RESISTING TRADITION: TRANSFORMATIONAL IDENTITY POLITICS IN THE WORK OF THREE CARIBBEAN WOMEN WRITERS

by

JENNIFER M FORMWALT

Under the direction of Lesley Feracho

ABSTRACT

In *In the Time of the Butterflies* (1994)*, Nuestra señora de la noche* (2006), and *La Hija de Cuba* (2006)*,* authors Julia Alvarez, Mayra Santos-Febres, and María Elena Cruz Varela recuperate the lives and biographies of historical women from their respective national contexts (the Dominican Mirabal sisters, Puerto Rican Isabel Luberza, and Cuban Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda) and rewrite them in dialogue with their own experiences and perspectives in order to *speak out against* the dehumanizing distortion of race, class, and gender differences within the discourses of national identity in their respective contexts and to *speak up from* a discursive position that has been silenced by cultural representations that reify such distortions through the appropriation and exclusion of counter-hegemonic voices. Drawing on the pedagogy of Paulo Freire (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 1970), the postcolonial literary criticism of Edward Said, the feminist theorizing of Audre Lorde, and the theoretical moorings of Third World feminists Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Trin T. Minh-ha, and others, these novels are analyzed as models of a transformational identity politics that rejects essentialized elements of identity and culture imposed externally in favor of self-definition through writing.

Alvarez, Santos-Febres, and Cruz Varela contribute to Third World feminist struggles for decolonization that reclaim writing as a means of defining identity and culture outside of hegemonic discourses by weaving the voices of these historical women and their own into a feminist genealogy of resistance to oppression. This study proposes that Alvarez, Santos-Febres, and Cruz Varela engage writing as *praxis* by recuperating these historical women as leaders of social change and establishing themselves as facilitators of liberatory dialogues with their readership. Freire's model of liberating consciousness through dialogue is manifested within the narrative among narrative voices from different race, class, and gender locations and beyond the text as an open-ended process that begins with the dialogic nature of the initial research process, which is recreated through writing the text and subsequently bringing the knowledge and understanding gained into dialogue with the readers presented with the critical insight that it provides regarding the lives and work of these women.

INDEX WORDS: Julia Alvarez, Mayra Santos-Febres, María Elena Cruz Varela, Mirabal sisters, Isabel Luberza, Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, Paulo Freire, Audre Lorde, Edward Said, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Trin T. Minh-ha, AnaLouise Keating, Caribbean, national identity, feminist genealogy, decolonizing feminism, Third World feminism, transformational identity politics, ideological decolonization, historiographic metafiction, auto/biography

RESISTING TRADITION: TRANSFORMATIONAL IDENTITY POLITICS IN THE WORK OF THREE CARIBBEAN WOMEN WRITERS

by

JENNIFER M FORMWALT

B.S., The University of Georgia, 2000

M.A., Middlebury College, 2002

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2011

RESISTING TRADITION: TRANSFORMATIONAL IDENTITY POLITICS IN THE WORK OF THREE CARIBBEAN WOMEN WRITERS

by

JENNIFER M FORMWALT

Major Professor: Lesley Feracho

Committee: Susan Quinlan
Betina Kaplan

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
August 2011

DEDICATION

I would like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to my mother, Dorothea Irwin, my colleague Elizabeth Combier, and my mentors, Lesley Feracho, Betina Kaplan, and Susan Quinlan. Under your guidance I have learned to listen, be honest about what I do not understand, and proud of what I have accomplished. I would also like to thank my father, Lee Formwalt, whose stories of experiences in and out of the closet of heterosexuality have helped me understand decolonization in a personal and meaningful way.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to the members of my committee, Dr. Lesley Feracho, Dr. Susan Quinlan, and Dr. Betina Kaplan, and Dr. Dana Bultman, who participated in committee work and my qualifying examinations. Thank your for mentoring and guiding me through this process.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In *In the Time of the Butterflies* (1994)*, Nuestra señora de la noche* (2006), and *La Hija de Cuba* (2006)*,* authors Julia Alvarez, Mayra Santos-Febres, and María Elena Cruz Varela recuperate the lives and biographies of historical women from their respective national contexts (the Dominican Mirabal sisters, Puerto Rican Isabel Luberza, and Cuban Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda) and rewrite them in dialogue with their own lives, combining critical reflection and dialogue in the process of recreating knowledge through writing historically and auto/biographically. I propose that these works model a transformational identity politics rooted in the theoretical moorings and pedagogical strategies of Paulo Freire *(Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 1970) and Audre Lorde (*Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* 1976-84) and the theorizing of Third World feminists Trin T. Mihn-ha (*Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* 1989), Chandra Talpade Mohanty (*Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* 1984-2003), Jacqui Alexander (*Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures* 1996), and AnaLouise Keating (*Women Reading Women Writing* 1996, *Teaching Transformation* 2007) among others in constructing "new forms of subjectivity and new strategies of emancipatory praxis" through rewriting the history of these historical women's lives in dialogue with their own and presenting their readers with narrative examples of "struggles which will lead to new forms of political culture and radical democracy" (Freire xi). In this study, I will bring the content and form of these works

into dialogue with reflections made by the authors themselves on their writing process and the research methodology employed in their search for information about the protagonists' lives to support my argument that Alvarez, Santos-Febres, and Cruz Varela engage writing as *praxis*, a means of combining critical reflection, dialogue, and constructing a subjectivity-in-process through a narrativization of these historical women's lives and struggles in dialogue with their own experiences and perspectives in order to *speak out against* the dehumanizing distortion of race, class, and gender differences within the discourses of national identity in their respective contexts inherited from the Spanish colonizer and its patriarchal and Eurocentric worldview and to *speak up from* a discursive position that has been silenced or appropriated.

The cases of the Mirabals, Luberza, and Avellaneda, are of particular relevance within discussions of national identity in the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and Cuba as figures whose lives and work have been appropriated and silenced through misrepresentation within national culture in order to perpetuate the Eurocentric and patriarchal values and beliefs of the dominant class inherited from the Spanish colonizer. Therefore, I propose that by rewriting their biographies in the interest of speaking truth to power and creating new knowledge about these women's lives and work, Alvarez, Santos-Febres, and Cruz Varela challenge the misrepresentation and appropriation of these counter-hegemonic voices within national history and culture and critique hegemonic cultural representations that perpetuate the silencing and negation of resistant subjectivities. Correlatively, I argue that by choosing to narrate the history of their lives and struggle as fiction, Alvarez, Santos-Febres, and Cruz Varela construct a new and creative means of recuperating feminist genealogies of struggle and rewriting them in dialogue with their own.

Drawing on the work of Nelly Richard (*Masculine/ Feminine: Practices of Difference(s)* 2004), Linda Hutcheon *(A Poetics of Postmodernism* 1987), and Liz Stanley (*The auto/biographical I* 1992), I propose that this form of rewriting counter-hegemonic history auto/biographically critiques the politics of hegemonic cultural representations that silence or exclude counter-hegemonic voices by creating a discursive space from which a resistant subjectivity, liberated from essentialized notions of identity, may be recreated in dialogue with the authors' own experience and perspective. My reading of these works as narratives of psychological decolonization that contest essentialized notions of identity by narrating a process of identity transformation realized in dialogue is based on the work of Freire, whose theoretical moorings on pedagogy and liberation are inspirational to the methodology and theorizing of the Third World feminist tradition derived from Lorde's work.

Freire's postcolonialist understanding of reading and writing processes as essential tools of decolonization have been central to the work of Third World feminists. The influence of Freire's methodology of liberation from oppressive social structures through consciousness and praxis is brought into dialogue with feminist struggles in the work of Audre Lorde, who makes direct reference to Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in the essay "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference" (*Sister, Outsider* 123) and in the cultural criticism of pedagogue and theorist bell hooks, whose work openly acknowledges Freire's contributions to feminist struggles (*Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* 1994, *Teaching Critical Thinking, Practical Wisdom* 2010*)* among others. Lorde and hooks elaborate Freire's original assertion that both oppressed and oppressor classes must eject the oppressor worldview implicated in essentialized notions of identity and become the authors of their own destiny through dialogue and self-definition. In *Woman, Native, Other,* Trin T. would bring these

reading and writing practices into the Third World context, asserting the need to recuperate feminist histories of resistance that originate in the Third World, rewriting these histories in dialogue with their own perspective and experiences.

In this study, I examine how Alvarez, Santos-Febres, and Cruz Varela contribute to this literary and theoretical dialogue through rewriting the lives of historical women in dialogue with their own, recuperating their roles as leaders of social change that worked to empower individuals through dialogues that would help them perceive the reality of their oppression and collaborate with those individuals to change the oppressive social context. This re-writing historically implies a recuperation of their lives and work and its re-creation through the act of writing. In the Dominican case, the Mirabals sisters lead the Dominican people in a popular struggle against the political tyranny of Trujillo; in Puerto Rico, Isabel Luberza organizes the women who work in her brothel in struggle against dehumanizing economic exploitation through prostitution; and in Cuba, Avellaneda was an important counter-hegemonic voice within Cuban national literature that re-defined distortions of race, class, and gender differences through her writing. Correlatively, I propose that these authors construct their own resistant subjectivity by establishing their own role as facilitators of liberatory dialogues with their readership through this process.

In this study, I use Keating's concept of transformational identity politics to refer to this critical engagement with hegemonic cultural representations through the creation of new discourses of identity that model a subjectivity-in-process. I explore how *In the Time of the Butterflies, Nuestra señora de la noche,* and *La Hija de Cuba* narrate the processes through which these historical women experienced a liberation of consciousness and became leaders of social change through dialogues with other individuals with whom they would build

communities of resistance. By contextualizing their work within the theorizing of Third World feminists that evolved from Lorde and Freire's work I place these novels in a tradition of feminist and postcolonial narratives of liberation that contribute to this legacy through a critical unveiling of the social reality that is the result of colonialism and its discourses. As Freire explains "Narratives of liberation must not ignore the cultural particularism of their roots, yet at the same time they must not abandon the opportunity to coordinate on a global basis" (xi). My examination of these works examines the specific location from which these writers reflect critically on the pervasive presence of patriarchal and Eurocentric worldview derived from colonialist discourses within the Dominican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban national imagination through the voices of the Mirabals, Luberza, and Avellaneda in dialogue with their own perspectives and experiences inside (Santos-Febres) or outside (Alvarez, Cruz Varela) of the nation.

I bring these perspectives into dialogue with Keating's concept of transformational identity politics in order to suggest a mode of reading these texts as narratives that rewrite the historical experience of psychological liberation from identities imposed externally in favor of self-definition through the voices of the Mirabals, Luberza, and Avellaneda, a process through which the authors engage in a dialogue with their voices that recreates this experience. As Keating explains in *Women Reading, Women Writing,* traditional identity politics based on identification with a specific minority group creates factions among the individuals working to transform society in the interest of all peoples and reifies essentialized notions of identity (60-63). Transformational identity politics rejects the legacy of resistant minority identity politics as divisive, reformulating the relationship between *transformation, identity,* and *politics* in terms of a psychological transformation of an individual's essentialized identity through writing and self-

invention. This liberation of consciousness and self enables individuals to join an all-encompassing struggle against the dehumanizing effects of oppression, recognizing the humanity of all people. This concept simultaneously critiques hegemonic discourses of identity that dehumanize and objectify individuals of difference and the limitations of an identity politics that contests the oppressive effects of these discourses through identification with one aspect of race, class, or gender difference.

Keating's concept draws on the work of Audre Lorde, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Paula Gunn Allen as examples of self-invention through writing. According to Keating, her reading of these women's texts lead to her own "psychological transformation" as she came to understand the need to reject essentialized identities imposed externally in favor of self-definition (*Women Reading, Women Writing* 182). In *Women Reading, Women Writing,* Keating herself rewrites Freire's pedagogy of liberation through her reading of Lorde, Anzaldúa, and Gunn Allen. As individuals whose identities combine multiple differences distorted with hegemonic discourses, Keating considers the voices of Lorde, Anzaldúa, and Gunn Allen to be examples of an identity politics that transcends the oppositional strategies of minority struggles organized around notions of an authentic/ core identity. In their work, she observes a transformation of the concept of identity itself, discarding the essentialized identities constructed through discourses that deploy the logic of colonialism to justify the exploitation of certain members of the national population through distortions of race, class, and gender differences. Keating observes that Lorde, Anzaldúa, and Gunn Allen's work models an alternative to accepting these distortions or reifying them through the search for an authentic identity of origin located in a distant past in their rejection of those identities imposed on individuals externally in favor of writing their own identity-in-process, redefining the differences distorted within traditional identity discourses. In

doing so, these writers re-connect those elements of reality separated within the Eurocentric and patriarchal worldview, re-establishing the union of mind-body-spirit by writing through the body, re-asserting the interdependent and dialogic nature of self and other through self-definition, and bringing the past struggles of historical women into dialogue with the present and future (6-7).

I have chosen to use her concept of identity transformation through reading and writing in my analysis of *In the Time of the Butterflies, Nuestra señora de la noche*, and *La Hija de Cuba* as a means of bringing Freire's postcolonial thought into dialogue with the work of Third World feminists and of engaging myself as a reader, writer, and pedagogue involved in this process. I position myself as a participant in the Freirian legacy of liberation in this way, critically reflecting on the discourses that name and identify in the interest of power, engaging in dialogue through reading and writing about those texts that contest them, and recreating this knowledge in dialogue with my students through teaching. My choice to focus on the Caribbean and the work of Alvarez, Santos-Febres, and Cruz Varela may be attributed to my experiences teaching literature from the Latin American and Caribbean and the thought provoking texts that I became familiar with as a graduate student and professor. In my search for teaching methodologies and texts that would engage students as people and critical thinkers I have found Alvarez's *In the Time of the Butterflies* to be an invaluable literary text due to its overwhelming popularity among my students. I also have found it to be an effective way to unveil truths about our own social reality and introduce discussions about the historical role of the United States military intervention in Latin America that has lead students to question their own assumptions about history and identity.

In my study, I will draw connections between these strategies of writing and self-definition and Third World feminist theory, a branch of feminism that engages the cultural criticism of postcolonial theorists such as Freire, Edward Said (*Orientalism* 1978), Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak ("Can the Subaltern Speak?" 1988) and others in dialogue with feminist struggles for decolonization. In doing so, I propose that Alvarez, Santos-Febres, and Cruz Varela have contributed to Third World feminist struggles for decolonization through critical reflection on the representation of these women within hegemonic cultural discourses, recuperating the legacy of their struggle, and rewriting their lives in dialogue with the author's own. I will elaborate the origins and evolution of Third World feminist theorizing in Chapter 1 "Third World Feminism: Writing Decolonization" and engage in a critical examination of the denominated "seminal text of national identity" in the Dominican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban contexts in Chapter 2 "The Colonial Legacy: National Identity Discourse," proposing that these texts established a framework for discussions of national culture and identity that would be rewritten through the national canon of literature and reaffirmed through cultural representations that would silence and objectify these counter-hegemonic struggles and voices.

Drawing from the literary criticism and discussions surrounding these seminal texts of Dominican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban national identity, I construct a framework for reflecting critically on narrative forms that reaffirm patriarchal Eurocentric values and beliefs through cultural representations that silence counter-hegemonic voices, examining Dominican history, Puerto Rican identity, and Cuban culture as the dominant discursive forms used to narrate national identity based on the form and content of the seminal text. For example, the Dominican novel *Enriquillo* (Manuel Jesús de Galván 1883), narrated the protagonist's life *historically,* as a hero and patriarch. Through the publication and canonization of this work, Enriquillo, a Taíno

Indian chief who lead an armed rebellion against a tyrannical landowner, became a symbol of Dominican national identity. *Enriquillo,* a rewriting of Bartolomé de las Casas' historical account of the rebellion, would set a precedent for the appropriation of counter-hegemonic historical figures through a rhetoric of heroic bravery that separates their forms of resistance and leadership from the people. Alvarez observed that monuments and celebrations of the Mirabal sisters as heroes silenced their role as leaders of a popular struggle that mobilized a large number of Dominicans, and (*In the Time of the Butterflies* 324). In Puerto Rico the discourse of national identity as a product of biological determinism established in the essay *Insularismo* (Antonio S. Pedreira 1934) would be built around a metaphor of the nation as family, *la gran familia puertorriqueña.* Within this structure, women's subjectivity would be split through a racialization of the Catholic Virgin Mary/ Mary Magdalene dichotomy. This division would inspire feminist Rosario Ferré to reunite women's mind/ body split in the short story "Cuando las mujeres quieren a los hombres" (1972). Santos-Febres observes that Ferré's attempt to contest the desexualization of white women by celebrating Isabel Luberza as a symbol of sexual liberation, silences and erases her counter-hegemonic role as an economically independent and successful businesswoman by portraying her as a folkloric incarnation of exoticized stereotypes about black women (*Sobre piel y papel* 154-55). In Cuba, the discourse that evolved from the novel *Cecilia Valdés* (Cirilio Villaverde 1882), would construct a cultural representation of the *mulata* as a symbol of a racially hybrid national identity would overshadow the counter-hegemonic discourse of Avellaneda's *Sab* (1841), which constructs a Cuban identity outside of the race, class, and gender coordinates within the patriarchal symbolic order (Sommer, *Foundational Fictions* 119). The literary production of Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, whose work pioneered the concept of a deterritorialized Cuban identity has been largely ignored or

misinterpreted within studies of the Cuban national canon of literature (Betancourt 6-7). Within these novels, Alvarez, Santos-Febres, and Cruz Varela recuperate and rewrite the Mirabals, Luberza, and Avellaneda's history and biography, using narrative strategies that challenge the assumptions perpetuated through these dominant discursive forms.

In *In the Time of the Butterflies,* Julia Alvarez gives voice to the Dominican people who have preserved the memory of the Mirabal sisters, a living history that has been excluded from Dominican historical narratives. Through her research of their lives in dialogue with the Dominican people who worked with them, Alvarez participates in a tradition of passing down their story to the next generation of readers, positioning her within their legacy and breaking the silence of Dominican exiles fearful of speaking out publicly against the dictatorship through the writing and publication of her novel (*Something to Declare* 103-112). Alvarez recuperates this historical past as a means of learning about her present perspective and positioning and rewriting it in the interest of the future, presenting her readers with a historical truth about the role of the United States in the Dominican dictatorship and the liberation work of the Mirabals.

I bring Alvarez's rewriting of history from the individual perspectives of the Mirabal sisters into dialogue with *Nuestra señora de la noche,* Santos-Febres's narration of Isabel Luberza's biography that rewrites Ferré's dichotomizing of back and white women, introducing a third character to the original Isabel la blanca/ Isabel la Negra pair. As suggested by the novel's title, Santos- Febres writes outside of the cultural prescription of femininity as white/chaste or black/unchaste through religious imagery associated with the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene, thus reflecting critically on distortions of race and gender difference through these representations. In *Nuestra señora de la noche,* Isabel-la-Negra-Luberza identifies with *La Caridad de Cobre*, the patron saint of Cuba, a religious representation of the virgin influenced by

the Cuban Santería tradition, which combines African Orishas with imagery of Catholic saints and introduces an alternative representation of femininity outside of the patriarchal duality. Luberza's liberation of consciousness, initiated through her reading of a play by Puerto Rican feminist Luisa Capetillo, leads to her self-definition as an autonomous businesswoman outside of the institutions of marriage and prostitution. In *La Hija de Cuba,* Cruz Varela uses dialogic reading and writing practices to bring her contemporary voice into dialogue with Avellaneda's historical voice.

La Hija de Cuba narrates a process of transcribing Avellaneda's autobiographical memoirs from the perspective of Ana Lucía (Cruz Varela's double within the text), weaving her own story into the text through the process of literally rewriting it. The narrative plot is organized around Ana Lucía's encounter with doña Mila, an older women in possession of the autobiographical memoir, which had been passed down through several generations by Trini, Avellaneda's friend that originally transcribed the memoir. During this rewriting process, a group of pirates, a metaphorical representation of hegemonic discursive interests, threatens the women and tries to steal the text. Ana Lucía manages to complete the transcription, however, earning the right to publish the text and present Avellaneda's counter-hegemonic perspective and experiences in dialogue with her own to her readers. Through dialogic writing practices, these authors weave their voices into a feminist genealogy of resistance to oppression.

I consider this form of writing historically and auto/biographically a model of writing as *praxis*, combining critical reflection and dialogue in the process of recreating knowledge through writing. This critical reflection and engagement through dialogue is manifested within the narrative through dialogues among and between narrative voices from different race, class, and gender locations and beyond the text as an open-ended process that begins with the dialogic

nature of the initial research process, which is recreated through writing the text and subsequently bringing the knowledge and understanding gained through that process into dialogue with other individuals in their lives, and engages readers in dialogue through the process of reading the text and being presented with the critical insight that it provides regarding the lives and work of these women.

As fictional works situated in a concrete socio-historical context, these novels reflect critically on the postcolonial social reality immersed in a worldview of oppression rooted in the patriarchal and Eurocentric discourses of colonialism. The Western discourses that distorted race, class, and gender representations within its colonies would be rewritten through the discourses of national identity in the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and Cuba and Western cultural hegemony would maintain and protect the pervasive presence of these distortions. By retelling of these women's lives, Alvarez, Santos-Febres, and Cruz Varela engage in a form of critical reflection that challenges the worldview of the oppressor class used justify the race, class, and gender hierarchies that structured their society and naturalize these relationships through distorted cultural representations. The discourses of national identity in the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and Cuba, rewritten by the beneficiaries of colonial exploitation, would adapt it to their own changing needs as nations in the process of fighting for political autonomy and in the consolidation of governmental power in the hands of the oppressor classes.

In this study, I will use the term *colonialist* to refer to those discourses that justify the exploitation and control of others through distorted representations of biological difference as an essential or authentic identity. Following Said's suggestion that colonialist texts be read contrapunctually (*Culture and Imperialism* 1993), I will include an analysis of what is widely accepted as the seminal text of national identity in the Dominican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban

context in Chapter 3 "The Colonial Legacy: National Identity Discourse." I consider this critical reflection on the ideological underpinnings of national culture an insightful prelude to my analysis of the appropriation and/or misrepresentation of the Mirabals, Luberza, and Avellaneda within the symbols and literature of national culture, reaffirming the values and beliefs of the dominant class. These discourses have been used to exploit and control certain members of the national community in order to exclude them from their rights as citizens, and justify these injustices. The colonial worldview rewritten by Creole classes following the fight for independence would assert their rights as beneficiaries within the social hierarchies of these nations. This would be accomplished through a rewriting of this worldview through the discourses of national identity, which would justify the privileged position of the oppressor class as a historical and biological right and establish the parameters of citizenship (the right to possess) in the interest of controlling the population and maintaining this privilege.

As the oppressor/ colonizer would silence and objectify the oppressed/ colony, negating their subjectivity by denying them the opportunity to produce discourses that would define them, the white male heirs to the wealth and privilege wrought by colonial exploitation, would protect their power through control of these identity discourses. This oppressor class would limit negotiation of the privilege to participate in discursive production to those members of the national population that would participate in the control and exploitation of others. My contribution to through this study is to bring this colonial legacy into dialogue with *In the Time of the Butterflies, Nuestra Señora de la noche,* and *La Hija de Cuba* and other critical reflections by the authors themselves and to establish this dialogue as a contribution to the struggle for decolonization through critical reflection on the colonial legacy, and recuperating and rewriting histories women's resistance to this legacy in dialogue with their own experiences and

perspectives, establishing a feminist genealogy of resistance. In Chapter 2 "Third World Feminism: Writing as Decolonization," I will examine the history and development of a Third World feminism derived from Freire and Lorde's work in dialogue with other postcolonial theorists and cultural critics. This theoretical base informs and structures my analysis of national identity discourse in Chapter 3 "The Colonial Legacy: National Identity Discourse," and my examination of *In the Time of the Butterflies* in Chapter 4 "Transforming History," *Nuestra Señora de la noche* in Chapter 5 "Puerto Rico's Founding Whore," and *La Hija de Cuba* in Chapter 6 "Dialogic Writing."

CHAPTER 2

THIRD WORLD FEMINISM: WRITING AS DECOLONIZATION

In *Woman, Native, Other* (1989), Trin T. elaborates a theoretical framework for a Third World feminism that identifies with the Third World as an ambivalent nonwestern location that is both the victim of colonial/imperial exploitation and a threat to its hegemony (97-99). I will elaborate the evolution of this branch of feminism in response to the systematic silencing and exclusion of the voices of women of color and Third World women within Women's Studies programs in this chapter. I propose Freire's influence on the theoretical moorings of Lorde, recognized as a foundational voice within Third World feminist theorizing and highlight the pedagogical and dialogic nature of the writing practices and the decolonizing struggles that originate through these practices inspired by Lorde's work. The Third World feminism that evolves from Lorde's dialogue with the Freiran model of decolonizing praxis shares conceptual affinities with Chela Sandoval's denomination of a US third-world feminism rooted in alliances across minority differences in "US Third-World Feminism: The Theory and Method of Oppositional Consciousness in the Postmodern World" (1991), however the Freirian roots of the former, its kinship to the postcolonial theoretical moorings of Said (*Orientalism* 1978, *Culture and Imperialism* 1994, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* 2004) and the impact of the concept Said's concept of Orientalist discourse on the early work of Mohanty in "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses" (1984) should be distinguished from the postmodern and postcolonial Marxist feminism(s) that inform and structure the latter. I ascribe Spivak's inability to resolve the issues raised by their work and Sandoval's failure to successfully coordinate a US third-world feminist movement to their containment within a

Western philosophical framework within which externally imposed identities are negotiated rather than redefined. I will briefly examine some of the seminal texts of postcolonial feminist thought that examine notions of subjectivity, identity, and cultural representation from a Marxist theoretical perspective in order to address the limitations of this theorizing in the context of feminist struggles for decolonization and bring these texts into dialogue with Said and Mohanty. Through this comparison, I argue that the decolonizing feminist theorizing derived from Emmanuel Levinas' postcolonial humanism and its influence on Freire's pedagogy addresses these limitations through writing practices rooted in the self-determination of oppressed individuals that hold the potential to free individuals from economic exploitation *and* psychological oppression by liberating their minds. It is in the context of these practices of writing as self-definition that I situate *In the Time of the Butterflies, Nuestra señora de la noche*, and *La Hija de Cuba.*

Third World feminism embraces the notion of the Third World as an ambivalent positioning and redefines a Third World culture of difference: different from Western culture, and full of its own cultural complexities and legacies of resistance that have the potential to enrich and strengthen worldwide anti-capitalist struggles for decolonization. According to Third World feminists, writing is a critical strategy in the struggle to redefine difference through critical reflection, self-definition, recuperating histories of Third World women's struggles and actively engaging in those struggles through the process of rewriting their histories in dialogue with the individual perspectives and experience of the theorist. Therefore, a Third world feminist approach understands writing as *praxis*: the combination of critical reflection, engagement in struggle, and recreation.

In my consideration of *In the Time of the Butterflies, Nuestra señora de la noche,* and *La Hija de Cuba* as a body of work characterized by their transformational identity politics, I have found that the social diverse positioning of the historical women represented contributes significantly to my comparative analysis. In any discussion of liberating dialogues, revolutionary consciousness, and the assertion of a self defined in one's own terms, it is important to consider various points of departure in the journey toward the realization of a sovereign self fully dedicated to the liberation of other individuals from their oppressive reality. My use of the term *consciousness* is based on Freire and refers to a perspective liberated from the oppressor worldview and which understands the humanity of all peoples, whose race, class, and gender differences are distorted and misrepresented within hegemonic culture. Consciousness is realized through *praxis,* critical reflection on the social reality shaped by the values and beliefs inherited from colonialism in conjunction with action through dialogue and struggle. Freire clarifies that engagement in decolonizing struggles from a position of privilege requires a "profound rebirth," a complete willingness to engage in dialogue and struggle *with* the people, not *for* them (14). Conversely, the oppressed must redefine their own humanity and become the authors of their own destiny by ejecting the oppressor worldview externally imposed on them, which dehumanizes through distortions of difference and by imposing the will of the oppressor, depriving individuals of the freedom to live according to their own will. In this study, I refer to the ejection of the oppressor worldview as ideological decolonization. In the case of the middle-class Mirabals and upper-class Avellaneda, ideological decolonization refers to their decision to eject an oppressive worldview that privileges their class in order to enter the collective struggle, whereas Luberza is empowered to see herself outside of discourses that oppress and dehumanize.

Alvarez, Santos-Febres and Cruz Varela evoke the voices of historical women previously silenced or erased from hegemonic discourses through a practice of writing their stories in dialogue with their own, redefining race, class, and gender differences distorted and misrepresented within hegemonic discourses of national identity through representations of liberated, interdependent, and equal selves. In this study, a transformational identity politics within these works refers to representations of culture and identity that are self-defined rather than externally imposed and are pedagogical in nature because they combine critical reflection (exegetic critique of cultural mis-representations or appropriations of these women and their lives) and praxis (rewriting the political/ social/ cultural engagement of the historical protagonists in their socio-historical context through struggle in dialogue with their own positioning). By appropriation I refer to cultural representations that silence rather than give voice to counter-hegemonic voices. Therefore, my use of the transformational identity politics refers to a reconceptualization of the terms *transformation,* identity, and *politics* that aims to liberate the consciousness from the psychological effects of colonialist discourse through reading and writing practices that are dialogic and oriented toward self-definition. From this self-actualized/ liberation position, an individual is able to see the humanity of all peoples, recognizing that their cultural differences (in terms of the race, class, gender, sexual preference, etc. culture/s that converge in the whole that is their self) contribute to dialogues among those dedicated to liberation of the self and the transformation of society. Keating' *Women Reading Women Writing* fails to mention Freire's work, however, my examination of his method and theory in dialogue with Lorde's work demonstrates that her concept of the transformational identity politics shares many of his original assertions.

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* Freire develops a model of teaching as praxis, critical reflection, action, and recreation, oriented towards the transformation of oppressive social structures that mediate social interactions through a prescription of the values and beliefs of the oppressor class on oppressed groups, immobilizing them in their vocation to become more fully human by distorting their humanity and causing the oppressed to suffer from self-deprication, fear, and emotional dependency (2-3, 28-32). According to this worldview, being human is equated with possession ("having more") that necessitates the dehumanization and exploitation of oppressed groups and that both oppressor and oppressed groups consent to this dehumanization because they are immersed in a social reality structured by this worldview (15-16). Freire argues that hegemonic knowledge and culture are necessarily the instruments through which the prescription of this distorted worldview is realized, and therefore cannot be used to destruct it (6-7). Combining the postcolonial critique of Karl Marx, Emmanuel Levinas, Franz Fanon, and Eric Fromm among others, he proposes a model of teaching rooted in consciousness, an awakening to the objective reality of oppression and subsequent participation in the transformation of the social reality that perpetuates it. According to this framework, the transformation of an oppressive social reality requires a dialectical relationship between objectivity (an unveiling of the reality of oppression through critical reflection) and subjectivity (active involvement in the struggle to transform that reality). Freire refers to this dialectical relationship between thought and action as praxis, recognizing the necessarily pedagogical nature of revolution and calling for "a humanizing pedagogy in which the revolutionary leadership establishes a permanent relationship of dialogue with the oppressed" (33). Acknowledging the self-interested nature of hegemonic knowledge and culture derived from the values and beliefs of the oppressor class and perpetuated through its institutions, Freire's model demands that

individuals reject these structures and create new knowledges, subjectivities, and cultures dialogically: "Therefore a humanizing pedagogy ceases to be an instrument by which teachers (here revolutionary leadership) can manipulate the students (the oppressed) because it expresses the consciousness of the students themselves" (34). This demands a total commitment on behalf of the revolutionary leadership and the oppressed groups to recuperating the humanity lost through the imposition of the oppressor's will on the oppressed by empowering the oppressed to become the authors of their own destiny and through that process becoming "the new man who is neither oppressor nor oppressed – man in the process of liberation" (21). Recognizing the dehumanizing effects of oppression on all people, Freire's method begins with a critical reflection on social reality through dialogues that unveil the psychological prescription of the oppressor worldview on the oppressed, who suffer from a divided subjectivity as "host" to the oppressor (26). Liberation from this prescription is realized when the oppressed decide to eject the oppressor worldview and become the "authors of their own destiny," through participation in struggles against oppression, recuperating their subjectivity (agency) and lost humanity (15-16). This framework for a democratic pedagogy through dialogue and educational projects, calls for leadership that works *with* oppressed individuals in the constant recreation of knowledge rather than relying on conventional Western knowledge and its institutions, which are instruments of domination that silence those individuals dehumanized through its discourses.

Freire's dialogic approach to critical reflection and pedagogy is recuperated by Lorde and hooks as a theory and method useful in organizing a dialogue among white feminists and women of color and addressing the privileged position of white women within society and the academy and unites the decolonizing struggles of all oppressed peoples, and the shared responsibility of addressing the needs of those members of society that are exploited, identifying their shared

humanity and potential to change their social reality. Hooks, whose work combines Freirian thought and feminism claims "There is no way one can or should separate feminist theoretical notions of pedagogy from Freirean theory and pedagogy" (Kincheloe). As a foundational voice within the theorizing of women of color and Third World Feminists, it is relevant to note Lorde's use of Freire's model to structure and voice her understanding of oppression and social transformation from her position and experience.

In Lorde's seminal critique of Anglo-feminism's paternalistic attitude toward the work of Black and Third World feminists "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," a speech presented at the Second Sex Conference in 1979, she brings the salient themes in Freire's *Pedagogy* into the context of feminist struggles, arguing that patriarchal and Eurocentric values and beliefs had permeated theorizing done within the Women's Studies paradigm, which silenced and excluded the voices of women of difference. As suggested by the title, Lorde calls for a new form of theorizing outside of the Western philosophical tradition through writing and dialogue that would re-define distorted notions of difference and otherness. In this speech, Lorde claims that tolerance of difference constitutes "the grossest reformism" by denying "the creative function of difference in our lives" and argues for a coalition among "those others identified as outside the structures in order to seek a world where we can all flourish" (111-12). In *Sister Outsider,* Lorde builds her theorizing on the importance of writing as a form of resistance: a means of speaking out against the dehumanizing effects of racism, sexism, ageism, and other forms of intolerance on all people, reflecting critically on the silencing and appropriation of counter-hegemonic voices of difference, and a means of self-definition outside of the discourses and institutions that would seek to define and silence her. In "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action," Lorde calls for all people to speak out

against oppression and to speak up in spite of their fears in order to teach and transform "it is necessary to teach by living and speaking those truths which we believe and know beyond our understanding. Because in this way alone we can survive, by taking part in a process of life that is creative and continuing, that is growth" (43). In Lorde and Freire's discussion of oppression and liberation, true liberation implies freedom *from* oppression and freedom *to* live one's life creatively and find meaning in work and love. Freire describes the latter as "the seeking, restless, impulse, and the creative power which characterizes life" (24). In Lorde's work, this freedom to live freely and creatively is referred to as *the erotic*, "an assertion of the lifeforce of women; of that creative energy empowered, the knowledge and use of which we are now reclaiming in our language, our history, our dancing, our loving, our work, and our lives" (55), which she distinguishes from the *pornographic,* "sensation without feeling" (54). Trin T. Minh-ha would build on Lorde's concept of the erotic as "womb writing" in *Woman, Native, Other,* rewriting Lorde's theorizing from the perspective of Third World women, recuperating the concept of Third World as a site of counter-hegemonic resistance. I will return to her ideas later in this chapter after a brief examination of the postcolonial and Third World feminist ideas that evolve through Mohanty's dialogue with Said's *Orientalism* in the essay "Under Western Eyes" (1984).

Said's seminal analysis of colonialist discourse, *Orientalism* (1978) is considered foundational within the field of postcolonial studies. Drawing from a variety of theoretical perspectives, and bringing Marxism and Foucauldian poststructuralism into dialogue with the Levinas' humanism, Said constructs an analysis of colonialist discourse that examines how the colonial powers constructed a discourse of the Orient as an objectified and homogenized other from a Western perspective, establishing and reaffirming its cultural hegemony through the

production and repetition of representations that present nonwestern people as barbaric and uncivilized. Said's *Orientalism,* premised on Foucault's examination of knowledge and power, argues that Orientalist discourse was used to produce and control knowledge about its colonies in order to justify the political and economic exploitation of colonized peoples. This discourse silenced and objectified the colonized through its hegemony, or control of culture and representation, through which the colonizer managed to procure the consent of the colonized, and justify Western control and subjugation of colonized peoples.

Said's examination of Orientalist discourse as a discursively constructed web of cultural representations of colonial subjects used to justify colonial conquest and protect its hegemony through control of cultural representation informs and structures Mohanty's seminal critique of a Western feminism in "Under Western Eyes" (1984). In this essay, Mohanty examines the colonizing role of hegemonic Western feminism discourse, which had constructed a homogenous image of third world women as a monolithic other, identifying the similarities between this discursive silencing the Orientalist discourse of colonialism. Mohanty proposes an examination of "colonization" as a discursive strategy that relies on "appropriation and codification of 'scholarship' and 'knowledge' about women in the third world" in order to negate their subjectivity by silencing them (333-34). Mohanty locates these distorted representations of third world women within a larger project of Western economic and cultural hegemony strengthened through the dialectical relationship between the discourses of humanism and scientific inquiry that sustain its dominance and control over the third world, concluding that "It is time to move beyond the Marx who found it possible to say: They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented" (354). Said and Mohanty formulate the argument that Western cultural hegemony is discursively constructed through a homogenized and distorted representation of nonwestern

peoples as uncivilized and incapable of speaking for themselves. Therefore Western cultural hegemony and its discourses dehumanize the object of their gaze, or study, by denying their participation in the production of knowledge about themselves and thus negating their subjectivity.

These discourses maintain a paternalistic relationship between the colonizer/ subject and the colonized/ object through a rhetoric of Western civilization and democracy in order to justify colonial control. This notion of civilization and democracy is premised on a false notion of humanity because it perpetuates the dehumanization of the colonized. In Freirian terms, colonialist discourse is the origin of the oppressor worldview and is constantly rewritten by the beneficiaries of its violent exploitation of the oppressed, who suffer from a divided subjectivity due to their internalization of these values and beliefs. Lorde's work had examined this relationship in the context of United States feminism in the 1970's in terms of oppressor/ oppressed, a relationship that Mohanty would examine from Said's postcolonial perspective in 1984. Mohanty's critique of Western feminism in reproducing this colonialist discursive othering in its representation of third world women would be elaborated in the theorizing of Gayatri Spivak, whose investigation of the relationship between subalterity (occupying a position of other) and subjectivity in her seminal essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988), concludes that the resistance strategies of subaltern women suggest their voice, but that it is impossible to accurately translate within the language of Western philosophy and therefore the subaltern woman is unable to speak within this paradigm.

Spivak is considered a foundational voice of postcolonial feminism, however, her work is situated within the Western philosophical tradition, drawing on Marxism and poststructuralism, and participates in postcolonial and feminist theorizing from this position. I mention her work

here as a provocative response to Said and Mohanty's failure to examine the counter-hegemonic strategies of nonwestern peoples in response to the Western colonialist discourse that they examine. Spivak's theoretical examination of subalterity and subjectivity constitutes an important contribution to these dialogues. She is known for her concept of "tactical essentialism," adopting an essentialized identity temporarily in order to ally oneself with women's groups divided due to their different agendas. Her concept of "tactical essentialism" would inspire Chela Sandoval's proposal for a new "differential subjectivity" that would coordinate the diverse interests of minority groups by positioning oneself strategically in the struggle against interlocking systems of oppression.

In "US Third-World Feminism: The Theory and Method of Oppositional Consciousness in the Postmodern World," Sandoval draws on Marxist theory and postmodern cultural criticism in her construction of a framework for a "differential consciousness" that would coordinate the oppositional strategies of minority groups, establishing common ideological ground in their resistance to interlocking forms of oppression and calling for a new understanding of the strategic potential for recognizing alliances among minority groups: "What US third-world feminism demands is a new subjectivity, a political revision that denies any one ideology as the final answer, while instead positing a *tactical subjectivity* with the capacity to recenter depending upon the kinds of oppression to be confronted" (89). Inspired by Spivak's concept of "tactical essentialism" Sandoval's seminal discussion of a feminist "differential consciousness" that would recognize the common ground shared by oppositional political positions serves as a valid model for building a coalition of oppositional political locations through a reconsideration of Marxist theory in the postmodern context of globalization, yet ultimately fails to propose a method of constructing a third world feminist discourse that responds to Lorde's call to "define

and empower" through dialogues among different in race, class, gender positinings, rather than "advocating the mere tolerance of difference between women" which Lorde denounces as "the grossest reformism" (111-12). Spivak and Sandoval's theorizing ultimately fails to formulate a concept of feminism outside of the hegemonic Western discourses through Marxist feminism and poststructuralism, and is therefore unable to imagine a third world feminist subjectivity within the institutional parameters of intellectual theorizing. Lorde's assertion that the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house is a useful reminder that such theorizing would be impossible within these structures. This paradox would be resolved by theorist and documentarian Trin T. Mihn-ha in *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (1989) in her reclaiming of the Third World as a site of counter-hegemonic resistance and her denomination of a Third World feminism.

According to Trin T. "The Third World to Third World peoples" is "an empowering tool, and one which politically includes all non-whites in their solidarist struggle against all forms of Western dominance" (98). Here, Trin T. claims that Third World feminists demanded a new understanding of women's experience outside of Western discourses that would account for their different experiences within the gender culture of their location (122). Like the title of Lorde's essay collection *Sister Outsider,* Trin T. reclaims her ambivalent positioning within the discourses that seek to name and define her reality externally as woman, native, and other. In this text, she engages in dialogue with her postcolonial antecedents, and reclaims writing as "the intersection of subject and history" (6), claiming that "Becoming a self is simultaneous with becoming the author of one's self" (12) and recognizing the ambivalence of language as a means "circulating established power relations": "As a focal point of cultural consciousness and social change, writing weaves into language the complex relations of a subject caught between the very

problems of race and gender and the practice of literature as the very place where social alienation is thwarted differently according to every social context" (6). Subjectivity and identity maintain a dialogic relationship and claims that the notions of "true origin" and "pure self" are derived from Western culture and

> They should be distinguished from the differences grasped both *between* and *within* entities, each of these being understood as multiple presence. Not One, not two either. "I" is therefore, not a unified subject, a fixed identity, or that solid mass covered with layers of superficialities one has gradually to peel off before one can see its true face. "I" is, itself, *infinite layers* (emphasis original 90).

In claiming that the *purpose* of feminist theorizing about identity is to "patiently dismantle the very notion of core (be it static or not) identity," Trin T. alludes the direct relationship between externally imposed identities and their role in structuring relationships of inequality. Using anthropological discourse as a model for her critical reflection on the difference between the social reality of the Third World and its cultural representation within hegemonic Western discourses, she elaborates a complex theoretical argument in favor of self-definition and rewriting women's history, which she refers to as "an endless task" for feminist scholars "gained through genuine curiosity, concern, and interest" (84). Research is discussed as a creation through recreation: in rewriting/ retelling women's history, they participate in this process and weave their own lives into the story, giving voice to the past in the interest of the present and future (122).

Lorde's erotic as a mode of recuperating the creative and emotional aspects of self becomes "writing through the body" or *womb* writing, a celebration of the maternal aspect of femininity in Trin T.'s text (37). Explaining that Asian culture considers the "intellectual,

emotional, and vital" as elements of an integrated consciousness, she attributes separation of womb and body to Western metaphysical mind/ body splitting (37). Through this broad and complex theorizing, Trin T. addresses the complexity of Third World women's difference, which would be silenced within the discourses of Western hegemony and therefore must be written from a Third World perspective.

The problematic nature of Third World women's representation within Western discourse would be revisited by Mohanty through her collaboration with Jacqui Alexander in the collection of essays *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures* (1996) and in her revision and elaboration of the issues raised in "Under Western Eyes" in *Feminism Without Borders* (2003). Both texts focus on the importance of Third World feminist theorizing in dialogue with Third World women, positing the counter-hegemonic role of writing as a form of self-definition and in the interest of historicizing of Third World women's struggles and bringing their unique forms of resistance into dialogue with other struggles against oppression. *Feminist Genealogies* is a collection of essays featuring theoretical work by Third World feminist scholars who locate themselves ideologically within communities of Third World women in the struggle for decolonization. Alexander and Mohanty introduce this collection with the proposal that feminist struggles for social justice in the United States dialogue with communities of women in Third World nations explaining that this approach acknowledges their common ground in histories of racism, sexism, and colonialism (xiii-xxvii). They suggest the idea of a feminist genealogy connecting the historical struggles of Third World women to their present social reality past in the interest of a democratic future. The concept of feminist genealogy is based on the Frerian model of praxis through critical reflection, dialogue, and the recreation of knowledge, acknowledging that "oppositional communities have their own histories of struggles, modes of

theorization, and forms of organizing which shape and transform feminist practices" (*Feminist Genealogies* xx). This dialogic model would be recreated in Mohanty's *Feminism Without Borders* to address the need to promote writing practices that would bring Third World women's voices into dialogue with such theorizing.

In *Feminism Without Borders,* Mohanty builds a theoretical framework for Third World feminism based on decolonizing praxis, uniting Third World women and feminist scholars in shared struggles against racism and heterosexism as equals and allies in a "horizontal comradeship" that establishes political common ground in ideological opposition to oppressions rooted in histories of colonial and imperial domination:

> It is not color or sex that constructs the ground for these struggles, rather it is the way we think about race, class, and gender- the political links we chose to make among and between struggles…imagined communities of women with divergent histories and social locations, woven together by political threads of opposition to forms of domination that are not only pervasive, but also systemic *(*46-7).

As Mohanty explains, colonial relationships of domination and subordination have left Third World women with "very different histories with respect to the particular inheritance of post-fifteenth-century Euro-American hegemony: the inheritance of slavery, forced migration, plantation and indentured labor, colonialism, imperial conquest, and genocide" (*Feminism Without Borders* 52). In order to contest these discourses, Mohanty claims that new historical accounts that highlight Third World women's "experience, identity, and agency" and "ground feminist politics in the histories of racism and imperialism" must be written: "the rewriting of history based on specific locations and histories of struggle of people of color and postcolonial peoples, and on the day-to-day strategies of survival utilized by such peoples" (52).

In *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures* and *Feminism Without Borders,* Alexander and Mohanty construct a model of a Third World feminist *praxis* that would combine decolonizing thought and action through a dialogic form of theorizing *with* Third World women, bringing Freire's pedagogy, Lorde's theorizing and Trin T.'s postcolonial proposal for a Third World feminism premised on a historicized examination of the forms of resistance to oppression used by Third World women in order to build a body of decolonizing literary and theoretical knowledge outside of Western discourse. I place *In the Time of the Butterflies, Nuestra Señora de la Noche,* and *La Hija de Cuba* within this tradition of writing historically and auto/biographically as works that participate in this dialogue through a critical reflection on the postcolonial social reality of these women's lives and their subsequent appropriation and silencing within national culture, and rewriting of their lives in dialogue with their own, thus giving voice to their experiences and presenting readers with the story of their lives.

In the following chapter, I will I will include an analysis of what is widely accepted as the seminal text of national identity in the Dominican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban context in Chapter 3 "The Colonial Legacy: National Identity Discourse." I consider this critical reflection on the ideological underpinnings of national culture an insightful prelude to my analysis of the appropriation and/or misrepresentation of the Mirabals, Luberza, and Avellaneda within the symbols and literature of national culture, reaffirming the values and beliefs of the dominant class.

CHAPTER 3

THE COLONIAL LEGACY: NATIONAL IDENTITY DISCOURSE

In this chapter I provide a contextualized overview of the discursive construction of ideological assumptions about race, class, gender, and culture in the postcolonial phase of each national context and during the struggle for national autonomy preceding this phase. In this study I refer to the hegemonic ideology operative in the Dominican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban discourses of national identity as *colonialist* due to its adherence to the dualistic Western European philosophical framework used to justify colonial relationships of domination and subordination. Within a colonialist ideology, social reality is discursively constructed, but presumed to reflect a natural order of relationships subordinate to white masculinity. Therefore men are *subjects,* or the leaders and moderators of social change, who establish relationships of domination and subordination, while those members of society who differ from normative white masculinity are presented as other. Under this paradigm, others are not considered subjects in their own right, but *objects* in scientific or philosophical work that justifies relationships of domination-subject and subordination-object. Others may establish their subjectivity by contesting assumptions through discourse. Within this discursive web, scientific and historical discourse are considered objective, while artistic production is considered subjective and repre
sentative of inherent qualities. The subjective and objective maintain a dialectical relationship leading to conclusions that reveal truths about human nature and society. This model of Western philosophy and its discourses has been used to establish and protect relationships of domination and subordination.

I examine these discourses in this chapter as part of a process of historicizing the discursively constructed relationships of power in the Dominican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban contexts, or a prelude to my discussion of the process of ideological decolonization in these works. As Chasteen notes in his introduction to Angel Rama's *The Lettered City:* "The most devastating effects of cultural hegemony occur when hierarchies of race and class are made to appear aspects of the natural order rather than results of a project of domination, [obliging] us to contemplate the hegemonic power that operates at the level of people's basic assumptions" (Chasteen xiii). In this chapter I will focus on the construction of a colonialist Dominican and Puerto Rican national identity as a discursive negotiation of power between Creole classes and colonial Spain. By colonialist, I refer to discursive attempts to prove the cultural, linguistic, social, and political similarities between colonizer and colonized as justification for national autonomy. To varying degrees Dominican and Puerto Rican Creoles adhered to the colonialist domination/ subordination framework by proving their qualifications as fathers to the new nations (a paternalistic relationship) through arguments that proved their racial and cultural similarities to Spaniards and loyalty to the intellectual, spiritual, and social discourses based on Western European philosophical thought.

Early postcolonial Latin American literary production reproduced the discursive forms of Western European "universal culture" in response to the colonialist discourses that had constructed an image of colonized people as uncivilized. As Jean Franco explains, "Franz Fanon described eloquently enough that hankering for assimilation which makes inhabitants of colonized territories wear the mask of the metropolis since they must negate themselves in order to exist for the colonizer" (66). The narratives of national identity in the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and Cuba demonstrate an appropriation of oral and folk traditions in their appeal to

a "popular" and racially diverse Dominican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban national population as authentic representations of a national culture (68). By "narratives of national identity" I refer to those texts that set a precedent for status-quo discourses of national history, identity, and culture generally accepted by the national population as realistic, normal, or authentic representations of nation.

I include this review as part of my study because it explains the development of discursive ideological and material colonization, or the cultural politics of ideology as a discourse of domination, which is relevant to any discussion of decolonizing work. Stanley explains that the study of cultural politics is a contextualization of cultural production socially, historically and politically: "By doing so, it rejects treating ideas as merely idealism, merely ideology. Cultural politics sees the material and ideological as symbiotically related, recognizing that ideas have a material origin and that the ideological has importance through the expression of ideas in concrete material practices" (3). My study will begin with an examination of how the discourses of Dominican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban national identity are colonialist through a brief historical overview of these nations in the colonial and postcolonial phase and a discussion of a seminal text of national identity from each. These paradigmatic texts are: *Enriquillo* (Dominican Republic 1883), a novel by Manuel de Jesús Galván, the essay *Insularismo* (Puerto Rico 1934), written by Antonio S. Pedreira, and *Cecilia Valdés* (Cuba 1882), a four-part novel by Cirilo Villaverde. All have been institutionalized as a seminal work on discussions of national identity in their respective countries, and are considered objective or truthful representations of the national social reality. This is because a colonialist ideology is premised on the truth and objectivity of Western European discourse: these narratives derived their legitimacy from their structural relationship to European models, and appropriated local customs

and traditions as a means of proving their authenticity, creating an autochthonous version of colonial culture that would legitimate the Dominican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban nations.

Enriquillo and *Insularismo* are paternalistic articulations of nation as family that facilitated the cultural and political hegemony of Creole men by presenting women and non-western ethnicities as others incapable of self-governance. This is also known as populism, a form of demagoguery through which Creole leadership assured the national population that it labored in the best interest of the nation-family. Doris Sommer elaborates: "The populist rhetoric describes the difficulties faced by a nation in transition to industrial society in terms of a traditional family that has been disrupted and that strives to reintegrate and re-establish harmony" (11). The transition from colonial to postcolonial society provided Creoles with the opportunity to establish their roles as leaders of nation and guardians of colonial tradition. Populist rhetoric, "which casts ideology in narrative form" and employs an "identification of nation with the family" played an important role in establishing the similarities between Creole classes and the colonizer by demonstrating their distance from (and superiority to) the "others" that constituted the national family (Sommer, *One Master for Another* 1-11).

Narratives of nation in the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and Cuba imitated European culture through discursive forms that would appeal to popular notions of authenticity by appropriating folk or regional culture and erasing those cultures that would threaten their legitimacy in the eyes of Spain. In the Dominican Republic, the proximity of Haiti and the the large percentage of black Dominicans prompted leaders to discursively construct an identity of difference from a Haitian Other; in Puerto Rico, African music and dance forms such as the *bomba* were slowly incorporated into representations of Puertoricanness; in Cuba, African culture had a larger presence within Cuban society and was represented in narrative

costumbrismo. In the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, cultural erasures lead to problematic ignorance regarding national history and identity. For example, in the Dominican Republic Galván created a fictitious past that established absolute racial and cultural difference from neighboring Haiti in *Enriquillo.* Rafael Leonidas Trujillo, a brutal dictator who established normative behaviors and traditions through an ideology of colonialist cultural nationalism, admired this foundational text. Puerto Rico desperately sought to highlight the "civilized" Spanish heritage (race) of the Creole classes who would educate the nation in Western European culture, but refused to struggle for independence and thus never realized national autonomy. Cuba was historically more tolerant of African culture than the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, which allowed Cubans to unite in the fight for independence from Spain in 1868 and later in the Cuban Revolution lead by Fidel Castro. While *Enriquillo* and *Insularismo* were decidedly paternalistic and racist, Cuba's *Cecilia Valdés* focused on social mores, and while critical and racist in its moral condemnation of the behavior of Afro-Cuban women, Cuban nationalism also celebrated the *mulatta* as representative of Cuban society. I will address this problematic representation of Afro-Cuban women in my discussion of Cuban national identity discourse.

The narratives of Dominican and Puerto Rican national identity were overtly paternalistic and maintained a nostalgic connection to colonial culture, which suggests that Creole classes were reluctant to sacrifice the privilege they enjoyed within the social structures born of colonial discourses of power. Historiographer Hayden White explains that within western historiography, the narration of historical events inevitably "moralizes" those events in order to give them historical meaning (21). From a decolonizing perspective, "moralize" should be understood as a means of justifying or naturalizing social relationships of domination and subordination in terms of legitimacy and the authenticity. These narratives appropriate Western European discursive

forms: historical (*Enriquillo*- Dominican Republic and *Insularismo*- Puerto Rico) in their narrative structure and thematic.

González Echevarria's discursive analysis of the function of myth and history in Latin American narrative in his study *Myth and Archive*, points out that textual legitimacy required both structural appropriation of European models and the assertion of "uniqueness and identity" (8-10). Employing dominant discursive forms, such as the nineteenth century scientific discourses of race and behavior used in Cuba's *Cecilia Valdés* was of key importance to claiming truth or objectivity. The foundational works of Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico maintain the colonial paradigm by employing Western European discursive frameworks in their narratives of national identity. The symbolic power of the figures evoked and recreated in these texts is most evident in their persistent role as representations of national identity and their long-lasting implications within the patriarchal family dynamic of the communities they helped shape.

I will discuss these texts as colonialist ideologies of identity that structured social relationships within the national family. Juan Gelpí notes that a "classical" text of national identity "es una especie de depósito de imágenes, arquetipos y tópicos que se invoca y recontextualiza continuamente" (Gelpí 51). In the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, *Enriquillo* and *Insularismo* were taught in public schools as objective and authentic representations of nation, producing long lasting race, class, gender, and cultural assumptions associated with individual and collective identity. *Cecilia Valdés* enjoyed popular familiarity in Cuban society and was presented as a musical in the early twentieth century that was considered a national anthem. *Enriquillo*, *la gran familia puertorriqueña,* and *Cecilia Valdés* were repeatedly presented as archetypal representations of the Dominican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban

nations throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. According to Hernán Vidal, "la canonización y administración burócrata de la literatura implican que la producción de significaciones para su interpretación son un foco de intensa lucha ideológica" (cited in Aching 3). These narratives demonstrate a resistance to change through the elaboration of essential qualities and archetypes that defined a national character that was considered authentic, not political. Along with Gelpí, Sommer, Kutzinski and others, I will demonstrate that these "authentic" representations *are* political and constitute a continuation of colonial relationships within Dominican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban society. Boal explains that Western European (colonialist) philosophies are premised on the "truth" of representation "focused on showing 'true' things" rather than "how things truly are" (112). The latter, a philosophy of artistic forms oriented towards social change, is the philosophy I associate with decolonization while the former, a philosophy of transcendence, tradition, and universality is that of Western European colonialism. I begin my review of the historical relationship between the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and Cuba, colonial Spain, and the national population of these nations with the Dominican Republic. In this nation, the discourse of national identity was primarily focused on establishing difference from Haiti as Other to the Dominican nation through erasures of African culture and Catholicism.

In the nineteenth century Dominican Creole patriarchs fashioned a Eurocentric national culture in opposition to Haiti's African identity through the concept of *hispanidad* (Spanish cultural/ ethnic heritage, Catholicism, and Spanish language). The seminal text of Dominican identity, *Enriquillo* by Manuel Jesús de Galván, celebrated Enriquillo, a Taíno Indian chief who had led Dominicans in rebellion against unjust colonial officials, as a Dominican hero and patriarch who embraced the goodness of Spanish colonial rule through Catholicism. The heroic

imagery of Enriquillo as Catholic and Spanish patriarch was recuperated by Trujillo as symbolic of Dominican culture and history. Trujillo claimed he was "the true savior of the country's Hispanic and Catholic tradition" and would "deafricanize the country and restore Catholic values" (Patterson 225). The *trujillato* established authoritarian control over the Dominican population by fomenting fear of Haitians and promoting popular adoration of himself as *El Jefe*. Trujillo presented himself as the embodiment of Dominicanness and appealed to the Dominican people as a racial and cultural whole whose cultural/ racial purity and safety was threatened by Haiti:

> Like Franco, he could purport to defend Catholicism (against vodun and other African practices), and like Hitler, he could purify the race… the carnavalesque masquerade of racial and religious cleansing worked politically to strengthen *El Jefe*'s hold on the newly formed totalitarian state. He called himself *Padre de la Patria Nueva*- Father of the New Fatherland: Trujillo *was* the nation (Patterson 225-6).

It is important to point out that the discursive power of a collective ethnic and cultural identity had a correlative in European fascism. The racial purity of Trujillo and the Dominican people was obviously fictitious. In fact, Trujillo himself was of Haitian descent and wore heavy make-up to hide his dark skin. The mask of the colonizer that Fanon refers to was used to legitimate Trujillo's power. But it is not difficult to surmise that the ideological foundation had been set through the repetition and familiarity of the historical fiction of the Catholic Enriquillo by Galván. Before revisiting the historical events that lead to the publication of this novel in 1882, I return briefly to the concern expressed by Alvarez regarding heroic representations of the Mirabals in order to emphasize the problematic nature of promoting a belief in heroic or

exceptional behavior. Alvarez writes that presenting the Mirabals as heroes seemed akin to the "god-making impulse that created our tyrant": any cultural representation of heroes, or exceptional heroism is inevitably motivated by hegemonic interest (*In the Time of the Butterflies* 324). An understanding of Galván's politics and the ideological role of *Enriquillo* in Dominican education reveals how the nineteenth-century roots of Dominican political and historical discourse are of critical importance in discussions of the historical evolution of this context into a totalitarian state under Trujillo during the mid-twentieth-century.

In the Dominican Republic, Haitian occupation from 1822-1844 prompted political leaders to solicit imperial intervention[1]. Outnumbered white Creoles thus sought to convince Dominicans, mostly black, that Haiti, interested in uniting the island as an independent black republic, was the cultural antithesis of the Dominican Republic's white Spanish heritage[2]. England, France, piracy, and weather had threatened the Dominican Republic's political and economic stability since the sixteenth century[3]. Spain's lack of protection on the island left Santo Domingo vulnerable to French settlers, who slowly established themselves on the west, which was officially ceded to France in 1697 under the Treaty of Ryswick. A profitable sugar economy in French Saint Domingue, by then known as Haiti, made the importation of slave labor a necessity, and white elites on the French portion of the island were soon in the demographic minority. In 1791, African slaves, who constituted ninety percent of the territory's population, organized a slave uprising and in 1793, slavery was officially abolished in an attempt to mitigate racial tension and revolt (Howard 27). When Spain ceded Santo Domingo to France in 1795 in the Treaty of Basle, Haitian invasions of Santo Domingo became common. The French used Santo Domingo as a military outpost during the Haitian Revolution (1801-1804) and the territory was returned to Spanish rule in 1809.

The Haitian nation was the first independent republic of the Americas and made its cultural identity African in the Constitution of 1805, which prompted a division of loyalties within the Dominican population as Haitians attempted to unify the island (Howard 27). Although some black Dominicans supported Haitian annexation, evidenced in popular revolts of 1812 and 1821, the brutality of Haitian attacks and two key ideological strategies, *hispanidad* and deculturation, were deployed by Creole elite throughout the island's history, to discourage facile identifications with the culture of African Haiti (Howard 23; Stinchcomb 10). These processes worked to erase African identity within the slave population and make association with "Spanish heritage, white skin, and Catholicism" desirous by promoting these elements of *hispanidad* as culturally superior and inherently Dominican (Howard 23). The process of deculturation was realized through "laws that prohibited African religions, languages, rituals, and the freedom of movement of Africans on the island" (Stinchcomb 10). Creole ideology thus created a Hispanic Dominican identity in opposition to African Haiti[4].

Under Haitian invasion and occupation of Santo Domingo (1822-1844), Creole elites strategically plotted independence from Haiti through pleas for help from Spain. It is in this context that white Dominican leaders first faced an urgent need to foment Haitian antipathy and foster Spanish identity. Re-annexation to Spain in 1861, organized by Creole elites, was met with protest from darker Dominicans who were fearful that Spain would reinstate slavery (Howard 28). The War of Restoration, which restored Dominican independence in 1865, provided opportunities for social ascension of all races provided that Dominicans assert their European ancestry: "Despite increased access to power, it was always more necessary for the darker-skinned Dominicans to demonstrate their national and cultural identity in opposition to the Haitian enemy" (Howard 29). Dark-skinned Dominicans benefitted from the creation of a

new “social race” that erased their African ancestry: “When faced with the darkness of their skin compared to the skin color of white 'superiors,' the darker Dominicans resorted to a social defense mechanism designed to create an identity based upon their indigenous ancestors who were exterminated in the sixteenth century (Stinchcomb 30-31). This concept reaches its cultural apogee in the nineteenth-century with the novel *Enriquillo*.

A former member of the Creole elite who favored re-annexation to Spain, Galván adapted his ideological approach to the social change and the disruption of white hegemony that accompanied independence (Sommer, *Foundational Fictions* 254). He returned to Bartolomé de Las Casas’s chronicle of Guarocuyá (Enrique), a Taíno chief who led a popular rebellion in the sixteenth century, as the protagonist for his epic creation of “the father of the Dominican nation” (Stinchcomb 26). This strategy aimed to unite Dominicans in order to take over the Cuban sugar economy during Cuba’s Ten Year’s War: “Galván’s condensation was wonderfully convenient for projecting the kind of conciliatory and culturally coherent nationalism that the Dominican elite needed. First, it reduced disorganized and multiply-threatening black masses to strictly hierarchal leaders with whom deals could be struck, as it were among gentlemen” (Sommer, *Foundational Fictions* 249-51). Thus, nineteenth century Dominican nationalism recognized racial diversity within the newly independent nation by replacing African heritage with Indian ancestry.

Manuel Jesús de Galván returns to Bartolmé de las Casas’ historical account of an Indian uprising on Hispanola led by Enriquillo, an Indian portrayed as a “noble savage”: “By comparing his novel with official texts of Dominican history, Galván immediately gave it legitimacy. In his novel, he footnotes the exact passages from the chronicles from which he bases his fiction, allowing the novel a privileged position of authority” (Stinchcomb 28). For the Dominican

Republic, the figure of indigenous and Catholic Enriquillo affirmed both Haitian difference and Hispanic Dominican identity. The novel became required reading in schools soon after it was published, and has therefore been read by the majority of Dominicans more than once during their education (Sommer *Foundational Fictions* 252, *One Master for Another* 67). This Dominican legend has been heralded as a great work by generations of Dominican writers and was of fundamental importance to the Trujillo dictatorship. Sommer argues that the novel has had such a large impact as an ideological tool due to "the function of race in the ruling classes" and "its paternalism" (*One Master for Another* 78). By returning to Las Casas' historical work, Galván uses Enriquillo as a symbolic critique of the injustice and oppression that accompanied Spain's colonial policies and a celebration of Catholic and Hispanic identity, whose universal goodness might be embraced by all.

A fragile social and economic stability marked the second Dominican Republic's entrance into the twentieth century, which led to neo-colonial agreements with the United States. Because the burgeoning sugar industry, at its peak between 1881 and 1889, created a demand for low-wage workers, laborers from the English Antilles were allowed to enter the island despite prior racist prohibitions of black immigration (Stinchcomb 63). The United States entered the country through capital and industrialization officially in 1906, when the United States government took control of Dominican customs in exchange for settling its foreign debts. The effects of the global economic instability that characterized the early twentieth century on the island was coupled with social unrest rooted in Dominican racism, prompting the United States to intervene militarily in 1916, occupying the island until 1924. Trujillo's army overthrew the constitutional government under President Horacio Vazquez in 1930, which had been plagued with economic, social, and political problems. Dominican culture and tradition became

nationalist propaganda, and the government took control of all cultural institutions and systems of communication: "Durante su dictadura ninguna organización podía mantener autonomía, todo estaba bajo su vigilancia. La vida política e intelectual, la educación y los medios de comunicación no sólo estaban controlados, sino que el régimen los usaba para promover e imponer su ideología" (Rosell 33).

Trujillo's popularity derived from his timely entrance in an unstable political environment, his exaltation of Dominican Catholic Spanish tradition, and his "culto a su personalidad," which portrayed him as the "Jefe" and "Benefactor de la Patria Nueva" (Rosell 33). Alvarez associates celebration of the Mirabals as national heroines with Trujillo's cult-like self- representation; a complacent celebration of their heroism that lacks a contextualized understanding of their lives and struggle: "As for the sisters of legend, wrapped in superlatives and ascended into myth, they were finally also inaccessible to me. I realized too, that such deification was dangerous, the same god-making impulse that had created our tyrant" (*In the Time of the Butterflies* 324). As Stanley explains, biographer claims that the biographical subject is "great" or "important" are invariably based on their race or class privilege, while arguments for "the uniqueness of their contribution" unnaturally separate individuals from the social networks that shaped their contributions (8-9). Instead of making them into heroes, Alvarez uses their story to demonstrate how colonialist cultural nationalism enabled Trujillo's control of a complacent national population by examining how they built networks of resistance to the ideological enmeshing of Catholicism, nationalism, and Trujillo by separating these identities as ideological positions of resistance through a Marxist national liberation movement that joined forces with progressive leadership of the Catholic Church, both primarily concerned with the Dominican people. By establishing ideological common ground among these communities the

Mirabals organized their popular revolution by leading Dominicans through a process of ideological decolonization and the creation of communities of resistance. This socially contextualized approach to biographical representation is, according to Stanley, feminist in nature: "In this alternative view, 'ideas' are seen as the product of socially shared understandings reworked in particular cultural settings, although given a particular biographical twist by the specificities of the life and work of a particular biographical subject" (8-9). Thus, *In the Time of the Butterflies* challenges one-dimensional representations of the Mirabal sisters as heroes by representing their processes of ideological decolonization and collaboration with other Dominicans in material decolonizing through the resistance community of the Fourteenth of June movement.

In Puerto Rico, identity itself was the subject of *Insularismo,* a racist and unforgivably colonialist attempt to answer a question with ideas for writing more questions under the leadership of those trained in the discursive practice of writing questions. My intention here is to point out that the seminal text of Puerto Rican national identity discourse was written *about* discourse and why the discourse of Puerto Rican identity had not progressed on its own. After all, Puerto Rico had pursued national autonomy under colonial rule discursively and politely, without threatening to go to war or revolt, arguing that it was the "whitest of the Antilles" and deserving of self-rule. White women and men of color who participated in discourse making in exchange for social advancement had even reproduced this colonialist discourse within the colonialist colony. Perhaps Puerto Rico had only been waging a battle against itself by imitating the paternalism of Creole classes and eradicating all social and cultural evidence of its African history.

The issue of unrealized national independence under Spanish colonialism and US imperialism was addressed in the writings of *la Generación de los treinta,* (Puerto Rican intellectuals of the 1930s) through the search for and construction of a unique Puerto Rican identity. Juan Gelpí connects this epoch to the Creole nationalism of Puerto Rican letters pre-1898: "El canon literario, de cierto modo, ha compensado la inexistencia de un Estado nacional independiente. Ese canon, por lo tanto, se asemeja al mecanismo aglutinador y de control político que es el Estado, aunque no se equipara con él" (30). Antonio S. Pedreira's *Insularismo* was recognized as a seminal essay addressing those issues related to identity that I established previously as evidence of a colonialist discourse: an attempt to prove the similarity between colonizer and colonized by establishing the white masculine self as the subject of discourse by demonstrating absolute difference from otherness and appropriating a Western European discursive model (in this case Rodó's *Ariel* – an example of Latin American *modernista* reflection on the universality of Western European philosophy) as a framework for its structure and thematic: "All of the ideological fashions inaugurated by José Enrique Rodó with the publication of his *Ariel* in 1900- elitism, individualism, rhetorical appeal to 'youth' and national rejuvenation of the counterposing of Latin aristocratic grace to Anglo-Saxon utilitarianism and democracy- find their faithful echo in Pedreira's essay" (Flores 37-38). Pedreira, a member of the once powerful Creole classes, turns to the past, pays homage to his literary forebearers (such as Manuel Alonso), and reiterates their celebration of Puerto Rican "jíbaro" identity as white and Spanish. Pedreira makes sure to clarify his subject-domination position by establishing his difference from the other Puerto Ricans, the object-subordination group, *and* blames these others for the sickly, insular condition of Puertoricanness: "*Insularismo* has as its underlying premise not only the determining power of race, but the inherent inferiority of the indigenous and African

'races' to the Europeans, the Spaniards in particular" (Flores 33). Santos-Febres reminds readers that the violent punishment of Afro Puerto Ricans is the social reality that belies this assumption and that only a celebration/ recuperation of this past could heal this sickness (*Sobre piel y papel* 142-43). In the essay "Raza en la cultura puertorriqueña" she writes that on May 1, 1797 it was the *Milicias mulatas* who took down the English Armada "la armada naval más poderosa en aquel entonces" that threatened the island (*Sobre piel y papel* 143). This history, dismissed as insignificant by Pedreira, ~~is~~ was obviously part of a Puerto Rican national identity in which patriarchs could not see themselves.

Instead, writers from the *Generación de los 30* reclaimed *la gran familia puertorriqueña*: "a unified, homogenous, and harmonic society devoid of racial conflict" from the plantation society past (Aparicio 5). Presenting the nation as family had originated in Creole mid-nineteenth-century literature, where they established a paternalistic position over the national family discursively due to their lack of authority under the colonial government (Janer 11). The change from Spanish to United States rule in 1898 had brought an end to this colonialist social structure. From 1898 through the 1920's, the government of the United States championed the interests of a rising working class in order to break down Creole hegemony (Janer 53). The leaders of labor movements authored their own identity discourses, rooted in the fraternal tenets of socialism, rejecting the paternalistic Creole nationalism: "As early as 1904 Ramón Romero Rosa related capitalism to colonialism and addressed intellectuals on the need to construct the 'true fatherland.' To the Creole idea of the nation as a hierarchized family he counterposed the idea of the nation as a horizontal brotherhood that included all Puerto Ricans" (Janer 65).

Crisis during the depression era, including extreme poverty and lack of jobs, and the breakdown of Creole hegemony under United States colonial rule prompted Creole and working

class factions to reconcile under a common national identity discourse that voiced their mutual interests, incorporating the working class national identity discourse in writings of the *Generación de los treinta*. Essential to the hegemony of this group, known as the *Partido Popular Democrático* was the destruction of other nationalisms, such as the independence party lead by Pedro Albizu Campos. Born in the 1930s, the *Partido Popular Democrático* recuperated the nineteenth-century "Great Puerto Rican family" rhetoric of Creole nationalism, and would sacrifice the promise of independence for perpetual colonial status.

Throughout these struggles, one group of Puerto Ricans maintained a strong community and sense of identity: working class Puerto Rican women. In spite of prostitution campaigns and attempts by moral crusaders to reform them, the working class Puerto Rican women of Santos-Febres' tribe (Luisa Capetillo, Isabel Luberza) did it their own way as they "very publicly rejected the boundaries of bourgeoisie propriety":

> Working class women settled their conflicts with fisticuffs and shouting matches in their yards. They often lived in consensual unions or set up households with other women and their children, rather than join in 'the holy state of matrimony.' And in the urban space of Ponce, poor women's 'disreputable' behavior was present for everyone to see. Working women, the majority of them of African descent, filled Ponce's great marketplace and walked the streets hawking foodstuffs, sweets, and other goods during the day, they also socialized at night without chaperones, often renting coaches with groups of girlfriends, flirting and sometimes drinking at neighborhood taverns. On weekends, they attended *bomba* dances, where drums beat on until dawn (Findlay 79).

While white bourgeoisie women would negotiate their public roles through Church, state, and patriarch, working class women proposed their own solutions to labor injustices, domestic violence, and other forms of injustice rooted in racism and colonialism. These women are the historical examples of decolonization that Santos-Febres aims to recuperate in her work. She refers to Isabel Luberza as a *puta fundadora* as a beautiful retort to the discursive othering of Afro Puerto Rican women by white women who accused 'public' working class women of prostitution. Instead of elaborating a wealth of details about how and why this was done, here, in the interest of brevity, I will simply say that it was colonialist. Capetillo, Luberza, and Santos-Febres represent a decolonizing feminist perspective, which seeks to change the way individuals see themselves as an oppressed group by offering them alternative images of self that are not consider inferior or subordinate and that help them see themselves as part of a collective identity with whom they may work to change society. Santos-Febres models a transformational identity politics of this nature through Luberza's biography, reminding readers that by transforming the way we see ourselves, we can collaborate to change society.

This process of ideological decolonization is realized in greater personal/ psychological detail in *La Hija de Cuba* as Ana Lucía Estévez reads and rewrites Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda's autobiographical memoirs. In this novel, Cruz Varela creates a literary dialogue that addresses decolonizing themes through autobiographical reflection on the different experiences throughout Avellaneda's life (privileges and psychological oppressions) and those of her friend Trini, whose family was from a less-privileged economic class. This dialogue addresses the effects of the colonialist (discourse producing) position of privilege occupied by Avellaneda and the intersubjective worldview of her friend Trini, whose life was more "centered" (an adjective referring to balanced between reason and emotion, or intersubjective

objectivity). Trini and Avellaneda are acquainted abroad in Spain, and their dialogue reflects their cultural and geographic location in addition to their differing perspectives influenced by class differences. Avellaneda reveals the ways in which she has been psychologically colonized as a white woman raised in Cuban society. I mention Avellaneda's race in order to better understand the position she occupied as a Cuban woman writer and also because I have noticed the similarities in Avellaneda's self-victimization and that of Christina Formarís; as a form of internalized inferiority in relationships with men that these two very different women, who shared race and class positions of privilege, both seem to suffer. I presume that this internalized inferiority is derived from the masculine-feminism dualism that positions women as inferior to men. While Christina's suffering is manifested as self-loathing that she projects onto other women and which eventually destroys her, Avellaneda seeks a very different path towards decolonization through her relationship with other women. Her literary production demonstrates a differential perspective of interdependent and equal relationships, in particular the novel *Sab,* a sharp contrast to the purported objectivity of Villaverde's *Cecilia Valdés* and its representation of social behaviors. Avellaneda demonstrates a questioning of naturalized assumptions associated with the race, class, and gender constructs that Villaverde presents as authentic representations of Cuban character, which I will now explore in its origin and development as the colonialist discourse of Cuban national identity.

In Cuba, a celebration of *mestizaje* characterized the nationalist tradition for a variety of reasons, including the separate and autonomous organization of *cabildos de nación*, where African slaves were allowed to organize and maintain cultural and religious traditions within plantation society as well as socially incorporate newly arrived slaves (Moore 16). This organization benefited colonial authorities by separating ethnic identities among the slave

population and thus "decreased the likelihood of mass uprisings or conspiracies" (Moore 16). As Vera M. Kutzinski clarifies regarding the paradigmatic texts of Cuban identity, "the discursive field of Cuban nationalism is significantly constituted by *historically shifting* alignments of, and alliances between, the different economic, social and cultural interests that vie for political and representational power" (9). African slaves were in the demographic minority until the boom of the Cuban sugar industry in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, during which large importations of slaves came to constitute over half of the island population (Moore 17, Kutzinski 5). Thus, the response of Cuban Creoles to the Haitian Revolution manifested itself in a desire to halt the importation of slaves and abolish slavery (Moore 17).

Kutzinski identifies the Cuban discourse of mestizaje, "perhaps the principal signifier of Cuba's national cultural identity" as a complacent celebration of multiculturalism on behalf of Creole interests (5). "This multiculturalism acknowledges, indeed celebrates, racial diversity while at the same time disavowing divisive social realities" (Kutzinski 5). Kutzinski makes a clear argument that the figure of the *mulata* symbolized a celebration of Cuban racial amalgamation as attractive and desirous, yet dangerous to social hierarchies, which privileged white Creoles. She credits Cirilo Villaverde as the author of this symbolism in his abolitionist 1839 short story and 1882 novel *Cecilia Valdés.* The *mulata* symbol "makes its official entrance into Cuban literature in the form of the Rosario Alarcón in Cirilo Villaverde's short story "Cecilia Valdés" and in his acclaimed abolitionist novel of the same title (1837 and 1882)" (Kutzinski 7). Villavede's novel "establishes the *mulatta* as the ideal of feminine beauty," while revealing her sexuality to be "a threat to a political order dependent on physiognomy as a reliable index of class differences" (Kutzinski 22, 27). Thus, the *mulata* as a positive emblem of Cuban identity also serves to warn upper class Creoles about the dangers of racial mixing. Although

later appropriated and recontextualized by separatists such as José Martí, the symbolic precedent set in Villaverde's novel has played an important role in precluding the possibilities of a raceless nation in Cuba, by portraying interracial relationships as a desire for social ascension, which, for upper class Creole men who have historically practiced interracial sex, are potentially incestuous because of the women's unknown (read: illegitimate) genealogies, and considered a national malady (Kutzinski 27). Although racial mixing had been responsible for the *mulatta's* beauty, it was also a dangerous temptation that would threaten white hegemony. The function of the *mulata* figure popularized in *Cecilia Valdés* as a "symbolic container" for African culture is yet another example of the subject-object dualism of colonialist national identity discourse (Kutzinski 7). This relationship of subject of discourse-domination and object- subordination is challenged in Gómez Avellaneda's *Sab,* where the common ground of marginality is identified among women and slaves who are able to dialogue as equals through autobiographical writing. The literary is also used to represent an intersubjective form of autobiographical writing outside of colonialist discourses in *La hija de Cuba.*

Nineteenth century Creole celebrations of *mestizaje* promoted abolition and espoused integration within the national population as a means of fostering unity in the fight for independence. When deployed within foundational texts, the discourse of *mestizaje* affirmed Creole patriarchal hegemony and historically hierarchal class structures by discouraging interracial societal changes that would disrupt the established order. This paradox is best explained in Kutzinski's conclusion about nineteenth century Creole nationalism: "abolitionist sentiment was not incompatible with racial bias" (Kutzinski 41).

González Echevarría cites Cuba's *Cecilia Valdés* as a clear example of a Latin American novel whose presumed validity and ideological influence "issue from the relationship with the

hegemonic discourse of the period, which was not literary but scientific" (11). Villaverde's novel belongs to the category of "costumbrista realism," a popular nineteenth century literary form focusing on "typical' representations of Cuban culture" whose authenticity was largely unquestioned (Kutzinski 21, 46). Considered "more a panoramic novel of Cuban manners and mores than an antislavery narrative proper," *Cecilia Valdés* embarks upon its cultural cataloging through the rhetoric of realism, which uses great detail in depicting physical characteristics (Kutzinski 9). Kutzinski notes that the language of Villaverde's novel, which uses "detail as empirical evidence of essential impurity" when portraying black and mulatto characters, was influenced in large part by scientific discourses of the time, which included Landaluze's mid-nineteenth century ethnographic cataloguing of Cubans (65, 60). As the industrialization of the Cuban sugar economy gained momentum, the discourses of science and technology were deployed in conjunction with *costumbrismo*, both incorporating the power of capital and preserving the traditional social order within Cuba (Kutzinski 79, 95).

Cecilia Valdés has been celebrated as a national novel in Cuba because of its abolitionist sentiments and presumably "authentic" representation of Cuban life. Its popularity was revived in a 1930's musical version by Gonzalo Roig, whose musical score was also institutionalized as a representation of the Cuban nation: "the zarzuela was like a national hymn- every soprano of any quality had to sing it" (Chanan 394). As Michael Chanan remarks, the figure of Cecilia herself came to represent the Cuban nation beyond the novel's narrative possibilities[5]. For Kutzinski, the figure of Cecilia Valdés marked the inception of the "cult of the mulata" present in a wide range of symbols of Cuban identity. Sommer considers Villaverde's novel to be a foundational narrative that elaborates the insidious details of racial prejudice in post-abolition Cuba (*Foundational Fictions* 126). In all cases, the importance of this polemic personage highlights

the cultural presence of Cecilia Valdés throughout the twentieth century as a representation of uniquely Cuban identity. The "symbolic container" of the mulata figure popularized in *Cecilia Valdés* is challenged in Gómez Avellaneda's *Sab* and the recuperation of the literary as a sphere of oppositional women's cultural production in *La hija de Cuba* (Kutzinski 7).

The colonialist discourses of national identity represented in *Cecilia Valdés* were not radically changed following the Cuban Revolution, rather represented in a new populist discourse of socialism and equality. While Fidel Castro's Cuban Revolution promised and initiated new and liberating race, class, and gender dynamics, the latter evidenced in universal education, the 1975 Family Code, and the 1979 International Women's Day celebration, patriarchal colonialism in the discursive realm survived, maintaining control of literary and political spheres. As Mirta Yañez notes, "In Cuba, feminism lives and breathes in the shadow of its great male heroes- the independence leader José Martí, the revolutionary martyr Che Guevarra, and the comandante Fidel Castro. Patriarchy has been dismantled without touching a whisker of the beards of the island's patriarchs" (x-xi). Cruz Varela's novel, *La hija de Cuba,* explores the impact of this patriarchal literary legacy from outside of its national domain, in Madrid, the second home of Gretrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, a nineteenth century Cuban writer whose literary manifestations of abolitionist sentiments predated the antislavery narratives of Diego Del Monte and Cirilo Villaverde (Betancourt 14). Cruz Varela's own literary production and social activism in Cuba lead to her exile from the island in 1992, yet her critique of patriarchal cultural hegemony is launched from an expansive position, connecting her intellectual and diasporic experience with Avellaneda's biography and bibliography (Betancourt 90). Cruz Varela's auto/biographical dialogue with Avellaneda takes place outside of Cuba in Avellaneda's second homeland, Spain, referred to as *la matria* and outside of the patriarchal intellectual

domain, the university, in the private sphere of Avellaneda's residence. This gesture challenges patriarchal cultural hegemony by eschewing the cultural institutions that produce its power. In this way, Cruz Varela both considers the presence of women's cultural production and its relationship to the dominant patriarchal discourse of nation and the literary institutions. Richard calls for this style of discursive critique in her essay "Politics and Aesthetics of the Sign": "Such a perspective would open with questions about the relationship between *feminine authorship* (being a woman) and *feminism* (signifying organization and cultural intervention) in the sense of asking what the mechanisms of critical dismantling might be which allow one to subvert the masculine organization of social registers for manufacturing meaning" (41-2). The populist appropriation of feminist causes in Castro's Cuba may have addressed these issues through moderate improvements in the material conditions of women's lives, but due to a lack of structural shift at an institutional level, these changes did not eradicate women's oppression, which has worsened under the economic crises of the late twentieth century, forcing many women to work as prostitutes (Yañez xii). Regarding literary cultural production, Betancourt notes: "That patriarchal discourse can hold the country hostage can be proven by reading Cuban history from the perspective of gender; the same is true when we read Cuban canonical literary studies" (6). Cruz Varela's novel explores this silencing and exclusion of women writers through her dialogic auto/biography. This provides a textual space in which the author's work may be reinterpreted. Doña Mila, Avellaneda's friend and transcriber of her autobiography, is the generational link that facilitates intellectual and oral dialogue between Avellaneda and Ana Lucía Estévez, Cruz Varela's novelistic alter ego. Ana Lucía must agree to read and study the text in doña Mila's apartment, where it was first dictated and transcribed, and promise not to copy or remove the autobiography from its sacred environ. This literary dialogue is framed

within a plot of intrigue: pirates who collect rare art to sell on the black market threaten to steal the text and force the two women to collaborate so that they may protect the author's plea that the text remain unpublished. Their collaboration is literary and political, preserving the written evidence of Ana Lucía, doña Mila, and Avellaneda's dialogue from its introduction as a pirated commodity into a public, institutionalized context where it would lose its private and personal transformative dimensions.

The structure and content of this work is imagined by and through women; as historical participants in nation-building who serve as metonymic representations of woman involvement throughout history and accounting for the perspectives of the writers and intellectuals who have given form to these alternative imagined communities in texts that dialogue with historical and literary representations of the past. In the previous section, I established that texts of patriarchal national identity derived their legitimacy in the outer colonial domain from a discursive relationship with European models and their authenticity in the inner domain as idealized celebrations of a national past, which accommodated democratic trends through the rhetoric of populism and affirmed traditional social hierarchies privileging white Creoles. The traditional values and morality advertised by populist leaders such as Luis Muñoz Marín, Puerto Rico's first democratically elected governor, and Trujillo, the authoritarian dictator who rose to power under United States military intervention in the early twentieth century, ultimately sought to maintain the race, class, and gender hierarchies and institutions inherited from the colonial era, benefiting the intermediary Creole class. The militant socialism of Fidel Castro, the leader of Cuban revolutionary forces and national dictator since 1959, is an ideological position antithetical to the neo-colonial capitalist industrialization realized under the imperial hegemony of the United States, whose intellectual censorship silences its opposition through imprisonment and exile, yet

is shown to be another form of neo-patriarchal domination. Santos-Febres, Alvarez, and Cruz-Varela critique this legacy through biographical interpretations of the lives of historical women, whose organizational leadership during moments of acute national crisis reveal the failures of the Creole neo-colonial and Cuban socialist models, and the socio-economic effects of its economic and political dependency in the outer domain on the inner/ national domain on a local and individual level. These representations critique patriarchal cultural hegemony in the Spanish Caribbean, but also recuperate/ celebrate the role of historical women who organized oppositional communities through creative management and deployment of human, material, and cultural resources, using differential subjectivity as the foundation for a transformational identity politics.

CHAPTER 4

TRANSFORMING HISTORY: *IN THE TIME OF THE BUTTERFLIES*

Julia Alvarez's *In the Time of the Butterflies* narrates the biographies of the Mirabal sisters, underground revolutionary leaders during the dictatorship of Rafael Leonidas Trujillo, as historical women whose relationships with fellow Dominicans transgressed the traditional race, class, and gender boundaries of Dominican society, initiating a collaborative effort amongst Dominicans in armed resistance to Trujillo's regime, known as the Fourteenth of June Movement[6]. Alvarez uses their story to demonstrate how transgression of social divisions lead to new forms of subjectivity based on empathy and identification and collaboration with fellow Dominicans. According to Richard, changing and resistant "sociocultural subjectivities" have the greatest potential to destabilize the conformist agenda of hegemonic culture because they attest to society's lack of cultural purity and consent by exposing practices and *nodes* of anti-conformist behavior (2). Alvarez's choice to represent relationships that attest to a refusal to consent to the divisive ideology of the dictatorship focuses on the construction of new forms of subjectivity that value differences among Dominicans as contributions to their struggle and cultural contradictions as a means of clarifying truths about knowledge and power.

For Alvarez, celebration of the Mirabals as national heroines within the Dominican post-dictatorial context had muted their important role as leaders of a community in struggle: "Such deification was dangerous, the same god-making impulse that had created our tyrant… by making them myth, we lost the Mirabals once more, dismissing the challenge of their courage as

impossible for us, ordinary men and women" (*In the Time of the Butterflies* 324). Alvarez's portrayal of the Mirabals examines how their refusal to consent to the normative parameters of Dominican women's roles and social divisions based on race and class lead to their creation of a resistance community that fought against the dictatorship. In *In the Time of the Butterflies,* the Mirabals are not portrayed as exceptional heroes, but as historical subjects who developed political and social alliances with fellow Dominicans across class lines, through which they were able to organize their revolution and intervene in the course of Dominican history. Through the historiographic metafiction form, Alvarez narrates the revolutionary journey of each sister from social passivity to political agency through strategies of collaboration, empathy, and identification as they work through their ideological differences and come to form a coalition of interests.

As Alvarez mentions in her quote, Trujillo had used the ideology of national heroes in the creation of his own image as the national patriarch. In the Dominican Republic, the historical novel *Enriquillo* written by Dominican politician Manuel Jesús de Galván is a useful example of ideological appropriation of previously marginalized social actors as symbols of progressive social politics in order to hide the complicity of hegemonic and colonial forms of power. Just as Enrique's tale was once used as evidence of the benevolence of colonial Spain, celebration of the Mirabals as national heroes in the post-dictatorial phase would be used as evidence of the birth of Dominican democracy through the fall of Trujillo[7]. The celebration of the Mirabals as heroes that represented the end of human rights violations at the hands of the state allowed contemporary political leaders to distance themselves from the excessive abuses of Trujillo. However, many contemporary Dominican political leaders who had once held prominent positions under Trujillo, reclaimed control over the government after a brief period of socialist

democracy and focus on the human rights violations during the dictatorship as the crimes of an excessive individual allowed the discourse of hegemonic power to equate the crimes of dictatorship with the malevolence of Trujillo himself.

This focus on the dictator as an enemy of the people is prohibitive to examining how capital has exploited the wealth and resources of Dominicans and lead to excessive poverty. Such an analysis is of critical importance for decolonizing feminist strategy and the development of new forms of subjectivity that would empower Dominicans to intervene in their social reality. In the Dominican Republic, the democracy represented by celebration of the Mirabals as martyrs and heroes did not amount to the necessary material changes within Dominican society that would imply improvements for women. Alvarez recognizes however, that the Mirabals had set an important historical precedent for social change through women's involvement in the revolution. In *In the Time of the Butterflies* this precedent is explored through education, empathy, and pilgrimage.

The Mirabals' widely recognized participation in the *anti-trujillista* movement set an important precedent for future generations of Dominican women revolutionaries (Rosell 34). Rosell notes that women's participation in the 1965 revolution was instrumental in its brief success. Espillat explains that women's participation in the Revolución de abril significantly changed the historical gender dynamics of leftist movements. While there had been a historical precendent for a "rama femenina en los movimientos de izquierda… que se ocupaba de las tareas asistenciales" the 1965 Revolution "representó histórica y simbólicamente la ruptura con ese segregacionismo" (Espillat cited in *ND* 42-43). According to Espillat, women participants in the Revolución de abril broke with the traditionally subordinate roles assigned to women who had participated in armed combat, further challenging dichotomous gender roles in Dominican

culture (cited in Rosell 41). As Roswell explains, following the murder of the Mirabals, the assassination of Trujillo, and the forced political exile of Bosch by conservative factions and anti-communist propaganda, the Dominican Left organized the *Revolución de abril* in 1965 against the government of Balaguer (Rosell 35). Noteworthy civilian participation and the increased involvement of women in the revolution facilitated a brief four-month success (Rosell 35, 41). Alvarez had observed the widespread impact of the Mirabal legacy among Dominicans when she traveled to the Dominican Republic to research their lives: "any shoeshine boy on the street or campesino tilting his chair back on a coconut tree knew the story of the Mirabal sisters. Las muchachas, everyone called them, the girls" (*Something to Declare* 199). This anecdote suggests that local familiarity with the sisters themselves attests to the broad impact that their lives and work had had on the Dominican people.

Alvarez's interest in the Mirabal story was inspired by her own family history of political exile, autobiographical information shared in *Something to Declare,* a collection of the author's essays on her life and craft. In *Something to Declare,* Alvarez reflects on how her research methodology for the Mirabal's fictional biography and her experience as the daughter of Dominican political exiles in the United States has informed her theoretical perspective as a writer and academic. Alvarez explains that she conducted interviews with Dominicans who knew the Mirabals personally and visited the spaces where the sisters lived and organized their movement, research that inspired her to write a fictional interpretation of their story from a relational perspective. Recognizing that a historical or non-fictive representation of the Mirabals would fail to reflect the "spirit" of the Mirabals that she became familiar with through Dominicans who knew the sisters, Alvarez clarifies that she hoped to be able to "immerse" a North American readership in the historical context of the dictatorship (*In the Time of the*

Butterflies 324). *In the Time of the Butterflies* presents the process of ideological decolonization through relationships that clarify truths about the dictatorship, changing their isolated worldviews to a differential consciousness.

The sisters' journey begins when they travel away from home to a convent school, a defining moment that broadened their worldview through a network of relationships with Dominicans from other social classes. As Minerva, Mate, and Patria mature in their understanding of how political, social, and religious dogma have been used to divide and oppress Dominicans, they become emboldened to challenge tradition and organize themselves and others politically. Throughout the novel, readers become aware of how Trujillo's nationalist propaganda were used to divide Dominicans amongst themselves according to race and class differences and deny women intellectual and material freedoms through vigilance and control of public spaces. *In the Time of the Butterflies* highlights the institutionalization of ideological consent during the *trujillato* through practices of vigilance and that fomented fear and mistrust among Dominicans, ideological control of public education, and control of the Catholic Church.

Alvarez presents the Mirabal revolution as a collaborative effort among historically divided Dominicans led by the Mirabals, rather than the work of heroes in isolation. The fourteenth of June revolution is presented as a coalition between Minerva's Marxist underground and Patria's *Acción Clero-Cultural*, a revolutionary faction of the Catholic Church based on Marxist Liberation Theology; emphasizing the ideological common ground shared by these groups. Minerva's public/ political activities, of essential importance in the formation of a revolutionary underground, were Marxist and didactic: exposing the true crimes of Trujillo's government to the Dominican people. Minerva's politics are presented in dialogue with her sister María Teresa's personal and feminist approach to revolution, which focuses on the collaborative

potential of intersubjective relationships of empathy and identification among women. Patria's narrative perspective, on the other hand, represents an ideological decolonization of the Catholic Church community, who are convinced that the Church should be of service to the Dominican people rather than an elite institution. This implies a new understanding of the Church as a model of community that transcends its function as a colonial institution by empowering individuals to be responsible for their own behavior and accountable to others. Patria, inspired by a vision of the Virgin of Altagracia and the radical politics of her parish priest, comes to realize that progressive ideologies such as liberation theology expand the ideological positions from which to address the moral issues raised by Catholicism. Patria joins her Church community to the Marxist underground initiated by Minerva, recognizing the important function of the Church as an institution that provides moral and spiritual leadership to the people and a spiritual sanctuary for Dominicans where the political issues may be discussed safely.

Alvarez narrates the process of ideological decolonization for each sister through personal dialogues and experiences that bring to light their struggles against the strictly gendered roles of Dominican society. Minerva, Patria, and María Teresa narrate the experiences that lead them to the development of a revolutionary consciousness, their motivations to become involved in the *anti-trujillista* movement, and their different forms of participation in the struggle: Minerva's intellectual engagement, informed by a materialist/ Marxist politics, begins with an experience at school; Patria's maternal-spiritual approach is inspired by the *Virgen de Altagracia* after the death of her child and her engagement with the Catholic Church's involvement in issues of social justice; and María Teresa's longing for romantic love and adventure bring her toward an awareness of the strength and potential for love within communities of women, an evolution from naïve romanticism to a feminist consciousness.

Through the experiences of each sister, *In the Time of the Butterflies* examines the individual decolonization from traditional gender roles and class stereotypes that divided Dominicans[8]. By combining the Marxist revolutionary politics of Minerva with the spiritual/ maternal priorities of Patria through her work in the Catholic Church, and the lesbian/ feminist consciousness of María Teresa, Alvarez presents multiple oppositional positions in a dialogue of differences and contradictions: Minerva exhibits a political Marxist consciousness that facilitates María Teresa's ideological decolonization (questioning of family values and tradition) and María Teresa influences Patria's break with conservative Catholic tradition, which leads to her own spiritual awakening to the revolutionary potential of a progressive Church. Through the combination of these perspectives Alvarez models a transformational identity politics that empowers social actors to collaborate in the struggle to change their social reality.

Through the historiographic metafiction narrative structure, the four Mirabal sisters narrate their journey through relationships that they developed with fellow Dominicans. Rosell notes that this (multiple narrative voices) technique is common in the work of contemporary Dominican women writers that explore how narrative forms have been used to naturalize hegemonic power: “Las escritoras rearticulan el pasado desde diferentes puntos de vista para problematizar conceptos como los de la autoridad narrativa o la veracidad" (*Narradoras dominicanas* 36). This subjective representation of history as historiographic metafiction in *In the Time of the Butterflies* emphasizes the collective potential for change when individuals organize themselves politically through resistance communities. As Alvarez explains, in Dominican society, storytelling constitutes a means of passing down information: "In a country that is still basically oral, storytelling is the way to tell the facts… In my *familia*, fiction is a form of fact" (*Something to Declare* 124).

Through an examination of her own writing style and strategies in the essay collection, *Something to Declare,* Alvarez clarifies her use of the practice of family storytelling (here referring to the sharing of politically subversive information as a narrative) to facilitate a reconciliation between her public and private selves and speak out against the dictatorship[9]. Through her fictional writing, Alvarez voices her own resistance through participation in a resistance community of writers[10]. She explains that her parents' silence about political issues, including the role of the United States in the Dominican dictatorship, was an internalized oppression that Dominicans living under the dictatorship experience in exile (*Something to Declare* 109). For Alvarez, this fear of publicly speaking out enabled the dictatorship's control. Alvarez recalls discovering a copy of Time magazine featuring the Mirabals in December of 1960 and asking her parents about the story. The fear provoked by her father's dangerous involvement in the *anti-trujillista* revolution had motivated her parents to hide news or information that might compromise the family's safety and her parents had immediately silenced the issue, saying "En boca cerrada no entran moscas", a slogan used by the *trujillato* to dissuade Dominicans from questioning the authority of the state (*Something to Declare* 109). Alvarez attributes her fascination with the Mirabal story throughout her life to this provocative moment, which would inspire her to conduct research of their lives in the Dominican Republic and to use her writing as a vehicle for her own refusal to consent to be silent about the crimes of the dictatorship and the conflicted relationship that characterizes political exile for Dominicans in the United States[11].

In the conclusion of the novel postscript, Alvarez apologizes to Dominicans for her choice to write the novel in English, explaining: "I hope that this book deepens North American's understanding of the nightmare you endured and the heavy losses that you suffered-

of which this story tells only a few" (*In the Time of the Butterflies* 324). I consider this direct address from author to reader to have a double objective: clarifying the author's identification with the Dominican experience as her own, and indirectly appealing to North American readers to empathize and identify with the Dominican people. As an American and Dominican author, Alvarez positions herself within the Dominican community of struggle against the dehumanizing conditions of Third World nations subject to the power of global capital, clarifying the truths about how United States military intervention in foreign affairs has affected the Dominican people and revealing the contradictions of United States Democracy by explaining its use to justify the perpetuation of inequality through global capital and capitalism itself. Alvarez's discursive intervention in the language of historical representation therefore addresses and speaks out against the imbrications of the discourses of nationalism, historical representation, and capitalism[12].

Minerva's character throughout *In the Time of the Butterflies* gives voice to Alvarez's refusal to remain silent. She challenges the silence and fear of Dominican life under the *trujillato* by speaking out against the dictator publicly. Minerva's character also speaks out against her father's fear and silence, which she blames as behavior that enabled Trujillo's control of the population: "That's right. His advice was always, don't annoy the bees, don't annoy the bees. It's men like him and Jaimito and other scared *fulanitos* who have kept the devil in power all these years" (179). Education is a central theme throughout Minerva's narrative, both as a means to developing her own class-consciousness and a potential solution to the political problems faced by her country. It is also representative of her path to ideological decolonization since she meets the characters that reveal information about the government to her in these places. Education in "Part I" and "Part II" of *In the Time of the Butterflies* is a vehicle for

freedom from her family's house and from her father's authority, as well as an opportunity to learn the truth about the regime and the existence of revolutionary organization. Minerva's autonomy and freedom from her father and home is first realized at the convent boarding school and later developed at the university where she studies law. In both cases, the freedom to leave home provides the opportunity to establish friendship with political dissidents and come to a politicized understanding of the social, political, and cultural contradictions pervasive within the Dominican society of her time.

Minerva's friendship with Lío Morales, a known Communist, and marriage to Manolo Távarez, a law student at the University, bring her into direct acquaintance with the theory and practice of Fidel Castro's revolutionary ideas. She emulates Fidel Castro's politics of revolution, choosing to study law at the university and educating others, such as her sisters, fellow prisoners, and the daughters of her father's illegitimate family. Minerva's own education in law and admiration of Castro's Revolution inspires her to share his ideas with her sisters, convincing Patria and María Teresa to join the Revolution, and Dedé to listen clandestinely to rebel radio broadcasts of Fidel's speeches (181). Minerva's politics are based on socialist principles of equality and class struggle in combination with a feminist understanding of masculine privilege. As the voice of Marxist politics, the details of Minerva's observation de-mythologize Trujillo as travesty, a cheap imitation of the Catholic European whiteness he laid claim to. For example, during her education at *Imaculada Concepción* Minerva remarks that the history textbooks issued to students were "pretty disgusting": “When we got to school that fall, we were issued new history textbooks with a picture of you-know-who embossed on the cover so even a blind person could tell who the lies were all about. Our history now followed the plot of the Bible. We Dominicans had been waiting centuries for the arrival of our Lord Trujillo on the scene”

(24)[13]. This can be seen in her response to Sinita's revelation that Trujillo had murdered her family members: "Trujillo is a devil' Sinita said…But I was thinking, No, he is a man" (24). Similarly, Minerva's discovery of her father's affair with a *campesina* in "Part II" suggests her father's weakness: "I saw his shoulders droop. I heard him sigh. Right then and there, it hit me harder than his slap: I was much stronger than Papá, Mamá was much stronger. He was the weakest one of all" (89). Minerva treats her father's illegitimate family with respect and humanity from the moment she meets them, demonstrating her understanding of how their misfortune was caused by her father's selfishness. This is made evident through her exchange with Carmen, the family's mother, about enrolling her daughters in school: "You know as well as I do that without schooling we women have even fewer choices open to us" (105). This expression of empathy demonstrates Minerva's mature understanding of how race, class, and gender define privilege and opportunity within their society. For Mate, the discovery of her father's affair provokes anger and blame directed at Carmen and her daughters, who she feels should not have attended Enrique's funeral mass: "I can't believe she came to the funeral mass with her girls, adding four more slaps to her big blow… I asked Minerva who invited them. All she said was they were Papa's daughters too" (118). Later adding, "I hate men, I really do", Mate shows an initial disillusion with male behavior, yet fails to correlate masculine privilege with the victimization of Carmen and her daughters (118).

Minerva's role as educator places her in a position of moral, intellectual, and ethical authority and is better understood in dialogue with the perspective of her younger sister, María Teresa. María Teresa Mirabal, the youngest of the four sisters, narrates her experiences through a diary where she records her private emotions and documents episodes and interactions that lead to her intellectual and emotional growth throughout the novel. While I agree with Brown's

assertion that Alvarez's fictional interpretation of María Teresa's diary entries in “Part I” and “Part II” of the novel "freezes her discourse into that of a superficial, trivial, childlike enunciator, as if to emphasize her 'innocence", I propose that Mate's diary entry in “Part III” of *In the Time of the Butterflies* demonstrates how the experience of prison has a profound effect on the narrator's perspective and highlights how her experience of confinement with women from different classes contributes to a radical maturity from her early naïveté about politics, religion, and romance (109). This personal and private perspective is quite different from Minerva's public voice. According to María Teresa, for Minerva, "revolution has become something like a habit", while María Teresa attributes greater value to the intersubjective relationships from her prison experience: "I tell myself the connection will continue. It does not go away because you leave. And I begin to understand the revolution in a new way" (243, 253). María Teresa is strongly affected by the experience of sharing stories with women during her incarceration at *La Cuarenta* as a political prisoner. In the novel, storytelling between characters is a means of identifying with their experiences and establishing bonds of trust.

Mate’s character gives voice to the ideas of Lorde, who writes of the importance of dialogues among women from different perspectives and experiences: "For women the need to desire and nurture each other is not pathological but redemptive, and it is within that knowledge that our real power is rediscovered. It is this real connection, which is so feared by a patriarchal world. For it is only under a patriarchal structure that maternity is the only social power open to women" (26). I propose that Mate is the voice of Lorde's decolonizing feminist perspective, proposing an alternative model of community rooted in intersubjective relationships of empathy and identification.

Lorde explains that the emotions rooted in different experiences of oppression can be powerful tools used to build connections among individuals through empathy, building a community of intersubjective relationships outside of colonialist identities (26). Lorde believes that "examination of mutuality between women, systems of shared support, and interdependence as exists between lesbians and women-identified women" is imperative:

> Those of us who stand outside of the circle of this society's definition of acceptable women; those of us who have been forged in the crucibles of difference; those of us who are poor, who are lesbians, who are black, who are older, know that *survival is not an academic skill.* It is learning how to stand alone, unpopular and sometimes reviled, and how to make common cause with those other identified as outside the structures, in order to define and seek a world in which we can all flourish. It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths. *For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.* They may allow us to temporarily beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change (26-7).

Therefore intersubjective relationships among ideologically decolonized Dominicans through resistance communities are suggested to be an effective weapon against relationships of domination and subordination within colonialist discourses of national identity.

In the early sections of *In the Time of the Butterflies,* María Teresa appears to represent a more traditional feminine point of view, which changes radically throughout the novel. Mate's early entries in "Part I" are replete with comments about how she idolizes her father and Trujillo[14]. Minerva soon clarifies the truth about the dictatorship and asks Mate for help providing Minerva with an alibi for her absences from school, during which she has been

attending political meetings (38-39). Minerva's explanation troubles Mate, who has difficulty coming to terms with the news[15]. While Mate's worldview is naïve, romantic, and shows a traditional adherence to women's roles in "Part I" of the novel, her belief system is radically altered in "Part II" after learning about her father's affair and illegitimate children. It is also in "Part II" that Mate decides to dedicate herself fully to the revolution after meeting Leandro. Her involvement leads to her arrest and confinement with women prisoners from March to August of 1960, where she develops a feminist awareness through her relationship with fellow women prisoners, political and non-political (prostitutes, thieves, murderers) based on shared experiences and identification across race and class lines. Her experiences contribute to her ideological decolonization and development of a differential consciousness: the ability to find common ground in emotional experiences (empathy) and the ability to see the ideological/ political nature of those connections.

For Mate, the prison experience suggests that intersubjective relationships among women that transcend differences in race, class, and gender should serve as the model for a new national community after the revolution. María Teresa often highlights how her opinions differ from her sister's Marxist principles practicality by describing her emotions. While Minerva's point of view highlights the race and class inequalities of Dominican society and uses parody to subvert the political/ historical discourse of the *trujillato* as well as reveal how the dictatorship used colonial tradition and anti-communist propaganda to maintain hegemonic power, María Teresa's diary addresses how dichotomous gender roles and male socio-cultural privilege disrupt the revolutionary potential of love among women and how developing solidarity with women in spite of different class, ethnic, and political ideologies, characteristic of feminist communities, can be a model for a future for Dominican society.

Through narrative details that highlight the markers of class privilege and tradition that characterize Mate's early exposure to the issues of Dominican society during the dictatorship Alvarez adds emphasis to the radical degree of personal and political evolution that takes place during her time in prison. By highlighting the differences in their priorities such as principle versus passion, freedom versus familiarity, and equality versus close personal bonds and friendship, Alvarez presents a unique perspective on the revolution through Mate's personal choices, incorporating a decolonizing feminist perspective in the revolution. This demonstrates how Mate's initial subject positioning as an upper-class woman and daughter of a traditional patriarchal family was profoundly impacted by her experience in prison with women from different racial and class backgrounds, modeling a decolonizing feminist paradigm for political mobilization through intersubjective relationships among women. Mate's journey toward ideological decolonization through empathy begins when she feels identification with Trujillo's daughter, Queen Angelita, who is made to preside over a traditional march of Dominican women through the capital in “Part II” of the novel. Mate writes: "Looking at her, I almost felt sorry. I wondered if she knew how bad her father is, or if she still thought, like I once did about Papá, that her father is God" (135). This foreshadows the connection that she will establish with the women imprisoned with her at La Cuarenta, especially with Magdalena, with whom she identifies as a mother.

While imprisoned in La Cuarenta, Minerva and María Teresa share a cell for political prisoners and "non-politicals." Mate's early diary entry expresses her shock that these two groups had been combined, and suggests her corresponding judgment of their cellmates as inferior: "Nonpoliticals,' all right. Prostitutes, thieves, murderers- and that's just the ones who have confided in us" (228). After sharing the cell with these women for fifty-nine days, Mate

was made aware that a cellmate, Dinorah, judged her and Minerva as "rich women" (229). Taking a turn at a small window out of the prison Mate recalls being scolded by Dinorah and surprised by a demonstration of solidarity among the other women, led by Magdalena, who offers her their turns: “It raised my spirits so much, the generosity of these girls I once though were below me" (230). After this moment, Mate begins to change her attitude towards the women in the cell and develop a strong friendship with Magdalena, who she discovers is also a mother. Mate describes her relationship with the women in prison in several passages: "I have to admit the more time I spend with them, the less I care what they've done or where they came from. What matters is the quality of a person. What someone is inside themselves" and "Magdalena and I had a real talk about the real connection between people. Is it our religion, the color of our skin, the money in our pockets?" (230, 239). Mate explains: "I spoke real slow for her to understand that we were talking about love, love among us women. There is something deeper. Sometimes I feel it in here, especially late at night, a current going among us, like an invisible needle stitching us together into the glorious, free nation we are becoming" (239).

After listening to Magdalena's life story one evening, Mate writes, "Magdalena has taught me more about how privileged I am than all of Minerva's lectures about class" (248). Mate's entry signals a break with her adherence to Minerva's principles, which she claims are often difficult to apply to a community where some members are selfish: "It certainly comes out, living in such close quarters with people, which ones are looking out for themselves and which ones are thinking about the whole group" (245). Mate addresses her own selfish impulses through reflection, but ultimately makes choices that are in the interest of those living with her. When Minerva argues that she should turn in the journal entries describing her torture on principle, Mate responds that she will do what she thinks is right (251). This surprises Minerva

and inspires her respect, which suggests that she has begun to recognize Mate's maturity and respect her personal judgment regarding ethical and moral choices.

Ultimately, Minerva's public challenges to tradition and Trujillo and María Teresa's personal involvement in the resistance struggle represent unique worldviews and forms of participation in the movement that develop dialogically throughout each sister's narration. In *In the Time of the Butterflies,* differential subjectivity allows Minerva, Mate, and Patria to strategically ally themselves with oppositional Marxist and feminist principles, joining the struggle for national liberation with a profound change in community dynamics. Through Patria, the reader observes empathy and identification with the poor, uneducated Dominicans characteristic of the Catholic Church's involvement in issues of social justice through liberation theology. Through liberation theology, the Marxist objectives of clarifying ideological "truths" or presenting things as they "truly are" becomes a tool with significant power to change social reality due to the large number of poor and ignorant (that representations of God that associate him with Trujillo, for example) peoples that unite in the name of the Catholic faith[16]. Patria feels that her deep religiosity and strong moral conviction contradict themselves when she sees Dominican *campesinos* kill a young Cuban soldier, a decisive event in her decision to join forces with the revolution.

In *In the Time of the Butterflies,* the Catholic Church is presented as an institution of ideological decolonization through liberation theology. I imagine this as a psychological replacement of the God-Trujillo dyad with the Virgin Mary-Dominican people. As Del Rosso explains, Alvarez and other "ethnic" women writers have explored the contradictory role of the Catholic Church in their own communities as a means of critiquing Anglo-feminism's universal dismissal of the Church as a patriarchal institution[17]. Del Rosso's ideas and the aforementioned

Mary/Mother-Church/Dominican people imagery fit within the decolonizing feminist framework for this study, as a means of deterritorialization, or disassociation of terminology and its cultural coordinates in order to place the term in a new context. This strategy poses a challenge to the colonialist system of meaning and creates the possibility for ideological decolonization, or the shift to a differential consciousness. Through Patria's character, Alvarez presents the Catholic Church as an institution of change, in addition to its colonialist role as an institution of tradition. Patria recognizes that the traditional role of the Church as an elite, colonial, and patriarchal Dominican cultural institution is contradicted by the demographics of its parishioners. Patria's character shares Minerva's socialist principles and María Teresa's empathy and identification in her matriarchal role as a leader in the Catholic Church community. The episodes that bring her toward this revelation also serve to broaden her true commitment to the Dominican people. Her role as the Mirabal matriarch is fully realized in "Part II" of the novel when she joins the *Acción Clero-Cultural* group with the Revolutionary Underground organized by her sisters. Patria thus joins the Marxist revolution with the role of the Church as a spiritual leader of the Dominican people. This coalition inspires the Dominican people to side with the Catholic Church to protest the injustices of the regime as the Dominican people join the Mirabal sisters in their struggle (*In the Time of the Butterflies* 206-208).

Patria's own spiritual journey from pure spiritual devotion to Matriarch of the revolution occurs through three pilgrimages that correspond to the three parts of the novel. Through these episodes, the reader comes to understand the motivating factors that influence her break with traditional colonialist Catholic dogma in favor of a new decolonizing vision of the church's role among Dominicans. In "Part I", when Patria meets her husband, Pedrito, she experiences a radical change in vocation, from her early desire to be a nun to her call to be a wife and mother[18].

After having two children, Patria miscarries her third child, an episode that corresponds to her growing concern about Minerva's political activities (51). Minerva's politics are decisive in Patria's loss and reclaiming of her faith in this section, a loss that Patria metaphorically correlates with losing "that pearl of great price" (52). Her first pilgrimage is to Higuey, where a sighting of the Virgin de Altagracia had been reported. Patria attributes religious importance to the trip and petitions to the Virgin that she appear while staring at the small shrine dedicated to her: "I stared at her pale, pretty face and challenged her. Here I am Virgencita, where are you? And I heard her answer me with the coughs and cries and whispers of the crowd: *Here, Patria Mercedes, I'm here, all around you. I've already more than appeared*" (59). At this moment, Patria's identification between Mary and people in the shrine prompt her to embrace her role as a Catholic within the Church *community*, the first step in her journey towards ideological decolonization, or participation in the revolutionary struggle.

Patria narrates another relevant episode in her journey featuring Margarita Mirabal, an illegitimate daughter of Enrique Mirabal, who brings the family written communication from Minerva and María Teresa while they are imprisoned (*In the Time of the Butterflies* 209). Minerva had "stayed in touch with them over the years" in spite of Patria and Mate's disapproval, establishing an important alliance that makes Patria aware of the potential for alliances among Dominicans of different classes: "I had to laugh. Papa's other family would be the agents of our salvation! It was ingenious and finally, I saw, all wise. He was going to work several revolutions at one time. One of them would have to do with my pride" (*In the Time of the Butterflies* 210).

Patria's second pilgrimage is through a retreat, organized in conjunction with the "Christian Cultural Group", an evangelical group that had been working in poor neighborhoods

(158). Here, the Virgin is a thematic presence again, as the retreat is to focus on the "meaning of Mary in our lives" and to take place in May, a month honoring the Blessed Mother (158). The retreat is postponed until June due to governmental restrictions in preparation for a Cuban invasion. The invasion, however, occurs during the retreat itself, and Patria witnesses the death of a young soldier at the hands of Dominican *campesinos*. The incident has strong meaning for Patria as a mother, due to her own son's increased curiosity about and involvement with the revolution through his Aunts and Uncles. It also marks a significant change within Patria, who reconsiders her role as a spiritual *mother* to a larger Dominican family inspired by the Higuey pilgrimage. The incident demonstrates to Patria the need to foster empathy among Dominicans in conjunction with the revolution, and outside of the brainwashing *trujillista* dogma. This change inspires Patria to imagine herself as a member of the Dominican *family*: "I cried all the way down that mountain. I looked out the spider-webbed window of that bullet-ridden car at brothers, sisters, sons, daughters, one and all, my human family" (162). In a visit to Padre de Jesús to talk about her concern about the Dominican political situation, Patria suggests that the Church become involved in the revolution:

> Still I hadn't given up on the church as Minerva and María Teresa had. Ever since I had my vision of the Virgencita, I knew spirit was imminent, and that churches were just glass houses, or way stations on our road through this rocky life. But His house was a mansion as big as the sky and all you had to do was pelt his window and He would let you inside (154).

This change reflects the revolutionary perspective of liberation theology, an ideological reconciliation between the moral role of the church to contest economic exploitation of the poor (Marxism) and foster empathy among Dominicans so that they would treat each other as equals.

Patria describes the mission of the *Acción Clero-Cultural* group: "We would spread the word of God among our brainwashed campesinos who had hunted down their liberators. After all, Fidel would never have won in Cuba if the campesinos there hadn't fed him, lied for him, joined him. The word was, we were all brothers and sisters in Christ" (164). Patria leads a merging of this group with Minerva's rebellion, which they decide to name after the men who were martyred on the Fourteenth of June (167).

This reconciliation is framed in terms of the need for a spiritual, political, and individual revolution. The contradictory juxtaposition of Dominican cultural themes and images in Patria's house, the new underground headquarters, emphasizes the necessity of a revolutionary change among Dominicans and within themselves in order to successfully realize national autonomy, self-government, and democracy: "So it was that between these walls hung with portraits, including El Jefe's, that the Fourteenth of June Movement was founded. Our mission was to effect an internal revolution rather than wait for an outside rescue" (167). The impact of the Mirabal coalition is profound. By invoking the power of spiritual devotion observed in the large number of peasant pilgrims to Higuey, the Church officially and successfully speaks out against Trujillo, and gains large support from the Dominican people. Mate's recollection of the Crucifix plot in “Part III” of the novel reinforces the unifying power of religious symbolism among Dominicans and the impact of the Church's newfound public voice on Trujillo, who the Pope threatens to excommunicate for inappropriate behavior during mass[19].

The large-scale effects of the *trujillato* on the Dominican population are shown to be, however, the largest obstacle to be overcome in order to realize a democratic future. Alvarez appears to attribute these negative behaviors to psychological colonialization, comparing the Dominican slaughter of the "Cuban liberators" to the slaughter of Dominicans during the *yanquí*

invasion: "They killed anyone who stood in their way. They burned our house down and called it a mistake. They weren't in their own country so they didn't have to answer to anyone" (57). Patria proposes that this past can be reconciled in preparation for the future through trust and forgiveness among Dominicans themselves, the only path to restoring their faith: or ideological decolonization and the restoration of empathy in relationships among Dominicans[20].

Alvarez's representation of the cross-class alliances made by the Mirabals with poor and uneducated Dominicans focuses on the political potential of resistance communities to intervene in one's social reality and enact change. In *In the Time of the Butterflies*, the Dominican people are not represented as passive spectators of history, but as historical actors who actively participated in the Mirabals' struggle. These relationships made collaboration amongst previously divided groups possible on a large scale, which in turn made the revolution powerful.

As the author explains in her essay "Chasing the Butterflies", her travels to the Dominican Republic to research the Mirabal story put her in contact with a number of Dominicans who knew the Mirabals personally and provided her with a wealth of information about their lives. Alvarez attributes the complexity and depth of her representation of the Mirabals' biography to the Dominican oral historians who helped her understand the importance of these relationships. When she traveled to the Dominican Republic to research their lives, Alvarez observed a local familiarity with the sisters' lives and history that attests to the broad impact that their lives and work had had on the Dominican people.

In *In the Time of the Butterflies,* Alvarez joins artistic form and historical representation, providing her readership with the opportunity to experience the transformative effects of relationships of empathy and identification as she tells their story to a broad public and positions herself as storyteller rather than historian: "My writing does proceed from a new attitude towards

familia, not unquestioning worship, but a desire to see and celebrate human beings in their full complexity rather than icons" (*Something to Declare* 127). *In the Time of the Butterflies* celebrates the Mirabals and their revolution, as a coalition of decolonizing strategies and ideological positions: demonstrating that social change on a large scale is made possible through an intersubjective way of being in the world that seeks justice and equality for all people. The figure that represents this decolonizing and intersubjective ontology in *In the Time of the Butterflies* is the *Virgen de Altagracia,* the patron saint of the Dominican people. In Mayra Santos-Febres' *Nuestra Señora de la Noche,* another patron saint*,* the *Virgen de la Caridad de Cobre,* inspires Isabel Luberza to create her own identity outside of the patriarchal worldview and the institution of marriage. In *Nuestra Señora de la Noche,* Santos-Febres incorporates a nonwestern representation of femininity through the *Santería* Goddess Ochún (*La Caridad de Cobre*) that reunites the mind-body-spirit through Lorde's concept of the erotic and initiates Luberza's journey to psychological liberation through her exposure to the writing of early Puerto Rican feminist Luisa Capetillo.

CHAPTER 4

PUERTO RICO'S FOUNDING WHORE: *NUESTRA SENORA DE LA NOCHE*

Nuestra Senora de la Noche narrates the biography of Isabel Luberza, famed madam and proprietor of Ponce's Elizabeth's Dancing Club. The symbolic importance of featuring Luberza as the drama's protagonist resides in her critical importance as a literary and historical figure who foregrounds the intersection of race, class, and gender in patriarchal nationalism. Like Mexico's *Malinche*, Luberza is a *puta fundadora,* a foundational and ambivalent personage in the Puerto Rican national imagination; demonized as a criminal in official culture and recuperated by contemporary writers as a subversive figure that challenged the limitations of women's societal roles. Luberza's biography is particularly propitious for an examination of the relationship between race, class, gender, Church, and State in the discourse of patriarchal nationalism for many reasons. Ponce, where Luberza lived, is also known as the birthplace of Puerto Rican nationalism (Findlay 14). Ponce's racial and sexual politics were paradigmatic in denying women of color access to citizenship in the national family; the city has a history of using the concept of "decency" to punish and marginalize working class women of color when elite hegemony has been challenged.

For Mayra Santos-Febres, writing is an integral part of asserting her own agency in creating her own identity and shaping her reality: "Sartre decía en "Qué es la literatura" que escribir al mundo, nombrarlo, era una manera de transformarlo. Que uno buscaba que lo ya sabido, lo ya concienciado transformara las percepciones del mundo y del entorno social. Yo

quiero incidir en mi sociedad. Esa es una de las razones por las cuales escribo"[21] (Interview Appendix). Because race has played an important role in the construction of national identity, placing Afro-Puerto Rican culture into a socio-cultural and historical context through writing constitutes a challenge to the discourse of cultural nationalism, which has systematically worked to erase African cultural roots from Puerto Rican identity[22]. Santos-Febres considers the fundamental lack of black Puerto Rican writers who contribute to the literary canon in addition to a lack of representations of black experience and reality the root of Puerto Rican anxiety of national identity and origin: "Sin el estudio sistemático y sin la libre inclusión de pensadores negros en la práctica intelectual del país no podremos trasponer la trampa de nuestra identidad enfermiza" (*Sobre piel y papel* 160). For Santos-Febres, unified identity discourse is a fictitious and powerful tool of domination[23]. As the author explained to me in our interview: "Tengo ganas de decirte que no creo en la identidad puertorriqueña, que creo en las identidades cruzadas que se encuentran en este lugar que es la isla de Puerto Rico."

In addition to the negation and erasure of African culture, the author also identifies a lack of representation of the reality with which she identifies, the experience of black women: "I wrote *Anamú y manigua* as a way to describe the participation of Black women in the construction of nationhood in Puerto Rico. I needed to feel that my mother, my grandmother, the women of my family, and I were a part of Puerto Rico; for we had worked so hard and suffered and conquered so much that Puerto Rico would be incomplete without us"[24]. As Pratt notes, women's participation in nation building has most often been silenced, domesticated, or symbolically appropriated (49). Santos-Febres addresses these historical and cultural lacunae through her recuperation of black women in *Anamú y Manigua,* a collection of poetry that uses the trope of the body in her construction of a relational genealogy: "me sitúo fuera de las líneas

patriarcales y de la nación (es decir que abjuro de ser la hija de los padres de la Patria) pero creo otra genealogía que empata biografía con historia, personaliza a la una y contextualiza en tiempo y espacios reticulares a la otra"[25] (Interview Appendix). Identifying with Third World feminism, Santos-Febres explains that in Puerto Rico gender is not an isolated or monolithic determinant of oppression[26]. Like Richard, Lorde, and other Third World feminist writers and theoreticians, Santos-Febres uses representations of the feminine as a point of departure for alliances among those marginalized through the interlocking discourses of race, class, gender, and colonialism and establishing connections and forms of solidarity with communities marginalized through hegemonic identity politics.

Of critical importance to the thematic and tropes of Santos-Febres' work is the reintegration of body and subjectivity: because the body is the instrument of socialization, it is a powerful tool through which the experience of social inequalities, relationships, privilege, and the way ones sees themselves and others can be portrayed[27]. It can also be the site of a contradictory construction of identity that defies social prescriptions:

> El cuerpo es casa propia, la manera más íntegra e íntima que tenemos para relacionarnos con los demás. Es la puerta hacía las relaciones más fundamentales con los seres humanos. Creo que para acabar de crecer como mujeres tenemos que revisar las maneras en que habitamos a nuestros cuerpos. No verlos como objetos de intercambio, o como encarnación de utopías, sino encontrar una manera de aprender a conocerlos, prelinguísticamente, más allá del discurso. Una vez logremos hacer esa integración real, entonces, su disfrute será profundo, íntegro, liberador. Al fin podremos salir de nuestros cárceles de carne (*Sobre piel y papel* 59).

Because Puerto Rican cultural discourse has exoticized and made folkloric representations of African culture and black women, new representations of identity that defy these normative parameters are a form of re-evaluating the presence of Afro-Antillean culture in Puerto Rican society and empowering marginalized persons to embody and enjoy these contradictions. Santos-Febres writes: "Faltándonos modelos históricos evidentes apoyados por el discurso oficial, las únicas presencias que nos quedan para emular son las de la criminalidad, las del racismo o las del folklore" (*Sobre piel y papel* 78). Through Luberza's biography, Santos-Febres revisits the working class reality of Afro Puerto Rican women whose defiance of normative women's roles has largely been erased and silenced within historical and cultural discourses. This includes representations of laundresses, domestic workers, and seamstresses, many of whom lived in communities on the periphery of upper class society, where they were able to work together to resist patriarchal abuses and provide for their families.

The historical segregation of working women accused of prostitution from "respectable" urban areas held certain advantages, including the ability to organize and defend themselves from patriarchal abuses, such as domestic violence, and organize protests against unfair labor laws and regulations (*Women and Urban Change* 3; Findlay 127). As Matos-Rodríguez notes, in the nineteenth-century, working women took advantage of the alliances built within extramural enclaves to build networks of support as well as launch "survival, familial, and solidarity struggles, which stood better chances of succeeding given the added distance from centers of colonial, military, and ecclesiastical power" (*Women and Urban Change* 3). Such communities had historically been called upon as an alternative to institutional intervention in cases of domestic violence, which was a common problem in lower class communities before the legalization of divorce in 1902[28]. These women-organized communities are the historical

precedents for the brothel community that takes shape in *Nuestra Señora de la Noche*; described by the author as a "popular" interpretation of the concept of a Puerto Rican family: "Usé el término familia en el sentido popular de la acepción, es decir, en esa familia compuesta por madres y abuelas y comadres y vecinos y gente que no es de sangre pero que llega a serlo al afrontar a vicisitudes juntos. Esa es la familia de la cual hablo en *Nuestra Señora de la Noche*" (Interview Appendix).

In the novel, Isabel narrates her life from her early childhood, where she was raised by a *madrina* that worked as a laundress[29]. Isabel recalls this moment of her life as a happy time, until she is contracted as a servant in the Tous home. This arrangement had been made by her *madrina*, concerned about the child's safety in her household where an uncle of Isabel's had been giving her threatening looks. Isabel must also face the repeated threat of sexual abuse at the hands of men, which testifies to the normative exploitation of black women and their bodies[30]. Isabel's life in the Tous household marks her entrance into a world of emotional and psychological abuse at the hands of Señora Tous. Georgia Tous considers hiring Isabel a favor to her Madrina Maruca, even though she will only be paid one dollar a month: "No te apures, Maruca, que yo les voy a hacer la caridad" (59). During her employment at the Tous home, Isabel befriends Lorenza, another domestic servant, who teaches her to sew (a skill that she uses in her next job). Through this relationship, Isabel learns to survive the difficulties of her life as a domestic servant. Isabel is almost raped by Señor Tous when he arrives home drunken one night before his wife. When Señora Tous returns, she catches him in Isabel's room, saving the young Isabel from the potential "disgrace" and firing her immediately (109-111).

As she leaves the house, Lorenza hands her a medallion of the *Virgen de la Caridad de Cobre* and reminds her that she can find work as a domestic servant or seamstress on the plaza:

"Era una medalla de la Caridad de Cobre. Resguardo para los viajeros. Refugio para los golpeados por la tormenta y la alta mar. Lorenza la impía le regalaba una medalla de la Virgen. Isabel quiso preguntar; acercarse y apoyar su cabeza contra los pechos de Lorenza, quiso abrazarla pero no pudo" (112). The medallion is symbolic of Isabel's transformation through her relationship with Lorenza, with whom she had identified and shared her frustrations. This mother-daughter relationship anticipates the collective maternal bonds that Luberza will foster through her brothel. As Lorde explains, collective maternal bonds begin with self-mothering: "we must establish authority over our own definition, provide an attentive concern and expectation of growth which is the beginning of that acceptance we came to expect only from our mothers. It means that I affirm my own worth by committing myself to my survival, in my own self and in the self of other Black women" (*Sister Outsider* 173). Lorenza contributes to Luberza's personal growth by teaching her to sew, a skill that Isabel will later use to make her own dresses for community events and with which she can earn a living without having to work as a domestic servant. By providing her with the medallion of the orisha, a representation of nonwestern femininity with which she can identify, Lorenza also participates in Isabel's process of ideological decolonization, or the ability to see oneself outside of identities associated with domination and subordination.

According to Santos-Febres, the historical Luberza wore a medallion of the *Caridad de Cobre* and kept a statue of the figure in a *gruta* behind the brothel where the women that worked for her would go to pray. In the context of the novel, the *Caridad de Cobre* represents a non Western image of feminine divinity that combines the spiritual and the sensual, an anti-hegemonic image of womanhood that is on the threshold of virgin and whore and empowers Luberza to transcend the spiritual subordination of women to men by invoking the power of

seduction, through which women connect with men emotionally and physically. At the presentation of her novel *Nuestra Señora de la Noche*, in San Juan, July 2006, Santos-Febres shared a memory of her grandmother: "Me dijo 'Fijate, a nosotras siempre nos han enseñado que una mujer debe ser o una virgen o un demonio. O absolutamente pura e inmaculada o sucia y decaída'. Yo le pregunté cual era el secreto. Me contestó que entre el demonio y la virgen está la mujer."[31]

Isabel is also empowered and transformed through her relationship with Demetrio Sterling, a labor organizer who teaches her to read and shares a text by Luisa Capetillo (*Amor libre y soberano*) with her. Isabel is strongly influenced by the text, marking her second transformation in the journey toward ideological decolonization. Capetillo herself was a radical feminist personality in Puerto Rico in the early twentieth-century. Her feminist manifesto, *Mi opinión sobre las libertades, derechos y deberes de la mujer como compañera, madre y ser independiente* (1911) was among the first to be published in the Caribbean and "described how traditional social systems perpetuated the ignorance and enslavement of women" (Kadison Berson 63). Capetillo argued that race and gender were social constructions produced by patriarchal institutions in the interest of hegemonic power and understood the relationship between language and domination, encouraging women to learn to read and write and organize themselves[32]. She called upon individuals to organize and denounce institutions that perpetuated the economic exploitation of women: "As an author, Capetillo disputes the authorities coming from universities and professional schools and postulates one emerging from lived experience and intuition" (Capetillo xxxiii).

This included marriage, which she equated with prostitution: "Legal matrimony is not only prostitution, it is general speculation at the other's expense; moreover it is always prostitution when the virgin is ignorant of what she does by getting married" (Capetillo 37-8).

Like other Third World feminists, Capetillo understood the role of hegemonic identity politics, the Church and state in the exploitation of women and the need for new theoretical frameworks that would allow feminists to critique colonialist discourses of domination and subordination: "Her work is very antinationalistic; she is not concerned with defining who is Puerto Rican and what is Puerto Rican. Capetillo is more concerned with local problems or larger structural issues of class and gender oppression. Her prose has a marked oral syntax combined with non-essentialist writing that is always looking for alliances and zones of contact" (Capetillo xxxiv). Capetillo addressed the need for social reform from within the population itself, proposing an anti-institutional, anti-nationalist politics of individual mobilization and collective accountability.

In *Nuestra Señora,* Isabel's friendships with Lorenza and Demetrio lead Isabel through a process of ideological decolonization and identity transformation by providing her with nonwestern tools (nondualistic ideas and identities) with which she constructs her own complex identity outside of patriarchal dualisms. Lorenza's gift to Isabel, the medallion of the *Caridad de Cobre* serves as an amulet to protect her against the psychologically colonized Puerto Rican society. For example, the novel opens with a scene where Luberza wears the medallion at a public event as a reminder of her identity as part of the brothel community on the other side of the river: "Asísteme en la zozobra, protégeme Madre.' Isabel, con sus dedos enguantados restregó la medalla de la Cachita, para siempre colgada de la muñeca. Su cara se deshizo queriendo sostenerse del aire" (11). Of equal importance is Demetrio's gift of Capetillo's text,

which inspires Isabel to pursue her own economic autonomy through illegal exchange: selling alcohol on the black market and eventually establishing her business. Capetillo's play *Amor libre y soberano*, is clearly credited with informing and politicizing Luberza's understanding of love, marriage, and the importance of economic independence: "Esa Luisa Capetillo le gustaba. 'Sindicalista, y fue tabacalera también'… Mujer de medios, independiente y libre. Ya existían otras que lo habían conseguido" (*Nuestra Señora de la Noche* 99). The impact of reading this text is transformative, suggesting that on a metatextual level, Santos-Febres uses the relationship between herself and the reader to invoke non-binary epistemological frameworks that have the power to change reality.

In her own life, Santos-Febres had learned the anti-hegemonic behaviors and worldviews associated with working class women's culture from the women in her family[33]. While the strength and independence of the women in her family introduced the author to the contradictory masculine and feminine nature of working class women's roles, Santos-Febres chose to elaborate on this contradictory womanhood by constructing her own performative identity that would combine the hyper-femininity of homosexual drag with the masculine behavior of the women in her family: "Muchos de mis amigos gay (no todos, pero muchos) me enseñaron a jugar a ser femenina, a reírme de esta feminidad, sin negarla, a asumir el rol como fachada y performance social. Pero su lección más valiosa fue usar esta distancia para inscribir otras versiones de 'ser mujer' en el libreto y alterar la coreografía" (*Sobre piel y papel* 27-8). The author's defiance of cultural values through performative femininity, like Lorde's self-naming, is a means of celebrating the body as the site of a complex and contradictory subjectivity where race and gender identities are performed. Richard refers to this approach as: "A denormativizing reformulation of militant feminism's battle cry that would allow dimensions like creativity,

fantasy, pleasure, taste, and style to mix *aesthetic impulses* with the *will to change* in order to intertwine the figural and strategic repertoires of *seduction* and *sedition"* (66- 67 emphasis original). Santos-Febres refers to Luberza as a *puta fundadora* because she is a historical example of such identity performance. In the novel, Isabel's erotic power of seduction is a model of femininity that empowers other women to assert their own erotic power and identify with the Madam's strength.

The collective identity among marginalized women in the novel is an example of collective maternal bonds. Like the solidarity among working class and plebian women that had historically facilitated networks of resistance to marriage and prostitution, understood as economic and sexual exploitation of women at the hands of men, the brothel community allows women to protect each other from spiritual and material subordination to men. Images of Afro-Antillean femininity such as the *Caridad de Cobre* provide alternative representations of feminine divinity, while community centered practices such as the *bomba* dances challenge the containment of women's roles in the domestic sphere. These community practices provided women with a space of public visibility, where they could decide what to wear and how to attract men's attention. In *Nuestra Señora,* freedom from the domestic domain is of critical importance to the intersubjective relationships maintained among women in the brothel community.

Describing her text as "novela histórica sobre el proceso de la modernización de Puerto Rico a partir de la raza", the author elaborates the complex discursive web through which Puerto Rican patriarchs and elite women negotiated power and the role of the Catholic Church in dichotomizing femininity into virgin/ whore roles ("En casa" 1). Santos-Febres uses Luberza as the starting point for her examination of how the ideology of cultural nationalism relied on identity politics to cultivate a discourse that marginalized women and African culture through the

creation of a patriarchal and Eurocentric national identity. As the author explains, Puerto Rican national identity politics relied on the discursive construction of race to secure white hegemony: "Las razas no existen, ni la negra ni la blanca, como hechos objetivos y científicos. Lo que sí existe es la concentración de melanina, ese leve variación en el patrón del cuerpo humano que tomamos como punto de partida para construir una identidad- la identidad racial, que casi siempre conectamos a otra, la identidad nacional" (*Sobre piel y papel* 143). She continues: "Tomar la categoría de la raza como punto de partida para hablar de una identidad nacional es un gesto mitológico, mentiroso" (*Sobre piel y papel* 144). As I outlined in Chapter Two, the objective of colonialist Puerto Rican national identity discourse has been the establishment of similarities between Creole classes and the Spanish colonizer through a difference-as-other model of race, class, and gender stereotyping.

Luberza's complex forms of identification resist homogenous categorization through a reintegration of women's subjectivity (split into virgin/ whore archetypes) and the empowering choice to self-name, embracing the contradictory elements of her reality and empowering others to radically accept their own. After reading a text by working class Puerto Rican feminist Luisa Capetillo, whose work denounces the exploitation of women through marriage and prostitution, Luberza chooses to live and love autonomously, resisting traditional women's roles as wife or prostitute. Through her friendship with Lorenza, a woman who works with her, Isabel is introduced to the *Virgen de la Caridad de Cobre,* a *santería orisha* who combines sensuality and divinity, an image that she incorporates into her worldview and identity. Luberza's identity on the threshold of virgin and whore is the first step in her ideological decolonization, freeing her to identify with a community of women disillusioned with the poverty, domestic violence, and social marginalization of their class. It is with this community of women that Luberza would

establish Elizabeth's Dancing Palace. In the brothel, Santos-Febres represents cultural phenomena such as the plena dance celebrations of Bumbum Oppenheimer characteristic of working class communities.

In an interview with Mayra Santos-Febres about her novel, I asked the author if she intended to dialogue with Rosario Ferré's canonical feminist text "Cuando las mujeres quieren a los hombres". The latter, originally published in the magazine *Zona de carga y descarga* in 1975, received international recognition due to its polemic celebratory representation of Luberza, a well known madam from Ponce, Puerto Rico, and was held responsible for immediate withdrawal of publishing support for the magazine (Aparicio 3). Santos-Febres replied to my question with one word: "Obviamente" (Interview). As Santos-Febres, Gelpí, and Aparicio have noted, Ferré's narrative represents Luberza, or Afro-Puerto Rican women as the sensuality that upper class white women have been denied through the dominant discourses of patriarchal hegemony, a racialized virgin/ whore dichotomy that positioned upper-class white women as the embodiment of European cultural values and black women as the embodiment of sin.[34] According to Aparicio, Ferré's discourse is problematically situated within the very tradition that she aims to contest, re-inscribing the oppositional terms of identity historically used to associate Puerto Rican white women with "ladies" and women of color with prostitutes in spite of uniting these polarized identities through a fusion of narrative voices representing each (3).

While Rosario Ferré's text intends to challenge patriarchal power through an alliance made between white and black Puerto Rican women, her representation of Luberza ultimately fails to consider historical race and class divides pivotal to an understanding of a divided Puerto Rican feminism. As Santos-Febres explains, "Y aunque las dos mujeres confabulan contra el marido- Ambrosio, representante de la sociedad patriarcal-, el mundo de la mujer blanca es

descrita con precisión y nos resulta plenamente reconocible. Pero el de la mujer negra brilla por su ausencia" (*Sobre piel y papel* 154). As Audre Lorde explains, "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house": and by failing to propose a new and empowering subjectivity that would liberate Puerto Rican women from subordination to patriarchal authority, Ferré equivocally uses the master's tools, leaving the discourses of race and gender that naturalize women's subordination to men remaining intact.

I use Lorde's concept of feminist discursive intervention in her essay "The Master's Tools will Never Dismantle the Master's House" to introduce my examination of Santos-Febres' discursive dialogue with Ferré's canonical text in *Nuestra Señora de la Noche* due to its radical proposal of a new form of feminism that uses difference to inspire dialogue among women from diverse backgrounds, contesting the hegemonic United States Anglo feminism that Ferré and women of her class represent. I will also follow Alexander and Mohanty's discursive framework for a Third World feminism that addresses the complicity between United States Anglo feminism and patriarchal identity politics in "bolstering inherited regimes of race and Eurocentrism" (xvi). By featuring Luberza, a criminal and prostitute, as the protagonist of her short story, Ferré participated in a colonialist feminism: creating her own subject position within the national canon by presenting Luberza as Other[35].

Thirty years later, Santos-Febres recuperates Luberza as a model of decolonizing feminism, voicing her challenge to Ferre's colonialist discourse and the erasures of Puerto Rican national identity discourses. She uses the historiographic metafiction form to present Luberza's biography from the perspective of the madam herself, and highlight how the racialization of women's bodies and the virgin/ whore dichotomy has oppressed women of all races and classes. The critical difference between these two perspectives lies in their unique representations of

agency, empowerment, and victimhood. In Ferré's text, both women are victims, while Santos-Febres clarifies that victimhood is choice, not destiny, and that while white and black women who adhere to the normative parameters of patriarchal dualisms are both victims, they do not suffer equally (*Sobre piel y papel* 154-5). Santos-Febres uses Luberza as an empowering model of agency and the construction of a differential identity that positions her outside of the virgin/ whore dualism. From this position she is thus able to establish alliances with other women and construct her own resistance community/ brothel where women can work with dignity, free from the patriarchal institutions of marriage and prostitution, both of which enslave and oppress.

As Lorde explains in her seminal essay, Third World feminists demand a new dialogic form of theorizing through which women of color can contribute to the struggle against patriarchal hegemony through collaboration, not token representation. Third World feminist thought identifies identity politics, the racialization and heterosexualized gendering of bodies according to normative white masculinity, as the root of the various forms of internalized and external oppressions faced by all marginalized persons. These myths of unified identities, in conjunction with the capitalist ideology of individualism that separates the self from others, perpetuate the social hierarchies of colonialism and must be revised according to relational ideas (Alexander and Mohanty xxxiii). Lorde, Alexander and Mohanty, and other Third World feminists argue that in order to bring about social change, marginalized identities must first assume responsibility for naming themselves and choosing new and empowering forms of identity through identification with others, followed by selecting those communities to which they are accountable, and actively contributing to the fight for social justice through these resistance communities.

Third World feminists also advocate theoretical reflections on their work that contribute to academic discussions of western hegemony and decolonization. Alexander and Mohanty write: "We cannot overestimate the need for conscious self-reflexivity about the complicity of intellectual frameworks in politics, in the fact that something is at stake, in the very process of reauthorizing and mediating inequalities or regressive politics of different kinds" (xviii). Similarly, these theorists argue that feminism did not originate in the western humanism of the US academy and that women have organized themselves in struggles throughout history and in a wide variety of contexts. The feminist genealogy framework used in this study is the theoretical framework used by these theorists to recuperate these histories of struggle as invaluable contributions to the struggle against colonialist forms of power (Alexander and Mohanty xx).

I would also like to emphasize that the discourse of Puerto Rican national identity through the metaphor of *la gran familia puertorriqueña,* or representation of the nation as family, relied on Catholicism's Western ontological worldview. According to this philosophy of masculine self-representation, white masculinity, associated with God the Father and Son was an earthly manifestation of a divine integration of body and soul, and women were considered subordinate object-others to the masculine subject-self. *Nuestra Señora's* characters Christina Fornarís and María Candelaria de Fresnet voice the internalized oppressions of ideologically colonized Puerto Rican women, while Luberza represents a position outside of these discourses, as a subject who has been ideologically decolonized. Christina and Montse, who suffer from the oppressions associated with their colonized identities, are unable to love themselves because they are unable to name themselves, suffering from internalized oppressions that cause women to project their fears or self-loathing onto others. Luberza, however, constructs her own differential identity outside of this dualism. Identifying with three Marías, Luberza creates her own

decolonized differential identity. As I mentioned earlier, white women who identified with the *Virgen María* were psychologically colonized as inferior others, an internalized oppression manifested through their worship of their husbands and sons as divine, while the association of black women with *María Magdalena* discursively positioned them as societal others.

In *Nuestra Señora,* the character of María Candelaria de Fresnet (Montse), the *madrina* who raises Luberza's illegitimate son Roberto, suffers because she has been isolated from other women and told that she resembles a statue of the *Virgin de Monteserrate.* Montse's relationship with the statue testifies to her frustration and scorn for the statue (*Madre María Carcelaria*) and desire to join the other women in the brothel community. The narrative voice of Christina Fornarís, the wife of Isabel's lover Fernando, gives voice to colonialist discourse of white femininity that established its subjectivity through the legitimate role of wife and mother. Both Christina and Montse represent the traumatic effects of colonization on women's subjectivity. Christina's presumption of moral superiority over women of color is presented as embittered and isolated from the liberating potential of relationships of identification with other women that would empower her to take control of her marriage, while Montse's isolation in a cave outside of her lover's house where she takes care of a statue of the Virgin de Monteserrate and Roberto isolates her from relationships that would bring her monologue of resentment toward the Virgin/ statue into dialogue with others. While both women are psychologically imprisoned through an ideological colonization, Christina has a large number of choices that are not available to Montse.

Christina's direct intercessions to the *Virgen María* are divided into three sections, named after the mysteries of the Catholic rosary: *misterios gozosos, misterios dolorosos,* and *misterios gloriosos*. Christina's soliloquies reflect on her private life, her relationship with her husband

and son, her education, and her escapism through alcohol. For Christina, the *Virgen María* is white like herself, establishing her similarity to the Western model by distancing herself from the otherness of the women that work for her, with whom she fails to empathize. Because she is also unable to empathize/ identify with the men in her family due to her belief in their superiority, Christina experiences a lack of emotional and spiritual connection to her husband Fernando (*el Amado* and *el Señor*) and Luis Arsenio (*el Hijo*). Luis Arsenio reflects on his mother's behavior: "Complacerla es imposible porque los estándares de la señora son inalcanzables, los gustos de la señora, excelentísimos, la sensibilidad de la señora más frágil que un cristal, los sacrificios de la señora los de una madre amantísima, los sufrimientos de la señora los de una mártir del hogar" (79). Frustrated by Fernando's emotional absence, Christina manifests her fears and frustrations through oppressive control over the domestic servants Carmela and Delfina (114).

Within the novel Montse directly intercedes to the *Virgen Santa de Monteserrate,* a religious statue of a *mulata* virgin that she was assigned to be the caretaker of in exchange for room and board on the property of her lover, don Armando. Armando hides this arrangement from his sisters, claiming that Montse is his nurse and employed as the guardian of the statue. Montse, María Candelaria de Fresnet, renamed after the *Virgen de Monteserrate,* identifies with the figure of the *virgen caída* represented by Mary Magdalene and St. Mary of Egypt. Mary Magdalene serves as the archetypal model for the whore, while the story of St. Mary of Egypt, a saint to whom Montse directly intercedes, most closely mirrors her own life. St. Mary of Egypt, María Egipciana*,* was a prostitute who was redeemed after being repelled by a secret force when trying to enter a church in Jerusalem during the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. Like María Egipciana, the *Virgen de Monteserrate* statue has an isolating function: Montse is destined to live in isolation and unable to assert her own identity:

> Bursting into bitter tears and beating her breast, she began to bewail her sins. Just then her eyes fell upon a statue of the Blessed Virgin above the spot where she was standing, and in deep faith and humility she besought Our Lady for help, and permission to enter the church and venerate the sacred wood in which Jesus had suffered, promising that if her request were granted, she would renounce the world and its ways and forthwith depart whithersoever Our Lady might lead her (*New Catholic Encyclopedia*).

Montse's monologue is a constant barrage of voices, prayer, and curses as she reflects on how her position as *madrina* to Roberto and guardian of the statue has isolated her. Unlike Christina's carefully structured *misterios,* Montse's narrative, structured as a stream of consciousness, is combined with flashbacks and fragments of dialogue with Roberto, Fernando, and other characters. This fragmented dialogue is suggestive of her frustrated attempt to liberate her own sense of self from the many roles that she is forced to play, alone and isolated from community. This fragmentation is also suggestive of the destructive imposition of the identities and worldviews of white middle-class Puerto Ricans on her.

Here I would like to invoke Keating's discussion of Mary Daly and Audre Lorde's revision of western myths in my analysis of *Nuestra Señora's* transformational identity politics. Both Daly and Lorde call for new representations of female divinity that challenge the masculine/ feminine hierarchy by providing women with alternative representations of femininity as divine (Keating 176). While Daly calls for an inversion of the masculine/ feminine hierarchy in which a Goddess Mother would replace the Western God the Father, and allow women to see themselves as divine, Lorde explains that nonwestern images of femininity that exist outside of these dualisms are capable of representing non-patriarchal femininity (cited in

Keating 171). In *Nuestra Señora,* Santos-Febres elaborates how all Puerto Ricans feel the oppressive effects of these colonialist discourses of identity. By choosing to sacrifice their own sexuality in exchange for social privilege and positions of power over women of color, white upper-class women, represented in the novel through the character of Christina Fornarís, had also participated in constructing black women's sexuality as a threat to their homes and marriages. Through the narrative voice of Luís Arsenio Fornarís the reader is also able to experience the isolation of upper-class society in contrast to the community formed in Luberza's brothel. These examples highlight the how the discursive battlefield of Puerto Rican identity politics has lead to social and cultural traumas affecting all Puerto Ricans.

Luberza is an ideal example of a historical figure that represents the intersection of the race, class, and gender identity politics ideologically instilled through cultural nationalism and enforced through the patriarchal institutions of church and state. For Ferré, who was raised Catholic, the historical figure of Luberza represented the erotic and political power that women of her class lacked because of their patriarchal education, which taught them to be submissive wives and mothers so that they would not become exploited prostitutes. For Ferré, all Puerto Rican women had been oppressed by patriarchal ideology and Catholic dogma: "El deber de las monjas era, por lo tanto, transformarnos a todas en dobles de Isabel Luberza, actuando en esa forma como las aliadas de un sistema patriarcal que hacía todo lo posible por asegurar la hegemonía sexual y económica del hombre, mientras tiranizaba tanto a la prostituta como a la esposa" ("¿Por qué Isabel quiere a los hombres?" 114). According to Ferré, her representation of Luberza sought a representation of love and sexuality as divine, rebelling against an education that applied Western ontology's separation of the spiritual and material to women's reality, while men enjoyed the privilege of access to both (114-115). Ferré fails to recognize her own role as

colonizer in her representation of Luberza as Other: a stereotyped representation of women's sexuality. Instead of basing her representation of the Madam on her memories of Luberza's impact on her as an individual that embodied contradiction because of her role as madam, businesswomen, and woman of political power, Ferré chose to write Isabel Luberza into literary posterity as the erotic other, ignoring her power to contest the limitations of these discourses.

In spite of her progressive anti-canonical intentions, Ferré's literary rebellion against the patriarchy is flawed because it invokes Luberza's otherness for its representational power. An essay by Ferré that claims to recuperate "decanonizing" voices of Latin American feminism is suggestive of her critical dismissal of the theoretical contributions of radical women of color, such as early working class Puerto Rican feminist Luisa Capetillo, in favor of the literary contributions of women writers of her own race and class ("Al pie del cañón del lapis"). A brief mention of Angela María Dávila reminded me of Alexander and Mohanty's assertion that "Token inclusions of our texts without reconceptualizing the whole white, middle-class, gendered knowledge base effectively absorbs and silences us" (xvii). In *Nuestra Señora,* Santos-Febres does not miss the mark: Luberza represents a transformational identity politics that transcend the dualistic western worldviews through the *orisha*-goddess represented by the *Virgin de la Caridad de Cobre* and celebrating the non-oppositional epistemology proposed by Capetillo. In conjunction, these ideas empower Luberza to see the institutions of marriage and prostitution as colonialist, choosing social and spiritual autonomy by recurring to nonwestern models of femininity and behavior. In *Nuestra Señora,* Santos-Febres invokes Luberza who represents erotic power and transformational identity politics providing marginalized women working as prostitutes with an anti-patriarchal and non-Western model of identity and identification.

As a community of women outside of marriage and prostitution, the relationships among the women in Luberza's brothel community are intersubjective, following Lorde's concept of "collective maternal bonds" through "interactional self-transformations" which Keating describes as: "Self-mothering [that] entails self-acceptance and empowered use of language that leads to the construction of positive individual and collective identities" (172). The transformative effects of the brothel as a threshold community can be observed among the women themselves, and their erotic relationships with men, channeling the body as a vehicle for connections of equality: empathy through which Luis Arsenio Fornarís is able to see himself through Minerva's eyes and as part of the brothel community. This transformational experience begins Luis Arsenio's process of ideological decolonization, which leads to his discovery of his brother Roberto- and his ability to see his relationship with Roberto as an integral part of himself. This is how Luis Arsenio realizes "differential consciousness" and is able to embrace new forms of identification that transcend race, class, and gender divisions. This touching denouement is suggestive of the radical and transformational identity politics presented in *Nuestra Señora de la Noche.* In the following section, I will establish the relationship between these ideas and Santos-Febres' own intellectual autobiography of interviews and essays about her life and work that further support my assertion that Santos-Febres' writing and feminism is dedicated to change.

In *Nuestra Señora*, gender performance and the erotic are the vehicles for individual and collective changes, empowering women to mirror behaviors that invoke the erotic and seductive as a means of connection with others. In Elizabeth's Dancing Club, the women that work with

Luberza engage in erotic encounters through which men (such as Luís Arsenio Fornarís) are able to connect with women emotionally and erotically.

In the novel, the brothel community is a model of a collective identity where intersubjective relationships among marginalized others forms a new family of collective maternal bonds that allow women to see themselves in Others and as part of a collective identity. This frees women to laugh at the normative power of identity politics and those who conform to these prescribed behaviors. Essential to an understanding of this effect are the observations made by Luis Arsenio, Fernando's son, about the dance hall's sensation of freedom in contrast to the societal constraints of his upper class neighborhood. Noting that the family chofer's usually subservient demeanor is emboldened as he approaches the brothel to drop off Luis Arsenio and his friends, Luis Arsenio remarks: "Era evidente además, pensó Arsenio, que el Elizabeth's se regía por reglas distintas a las del resto del pueblo. Que allí no era igual la distancia entre los servidores y los servidos, que los cuerpos y los humores se atrevían a proponerse más cercanos" (31). Once inside, he observes a carnivalesque inversion of social mores: "Era otra la alegría del Elizabeth's. Una alegría derramada pero consciente de su existencia casi imposible. Era una alegría de regalo con sonrisas de regalo, con mujeres tan diversas como uno las pudiera imaginar, prestas a hablar y a regalar su presencia la noche entera…" (33). The cross class clientele reflects the larger appeal of the establishment's feeling of freedom: "La barra estaba atestada de soldados. Ya tenían acaparadas a muchas chicas. Algún que otro negociante en taje de hilo y banda de casado tomaba en las mesas del fondo, como ellos. Entre la penumbra de cuerpos bailadores, de vez en cuando se veía la presencia de algún famoso" (36). Luís Arsenio's experience in the bar is a liberating contrast to the isolation of his upper-class home.

Luís Arsenio's erotic encounter with Minerva, who he describes as "la doble de la madama" provokes a strange and confusing nostalgia and frustration of his own identity associated with empathy and emotion: "Luís Arsenio sintió la presencia de su derroto y tuvo miedo… Cerró los ojos y se vio por dentro igual, pero distinto, entre las piernas de otra mujer pero la misma, ahogándose en un llanto que no era suyo pero le invadía un sentimiento de nostalgia que no se pudo explicar" (39). The power of the erotic to destabilize the self/other dualism with which Luis Arsenio associates his own identity provokes an awareness of the differential environment of the brothel, where individuals are decolonized: free from race, class, and gender relationships of domination and subordination: servants look their masters in the eye, women approach men, and soldiers, prostitutes, artists, businessmen, and working class men enjoy the bar. This experience provokes reflections from Luís Arsenio on privilege and the racial and cultural differences between Puerto Rico and the United States when he goes to study abroad and discovers that on the mainland, he is a racial other: "Además, ¿cómo iba yo a presentarte a mi familia? Hola, éste es Louie Forneress from some island. No conozco a sus padres. No sé si tienen medios para sostenerme. Nos queremos casar y vivir en la selva, en un árbol junto a los monos" (247).

As Luís Arsenio travels as an enlisted Army officer, he runs across his brother Roberto, who he recognizes because of their physical similarities. His search for his own double, correlates to his search for his own identity, and through their reunion, both are able to better understand their own story (334-5). As the author explained at the presentation of her novel in San Juan, *Nuestra Señora de la Noche* was her own search for the relational origins of her complex Puerto Rican family: "Cómo fue que esto se convirtió en una familia de madres que abandonan, de padres ausentes, de medios hermanos, de bastardos, de gente 'gay' y 'straight',

blanca, negra, jabá, mulata, juncha, pobre, rica que somos. Cómo es que en esta familia se da el odio y la traición, pero también se da el amor y la compasión" (Arroyo-León 1). This is the family seen in Elizabeth's Dancing Palace, a diverse group of Puerto Rican people.

Luberza models her brothel after Bumbum Oppenheimer's dance hall, a space where she remembers feeling freedom and enjoying her sexuality. As Findlay notes, Ponce's *bomba* dances continue to evoke nostalgia among working class Puerto Ricans (Findlay 243). By having Isabel Luberza attend one of Bumbún Oppenheimer's famous dances, Santos-Febres incorporates this working class legacy in *Nuestra Señora*. The dynamic communal life and cultural exchange characteristic of this time in Puerto Rican history is present in this scene as Isabel observes the activity of the labor unions: "acomodaban panfletos de 'Páginas libres,' 'Musarañas,' 'Unión Obrera' y una copia del 'Programa de la Federación Libre de Trabajadores' según don Eugenio Sánchez"; has memories of her Madrina Maruca: "recordaba a su Madrina enseñándole los pasos de bomba"; and experiences her first kiss: "Su primer beso consentido, su primer beso con hombre que le gustaba" (184, 185, 189). In *Nuestra Señora,* Luberza's vision for Elizabeth's Dancing Palace incorporates the popular *plena* music of the working class Joya del Castillo Barrio and the upper class ambiance of a dance/ ballroom to entice its clients with what was prohibited from "decent" society and thus made more desirable. As Santos-Febres explains, the erotic is an important means of connecting with ourselves and others:

> Tomar en serio el tema del cuerpo y el placer es adentrarse en temas que reclaman cierta libertad. Discutir el goce es acto transformador. Es retomar el placer y las partes placenteras en la geografía del cuerpo, no dejar que éstas se conformen sólo desde la religión, el poder institucional, el comercio, inclusive desde la puritana

moral socialista. El análisis y la práctica cotidiana del deleite es otra trinchera desde la cual se puede pelear por una suerte de liberación (*Sobre piel y papel* 18).

This inversion of cultural values aims to rescue femininity from its subordinate cultural role through proposing the body as the site of a complex inter-subjectivity.

Santos-Febres explains that the roots of myths about the *mulata* as seductress originated in the sexual abuses common during the plantation era: "Imagino que muchas jóvenes esclavas, después de la abolición, continuaron practicando la profesión que le enseñaron sus amos-amantes-hermanos-padres" (*Sobre piel y papel* 121). Therefore black women's bodies were subject to a double oppression, deprived of the ability to self-name and identify with non-western images of powerful black women. As Keating explains: "The myth of feminine evil, for example, often has further implications for dark-skinned women: Because the dominant ideology privileges male over female and light over dark, both their gender and their ethnicity seem to confirm their inferior status" (75). In the novel, this struggle is represented through the character of Montse who is unable to see herself in the faceless image of the black *Virgen de Monteserrate*, who she also accuses of having stolen her name and forced her to consent to patriarchal authority (*Nuestra Señora* 15-21). For Lorde: "ignoring non-european cultural systems inhibits the establishment of women-to-woman bonds" (Keating 171). Monste's silence and isolation in the *gruta* is representative of this frustration of identity.

Luberza, however is an "homenaje a lo femenino" that identifies with Tres Marías: "Eran tres ustedes, tres las que fueron al sepulcro al otro día al amanecer. María la Madre, María Magdalena, María Salomé de Cleofás, como si fueran una" and the *Virgen de la Caridad de Cobre*, representative of the sensuality of *Ochún* and the spiritual power of the Virgin Mary (13). In *Nuesta Señora,* creating an empowering image of historical women that defied patriarchal

authority is a tool that aims to empower the refusal to consent that Montse struggles with (20). For Santos-Febres, a refusal to consent to normative behaviors constitutes a step toward individual empowerment:

> Ser buena significa 'hágase en mí su voluntad'. Y yo, como soy voluntariosa, pues soy mala," dice entre risas. "Estoy rescatando las historias de estas mujeres exitosas que logran finalmente darle por la cabeza al patriarcado, algo que nadie se lo hubiera planteado desde la bondad y la paciencia. Mujeres que, con todas sus caídas y metidas de pata y grandes tragedia, logran establecer una voz que no es la usual, no es la acostumbrada" (Perez-Duthie 1).

The author considers Luberza to be an example of a puta fundadora, a historical woman that managed to overcome this struggle and represent a contradictory combination of sexual power and agency:

> En todas las historias de las naciones hay una puta fundadora. Pienso en Evita Perón, en las madres fundadoras de la nación norteamericana, la mayoría putas. Pienso en La Malinche, mujer vendida como cosa a Cortés. Me gusta pensar en la historia desde esta perspectiva, no desde la del 'padre' legítimo de la Patria, o desde la Madre sufrida que pare al pueblo legítimo y soberano; sino desde este rincón oculto de la Puta escondida que puja a la nación bastarda (Interview Appendix).

This empowering model of femininity celebrates the decolonization of identities from colonialist relationships of domination and subordination through the erotic. As a decolonized identity, Luberza is an example of power to change: liberating herself and others from normative

women's roles through the power of erotic connection, a connection made in María Elena Cruz Varela's *La Hija de Cuba* through autobiographical writing.

CHAPTER 5

DIALOGIC WRITING: *LA HIJA DE CUBA*

As a concluding chapter to my study on the use of historiographic metafiction by Alvarez, Santos-Febres, and Cruz Varela in their portrayals of the Mirabals, Luberza, and Avellaneda, as historical women who used the tactics of differential subjectivities to create alliances with marginalized others in their respective social contexts, I would like to suggest that Cruz Varela models the potential of writing that explores consciousness as a mode of relational identity and political strategy through empathy and identification with others to affect reader perspectives. In *La Hija de Cuba,* Ana Lucía's identification with Avellaneda, Trini, and Milagros allows her to empathize with these women and identify with their experiences as her own (*La Hija de Cuba* 232-235). This experience teaches her to transcend feelings of jealousy and inferiority as she builds her relationship with Milagros and comes to forgive Marcos for their past. In their theoretical studies of women's writing, Madeline Cámara Betancourt and Keating reflect on similar experiences of changed perspectives[36]. Betancourt writes: "I chose these writers because they inherited a legacy and transformed it; but also because their writing transformed me. I have reappropriated the nation of letters that they have given me" (6). Based on her reading of Anzaldúa's creation of differential subjectivity, Keating suggests: "In this transformational, performative reading practice the borders between writer, reader, and text dissolve: Words have concrete physiological, ideological and psychic effects" (183). While both theorists clarify that these comments are clearly personal responses to the works that they have

studied, I would like to encourage their words in dialogue with Stanley's remarks about the focus of the auto/biographical text, which:

> Lies in the notions of auto/biography as an epistemologically-oriented concern with the political ramifications of the shifting boundaries between self and other, past and present, writing and reading, fact and fiction, and with an analytic attention to these within the oral, written, and visual texts that are 'biographies' and 'autobiographies' in the widest sense of these terms (89).

Stanley's research on the concept of auto/biography suggests, along with Betancourt and Keating, that representations of the past must be brought into dialogue with the present and reappropriated as discursive strategy by fostering differential consciousness, the celebration of differences as contributions to new modes of subjectivity and identification and contradictions as weapons against unified assumptions about identity, history, culture, and politics. As Hutcheon explains, postmodern contradictions have the potential to provoke change (21). In *In the Time of the Butterflies,* historical change is made possible through storytelling, organizing networks of opposition rooted in the communities to which each sister belongs and mobilizing those groups to concrete political action. As I suggested previously, Alvarez's writing in *Something to Declare* and the novel postscript testifies to her own identification with the Mirabal's work and bravery, a story that she hopes will "deepen North Americans' understanding of the nightmares you endured and the heavy losses you suffered" (*In the Time of the Butterflies* 324). In *Nuestra Señora,* Isabel Luberza contradicts societal assumptions about the Madam by portraying her as a combination of virgin/ whore archetypes through a performance of seduction that liberated her from the confines of marriage and prostitution. At the presentation of the novel in June of 2006, Santos-Febres attributed this both/and concept of femininity to her grandmother, who had told

her that although women were taught to be *virgenes o demonios:* "entre el demonio y la virgen está la mujer" ("En casa" 2). In *Sobre Piel y Papel,* Santos-Febres also writes of her choice to celebrate her femininity as seductive, which has liberated her from expectations about dress and appearance in public and private (9-13, 24-29). As with Alvarez, I see clear connections between the Isabel Luberza of *Nuestra Señora* and Mayra's own experience, which I confidently attribute to a desire to transform assumptions about women in Puerto Rican society and vindicate Luberza as a political and social strategist of her time. In *Hija de Cuba,* the change in reader perspective occurs within the text itself. Instead of critiquing any specific discourse or social/ political space of domination and control, this novels suggests that reading and writing can change us; that an understanding of the historical context in which literary work was produced can teach us; and that this process should be done in dialogue.

In *La Hija de Cuba,* María Elena Cruz Varela frames fictitious autobiographical memoirs of nineteenth century Cuban writer Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda with dialogue from a close personal friend of the author, Trinidad, and a metanarrative dialogue between Milagros, Trinidad's great-granddaughter and Ana Lucía Estevez, a literary historian researching Avellaneda's work. In *La Hija De Cuba*, politics and art are brought into dialogue through reflections on the relationship between the poetic language of artistic production and historical representation as well as how the oppositional language of race, class, and gender identities in the Spanish and Cuban context foment social and cultural marginalization. These issues are introduced through expository details included in Avellaneda's narrative that refer to the transcultural relationship between Avellaneda's family and African slaves, which she compares to the common cultural exchange between Cubans (*La Hija de Cuba* 56).

I compare Cruz Varela's form of autobiographical writing in dialogue, through which Ana Lucía (representative of the author herself) and Avellaneda are able to exchange, to Liz Stanley's proposal for a feminist auto/biography based on a model of writing as storytelling. Stanley explains: "The writer or author and the researcher are certainly not treated as transparent and or 'dead', but very much as agents actively at work in textual political production" (89). Cruz Varela elaborates on the auto/biography concept of dialogue between past and present through the characters of Trinidad and Milagros, also active participants in this exchange. In this way, the cross-class relationship between Avellaneda (Tula) and Trinidad (Trini) is presented as a historical example of differential subjectivities in collaboration, which will in turn influence the collaborative nature of the relationship developed between Ana Lucía and Milagros. Therefore Trini and Tula's relationship is presented as a precedent, through which the women were able to transcend social limitations of class and gender through storytelling/ writing that explores internalized forms of oppression, reflecting on the meaning of personal experiences and past events and learning to become the authors of their own story by confronting painful moments in their past in dialogue. By reading/ rewriting Tula's memoirs in dialogue with Trini's, and under the guidance of Milagros, Ana Lucía is able to identify with these women and learn to confront her own fears and self-victimization. Ana Lucía's metanarrative commentary narrates her own journey to a differential consciousness, learning to see herself through the experiences and relationships of these women and transcend her own self-pity and fear in the process; eventually collaborating with Milagros and her ex-lover Marcos to protect the memoirs from pirates who threaten to steal them[37].

Cruz Varela uses the historiographic metafiction to place Avellaneda's autobiography in a context of relationship told from the perspective of the author herself and from the narrative

point of view of a close personal friend, Trinidad Anzuaga, who transcribes Avellaneda's memoirs, writing in her own story as she reflects on the ways that her friendship with the author has changed her life and work. Exiled from Cuba for the polemic nature of her writing and political activism, Cruz Varela currently resides in Spain, where, like Avellaneda, her work has been published and celebrated. As Betancourt explains, for Cuban women writers, Avellaneda is "the mother," or a pioneer in translating feminist, anti-racist, and transnational themes into literary language (13-14). I will briefly explore the tropic and thematic similarities between Avellaneda and Cruz Varela's work through a brief comparative study of Avellaneda's novel *Sab* (1839). In *Foundational Fictions,* Doris Sommer argues that in *Sab,* Avellaneda establishes a literary/ textual identification with Sab, the novel protagonist "through their shared productive function, their literary labor conditioned in both by the need to subvert and to reconstruct. The obscure slave represents the privileged novelist because both vent their passions by writing and because their literary slippages destabilize the rhetorical system that constrains them" (114-15). Sommer's proposal suggests that Avellaneda herself used the differential strategy of identity deterritorialization in *Sab* through writing from his perspective, which she is presumed to share.

It is important to note that the concept of feminist genealogy here differs significantly from my use of the term in the previous two chapters of this study. Autobiographical and literary parallels and similarities characterize the relationship between Cruz Varela and Avellaneda, while Alvarez and Santos-Febres reconstruct literary and cultural representations of historical actors who did not produce literary works. Therefore, the dominant discourses of colonial and post-colonial Cuban culture will be examined according to their relationship with women's cultural production and its exclusion from the national canon with the understanding that the social and political challenges faced by Avellaneda in her time and Cruz Varela's contemporary

context are quite different. I propose that Cruz Varela suggests that, in spite of these differences, Avellaneda's foundational dissidence of identity through her contradictory positioning as a woman/writer who maintained a close cross-class friendship with another woman, is of value as a model for social, cultural, and political strategy through differential subjectivities. Similarly, *La Hija de Cuba* clarifies that Avellaneda's work has a clear social and historical context and is strongly political; in other words that her work was intended to influence her audience and their ideas. I will use Betancourt's literary framework in my elaboration of the concept of feminist genealogy used in this chapter, which is different from Alexander and Mohanty's anti-capitalist feminist genealogy framework used for my study of *In the Time of the Butterflies* and *Nuestra Señora de la Noche*. In the auto/biography form, feminist genealogy is a conceptual framework and narrative structure (Stanley 89). Avellaneda's story, originally told to Trinidad and transcribed/ rewritten is passed down to her daughter Matilde and her great-grandaughter Milagros (Mila), and from Mila to Ana Lucía, who is visiting Madrid to study Romanticism and Avellaneda. According to Mila's will, the original text must be transcribed/ rewritten by Ana and Mila before it can be published, adding a third layer of autobiography, dialogue, and experiential/ existential reflection to the narrative. Writing, rewriting, and reflecting on one's own life in *La Hija de Cuba* is also a vehicle for establishing personal relationships akin to the bonds between family members (mother-daughter and sisterly bonds) amongst friends. Through writing, these women are empowered to become the authors of their own story and participate in an examination of internalized oppressions collectively, by identifying with the many similarities that characterize the experience of the women in the narrative.

Cruz Varela's recuperation of Avellaneda is both historical and literary, using the historiographic metafiction format to place the author's life in a historical context that elaborates

her numerous contributions to artistic and cultural production as well as the limitations she faced in both Cuba and Spain as a woman and writer. In the historical figure of Avellaneda, Cruz Varela initiates a feminist genealogy of "de-canonizing voices" that struggle against normative masculinity and the masculinization of knowledge and artistic production. Richard explains: "Language, history, and tradition are not unbreakable totalities but rather provisionary juxtapositions of multiple accounts that do not coincide, juxtapositions in which various historical meanings struggle against each other in battles between material and interpretive codes" (25). According to Richard, voices that participate in any anti-hegemonic challenge to the masculine norms of knowledge and culture and resisted traditional forms of cultural production and representation have the capacity to "reframe the canon": "Recovering those *decanonizing* voices (including the masculine ones) for women's benefit, and weaving antiofficial pacts with them, is as vital as reforming and resignifying the canon under the pressure of heterodox readings that subvert and pluralize the norm of literary knowledge" (25). By recuperating Avellaneda as a foundational literary figure, Cruz Varela proposes a new feminist genealogy of voices that does not present itself as an exhaustive representation of Cuban women writers, but is anti-canonical to the extent that it invites and extends its parameters through personal relationships cultivated through writing. Cruz Varela's feminist genealogy in *La Hija de Cuba* is also anti-canonical in its dialogic form, incorporating the popular voices of women who were not of artistic renown, but maintained close relationships with Avellaneda. These relationships model the differential subjectivity that I suggest the authors of this study strive to inspire in their readership. Betancourt identifies the lyrical strategies in Cruz Varela's poetry that aim to politically mobilize her readership as a "poetics of convocation", obviously here I apply these ideas to her narrative (89-113).

By bringing Avellaneda's renown into an autobiographical dialogue, Cruz Varela destabilizes hegemonic notions of art and literature as "the superior and universal expression of refined individuality" by returning this narrative form to the hands of the people, presenting writing as a collective endeavor where spiritual renewal is made possible through physical proximity and rewriting as a dialogic process[38]. Here the act of writing and storytelling are liberating- they allow the participants the opportunity to cultivate their own voice, reflect on the significance of the events throughout their lives, and come to a greater understanding of the similarities and differences that characterize experience, which changes their perspective through the opportunity to see the world though another's eyes. The narrative form used in *La Hija de Cuba* combines the physical proximity between storyteller and listener characteristic of oral narratives with the act of writing. The novel structure suggests that it is only in the context of personal relationships that the act of writing an autobiographical text acquires its liberating potential to free individuals from the isolation of personal experience and bring them into a community of voices. Cruz Varela's concept of community in *La Hija de Cuba* is not restricted to the patriarchal domains of family, nation, or ideological partisanship, rather its intimate and personal tone clarifies how identification with others is often inspired by external factors that marginalize identities according to the normative parameters of membership in these communities. Trini and Tula demonstrate their refusal to consent to the limitations of these norms by creating a discursive space for a dialogic and personal form of writing that reflects the transformative potential of confronting one's most intimate fears by exposing them to others and learning to love oneself by exposing and embracing the aspects of identity that one is most ashamed of.

Therefore, generations are understood in terms of a collective influence and inspiration rooted in the initial act of storytelling that takes place between Trini and Avellaneda. Avellaneda's influence on Trini's life was made manifest through teaching her to read and write and empowering her to tell her own story, while Trini physically and emotionally comforts Tula and reflects on how Avellaneda's dramatic choices were often the cause of the unhappy life that she led. Trini, in contrast, has a balanced and humble perspective and a rather happy life. Trini is emotionally and intellectually indebted to Avellaneda and refers to learning to read and write as a miracle, comparable to the miracle of love that Trini finds in her spouse (*La hija de Cuba* 78-9). By giving Trini the gift of writing, Avellaneda invites her to participate in a dialogue that is intellectual and personal, and which attests to the important role of friendship within their women's lives.

There is also a metanarrative layer of interpretation provided by Ana, who has been studying Avellaneda's life and work and is finally able to answer some questions about Avellaneda's personal life that have been haunting her, a signal that these are also questions that other academics and intellectuals that have studied her work have raised (*La hija de Cuba* 167-68, 232-33). The ultimate goal, of transcribing the document for publication, must first be realized on a personal level, where the intimate relationship that she cultivates with doña Mila changes her own perspective from that of an academic researching details of the author's life to one of an artist who explores another author's work and is changed by the experience (*La hija de Cuba* 234-35). Therefore, history has an important and empowering impact on Ana, and the relationship that she develops with Mila, also empowers her to be bold and confront her fear of emotional intimacy and relationships, manifested in her complicated feelings for her lover Marcos, who becomes involved in the story.

La Hija de Cuba contrasts Avellaneda and Trini's narrative perspectives in order to demonstrate how Trini's inner freedom liberates her to comfort and counsel Avellaneda through her struggle with the tragic results of her dramatic and self-destructive emotions. Trini is thus able to reflect on Avellaneda's participation in her own suffering, which Avellaneda is unable to recognize and control throughout her life: "A veces podía atajar las penas que solían amenazarla desde fuera, pero era incapaz de derrotar al adversario de Gertrudis: ella misma, su temperamento impulsiva y su rara vocación por la tragedia" (*La Hija de Cuba* 232). On her death bed at the end of the novel, Avellaneda is finally able to recognize her self-destructive behaviors as the cause of her suffering and tells Trini "El mayor egoísmo de los seres humanos se manifiesta en los dos extremos de las emociones: la felicidad y el dolor, y yo no fui la excepción, Trini. Creí que tu vida era mucho mejor que la mía… Siempre has sabido dónde se encuentra tu centro. Cuando sufres o cuando eres feliz, no te pierdes en los extremos" (*La Hija de Cuba* 311). While Avellaneda comes to realize the truth about her own power to control her life's tragic bent too late, her experience inspires Ana Lucía to reflect on her own life and learn from Avellaneda's suffering.

From a metatextual perspective, Ana, as the re-writer/ transcriber of Avellaneda's story in collaboration with Mila, identifies with Avellaneda's dramatic emotions and uses them to reflect on her own self-destructive fears. As Trini had counseled Avellaneda, Mila challenges Ana to overcome her fears by identifying them and learning to control them. The moment of this identification of self on other from Ana's perspective:

> Pensativa, Ana Lucía registra en su interior, buscando la zona en que las sabias palabras de doña Mila reverberan, recordándole que sí, que ella también ha caído muchas, demasiadas veces, en el estúpido juego de verdugos y víctimas, sin

> atreverse a plantar cara a sus maniobras secretas, tan secretas que ni siquiera ella era capaz de detectarlas, hasta que con el agua al cuello caía de rodillas suplicando la piedad y la ayuda de quien Todo lo puede (*La Hija de Cuba* 233).

It is important to note that while Ana is inspired by Avellaneda's experience to identify and address her self-doubt and fears, she is equally inspired by Mila and Trini's wisdom to control them (*La hija de Cuba* 233). As Betancourt observes, in Cruz Varela's poetry, the author uses her poetic voice to expose her own weaknesses: "Publicly accepting her vulnerability becomes a persuasive strategy; it is proof that it is possible to achieve the state of inner freedom that is an essential prerequisite before one can take up the struggle for collective freedom" (111). Ana Lucía is able to expose her vulnerabilities once she has recognized herself in all of the women involved in the autobiography and recognized that her relationship of love and trust with Milagros inspires her to temper her own emotions and frustrations (233). In *La Hija de Cuba,* the act of re-writing Avellaneda's autobiography as part of one's own story is an ongoing process of realizing a differential subjectivity in dialogue[39]. As Betancourt explains, Cruz Varela's writing uses tropes of proximity and identification that aim to inspire her readership to collective action: "All of the strategies put into practice by this writer enter into her search for contact with her audience that will allow her to speak for the other, or to the other as directly as possible" (90). Writing is an ideal space for the construction of a feminist genealogy that challenges hegemonic dualisms by freeing the authorial voice from assumptions rooted in physicality. In *La Hija de Cuba,* writing facilitates identification amongst kindred "souls," who use writing to elaborate their spiritual identity, a complex identity that is formed through relationships with others and reflecting on corporeality selectively, through the elaboration of experiences that have provoked feelings of isolation and hurt. Through the construction of new, complex forms of identity, Cruz

Varela challenges readers to re-evaluate their own terms of identification and participate in the process of constructing an identity that is fluid and dialogic, or open to change through relationships.

As intellectual and woman, Avellaneda was a contradiction during her time due to her equal loyalty to Cuba and Spain and her refusal to identify with a model of femininity that limits women's roles to the domestic sphere (*La Hija de Cuba* 74, 179). In the novel, Avellaneda addresses normative oppositional masculinity and femininity as a means of privileging men through associating masculinity with intellectual work and enslaving women as domestic laborers so that the superior nature of the feminine soul and intellect would not threaten masculine hegemony (*La Hija de Cuba* 174, 195). Throughout the novel, writing has an expressive function in Avellaneda's life, empowering her to contribute to intellectual thought and artistic production, cultural realms traditionally restricted to men.

Cruz Varela appears to suggest that Avellaneda's most defiant refusal to consent to normative femininity was through writing, which she also saw as a path for identification and empowerment for Trini and others of her class. Avellaneda remarks that her parents supported her education and intellectual growth and that her mother manifested her own refusal to consent through unconditional support for her daughter's non-traditional behavior (*La Hija de Cuba* 44, 45). Avellaneda teaches Trini to read and write and liberates her from an abusive and controlling father by inviting her to join her own family, while Trini provides spiritual and emotional counsel to Avellaneda, inspiring her to learn to control her emotional extremes and find happiness (*La Hija de Cuba* 68-69, 139-144). Trini and Tula learn that relationships with other marginalized social actors empower them to confront and transcend the oppressions of self and the social limitation of class and gender.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Julia Alvarez's *In the Time of the Butterflies,* Mayra Santos-Febres' *Nuestra Señora de la Noche,* and María Elena Cruz Varela's *La Hija de Cuba* are fictional biographies of historical women from the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and Cuba that *speak out against* the dehumanizing effects of national identity discourses in their respective national contexts by *speaking up from* a discursive position that has been silenced or appropriated within these discourses. In this study I proposed that these novels constitute a form of writing historically and auto/biographically, constructing a feminist genealogy of resistance that recuperates the voices of these historical women in the interest of understanding the present social reality and working toward a more democratic future. This form of writing as decolonization is rooted in the philosophy of Levinas who spoke of oppression based on his experiences as a prisoner during the Holocaust. Levinas' reconsideration of the relationship between Being and Other in his philosophy of ethics claimed that human beings cannot know the other outside of a relationship that brings their worldview into dialogue with our own. Freire elaborates this dialectical relationship between self and other proposed by Levinas as a pedagogical approach to psychological liberation from the discourses of colonialism through dialogue: critical reflection, action, and recreation. Freire's important contribution to the strategies of Lorde and the feminism that would evolve in dialogue with her work is his proposal that writing is a means of engaging oppressed individuals in dialogues that would reflect, engage, and recreate knowledge of a shared cultural past excluded from historical discourses, while

fostering one's own subjectivity through action and self-definition outside of traditional structures. Lorde brings these ideas into the context of feminist struggles, calling for writing practices that "define and empower" rather than "divide and conquer," acknowledging the creative interplay of differences among "self-actualized individuals" engaged in a dialogic exchange of ideas and action.

Lorde's suggestion that we learn to identify with "those others identified as outside the structures in order to define and seek a world where we can all flourish" constitutes a challenge to understanding the potential for social change through collaboration outside of the institutional parameters and its mode of oppositional containment. *In the Time of the Butterflies, Nuestra Señora de la noche,* and *La Hija de Cuba* contribute to a growing body of written knowledge rooted in liberation through self-determination as an alternative to negotiating an externally imposed identity within the Western discourses from which the colonialist worldview originated. Within this worldview, externally imposed identities place individuals within social hierarchies according to race class and gender coordinates that correspond to a set of behaviors and an essential self. Through this division, individuals become distanced from knowledge accessed through feelings and emotions that remind them of the shared humanity of all people. Writing that reminds individuals of this truth by writing outside of these coordinates presents readers with the possibility of defining oneself in terms of how one lives this fundamental belief in different ways that fight to change a worldview that dehumanizes.

As the title and focus of this study suggest, identity is what locates us ideologically from any perspective, colonized and oppressed or decolonized and free to see ourselves outside of the ideological anchors that position us within relationships of domination and subordination. As I reflect and summarize my understanding of these novels as literary examples of the decolonizing

feminism proposed by Third World feminist theorists, I see that presenting identities capable of change is the first and most important step in any struggle for decolonization.

Alvarez, Santos-Febres, and Cruz Varela participate in this legacy by weaving the historical voices of the Mirabals, Luberza, and Avellaneda into a web of decolonizing resistance to the dehumanizing and exploitative effects of colonialism. In doing so, they reclaim their voices as part of a feminist genealogy of counter-hegemonic struggles and bring their own lives and perspectives into this dialogue. By rewriting the voices of these historical women silenced with the discourses of national identity, reincorporating the erotic and maternal aspects of femininity and subjectivity, and redefining the self in dialogic terms, these novels return to the past in the interest of the present and future.

WORKS CITED

Aching, Gerard. *Politics of Spanish American Modernismo: By Exquisite Design.* NY: Cambridge UP, 1997.

Adjarian, M.M. *Allegories of Desire: Body, Nation, and Empire in Modern Caribbean Literature by Women.* Westport: Praeger, 2004.

Alegre Barrios, Mario. "Al desnudo Mayra Santos-Febres." *El Nuevo Día* 22 August 2005, Vida y Estilo.

Alexander, M. Jacqui and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, eds. *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures.* NY: Routledge, 1997.

Alvarez, Julia. *In the Time of the Butterflies.* NY: Plume, 1995.

---. *Something to Declare*. NY: Plume, 1999.

Aparicio, Frances R. *Listening to Salsa: Gender, Latin Popular Music and Puerto Rican Cultures.* Hanover: Wesleyan UP, 1998.

Arroyo León, Pablo. "En casa 'Nuestra señora de la noche." *El Nuevo Día* 23 June 2006, Flash!

Barceló-Miller, María de Fátima. "Halfharted Solidarity: Women Workers and the Women's Suffrage Movement in Puerto Rico During the 1920's." *Puerto Rican Women's History: New Perspectives.* Eds. Félix V. Matos-Rodríguez and Linda C. Delgado. Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1998. 126-142.

Betancourt, Madeline Cámara. *Cuban Women Writers: Imagining a Matria.* NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Birmingham-Pokorny, Elba D. "The Page on Which Life Writes Itself: A Conversation with Mayra Santos Febres." *Daughters of the Diaspora: Afra-Hispanic Writers.* ed. Miriam DeCosta-Willis. Miami: I. Randle, 2003. 451-461.

Boal, Augusto. *Theatre of the Oppressed.* Trans. Charles A. & Maria-Odilia Leal McBride. 1979. New York: Theater Communications Group, 1985. Print.

Brown, Isabel Zakrewski. "Historiographic Metafiction in *In the Time of the Butterflies*." *South Atlantic Review* 64.2 (1999): 98-112. Print.

Capetillo, Luisa. *A Nation of Women: An Early Feminist Speaks Out.* Ed. Félix V. Matos-Rodríguez. Houston: Arte Público Press, 2004.

Caminero-Santangelo, Marta. "Contesting the Boundaries of Exile: Latino/A Literature." *World Literature Today* 74.3 (2000): 507-517. Print.

Cruz Varela, Maria Elena. *La hija de Cuba.* Madrid: Ediciones Martinez Roca, SA, 2006.

Del Rosso, Jeana. "The Convent as Colonialist: Catholicism in the Works of Contemporary Women Writers of the Americas." *Melus* 26.3 (2001): 183-201.

Ferré, Rosario. "¿Por qué Isabel quiere a los hombres?" *El coloquio de las perras.* Harrisonburg: Editorial Cultural, 1990. 111-115.

---. *Las Puertas del Placer.* Guaynabo, PR: Ediciones Santillana, Inc, 2005.

Flores, Juan. "The Insular Vision: Pedreira and the Puerto Rican Misère." *Divided Borders: Essays on Puerto Rican Identity.* Houston: Arte Público Press, 1993. 13-60.

---. "Bumbún' and the Beginnings of *Plena* Music." *Divided Borders: Essays on Puerto Rican Identity.* Houston: Arte Público Press, 1993. 85-91.

Foucault, Michel. "Of Other Spaces." 1967.

Franco, Jean. “Dependency Theory and Literary History: The Case of Latin America.” *The Minnesota Review* 5 (1975): 65-80.

Freire. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* 1970.

García Ramís, Magali. "No queremos a la virgen." *El tramo ancla: Ensayos puertorriqueños de hoy*. 1988. Río Piedras: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2003. 65-69.

Gelpí, Juan G. *Literatura y paternalismo en Puerto Rico.* San Juan: La Editorial Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2005.

Hiddleston, Jane. *Understanding Postcolonialism.* Stocksfield: Acumen Press, 2009.

Hutcheon, Linda. *Poetics of Postmodernism.* NY: Routledge, 1988.

Ink, Lynn Chunk. "Remaking Identity, Unmaking Nation: Historical Recovery and the Reconstruction of Community in *In the Time of the Butterflies and the Farming of Bones*." *Callaloo* 27.3 (2004): 788-807.

Janer, Zilkia. *Puerto Rican Nation-Building Literature: Impossible Romance.* Gainesville: UP of Florida, 2005.

Jefferess, David. *Postcolonial Resistance: Culture, Liberation, and Transformation.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008.

Kadison Berson. *Marching to a Different Drummer: Unrecognized Heroes of American History.* Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994.

Kaminsky, Amy. "Gender, Race, *Raza*." *Feminist Studies* 20.1 (1994): 7-31.

---. *After Exile.* Minneapolis: U Minnesota P, 1999.

Keating, AnaLouise. *Women Reading Women Writing.* Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1996.

Kutzinski, Vera M. *Sugar’s Secrets: Race and the Erotics of Cuban Nationalism.* Charlotteville: UP of VA, 1993.

Lorde, Audre. "The Master's Tools will Never Dismantle the Master's House." *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader.* Eds. Reina Lewis & Sara Mills. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2003. 25-28.

---. *Sister Outsider.* Freedom, CA: Crossing Press, 1984.

Matos-Rodríguez, Félix V. "¿Quién trabajará?: Domestic Workers, Urban Slaves, and the Abolition of Slavery in Puerto Rico." *Puerto Rican Women's History: New Perspectives.* Eds. Félix V. Matos-Rodríguez and Linda C. Delgado. Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1998. 62-82.

---. *Women and Urban Change in San Juan, Puerto Rico, 1820-1868.* Gainesville: Univiversity Press of Florida, 1999.

---. "Women's History in Puerto Rican Historiography: The Last Thirty Years." *Puerto Rican Women's History: New Perspectives.* Eds. Félix V. Matos-Rodríguez and Linda C. Delgado. Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1998. 9-37.

Messinger-Cypress, Sandra. "Tradition and Innovation in the Writings of Puerto Rican Women." *Out of the Kumbla: Caribbean Women and Literature.* Eds. Carole Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido. Trenton: Africa World Press, 1990. 75-88.

Moraga, Cherríe. "From a Long Line of Vendidas." *Theorizing Feminism: Parallel Trends in the Humanities and Social Sciences.* Eds. Anne C. Hermann & Abagail Stewart. Boulder: Westview Press, 1994. 38-55.

Pérez-Duthie, Juan C. "En pos de nuevos contextos culturales." *El Nuevo Día* 24 November 2006, Flash!

Patterson, Richard F. "Resurrecting Rafael: Fictional Incarnations of a Dominican Dictator." *Callaloo* 29.1 (2006): 223-237. Print.

Pratt, Mary Louise. "Women, Literature, and National Brotherhood." *Women, Culture, and Politics in Latin America.* Eds. Emille Bergmann, et al. Berkeley: U of California P, 1990. 48-73.

Rich, Charlotte. "Talking Back to El Jefe: Genre, Polyphony, and Dialogic Resistance in Julia Alvarez's *In the Time of the Butterflies* and *In the Name of Salomé.*" *Melus* 27.4 (2002): 165-182.

Richard, Nelly. *Masculine/ Feminine: Practice(s) of Difference.* Trans. Silvia R. Tandeciarz & Alice A. Nelson. Durham: Duke UP, 2004.

Rosell, Sara. *La novela de escritoras domincanas de 1990-2007*. New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2007.

Roy-Feriqué, Magali. "Contested Territory: Puerto Rican Women, Creole Identity, and Intellectual Life in the Early Twentieth Century." *Callaloo* 17.3 (1994): 916-934.

Said, Edward. *Orientalism.* New York: Random House, 1978.

Sandoval, Chela. "US Third World Feminism: the Theory and Method of Oppositional Conciousness in the Postmodern World." *Genders* 10 (1991): 1-24.

Santos-Febres, Mayra. *Nuestra Señora de la Noche.* Espasa: Madrid, 2006.

---. *Sobre Piel y Papel.* San Juan: Ediciones Callejón, 2005. 119-123.

Santos-Febres, Mayra. E-mail interview. 15 May 2007.

Sommer, Doris. *One Master for Another: Populism as Patriarchal Rhetoric in Dominican Novels.* Lanham: UP of America, 1983.

---. *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America.* Berkeley: U California P, 1991.

Stanley, Liz. "Sisters Under the Skin? Oral Histories and Auto/Biographies." *Oral History* 2.22 (1994): 88-89.

Suárez Findlay, Eileen J. *Imposing Decency: The Politics of Sexuality and Race in Puerto Rico, 1870-1920.* Durham: Duke UP, 1999.

Trinh T. Minh-ha. *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism.* Bloomingtom: Indiana UP, 1989.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW MAYRA SANTOS-FEBRES

Escribí las preguntas y la autora contestó a través de correo electrónico. Luego tuve la oportunidad de conocerla y charlar sobre su hijo (y el que viene), las madres puertorriqueñas y su próximo proyecto.

JF: He leído varios estudios que se interesen por su uso de las figuras históricas y la biografía en *Anamú y manigua*. Allí usted había comentado la presencia de éstas como parte integral de la construcción de la nación puertorriqueña. Su última novela, *Nuestra Señora de la noche* narra la vida de Isabel la Negra, figura histórica y parte familiar en la cultura popular. Además de la gran diferencia entre el género literario (poemario/ novela), ¿Hay semejanza entre las dos obras y su lugar dentro de la literatura puertorriqueña?

MS: No sé ni cómo contestarte esta pregunta, ya que yo soy la que escribo las obras, no quien las clasifico. Pero bueno, aquí voy.

Mi elección de figuras históricas tiene un poco que ver con mi selección de ancestros. Lo hago así por que soy una negra caribeña, es decir, una afro-diaspórica con todo ese bagaje filosófico e cómo se construye una subjetividad colectiva de manera reticular (ver a Edouard Glissant en d "Poetiques de la relation" y estudiar algo del culto a los ancestros en las religiones yoruba). Y como la esclavitud rompió los hilos de la historia, entonces, selecciono mi familia. Trazo una línea imaginaria que incluye a mi mamá, a mis abuelas, a Julia de Burgos, Manuel Ramos Otero,

Albizu, Lolita, Isabel La Negra, a Yemayá a Cangó, a María Magdalena, a La Lupe, etc. Por lo tanto, me sitúo fuera de las líneas patriarcales y de la nación (es decir que abjuro de ser la hija de los padres de la Patria) pero creo otra genealogía que empata biografía con historia, personaliza a la una y contextualiza en tiempo y espacios reticulares a la otra.

No sé qué lugar ocupan mis obras dentro de la historia y el canon de literatura puertorriqueña. Espero que alguno.

No creo que haya tanta diferencia entre la poesía y la novela. Creo, de hecho en que son los dos géneros literarios que más se me parecen. Que una lleva a la otra.

JF: Un artículo en el periódico El Nuevo Día sobre la presentación de su novela comenta que la idea "nació del deseo de buscar como se formó la familia puertorriqueña", a través de la historia de la famosa madame. ¿Considera que la obra ofrece una revisión de los discursos de la identidad puertorriqueña que provenía de las generaciones de escritores anteriores?

MS: Sabes qué, tengo ganas de contradecirme. Tengo ganas de decirte que no creo en la identidad puertorriqueña, que creo en las identidades cruzadas que se encuentran en este lugar que es la isla de Puerto Rico. Mientras más pienso, más me doy cuenta de que eso es lo que quiero decir. Usé el término familia en ese sentido popular de la ascepción, es decir en esa familia compuesta por madres y abuelas y comadres y vecinos y gente que no es de sangre pero que llega a serlo al afrontar vicisitudes juntos. Esa es la familia de la cual hablo en *Nuestra Señora.*

Además, tengo ganas de decirte una cosa terrible, decirte "en todas las historias de las naciones hay una puta fundadora". Pienso en Evita Perón, en las madres fundadoras de la nación

norteamericana, la mayoría putas. Pienso en La Malinche, mujer vendida como cosa a Cortés. Me gusta pensar en la historia desde esa perspectiva, no la del "padre" legítimo de la patria, sino desde ese rincón oculto de la Puta escondida que parió a la nación.

JF: La novela protagoniza a Isabel Luberza Oppenheimer, pero es narrado por una multiplicidad de voces. ¿Qué función narrativa tiene esta diversidad de perspectivas?

MS: Cuando acometo grandes proyectos narrativos, la voz que mejor me cuadra es la del indirecto libre. Me deja fluir de cabeza en cabeza. No ser omnisciente, pero no dejar de serlo. No tener autoridad sino cercanía con los personajes. Me deja saltar fácilmente, o más bien, deslizarme hacia el diálogo y la digresión histórica y poética. Me gustaría usar el indirecto libre de una manera tan genial como logró hacerlo Virginia Woolf, pero bueno, ahí voy tirando.

JF: En su ensayo "Raza en la cultura puertorriqueña", escribe sobre las representaciones de lo negro en el canon literario puertorriqueño y menciona en particular al cuento corto de Rosario Ferré "Cuando las mujeres quieren a los hombres", en el cual "el [mundo] de la mujer negra brilla por su ausencia". ¿Dialoga con esta representación de Isabel Luberza en su novela?

MS: Obviamente.

JF: En una entrevista mencionó que la novela *Nuestra Señora* formaría parte de una serie de novelas sobre " famous and infamous black women in Puerto Rico". ¿Sobre quien más le interesa escribir? ¿Protagonizaría alguna de las mujeres mencionadas en Anamú y manigua?

MS: Esta pregunta no te la puedo contestar porque me traiciona. Espera, que por ahí viene esas mujeres protagónicas.

JF: Otro artículo de El Nuevo Día (6/8/2006 "En pos de nuevos contextos culturales" Juan C. Pérez-Duthie) comenta "Mayra le ha dado representación al negro en nuestra literatura, pero no como una figura folklórica y 'exótica' sino como una insertada en un entorno social, con su historia, sus luchas y sus contradicciones". ¿Cómo se vincula esta representación con los cambios que le gustaría ver al nivel social?

MS: Sartre decía en "Qué es la literatura" que escribir al mundo, nombrarlo, era una manera de transformarlo. Que uno buscaba que lo ya sabido, lo ya concienciado transformara las percepciones del mundo y del entorno social. Yo quiero incidir en mi sociedad. Esa es una de las razones por las cuales escribo.

JF: ¿Quién le interesa tener como público lector?

MS: Al mundo entero hasta el final de los tiempos

Jennifer Formwalt

5/15/2007

BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTES

[1] Stinchcomb notes: “Though some Dominicans feared that any protectorate arrangement [with Spain or the United States] would threaten their way of life, the Spanish Creoles were more concerned about a black occupation than white imperialist control” (25).

[2] Stincomb explains: “Unlike what occurred in other countries of Spanish America, Dominican literature’s interest in independence emerged from a desire to be free of any association with its black history, or more specifically, the presence of Africans in the Dominican Republic” (18).

[3] “From the conquest through the 1870’s the Dominican Republic had one of the most spectacularly unstable histories in all of Latin America” (Sommer, *Foundational Fictions* 249).

[4] Howard also notes “the violent imposition of European culture upon African slave labor reduced the possibilities for the transfer of material culture from Africa to the colonies” (22).

[5] Chanan writes: “Villaverde gave literary shape to an already-existing myth in the social world of the time: Cecilia is the *mulatta blanconaza*- the mulatta woman who is able to pass for white- and the queen of the *pardos y morenos* (mulattos and blacks) of her neighborhood, possessed of a special beauty and vivaciousness supposedly born of her racial mix, whose feminine charm, being her only tool for social improvement, thereby condemns her to serve as a carnal attraction to rich, young white men. She is, of course, doubly positioned, an object of sexist manipulation and of racial prejudice. A femme fatale lacking the virtues that “society” required of its wives, her social career traverses the stages of the flirtatious, desire, passion and jealousy, but she never escapes the condition of discrimination. In short, as the personification of Cuban feminine beauty, she represents, on one hand, a tacit acknowledgement by all social classes of the blackness in Cuban blood, and, on the other, a figure of tragedy” (Chanan 390).

[6] As Brown notes, "The vastly documented history of the Trujillo era makes scant reference to the Mirabal sisters… The tendency in these works is to merely mention the sisters' legendary beauty and the tragedy of their 'accidental' deaths" (110).

[7] It is important to clarify that the concept of democracy in post-dictatorial Dominican Republic is modeled after the discourse of United States Democracy, which is inextricably tied to the values and beliefs of capitalism (Alexander and Mohanty xxx-xxxi). Here, the United States ideology of democracy will be examined as a discourse of imperial power that perpetuates socio-economic inequalities inherited from colonialism and uses the defense of human rights to justify military intervention in Third World countries when United States political or economic power has been threatened (Alexander and Mohanty xxxi).

[8] As Richard notes: “Another task of this criticism is the antihegemonic struggle against the division and parceling out of cultural power. This power follows multiple paths- traced by *imposed* or *negotiated* boundaries- that survey and cross diverse maps of identity and social thought: demarcating territories, establishing checkpoints and zones of influence that regulate the system's borders as a place from which to debate the tension of limits that include or exclude” (2).

[9] Rosell notes "A partir del ajusticiamiento del Trujillo las mujeres comienzan a entretejer su historia personal con la nacional, rompiendo así el silencio al que se vieron sometidas por el régimen y su tradicional exclusión de la historia literaria" (*Narradoras dominicanas* 35-6).

[10] Alvarez recognizes that her own double positioning as an American citizen and Dominican political exile is one of contradiction due to the role of the United States in Trujillo’s rise to power: “But this great country that had offered my parents a refuge had also created the circumstances that made them have to seek refuge in the first place. It was this same United States that had helped put our dictator in place during their occupation of the country from 1916-1924” (*Something to Declare* 108).

[11] Alvarez writes: “Long after we left, my parents were still living in the dictatorship in their own heads. Even on American soil they were afraid of awful consequences if they spoke out or disagreed with the authorities. The First Amendment right to free speech meant nothing to them” (*Something to Declare* 108).

[12] As Alexander and Mohanty note: “One concrete task that feminist educators, activists, scholars, and artists face is that of historicizing and denaturalizing the ideas, beliefs, and values of global capital such that underlying exploitative social relations and structures are made visible" (xxi).

[13] Three episodes in *In the Time of the Butterflies* that parodically incorporate texts of Trujillo's official fictions are featured in “Part I” and “Part II” of *In the Time of the Butterflies.* Minerva's sarcastic remarks foreshadow her public insubordination to Trujillo at the Discovery Day Dance, where her remarks and observations unmask the fiction of the race, class, and gender tropes of the *trujillato.* Close personal contact with Trujillo reveals the dictator's use of white make-up to cover his Haitian ancestry: "El Jefe studies me as attendants dab at his dripping pancake"; sarcastic comments about the ceremony highlight his fictitious European ancestry: "After the toast, the Spanish ambassador presents this illustrious descendent of the great Conquistador with yet another medal"; and his effeminate vanity: "Trujillo met him on one of those shopping trips he periodically makes to the States to order his elevator shoes, his skin-whiteners and creams, his satin sashes and rare bird plumes for his bicorn Napoleonic hats" (95-100).

[14] She writes: "I long to see Papá, whom I haven't seen in three whole months!" and "He calls me his little secretary". Mate's adoration of her father is made clear throughout her early entries (32, 35). She shows similar adoration of Trujillo: "I am taking these few minutes to wish El Jefe a Happy Benefactor's Day with all my heart. I feel so luck to have him for a president. I am even

born the same month he is (October) and only nine days (and forty-four years!) apart. I keep thinking it shows something special about my character" (37).

[15] "I am not saying I don't love our president, because I do. Its like if I were to find out that Papá did something wrong. I would still love him, wouldn't I?" (40).

[16] I hesitate to use the term "ignorant", but find it preferable to saying "uneducated" as the Catholic parishioners I refer to are *educated* in dogmatic Catholicism.

[17] Del Rosso's study examines how Alvarez and other women authors paradoxically present the church as "a vehicle of repression, subversion, or liberation": "I propose that such writers, often living on the margins of dominant hegemonies themselves, not only cross the perimeters of nationhood, but also explore, resist, and negotiate the confines of American understandings of Catholicism, rereading the religion in terms of gender, class, and ethnicity" ("Convent as Colonialist" 184-85).

[18] When the sisters ask her about her decision to dedicate her life to God, Patria recalls, "I felt so sorry to disappoint her, and yet I felt there was nothing to apologize for. My spirit was finally descending into flesh, and there was more, not less, of me to praise God" (49).
[19] Minerva remarks, "Trujillo was doing all the crazy things of a trapped animal. In church in a drunken stupor, he had seized the chalice and dispensed communion to his frightened attendants. The pope was talking about excommunication" (267).

[20] "I wanted to start believing in my fellow Dominicans again. Once the goat was a bad memory in our past, that would be the real revolution we would have to fight: forgiving each other for what we had all let come to pass" (*In the Time of the Butterflies* 222).

[21] Mayra says: "Why do I write? Mainly because I cannot stop doing it, nor can I imagine doing anything else with more passion or purpose. There is nothing else that makes sense to me, nothing that nourishes me more. Words are the medium through which I understand the worlds I inhabit, visit, or dream about. So basically, I write because I have to. It is the way in which I live this life of mine" (Interview Birmingham-Pokorny).

[22] "Queriendo ser europeos o gringos sin serlo, nos hemos definido como pocos, enfermos, incompletos. A los negros nos definieron como salvajes, amenazantes, primitivos, ininteligibles. Causantes de la enfermedad que hoy es nuestra nacionalidad. Me parece que la supuesta enfermedad que aqueja a la identidad puertorriqueña no está en la presencia de lo negro sino en su negación" (*Sobre piel y papel* 160); Santos-Febres on *la pesadilla de folklore:* "La museificación y folklorización de lo negro, acompañado de una falta de discursividad y representación cotidiana tiene nefastos efectos. Faltándonos modelos históricos evidentes apoyados por el discurso oficial, las únicas presencias que quedan para emular son las de la criminalidad, las del racismo o las del folklore" (*Sobre piel y papel* 78).

[23] "El origen es una opción. Se toma como punto de partida , uno entre miles, y de ahí se escribe una historia. Pero una vez se echa a andar el cuento de la identidad, este cobra vida propia y se

va definiendo y redefiniendo a lo largo de una historia de preguntas y respuesta sociales" (*Sobre piel y papel* 143).

[24] "This book does not address the issue of the awakening of national consciousness, but of the ways in which Black women have always been Puerto Rican, because their/ our work is a thread in the construction of the nation. Maybe in critical analysis it is difficult to explain the ways in which race, gender, class and nation intersect, but in the lives of my mother, my grandmother and me, those identities go hand in hand and place us in a particular locus within the history of our country, of this planet. *Anamú y manigua* is an attempt to understand those places and to celebrate them" (Birmingham-Pokorny 451-461).

[25] "Mi elección de figuras históricas tiene un poco que ver con mi selección de ancestros. Lo hago así por que soy una negra caribeña, es decir, una afro-diaspórica con todo ese bagaje filosófico de cómo se construye una subjetividad colectiva de manera reticular (ver a Edouard Glissant en *Poetiques de la relation* y estudiar algo del culto a los ancestros en las religiones yoruba). Y como la esclavitud rompió los hilos de la historia, entonces, selecciono mi familia. Trazo una línea imaginaria que incluye a mi mamá, a mis abuelas, a Julia de Burgos, Manuel Ramos Otero, Albizu, Lolita, Isabel La Negra, a Yemayá a Cangó, a María Magdalena, a La Lupe, etc." (Interview).

[26] "For me gender is a definite point of departure for talking about politics. However, I cannot see it in a hierarchal way. I guess that is because the feminism that I practice comes from the Third World, and in the Third World the predominant way in which many women experience oppression is not gender. Sexual oppression is always linked to race, to class, to ethnicity, to sexual preference, to migratory status, to so many things. To pinpoint gender as a central element would be an error. My understanding of gender is intricately intertwined with my experiences of other oppressions, of colonialism, and also of the privileges that I have experienced as an intellectual, a writer, a college graduate, a financially independent women, etc." (Birmingham-Pokorny 458).

[27] "The body is the site of perception, the filter, and the page on which life writes itself. The body reflects the way in which history touches a person. If writing defies oblivion, if it is a way of constructing memory, then the body is the quintessential instrument of literature. All one has to do is try to translate what ones perceives through the senses into words. Without the body I cannot write, because I perceive the world through it. Needless to say I don't believe in that old mind-body separation" (Birmingham-Pokorny 457).

[28] As Findlay notes, plebian women often "resisted domestic violence through familial and informal community intervention, often calling on neighborhood networks of women" (Findlay 127).

[29] As a child, Isabel enjoys the freedom of her Madrina Maruca's work as a laundress outside of the domestic domain: "Adelante iba Madrina Maruca balanceando el inmenso lío de ropa en la cabeza. Derechita como un pájaro zancudo, hundía sus piernas largas en el camino, tensaba su cuello oscuro. Las telas ligeras de la cota que la cubrían ondeaban como plumas contra la brisa"

(44). Other laundresses that form part of the local community exchange friendly comments and gibes with Maruca: "Riéndose a carcajada lenta, Lucía, lavandera de San Antón, las alcanzó en el camino. De entre otros matorrales salieron Casilda de Merceditas, Carolina de Vista Alegre, Toñín de Constancia, todas con sus líos de ropa recién lavados, olorosas a agua de río y a sol" (45).

[30] Isabel's Tío Mariano, a violent and irresponsible drunk, had motivated Maruca's decision to send Isabel away at a very young age to work as a domestic servant for the Tous family: "Mariano miraba la niña Isabel de plano. Esas miradas le ponían intranquila; y no era a ella nada más. Madrina Maruca siempre se presenciaba cuando notaba a su hermano mirando a Isabel de aquella manera" (54).

[31] "En casa 'Nuestra señora de la noche" Pablo Arroyo Leon 7/23/2006

[32] Capetillo's texts are situated in a social context of the struggle for women's and worker's rights: "Her essays and dramatic pieces condemned the sexual double standard, religious hypocrisy and fanaticism, workers' exploitation and female oppression by the dominant patriarchal society. She also proclaimed the rights of women to universal suffrage and free love, and defended internationalism" (Messinger-Cypress 79-80).

[33] "En casa reinaban las mujeres de mi clan. La familia Febres dependía de estas mujeres para su supervivencia. De ellas aprendía reírme alto, a no aceptar ninguna negativa por respuesta, a nombrar mi deseo sin vergüenza. En mi casa ser mujer era otra cosa que convertirse en la criatura frágil que me enseñaron en la escuela. Las mujeres bailaban y bebían, le montaban casa a sus hombres y los botaban de allí si tenían que hacerlo; remendaban las caderas, pegaban carcajadas en medio de la calle y mantenía una familia con todos los trabajos que hicieron falta" (*Sobre piel y papel* 26).

[34] Juan G. Gelpí *Paternalismo en la literatura puertorriqueña*; Aparicio *Listening to Salsa*

[35] Aparicio writes "The author's personal and revealing essays examining the genesis of this story in Spanish titled "¿Por qué Isabel quiere a los hombres?" and in English "Why I wrote When Women Love Men"- evince its canonized status as one of the most representative texts in Puerto Rican feminist writing" (3).

[36] In *Cuban Women Writers: Imagining a Matria,* Betancourt explains her choice to study the work of Ofelia Rodríguez Acosta, Lydia Cabrera, María Elena Cruz Varela, and Zoe Valdés in these introductory pages. (3-6); In *Women Reading Women Writing,* Keating concludes her study of the work of Gloria Anzaldúa, Audre Lorde, and Paula Gunn Allen with personal remarks about how these works have changed her perspective as a woman, writer, and pedagogue (180-187).

[38] I include Richard's quoted material referencing the transcendent concept of art-as-original and the work of talent because quite simply, I appreciated and enjoyed her phrasing (Richard 5).

[39] As Keating explains, Gloria Anzaldúa uses her own internalized oppressions manifested as anger, guilt, isolation, shame, confusion, and fear as "catalysts to alterations in consciousness" that help construct liberate individuals from hegemonic individualistic thought (72).