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The Dictator's Seduction: Gender and State Spectacle during the Trujillo Regime

Lauren H. Derby

The search for and the maintenance of legitimacy have been behind much of the state's sponsorship of great spectacles, whether in ancient Rome or mid-twentieth-century Latin America. Always at issue is the most effective manner in which to represent the goals, the policies, and the identity of the state. To achieve these ends, the state typically has appealed to the average citizen through evocations of patriotism or community, often in a community-re-created or conveniently reinterpreted for the occasion at hand. With the advent of popular consumerism and mass media, other legitimizing forces could be marshaled for purposes of the state in ways never before possible. Popular culture itself became fertile ground as leaders could enter into and manipulate cultural patterns for their own purposes. Gender relations, specifically machismo, provided one such pattern. State spectacle presented official female figures whose very presence manifested the power of their male counterpart (the ruler), who in turn received the admiration of the masses. Lauren Derby discusses one such case involving the Dominican dictator Trujillo, who presented to his public the official romantic intrigues of himself and his children. Through this discourse of amorous exploits the dictator was humanized; spectacle became a medium for sentimental investment in the state.

In 1955 a Free World's Fair of Peace and Confraternity was held in the Dominican Republic to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Trujillo regime. A full year of trade fairs, exhibits, dances, and performances culminated in a "floral promenade" that showcased the dictator's daughter, sixteen-year-old María de los Ángeles del Corazón de Jesús Trujillo Martínez, better known as Angelita, who was crowned queen during the central Carnival parade. One-third of the nation's annual budget was spent on this gala affair, a good portion of which was invested in Italian designer Fontana gowns...
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for chic Angelita and her entourage of 150 princesses. Queen Angelita’s white silk satin gown was beyond fantasy proportions: it had a 75-foot train and was decorated with 150 feet of snow-white Russian ermine—the skins of 600 animals—as well as with real pearls, rubies, and diamonds. The total cost of the gown was U.S. $30,000, a significant fortune at the time. In full regalia, her costume replicated that of Queen Elizabeth I, replete with ermine collar and adorned with a brooch and scepter that cost another $75,000. For $1,000, two imperial hairdressers were flown in from New York to set the royal coiffure. A full army of street sweepers scrubbed by hand the main boardwalk of the capital city where Angelita’s float would proceed, to protect Her Majesty’s snow-white robe. Her royal entry was made on a mile of red carpet and in the company of hundreds of courtiers. A new western extension of the city was even built for the fair that became municipal office space after the event. This national extravaganza surpassed all other events of the regime in its excesses of magisterial pomp and spending. The fair framed the dictator’s daughter as a charismatic center of national value and the luminous totem of the regime, the nation, and even the “free” world (as the name of the fair announced).2

The symbolic climax of the “Year of the Benefactor,” dedicated to Trujillo, the fair was intended to highlight the achievements of the regime by placing them on display. In this nationalist mythology, signs of progress equaled the regime, which equaled the man himself. As Trujillo stated, the Free World’s Fair of Peace and Confraternity was “the patriotic achievement of the Era which national gratitude has baptized with my name. There it is, objectively materialized in each one of the exhibitions of this Fair, the period that I have presided over and that I offer today, at the end of twenty-five years, to the judgment of the people who entrusted their destiny to me in 1930 in a gesture of deep faith in my patriotism and in my acts, that rewards my long vigils and my fever for work during these twenty-five years in which was forged this prodigious reality. That work is my own, and with it I submit myself today to history.”3

The fair was convened not merely to represent the “prodigious reality” of Trujillo’s rule. Filtered through Angelita’s aura of perfection, the event was a particularly grandiloquent manifestation of the larger-than-life ceremonial regime that was the era of Trujillo, the Trujillato. On the cusp of an epoch in which nations were judged by their ability to represent their virtues at trade exhibits and world fairs, la Feria was proof that a man with a big vision could make even a small country look great. But why was it not the figure of the dictator that came to stand for the regime? Why was the dictator’s daughter the emblematic icon of the regime and the chosen medium for its consecration?

This study explores two representations of women in official spectacles during the Trujillo regime. Like Marie Antoinette, Trujillo had many bodies, which were variously represented through the women of the regime. The feminine imagery functioned as a foil for the dictator’s multiple masculine identitites; each female relationship revealed a different facet of his power. One could say that the display of women, particularly those of high social status, was a means of accumulation in Trujillo’s drive for symbolic capital, although this symbolic capital had to be constantly renewed.6 Trujillo drew on a traditional genre of masculinity in which his self-aggrandizement was based on the sheer number of women he could lay claim to—women who highlighted his prowess as lover, father, husband, as well as defender of his female liaisons and extended family. His macho stature grew especially through the acquisition of women of superior social status. Trujillo was the quintessential Latin American “big man” whose authority was based on dramatic acts that drew loyal followers. As Parker has argued for Brazil, the good macho expresses the values of activity, dominance and violence, penetrating and metaphorically consuming by possessing both clients and women.7 Trujillo’s power was based as much on the consumption of women through sexual conquest as it was on the consumption of enemies of state through violence. His charisma was founded as much on the concrete numbers of women he acquired (and their class status) as it was on violence and the near-mythological fear he inspired by eliminating men. And whereas his insatiable sexual cupidity incited ignominy, it also brought him respect and was a key to his legitimacy as a caudillo-turned-statesman.

The Dictator’s Two Bodies

Scholars exploring the issue of gender representation and politics have focused on the identity of first ladies, female regents, and queens, and particularly on how they often become magnets for negative commentary and abuse. In an apparently transnational and transhistorical paradigm, public women from countries as diverse as Argentina (Eva Perón) to Nigeria (Maryam Babangida) and from periods ranging from ancien régime France (Marie Antoinette) to post-cold war United States (Nancy Reagan) have borne the brunt of popular disaffection for their husbands. Scholars have explained this recurrent negative imagery surrounding women in the public sphere in several ways. Historians have argued that the transfer of political life out of regal households and courts, and the growing divergence of public and private domains, banished women from politics. Women then became the focus of loathing and resentment when they ventured onto terrain that was no longer their own.8 Other scholars have taken an alternative culturalist approach, pointing to a cross-cultural bifurcation of power in which men inhabit the controlled, ordered, and hierarchical while their female counterparts inhabit the uncontained, dangerously protean spiritual power of the feminine. This paradigm stresses the complementarity of feminine and masculine powers and is in line with other theories that explain dualistic gender ideologies in terms of constructions of nature and culture, or power and authority.9
The Trujillo regime did not fit either of these paradigms. The prevalence of feminine iconography did not engender popular loathing of women in the public sphere or an obsessive concern with their sexual exploits during the Trujillato. Rather, stories of hyperactive sexual antics were a stock feature of popular mythmaking concerning all of the Trujillo family, primarily the men but including the women. Even today, popular books charting the lascivious exploits of Trujillo and his inner court are the most popular form of literature about the regime. Stories also abound of Trujillo’s abduction of virginal girls during his provincial travels, of his beautiful victims spirited and romanced during official balls and functions. Indeed, to have been chosen as an object of Trujillo’s desire efficited a certain pride, even among the highly sheltered but rebellious adolescent daughters of the elite, who snuck off to official functions. As a result, parents went to great lengths to prevent their daughters from being noticed by the dictator, since refusing his attentions carried a high price and could even cost a girl’s father his job.

Nor was power in the Dominican popular imagination configured in the binary conjugal fashion. Indeed, Trujillo’s wives played little or no role in either state iconography or popular mythmaking. His several legal consorts were dowdy and unassuming, taking little or no public role in regime affairs. His first wife, Aminta Ledesma, was of simple peasant stock from Trujillo’s provincial hometown; he divorced her to marry “a more socially suitable wife.” Bienvenida Ricardo, a “poor blueblood” from a provincial aristocratic family. Although the official party, the Partido Dominicano, established a women’s branch in 1940, the first lady did not actively participate, outside of the occasional cameo appearance as hostess for Party parties. Doña María Martínez, Trujillo’s third wife, the daughter of Spanish immigrants, was guarded and reclusive, keeping to a tiny coterie of confidants and insiders. She focused her attention on raising the children and on business affairs; she was less interested in her public profile than in concrete material returns for her efforts. In fact, during her tenure as first lady, Doña María succeeded in amassing one of the largest personal fortunes of the era. Toward the end of the regime, when she began to take an active interest in urban planning and architectural affairs, she did so entirely behind the scenes. Doña María founded a social welfare organization after 1953. However, she never cultivated an active maternal hands-on approach to the masses. Rather, her reputation was one of cool distance, reserve, and sporadic outbursts of impetuous ire that some allocated was due to rancor stemming from her earlier social exclusion as Trujillo’s mistress. Doña María’s most significant venture into the public was as author of an etiquette booklet entitled Moral Meditations, a chiding, schoolmarmsish mixture of popular philosophy and manners for Dominican mothers. The book disappeared without a ripple.

The Trujillo regime stands out because it was not the dictator’s wife who took center stage in regime iconography. Nor was the cannibal couple the basis of the nuclear family. Instead, it was Trujillo’s other women who provided erotic imagery for the body politic, most especially his young lover Lina Lovatón, through her participation in the 1937 Carnival, and his two daughters—Angelita, who was queen of the 1953 World’s Fair, and Flor de Oro, who served as cultural ambassador in New York, where she became doyenne of the Hollywood set by virtue of her one-time marriage to Dominican playboy Porfirio Rubirosa. Although the passions of heterosexual courtship among the Trujillos became an important idiom of legitimacy for the regime, this romance of state was based not on the binomial couple but rather on several family triangles. The intricacy of this imagery in part derives from the complex and contradictory structure of the Dominican family, which is characterized by concubinage, serial unions, female-headed households, de facto polygyny, and a rigid set of unattainable gender-role expectations. For the majority of rural and urban poor, a family headed by a stable male wage-earner is an ideal but unreach goal. For example, although women ideally should not work, most find they have to: either they are the sole wage-earners in their family or their husband's income is insufficient. Indeed, some have argued that the economic emasculation of the lower-class urban and rural male has taken its toll on gender roles and driven men to exhibit their masculine prowess, machismo, in alternative arenas of daily life. The Dominican male is expected to be an honorable father to his public family, which shares his apellido (surname), as well as secretly to maintain his unoficial wives and offspring, his casa chica (small house). The Dominican family, then, provides several "triangles of dramatizations" through which "unconscious images of a familial order" are defined, an obvious example being the husband-wife-mistress triangle.

Stories of the erotic adventures of the Trujillo family brought the regime down to earth by translating the apparently superhuman first family’s sexual activities into sexual exploits described by the language and mode of expression drawn from everyday life. In the arena of popular rumor, official romance offered a medium for sentimental investment in the regime while also providing grist for moral criticism of the excesses of statecraft and male philandering run amok. The public recognized a form of legitimization based on lust, not love, since adulation of the daughter and lover did not invoke the promise of "natural" childbearing. The parodying of Trujillo’s women involved a performance of masculinity that drew on the figure of the popular anhoro from the barrio (marginal neighborhood) who achieves status, money, women, and position from nothing but the result of his own efforts. Trujillo embodied the tigre (tiger), the quintessential Dominican underdog who gains power, prestige, and social status through a combination of wits, will, sartorial style, and cojones (balls). The tigre seduces through impeccable attire, implacable charm, irresistible sexuality, and a touch of violence. His defining feature is his daring, audacious willingness to go after whatever he wants—money, commodities, or women, particularly those beyond his social reach.
The daughters and wives of the state elite created by the Trujillato merely represented their husbands in official pages and reenacted the exchange of gifts and favors that was part and parcel of politics under the regime. But staging affairs of state through a rhetoric of female corporeality had its own particular effects. First, it created a public of voyeurs convened to gaze upon, assess, appreciate, and above all admire the mythic dimensions of Trujillo’s masculinity: as exemplary father, husband, caudillo, patrón, and lover. Second, Trujillo’s women as objects of value were crucial tropes for the construction of his power. They accrued to the person of the dictator through their evaluation and exchange. Rejected by the traditional white elite as a ruthless mulatto arriviste with Haitian (that is, black) lineage, Trujillo sought out the daughters of the bourgeoisie in his erotic forays as a means of insinuating himself into elite circles. Not only did he seek to defy the aristocracy by stealing their daughters, but, in true tigre fashion, he also legitimized himself through the conquest of women of superior status. Romantic conquest, then, became a means both of subjugating the bourgeoisie and of entering their ranks. Scholars have focused on Trujillo’s accumulation of land, commerce, and capital while neglecting perhaps the most important economy of male personal status in the Dominican Republic. Through the display of his women, Trujillo amassed prestige.

Lina Lovatón: “I, the Queen”

In 1937, Trujillo was taking one of his daily strolls in tree-shaded Gazcue, a scenic neighborhood in Santo Domingo. During his outing that balmy late afternoon, he came upon the young Lina Lovatón Pittaluga, tall and lithe and looking ravishing in a dreamy tulle dress. She was the sole daughter of Ramón Lovatón, a prominent lawyer from one of the most exclusive Santo Domingo families who was known for his elegant attire. Lina, one of the most eligible debutantes at the time, was a contestant for Carnival queen. She was facing stiff competition from the beautiful Blanquita Logroño, sister of an esteemed jurist and close ally of Trujillo. But, as the legend goes, Trujillo was smitten, and proceeded to arrange things in her favor. And, it seems, Trujillo knew that giving Lina the queenship would create a large debt that would have to be repaid.

Trujillo at this point had recently divorced his second wife, Bienvenida Ricardo, to marry María Martínez. Nonetheless, in 1937 he was to have a daughter by his former spouse. Doña María, having just married Trujillo, did not take well to Lina or to what rapidly became a quite public challenge to their marriage. The challenge was multifaceted. First, Lina, as a member of the old aristocracy of the capital, had social class, something Trujillo craved. She was described as “young, beautiful, cultivated, virtuous, distinguished, aristocratic, while being simple and generous.” Stories abound that Trujillo had become vengeful toward the traditional elite when he was denied admittance to a prominent social club. In this context, possessing Lina implied social acceptance; it also signified domination of the new Trujillista state elite over the traditional culture brokers. Lina became the ultimate accomplice and sign of Trujillo’s unfulfilled bourgeois ambitions. To make matters worse, Trujillo fell passionately in love with Lina. Much to Doña María’s chagrin, Lina indeed became Carnival queen, and a much-loved one at that. The sole recourse in Doña María’s arsenal, it seems, was to pressure the papers into refraining from publishing any further pictures of Lina, and indeed they did not. As a result, 1937 stood out as the year in which no photographs of Carnival festivities appeared in the newspapers.

Although Lina was the centerpiece of the 1937 Carnival, it was clear from the outset that the event was not about her but about Trujillo, to whom she owed her title. Indeed, entitlement, or empowering individuals to speak in the name of the state, was a common strategy under the regime, one that proved useful because it spread responsibility by implicating the citizenry in an otherwise highly centralized political system. But this case was rather more extreme. The 1937 Carnival re-created the state in ritual form through its women, using as a pretext a two-month-long feudal masquerade ball. Her Majesty Queen Lina stood at the apex, with a court of princesses of her choosing, nearly all of whom were the daughters of state functionaries. Next in line came the ladies of honor and the ambassadors to Lina’s court, each of whom represented a province; each princess also had her own court. The Departments of Public Administration, the (official Trujillista) Dominican Party, social clubs, and organizations also sent representatives to Queen Lina. There was even a Princess of Meritorious Firemen. Needless to say, these women were authorized to represent the regime by Trujillo. Lest they forget, they were reminded often. For instance, Queen Lina sent a letter to Lourdes García Trujillo praising her as the greatest of princesses “because in your veins runs the same blood as the Maximum Hero.” Queen Lina also named honorary titles, yet in recognition for efforts made on behalf of Trujillo, not for Lina herself. In the end, she was unquestionably Trujillo’s vassal.

Carnival’s monarchical theme underscored the “courtly” aspects of the regime. Carnival’s simulation of statecraft also extended to the practice of official presentation, a form of ritual tribute and fealty required of insiders during the regime. During her two months in office, Lina not only issued decrees (which constituted, in a sense, symbolic gifts—she named Trujillo’s wife and mother “great and unique protectors of my kingdom,” probably much to Doña María’s consternation), she also participated in the exchange of favors, an important expression of reciprocity and recognition during the regime. She gave a ball for the municipal government, the barrio princesses held a dance for Trujillo, the secretaries of state offered Lina a reception, and Lina gave a champagne toast in gratitude for both the “protectors” of her fiefdom and the
allegiance of her vassals. Nor were these activities to be scoffed at by officials. Trujillo arrived at the barrio dance, honoring princesses from lowly working-class neighborhoods such as Villa Duarte and Villa Francisca, in formal military dress attire, in a “smoking” (a tuxedo) arrayed with a full display of military decorations. If it was not already crystal clear that Lima was but a simulacrum of the true monarch, Trujillo, it was when she designated “Military Maneuvers of Dajabón” one of the “preferred sonnets” of her kingdom. Lima was an elegant feminine mascot for a regime that relied primarily on military iconography. Her Highness even posed for photographs with personnel of the Ministries of the Interior, Police, War and Marines.

Although the 1937 Carnival did invert the social order, its choreography had far more in common with a military parade than with a typical carnival procession. The opening reception took place in the National Palace on January 9, and Lima received Trujillo as a president would a visiting dignitary. The queen was given symbolic keys to the city to the accompaniment of a twenty-one-gun salute before making her triumphal march; she then proceeded to traverse the principal capital thoroughfares in a cavalcade. The climax of Carnival thus replicated the form of a presidential rally. The result was an intricate celebration of hierarchy and a dramatization of the glories of entitlement.

Previously, Dominican Carnival had coincided with the Independence Day celebrations of February 27, marking the day the country achieved freedom from Haitian rule (1822–1844) and rendering it a day commemorating and etching popular sovereignty. However, the overall plan of the proceedings made it quite clear that the 1937 Carnival was not intended to be a licentious, popular affair, nor was it intended to have been touched by a “feminine” perspective. Rather, it was a civic tribute to “the populator” Trujillo, “savior of the nation.” In fact, the central events occurred on February 23, the anniversary of Trujillo’s ascension to power in 1930. Only a concluding dance remained for Independence Day, since by then the crowning activities were all over. Moreover, a new event was scripted in that became the culminating moment of the festivities: the unveiling of a 40-meter obelisk to pay homage to Trujillo’s seemingly miraculous reconstruction of the city after the devastating 1930 hurricane and to mark the name change of the capital city from Santo Domingo to Ciudad Trujillo in 1936. Although Carnival was entrusted to women this year, they were called on to sing collective praises to this great phallic token of Trujillo’s fecund and promiscuous dominion. If anyone missed the sexual allusion, it was clarified in the inaugural speeches. Head of the Erection Committee and Dominican Vice-President Jacinto Peynado declared the obelisk a fitting tribute to a man “of superior natural gifts.” Municipal government chief Alvarez Pina remarked, “[T]he allegory of this monument has close similarity with the man it glorifies. Its base firm, its lines severe... This obelisk, a gigantic needle of time in space, will stand out forever.” The obelisk, luminescent with marble dust and laced with gold-leaf aphorisms at its base, stood contrapuntally in relation to Queen Lima herself. Both were symbolic reminders of the force of Trujillo’s masculine powers, of the dictator as sexual conquistador, or, in Lima’s words, of Trujillo as “inexhaustible sower.” Queen Lima and her court were seated at the dignitaries’ pavilion on the malecón, where they first viewed the obelisk’s inauguration rites, and then Trujillo, Lima, and her courtiers were serenaded by the Army Band.

Although 1937 was a carnival of women, it was by no means a protofeminist affair. The prevailing mood was romantic and highly sentimental. The female image espoused by the regime was ornamental, baroque, and saintly. This angelic aura was enhanced by the fact that Trujillo’s wife invariably appeared accompanied by his mother—never alone. Additionally, the patron saint of the Dominican Republic, the Virgin of Altagracia, was championed as embodying the Dominican nation so perfectly that she even shared the very substance of dominicanidad. Even nonreligious Dominicans were said to feel a “congenial impulse” of reverence and respect toward her. This official version of femininity, however, did resonate with middle-class women’s values. Bourgeois Dominican women argued for a woman’s place in the public sphere, but one sharply delineated from the world of men, which they saw as corrupting. For example, one group, called the Feminine Creed of Culture, argued that male culture—objective and materialistic—had reached its decadence and that female culture, embodying subjectivity and the emotions, must be cultivated for renovation. Women would be the sentinels of the spiritual renewal of the West: not to substitute for men but to complement them, to remind humanity of the “correct” path of real human sentiment.

In this sense, the official choreography of womanhood in the 1937 Carnival resonated with one strand of women’s thought that advocated an honor-shame morality and a cult of “good womanhood.” This elite vision championed women as representatives of a larger collectivity and stood firmly against a liberal “Americanized” female prototype, the “modern woman,” which they saw as antithetical to the values of family and nation. In the 1930s the image of the “new woman” propagated by “Hollywood” was received with some ambivalence and not a small measure of fear in the Dominican Republic, a country just emerging from a direct U.S. military regime and the 1929 world depression. Certainly there was coy support for the “modern woman” who need not merely be a good mother or wife but who could pursue a career. But there was also anxiety that secretly men were not pleased by this encroachment on their terrain or by the thought of sharing privileges with this “masculinized” woman. The debate as articulated was not really over whether women could or should aspire to a professional identity; instead, it focused on the politics of self-fashioning, the right of young women to aspire to a new, glamorous image through dress and adornment. At issue was whether a girl should feel free to dress and make up in an alluring fashion and whether the male attention she received as a result rendered her a woman of ill repute. At
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and drew up and built from scratch a new western extension of the capital city totaling some 8,000 cubic meters and encompassing 71 buildings. The event was intended to achieve several objectives. First, it was conceived of as a money-making enterprise. Unlike most public entertainments under the regime, tickets were sold. This was not an event for the masses but rather for the expanding bourgeoisie, the new industrial and landowning class fostered by the expanding internal market of the postwar period. Much like the New York World’s Fair of 1940, which served as template for the Dominican version, la Feria was intended to have a strong trade component—the English-language brochures even called it an international trade fair. It was intended both to promote the Dominican Republic as a site for foreign investment and to publicize the country’s natural resources, political stability, and national products. However, while the century-of-progress expositions used the fair as a medium for expanding commerce and promoting consumer capitalism, la Feria was essentially what Robert Rydell has called a “theater of power” to legitimate the Trujillo regime. The fair was also intended to render the Dominican Republic a U.S. ally by situating it squarely in the Western anticommunist bloc. It was a reminder to the United States that even if it objected to Trujillo’s lack of political liberties at home, the Dominican Republic served as an essential hemispheric anticommunist bulwark.

A crucial precondition to the fair was the postwar expansion of the Dominican economy. The country embarked on a program of import substitution industrialization during World War II, as global prices for many of the nation’s primary commodities soared, especially sugar. Although historians may debate to what extent Trujillo’s economic policy was nationalist or not, the net effect of the postwar scarcities was both an expanded production of essential staples and light industry items and the encouragement of foreign direct investment—as long as it stayed away from Trujillo’s personal fiefdoms. By the mid-1950s, domestic demand had expanded dramatically as a result of growth in population, per capita income, and urbanization. During the Korean War, Trujillo established highly favorable terms of investment, for example by eliminating tariffs on raw material imports. In this context, a U.S. $25 million expenditure on a world’s fair was only part lavish showmanship; it also had a strong advertising and public relations component.

One objective of la Feria was to bring the world physically to the Dominican Republic. Trujillo had tried to encourage tourism from the early days of the regime. In 1937 the first major luxury tourist vessels had arrived from Canada, bringing hundreds of visitors to explore Santo Domingo. In dock, visitors lunches at the exclusive “Country Club.” Their arrival caused tremendous excitement, particularly the arrival of one British lord who traveled with an entourage of fifteen servants. One editorial proclaimed that Ciudad Trujillo had finally become “a Mecca of curiosity and universal interest.” But it was not until the early 1950s that the regime endeavored to cultivate tourism

Angelita at the Family Fair

From one of the first major spectacles of the regime we now turn to the last, the twenty-fifth anniversary of Trujillo’s coming to power in 1955. In only eight short months the artists, architects, and urban planners of the Free World’s Fair choreographed a year’s worth of shows, spectacles, and music,
in earnest, erecting "sparkling and new" beach hotels under American management and persuading Pan American Airlines to establish direct bargain flights from New York. An esteemed historical archeologist was commissioned to write a walking tour of the colonial city in English for visitors, and pamphlets extolling the virtues of the country were distributed overseas. The regime built several luxurious new hotels in anticipation of scores of tourists; although few actually came. However, the regime’s intended message was not lost on those few visitors who did attend, who enthusiastically commended Trujillo’s achievement in transforming the capital from the “dirty, pestilent, and unattractive city known as Santo Domingo,” “a disease-ridden pesthole...loaded with foreign debt and infested with bandits,” to the “sophisticated modernity of Ciudad Trujillo.” They proclaimed the country “the most modern of all our Latin-American neighbors,” “the Switzerland of the tropics,” and Dominicans “the Yankees of Latin America”—in sum, an island of familiarity in a sea of difference.43

If few foreigners were inspired by la Feria to visit the Dominican Republic, Dominicans were nonetheless thrilled at the exotic global cultures la Feria brought to them. The Trujillo regime had created a virtually closed society, sealing off Dominican access to passports and foreign travel and establishing tight control over the flow of information into the country. The vacuum was partially filled by what had become by the 1950s one of the largest and most technologically advanced state-owned radio and television networks in Latin America.44 Nonetheless, Dominicans craved news of the outside, particularly the steamy cosmopolitan glamour flourishing in neighboring Cuba and the United States, which they consumed vicariously through Cuban rumba albums and Hollywood films. In this context, through revealing glimpses of fantastic faraway dreamscapes and situating Dominicans as the subjects of the gaze, la Feria provided enticing entertainment to a public starved for high style and things foreign. Each country had its own day at the fair, when its national pavilion was unveiled and its own cultural program and exhibit took center stage. Some of the local favorites were the Chinese pavilion, with its intricately carved porcelain and wooden objects, delicately painted fans, and luxurious silks, and the futuristic Atoms for Peace exhibition, which was later reassembled in Geneva by the United States after its presentation at the fair. France sent a helicopter, and Japan and Mexico sponsored weeklong film festivals. Overall, Western nations emphasized themes of scientific and industrial progress, while other nations focused on traditional artisanry or culture. Women figured prominently in all of the displays as the quintessential sign of nationhood: from Indonesia, which sent a Javanese woman in traditional batik, to Guatemala, which provided a living display of the country’s rich, hand-woven textiles. Even Holland, the Dominican Republic’s third largest export market, selected tulip and gladiola bulbs and girls in traditional maidens’ outfits as conveyors of Dutchness. But Latin American nations more commonly intended their female exhibitors to represent modernity. Such was the case for Venezuela, which flew in the compatriota Miss Mundo (Miss World) from London for the occasion, and Mexico, which held a weeklong fashion parade of Mexican designer outfits in honor of Queen Angelita that featured ballgowns with tulle skirts à la haute couture Parisien. Mexico also courted the ladies, however, by erecting a tortilla provision stand and handing out free bags of corn flour to housewives.

The national displays provided a means of legitimation that Trujillo capitalized on heavily. Whenever possible they were transformed into emblems of commendation and tribute for Trujillo’s virtues as a statesman. The letters of praise and thanks from participating countries were reproduced and publicized widely, such as the French delegate’s note declaring the progress of the country was “miraculous” and that he “felt honored to be Trujillo’s friend.” Not surprisingly, the most effusive praises came from strongmen Somoza and Franco, but Japan called Trujillo an “organizational genius” and characterized the Trujillisto era as “splendorous.” Brazilian president Kubitscheck was the highest-level political figure to attend, and photographs of him embracing Trujillo or standing with Trujillo family members and the regime’s inner circle were legion. Somoza even sent a military decoration for Trujillo’s elder son Ramírez, the Order of Ruben Darío, in frank recognition that Trujillo, like Somoza, was grooming his son to take over the position, in Somoza’s words, of “permanent sentinel of national greatness.” The note from the U.S. ambassador strained to praise not Trujillo but the anticommunist significance of the fair and the “marvelous” energy that went into constructing the fair in such a short period of time.

Ultimately the central pedestal of la Feria was reserved for the Trujillo regime. As one visitor observed, “the government itself is the principal exhibitor, displaying evidence of political, economic, social, and cultural progress during the past quarter-century—The Era of Trujillo.” In fact, most of the pavilions and floats in the central parade were put on by state agencies, ministries, provincial governments, and the central bank, although local and foreign industries and banks participated as well. The ubiquitous image of Trujillo, El Benefactor, loomed large in all of the government pavilions, here smiling, there bending down or signing a document, such as the all-important Hull-Trujillo treaty of 1940, which canceled the U.S. administration of customs, in place since 1924, and established the first national Dominican currency and central bank (and, not coincidentally, also allowed Trujillo much closer surveillance over the national coffers). The armed forces had a prominent part in la Feria as well, since Rafael Trujillo at that time was serving as its head, with his brother Héctor “Negro” Trujillo reigning as chief of state. Indeed, this explains the predominance of military iconography at the event, in conjunction with growing opposition to the regime overseas. Not only did the armed forces pavilion house an impressive collection of
tanks, jeeps, and advanced artillery, which also were displayed in a military parade staged for the occasion, which included elegantly uniformed battalions in procession. Over the years, Trujillo had created one of the strongest militaries in Latin America, tripling its size and creating a full-fledged professional air force. Needless to say, this amount of military preparedness exceeded the country's actual defense needs, which were minimal.  

The World's Fair did present a family model of state authority in which obedience to the patriarchal father was "naturalized." The Carnival parade, which took place on April 1 in tribute to Queen Angelita's birthday, enacted the "family romance" of the regime. The familial model of authority was laid out in allegorical form as Trujillo, "Father of the New Fatherland" (Padre de la Patria Nueva), was represented at the head of the parade in the form of an enormous bronze bust. In the rest of the floats women figured prominently, as contestants representing provinces and parastatal organizations competed for a ranked series of prizes. Some of the most popular themes were drawn from classical Greece, such as the display of the Dominican Party, which featured a bevy of women representing the muses of Zeus, swathed in Greek togas and adorning a huge lute. In the contribution of the Dominican Electrical Corporation, allegorical women workers dressed in black-and-white men's uniforms waved from atop an oversized electrical plant; a model of the technically sophisticated Rhadamés bridge was similarly decorated with "professional girls" in the Ministry of Public Works float. Drawing on the iconography of women in World War II cinema, the air force paraded a two-seater airplane amply decorated with uniformed female "pilots." A high school, the Colegio San Luis, featured a boy's choir that sang praises to a queen bee centerpiece amid lush floral garlands. Another popular theme was a folkloric pastoral scene. Incorporating a bricolage of Mexican peasant dress and Hollywood's Carmen Miranda, this style was represented by young peasant boys in wide-brimmed straw sombreros accompanying ruffled-sleeved and hoop-skirted women with slightly risqué off-the-shoulder peasant gowns who lacked only the fruit-bowl turban. The province of Samaná, an isolated Atlantic coastal zone, won first prize for best costume with a group of little mermaids crowned by a large conch shell in gentle pastel colors. However, this parade of European queens, folkloric fantasies, and fables was a collection of imported dreams. The fact that the bulk of these costumes were imported from overseas added to la Feria's otherworldly feel. It also drew the ire of local dressmakers, who protested vociferously over the loss of work and questioned just how "nationalist" the fair really was.  

While la Feria privileged women in the floats, as signs they stood in relationship to emblems of manhood, namely cattle. Both cattle and women were media for extending the male self into the world—for dominating and mobilizing clients, territory, and familial networks. Cattle also served as currency in the domain of the traditional caudillo, a figure that accumulated cattle, women, and money, through which he established ties of patronage and alliance. This was clear in the International Cattle Fair, a popular component of the fair that showcased purebred horses, cattle, and pigs from Cuba, the United States, and Puerto Rico. La Feria elided cattle as a traditional symbol of national value with money, the sign of postcolonial nationhood, and the iconography of the fair linked them both through the person of Trujillo. Indeed, money was perhaps the most trumpeted symbol at the fair. Not only were commemorative bronze coins, embossed with Trujillo's profile (hard and stern) minted for the event, but the Finance Ministry set up an entire pavilion with a historical money exhibit, one that placed U.S. and Dominican money side by side, as if rendering commensurable the economics of the two nations. The Spanish painter Vela Zanetti also created an allegorical mural in one of the new ministry buildings that depicted sweating futuristic laborers struggling to prop upright an enormous gold coin. This depicted the Hull-Trujillo treaty, which in Trujillista ideology established full fiscal autonomy and, more important, the symbolic sovereignty of the Dominican nation. Trujillo, then, became the mediator of national conversion: one who transformed cattle into money and colony into nation. At la Feria, the dictator himself became the principal sign of national sovereignty and value.  

More than 250,000 people turned out to see the crowning glory of the fair, however—Her Majesty First Daughter Angelita's float, which was named "The Reign of Love." The float featured an oversized baroque carriage decorated with gold leaf and adorned with rubenesque angels floating atop a cloud. The women all wore white, with red hearts on their busts and smaller hearts appliquéd on their expansive skirts. Additionally, Angelita wore a Dominican national emblem on her chest. Cascading downward from Angelita's pedestal was her court. Angelita's "reign" had actually begun in August, when, at the tender age of sweet sixteen, she was handed the symbolic keys to the city and greeted with the pomp and circumstance afforded a foreign dignitary, with full military observances, as combat planes and naval ships came out in her honor. Wearing a naval jacket with a captain's stripes (perhaps an allusion to her brother, Ramfis, who was made army colonel at age three and brigadier general at age nine), Angelita's quinceñera (coming-out party) was not to be forgotten, either by her or by the nation.  

If the dictator's daughter was intended to provide a lovable face to the regime, however, she was never as successful as Lina. Partly this was due to her age; at sixteen she was essentially a tabula rasa, a mute mirror for national fantasy. And partly it was because of Angelita's personality. Cool, distant, and reserved, Angelita had grown up as the coddled younger daughter, showered from the first with national attention and sequestered by her jealous father, for whom no suitor was good enough. An unhappy person, she suffered from a strange back malady for which she was frequently hospitalized. Unlike Queen Lina, she was neither gracious nor grateful. Nor was she legitimate in class terms. Lina had been born into a traditional aristocratic family; lily-white, she was born to rule.
Angelita, on the other hand, lacked both the achieved status of her father or the ascribed social prestige of the Lovatón family. Worse still, she was considered neither especially beautiful nor warm and generous by the general public. Finally, she was the central icon of a festival that lacked the populist trappings and participatory élan of other rituals of state. This event was instead primarily at impressing the world, not Dominicans, in a context in which a combination of state monopolies and postwar affluence had created unprecedented social distance between the elite and the masses. In the end, la Feria was magnificent but not inclusive; it inspired reverence, not love. The fair reflected what Trujillo wanted his country to be, not what it was. With la Feria, Trujillo stretched too far.

This consideration may account for the fact that one of the most dramatic protests of the entire regime occurred over the selection of Miss Dominican Republic at the fair, when the beauty contestants’ favorite was overlooked for the daughter of a Trujillista insider (apparently at the behest of First Lady Doña María). When the announcement was made, the contestants (all daughters of public functionaries) angrily threw rum-and-soda bottles and chairs and marched out in disgust. Like all state rituals during the Trujillato, from elections to rallies to civic parades, the fair was choreographed from above; nonetheless, within those confines, state pageants such as this one included an important participatory space. No one objected to the election of Angelita as queen, because that was nonnegotiable, but the remaining winners were seen as the choice of the contestants, as within the realm of their “democratic” freedom to choose. Doña María was perceived as interfering with the populist component of the state rite, an arena regarded as outside her jurisdiction. If Angelita represented the state at la Feria, Miss Dominican Republic represented the nation, and the Trujillo family had no moral claim on who embodied this popular emblem of nationhood.

Angelita symbolized a particular genre of feminine participation in the public realm, a vertical as opposed to a lateral principle. Trujillista ideology was highly authoritarian, embodying hierarchy, order, and the sacred. The role of the mystical body of the regime, the ideal, invisible, and immortal body politic, was played by Trujillo’s youngest daughter, Angelita. Authority, in abstract, ideal, and transcendent form, was ascribed to Angelita, who, like her namesake, came to represent rarified purity itself, a kind of living embodiment of the Virgin of Altagracia, patron saint of the Dominican Republic. Hierarchy was also expressed through establishing the daughter as the ultimate emblem of the regime, and one thoroughly disciplined by the unquestioned authority of her father.

Trujillo, el Tigre

This study has explored the culture of a particular kind of “theater state” and its impact on the logic of class, gender, and race marking. As events sur-
the opposite dynamic from that revealed by his own family romance. Trujillo himself was not a man to die for reasons of pure romantic fulfillment; he was not one to give up the hand of the king’s daughter for his perfect love of an abject slave. Nor was he likely to sacrifice love of nationhood for a love supreme. Yet one strand of Aida does ring true to Trujillo. In the opera, nationhood is defined by fatherhood. And ultimately, no one can successfully escape the bonds of family or national allegiance except through the ultimate exit, death.

It is the centrality of the father-daughter bond in this iconography of state, however, that distinguishes the Trujillo regime from other Latin American family romances. It is the father who ultimately represents the nation, through whom the nation derives its name and lineage and public identity. Yet the father here is represented by the daughter. Of course, father-daughter symbolism offers an even sharper hierarchical relation than the couple, invoking both rankings of age and gender. Furthermore, this allegory makes sense, given the real Dominican family. Outside of the Europeanized elite strata, the father tends to be a distant figure, one who is often absent from the actual raising of children. In the serial marriage system, in which children are raised primarily by their mothers and other female kin, the father is a distant and problematic figure who often conjures up feelings of resentment and abandonment. In this context, the daughter analogy presents a more tender, and desirable, face for the state. Finally, as we have seen, Trujillo’s parading of his lover and daughter reverted to a subaltern model of male authority, one based on virility, fecundity, and control over women. The daughter substituted for the wife, but invoked the mistress. Even while seeking status ascendance through the production and consumption of bourgeois femininity, Trujillo at the same time invoked a very barrio style of male self-fashioning—in Bourdieu’s words, “the outcast’s aristocratization”—that deliberately broke the rules of elite sexual comportment.

Trujillo fulfilled the ultimate dream of the tigre, the mythic paragon of barrio masculinity who gains power—riches, women, control over others—apparently from nothing; he was thus the ultimate transgressor of the rules of the game both for race and for class. The tigre is the classic dissimulato, someone who gains access to a station above his own through dressing the part, through the appropriate style and women, but also through being bold, daring, and a smooth talker. There are several substyles of tigueraje, however. Trujillo gained power largely through political control and a large dose of violence. His bravery, manliness (hombria), athletic build, and especially his capacity for ruthlessness qualified him as a tigre gallo (a tiger-cock). While the tigre as a mythic figure always appears alone, there was a larger sociological transformation at work behind these individual rogue-hero success stories. Trujillo, Angelita, and Lina expressed a logic of social prestige in which distinction was accorded those in Geertz’ terms “near the center of things;” those at the center of the social gaze. The message of the Trujillista state elite was that “blood” lineage was meaningless; what counted was being on the national stage, and having style and cash to burn. This had become a world in which social capital was based less on who you were, but on being there and looking the part. And while access to those spaces of prestige depended on plenty of capital, money, it seems, could make race and other symbols of origin melt away.

Unlike other Latin American dictators, Trujillo did not privilege the bourgeois family as a metonym of moral nationhood. In fact, he actually innovated laws aimed at loosening family bonds. For example, he passed one law allowing children to be disinherited and another enabling divorce after five years of childless marriage. Early on, the Dominican Republic had some of the most liberal divorce laws in the Western Hemisphere as a result of Trujillo’s maneuvers, in large part to accommodate his own tigre ambitions. A discourse of family values would have appealed to a middle-class and elite audience, for whom marriage was a stable union of social equals. However, Trujillo chose instead an ideology of authority with more mass appeal, one based on social mobility through the conquest of superior women who were more frequently lovers than wives, and one that made sense to the rural and urban poor who usually lived in concubinage, not formal unions. Trujillo was the tigre, the liminal figure who shares power with no one, especially not his wife.

The historical roots of tigueraje lay in the relatively open social order of the Dominican Republic. Slave imports were terminated as early as the seventeenth century because of colonial poverty, and many former slaves were able to escape the plantations and mines and found their own hatos (small cattle farms) or live outside the market economy through subsistence agricultural production. The social category of tigre in the twentieth century was the criollo of the sixteenth, the freed slave of the seventeenth, and the mulatto of the eighteenth century—all figures of difference that threatened the social hierarchy through their status as strangers. Unlike the rigid social order of colonial Haiti or Cuba, the Dominican Republic developed maximal racial mixture and minimal class differentiation, in large part because cattle ranching, logging, and coffee and tobacco cultivation, not sugar and plantation slavery, formed the backbone of the economy until the nineteenth century. Slave escape in this context was relatively easy owing to the low population density. Indeed, by the eighteenth century, the Dominican peasantry was primarily composed of free blacks and mulattoes, who subsisted on the margins of the social order through shifting cultivation, hunting, and only occasionally wage labor.

Yet while this social and economic fluidity created multiple opportunities for individual achievement, it also generated strong anxieties over the boundaries defining class and racial strata. The other side of the logic of “passing” in a mestizo culture is anxiety over lineage. Because everyone has a potential claim to whiteness, the white minority must struggle to create and maintain a bulwark
against penetration of the racial frontier from below. As a result, the free mulatto in the Dominican Republic became a locus of fear and revulsion, a figure representing the antithesis of the "civilized" colonial order. In 1780, these fears were confirmed by a bandit known as "the Unknown Black" (el Negro Incognito) or "the Cannibal" (el Camejente), a mulatto who killed, injured, and pilaged, preying almost exclusively on sugar plantations and their property—slaves, harvests, and farm animals. As a result of this wave of terror, colonial authorities suggested an imposed relocation scheme whereby rural blacks and mulattoes would be forced to reside within townships. The objective was to eliminate the black rural subculture that evaded subjection by the colonial state and that stood outside the community of "citizens."

It was not coincidental that the dangers of the mulatto were spatialized, seen as deriving from rootlessness and vagrancy, and that the prescribed antidote was forced residence in a township. The danger of the mulatto lay precisely in his ability to move throughout the social hierarchy, and particularly his ability to pass for white. This may explain a colonial injunction punishing free blacks who dressed above their rank, an effort aimed at circumscribing a love of finery and elegance that poor criollo colonists had difficulty matching.90

The same historical openness that created multiple opportunities for individual achievement for the mulatto underclasses also produced the culture of tigueraje, the popular valorization of those who fashioned themselves as "big men" through accumulating the comportment and accoutrements of status—the women, attire, bravado—without the ascribed criteria, the apellido, or family, class, or racial identity. The tigre is a charmer who talks his way into places he doesn't belong through "verosimilitude, charlatanism [and] . . . a false lyricism."91 The tigre is not given prestige, he steals it. "Born like rats"92 in revolt against a bourgeois morality that sees them as "matter out of place,"93 as social filth that should remain at the margins where it belongs the tigre is a man of the public sphere, who frequents the café, the hotel, the theater. He is without a fixed home or official identity (save to the police); he ridicules the status economy of society, snubbing education or "culture" as modes of advancement. The tigre can operate outside the rules of society because he seeks respect and approval only from his barrio, from la gente, the people. Whereas the mulatto trickster had been popular throughout Dominican history, it was only during the Trujillo period that the figure of the tigre became generalized as the paradigmatic Dominican hero, the man of the people, the "typical Dominican character par excellence."94 This was largely due to the elevation and prestige ascribed to the figure of the tigre within the Trujillo regime.

To Dominican elites, the classic tigre is a disseminator; he inspires fear as a stranger whose identity resides solely in his appearance. Elites perceive the importance of clothes in tigre self-fashioning as a ruse and at times a threat to conventional standards of masculinity. The tigre constructs himself as a self-conscious object of the gaze, a position appropriate only to women.

Thus, when the insular aristocracy of the 1930s closed ranks against Trujillo, it was apt that a sartorial metaphor was deployed, as one observer put it, "[It] was the military dress that was accepted, not the man wearing it."95 Elite ambivalence became clear at Trujillo's wedding in 1929 to the patrician Bienvenida Ricardo, from a familia de primera (society family). Trujillo is remembered as having an alluring, enigmatic, even disconcerting air about him and a reputation as a covetous adventurer—a man not averse to taking risks. He was described as elegant, "impeccably dressed, with a sensual mouth and the look of a "film star more than a military." "While loved by the girls (nicknamed not coincidentally "las Correcas," the belts, for their attraction to men in uniform), Trujillo was rejected by the girls' parents as a trickster, with his "incommensurable vanity" and his "false and cunning" airs. His identity as an impostor was unmasked at the wedding in a gesture that became emblematic of Trujillo's outsider status. Refusing the cake cutter, he pulled his sword (of solid gold) to cut the first slice of wedding cake, and inadvertently sent the finely decorated wedding cake, an elaborate affair replete with delicate hand-crafted sugar flowers and baroquely adorned with lace, angels, and figurines, crashing down, smashing even the mirror serving as base for the cake.96

This event embodied for the guests his thinly submerged cruelty while revealing his status as a stranger to the rules of Dominican high society.

By the 1950s, the tigre was no longer a focus of elite angst. How then did the tigre-cum-flaneur achieve respectability? The answer lies in part in the culture of spectacle of the Trujillato. As Benjamin states, "his [the flaneur's] leisurely appearance as a personality is his protest against the division of labour which makes people into specialists. It is also his protest against their industriousness. . . . The intoxication to which the flaneur surrenders is the intoxication of the commodity around which surges the stream of customers." Commodity culture under the Trujillo regime did not enter through the arcade and the department store. Rather, it entered through state pageants that ultimately linked the magic of the commodity to the magic of the regime. This was particularly the case by the 1950s, when the Trujillo family had bought up the commanding heights of the economy and Trujillo himself was one of the richest men in the world. State ceremonies like la Feria and the 1937 Carnival were shrines to the great fetish of state that was Trujillo in their sensory overload of goods, fashion, women, money, all of which were ultimately claimed by El Benefactor: These rituals of state were hardly window-dressing. Far from it: they were an essential part of making the carnivalesque excess that was the era of Trujillo believable.

Notes
The Trujillo Regime

cisca, the underworld barrio of pimps and prostitutes that Trujillo was fond of frequenting. René Fortunato’s documentary film Trujillo: El Poder del Jefe II (1995) also treats Trujillo’s love life.

11. There was a certain pride in having been chosen, although there was definitely shame in consummation. While interviewing in 1992, I heard many stories from Santo Domingo elite women about having been noticed by Trujillo, as well as how parents often withdrew their daughters from the public arena (from ballet classes, society balls, and the like) so as to preempt their possible deflowering by Trujillo.


20. I am drawing on Roberto DaMatta’s discussion of the hero figure in Brazil; see his Carnivals, Rogues and Heroes, 204–06.

21. Trujillo was a tigre until he became president, after which time he ruled less through his wills than through the state—the national army and treasury. When he became Jefe he transferred his role as regime tigre to Porfirio Rubirosa, since neither dynastic first son Rafael (Ramfis) nor second son Leónidas Rhadamés had the personal charisma for the part. Indeed, Rubirosa, who became an afflictive “son” of Trujillo’s through his marriage to daughter Flor and his close friendship with Trujillo’s son Ramfis, became a surrogate for Trujillo, reaching even greater heights of tigueraje than Trujillo himself, for which he was rewarded handsomely in diplomatic positions for his unrivaled successes in marital conquests. The charming and winsome Rubirosa thus served as Trujillista gigolo and conduit for the symbolic accommodation and display of women—even richer, more famous, and more beautiful—to the regime. The analysis of Flor and Rubï forms part of a larger study that, due to brevity constraints, I was unable to elaborate in this article.

(Santo Domingo: Editorial de Nordeste, 1990), 80; Germán Ornes, Trujillo: Little Caesar of the Caribbean (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1958), 219. Another version of this essay was published as “La seducción del dictador: Lo masculino y el espectáculo estatal durante la era de Trujillo,” in Ramonina Brea, Rosario Espinal, and Fernando Valerio-Holgüin, eds., La República Dominicana en el Umbral del Siglo XXI: Cultura, Política y Cambio Social (Santo Domingo: Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra, 2000), pp. 195–214. This article is based upon a chapter of my dissertation, “The Magic of Modernity: Dictatorship and Civic Culture in the Dominican Republic, 1916–1962” (Department of History, University of Chicago, 1998), the fieldwork for which was sponsored by the Social Science Research Council and Fulbright-CIEE. The Newcomb Foundation supported my dissertation write-up. Special thanks to César Herrera and Julio César Santana, who have helped me to understand tigueraje as a parable of race and class ascent and masculine self-fashioning.


3. Crasswell, Trujillo, 295. All translations were newly prepared by me.


22. Flor Trujillo, however, notes that Trujillo first met Lima as one of Flor's adolescent friends in her "My Tormented Life as Trujillo's Daughter," 15.


26. "Ecos del Gran..." The choice of this poem had special significance: in January the 1937 Haitian massacre was just drawing to a close, and most of the killing had taken place in the Dajabón area. In selecting this poem, Lima was commemorating Trujillo's patriotic border reinstatement and ethnic cleansing of the country.

27. I am referring here to the distinction made by Roberto DaMatta in his classic essay, "Carnivals, Military Parades, and Processions," in his Carnivals, Rogues and Heroes, 26–60.

28. Trujillo is called "el poblador" in Sánchez's Musiquito, a rubric that puns on his official title as founder (as in cities, architecture) and his virile fecundity (to people, populace).


30. Letter from La Reina, Listín Diario, January 9, 1937.


38. The information in this section was culled from the Album de oro de la Feria de la Paz y Confraternidad del Mundo Libre (Ciudad Trujillo, n.p., 1956).


40. Rydell, World of Fairs, 11.


46. On Trujillo’s expansion of the army, see Peguero, "Trujillo and the Military," and Grasswell, Trujillo, 263–66. Grasswell treats the Hull-Trujillo treaty on pages 182–83. On the impact of the invasions, see Bernardo Vega, Trujillo y las fuerzas armadas norteamericanas (Santo Domingo: Fundación Cultural Dominicana, 1992). Of course, equally important to the heavy military presence at the fair were two attempted exile invasions in 1943 and 1949 and the growing climate of hostility to the regime from abroad, with the formation of the pan-American Caribbean Legion and organized anti- Trujillista forces in Haiti and Cuba.


49. The Dominican display at the 1901 Pan American Exposition had a painting of the first coinage minted on the continent as its centerpiece. (Frederick Starr Collection, Department of Special Collections, University of Chicago Library, Box 29, Pan American Exposition Notebook, September 1–8, 1901). My thanks to William Beazley, who provided me with this citation.

50. This incident was recounted to me by a witness who participated in Queen Angelina’s court at La Feria but preferred to remain anonymous.


figure of the *tigre*, see Christian Krohn-Hansen, “Masculinity and the Political Among Dominicans: ‘The Dominican Tiger,’” in *Machos, Mistresses, Madonna*: Contesting the Power of Latin American Gender Imagery, edited by Marit and Kristi Anne Stolen Melhuus (New York: Verso, 1996). I am ironing in here on but one aspect of Dominican sentiments toward Trujillo. He was also despised for his ruthless killing, his monopolistic hold on the economy, his iron-clad control, his megabomanía, the total absence of civil liberties during the regime, the requisite deference towards him on the part of the elite, and the frequent rituals of submission he forced members of the bourgeoisie to endure. Dominican memories of the Trujillo regime are complex and volatile, and I am focusing in this chapter on only one aspect of popular mythology of the man and his thirty-year rule.


60. Raymundo González, personal communication.


Suggested Readings


The Trujillo Regime


Sights

*Dominican Republic: Cradle of the Americas* (OAS).


Sounds