

## **The Dictator's Two Bodies: Hidden Powers of State in the Dominican Imagination\***

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Most often, human destiny can only be lived through fiction. Although in fact, the man of fiction suffers for not himself fulfilling the destiny he describes, he suffers because only in his career does he escape fiction. So he attempts to bring in the ghosts that haunt him into the real world.

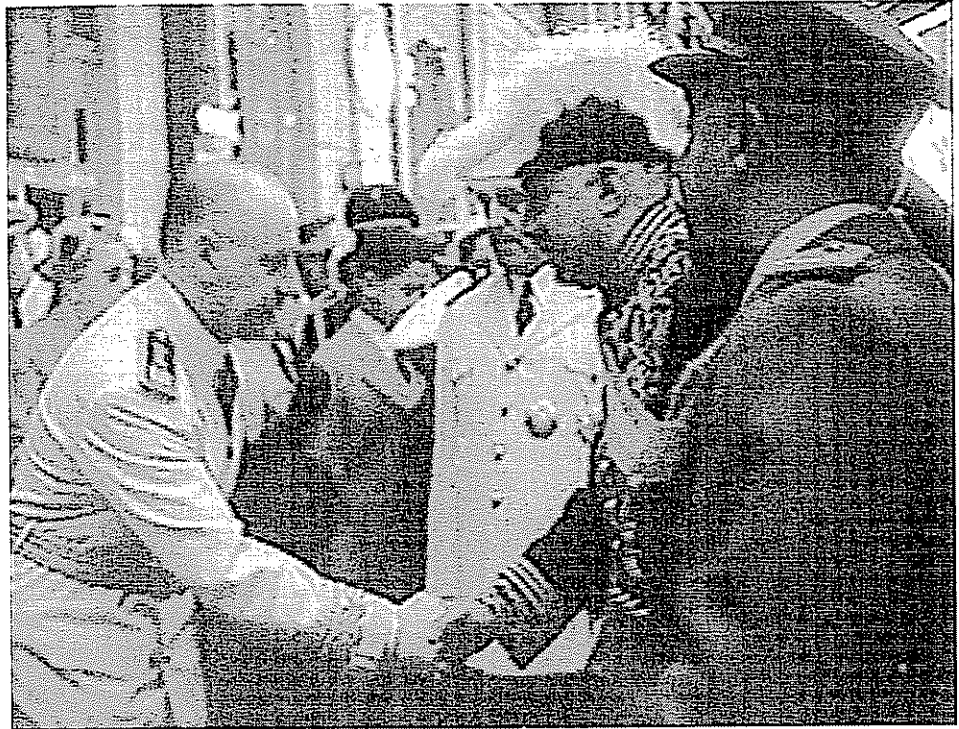
George Bataille, 'The Sorcerer's Apprentice'

Religion is the basis of the state.  
Karl Marx

### **Habeas corpus**

On the last day of May, 1961, the dictator who ruled the Caribbean-island nation of the Dominican Republic with an iron fist for more than three decades (1930–1961), Rafael Trujillo, was shot dead on his way home in an ambushed assault on his car. The culmination of months of international plotting involving the Kennedy Administration, the CIA, disgruntled Dominican elites, and a handful of regime-insider defectors, Trujillo's long rule came to an end in that one fleeting instant. Yet while the assassins succeeded in killing their opponent, the second stage of the military takeover failed. The coup plotters were unable to complete part two of the plan, that of installing themselves in office, because none of the other collaborators could believe that the dictator had died without actually seeing his corpse, since declaring themselves his successors with Trujillo alive would mean certain demise to the conspirators. The dangers of transporting Trujillo's remains, stuffed as they were unceremoniously into a Chevrolet trunk, around a city swarming with secret police, eventually aborted the coup.<sup>1</sup>

The problem of belief in Trujillo's death, I propose, was related to a larger phenomenon. There was a mystical awe surrounding the dictator, as if Trujillo's authority transcended corporal limits, endowing him with a suprahuman status. In the words of Claude Lefort, he had a 'mortal body . . . [yet one] perceived as invulnerable, which condenses in itself all strengths, all talents, and defies the laws of nature by his super-male energy' (Lefort



*Figure 1.* Rafael Trujillo during an 1954 official visit to Spain wearing his signature Napoleonic bicorn hat (image from documentary, *El poder del jefe*, René Fortunato, 1996).

1986:300). This resulted in part from Trujillo's ability to apparently enact the impossible. He had survived three major coup attempts by exile invasion, one with support by Cuba's Fidel Castro and Venezuelan leader Romulo Betancourt. Moreover, he managed to kill his opponents as far away as New York and Caracas. His larger-than-life persona was also a product of the multitude of titles, ranks, decorations, medals, and prizes granted by sycophantic cronies and more than twenty foreign governments and organizations, ranging from Generalissimo to Benefactor of the Fatherland, from Doctor to Restorer of Financial Independence, as well as numerous other honorifics which were a ritual accompaniment to his visits to the interior and overseas. He even earned the ill-deserved Great Collar of Democracy and Great Medal of Extraordinary Merit (from a Peruvian notable and the government of Lebanon, respectively). His omnipresence was reinforced by the inscription of his person in the national terrain, as the capital city was renamed after him, becoming Ciudad Trujillo in 1936, just as many provincial hamlets were renamed after his immediate family members. If this was insufficient adulation, an entire year of state spectacle and rites called the Year of the Benefactor celebrated Trujillo and his regime in 1955, supplementing the dozens of national holidays in his name. In addition, his elaborate array of bedecked and bejeweled costumes and uniforms, including his signature Napoleonic plumed bicorn

chapeau, garnered the envy as well as opprobrium of many (Roorda 1998:149–191). (See figure 1).

The popular perception of Trujillo's preternatural omnipotence is clear from the absolute shock evidenced when people learned of his death. One version of the event recounts that when the body arrived at the home of the coup plotters,

Everyone froze. It was minutes before anyone found his voice or could take his eyes away from the bloody remains of Trujillo wedged into the back of the trunk. . . . This mangled mess, was this the same person who had such a mania for cleanliness, perfume and well-pressed uniforms? *El Jefe*, who for thirty years had commanded obedience and respect such as few Oriental potentates had known, was now just a mangled corpse (Diederich 1978:154).

So exalted, extraordinary and seemingly perfect in life, it was hard to believe that Trujillo could actually expire as a mere mortal. A synecdoche for Dominican nationhood itself, the body of Trujillo had become both a repository of individual desire and a vehicle for the transfer of collective forms of value. I will argue that Trujillo's person became the crux of several overlapping fetishisms. Due to his role as the central object of a 'theater state', and as owner of the commanding heights of the economy, he was a key sign of commodification as well as the embodiment of what Michael Taussig calls maleficium itself, the modern state as magical 'power-object' (Geertz 1980; Taussig 1993a). He may also have been subject to a Freudian style of fetishism, in which his lack of class and racial legitimacy (here analogized as insufficient masculinity) was compensated through providing him a demonic phallic substitute or fetish.

Of course, Trujillo was not the only Latin American leader to have a magical aura surround his person, in whole and in part, physical and otherwise. Other examples abound, such as the case of Cuban revolutionary Che Guevara's hands which, after being severed to identify his corpse, were preserved in formaldehyde, stored in the Palace of the Revolution, and displayed only to the most eminent of dignitaries (Rohrer 1997). Or the infamous leg of Mexican independence general and president Antonio López de Santa Anna, which was exhibited in a shrine in Mexico City for a time (Lomnitz 2000). The popular Catholic traditions of venerating saint's relics and memorializing miracles through corporal iconic signs of grace, the tiny legs or hearts called *ex-votos* which provide thanks for healing, probably nourish the custom of sanctifying political leaders' corporal members. Body parts can even become metonymic symbols which transmit larger social currents of meaning, with organs as mundane as the foot at times becoming 'central icons of power' refracting more general social anxieties of national fragmentation (Stallybrass 1997). However, a key difference resides in the fact that after death such relics become representations of the original sacred object, while actual bodily extremities themselves, of course, signal a more direct line of source contact with the wondrous (Taussig 1993b:21). Additionally, Latin American bodies of state are typically masculine, and thus unlike religious signs of Mary do not rely on maternal associations with fertility and thus reproductive mimesis (an important exception being the numinous afterlife of Evita Perón's remains and her cultic following) (Eloy Martínez 1996; Taussig 1993b:35).

Yet if not unique, Trujillo was an unlikely candidate for the status of divine rulership. As a mulatto with some Haitian ancestry, he was not considered blessed with extraordinary attractiveness (which would mean whiteness in the Dominican context) or an intrinsically prepossessing presence. He was known for his achieved rather than ascribed demeanor; his love for uniforms, his use of makeup, and his elegance as a dandy. However, with his notoriously squeaky voice and portly stature, he was neither exceptionally statuesque nor an eloquent man of words. He relied on cultured regime intellectuals such as the eloquent poet and speech writer Joaquín Balaguer to provide him with the discursive presence requisite to a man of stature. Trujillo did not have social honor in a traditional sense, since he was not from an old elite family; nor could he claim status from ancestral participation in historical episodes of nationalist relevance. His reputation for violence accorded him 'respect', yet this was a byproduct rather than a precondition of his authority (Lauria 1964).

Nonetheless, he was accorded in the collective imagination several signs of identity as a popular messiah, from his providential role as national protector during the devastating 1930 hurricane, to the narratives which circulated of his occult powers. I investigate here the popular memories of Trujillo's charismatic powers as emblematic of a particular cultural understanding of political authority; one which derived more from a Dominican conception of power itself than any conscious effort on Trujillo's part to fashion himself as a divine king or cosmic oracle (Anderson 1990:17–77). This differentiated his otherworldly image, for example, from that of Haitian leader François Duvalier who, it is said, consciously styled himself as a particularly fearsome god in the *vodoun* pantheon in order to elicit fear (Rotberg 1976). However, in contrast to Weber's understanding of charisma, Trujillo's was not 'revolutionary' since it was perceived as part of the 'normality of the extraordinary', rather than in contradistinction to the disenchanted world of bureaucratic rationalism (Anderson 1990:81). It was also patently reactionary, his magnificence more a result of elaborate stagecraft than true norm transformation or the redistribution of real power.

This essay examines the *corpus mysticum* of Trujillo through narratives of the dictator's sorcery. The locus of charisma of the leader in this case resided not in his body but rather in his alter-corpus, his body double or 'superbody' (Kantorowicz 1957:13), an elfin being which enabled Trujillo to extend his person into this world, and others. I investigate here the cultural rationale behind popular narratives which explained Trujillo's power in terms of his *muchachito*, which means literally little boy, but can also indicate an economic or political subordinate, a midget, a demon or a kind of personal guardian angel. Trujillo also was renowned for seeking assistance from a series of female diviners who came and went, but the *muchachito* had a unique and far closer role in Trujillo's life, forming a constant companion, guide, or even appendage of his presidential person.<sup>2</sup> Thus I explore here a particular cultural idiom of state fetishism, the meanings attributed to the state in a context in which sorcery provides an important language for conceptualizing absolute power. This is especially true for the urban and rural underclasses, for whom the state appears to operate according to an opaque and frequently inscrutable logic.

This essay interprets a corpus of stories that emerged in life histories of the Trujillo

period when I asked for the secret of Trujillo's power.<sup>3</sup> Informants included unemployed familial dependents living in Trujillista housing projects in the capital city of Santo Domingo; a family of minifundista sharecroppers on the periphery of Trujillo's cattle ranch in the rural hamlet of San Cristóbal, a satellite of Santo Domingo; and even a Dominican immigrant residing in Chicago who works at a used clothing store. Narratives of Trujillo's *muchachito* form a genre that is thus both unified and widely-diffused. The common denominator of the authors of these narratives was that they lacked post-primary education, and were predominantly, but not exclusively, women (cf. Edelman 1994). I interpret these stories of Trujillo's witchcraft as emblematic of how the state is conceived of in the popular imagination from a variety of social locations (Joseph and Nugent 1994). While the general motif of the *muchachito* as a figure of invisible power remains constant in the stories I interpret here, there are key differences in the interpretation of the phenomena which map onto political sentiment towards the regime, as we shall see.

First a note on how I am deploying the concept of charisma. In terms of Weber's ideal-typical definition of the concept, Trujillo did cultivate an extraordinary image of himself as a person capable of miracles and superhuman feats. However, in contrast to Weber's model, this image continued and arguably even increased during the later, routinized phases of his rule, as his unique longevity in office became but one more 'miracle' explaining his special power to combat enemies and confound foes against all odds. Thus personalism and bureaucracy were not in this case mutually exclusive. Moreover, the 'Trujillo myth' was only partly the result of an explicit effort at propaganda on the part of the regime. While the staging of massive state spectacles and public works helped frame Trujillo as *the charismatic center of public life, the popular vision of Trujillo's power was also the result of a particular political cosmology* (Geertz 1977). In contrast to leaders such as Hitler, who hired master cineaste Leni Riefenstahl to choreograph and entirely invent his extraordinary stage presence, the source of Trujillo's charisma lay more squarely in the eye of the beholder (Geertz 1977; contrast with Kershaw 1989:3–5).

### Techniques of the body politic

One way of understanding Trujillo's 'secret,' as people referred to his *muchachito* or embodied other, is that it was a kind of mimetic slippage (Taussig 1993b:115–116). In this view the representational fetish of the *muchachito* was as much a part of the image of authority as the figure of the dictator himself. Trujillo's absolute authority is thus symbolized by his autocratic control over this immediate fawning underling at his constant beck and call. Indeed, some people saw the gnome as a virtual possession of the dictator, his personal *zombi* that unconsciously enacted his every wish, no matter how capricious. This is a perspective which challenges the assumption of the physical boundedness of personhood (Handler 1994:32). Here, Trujillo's extraordinary authority is glossed by the fact that his physical as well as metaphysical personhood extended to include his subordinate clients (at times he is even said to have had two *seres* or *misterios* – spiritual

agents of the *vodoun*-derived pantheon mediating between devotees and God – a male and female). A vision of power which necessarily includes one's clients is one which defies the modern individualist framework that privileges the bounded, autonomous self. This is first and foremost a collective view in which authority is by definition encompassing; one in which power is defined by the ability to move, control, contain and claim others (Dumont 1980; Sahlins 1962). Here, power is a relationship between people rather than a property or essence (Handler 1994:37). This may explain why the most important *caudillos* and statesmen in the Dominican Republic are all remembered in tandem with their key subordinates: from rural frontier strongman Desiderio Arias, who was never seen without his Haitian bandit sidekick Rosilien; to president Joaquín Balaguer, who is said to have been guided closely by his spiritist sister Emma, who was a reputed *Santera* (*Santería* priestess) of *Ochum* and was known throughout the capital city for her extravagant thanksgiving celebrations.

This logic of dualism or diarchy (Valeri 1990) could also be an expression of religious syncretism, in which African and Spanish-derived forms coexist within popular Catholic practice. Dominican religious practice is nominally Catholic, but has been deeply embossed by the Afro-Catholic religion of *vodoun* from neighboring Haiti. Thus Trujillo may represent the Spanish-Catholic face of saint authority, while the *muchachito* corresponds to the potent yet invisible powers of *vodoun*. While the Dominican Republic and Haiti share a common history of slavery, the fact that freed men outnumbered slaves during most of the colonial period on the eastern side of the island meant that Dominicans came to identify as Spanish Catholics, even if extensive racial mixture meant that African cultural practices were widely diffused. A constant stream of Haitian immigration to the Dominican Republic from the colonial period onwards disseminated Haitian *vodoun*, which today is considered both more powerful and more dangerous than saint worship. This explains why a respectable self-presentation requires a public lineage of Catholic saints, yet private practice inevitably blends the saints with a corresponding set of Haitian *vodoun* deities (Davis 1987; Deive 1988).<sup>4</sup>

Thus both the political and the religious realms are organized not around single cults of personality but rather hierarchically-organized clusters of either clients or saints and their *vodoun* correspondences (Apter 1991:249, 1992:149–164).<sup>5</sup> Of course, such a vision of power also foreshadows a world view in which it is taken for granted that invisible forces operate beyond one's ability to perceive them. Reality includes that which is insensate, invisible forces akin to what Freud termed the uncanny. Given the radically democratic ethos of a society which was based for centuries on foraging, and on wild cattle and pig hunting, access to occult forces may provide a way of explaining how one person can have so much more authority than everyone else when all people are presumed fundamentally equal. In such a strong egalitarian moral ethic, unusual power must be explained through access to extraordinary realms of influence since it is presumed that this world provides all men the same basic tools (Williams 1991:92–106). In this view, command over spatially distinct and distant realms of esoteric knowledge thus both reflects and helps constitute the mystique of the politically powerful (Helms 1988:5). And through his grandmother

Trujillo was known to have Haitian antecedents, which explained his mystical access since neighboring Haiti is considered a superior center for black magic and the occult in the Dominican imagination. If blackness in this world is derogated as demeaned and inferior, in the other it evokes a far more potent genre of witchcraft (Derby 1994; Krohn-Hansen 1995; Wade 1993:23). Additionally, the ability to move between realms can be mapped onto the ability to transgress the boundaries between species. Extraordinary power can thus also be marked by the ability to self-transform, as certain people have the power to become spirit animals. For example, late nineteenth-century order and progress dictator Ulises Heureaux was said to have actually been a *gallipote*, a being capable of transmuting from person to beast (Deive 1998:192). Portraying figures of authority as having extraterrestrial assistance provides a mirror which accentuates the power of the authority figure, while answering the question why him.

Yet Trujillo's supernatural assistant was far more than a mere quotidian foil helping by proximity and contrast to accentuate the perceived distinction of the central protagonist. He had a far more significant role than, say, Batman's Robin or the Lone Rider's Tonto. First of all, Trujillo's *muchachito* was blessed with powers of divination. He provided him with secrets, particularly concerning the movements of his close allies and potential enemies, enabling Trujillo to portend future events and prepare in advance for eventual trials and tribulations. In this rendition, the *muchachito* could be a Dominican equivalent of the Haitian *ti ange* or guardian angel, a personal protector. One narrative contends that Trujillo's elf came to him in his sleep, in dreamspace, a common route of access to the realm of the supernatural. From his nocturnal passageway, the figure would pass Trujillo clues about which of his inner circle could be betraying him, or which business ventures he should go forward with. Dreamspace provides a common channel of access to various kinds of divine knowledge in the Dominican collective imagination, but typically messages appearing in dreams require deciphering from specialists who can translate, for example, the appearance of a particular person in a dream into the fact that one should play their birthday or *cédula* (official identification card) number in the lottery on a given day. Moreover, only people gifted with special powers have constant access to the metaphysical plane. Nocturnal visits by a *muchachito* typically is thus a sign that one is being called by the saints to become a medium and that one must proceed to be baptized or else suffer dire consequences.

*Muchachitos* have a rather curious status within Dominican *vodú*, however. They are neither Catholic saints, *seres* or *misterios* (divine beings) or formal *loás/hwas* (*vodú* divinities). The *muchachito*'s lack of a codified place in the divine pantheon in part explains the variety of interpretations of the figure's precise nature. Some believe it was a child. Children are held to have direct contact with the divine, particularly during the period preceding their baptism. Insomnia in children is taken to be the result of nocturnal visitation from the dead since they are said to 'see' beings, substances and powers which adults cannot. In sharp contrast to adults, children who die are given joyous funerals characterized by song rather than prayer. Called *angelitos* (little angels), their bodies are prepared and kept amidst the living as long as practically feasible as sacred objects.

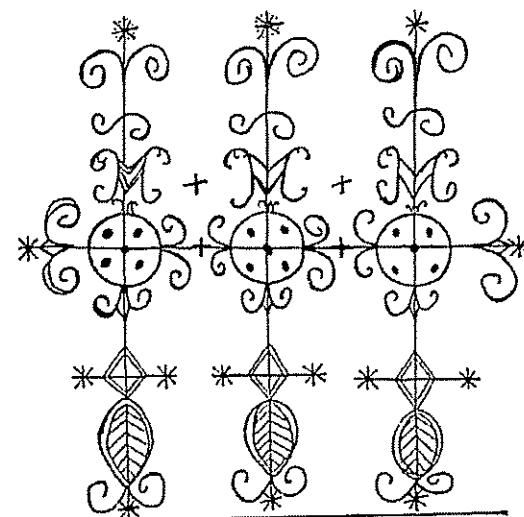
Indeed, the *muchachito* does resonate with several divinities linked to childhood. Of course, there is always a certain amount of ambiguity concerning the recognition of *loá* identity since any being can descend in one of several *puntos* (lit. points) *nanchon* (Haitian Creole, nations) or forms. Thus the *muchachito* could have been a representation of the saint chromolithograph El Niño Atocha (the Divine Heart of Atocha, a version of Jesus as child; see figure 2), who is at times glossed as Legba, the messenger of the *vodoun*<sup>6</sup> pantheon, the god of the crossroads and quintessential link between spatially segregated categories such as life and death, old age and childhood, man and womanhood, the *loá* who arrives first and departs last in any ritual event. Notwithstanding his appearance as aged man with a walking stick, Legba is associated with children, as a result of his paradoxical unification of opposites (Deive 1988:136; Deren 1953:97). The theme of metamorphosis and duality is echoed as well among the other central religious icons of childhood, the twin children, the *Marassa*, who are held especially dear. In fact, they are considered purer, higher beings than formal divinities and are classed apart. One index of their superior status is that they rarely descend to possess. As Maya Deren affirms, the *Marassa* 'are a celebration of man's twinned nature: half matter, half metaphysical; half mortal, half immortal; half human, half divine' (Deren 1953:38). Unlike all the other divinities, actual twins are worshipped just as their *loá*. Like the *muchachito*, the twins have special powers of divination, and are capable of bringing or arresting rainfall, healing the infirm, as well as harming those who get in their way. As a result they are officiated apart, provided special foods in their own corner of the altar, and placated especially so as to nullify their potential danger.

Yet twins seem to represent a deeper dualism in *vodú* which is particularly fraught with danger in both Dominican and Haitian cosmology. Everything doubled has an inherent instability. For example, of the two classes of *vodú*, the right-handed everyday *Rada* group and the left-handed *Petro*, where black magic is executed, those who work with the *Petro* are said to 'work with both hands' thus marking their exceptional power and correspondingly, danger. Indeed, the *Petro* are often glossed as devilish Haitian spirits (Davis 1987:136–137; cf. Brodwin 1996). The *Petro* mount violently, and while they can do more than the *Rada* they entail far more risk for the practitioner. It is to the *Petro*, for example, that one must turn for a *bacá*, a man-made *misterio* which can bring wealth or power to its owner, but which usually entails a dear sacrifice, such as the death of a family member (cf. Taussig 1980). Indeed, Dominicans differentiate their brand of *vodú* from the Haitian variant through the fact that theirs does not include the motif of doubling. Unlike Haitians, who spatially divide their altars into a high/low divide, Dominicans say they worship one set of gods only, unlike Haitians who 'work with both hands' (Davis 1987:112).<sup>7</sup> Moreover, even though each Catholic saint has a corresponding syncretized *loá* identity, a respectable Dominican presentation of self (even for someone who 'works the mysteries') requires that one deny that one even knows the *vodú* alter-identities of the Saints, so as to represent oneself as a good Catholic, as opposed to a questionable practitioner of magic and sorcery.

Indeed, doubling has such an air of danger and potential malevolence that divine



Figure 2. Chromolithograph of El Niño de Atocha, a possible source of inspiration for *el muchachito*.



Marassa - Dossou - Dossa

Figure 3. Tripartite sacred symbol of the twins – les marassa – in Haitian vodoun (source: Alfred Métraux, *Voodoo in Haiti*, NY: Schocken Books, 1972 [1959], p. 148.)

twosomes are most frequently cloaked in the more Catholic and thus respectable trinitarian logic of three. Twins in a family can inflict terrible witchcraft, attacking the intestines. Dominicans say that the *dosu* or child born after a twin is superior even to the sacred twins, serving as an invisible third term transforming a devilish double into the holy Trinity.<sup>8</sup> In parallel fashion, the father of the sacred twins, Saint Nicholas, is credited with having brought three children back to life, which makes him sacred by association with three rather than two (Métraux 1972:146). And multiples of three are considered holy numbers, especially twenty-one, which is the overall number of gods in the pantheon (Davis 1987:125). Three people, for example, present at an accursed witchcraft event can foul it up, producing violence, and thus nullify its force. Interestingly, the iconographic symbol of the *marassa* twins is a kind of Trinity, thus a triad rather than a duo, as is the tripartite jar for their food offering (Métraux 1972:148, 151; see figure 3). As Deren confirms, 'the twins are not to be separated into competitive, conflicting dualism. In *Vodoun* one and one make three' (Deren 1953:41; cf. Leach 1970:15–34).

Just as Kantorowicz has argued, the split image of Trujillo's body as a kind of body double, individual and collective, private and public, may have had some symbolic basis in the body of Christ. It shared the medieval notion of the mediation of the divide between the visible and the invisible, the mortal and the immortal, and even the masculine and feminine (cf. LeFort 1986:306). As Bynum has argued, Christ historically has provided a paradigmatic template for a notion of bodily regeneration and movement between earthly



and celestial domains (Bynum 1992:79–118). But this does not mean there was necessarily a formal Christian genealogy to this idea in the Dominican Republic. Indeed, unlike neighboring Cuba and Haiti, where official Catholicism was a force to be contended with and actively combatted pagan practices, after the colonial *audiencia* was moved to Mexico in the seventeenth century the Church languished in the Dominican Republic, with many parishes having to suffice with irregular and highly infrequent priest visitations. Many provincial parishes even close to Santo Domingo were given their first prelate assignments as late as the 1940s. In this context, then, official Christianity never quite succeeded in stamping out the marvelous as it did in many other contexts, and a popular brand of Catholicism which drew liberally upon Afro-Dominican and Haitian *vodoun* flourished.<sup>9</sup> Not only did a heroic tradition outside of saint miracles retain its saliency and force, but a multiplicity of malevolent forces traversing the earth were seen to exist (Le Goff 1988:27–44). Indeed, the investment of both objects and individuals with physical deformities with magical powers – such as children born with six fingers – indicates the legacy of the marvelous.

If Christ provided the foundational template for body doubling, the preference for a pluralist image of power over one which stressed Jesus' singular uniqueness may stem from a popular political cosmology based on the patron-clientelist model (Barber 1981; Brown 1981:61). The need for more approachable, anthropomorphic brokers between the divine and the everyday may well reflect a political imaginary which privileges belonging over autonomy; one in which marginality is overcome not alone, but rather through appending oneself to a more powerful broker. This is a view which assumes a deeply hierarchical social universe in which one cannot advance without assistance from those with superior status. As Karin Barber has discussed in another context, it is also a reflection of a kind of frontier culture in which self-made big men rise through accumulating underlings who both recognize them, and extend themselves into the world (Barber 1981:724). This is a deeply personal mode of domination, one based on renown and respect. Since Trujillo lacked the traditional means of distinction – land, *apellido* or a family genealogy of martial prowess in nationalist wars – he was forced to rely more centrally on sheer numbers of followers, as well as fear based on magic as a genre of 'fund of power' (Sahlins 1962:292). Just as a truly powerful *loá* must always be clustered with its subordinates and affines (after its principle pair, the spouse), a *caudillo* must be represented with his loyalists since they are its principal symbolic capital. In a parallel logic, Trujillo's *muchachito* as guardian of the underworld was an emblem of an invisible crowd of client spirit-beings which seemed all the more potentially numerous because they were unseen (Canetti 1962:42–47).

An extension of this culture of patron-clientelism may be the model of personhood in which exceptional advancement must be seen as emanating from outside the subject.<sup>10</sup> In this radically egalitarian framework, power always derives from assistance from either a powerful patron, or the other realm. As Jan Lundius has noted, this paradigm permeates both political and religious forms of charisma; 'it is not the man who is worshipped, but the power incarnated in him' (Lundius 1985:269, see also 370; contrast with Edelman 1994:74–75). The dictator Rafael Trujillo, was just a man. However, his personal *muchachito* provided him with the secrets, the *sabiduria* (wisdom) necessary

to gain and hold power. In this view, power by definition is not inherent; it must derive from the invisible, divine realm, in the form of either an elfin dwarf, a spirit (*el viejo*) or svelte *india* or female wood sprite (*ciguapa*) who conduct visitations through dreams, or an *ouanga*, a sorcerer's charm or stone or coil that serves as a conduit for sacral energies. Power is not essentialized; it is accumulated through spiritual foils or aids which enable one to achieve a position of authority, in addition to the requisite cluster of underling clients. In this view, the source of power is an office, a skill or most especially, a gift. It is acquired, not ascribed. Moreover, one does not seek out a *muchachito*; it comes in one's dreams. It should be offered without compensation, never bought or sought as a commodity. Most importantly, power is a product of one's social matrix of contacts, the web of relations which constitute one's extended identity. This is why the query 'do you know who you're talking to?' is an acutely dangerous one, because one's identity is defined not by immediately legible surface criteria, but by the range of contacts one can access and invoke – the private, invisible crowd of people one represents (DaMatta 1991:137–197). This view presupposes the sociality, and this the multiplicity, of sources of identity formation; as well as its embodied character. The subject, here, is inherently sublimated; less a transcendent 'I,' than the nexus – and product – of a particular social field.

This cultural understanding of power also corresponds to the notion of the subject assumed in spirit possession. Power is less acquired or consumed than accumulated (Anderson 1990:23; Fabian 1990). This agglutinative concept of power is operative when one is 'mounted' (*montado*) or possessed by a *misterio*, in which the *loá* is envisioned as crouching on the nape of one's neck, at the top of the spine. Power is achieved here through a doubling of self, as the 'horse' (*caballo*) becomes the recipient of the identity of a particular *sere*, a force that rises up through the ground through the spinal column and eventually into the head (Gilroy 1993; Jiménez Lambertus 1980). However, while the subject here is conceived of as a vehicle through which other identities are channeled, these are not seen as producing ambivalence, since they remain radically distinct, in different spheres. Nonetheless, power in its pure form not only comes from outside, but has consequences that can be externalized. Power is 'destiny,' but it is also *fucú*, an evil charge passed through bodily accretions and extensions such as clothes, house, touch, or even the uttering of one's name (Jiménez 1981:65–68). Indeed, just as it is taboo to utter the name of Christopher Columbus for the bad luck it carries (which is why he is often referred to as 'the Admiral'), during his regime it was taboo to name Trujillo, which explains the popular preference for calling him by his myriad official titles (such as *el Jefe*, or *el Benefactor*) or his derogatory nickname *Chapitas* (orange peels).

### The devil and state fetishism

Another popular resonance for the *muchachito* is a class of much-feared man-made spirits. Some allege that Trujillo's *muchachito* was not found but rather concocted or even purchased by a powerful *bocor* or sorcerer; thus the *muchachito* only looked like a

child but was actually a *bacá*, a being capable of transmogrifying from human to animal to even machine. Haitian *vodoun* establishes a class of particularly risky 'hot' spirits which are bought. As such, the 'hot points,' the *bacá*, or the *zonbi* (zombi) stand alone and apart as quintessential strangers in sharp contrast to the 'family' of *lwa* (Métraux 1972:288; Brodwin 1996:142). While they are not all technically made (for example, the *zonbi* is collected from a corpse and bottled), they are defined by the fact that one acquires them through purchase, as opposed to more 'natural' means of acquaintance; they are seen as artificial and thus contrary to nature, and by extension, God. Their otherness as neighbors but patently not blood kin is also expressed by the fact that while ancestral spirits can become *lwa*, and thus are on the same continuum; the 'hot' spirits, like slaves, are taken forcibly, either by stealing, involuntary capture, or purchase (Davis 1987:112–113). And like slaves, they often must be bound and chained to the ground, and held as involuntary captives. Like virtual commodities, of course, they can be appropriated by others, and thus must be protected from theft or kidnapping, unlike the *lwa* who are personal friends and thus nontransferable.

Unlike kin whose identities are known, the changeability of the hot spirits render the *bacá* deeply frightening. Often appearing as innocent children or domestic animals such as cats, dogs or pigs, they hide in woods and county roads and can instantly become cows, crabs or even enormous monsters defying description. They can also appear as half dog, half men. Indeed, their capriciousness extends even to the purported guardian of the being who falls within its control. As Métraux asserts, 'you think you are its master, only to discover you are its slave' (Métraux 1972:130). The version of the *muchachito* as *bacá* makes sense due to Trujillo's hidden Haitian genealogy through his grandmother. Irrespective of the fact that in some versions she was taken to be a representative of the mulatto Haitian aristocracy (and thus was at times portrayed as French), Trujillo's grandmother Luisa Ercina Chevalier established a genealogical connection to Haiti, and thus tapped into a vein of popular associations linked with blood, sorcery and commodity exchange (Derby 1994). And as Krohn-Hansen argues, the *bacá* is an emblem of radical alterity with popular nationalist associations (Krohn-Hansen 1995). Thus if Trujillo was indeed *really* Haitian, it makes sense to explain his extraordinary power as a result of a particular genre of devilish spirit that typically one must buy in Haiti, with assistance from a Haitian sorcerer.

Another aspect of the power of the *bacá* is that it involves excessive consumption. In this way it is similar to the *kharisiri* vampire tales of the Andes, which link otherness, money and blood in gruesome rumors of gringos stealing body parts, blood and fat to lubricate industrial machinery or flesh to be sold and consumed in fancy restaurants (Wachtel 1994:82–3). Or the goat-sucking kangaroo-vampires called *chupacabras* which have slaughtered domestic farm animals from Florida to Puerto Rico. The *bacá* not only consumes its victims, but sucks their blood dry. This consumption forms part of a circuit of exchange, however, since at great potential sacrifice, *bacases* can provide their owners with riches, if only for a short time, for they also demand 'payment' (Davis 1987:111). Consumption in many contexts is a common metaphor for understanding power. Fabian,

for example, has found that the Luba see voracious eating as a motif of raw domination, one which invokes a life-death struggle (Fabian 1990; Geschiere 1995; Mbembe 1992; Bayart 1993). And Meyer has demonstrated how Ghanaian Pentecostals view foreign goods as potentially satanic, and their consumption as threatening to consume the owner (Meyer 1999). Those who explain Trujillo's *muchachito* as a form of man-made *bacá*, then, are those who saw Trujillo as a ruthless killer, one whose power grew at the expense of the lives of many innocent victims; like a leach, he accumulated through the blood of others (Thoden van Velzen 1994, 1997).<sup>11</sup> This model of domination implicitly contrasts the correct, social means of ascent by attaching oneself to a more powerful client, to a mode in which one grows alone by consuming one's enemies through violence.

Yet there is another mode of interpreting the separation of Trujillo's powers in the popular imagination. This would be to see the narratives of Trujillo and his *muchachito* as the symbolic expression of a political strategy of Trujillo by which he sought to remain above the fray of daily political squabbles and violence such that he was able to garner all credit for the positive benefits of the regime – for the extensive public housing, the lack of crime, the economic development – while remaining disassociated from the daily system of social control.<sup>12</sup> Thus Trujillo sought to retain a transcendent image, while his hit men, agents of the SIN or secret police, took the blame for the terror. Thus if the *muchachito* was a *bacá*, it may have been an emblem representing the daily system of surveillance and violent 'excesses' of regime cronies such as the venal hatchet man Johnny Abbes, for example; while Trujillo was able to take credit for the positive aspects of the regime. In this 'maleficium' model, Trujillo remained pure, his sacredness kept distinct from the 'impure' actions of lower-down regime assassins, torturers and spies (Taussig 1993a; Leiris 1988:24–31).

Yet ultimately these two modes of power are contrasted not to create a manichean moral opposition, but rather to form a spectrum expressing a deep ambivalence about particular forms of power abuse, which ultimately both level inequalities, as well as can lead to excessive accumulation (Geschiere 1995). The tales told about Trujillo's secrets express the condition that ultimately it is not power in itself but rather how it is used which leads to evil. Trujillo's flaw lay in his lack of *confianza* or trust in others, which stemmed from his acquisitive desire for absolute power. In a story which renders the *muchachito* as a virtual Christ, Trujillo tried to test the *muchachito*, to make sure that he indeed had powers of clairvoyance by giving him three pieces of bread, one of which had been poisoned. Of course, the *muchachito* knew which was which and was not killed. After this insult, the *muchachito* was so offended that when he divined Trujillo's impending assassination, he refused to inform him, allowing him to die.<sup>13</sup> In another narrative, Trujillo went to Haiti to get a *despojo* (ritual cleansing bath) to protect him from his enemies. After the rite, the Haitian sorcerer said that now Trujillo had nothing to worry about – that only he himself or God could kill him. Trujillo interpreted this as a veiled threat and killed the man.<sup>14</sup> Thus in the end, it was Trujillo's own arrogance, his inability to trust others, that led to his own demise. Trujillo's failing lay in his attempt to rule alone, a style of authority which, like the *bacá*, ultimately consumes.



There are other folk tales expressive of the evil which would come to those who tried to interrogate Trujillo's secrets. These stories take Trujillo's isolation at the top of the political hierarchy for granted; the taboo here lies in ordinary people seeking to decipher the secrets of *el Presidente*. In one version allegedly told by Trujillo's cook, the domestic servants of the first household had all been banned from entering a particular room, which was always kept closed and under lock and key. Violating the prohibition, one once penetrated the purported chamber of horrors, and went instantly mad as a result, never to recover. He was able to conduct his daily duties at work like a zombi but in the street he spoke only nonsense, and was never able to regain any semblance of his previous private life.<sup>15</sup> In another version of this story, Trujillo's locked room contained an enormous shrine which was so powerful it could kill the uninitiated. Clearly in these tales, absolute power exerts a profound fascination, but one which should never be indulged. There is a strict prohibition against seeking to share the occult secrets at the top of the political hierarchy, as well as a sense that the corridors of power inevitably contain a dark and sinister chamber. Ultimately, however, in all these narratives the dangers of power are not intrinsic to it; they are spatially and thus categorically distinct, as well as contingent. One moral to these stories is that absolute power, one that is not shared either horizontally or vertically, often requires a dear sacrifice. For this reason, most witnesses to the inauguration of the multi-million dollar monument to Columbus, the Faro a Colón lighthouse, completed by President Joaquín Balaguer in 1992, were not at all surprised when his sister died days before the event. They said it was the *fukú* or curse of Columbus, but perhaps it was also Balaguer's conceit in striving to in effect become the admiral himself by association that required his sister's (the *Santera's*) sacrifice. In reaching too far, he lost all.

### Alchemies of state

The image of the *muchachito* condensed more than one idiom of fetishism, just as Trujillo represented more than just state power. On the one hand, Trujillo came to embody what Timothy Mitchell has called the 'state effect,' when the state comes to appear completely severed from civil society (Mitchell 1988). In this case, Trujillo himself came to personify the state. His person became the centerpiece of an elaborate theater state which like a hall of mirrors reflected back only upon Trujillo. As in the neon sign deployed by one regime sycophant, only 'God and Trujillo' were permitted any form of symbolic elevation, as if Trujillo indeed had built the state singlehandedly, which he clearly did not. Trujillo may have at times resembled an *ancien régime* monarch with absolute powers, but in reality he ruled at the apex of a modern bureaucratic state apparatus based upon a complex system of complicity and collusion.

However, there is another layer of significance to the fetishism of Trujillo. Trujillo bought up virtually all of the commanding heights of the economy, by the 1950s owning even the bulk of the formerly heavily foreign-owned sugar sector (LeGrand 1995). And some have estimated that Trujillo and his immediate family came to control as much as



Figure 4. President Rafael Trujillo making a speech during a 1950s state event in front of a larger than life poster of himself (image from documentary, *El poder del jefe*, René Fortunato, 1996).

fifty to sixty percent of all arable land, as well as eighty percent of all business in the country (Wiarda 1969:40; cf. Vedovato 1984). Not only did he seek to monopolize the most profitable domestic industries, from rice production to cement; but his control of export markets was so complete that by 1947, when he paid off the last installment of the national debt in one of the most highly celebrated nationalist ceremonies of the Era of Trujillo, he wrote a check to U.S. Ambassador Cordell Hull from his own bank account (Roorda 1998:192–230). As a result of the Hull-Trujillo Treaty, the U.S. dollar, which had been the national currency since the U.S. Customs Receivership had been installed in 1907, was replaced by the Dominican peso, and the first national bank was inaugurated. If the notion of fetish denotes an illusory mirage, then, perhaps another term should be deployed since that act made Trujillo quite literally the embodiment of national value, an equation which was deepened when the regime minted solid gold coins with Trujillo's profile to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Era of Trujillo. As the peso replaced the dollar as the form of currency backing the nation, Trujillo replaced the U.S. as the sovereign sign of national value, as he came to monopolize the most profitable economic enterprises in the country, from salt to tobacco, from sugar to cattle products and even insurance (Galíndez 1973:186–193). As one observer said, 'It is impossible to eat, drink, smoke or dress without in some way benefitting *el Benefactor* or his family. The Dominican pays him tribute from birth to death' (Wiarda 1969:41). If Trujillo was perceived as the 'public authority upon the metal that makes it money,' one can see why (Marx quoted in Taussig 1997:133).

If Trujillo's *muchachito* was indeed a living Frankenstein, a demon morphing from animal to human and back, its capacity for metamorphosis was similar to the magic of money as it transforms from generic currency to particular value. Like 'a live monster that is fruitful and multiplies,' the *muchachito* resembled a *gallipote*, the Dominican version of werewolf, but with the added horror of being able to transmogrify from cat to goat to tree branch (Marx quoted in Taussig 1997:140; Labourt 1982:189).<sup>16</sup> By forging the first national currency and paying off the national debt, Trujillo transformed the Dominican Republic from debt colony to nation. It was also during his rule that the majority of national labor shifted from essentially non-market, nomadic hunting and gathering, swidden agriculture and cattle ranching on state and communal lands to commodified wage labor on privately-held territory, a process which shifted the meaning of money drastically in everyday life (Turits 1997; Franks 1997). If sorcery is a form of invisible power, Trujillo harnessed the magic of international markets into the regime's sleight of hand. The fetishism of Trujillo represented not only the complex of changes that resulted from the development of state capitalism, thus providing a human face for the new impersonal market regime; it was the personification of a new form of material relations. By the 1950s, Trujillo was a fetish since he appeared to be ruling as a traditional *caudillo* when he actually directed a complex bureaucratic state (Marx 1973; Pietz 1993:148). Personalist methods could provide the basis of rule over a face to face society of one million, but governing three times that figure with a system of rigid social control was quite another thing altogether.

But perhaps the monstrous quality of the *muchachito* mimicked that of Trujillo, who had himself transmogrified from marginal cattle rustler to one of the wealthiest men of the world. As one who had transgressed the rules of race and class ascent still rigidly enforced when he came to power in this traditional society, Trujillo broke all odds not only by getting into power, but by staying there for more than three decades. One could argue that Trujillo's apparent fetish power thus expressed his illegitimacy as a mulatto who violated the patrilineal order – the bourgeois regime of power and propriety through which property was transmitted in an orderly fashion on the basis of *apellido*, or male family name. Within a Freudian paradigm one might say that he was feminized due to the way he represented the counter-hegemonic descent system of matrilocality; that is, the more dominant but nonetheless illicit family form governed by women's reproduction which ruled (and continues to rule) among the poor in the Dominican countryside (Smith 1996). There is much lore surrounding that which could be construed as Trujillo's effeminization – that he wore pancake make-up and powder, that he was a fop, and that he had a surprisingly high-pitched voice, for instance. Trujillo may have been feminized in popular memory because of the way as a mulatto social outsider he represented 'unnatural' social reproduction – from his chaotic extramarital liaisons and offspring, to his usurpation of land and property which was distributed not to his patriline, but rather to his political cronies and fictive kin (Gallagher 1985). Trujillo's promotion of capitalist market relations may have further deepened his association with an unnatural regime of value. And yet Trujillo was also deeply masculine – conforming to a *gallo* or *caudillo* idiom of masculinity through his passion for horses, his fierce demand for respect, and his womanizing (Simpson

1994:ch.4). Thus he may have evoked anxiety due to his unstable combination of strength and weakness, authority and illegitimacy – one which was resolved through endowing him with a phallus-substitute through the *muchachito* which rendered him unequivocally a *macho*. If the *muchachito* caused horror, it also mitigated it, by resolving Trujillo's symbolic castration (Hertz 1985:161–193; Freud 1992:202–209). If Trujillo had no right to rule, his *muchachito* provided the requisite authorization.

However, if the popular classes saw Trujillo's charisma as deriving from the religious realm, they were not entirely to blame. Regime panegyrists were equally responsible, since they used the language of 'predestination' and 'thaumaturgy' to describe his ascent to power in official publications (Lizarazo 1958:73, 131). Indeed, it may be that the middle class was guilty of far greater mystification than the illiterate poor, since they saw something intrinsic to Trujillo the man as responsible for his charisma, as opposed to an alien force like the *muchachito*, an external set of powers which Trujillo just happened to claim, but which could potentially fall into anyone's control. Just as Taylor has demonstrated for Evita Perón in Argentina, although the middle classes assumed that the 'irrational' lower classes were responsible for the deification of Trujillo, it was actually they who were the chief architects of the symbolic apparatus of rule that rendered Trujillo larger than life – from the speeches which compared him to Julius Caesar, to the public works and spectacles that framed him as numinous lodestone of national value, to the name-changing of the capital city to Trujillo City, as well as those of numerous other provincial streets and townships, to the names of his kin (Taylor 1979). It was the middle classes who forged the portentous image of Trujillo when they wrote:

The people began to see that they were in the presence of no ordinary man, but of a Hero capable of interpreting their common feelings, often vague and hidden, but alive and throbbing, as an instinct of the Fatherland in the popular mind (Lizarazo 1958:97).

It was the middle classes who constructed the image of Trujillo as conduit for the wild and irrational powers of the masses, one which harnessed their savage, instinctual energy and channeled it into a state-making project (Coronil and Skuski 1991). It was they who wrote of the bleeding of national wealth through foreign investment, and the draining of national surplus value to be invested on Wall Street. In this epic tale, Trujillo arrested this blood-sucking extraction, and restored the inalienable value of the nation by proffering his own person, and thus *respeto* (respect) to the body politic. As he vowed to his creditors, 'If my credit as President of the Republic is not enough,' . . . 'I offer my credit as Rafael Leonidas Trujillo.' Trujillo thus presented his own inalienable value to back a nation with no public credit by replacing the U.S. dollar with a Dominican peso sporting his profile, an act which established a powerful 'myth of equivalence' between the Dominican Republic and its former colonial patron, one with a special resonance in a country which had spent eight years under U.S. Marine rule (Mateo 1993:124–126).<sup>17</sup> The magic of Trujillo, then, was ultimately his ability to convert national debt into value backed by no more than the honor of the sovereign – in the end, an act of conjuring which would have even impressed Karl Marx.

Trujillo's panegyrists were also responsible for helping accrue a mystical image of divine redemption around Trujillo the man as embodiment of the nation state. This was achieved not only through rhetorical flourishes, such as Manuel Peña Battle's claim that 'Trujillo was born to satisfy an eminent and imponderable destiny . . . His work and his personality have begun to be confused with the very roots of the country in its historical and social meaning' (Peña Battle cited in Cassá 1982:773). Perhaps more important than the metaphors and tropes used to describe his acts were the less immediately decipherable signs which to a Dominican audience indexed a transcendental destiny, such as his miraculous recovery from an infant illness which brought him close to death. Or the concordance of official holidays with Trujillo's saint's day, that of Saint Raphael, which as a result became an unofficial, masculine national patron saint alongside the traditional *matrona*, the Virgin of Altigracia.

But while Dominicans may blame the 'false consciousness' of the poor for making Trujillo a hero, albeit a sinister one; historians are guilty of another form of state fetishism. Their insistence on seeing Trujillo the man as the key variable of the regime, as opposed to the network of social relationships through which the regime penetrated civil society and wove the population into a role of complicity with the dictatorship, grossly oversimplifies the problem of agency in a complex modern regime. As José Martí has taught us, reciprocity can be a strategy of power as well. The *muchachito* narratives demonstrate a form of state fetishism by imputing to Trujillo's special qualities as a person the 'secret' of his rule, if only in the sense that he was either lucky or special enough to obtain his own spiritual assistant. Yet at least they cast the problem of authority during the Trujillato as one not reducible simply to the dictator himself, but rather as fundamentally residing in Trujillo's network of relations with his subordinates, a logic encapsulated in the emblem of the *muchachito*.<sup>18</sup> The *muchachito* narratives thus locate authority in a relational balance of power, and thus problematize any simple reductive manichean morality in favor of a more complex spectrum of complicity and collusion; one in which Trujillo was to blame for monopolizing too much power, resources and wealth in his own hands, just as his underlings were to blame for being seduced by his politics of the gift to providing him with essential support without which he could never have remained in office for three full decades. In this complex moral vision, the right hand can dislike the left but can't do without it.

This essay has sought to demonstrate that Trujillo's *muchachito* provides a key to uncoding the cultural logic governing the phenomenology of power in the Dominican Republic. But this case may also indicate a problem in the literature on state fetishism in the post-colony which stems from the difficulty of disentangling analytically the phenomena of state and commodity fetishism, at least in contexts such as those in which the state through the dictator assumes a central role in the economy, and in which the public is kept quite shielded from the everyday operations of politics. Here, as Bourdieu puts it, the 'ministerium appears as a mysterium';<sup>19</sup> and in the case of Trujillo, eventually became a *misterio* ('mystery', mystical agent). Ultimately popular interpretations of the *muchachito* vary according to the subject's sentiments towards the regime – those who

liked Trujillo tended to see his otherworldly assistant as benign, while those critical of the dictatorship saw it as the very incarnation of evil.<sup>20</sup> However, no matter whether people saw the *muchachito* as the right or the left hand of Trujillo, his private secret or his true public identity, its function was ultimately the same. The *muchachito* provided mythic confirmation of Trujillo's authority. It was a spiritual manifestation or 'political mimesis' of the everyday behind-the-scenes machinations of power, from extortion to juridical manipulation, from graft to assassination, that were the true secrets of Trujillo's longevity in office (Fischlin 1996:9; Bourdieu 1991:182).

## Notes

- \* This essay 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 Newcombe Foundation supported my dissertation write-up. This essay is dedicated to my own twins, James and Alec, who arrived while finishing this piece.
1. Interview, Rosa Tavares, widow of Manuel Tavares, Santo Domingo, 1992.
2. Interestingly, Trujillo's female diviners are named, such as Mama Iné; while his *muchachito* is not.
3. The *muchachito* arose in life-historical interviews with the poor urban underclass of the capital and some rural interviewees during my dissertation fieldwork in 1992, as well as Dominicans resident in Chicago in 1997–98.
4. Not all *misterios* are putatively Haitian; many are considered Dominican spirits. In fact, the entire Petro line of Haitian deities in Haiti is attributed to a Dominican sorcerer – Sr. Don Pedro – who is said to have fashioned a 'point' in Haiti. I take no sides on these genealogical debates, but site their relevance to negotiating categories of spiritual powers. On 'points' see Larose (1977) and Davis (1987).
5. Additionally, elites replace the dualistic structure of Trujillo and his *muchachito* with Trujillo and key subordinate Joaquín Balaguer, at times gendering Balaguer as the female term of the pair since he never married.
6. In this essay I refer to *vodú* when a phenomenon is more typical of Dominican popular religious practice, and *voodoo* when it is more Haitian. However, there is a very porous boundary between the two nation's religious cultures.
7. Although this is the public, respectable self-presentation; I have met many Dominican *servitors* who actually do have double altars.
8. This occurred with the powerful twin cult of 1961 which formed at Palma Sola, near the Haitian border. The Ventura brothers who lead the movement, although called twins in popular parlance, actually had an invisible third term – another sister who died. For more on Palma Sola, see Lusitania Martínez (1991).
9. Laennec Hürbon also makes the point that Catholicism throughout the Caribbean is perceived as continuous with Afro-Caribbean spiritism. He argues that this explains why some people convert to Protestantism, since it is seen as offering superior protection from the dangers of the *loá*, especially if one is being 'called' to be baptized as a '*servitor*'. See Hürbon (1986).
10. I am referring here to inexplicable or socially illegitimate advancement, not to hegemonic forms of social distinction such as class authority.
11. In this version, the *muchachito* resembles the *bakuu* or demons of Surinamese maroons who are represented as killers and 'money machines'.

12. The underlying reasons for this are discussed in chapter seven of my dissertation, 'The Magic of Modernity: Dictatorship and Civic Culture in the Dominican Republic, 1916-1962,' Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of History, University of Chicago, 1998, Vol. II, 321-379.
13. Interview, Los Corporanes, San Cristóbal, 1992.
14. Interview, Daniel Parede, Chicago, 1997.
15. Interview, Miguelina Ramirez, Chicago, 1997.
16. The morphing metaphor may have some illustrative validity as well since in Haiti, *bacas* can become machines, as well as animals (fieldwork, Ouanaminthe, Haiti, 1988).
17. While I am borrowing Mateo's argument about myths of equivalence, he is discussing how Trujillo became equivalent to nationalist founding father Juan Pablo Duarte by paying off the national debt, and thus by 'making the idea [of nationhood] a reality'.
18. This argument about authority was inspired by Webb Keane's talk on 'Words and Agency,' The University of Chicago Department of Anthropology, 20 October 1997. This point is also stressed in the film directed by René Fortunato, *El Poder del Jefe I*.
19. Indeed, this feature might also qualify this form of fetishism as falling within the general criteria laid out by Arjun Appadurai in his 'Introduction: Commodities and The Politics of Value' (1986:54) as one which develops in contexts in which 'there are sharp discontinuities in the distribution of knowledge concerning their trajectories of circulation,' such as enclaves. This is also similar to Bourdieu's argument about political fetishism in his 'Delegation and Political Fetishism' (1991:204.)
20. This broad characterization, however, camouflages the fact that more women portrayed the *muchachito* in positive terms, which may be a product of the fact that more women than men are active saint/*loá* devotees, and more women actually have *muchachitos* themselves.

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