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### Rita Indiana's *Estrategia* to Refocus (neo) Trujillista and Balaguerista Narratives of Dominicanidad. Unearthing Sonic Stories of 1990's Urban Youth

*La Estrategia de Rita Indiana para Re-enfocar las Narrativas (neo)Trujillista y Balaguerista de la Dominicanidad: Desenterrando las Historias Sónicas de la Juventud Urbana de los Años 1990*

*La stratégie de Rita Indiana pour recentrer les récits (néo)trujillista et balaguerista de Dominicanidad: dénicher les histoires sonores de la jeunesse urbaine des années 1990*

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#### Abstract

In the aftermath of *los doce años* Dominican literary production refocused the model of cultural homogeneity and the ideological foundations of dominicanidad upheld by (neo)trujillista and balaguerista ideologues. The writings of Aurora Arias, Rey Emmanuel Andújar, Frank Báez, Juan Dicent, and Rita Indiana—to name a few—put forward a dominicanidad that transcends Hispanicity, geography, and essentialisms. This article looks at *La estrategia de Chochueca* by Rita Indiana as a key illustration for a wave of literary works that have moved beyond the one-dimensional and nationalistic discourse of *dominicanidad* by focusing on the adventures of Silvia, a modern day *flâneuse* in 1990s Santo Domingo, her almost anonymous existence in the urban space as well as

sonic memories reconstructed in the novella. In doing so, I amplify the ways the intersections between said sonic memories and literature proliferate to put forth a more nuanced and reflective narrative of *dominicanidad* that resists the structural foundations of a (trans)nation that is still haunted by the ever-present ghosts of the (neo)*trujillato* and (neo)*balaguerato*.

### Keywords

Dominicanidad, (neo)*trujillista*, (neo)*balaguerista*, Rita Indiana, sonic memories, urban youth

### Resumen

Tras el período de los Doce Años de Balaguer hubo un incremento de la producción literaria dominicana que cuestionó el modelo de homogeneidad cultural y los fundamentos ideológicos de la dominicanidad sostenidos por los ideólogos (neo)trujillistas y balagueristas. Los textos de Aurora Arias, Rey Emmanuel Andújar, Frank Báez, Juan Dicient y Rita Indiana —por nombrar algunos— postulan una dominicanidad que trasciende la hispanidad, la geografía y los esencialismos que han servido de base para conceptualizar la identidad dominicana. Este artículo analiza *La estrategia de Chochueca* de Rita Indiana como ejemplo clave de una ola de obras literarias que han ido más allá del discurso unidimensional y nacionalista de la dominicanidad. En mi análisis, centralizo las aventuras de Silvia, una joven *flâneuse* en el Santo Domingo de los años 1990 y su existencia casi anónima en el espacio urbano, así como las memorias sonoras reconstruidas en *La estrategia de Chochueca*. De este modo, amplifico las formas en que proliferan las intersecciones entre dichas memorias sonoras y la literatura con la finalidad de conceptualizar una narrativa de la dominicanidad más inclusiva y reflexiva que desafía los cimientos estructurales de una (trans)nación que sigue siendo asediada y marcada por los siempre presentes fantasmas del (neo) trujillato y (neo) balaguerato.

## Palabras clave

Dominicanidad, (neo)trujillista, balaguerista, Rita Indiana, memorias sonoras, juventud urbana

## Résumé

Après *los doce años*, la production littéraire dominicaine a recentré le modèle d'homogénéité culturelle et les fondements idéologiques de la *dominicanidad* soutenus par les idéologues du (néo)trujillisme et du *balaguerisme*. Les **écrits** d'Aurora Arias, de Rey Emmanuel Andújar, de Frank Báez, de Juan Dicient et de Rita Indiana, pour n'en nommer que quelques-uns, mettent en avant une dominicanité qui transcende l'hispanité, la géographie et les essentialismes. Cet article examine *La estrategia de Chochueca* de Rita Indiana comme illustration d'une vague d'œuvres littéraires qui ont dépassé le discours unidimensionnel et nationaliste de *la dominicanidad*. *La estrategia* tourne sur les aventures de Silvia, une flâneuse moderne dans les années 1990 à Saint-Domingue, son existence quasi anonyme dans l'espace urbain ainsi que des souvenirs sonores reconstitués dans cette nouvelle. Ce faisant, j'amplifie les manières dont les intersections entre les dites mémoires sonores et la littérature prolifèrent pour proposer un récit plus nuancé et réfléchi de *la dominicanidad* qui résiste aux fondements structurels d'une (trans)nation qui est toujours hantée par les fantômes toujours présents de le (néo)trujillato et le (néo)balaguerato.

## Mots-clés

Dominicanidad, (neo)trujillista, (neo)balaguerista, Rita Indiana, souvenirs sonores, jeunesse urbaine

During the 1970s dominant political sectors and the intellectual elite in the Dominican Republic still conceptualized the nation as a homogeneous “imagined community.”<sup>1</sup> In this

1 The concept of the nation as an “imagined community” is theorized in Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread*

context, the nation-building project is “imagined” as a beacon of modernity and economic progress where the perpetuation of the Hispanocentric, Catholic, and anti-Haitian values create a false sense of communion among its members. Elizabeth Manley argues that these values not only serve as the ideological base of Trujillo’s regime and its continuation with the *balaguerato*, but can also become a critical turning point, one where the Dominican narrative can be refocused and enable “a new ‘usable past’ after authoritarianism.”<sup>2</sup> Literary production, from the late 1980s until today has become a destabilizing space of the aforementioned model of cultural homogeneity and the sense of unity upheld by (neo)trujillista ideologues during Joaquín Balaguer’s *doce años*.<sup>3</sup> The writings of Aurora Arias, Rey Emmanuel Andújar, Frank Báez, Juan Dicient, and Rita Indiana—to name a few—put forward a dominicanidad that transcends Hispanicity, geography, and essentialisms.<sup>4</sup> This new approach to imagining the nation

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*of Nationalism* (1983; repr. New York: Verso, 2006). Anderson writes that the nation is “*imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (6).

2 See Elizabeth Manley, *The Parados of Paternalism. Women and the Politics of Authoritarianism in the Dominican Republic* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2017), 12, 72.

3 Joaquín Balaguer rose to power during an unstable political moment. After Rafael Leónidas Trujillo died, there were several provisional governments. The assumed threat of the spread of Communism, and the fear that the country would follow in Cuba’s footsteps, provoked a military coup by president-elect Juan Bosch in 1963 and the abolition of the constitution that same year. As a result of these events, *Movimiento Revolucionario* leaders began a battle on June 14 that culminated in many of them dying or being imprisoned. The population’s discontent provoked a group of soldiers, led by Francisco Caamaño Deñó and Rafael Tomás Fernández Domínguez, to fight to reinstitute the constitution. A civil war began in the Dominican capital on April 25, 1965. Three days later, a North American invasion began that supported the national reconstruction efforts against the restoration of constitutionality, so much so that Joaquín Balaguer’s victory in 1966 was supported by North American troops. We must remember that the advisor and leader of the *Partido Reformista Social Cristiano* (Christian Social Reform Party) was one of the core ideologues of the “Trujillo city.” Therefore, the period known as “*doce años*” (twelve years) strengthened and perpetuated Dominican conservatism instituted by the Trujillo regime. This time frame was just as bloody and violent as Trujillo’s Era.

4 It should be noted that the work of these authors is a continuation and amplification of cultural, intellectual, and literary endeavors that challenged

emerged as a response to the political and cultural repression and suppression of anyone and anything that attempted to disrupt the monolithic construction of dominicanidad ingrained in the structural foundations of a (trans)nation that is still haunted by the ever-present ghosts of the (neo)*trujillato* and *balaguerato*.<sup>5</sup>

In *La pasión danzaria: Música y baile en el Caribe a través del merengue y la bachata*, Darío Tejeda writes, “Con el proceso de lo que se llamó ‘destrujillización’ y la democratización política, la sociedad dominicana empezó a forjar un nuevo rostro. Los cambios motorizados principalmente por los sectores urbanos fueron provocando el descubrimiento de su novedoso perfil; la nación empezó a adquirir una mayor conciencia de sí misma.”<sup>6</sup> The new consciousness and the process of “*destrujillización*” and, I would add, “*desbalaguerización*,” or what I describe as de-identification with the political and social foundations of dominicanidad promoted, instilled, and perpetuated by Joaquín Balaguer—derived into counter-discursive cultural movements that assigned new value to popular cultural elements disavowed by the (neo)*trujillato* and *balaguerato*. In today’s cultural and literary context, the works of Dominican queer icon, author, and performer, Rita Indiana, propel a renewed (trans)national and fluid self-awareness where alternative conceptualizations of dominicanidad include, but are

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hegemonic notions of dominicanidad in earlier decades. Such is the case of the efforts of groups such as *Convite*, and the literary subversions of writers such as Aida Cartagena Portalatín, Juan Bosch, Pedro Mir, Juan Sánchez Lamouth, and Norberto James Rawlings—to mention some of the main actors. The recent works of Dominican diasporic writers also illustrates this tendency to subvert reductionist and homogeneous understandings of Dominican identity as we can appreciate in the literary production of Nelly Rosario, Angie Cruz, Loida Maritza Pérez, Naima Coster, Elizabeth Acevedo, and Junot Díaz.

5 By *neotrujillato/balaguerato*, I refer to the continuation of the ideological foundations of *trujillismo*. Yet, I made this distinction to point out how with *balaguerato* there is a shift in strategy and leadership. Joaquín Balaguer becomes the central political figure and his dictatorial ways hide under the veneer of democracy, transparency, and modernity.

6 Darío Tejeda, *La pasión danzaria: música y baile en el Caribe a través del merengue y la bachata* (Santo Domingo, DR: Academia de Ciencias de República Dominicana, 2002), 113.

not limited to, Afro-Dominican traditions, queer identities, popular music, and cultural interconnections amongst the Dominican diaspora in the United States. This article focuses on the adventures of Silvia, a modern day *flâneuse* in Santo Domingo 1990s, her almost anonymous existence in the urban space, and a sonic archive reconstructed in Rita Indiana's *La estrategia de Chochueca*. In doing so, I amplify the ways the intersections between sonic memories and literature proliferate to put forth a more nuanced and reflective narrative of dominicanidad that, as Miguel de Mena has pointed out, reframe fundamentalist visions that have prevailed in the Dominican imaginary.<sup>7</sup>

Rita Indiana's literary career began in the late nineties with the publication of: "El legado," "La caída," and "La división" in the cultural magazine *Vetas*.<sup>8</sup> Her contribution to Dominican prose began with her short story collections *Rumiantes* (1998) and *Ciencia Succión* (2002). With *La estrategia de Chochueca* (2000) she embarked on what she refers to as "la trilogía de las locas," which continued with *Papi* (2005) and concluded with *Nombres y animales* (2013). After the completion of that trilogy, she published *La mucama de Omicunlé* (2015), which was awarded the Grand Prize of Literature by the Caribbean Writers Association (2017) and translated into English as *Tentacle* (2018) by author Achy Obejas, and most recently *Hecho en Saturno* (2018). Over the course of the last decade, Rita Indiana has become a trans-Caribbean and transnational cultural icon, contesting, blurring, disrupting, and transforming the notion of dominicanidad. Her *vaivenes* between genres and geographical spaces are central to her (re)articulation of *dominicanidad*. In other words, although her constant bridging and blurring of borders between and within music and literature may be read as an act of "ignor[ing] divisions be-

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7 Miguel D. Mena, "El dominicano, sus imaginarios," in *Poética de Santo Domingo II*, 2nd ed. (Santo Domingo, DR: Ediciones Cielonaranja, 2013), 17.

8 The first short story was featured in volume 17, March 1996. The second and third short-story were published in volume 19, June 1996.

tween artistic disciplines,”<sup>9</sup> as Hutchinson suggests, it also provides a more accurate depiction of the ways we have ignored the in-between spaces that make up the multi-textured and diverse fabric of Dominican identity.

In the prologue to the third edition of *La estrategia de Chochueca*, Juan Duchesne-Winter cites the words of Néstor Rodríguez, who deemed the novella “la contribución más importante a la novelística dominicana de los últimos 20 años.”<sup>10</sup> Almost two decades after this statement, and considering its relevance in the late nineties and early 2000s, I re-read *La estrategia de Chochueca* as an important contribution to Dominican narrative fiction and as a seminal illustration of a wave of literary works that has moved beyond the one-dimensional and nationalistic discourse of dominicanidad in the last four decades.<sup>11</sup> As literary and cultural critics Odalís Pérez and Fernanda Bustamante have pointed out, these new narratives legitimize the margins, challenge the status quo, and transgress potable and homogeneous representations of the Dominican nation-state by expanding the borders of language, geography, gender and sexuality representations, and racial discourses.<sup>12</sup> These more expansive representations of dominicanidad also become evident in the way authors such as Rita Indiana, her cohort-mates (Rey Emmanuel Andújar, Juan Dicient, and Frank Báez), and predecessors (Aurora Arias and Josefina Báez), bridge the separation between high and low culture and make legible *other* bodies, spaces, experiences, and practices. Within this framework, I consider how *La estrategia de Chochueca* creates knowledge from the cracks of official discourses of dominicanidad. I approach the novella as a space where sound enters the domain of language and

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9 Sydney Hutchinson, “Listening Sideways: The Transgenre Work of Rita Indiana” in *Tigers of a Different Stripe: Performing Gender in Dominican Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 174.

10 Rita Indiana, *La estrategia de Chochueca*, 7.

11 I am referring to the works of Aurora Arias, Pedro Antonio Valdez, and most recently, Rita Indiana, Rey Andújar, Frank Báez, Juan Dicient, Karol Starocean, and Miguel Yarull.

12 See Pérez (2005) and Bustamante (2014).

the sonic and non-sonic converge to provide a more holistic and encompassing script of dominicanidad, one where sonic memories, events, and objects become fertile grounds to challenge, resist, and counter narrate the (neo)trujillian/balague-rista city.<sup>13</sup>

Rita Indiana's *La estrategia de Chochueca* reminds us of the social ruin that haunted Dominican urban youth after the period of the *doce años*, the failed attempts at social reform by the *Partido Revolucionario Dominicano* (1978-1986), and the return to power of Joaquín Balaguer and the *Partido Reformista Social Cristiano* (1986-1996). Yet rather than amplifying the sounds of these conjunctures, Rita Indiana uses them as a point of reference to counter-narrate the milestones of urban modernization projects propelled by Joaquín Balaguer and his acolytes. In this sense, *La estrategia de Chochueca* can be construed as a historiographical attempt to show the cracks in the veneer of a Dominican imaginary that omits subaltern stories, spaces, and subjects. In her attempt to legitimize alternative sounds of the city—more expansive and inclusive ones—Rita Indiana creates a sonic narrative set at the crossroads between *canCIÓN protesta*, Caribbean and Dominican rhythms, and US American music.

In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau asserts the “concept city” as a place of distributions, differentiations, rejections, transformations, and appropriations. Urban life, in de Certeau's view, “permits the re-emergence of the element that urbanistic model rejected.” It “is left prey to contradictory movements that counter-balance and combine themselves outside the reach of panoptic power” where “the ruses and combination of powers that had no readability identity

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13 See “The Spaces of the Dominican Nation” in Nestor Rodríguez, *Divergent Dictions: Contemporary Dominican Literature* (2011). Rodríguez explains how the topographical reconfiguration of the Dominican capital after Hurricane San Zenón in 1936 supposed not only a transformation on the physical space, but also “a new social ordering” (27). Rodríguez argues that this order has been held, perpetuated, and disseminated, and institutionalized by intellectuals as the epistemological foundation of *dominicanidad*.



proliferate.”<sup>14</sup> The urban cartography recreated in *La estrategia de Chochueca* centers the practices that resist and survive the decaying and stagnant socio-political and geographical demarcations in what Néstor Rodríguez denominates as the trujillista city and that I refer to as the (neo)trujillista/balaguerista city. Rita Indiana's depiction of Dominican urban life—mostly anchored in what used to be the center of the Dominican capital, the Zona Colonial, and neighborhoods in the Western part of the capital, what became the new *centro* in the 1980s<sup>15</sup>—privileges aspects rejected and eliminated by the (neo)trujillista/balaguerista city proliferating in this way illegitimate and unreadable spaces, bodies, and experiences. The novella validates the existence of subaltern subjects in an urban center that, as Fernanda Bustamante points out, “da cuenta de la transformación de las dinámicas sociales después de la represión del último gobierno de Balaguer, al mismo tiempo que desmantela los discursos hegemónicos en los que se ha envuelto la ‘dominicanidad.’”<sup>16</sup>

One of the novella's settings, a bar called Century on El Conde street that is frequented by young people who listened to music from the United States instantiates how *La estrategia de Chochueca* makes visible and legible subaltern spaces and subject. Silvia describes Century as a place that “tenía fama de antro de raros.”<sup>17</sup> The bands and musical icons that were integrated into the daily lives of these subaltern youths reveal the impact of US culture on middle class Dominican urban youth in the 1990s. In this sense, with the insertion of foreign trends in the Dominican sonic and geographic cartography, new spaces and experiences are validated, and Century beco-

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14 de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 95.

15 See Arturo Victoriano, “Memoria y espacios en Santo Domingo,” *Revista Cielonaranja*, accessed October 19, 2020, <http://www.cielonaranja.com/victorianomemoria.htm>.

16 Fernanda Bustamante, “Rita Indiana Hernández: Una escritura que retuerce los márgenes y los paradigmas de representación identitaria,” in *Rita Indiana: Archivos*, ed. Fernanda Bustamante (Santo Domingo-Berlín, DR: Ediciones Cielonaranja, 2017), 260.

17 Indiana, *La estrategia de Chochueca*, 19.

mes a sacred space. In Century, the DJ is the priest who presides over the congregation, delivering music as homily and church organs are replaced by a record player and vinyl that projects strident sounds in English: “La música estaba brutal. El dj diminuto detrás de sus platos tenía una cabeza afeitada perfecta, el dj y su zug zigui zug, el dj como el sacerdote de alguna secta de titanio antes los monigotes que bailaban en la pista, un óvalo pintado de rosado pepto-bismol.”<sup>18</sup> This proliferation of foreign music and trends culminated in an explosion of global cultural streams through the *mac universe* and cable TV accessed by middle- and upper-class youth in the DR. At least in the symbolic space, said access was a step toward breaking the dam of cultural homogeneity and hispanophilia that was promoted and instituted by the (neo) trujillista/balaguerista city.

*La estrategia de Chochueca* is the story of the nighttime escapades of a generation yearning for an alternative social and spatial structure to that of their past and present: one where their differences are no longer squashed or eliminated. Rita Indiana weaves a textual tapestry that narrates a series of mishaps of a young group of people who attempt to delineate what Néstor Rodríguez denominates as “subversive cartography” of Santo Domingo.<sup>19</sup> The novella revolves around the theft of a set of loudspeakers and the various attempts of Silvia, the narrator, and some of her friends to return them without being caught by the authorities. These loudspeakers signify the sounds of a city buried in the physical and metaphorical ruins of the aftermath of thirty-one years of dictatorship, political instability, and political unrest of the second US Occupation, *La Guerra de Abril*, Joaquín Balaguer’s *doce años* and his return to the presidency in 1986 after two tenures of the *Partido Revolucionario Dominicano*, and the IMF austerity measures of 1985.

The stolen loudspeakers, dusted off and extracted from the ruins, are in the hands of “una generación de dominicanos

18 Indiana, *La estrategia de Chochueca*, 66.

19 See Rodríguez, *Divergent Dictions*, 109–128.

que no aparecen en la publicidad, que no es pensada por la política” as María Teresa Vera-Rojas reminds us.<sup>20</sup> The re-appropriation of the loudspeakers by the youth portrayed in the novella, especially the narrator—a young modern-day *flâneuse* who reinvents the city and its sounds with every night stroll—can be interpreted as an attempt to reset—at least in the symbolic plane—the ideological foundations that have marked the rhythm of the city. In the words of Torrado, “[l]a importancia de las bocinas reitera el valor literal y simbólico que tiene la música a través de la novela, y simultáneamente el robo funciona como rechazo metafórico del *status quo* y de la Ciudad Trujillo.”<sup>21</sup> I speculate that the author’s choice to center loudspeakers in the story could be an attempt to confront the reader with the frustrations of a generation that, in spite of having a device that is visible, can amplify their voices, and project their concerns, they are unable to use it in the public eye of a Santo Domingo that is still influenced, defined, and guided by the ideological apparatus of the neo-trujillian/balaguerista city. As such, Silvia and her friends have to keep hiding the loudspeakers and making use of the nights to move them around the city until they reach their unknown final destination.

The sonic archive and musical artifacts (loudspeakers, CDs, music boxes, cassettes) that are centered or serve as the novella’s backdrop are fundamental to understanding the tactics employed by urban youth in the 1990s to create what Lorna Torrado has called a *ciudad musical*: “una realidad alterna que apunta hacia un nuevo sujeto urbano globalizado que no tiene que limitarse al imaginario cultural caribeño.”<sup>22</sup> As such, Rita Indiana creates a “ciudad musical,”—borrowing from To-

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20 María Teresa Vera-Rojas, “¡Se armó el juidero! Cartografías imprecisas, cuerpos disidentes, sexualidades transgresoras: Hacia una lectura queer de Rita Indiana Hernández,” in *Rita Indiana. Archivos*, ed. Fernanda Bustamante (Santo Domingo: Ediciones Cielonaranja, 2017), 212.

21 Torrado, “Sinfonía del desencanto,” 249.

22 Lorna Torrado, “Sinfonía del desencanto: La destrucción de Ciudad Trujillo en Rita Indiana Hernández,” in *El sonido de la música en la narrativa dominicana: ensayos sobre identidad, nación y performance*, ed. Médar Serrata (Santo Domingo, DR: Instituto de Estudios Caribeños, 2012), 249.

rado— where new geographical and cultural cartographies of the city are drawn by Silvia and her friends privileging new sounds to counteract the political and economic ruin that engendered and surrounds them. By bridging local and global music, the novella establishes an urban spatial and ideological reordering in which subjects and expressions that have remained marginal in hegemonic dominicanidad become legible and visible. It is not coincidence that this “ciudad musical” in which the sonic (music) and non-sonic (literature) conflate, provides the rhythm and structure of *La estrategia de Chochueca*; it is a narrative mechanism, a rhetorical technique, and an ideological tool. Music is a constant throughout the seven chapters of the book where music-centered spaces—a record store and a concert. Further, music idols are referenced to contextualize the popular culture trends of a particular era, including Madonna, Kurt Cobain, The Meat Puppets, David Byrne, and the Talking Heads. At other times, as intertexts, lyrics of recognizable popular songs appear in the story: “Alguien ha cometido la temeridad de poner a Talking Heads en el equipo de música. ‘Memories can’t wait,’ la guitarra que tiembla y habla por una boca seca, pa, pa, [. . .] never woke up had no regrets.”<sup>23</sup>

In an effort to reframe the foundations of the Dominican imaginary through music, the novella also highlights an event that has been kept at the margins of official narratives of the Dominican nation-state: the *Siete Días con el Pueblo* music festival, the first international meeting of the *Nueva Canción* organized by the *Central General de Trabajadores*. The festival was a collective act specifically designed to mark music as political—a tool to resist and denounce repressive and authoritarian regimes in Latin America and the Caribbean during the 1970s.<sup>24</sup> Opponents of the authoritarian regime

23 Indiana, *La estrategia de Chochueca*, 54.

24 This historic musical gathering took place in different parts of the country between November 25 and December 1, 1974. It brought together key local and international figures from the Canción Protesta / Nueva Canción, such as Dominican groups Los Virtuosos de Cuco Valoy, el Combo Show de Johnny Ventura, Convite, Nueva Forma, and Expresión Joven, among others. Among the international participants and attendees were Mercedes Sosa, Danny Rivera,

of Joaquín Balaguer gathered during the seven days of the series of concerts with music icons of *canción protesta* from Latin America and the Caribbean to denounce the repression, constant harassment, and the violence that prevailed during the *doce años* as well as the unjust imprisonment of political dissidents in the Dominican Republic, Latin America, and the Caribbean. From the brief, yet concise manifesto of the event one can appreciate how the political climate of Latin America and the Caribbean culminated in a collaborative and solidary project that championed popular resistance as means to combat political repression.<sup>25</sup> By foregrounding this event, Rita Indiana underscores the role of music in dissident politics as an avenue for unity and grassroots change. In the novella, Salim, one of Silvia's friends, recounts his unforgettable childhood encounter (in his father's arms) with Silvio Rodríguez. Salim's father, Don xxxxx, was a vocal critic of the *balaguerato*:

Pasaba Silvio Rodríguez con una camisita de rayas y me cargaba un hombre altísimo y le decía a unos jóvenes que yo era el hijo, que yo era el hijo, que yo era el hijo... y los presos, los presos, los presos, mi mamá desgañitándose con una consigna y yo con los bracitos alrededor de su cuello.<sup>26</sup>

The reference to this event in the novella serves two additional purposes. On one hand, it situates Dominican political struggles against authoritarianism in a pan-Latin American/Caribbean context. On the other hand, it shows the incongruence and lack of historical and social continuity of the ideological footing of *Siete Días con el Pueblo* music festival over time and under the influence of the *balaguerato*. The la-

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Noel Nicola, Lucecita Benítez, Ana Belén, Víctor Manuel, and Los Guaraguo. For more information about the impact of this event, see VV.AA., *Memorias de la cayena. A cuarenta años de 7 días con el pueblo*. (Santo Domingo: Ministerio de Cultura, 2004) and Alfonso Quiñones, "7 días con el Pueblo', un evento que cambió la canción," (*Diario Libre*, November 26, 2004. Web January 16, 2005).

25 The following link to El Taller Latino contains the details of said Manifesto as well as an interview with Bernardo Palombo, an Argentinian singer who participated in the festival: <https://tallerlatino.org/blog/2020/1/8/7-das-con-el-pueblo-politics-and-music-the-woodstock-of-the-dominican-republic>

26 Rita Indiana, *La estrategia de Chochueca*, 64.

ter is evidenced in the character development of Don xxxxx, who resurfaces in the story when Silvia and one of her friends are unloading the loudspeakers from a truck with the help of a security guard and a shoe store clerk. Silvia describes the encounter with Don xxxxx in an ironic tone, revealing her disappointment that Salim's father wasn't the revolutionary man of his son's stories:

Yo dirigía desde lejos, obviamente, hasta que salió Don xxxxx, el papá de Salim, de una tienda de discos, Don xxxxx ahora trabaja en el gobierno y tiene en la mirada esa cosa rara de los que fueron torturados en los doce años y ahora trabajan junto a sus torturadores. Me hace señas y en su muñeca me molesta el reflejo necio del sol en un Cartier, me dice: "Mi hija, ¿y esos armatostes?", señalando las bocinas.<sup>27</sup>

Don xxxxx leaves the record store a different version of the revolutionary man Salim remembered and is portrayed as a metonymic extension of the balaguerato. Despite being tortured during the period of the *doce años* and having protested the imprisonment of the political opposition alongside his wife during *Siete Días con el Pueblo*, he became an ally of the system that had oppressed him. In a conversation with Silvia, her friend Salim revisits the day he accompanied his father to one of the concerts of *Siete Días con el Pueblo*: "Tú tenía que ver eso, pidiendo libertad para los presos políticos y mi mamá me levantaba del piso del estadio olímpico y yo le veía los ojos morados de llorar y me decía en secreto "Tu papá, tu papa."<sup>28</sup> Meditating on the ideological change of Salim's father, Silvia concludes, hopelessly, that in the end ideals lead to nothing because ultimately: "me daba cuenta de que todo da igual, al final todo es mentira, todos queremos un carrito japonés y una piscina."<sup>29</sup> To invoke Antonio Benítez-Rojo, *La estrategia de Chochueca* is part of a Caribbean literary tradition that "no son sólo proyectos para ironizar un conjunto de valores tenidos por universales; son también, proyectos que comunican

27 Rita Indiana, *La estrategia de Chochueca*, 63.

28 Rita Indiana, *La estrategia de Chochueca*, 63.

29 Rita Indiana, *La estrategia de Chochueca*, 64.

su propia turbulencia, su propio choque, su propio vacío...”<sup>30</sup> As such, by situating the character, Don xxxxx, in two ideological clashing contexts, Rita Indiana reflects upon the la “propia turbulencia” and “propio vacío” that is left when ideals and revolutionary movements are short-lived.

*La estrategia de Chochueca* opens and closes with allusions to sound and silence. In the beginning of the novel, “la acción de andar” bridges sound and movement: “La sola acción de andar ofrece posibilidades inevitables, se camina sin pensar que se camina, más bien tintineamos las caderas acompañando las piernas a la cadencia automata.”<sup>31</sup> The act of walking,—of navigating space with new feet, new sensibilities, and a new attitude—moves the body left, right, backwards, and forward; it becomes a dance where one is moving without thinking and letting silence and the sounds heard and produced by the walker set the pace and the way. In *Cuerpo y cultura: Las músicas “mulatas” y la subversión del baile*, Ángel Quintero Rivera explains how dance practices for enslaved subjects “constituían una expresión ritual de memorias colectivas, una estética de la seducción...o una vía de comunicación e incitación libertaria.”<sup>32</sup> Following this line of argumentation, and aware of the socio-historical differences between the horrors of the chattel slavery and modern-day readings of social structures and dynamics as forms of slavery, I interpret the “act of walking” as it relates to sound and movement, as a “ritual expression of collective memories” that is seducing us—the readers—in *La estrategia de Chochueca* to liberate dominicanidad from the (neo)trujillista/balaguerista ideologies and dance to other rhythms. In this sense, the novella reveals “el claro desfase entre el paradigma de identidad cultural surgido de la ciudad trujillista—ese que sigue vigente como santo y seña de la cultura política dominicana—, y una cul-

30 Antonio Benítez-Rojo, *La isla que se repite*. (Barcelona, ES: Editorial Casiopea, 1998), 43.

31 Rita Indiana, *La estrategia de Chochueca*, 13.

32 Ángel Quintero Rivera, *Cuerpo y cultura. Las músicas “mulatas” y la subversión del baile* (Madrid, ES: Iberoamericana, 2009), 10.

tura distinta, marcada por el entrecruzamiento de conductas, discursos y niveles de comunicación heterogéneos.”<sup>33</sup>

The verbal threads woven into the novella’s final paragraphs invoke the universe of sound: “oigo los gritos,” “dando voces de auxilio,” “los gritos de las mujeres”<sup>34</sup>. In the penultimate paragraph, “los gritos desaparecen dibujando virutas diminutas en el silencio.”<sup>35</sup> By the end, the sound fades, words come to their end, and only a sonic image prevails, “el zumbido de las lámparas llenas de moscas,”<sup>36</sup> to keep buzzing in the ears of (neo)trujillista/balaguerista ideologues. The sonic and non-sonic events centered in *La estrategia de Chochueca*’s urban liminality become useful to see and reflect upon the cracks in the veneer of the (neo)trujillista/balaguerista ideological apparatus. The novella becomes a space of reflection where the stories of the heirs of those who lived through the *doce años*, their mishaps, and the way they make sense of their present by revisiting very specific events of the *balaguerista* past, take center stage to unearth urban stories that remain buried in the (neo)trujillista/balaguerista city decades after *los doce años*.

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33 Néstor Rodríguez, “Dos artículos sobre *La estrategia de Chochueca*,” in *Rita Indiana: Archivos*, ed. Fernanda Bustamante (Santo Domingo: Ediciones Cielonaranja, 2017), 36.

34 Indiana, *La estrategia de Chochueca*, 71.

35 Indiana, *La estrategia de Chochueca*, 72.

36 Indiana, *La estrategia de Chochueca*, 72.