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# Subjugated Bodies, Normalized Subjects: Representations Of Power In The Panamanian Literature Of Roberto Díaz Herrera, Rose Marie Tapia And Mauro Zúñiga Araúz

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**SUBJUGATED BODIES, NORMALIZED SUBJECTS:  
REPRESENTATIONS OF POWER IN THE PANAMANIAN LITERATURE OF  
ROBERTO DÍAZ HERRERA, ROSE MARIE TAPIA AND MAURO ZÚÑIGA ARAÚZ**

by

**SARA ESCOBAR-WIERCINSKI**

**DISSERTATION**

Submitted to the Graduate School

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Detroit, Michigan

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for the degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**2014**

**MAJOR: MODERN LANGUAGES (Spanish)**

**Approved by:**

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**Advisor**

**Date**

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## **DEDICATION**

In loving memory of my dad, Deusdedith Fernando Escobar R. (1931-1997)

and

of my only son, Luis Fernando Acosta Escobar (1987-2007)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## PREFACE

Panamanian literature has received limited attention within academic circles in the United States and Canada, and when Panama comes up in scholarly and popular discussions, it is often in relation to its inter-oceanic canal. However, in the second half of the twentieth century there have been important Panamanian writers who deserve to be better known, both because of the quality of their writing and because of the important problems and questions that their texts pose to contemporary readers. In the works of these writers, Panama is much more than a canal; their literatures examine important questions concerning authoritarianism (usually in connection to the dictatorship of Manuel Antonio Noriega). In addition to the severe inequalities, exclusions, and subtle forms of domination that pervade ostensibly democratic societies (in Panama, the post-Noriega period after 1989) which are subordinated to the often implacable forces of globalized capitalism. It is the literary production of an important group of those writers—Roberto Díaz Herrera, Rose Marie Tapia and Mauro Zúñiga Araúz—that I studied in my dissertation. In addition to shedding light on the literature of a country that is often ignored in contemporary Latin American Studies, my analysis will show how these writers are confronting social and political problems and questions that remain vitally important not only in Panama, but also throughout Latin American, and beyond.

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## **CHAPTER I Representations of Power, Subjugation and Normalization in the Works of Roberto Díaz Herrera, Rose Marie Tapia and Mauro Zúñiga Araúz**

But in thinking of the mechanism of power, I am thinking rather of its capillary form of existence, the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives.

—Michel Foucault.

### **INTRODUCTION**

This dissertation examines the dissemination of the exercise of power represented in the literary works of contemporary Panamanian writers: Roberto Díaz Herrera (1938- ), Rose Marie Tapia (1947- ) and Mauro Zúñiga Araúz (1943- ). These writers have written novels and testimonial narratives to expose and denounce important issues that have negatively affected Panamanian society in two important historical moments of transition. These two periods, when the operation and diffusion of power and subjugation in Panamanian society shifted, are: The military dictatorial era of General Manuel Antonio Noriega (1983-1989) in which the repressive apparatus of a dictatorial state exercised direct and violent control over the population; and the post-dictatorial era (1990-) in which power operates in the Foucauldian manner, in a subtle way, through institutions, mechanisms of civil society, and globalization with its consistent manipulation through the global market, but with similar repressive effects, affecting and controlling minds, bodies and behaviors.

The works of these Panamanian figures scrutinize an era of abuse of power, corruptions, violence, abductions, and assassinations by the Panamanian dictator; and additionally, their narratives examine social problems and socio-political and economics matters in the Panamanian nation. These problems mainly affect the lives of those living in the margins of society, particularly children, youth and women. For example, political repression, out of control violence, inequality, and poverty affects marginalized young offenders. Globalization, the

market and its dominating ideology of unbridled consumerism can lead to trafficking of women and prostitution. The ramification of the increasing number of gambling casinos and shopping malls reflects contemporary social addictions. These institutions overpower the country, adversely affecting the masses in general, and women in all strata of society, in particular.

The diverse manifestations of power and subjugation represented in the work of Díaz Herrera, Tapia, and Zúñiga Araúz demonstrate that power extends beyond the institutions that exercise discipline, it manifests in many situations and it is embodied in societal norms. That “normalization” can either reward or punish individuals in society for conforming or deviating from an ideal conduct established by mechanisms of authority and power (*Discipline and Punishment* 21). As the above-mentioned problems in the authors’ works are contemplated, the following questions will be explored. How did Panamanian society move from military control, violence, and foreign aggressive invasion to “normalization”? In other words, in the post-dictatorial period when Panama embraced democratic notions again, Panamanian people said “We are free now.” But are they really free? How do the global market, the transnational corporations, the media—among other socio-economical institutions—exercise repressive control on society, creating the “acceptable norms”?

The significance of the analysis of Díaz Herrera, Tapia and Zúñiga Araúz’s literature is that, in spite of the limited attention that contemporary Panamanian literature has received in academic circles, the works of these writers clearly show that Panama is more than a canal, as too often depicted in the popular mind. As the Panamanian writer and critic Berna Burrell indicates, “The issue of the canal as a central motivator turned into a proud asset for a country that is today considered to have a privileged economy. The canal is a total presence and functions seamlessly, as the colossal prodigy it still is . . . By now, the Panamanian novel has

ceased to sail only through the Canal. It is different, more cosmopolitan, psychological, with new subjects and intent” (“History as magnificent Fiction”). Thus, by focusing attention on Díaz Herrera, Tapia and Zúñiga Araúz’s literature, this dissertation seeks to contribute meaningfully to the field of twenty-first century Latin American literary and cultural studies. Furthermore, I want to expand the work of previous critics of Panamanian literature by exploring the operation of power in three writers that have not received the critical attention that they deserve outside Panama.

In order to accomplish the above, this dissertation relies on—among other theoretical applications—the diverse notions of power associated with the work by Michel Foucault, as the main theoretical approach. These concepts are used to examine the representation of power in the three author’s narratives, and to investigate how it has operated in the dictatorial and post dictatorial eras in Panama.<sup>1</sup>

## **I.1 The Context of Panamanian History and Panamanian Literature**

*No es posible, dice un juicioso historiador moderno, comprender el nuevo período de la vida de un pueblo, sin conocer el que le precedió, porque de él nace y él es que le ha engendrado.*

—Lafuente.

[It is not possible, says a thoughtful modern historian, to understand the new period of the life of people, without knowing the one that preceded it, because it was born from it and has engendered it<sup>2</sup>]

### **I.1.1 The Connection: Spain, Colombia and the United States in Panamanian History**

The relationship of power/knowledge has been inherent in the nation of Panama since colonial times when power and control over the country were seized first by colonial Spain in 1510, transferred to Gran Colombia in 1821, and usurped by the United States in 1903. The knowledge gathered through the strategic geographical location of the Isthmus of Panama reinforced the exercise of power of the foreign, controlling nations. The idea of creating a

commercial route to connect the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans started after 1513 when the Spanish colonizer Vasco Núñez de Balboa (1475-1519) “discovered” the Pacific Ocean. However, Nuñez de Balboa was not part of the Spanish Kingdom plans for long. Few years later he was decapitated through the orders of the ambitious Governor Pedro Arias de Avila (1468-1531)—known as “Pedrarias.” The latter understood the importance of the new ocean and wanted to be in control.

In 1529 the Spanish Crown envisioned a canal transit route in order to transport precious metals, goods and captive human labor (slaves) to other parts of the continent (especially to the Viceroyalty of Peru) and to its European metropolis. The idea of a canal, however, never came to fruition when King Philip II understood both the magnitude and difficulty of the plan. Noel Maurer and Carlos Yu in, *The Big Ditch*, quoted a Spanish Jesuit familiar with the Americas saying: “I think that such a plan is useless . . . I believe that no human power is capable of tearing down the strong and impenetrable mountain that God places between the two seas” (17). A land transport route, the Trans-isthmian (*transístmica*), connecting Panama City on the Pacific coast (Province of Panama) with Nombre de Dios on the Atlantic coast (Province of Colon), was built instead. It was known as “Camino Real.” It can be considered one of the first colonial demonstrations of power in the history of Panama.

Colonial Spain’s ultimate purpose was power and control through domination of the seas. Spain wanted to fulfill its own commercial enterprise and enlarge its wealth using the territory. Panamanian historians, Jorge Conte-Porras and Eduardo E. Castellero L. explain in *Historia de Panamá y sus protagonistas*:

El acontecimiento más trascendente de la colonización del Istmo de Panamá, ha de ser sin duda su papel como centro geográfico de nuevas expediciones que habrán de vincularlo con la Región Andina, con motivo de la importancia que ha de adquirir el enorme Virreinato del Perú y sus riquezas. Esta es la razón por la

cual Panamá fortalece sus vínculos históricos con Sur América, que habrán de ser determinantes a través de las centurias tanto en el siglo XIX cuando permanecemos unidos a Colombia, como en los días de nuestro presente histórico. (36)

[The most important event of the colonization of the Isthmus of Panama, must be without a doubt its role as a geographic center of new expeditions that tied it with the Andean Region, in light of the importance that the enormous Viceroyalty of Peru and its wealth was to acquire. This is the reason for which Panama fortified its historical bonds with South America, across the ages, both in the XIX century when we remained united to Colombia, as well as in our present days.]

Besides Spain's interests, additionally, the narrow strip of land that is the Isthmus of Panama brought alarming interest from other strong world powers.

The relationship with Spain ended with independence on November 28, 1821. After the war of independence, in which Latin America bravely fought for freedom from the Kingdom of Spain, the small country of Panama—which during that period only counted with approximately 100,000 inhabitants—decided to be protected and become part of the “Gran Colombia.” Panama would have been in danger of foreign occupation due to the interest that England had towards the country. Gran Colombia was led by Simón Bolívar who is considered the “Great liberator,” the father and even one of the leading voices of the South American independence movements. Julie A. Charlip and Bradford Burns note: “It would fall to Bolívar not just to become one of the main leaders of the independence movements, but also the one who would articulate the reasons for Latin American independence” (76). Colombia, the great big sister-nation, took Panama under its wing, though it was mostly interested in the little sister's strategic position.

Nonetheless, after a while, both Colombia and Panama needed a stronger protector to keep the latter out the reach of England. For that reason, Panama at an earlier stage and under the umbrella of Colombia began a relationship of unequal power with the U.S.A. In 1846 the “Mallarino/Bidlack” treaty was signed between Manuel María Mallarino (1808-1872) from New Granada (Colombia) and Benjamin Alden Bidlack (1804-1849) from the United States. Among

other things, the treaty would give free commuting rights to U.S. citizens through the Isthmus, and in exchange the U.S. offered a protectorship to the territory. A few years later, the treaty would be of greater significance when in 1848 gold was discovered in California and the Isthmus of Panama became a busy and constant commuting route for the thousands of spectators rushing to get that gold. It made Panama the crossing zone for “La fiebre del oro de California” [the California Gold Rush fever]. People from diverse parts of the world, mostly Americans, would use the Panamanian territory to traverse the continent.

The commuting increased in such a form that a faster transportation route was needed. The construction of the “Panama Canal Railway” started in the year of 1850, and within five years the first land transportation traversed the Isthmus of Panama. In later years, the Panama Canal would be running parallel to the railroad. The California Gold Rush brought economic benefits to the country, and yet it also produced acts of violence and prejudice—Anglo violence and discrimination towards nonwhites—which required further intervention, rather than simply mediation, from the United States. Historians depict the 1856 “Incidente de la Tajada de Sandía” [The Watermelon War] that occurred in the Atlantic Panamanian City of Colon as perhaps the first act of confrontation between American citizens and Panamanians.

For example, The “Country Studies Series” note: “The gold rush and the railroad also brought the United States “Wild West” to the isthmus.” It explains that the adventurers “tended to be an unruly lot, usually bored as they waited for a ship to California, frequently drunk, and often armed.” In addition, “many travellers also displayed prejudice verging on contempt for other races and cultures. The so-called Watermelon War of 1856, in which at least sixteen persons were killed, was the most serious clash of races and cultures of the period” (6). While the above presents an informal account of that occurrence, Conte-Porras and Castellero explain

the historical incident in a more telling way. Their text makes readers understand the depth of the tense situation, as to why Panamanians felt no longer protected but rather threatened by the U.S. in the years that followed.

The historians note that Panamanians not only needed to deal with hostile travelers armed with fireguns, ready to act violently, but “nos enfrentaron a la presencia amenazante de los Estados Unidos de América, quienes apelando al Tratado Mallarino-Bidlack (1846), nos hicieron exigencias desde todo punto de vista injustas, valiéndose de nuestra fragilidad” (103). [“they confronted us with the threatening presence of the United States of America, which by making claims to the Mallarino-Bidlack Treaty (1846), demanded all kinds of unjust things, taking advantage of our fragility”]. An excerpt of the main account of the events of the Watermelon War on April 15, 1856 is vital to the understanding of the first overpowering manifestation of power over the country when Panama was still part of Colombia:

Un vendedor ambulante de frutas (Sixto Luna), se vio ofendido y amenazado de muerte por un viajero (Jack Oliver), que se negó a pagarle el precio de una fruta, y fue ello lo que motivó la presencia de una muchedumbre en defensa de una agresión contra un humilde vendedor. En pocos minutos se formó una batahola que envolvió todos los ámbitos de la ciudad, causando muertos, heridos y la destrucción de muchos establecimientos de los alrededores . . . A pesar de ser los agredidos, en un informe amañado levantado por una comisión que dirigía el Cónsul norteamericano, Mr. Bowlin, terminamos siendo nosotros (el Istmo) responsable de los actos de violencias . . . Las cláusulas humillantes de éstas reclamaciones, fueron el motivo de la firma de [otro tratado]. (103-04)

[A fruit street-seller (Sixto Luna), was offended and threatened with being killed by a traveller (Jack Oliver), who refused to pay him for a fruit, and this prompted the presence of a crowd in defense of the humble salesman who was being threatened. In few minutes a brawl began involving in the city, causing deaths, injuries and the destruction of many establishments of the area . . . In spite of being the aggrieved party, in a fixed report provided by a commission directed by the North American Consul, Mr. Bowlin, we (the Isthmus) ended up as responsible for the acts of violence . . . The humiliating clauses surrounding these claims, were the reason for signing (another treaty).]

By forcing Colombia to give independence to Panama, the U.S. gained even more access, power and control over the small country, besides the freedom that it would have to move its navy freely from ocean to ocean.

On November 3, 1903 Panama finally separates for a second time, this time from Colombia. The United States immediately after began the construction of the Canal of Panama. Maurer and Yu note: “In 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt used the threat of force against the Colombian government to permit local secessionists to peel the Panamanian isthmus away from Colombia. He then used the threat of force against the newly created Republic of Panama to take direct and formal control over the Canal Zone. Finally, he imposed indirect but formal rule over Panama” (7). The Panama Canal construction began in 1904 but not before the “Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty” was signed on November 1903 by U.S. Secretary of State John Hay (1838-1905) and French Engineer-Diplomat Philippe-Jean Bunau-Varilla (1859-1940). This treaty gave the United States sovereignty and perpetual control of the Canal Zone, while Panama would initially receive an annual lease of \$10 million in return.

The Hay-Bunau Varilla negotiation caused severe problems, resentments and discontent among Panamanian citizens. Throughout the years, Panamanian students—and all citizens for that matter—demonstrated their dissatisfaction in various demonstrations and riots. The ultimate riot that would see the deaths of more than 21 Panamanian students and many more severely wounded by the U.S. Canal Zone police was on January 9, 1964. Students were fighting against foreign subjugation and in favour of autonomy. They wanted the freedom to fly a Panamanian flag even in the Canal Zone. Since this date, the event is known as “El día de los mártires” [Martyr’s day] and “el 9 de enero” is a National holiday and Remembrance Day in Panama. Seventy-four years later, another treaty attempted to fix all of the problems that the treaty signed



by an American and Frenchmen brought to Panamanians. This new “Torrijos-Carter Treaty” was signed on September 7, 1977 by General Omar Torrijos Herrera (1929-1981) and the 39<sup>th</sup> U.S. President Jimmy Carter (1924-). It would put an end to the perpetuity clause twenty-two years later, on 1999 when the Panama Canal would finally be handed over to Panamanians.

The Torrijos-Carter treaty also gave rights to the U.S. military to intervene in the country if it was ever considered necessary, in order to keep the canal safe from any danger to U.S. imperial interests, as it became apparent on December of 1989 when the U.S. invaded Panamanian soil, leaving hundreds of deaths and much devastation in the country. On December 31, 1999 control of the entire Panamanian territory and the canal was returned to Panama. This date can also be considered the third major separation that Panama has had from a foreign country encroaching on its national territory.

Before examining how the canal history and fictional literature meet, it is vital to understand that France also had an important role in the isthmus through the first attempt of construction of the canal. On January 1, 1880 the French company, “Compagnie Universelle du Canal Interocéanique de Panama,” dug up the first spade of soil to start the canal is reported on *The History Panama Canal*, “French Canal Construction.”<sup>3</sup> The French plan was to build a sea level canal but after a period of difficulties, sickness—yellow fever and malaria killed many—plus lack of funding, the French work failed. The same report confirms that “by May 15, 1889, all activity on the Isthmus ceased. Liquidation was not completed until 1894.” The United States bought the rights and properties of the French Canal for approximately \$40 million USD, before continuing its construction after Panama and Colombia separated.

Octavio Tapia Lu calls that era “the black history” of Panama in “El Canal de Panamá y el proceso de identidad nacional.” He explains: “La propia construcción francesa y

norteamericana del canal y la delimitación de la región interoamericana, como hecho histórico de transcendencia única en el país, influyó decisivamente en el sentido de la separación de Colombia, hecho estigmatizante en una denominada “historia negra” del país” (23). [“The very own French and North American construction of the canal and the creation of a boundary in the Inter-American region, as a historical fact that became a unique point of transcendence in the country, decisively influenced the separation from Colombia, a stigmatizing fact that has been denominated “the black history” of the country”]. All of the above depicts not only the economic worth of the canal, which would be an important component, described in verse and prose in Panamanian literature, but also the significance that it had in the control and subjugation of the Panamanian masses.

### **I.1.2 The Connection: Canal, Nation and Panamanian Literature**

The construction of the Panama Canal implied the triumph of the “export” of North American policies, like the “big stick” policy of Theodore Roosevelt, an expression of power by the United States as a way to “normalize” Panamanian receptivity to the hegemony of the U.S. in the region. This sociopolitical-historical context, together with an articulation of defiance and desire by Panamanian writers to express their own identity, was then symbolized in their literature. Even though a few novelists started to bring into fiction a reality that was seen and experienced, the novel was not the most popular genre during that time. Panamanian writers firstly manifested their patriotic thoughts in poems and short stories.<sup>4</sup> Historian Ismael García, in *Historia de la literatura panameña* (1964), explains that the history of the literature was divided into three important phases, which goes hand-in-hand with the three main phases of the history of the Isthmus of Panama.

The first phase, García explains, was when the Spaniards ruled Panama from 1501 to 1821, but it was a fruitless period for Panamanian literature despite many several well-intentioned attempts: “En este largo período, el cultivo de los quehaceres espirituales es casi nulo y los frutos literarios no pasan de intentos desafortunados de quienes sienten el ímpetu irrefrenable que los empuja a la creación literaria” (9). The second phase began with the insertion of Panama as province of Colombia until its final separation in 1903, a period that saw literature and the poetic genre blossomed. García also notes that the first novel emerged in this period: *La verdad triunfante* (1849) by Gil Colunje (1831-1899). The third phase began with the Republican era (1903), when several novels were published contributing enormously to the literary history of the nation. In García’s words: “En este período se adquiere real y efectivamente la conciencia de nuestro destino, y la producción literaria representa un aporte definitivo y propio de lo nacional” (10). The Republican era brought diverse manifestations of power in Panama and the novel becomes the dominating literary genre, exploring mostly matters of the canal, and therefore becoming a strong pillar of the Panamanian identity.

It is vital to realize that during the second phase mentioned by García (the Colombia era), while Panama was dealing with the ambivalence of its identity as an independent nation, most other countries of Latin America that obtained independence from Spain around the same period as Panama, were also confronting the challenge of rebuilding their new nations and national identities. New generations of Latin American novelists emerged writing widely about the social and political problems germinating in their countries. Panama, however, was dealing with its formative identity. Ricardo Segura Jiménez explains: “Esta experiencia de subordinación histórica en el plano político y económico, social y cultural – primero a España y después a Estados Unidos – ha dejado huellas en el discurso literario” (262). [“This experience

of historical subordination in the political and economic, social and cultural level - first to Spain and later to the United States - has left its imprint in the literary discourse”]. Perhaps the above could be one of the reasons why Panamanian writers remained in the shadows of the literary movements. For example, Lucía Martínez in an interview with Damaris Serrano Guerra explains why Panama literary production has been almost completely ignored in the United States (1-2). As a result good Panamanian writers and literatures are relatively unknown in the Academic world.

Twentieth century novels, such as *Gamboa Road Gang* (1960) by Joaquín Beleño C. (1922-1988), and *La otra frontera* (1967) by César A. Candanedo (1906-1993), that dominated Panamanian fiction, were central to portraying not only the problems of the construction and the Canal Zone itself, but the problems that Panamanians were encountering in their own country with the foreign laws and intervention. For example the novel of Joaquín Beleño reads: “No puedo caminar libremente sobre la tierra de mi propia patria. Los amos del latifundio zoneíta, me lo impiden . . . En cualquier país del mundo que nada le deba a los panameños, puedo transitar y danzar libremente. Aquí en la Zona del Canal . . . los Estados Unidos que le debe gran parte de su grandeza mundial al sacrificio de los istmeños, me niega el derecho de practicar libertad (14-15)”. [“I cannot walk freely on the soil of my own homeland. The masters of the Canal Zone latifundium prevent me from doing so . . . In any country of the world owing nothing to Panamanians, I can transit and dance freely. Here in the Canal Zone . . . the United States that owe a great part of its world-wide greatness to the sacrifice of the Isthmians, denies me the right to practice freedom”]. These novels can be considered part of the national identity focusing on the historical, social, and cultural significance of the construction of the Panama Canal, and they are mostly known as “novelas canaleras.”

Frances Jaeger, in her article, “La novela canalera como acto contestatario de la nación panameña,” explains that these types of novels are contestatory acts of the Panamanian nation because they contest and strongly denounce the U.S. intervention in the nation (par.3). Humberto López Cruz indicates that literary nationalism is an important part of the Panamanian narrative: “En el caso de Panamá, escritores contemporáneos incorporan una visión ficcionalizada de Panamá que hace que la república termine por erigirse un pilar fundamental de la novela en cuestión. El país deviene en un personaje más que reclama su espacio; la Nación se inscribe dentro de un enunciado social” (109). [“In the case of Panama, contemporary writers incorporate a fictionalized vision of Panama that causes the Republic to end up becoming elevated as a fundamental pillar of the novel at hand. The country becomes another character which claims its space; the Nation registers within a social issue”]. All of this explains why the canal has been an important subject in Panamanian literature.

There are many contemporary Panamanian writers that continue writing about historical issues of the canal correlating it with the Colombia era and U.S. interventionism. As Burrell notes: “The Panamanian novel, as a whole, is rooted in history, with the Panama Canal often as its cornerstone . . . the Panamanian novel is at once very Latin American and influenced by its special geography and history” (Par. 2). Writers who address that topic include Rosa María Britton’s “No pertenezco a este siglo,” Justo Arrollo’s “Vida que olvida,”<sup>5</sup> and the newest novel of Roberto Díaz Herrera’s *El canal, sangre, codicia y coraje*.”

Finally, and to close the illustration of the triad relationship Canal/Nation/Novels, it is important to remember that Panama is also much more than the inherent problems that come with having one of the most important transit routes in the world, connecting two oceans through the hemisphere’s narrowest stretch of land. Panama’s history has been well-represented and

expressed in its literature of 20<sup>th</sup> century narratives. But, unfortunately (as it was mentioned earlier), contrary to other Latin American novels, the Panamanian narrative has mostly remained within its borders, and therefore predominantly unfamiliar in international academic circles. In addition, the well known factor that during the past (and current) century writers needed to pass the objective power relations that exist in the literary industry. That is, a struggle of power in which, as sociologist Pierre Bourdieu argues, the literary space is a constant battlefield which makes it difficult (but not impossible) for new authors to break into the literary arena (30). This struggle for a place within the literary world also explains the problems that new contemporary writers have to face today.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century narratives, such as the ones investigated in this dissertation: *Estrellas clandestinas*, *El chacal del general*, *Roberto por el buen camino*, *Espejo de miserias*, and *Mujeres en fuga*, move from identity and the subject of the Nation mainly represented in earlier periods of the literature in Panama, to examine more contemporary mechanisms of power that affect Panamanian society. It is a type of power and control that complicates the coherence of the concept of national identity in the face of foreign imperialism. In order to comprehend this new emphasis, it is vital to identify, what is perhaps a fourth stage in Panamanian literature, a phase dealing with issues that began when the Republican era changed from democracy to military dictatorship in 1968, and back to democracy in 1990.

### **I.1.3 The Military Dictatorship Era in Panama (1968 – 1989)**

The end of a democratic government was abruptly followed by an era of military dictatorship starting on October 11, 1968. It would last 21 years until the U.S. invasion and removal of the last military dictator, General Noriega, from power. It began when Panama National Guard removed the democratically elected president, Arnulfo Arias, during the military

coup d'état of 1968. Arias was elected three time president in Panamá (1940, 1949 and the last term on October 1, 1968). Yet, he never had the opportunity to complete a full term. The coup was led by military men: Omar Torrijos Herrera and Boris Martínez. The latter was soon removed by the former, becoming the brigadier general in full control and head of state of the National Guard and the country. Even though the masses responded to the overthrow with demonstrations and riots for several months, some slowly started to accept the norm in the country and people began to settle down and accept that now every decision would be taken by strongman Torrijos. Others “were made” to accept the inevitable.

Conte-Porras and Castellero inform about the popular reactions manifested in various forms of violence in the province of Chiriqui. A group of young “guerrilleros” who formed part of Arnulfo Arias’s political party fought the National Guard: 17 died during the battle or were jailed after they were captured. Interestingly, the authors note that the young military oficial in charge of the mission to eliminate the sedition was: “un joven oficial que dirigía el S-2 en ese tiempo, el Teniente Manuel Antonio Noriega, quien colocaba bombas en las casas y en los autos de los familiares de los que peleaban en la guerrilla, encarcelaba a las madres de los combatientes, golpeaba a sus mujeres, hasta que los fue matando, uno a uno” (262). [“a young official who directed the S-2 at the time, the Lieutenant **Manuel Antonio Noriega**, who placed bombs in the houses and in the cars of the families of those who fought in the guerrilla, jailed the mothers of the combatants, hit their women, until he killed them all, one by one”]. (Emphasis added to the name to show that that lieutenant was going to be the future Panamanian dictator).

Torrijos mirrored the figure of a charismatic populist leader who, as Charlip and Burns explain, are leaders who speak “an intoxicating nationalist vocabulary. Rhetorically convincing, ideologically weak, they offered immediate benefit—better salaries, health services, and the

nationalization of resources—rather than institutional reforms” (226). Thus normalization occurred and the masses “accepted” the country’s new leader. However Torrijos mysteriously died in an airplane crash in the year of 1981. Afterwards, several other strongmen, including Noriega, took over the country. The second in command for both military men, Colonel Roberto Díaz Herrera (a Panamanian author researched in this dissertation) would publicly shock the world in the year 1987. In a national and international media conference he blamed the death of Torrijos on Noriega, of the killing by decapitation of Dr. Hugo Spadafora, and of many other crimes and corruptions (such as working both for the CIA and the Colombia Drug Cartels). A more descriptive illustration and depiction of the impact of Díaz Herrera’s actions against the dictator, as well as more information about Omar Torrijos is provided in chapter two of this dissertation.

The year of 1987 marked the beginning of Dictator Noriega’s swift downfall and with him the era of dictatorship. Thousands of Panamanians: Civic groups like “Cruzada Civilista,” students, women, youth and men of all ages and social status, took to the streets in peaceful demonstrations. They protest against the corrupted regime, using “pailas y pañuelos blancos” [pots and white handkerchiefs]. Everything ended the night of December 20, 1989 when the Americans invaded Panama with more than twenty seven thousand military troops looking out for the Dictator M.A.N. (Manuel Antonio Noriega), a man that they themselves had helped come into power through his role as CIA informant. Historians and critics consider that this was an action that could have been done in other ways—without destroying hundreds of innocent lives or leaving a lasting bad taste of the U.S hegemonic of power in Panamanian memory. Even though this last official manifestation of power is demarked in many history books as an offensive invasion of Panama, many Panamanians think that the invasion was “un mal necesario”



[a necessary evil], as well, a necessary act to capture and remove the dictator from power—once and for all.

Noriega was brought to court in Miami to face charges of drug trafficking and money laundering. He was indicted, tried and sentenced in April of 1992. Noriega stayed in a prison in Miami until he was extradited to France in 2010. On December 11, 2011 he experienced a final extradition to his native land. Noriega needed to pay for all the murders, disappearances and devastations committed against Panama and Panamanians. He is currently serving 20 years in a prison in Panama. After the invasion, democracy was restored in the country, until the present date (2014). Panama has had diverse elected presidents since 1989. As any nation that has gone through a dictatorship and back, Panama still faces diverse challenges that continue to affect the masses in the post-dictatorship period, and these are reflected in Panamanian narratives of this century.

Finally, and returning to the Panamanian literature, as was explained above, while the past century narrative mostly portrays historical issues of imperialism, interventionism and racism, this dissertation focuses on narratives that, rather than idealizing the national versus the foreign, examine how the nation itself is a problematic and fragmentary reality, tarnished by social and political problems, such as abuse of power, corruption, economic injustice, violence, inequality, globalization and its manipulation through the global market, and above all, marginalization of those who do not conform to the norms of the Central American society which those in power have established or institutionalized.

## **I.2 Summary of Chapters and Methodology**

This dissertation is divided into five chapters, the first is a general introduction, the next four chapters make up the main body, each chapter focusing on the ways in which the

apparatuses (or institutions) that exercise discipline, power and control in society are represented in the texts analyzed, and a final conclusion of my work. Through the use of the Foucauldian notions of power, primarily the work will explore the diverse dynamics and ramifications of power as revealed in Panamanian narratives in fiction and reality. According to Michel Foucault (1926-1984), the world-famous twentieth century French philosopher, social theorist, and cultural critic, who is known by many as the philosopher who introduced a new way of thinking about power: “Power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourse, learning processes and everyday lives” (*Power/Knowledge* 38). In other words, in every movement of men and/or women one may identify the workings of power. That is, power operates in people’s daily lives, including the generation of diverse types and fields of knowledge, because, for the philosopher knowledge is one of the main components that produce power, and vice versa.

The notion of power/knowledge, allows us to study the way in which different types of knowledge (i.e. controlling people’s behaviors, observing and obtaining information on every citizen movement) were produced in Panama during dictatorship and during the post-dictatorial era (through civil governments, institutions, global markets, among others). As the Panamanian texts examined in the following chapters depict, in every conversation, discourse, and even in the way people think, one can see power (good and bad) operating. Power generates and utilizes information such as what people consume, where they do it and how often, where they spend their leisure time, and even information on people’s health, their use of health institutions, the diagnostics and the diagnosticians. Every compilation of information is what increases knowledge and adds force to power. Nonetheless, power is not only a negative repressive force. As Foucault says: “If power were anything but repressive, if it never did anything but to say no,

do you really think one would be brought to obey it? What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't weigh on us as a force that says no, but it traverses and produces things, it produces pleasure, forms knowledge, produce discourse" (*Power/knowledge* 119). The study of these narratives will show that in spite of the objectification and subjugation, the exercise of power also produces positive normalization in society.

The relationship of power is established starting in the introductory section of the dissertation. This section presents the historical overview of Panamanian history and its literature, and it demonstrates the hegemony that has surrounded Panama. Panamanian history has been weaved in a chain of power through different eras touching everything and everybody. It also offers a brief overview of the life and works of the three authors. More in depth information about Díaz Herrera, Tapia and Zúñiga Araúz, including my interviews with them, is presented as supplementary material in the appendices section at the end of the dissertation. The interviews, which offer a first-hand insight into their lives, were conducted both electronically and in person.

The analysis of the texts begins in the second chapter, where the historical moment when the repressive mechanism of the dictatorial state exercised direct and violent control over the Panamanian population is taken up. It examines the aftermath of the political terror of the dictatorship era of General Noriega in Panama through the narratives of Roberto Díaz Herrera's *Estrellas clandestinas* (2009) [untranslated, but "Clandestine Stars"], and Mauro Zúñiga Araúz's *El chacal del general* (2007) [untranslated, but "The Jackal of the General"]. In this chapter the two narratives are examined independently of each other, and at the end of the chapter a comparison of important sections of both texts is established.

Díaz Herrera's text is a powerful testimonial about his participation in the military dictatorship and in his denunciations against Noriega. The author uses his own personal story to make an account of Panamanian collective history—a productive, but also dangerous narrative strategy. He analyzes the military presence in Panama since 1968, the imperialism of the United States in Panama, and the role of the CIA in Dictator Noriega's rise to power and fall from grace. Díaz Herrera also uses diverse methods to construct his personal memoir into a testimonial narrative. The chapter studies the biased and unbiased testimonial dimensions in the text, uncovering important events in Panamanian military culture that are central to this study. It argues that the author's observations of what happened to the country before and after his confessions of 1987 make him an important historian-agent-expositor of Panamanian military culture, and his text a central educational instrument for Latin American studies.

Zúñiga Araúz uses *El chacal del general* to present not only the ways in which Noriega exerted his brutal power in Panama, but also to denounce the psychological terror of the regime for his victims. He uses fiction to condemn the relationship of power encountered in various real historical events that occurred in Panama. The novel depicts the scenes of actual persecutions, disappearances and tortures of those who dared to challenge the Dictator's authority—including Zúñiga Araúz's own kidnapping and torture—and creates a contestatory weapon against Noriega. The chapter argues that *El chacal del general's* narrative style echoes the "Dictator Novel" in Latin America, because it mirrors the cruelty of and the exploitation of power by Latin American dictators. In this section the Foucauldian notion of power/knowledge is used to interpret the exercise of power during Noriega's dictatorship in the country.

Chapters three to five deal with the post-dictatorial literature in which power is revealed operating in a more subtle way, not by violent control over society, but in a Foucauldian manner

through institutions and mechanisms of civil society and the global market, all with similar repressive effects. For example, chapter three examines the world and lives of young offenders, and the relationship of power is demonstrated through institutions (family and State) and education systems (inequality) that denied the assistance and protection that poor marginal children deserve at an early age. Chapter four and five depict power as it is inflicted by global capitalism, its enterprises and the market—creating wealth for some, and objectification, diseases, and addictions to women in every sphere of society.

Chapter three analyzes Rose Marie Tapia's social novel *Roberto por el buen camino* (2004). [Translated as: *Roberto Down the Right Path* in 2006]. It is a novel that presents a wide range of social inequalities found in all societies, but focusing specifically in Panama's culture of violence perpetrated by the underclass. The author uses the story of a group of marginalized young offenders to represent a hostile space within Panamanian society. This situation is analyzed through the syndrome of "V.I.P" (violence, inequality, and poverty) to denounce a powerfully repressive control in Panamanian society. It argues that the young delinquents in Tapia's narrative use violence as their own expression of power, and as a path to find their voices, their power and their authority in a society that has neglected them. Social inequality and poverty are the contributing factors to their hostility, anger and antagonism.

In chapter four, Mauro Zúñiga Araúz's social novel *Espejo de miserias* (2010), [translated as: *Mirror of Misery* in 2012], is examined. The narrative takes the reader to a deep journey through a diverse range of social problems affecting women in Latin America and other countries around the world. Focusing first and foremost on the subjugation and control of women's bodies through prostitution, this study demonstrates the diverse forms of power used by authoritarian figures to control bodies and minds. Zúñiga Araúz gives the protagonist Omayra

Huertas, a good girl turned prostitute, the right to be heard. Through her diary she gives voice to women sunken in a world of depravation and prostitution. In the novel, the diary of a prostitute not only exposes the objectification of women—specifically young women—in patriarchal societies, but also the power of the globalized sex-trade apparatus using women as commodities of the market.

In this chapter the notion of biopower is utilized as a demonstration of another technology of power used by modern nations, as Foucault notes. This notion serves to illustrate power operating through globalization and the sex trade market. By biopower we must understand how the application of power regulates and controls people's bodies, health, sexuality and urban life in general. Foucault says that, power involves: “an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations” and it is “present at every level of the social body and utilized by very diverse institutions (the family and the army, schools and the police, individual medicine and the administration of collective bodies) operated in the sphere of economic processes, their development and the forces working to sustain them” (*The History* 140-41). In other words, the State (government) does not necessarily need to exert direct control or violence on individuals in order to have power over them—like in the dictatorial era—because control is exerted through institutions, disciplines, customs and practices that carefully define and regulate acceptable and unacceptable (“normal” and “abnormal”) behaviors for the whole of society. The two components that form the notion of biopower is explained in the chapter.

Finally, chapter five investigates the mechanisms of power depicted in Rose Marie Tapia's *Mujeres en fuga* (2008) [untranslated, but “Fleeing Women”]. It shows how globalization and the global market, through casinos and shopping malls, manipulate

Panamanian society, contributing to its socio-economic fragmentation. More importantly, the novel explores how these institutions influence the growth of contemporary addictions such as pathological gambling and addictive consumption. It argues that casinos, shopping malls, and even Panama's geographical position of importance for global enterprises, are both beneficial and detrimental to Panamanian people. As the novel illustrates, these problems not only affect women in poverty, but also middle and high class, professional women. The chapter shows how the characters' troubles and their addictive patterns seclude them in the margins of society, and alienate them from socially accepted norms. This keeps them from having normal lives, professional careers, families and friends, and leaves them vulnerable to powerful deceptions, lies and violent behaviors.

The five chapters in this dissertation, as mentioned above, examine the ways in which individuals can be either rewarded or punished in society for conforming or deviating from an ideal conduct established by institutions and norms of authority and power (*Discipline and Punishment* 21). As Foucault also explains: "a normalized society is the historical outcome of a technology of power centered on life," that's incorporated into a "continuum of apparatuses" or administrative process that makes normalizing power acceptable to society (*The History of Sexuality* 144). The works of other philosophers and literary critics' ideas will be cited as well to study the manifestations of power in the literature of the three Panamanian authors investigated. The following section will offer an overview of these author's lives and literary careers.

### **I.3 Overview of the Life and Works of the Three Panamanian Authors**

**I.3.1 Roberto Díaz Herrera** (1938- ), in addition to being a writer, he is a retired colonel of the Defense Forces in Panama, a former ambassador of Panama to Peru and a lawyer. Díaz

Herrera was born on June 26 in the small city of Santiago, which is the capital of the province of Veraguas. The author grew up in a large and very strict Catholic household comprised of nine siblings and his parents, both teachers, Anastasio Díaz and Gregoria Herrera. He describes the atmosphere of Santiago in those days as semi-urban/semi-rural and his family's modest living conditions. Díaz Herrera is the first cousin of Omar Torrijos Herrera who is a historical Panamanian personality. Torrijos was the first military general dictator of Panama, as well as a key player in the signing and negotiation of the Panama Canal "Torrijos-Carter Treaty" in 1977. Due to the generation gap (almost 10 years) between the two cousins, Díaz Herrera and Torrijos Herrera were not very close during childhood. Yet, everything would change during their military years.

Díaz Herrera's literary career began early in life. Being part of an educator household he grew surrounded by books and developed a love of reading. He embraced writing poems at school, but the taste for writing and literary works really took off in ninth grade. His Spanish teacher stimulated in him the habit of reading and writing and influenced his literary career. His favorite authors include Rubén Darío, Gustavo Adolfo Becquer, Federico García Lorca, Pablo Neruda, José Asunción Silva, and César Vallejo. Díaz Herrera attended "Dominio del Canadá" an elementary school. Despite his lack of English language knowledge, he learned to sing the lyrics of the Canadian anthem in English. He continued at the "Escuela Normal Juan Demóstenes Arosemena," but finished high school with a scholarship in Peru. That's when his military education started.

In spite of his desire to pursue a law career, one day he ended up in the Peruvian educational institution "Leoncio Prado Military School" in Callao. After four more years of military instruction in the "Escuela de Oficiales de la Guardia Civil" in Lima, Peru, he graduated



with the rank of “alférez” (sub-lieutenant). In 1961, Díaz Herrera entered the National Guard of Panama. In 1962 his cousin, Omar Torrijos took him under his wing. They worked closely together for a period of 20 years until Torrijos died in a suspicious aviation crash on July 31<sup>st</sup>, 1981. Díaz Herrera, years later, became a military colonel working under the command of General Manuel Antonio Noriega, until his retirement from the military vocation, and his denunciations of Noriega’s violence and corruption, in 1987.

Díaz Herrera was arrested and sentenced by the dictatorial regime of Noriega to five years in prison, he served five and half months in solitary confinement, after which several countries negotiated his freedom. He was able to get political asylum in Caracas, Venezuela, homeland of his wife Maigualida de Díaz. During his years of exile, Díaz Herrera wrote his first book *Panamá, mucho más que Noriega* (1988), which circulated in Panama clandestinely. One of this books which is analyzed in this dissertation, is *Estrellas clandestinas*, a testimonial account of the crimes committed by Noriega during his years in power. The author continues his testimonial narration in *La explosión de Panamá* (2011) which was written and published before Noriega was extradited from a prison in Paris to Panama City in 2011. He has written several other books and novels. His latest literary work is a historical-testimonial novel: *El canal – sangre, codicia y coraje* (2014) [untranslated but: “The Canal – Blood, Avarice and Courage”].

More about the life and work of Roberto Díaz Herrera is presented in an interview included in Appendix A. I had the opportunity to interview the author and he answered twenty-three questions, which I weave with a qualitative analysis intended to provide a first-hand insight into his life and literary work.<sup>6</sup> The interview and the Q&A were performed in Spanish. The following five questions and translated answers illustrate their value in enhancing the author’s worldview.

SEW: In my investigation I argue that *Estrellas clandestinas* is part of the genre “Testimony,” an important and controversial genre in Latin American studies . . . Your literature educates the masses on Panamanian history. In that form, your work draws near those Latin American testimonies. But, at the same time it moves away from it due to your participation with the military corruption . . . How would you explain this dichotomy?

RDH: Curiously and frankly I do not feel part of any corruption. The biggest testament is that . . . the authorities that arrived and persecuted the crimes and violations of the time of the military government . . . never a judge or prosecutor (with many military personnel prosecuted and sentenced) I was object of a single prosecution or a formal legal accusation. Why? Because there was no ground or reason for it. My professional life of 26 years and months never entailed a single denunciation of violation of human rights against me. In fact, I deserved social and collective support . . .

SEW: In your denunciations of June 7, 1987 . . . You even self-denounced yourself concerning several crimes committed. What were the reasons? Have you ever regretted that move?

RDH: What I did on June 7—including my “self-incrimination”—was strategically performed in front of the media . . . I needed to gain credibility. . . Noriega could arrested or killed me in hours—people were terrorized by him. No Panamanian dared to declare what I said against him and dare to stay alive . . . No Panamanian, next to his wife and small children, faced such threats from a regime that executed crimes. Diverse

crimes such as the decapitation of Spadafora or the massacre—by a shot in the neck—of a dozen officials in the Albrook base.

SEW: In several of the books that I have read on Panama and the dictatorship, almost none mention your name as an important figure in Noriega's fall. What do you think of this?

RDH: In the US a calculated void was made (about my declarations). I saw the documentary winner of an Oscar, "Panama Deception," in Argentina, and it surprised me not to have a minimum mention of my denunciations of June 87. Why? Because if they included me they would also need to reveal my declarations against the immoralities of the Reagan-Bush Regime . . . Same thing happens in other books . . . In my country there are jealousy of historians and journalists. But, many Panamanian people admire and recognize my value and my contribution to democracy. Thousands of them, and that is enough for me.

SEW: In *Estrellas clandestinas* each time you mention the name of the Dictator Noriega, you correlate it with President Bush and the CIA in contemptuous form and resentment. Could you explain the reasons for that resentment towards Washington?

RDH: It is not resentment, the scandal "Iran-Contra" was proven. Reagan had to dismiss as a "political show" big civil employees, who later Bush, as the president, pardoned. It is a real history . . . Finally, (the US) sent an extraordinary army of nearly 30 thousand soldiers with bombs of extermination, etc., with the excuse "to remove a bandit" (its bandit and

partner up to a few days earlier). They could have taken him (Noriega) with three dead people of his escort, only. They knew how to do it in Fort Amador, at only meters of their gates and quarters. And not with the massacre of hundreds of deaths and wounded people. That truly is a crime to humanity. It is amorality—worse than immorality.

SEW: Contrary to my previous question, in the book whenever you mention the name of General Torrijos, President Jimmy Carter and John Kerry, you do it with much admiration and respect. Could you explain the reasons for that admiration, mostly to John Kerry?

RDH: Why do I speak so well or positively of John Kerry? Kerry, then already a young senator, had the moral courage of being the first one in the Senate who denounced the complicity of the Republican government of then—Year 81 and thereafter, Reagan, Bush—with people involved with international drug trafficking, through clandestine operations in Central America . . .

More Q&A in the Appendices section.

**I.3.2 Rose Marie Tapia (1947- )** Tapia is a contemporary Panamanian writer and social activist whose novelistic commitment is directed towards the exposure of socio-political problems affecting her native society. Tapia, who entered the literary scene in 2000, relies solely on the literary genre of the novel to capture the lives of everyday characters affected by diverse types of social problems. Tapia was born in Panama City, on December 6, 1947. At the young age of three, her family moved to the small city of Chitre in the Province of Herrera—254 kilometers from Panama City. She attended high school in Chitre in “Escuela José Daniel Crespo.” Due to a precarious health condition, she was unable to pursue any higher formal

schooling. In spite of this, the author explains that she taught herself and took training courses, from which she learned everything needed to become a successful business woman.

She worked in diverse positions in “Raúl Tapia y Compañía, S.A.” and was in charge of various departments as manager. Her auto didacticism and all her experience acquired in the business industry would be beneficial when deciding to follow her dreams to become a writer. Tapia loves writing, and she says that her literary work is not only a passion, but it is the centre of her life, because: “La literatura me rescató de la muerte” [“Literature rescued me from death”]. On June 2001, her first novel was published: *Caminos y encuentros*, a novel where history, autobiography and fiction meet. She decided to write about the political and dangerous situation in Panama during the dictatorship era of Noriega. Since then, Tapia has written eighteen novels.

The novels chosen in this dissertation are: *Roberto por el buen camino* and *Mujeres en fuga*. These two novels capture the lives of characters affected by social problems and degradations, such as drug addictions among females, and gang and violence among youths. They are direct critiques of the degradation of today’s culture, affecting specific marginalized groups of people in Panama: women and youths. Tapia has only one translated novel, *Roberto Down the Right Path* (2006), which was declared by CNN as the best-selling book in Panama in 2006, selling more than 70,000 copies. In 2001, she was awarded the Honorable Mentions “Ricardo Miró” for her first novel *Caminos y encuentros*. In addition, Tapia is the founder and coordinator of the literary groups, “Letras de fuego” (in 2001) and “Siembra de lectores” (in 2007). The latter is a socio-cultural program that promotes reading circles throughout Panama City and rural areas.

Besides the social novels investigated, Tapia has written political/detective novels: The trilogy: *No hay trato* (2007), *Agenda para el desastre* (2009), and *El retorno de los bárbaros* (2010); and the newest, *El poder desenmascara* (2014); autobiographical novels include: *Y era lo que nadie creía* (2001), and *Diagnóstico: N.P.I.* (2011); psychological novel: *La cárcel del temor* (2003); juvenile novels: *Travesías mágicas* (2002) and *La noche oscura* (2002); mystery novels: *La raíz de la hoguera* (2005) and *El crepitar de la hoguera* (2011); the romantic novel: *Los misterios del olvido* (2012); and social novels: *Los ángeles del olvido* (2006), *Niña Bella* (2010) and *El arcoíris sobre el pantano* (2013).

More about the life and work of Rose Marie Tapia is provided in an interview in Appendix B. It sheds additional light on her literary work through a qualitative analysis that provides the identification of significant informations about the author's life and worldview. The interview and the Q&A were performed in Spanish. The following five questions and translated answers exemplify their value.

SEW: In 2012 when I began with my investigations on Panamanian authors, you had sixteen published novels. Since then you have written two more. Could you say what motivates you to write incessantly?

RSM: Life is my greatest motivation to write. It is the best way that I find to express myself, and find a sense of life. Sometimes there are injustices that I cannot explain and I hope to provoke in the reader and in society a reaction. Or at least, that they face the indifference that impedes us from making this world a better place . . .

SEW: Recently I saw you, in a video in your Web page, saying that you love to write and that writing is the center of your life? Can you clarify, why writing is “the center of your life?”

RMT: My health has always been very fragile. Six months before I turned to writing a serious disease appeared, and literature rescued me from death. I spent years without a diagnosis. I have Lupus and this disease attacked the lungs, kidneys, thyroid, the joints, a cerebral cortex, the eyes and the skin with vasculitis, in short, several systems. Doctor Zúñiga, himself, thought that I would not survive. In 2000 I began to write and it was not an escape, it was a refuge where adversity could not or did not want to find me.

SEW: In addition to being a writer, you have formed the literary groups “Letras de fuego” and “Siembra de lectores”. How do these groups help Panamanian youth? and what do you try to promote in those groups?

RMT: The most important thing for me is to promote reading. Through reading we instruct ourselves; education is the key of social development and a tool to fight poverty. On the other hand, a cultured town does not let itself be manipulated; it fulfills its duties and demands its rights . . .

SEW: One of the two novels that I study in my doctoral work: *Roberto Down the Right Path*, has had a great welcome in the Panamanian market. Why do you think it has been your best seller novel?

RMT: I believe this is because it is a social subject that affects us all, and in a certain ways I was ahead its time because in 2004 this was still not a serious problem. It was starting and I wanted it to be a warning . . .

SEW: The other novel analyzed in this dissertation is: *Mujeres en fuga*. In that literary work two of the three problems that afflict the characters are: “gambling” and “compulsive purchase.” Both reflect the manifestations of power that the globalization of the international market exerts in Panama. The commercial proliferation of casinos and malls has placed the country in a form of apathy and/or indifference. Everything is standardized and accepted quickly in spite of the damage to Panamanian society. Do you believe that through literary works, like yours, the readers can become more aware of this problem when they see it in front of them, and act?

RMT: Of that novel I have several (testimonies). It was like a mirror where many addicts watched themselves, and their own reflections horrify them. However, they accepted their addiction and looked out for professional help. Regarding the authorities, I did not obtain any action, or perhaps our authorities do not read? Are they too occupied using and exercising power so that they do not have time for reading? How is it possible that in districts of extreme poverty we find casinos?

More Q&A in the Appendices section.

**I.3.3 Mauro Zúñiga Araúz** (1943-) is a contemporary writer who has written several novels, short stories, essays and theatre plays, but prior to his literary career, he was first a doctor of medicine specializing in internal medicine. Presently Dr. Zúñiga—as most Panamanians continue to call him—is a retired doctor. He was born in Panama City on February 25, 1943. His household was formed by four children and his parents who instilled in them strong ethics and morals. He lived and attended school in Panama City. Zúñiga Araúz graduated as a doctor



in the University of Panama on February of 1968. He then specialized in Internal Medicine. He studied in two other countries: Argentina and Chile. In addition, he has been a professor and researcher at the University of Panama. As a university student, Zúñiga Araúz was an avid political activist, and he fought against all types of oppressions against society. This was the beginning of long years of political activism against subjugation. Later in life he became the founder of a civil political opposition movement “Coordinadora Civilista Nacional” against Panamanian dictatorship. As a result of this, Zúñiga Araúz’s celebrated opposition spot made him a target of death threats. He was kidnapped and tortured by Noriega’s regimen in 1985.

His literary career began in 1999 with much success with his first play-monologue “*Vida de otra forma.*” He was nominated and received the “Premio Ricardo Miró” and “Anita Villalaz” in 2001 for the best national play of the year. It was presented in Mexico, Cuba, and in the Central American Theatre Festival in El Salvador, as well. Among Zúñiga Araúz’s published literary works are the two novels which are analyzed in this dissertation: *El chacal del general* (2007) and *Espejo de miserias* (2010). In addition, he wrote his first novel *Itinerario de un tacaño* (1999), *El alumno* (2012), and *Fumata negra* (2013). He has also published short stories, such as *Los lamentos de la noche* (2001)—“Premio Miró” mention of honor—and *Y llegó la noche* (2013). He has one novel translated into English, *Mirror of Misery* (2012)—translated by Stella Saied Torrijos. The same novel was re-published in Spain in the year of 2012 with a new title: *Diario de una puta– Espejo de miserias.*

Among his medical research work, he has produced several texts and co-authored *Maltrato infantil y mujeres homicidas en Panamá*—with Dr. Ana de Pitti in 2010. It is an investigative text about the relationship between women’s violence and homicide and the causes of child abuse. His testimonial-essay *Coordinadora Civilista Nacional: C.O.C.I.N.A.* was

published in 2011, it is a Panamanian national project about the struggle against the dictatorial tyranny in Panama. He also has several works of literary criticism, multiple articles of opinion in national and international press, and in 2013 he wrote the text: *¿Qué es la democracia absoluta? ¿Una utopía o un paradigma?*

Similarly to the format of the other authors, listed in Appendix C is presented the interview with the doctor-writer, Zúñiga Araúz. It helps to understand and shed some more lights on his life and worldview. The interview and the twenty-three Q&A were performed in Spanish. The following five translated questions and answers exemplify their value.

SEW: When did your political vocation begin? When you were a student of medicine, or later?

MZA: Since I entered the University of Panama in 1960. I was aware of the great social injustices. I was President of the Association of Students of Medicine of Panama, the Association of Students of Medicine of Central America, and the Union of University Students . . .

SEW: And you continued in political leadership after graduating. Can you tell me about that period?

MZA: After graduation, I was Secretary of the Association of physicians, Odontologists and allied professionals of the hospital “Caja de Seguro Social” during four periods (eight years in total). I led the first movement against the Noriega dictatorship in 1984: “La Coordinadora Civilista Nacional”. On August 21st, 1985 I was kidnapped and tortured by the military. My political vocation was not to occupy public office. I have rejected several offers to become minister . . .

SEW: The first novel that I discuss in my dissertation is *El chacal del general* which makes direct reference to the dictatorship in Panama . . . In 2012 you wrote another novel, *El alumno* [untranslated but "The Student"]. In this novel the military Dictator teaches a civilian Dictator. Could you tell me about this novel, *El alumno*?

MZA: I wanted readers to know the insides of power and I chose for a model the then-president, noting that any similarity was pure coincidence. Naturally, the teacher was the character of the *Chacal del general* . . .

SEW: Do you think that Panama has now changed, as it is considered a democratic country without dictatorship?

MZA: Are you referring to the postdictatorship governments? For me representative democracy has failed. Gone is the era of political parties. Now they are groups of friends and acquaintances who seek to embezzle the public possessions. Some more, some less. The world has globalized in such a way that it is the financial capital that dictates all policies to our States Nations.

SEW: The other novel that I discuss is *Mirror of Misery*. In my critical analysis I write about the influence of globalization and in the sex market that influences human trafficking, specifically affecting women and girls in Latin America who turn to prostitution and sex trade in other parts of the world. Your novel reflected that reality in a specific form. Was that one of your purposes?

MZA: Not exactly. I wanted to rescue prostitutes that society placed in the lowest positions. They are the mirror of human miseries. I also pretended to point out

how hypocritical it is that we are both men and women, seeking to satisfy appetites, but in public we reject them . . .

More Q&A can be found in the Appendices section.

The diverse manifestations of power and subjugation represented in the work of Roberto Díaz Herrera, Rose Marie Tapia, and Mauro Zúñiga Araúz, will guide this dissertation to analyze how the global market, the transnational corporations, the media—among other socio-economic institutions—exercise repressive control on society, creating the “acceptable norms.” Starting first with the military era when Panamanian society was being controlled by military power and subjugation, as the following chapter demonstrates.

**CHAPTER II      Discourse of Power in Reality and Fiction: The Panamanian Dictatorial Era in Roberto Díaz Herrera's *Estrellas clandestinas*, and Mauro Zúñiga Araúz's *El chacal del general***

It is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together. And for this reason, we must conceive discourse as a series of discontinuous segments whose tactical function is neither uniform nor stable. To be more precise, we must not image a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies.  
—Michel Foucault.<sup>7</sup>

Roberto Díaz Herrera's *Estrellas clandestinas* (2009), and Mauro Zúñiga Araúz's *El chacal del general* (2007) are two contemporary Panamanian narratives that recount the political terror of an era of dictatorship in Panama. The authors craft their texts using two different genres styles. The first employs a testimonial narrative style, and the second chooses a fiction novel to denounce a single subject: Dictator Manuel Antonio Noriega's absolute power from 1983 to 1989. In those six years the dictator controlled and abused Panamanian people in every aspect—economically, socially, culturally and politically. These two authors give testimony to how Panamanian society dealt with dictatorship for twenty-one years, starting on October 11, 1968 with a military coup d'état, headed by General Omar Torrijos Herrera against the democratically elected president Dr. Arnulfo Arias Madrid.

Díaz Herrera and Zúñiga Araúz incorporate in their writings their vast experience and knowledge as military, medical doctor, politicians, critics and professor, respectively. Although since 1987 both authors started to work in similar undertakings—beginning in May of that year and ending in 1989—toward the dismantling of Noriega's dictatorship, in earlier years they were at opposite ends of the Panamanian political spectrum. While Zúñiga Araúz was fighting military control in Panama, Díaz Herrera was part of the military culture. Díaz Herrera served in the Panamanian military as a colonel and chief of staff under Noriega's command until he decided to retire and to publicly accuse Dictator Noriega of corruption in June of 1987.

*Estrellas clandestinas* is a powerful political testimony about the author's participation in the military dictatorship and its dismantling, as well. In his testimonial discourse, the author unmasked the dictator's secretive corruption and involvement in the murders of thousands of Panamanians. *El chacal del general* is a dictator novel, depicting cruel, vibrant, frightening scenes of blackmail, lies and representations of power through authoritarianism. Historical images of violence, socio-political and intellectual abuse perpetrated by the dictator are represented in Zúñiga Araúz's fictional discourse. The central message of both literatures, focus directly at Noriega's abuse of power. Díaz Herrera also informs the reader about Noriega's participation as a double agent, working both, for the U.S. government as a CIA agent, and for the drug cartel of Colombia. Additionally, both narratives also depict three important aspects of Panamanian history: the dictatorship of General Omar Torrijos Herrera; the assassination of Dr. Hugo Spadafora; and Panama's Civic Crusades movement against Noriega.

This chapter examines the literary characterization of abuse of power of the Panamanian dictator during his dictatorial. In order to expose Noriega's repressive apparatus exercising direct and violent control over the nation, the Foucauldian theoretical framework of "Power/knowledge" is utilized because it helps to explain and to understand the relationship of power in the dictatorial discourse of both writers. Due to the fact that both texts contest and chronicle Panamanian reality in diverse ways, this chapter studies and compares the various distinct and shared approaches that the authors use their literary work to denounce Noriega and the center of his hegemonic power. It also presents an analysis of the literary techniques used by the writers in the portrayal of their literature, and a brief comparison of the similarities and differences that the two narratives produce.

The chapter is divided in three sections. The first section focuses on Díaz Herrera's *Estrellas clandestinas* and on the ways in which the retired Colonel shapes his personal memoirs and chronicles them into a Testimony. It gives a succinct account of the Testimony as a literary genre in Latin America literature. In addition, it explores the trustworthiness of testimonies, analyzing both the biased and unbiased testimonial dimensions in the author's narrative, and the role of the intellectuals in the literary genre. Finally, it identifies the literary techniques by which the author uncovers and denounces the dictator's authoritarianism and important events in Panamanian military culture. The second section analyzes Zúñiga Araúz's *El chacal del general*. It is analyzed focusing on the representation of power that the novel depicts. It examines the ways in which the author employs fiction to denounce the relationship of power encountered in various real historical events that occurred in Panama. It gives a concise report of the "Dictator Novel" in Latin America, and analyzes the literary subgenre to denounce the representation of power in the narrative. Zúñiga Araúz's novel also depicts the representation and portrayal of women, therefore a fragment explores the portrayal of feminine character in comparison with classic novels of dictator. Lastly, the final section examines and compares both authors' references to Torrijos, Spadafora and the Civic Crusades.

## II.1 *Estrellas clandestinas*: Testimonial Account of Roberto Díaz Herrera

Era porque estaban saliendo al aire la pus y la sangre maloliente no solo de Noriega, sino de todas las operaciones clandestinas; tantas, que se identifican históricamente . . . ya he tomado demasiados riesgos, pero también sé que tengo un compromiso con la historia.  
—Díaz Herrera.

[It was because the smell of pus and rotten blood were out in the air, not only from Noriega, but from all the clandestine operations; so many, that they are identified historically . . . I have already taken too many risks, but I also know that I have a commitment to history].<sup>8</sup>

Díaz Herrera's *Estrellas clandestinas* is what the author describes first and foremost as his "testimonial history" (4), due to the fact that his narrative presents important phases which he

lived and witnessed as a first-hand observer. In order to introduce the reader to the enormous scope of Noriega's power in his testimonial writing, the author gives an analytical account of his own personal warfare with the dictator, as well as the reason for his lethal declarations against Noriega. On June 7, 1987, the author, then recently retired colonel and second in command of the military dictatorship, publicly denounced the Panamanian dictator Noriega's crimes against the country and the Panamanian people. Among his denunciations in front of the national and international media, he accused the Dictator of corruption, election fraud, money laundering, abductions and assassinations.

For example, Díaz Herrera writes: "En el diario panameño *La Prensa*, publicadas con titulares de oro el 8 de junio de 1987—guardadas en su hemeroteca—al siguiente día de mi conferencia de prensa . . . Los periodistas llegaban a investigar, asombrados de mis denuncias impactantes, contra el hombre que secuestraba a los panameños con el mayor terror que régimen alguno nos había impuesto" (16). ["In the Panamanian newspaper *La Prensa*, published with gold headlines on June 8, 1987—stored in its library—the day after my press conference . . . The journalists arrived to investigate, amazed at my shocking allegations against the man who kidnapped the Panamanians with the biggest terror than any regime had imposed on us"]. Among those crimes, he denounces Noriega's direct involvement in the plane crash that killed the commander of the Panamanian military, General Omar Torrijos on July 31, 1981. In addition, the murder of Dr. Hugo Spadafora on September 13, 1985.

Spadafora was a prominent opposition leader and open critic of Noriega and the Panamanian military—on many occasions Spadafora denounced Noriega's links to murders, narcotrafficking and the illegal dealing of arms. In his testimony Díaz Herrera writes that his decision to separate from Noriega started in September of 1985 after Noriega assassinated



Spadafora. The author recounts that Noriega's animosity against Spadafora started in 1979 after the latter accused the former—in front of then ruler, General Omar Torrijos—of narcotrafficking. Additionally, in his narrative Díaz Herrera explains of the different actions he intended to do in order to stop Noriega's abuse of power. For example, Díaz Herrera explains the internal military coup of 1985 that he initiated, but failed. It could have cost his life; therefore he decided to wait for a crucial moment that could be used as a mortal weapon against the dictator. That decisive moment arrived in June of 1987.

The core of *Estrellas clandestinas*—and the first significant part—is about these public denunciations, the persecutions to which he was subjected before and after his denounces, and about the important role of the CIA in the Panamanian dictatorship. The author dedicates a vital section detailing information about the aftermath of his declarations. For example, he explains that he was placed under house arrest first, but at that time the Panamanian people rallied around him, offering support for his brave actions. Later he was arrested and sentenced to five years in prison. He only served nearly six months before beginning a political asylum in Venezuela. He also writes lengthily about his supporters and family's reactions, fears and feelings. The following excerpts present poignant details of the day he was arrested in his home in the presence of his wife, children and supporters, as well as the subsequent days.

Robert, amor, despierta —dijo Maigualida, de pronto, asustada—. “Están ya por toda la casa. Levántate”. Traté de desperezarme, echado aún, desconcertado. — Son ellos—dijo luego—, los soldados de Noriega. Tienen fusiles y esas metralletas chicas como las que tú tienes, Robert, la Uzi. La voz de mi esposa, como eco extraño de un sueño pesadísimo, no admitía ya ninguna duda en aquella madrugada del 27 de julio. Había tenido algo menos de una hora de haberme acostado, pero apenas unos quince minutos de cerrar los ojos y dormir . . . Al ver a mis hijos menores, sus grandes y limpios ojos fijos en los pequeños rostros me paralizaron en seco. No obstante, debo decir, me daban también una fuerza extraordinaria para enfrentar lo que fuera . . . Lo importante en ese momento era salvarnos todos y mi responsabilidad—como nunca antes al mando de tantos

hombres uniformados—había tomado una dimensión más vital y urgente: mi familia y quienes me rodeaban. “¡Roberto—me dije—que nadie muera!”. (79-83)

[Robert, love, wake up - Maigualida said, suddenly, scared—. They are in, already in all the house. Stand up.” I tried to stretch, still thrown, disturbed. — They are—she said next—Noriega’s soldiers. They have firearms and those small machine guns like yours, Robert, the Uzi. The voice of my wife, as strange echo of the heaviest dream, already did not admit any doubt in that dawn of the 27 of July. I just had less than one hour to have laid down, but only fifteen minutes to close my eyes and sleep . . . When I saw my smaller children, their big and clean eyes fixed in their small faces, it paralyzed me immediately. However, I must say, they also gave me an extraordinary force to face anything . . . The important thing then was to save all of us and my responsibility—like never before in the command of so many men in uniform—it had taken a more vital and urgent dimension: my family and those who surrounded to me. “Roberto—I said to myself—nobody dies.”]

Besides giving explicit details about his family, the author also depicts his own ideological actions and that of his former military comrades.

While using a vital part of the narrative giving straight specifics (as the above) of the day of the occurrence, the author uses a variety of literary devices to explain his actions, as well. These literary techniques are detailed further below in section II.1.3 For example he uses the metaphor of “Don Quixote” and “Sancho Panza” the literary characters of Miguel de Cervantes’ *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha* [The ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha], to compare his ideological mission, and his former comrades’s position. Díaz Herrera writes: “Pero dentro de mí, un Quijote salió valeroso y decidido a no ser cómplice de un general de pacotilla que se había hecho socio de carteles colombianos y políticos corruptos” (80). [“But within me, a courageous Quixote emerged and decided not to be an accomplice to a worthless general that had become business partner with Colombian cartels and corrupt politicians”]. Adding that some of his comrade-in-arms behaved like “Sancho Panza.”

He explains that when they decided to ignore Noriega’s criminal ways, they sold their souls, without moral scruples, for a “bowl of lentils.” Díaz Herrera writes: “los que

conociéndolos [los desvíos de Noriega] se afincaban en los miedos comunes de los seres que someten sus almas a los dictados de sus Sancho Panzas, dicho en criollo panameñísimo “los que solo defienden sus portaviandas” sin escrúpulos morales” (80). Additionally, Díaz Herrera writes: “Por otro lado, mis compañeros de armas eran mis acosadores y verdugos. Muestra de ello, la vergonzosa irrupción que viví aquella mañana cuando pisotearon cobardemente mi hogar” (80). [“On the other hand, my comrades-in-arms were my persistent attackers and executioner. An example of it is the shameful irruption that I lived that morning when they cowardly trampled into my home”]. More of Díaz Herrera powerful denunciations and the power relationship encountered in *Estrellas clandestinas* are examined in following sections.

The second significant part of *Estrellas Clandestinas* is about the triad of power compounded by the Dictator, the CIA, and the Drug Cartels. Without any particular order and rather unceremoniously, beginning in his introductory chapter and during the course of the pages of his testimonial, the author continuously denounces Noriega’s association with what he describes as Noriega’s main ‘jackals’—giving reference to the CIA. For example, he writes: “Los lobos que me acechaban no estaban únicamente con Noriega, como sus perros Dobermans. . . los principales chacales tenían nombres anglosajones, como Bill Casey, el todopoderoso director de la CIA, padrino de lujo del dictador. Y, más allá de Casey, los que los habían nombrado” (15). [“The wolves that hunted me were not solely with Noriega, like his Dobermans dogs. . . the main jackals had anglo-saxon names, like Bill Casey, the all-powerful director of the CIA, luxury godfather of the dictator. And, beyond Casey, those who had hired him”]. Clearly, he was making references to the US Presidents, Bush and Reagan (16-17). The author exposes that Noriega’s affiliation with the CIA initiates a positive but dubious liaison with Washington as associates in power. Throughout the chapters Díaz Herrera presents facts of what he calls

“trama profunda del propio engranaje corrupto—los estamentos clandestinos en Washington— que lo sostenían [a Noriega] y le habían dado inmunidad e impunidad” (10). [“a deep conspiracy from the corrupt apparatus—The clandestine estates in Washington—that supported him [Noriega] and had given him immunity and impunity”]. In an effort to eliminate, what he coins as “historical amnesia,” besides talking and writing about it, the author urges people to acquire knowledge of the Panamanian situation to eradicate the ignorance that could affect new generations.

Throughout several page on his book, Díaz Herrera challenges people to do their own research, in order to discern the truth: “Quien tenga ganas de repasar esta historia no solo de Panamá sino continental y mundial, que tome un par de horas, largas, para entrar a la web y a los propios archivos desclasificados de la CIA e inicie el recorrido tortuoso de ese plan macabro” (75). [“Whoever feels like reviewing this story, not only Panamanian but continental and global, should take a couple of long hours to get on the Web and in the CIA’s own declassified files and begin the tortuous trajectory of that macabre plan”]. Although, it is a general belief that the association Noriega-CIA started in the years of his dictatorship, the author says that history demonstrates that it began around 1958-1959, when Noriega was a student at a military academy in Peru. These facts are recorded in Frederick Kempe’s investigative work *Divorcing the Dictator –America’s Bungled Affair with Noriega*, as well. For example, Kempe explains in his book that the thirty-year affair of the Dictator with the United States started when Noriega was enlisted in espionage as a young CIA informant at the same time Fidel Castro and communism came onto the scene in the region. Kempe notes:

Noriega would provide regular reports on their pro-Fidel teachings, offering names of officers . . . Manuel Antonio Noriega was the perfect informant –and not just because he was smarter than his fellow cadets” it was because “Noriega’s shy personality was fittingly unobtrusive. He had an archival memory and a

brother who could act as the perfect intermediary for intelligence reports and payments . . . Noriega's five years in Peru, which ended in 1962, were his life's turning point. The degree, the knowledge and the contacts he acquired —most importantly his new relationship with the Americans . . . —would provide the first paving stones for his path to power . . . He had suited America's narrow needs by gathering intelligence —of dubious value and at small prices —regarding Latin American leftists, Washington fulfilled his need for an early sponsor and an enthusiastic promoter in the years to come. (51-54)

It is important to highlight the interesting information given by Kempe, where he points out that besides recruiting and training Noriega as a spy, the CIA also helped him to form a small provincial intelligence operation. Noriega received \$200,000 a year in the intelligence service payroll. An amount, Kempe points out, “equal to the American president's salary” (26). But that affiliation would terminate in the year 1989, “with Noriega as Federal Prisoner 41586” (418). The above correlates with Díaz Herrera's accusations.

Díaz Herrera in his testimony informs readers that the CIA/Noriega relationship ended when Washington's “bandido” became useless to them. He writes: “George Bush, padre, definió estas acciones como “necesarias” para cazar al bandido de Noriega. Pero la verdad era que sólo lo intentan sacar cuando el títere se había quedado sin cuerda, precisamente por el escándalo mundial que provocaron mis suicidas declaraciones del 7 de junio de 1987” (9). [“George Bush, the father, defined these actions as “necessary” in order to hunt the “bandit” Noriega. But the truth was that they only tried to remove him once the puppet had run out of rope, precisely because of the world-wide scandal provoked by my suicidal declarations of June 7, 1987”]. In his detailed descriptions, besides naming those who he considered villains in the Noriega-US relationship, furthermore, Díaz Herrera uses a complete chapter of *Estrellas clandestinas* to depict the “Image of an idealist hero” in the affair: The then U.S. Senator John Kerry (1943- )—currently the U.S. Secretary of State.

Díaz Herrera names Kerry “the Quixote” of North America for his role in denouncing the “Iran-Contra drug scandal,” in which the dictator Noriega was an ardent participant. He writes:

La historia se definió después, y una sola muestra del laberinto infernal que viví fue la condena moral que el propio Congreso norteamericano impone luego a varios, por obra de otro Quijote, el senador John Kerry, el cual simultáneamente conmigo, y sin que nos conociéramos, libraba otra batalla llamado “Irán-Contras,” precisamente la sociedad que unió a Manuel Antonio Noriega con Ronald Reagan y George Bush, a través de un alto militar, el coronel Oliver North. (11)

[History was defined later, and as a single sample of the infernal labyrinth that I had lived was the moral sentence that the North American Congress imposes on several other people, through the work of another Quixote, Senator John Kerry, who simultaneously with me, and without knowing each other, was fighting another battle called “the Iran-Contra,” precisely the association that united Manuel Antonio Noriega with Ronald Reagan and George Bush, through a high-ranking military official, Colonel Oliver North.]

Most of the Iran-Contras association connection with drug cartels and Noriega is described in the first chapter of *Estrellas clandestinas*, in the section: “Cómo John Kerry descubrió el escándalo de la conexión contra-drogas” (23-31). [“How John Kerry discovered the scandalous Contra-drugs connection”]. Díaz Herrera gives vast information about the scandal, but although the above connection is important and relevant in order to understand the triad of power (Noriega/CIA/Drug Cartel), this chapter is not dedicated to analyzing the Contras operation—that in itself could easily fill a complete chapter of a major scholarly work.

Nonetheless, it is important to mention that while the description of the association Noriega/CIA is quite abundant, the narrative only makes quick reference of the association Noriega/Drug Lords.<sup>9</sup> For example: “desde 1983 los capos colombianos de la droga empiezan a ser recibidos con honores, hasta poder lograr realizar “convenciones de carteles” como el ocurrido en el Hotel Soloy, con azafatas y custodios brindados por Noriega” (14). [“since 1983 the Colombian drug CAPOS begin to welcome with honors, until they are able to create “cartel

conventions” as occurred in Hotel Soloy, with stewardesses and bodyguards paid by Noriega”]. Continuously the author denounces in every possible way the last six years of the dictatorship in Panama headed by Noriega, but, paradoxically—as is further explained—he commends, in every possible way, the thirteen years of dictatorship of his cousin Omar Torrijos Herrera.

The third significant section in *Estrellas candelinas* is about Díaz Herrera extended impressions in relation to the life and death of Torrijos, and several major differences between the two Panamanian dictators. The following examples depict the author commending General Torrijos, and condemning General Noriega. In his first and third chapter, the author makes many precise references to Torrijos, highlighting that he was an honest general commended by many. For example, he quotes the well-known South American Poet, José Ignacio Cabrunas praising Torrijos for his work and for creating “el estado mayor más digno de Latinoamérica” (35). [“the greatest, most suitable military state of Latin America”]. In addition, the Panamanian high-ranking priest Monsignor Gregorio Mac Grath, saying: “Omar tuvo el espíritu de misericordia del Señor, amó a los pobres no solo de Panamá sino del tercer mundo, Dios sabrá juzgar sus defectos y reconocer sus virtudes” (36). [“Omar had the Lord’s spirit of mercy; he loved the poor not only of Panama but of the third world; God will know how to judge his defects and to recognize his virtues”]. His narrative portrays Torrijos managing the country for thirteen years with honesty and integrity, without stealing one penny or using the national economy for his own benefit.

Regarding Torrijos’ essential role in the historical treaty “Torrijos-Carter,” Díaz Herrera writes:

Dios me habría de permitir vivir sueños hermosos y odiseas terrible. Al lado de Omar Torrijos Herrera . . . viví luego sucesos de increíble importancia, no solo nacional o regional, sino mundial. ¿Cómo no serlo la firma en septiembre de 1977 de nuevos tratados que ponían precisamente fin, con la ayuda moral de

Carter, a los denigrantes pactos que nos impuso por casi un siglo aquel Roosevelt tomador de naciones a la fuerza? No fue lo que firmó Omar y Carter una Victoria de Panamá solamente. Fue un triunfo de América. (9)

[God would have permitted me to live beautiful dreams and terrible odysseys. Next to Omar Torrijos Herrera . . . I then lived events of incredible importance, not only of national or regional importance, but world-wide. How could not be the signing of new treaties in September of 1977 that precisely put an end, with Carter's moral help, to the degrading pacts which Roosevelt imposed on us for almost a century? What Omar and Carter signed was not only a Victory for Panama. It was a triumph for the Americas.]

It is important to keep in mind that Díaz Herrera served in both dictatorships as the second in command, and due to his specific and internal knowledge, he knew that both men, Torrijos and Noriega diverge in major aspects.

For example, Díaz Herrera writes that whereas Torrijos was trustworthy and respected, Noriega was deceitful and scorned: “El General [Torrijos] consiguió el Tratado más importante, el del Canal con Estados Unidos, el que nos devolvería la soberanía total en pocos años. . . . cuando lo mataron sus enemigos rastrearon su vida y su economía, y no pudieron encontrar en sus cuentas bancarias dentro de Panamá o fuera ni un cuarto de millón de dólares” (120). [“The General [Torrijos] negotiated the most important Treaty, the Canal with the United States, which would return full sovereignty to us in a few years . . . when his enemies killed him they tracked his life and its economy, and they couldn't find in their bank accounts in Panama or outside not even a quarter of a million dollars”]. Noriega instead, he writes: “terminó confesando ante el gran jurado de Miami que sus muchos millones, docenas de propiedades –incluidas mansions en París--, las había logrado en gran parte por los salarios y bonificaciones que recibió de la CIA” (120). [“ended up confessing before a grand jury in Miami that his many millions, dozens of properties - including mansions in Paris, it had been largely for salaries and bonuses received



from the CIA”]. At the same time the author portrays the two extreme points of view, he condemns the voices that assert that Torrijos was “the other Panamanian dictator.”

Fiercely and without hesitation, Díaz Herrera refutes critics—especially Panamanian critics—in his narrative. The author classifies them (critics) as “ignorant” people who speak without knowing anything about history: “panameños y panameñas onodinos, desconocidos para nuestra historia profunda, gente que habla sin saber nada de nada” (36). Díaz Herrera strong point of view could make the reader wonder whether his observations are biased because of the author’s blood connections with the late General’s dictatorship—they were first cousins.

In spite of the dichotomies and differences between the two Panamanian generals, given by Díaz Herrera, history has proved the role of the two men as “military dictators” who ruled in the Panamanian dictatorship era. For example, Kempe notes that while Torrijos was more charismatic and most people loved him, “(he) ruled over Panama with a tropical laissez-faire. Hardly a military dictator, he was more a populist, happy-go-lucky lay-about who was determined to make history by creating a generous social welfare system and new Panama Canal Treaties” (73). Noriega instead, was more obscure, and preferred the shadows. He was a “detailed-oriented, workaholic confidence man . . . Noriega shied away from human contact . . . Few knew Noriega and those who did know him, feared him” (73). But despite the differences, Kempe notes that dictator Torrijos “hands-off approach allowed corruption to spread within the ranks of his military and the nation like jungle fever. Noriega’s intelligence service was the only full-time monitor . . . Ironically, though, it would be Torrijos who created the system of corruption and broad military power that Noriega would later exploit to repress a nation” (73). Both men’s love to power made them commit diverse acts of violence and treason against the Panamanian people.

Lastly, Díaz Herrera's testimonial writing against Dictator Noriega contains a denunciatory tone that resembles the voices of hundreds of Latin American writers opposing injustice and abuse of power. Just like anyone who dares to speak, denouncing crimes, challenging injustice and the status quo, the author put his life in danger with his denunciatory declarations in 1987. Nonetheless, he did not end there; twenty-two years later Díaz Herrera strikes again, publishing his testimonial *Estrellas clandestinas* in 2009. The author and retired colonel argues that his sense of responsibility and his commitment with history, were then (in 1987), and are now (in 2009—the year he publishes his testimony) the reasons for his actions. Consequently, with the creation of his testimonial narrative, *Díaz Herrera* places those important years of Panamanian history in the literary map. He contributes a powerful testimony of the dictatorship era in Panama to Latin American studies. The following section explains the significance of testimony genre to these studies.

### **II.1.1 A Succinct Recount of the Testimony Genre in Latin American Literature**

Testimonial writing is a literary genre that has become an important, though sometimes controversial genre in Latin America in the second half of the twentieth century. It is a genre that generally has a denunciatory connotation and is also recognized as “contestatory literature,” contestatory because it contests and denounces injustice, abuse, murder, inequality and the struggle for social, gender, religious, racial, and political freedom. Throughout the years, a multitude of literary critics have analyzed this literary genre. Critic George Yúdice considers that “testimonial writing may be defined as an authentic narrative told by a witness who is moved to narrate by the urgency of a situation (e.g., war, oppression, revolution, etc.). Emphasizing popular, oral discourse, the witness portrays his or her own experience as an agent (rather than a representative) of a collective memory and identity” (15-31). John Beverly defines

testimonial writing or testimonial narrative as “a novel or novella-length narrative in book or pamphlet (that is, printed as opposed to acoustic) form, told in the first person by a narrator who is also the real protagonist or witness of the events he or she recounts, and whose unit of narration is usually a ‘life’ or a significant life experience” (70). He also describes the genre as “a challenge and an alternative to the figure of the writer as cultural hero.” Elzbieta Sklodowska considers that “testimonial creations are used for retrieving voices of people who had seldom been heard” (85). Testimonial literature, as is Díaz Herrera’s *Estrellas clandestinas*, brings into the literary world, issues that concern the writers, their sense of violation, and their search for justice and equal opportunities. Testimonial writing is also the memory of a piece of history as lived or witnessed by the writer.

The 1980’s saw various influential warriors use their voices to cry for justice and consequently to create their own way of denunciation through their testimonial writing. This is the case of Guatemalan social reformist, indigenous leader and recipient of the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize, Rigoberta Menchú. In her struggle to denounce the crimes and abuse of power of the Guatemalan dictatorship, this indigenous woman produced testimonial literature translated in English as: *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala*. [*Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* (1983)]. It is a brave testimony about the suffering of Guatemalan people during and after the country’s Civil War (1960-1996), thirty-six long years of political terror in her country. Menchú used her powerful voice and testimony to advocate for the rights of the indigenous community. Thousands of indigenous peasants were massacred during the years of dictatorship, and others were affected by oppression and exploitation.

Though this revolutionary writing style is said to have been initiated in the eighties, history has demonstrated that testimonial writing has always existed in Latin America and began

in colonial times. For example, in 1542 Spaniard Dominican Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, resentful of the abuse of power of his fellow-Spanish colonizers and of the constant mistreatment of the indigenous people of the Americas, wrote a testimonial account, *The Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (*Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*). He became one of the most avid defenders of those without voice or power who cannot defend themselves. De Las Casas denounced the abusive practices in a letter and sent it to the Prince of Spain, Philip II. Among other very descriptive and emotional accounts, he described the slaughter by Spanish soldiers, specifically how they would murder indigenous men, women and children in the most savage ways in order to take their gold and lands and to force them into hard labor.

At the same time that the genre denounces and educates, it also lends itself to criticism and accusation. It usually faces a share of counter-allegations of deception and disloyalty from critics. Rigoberta Menchú's testimony is a solid example of how testimonies are scrutinized by critics. For example, Anthropologist David Stoll solidly criticized and accused the indigenous woman of fabrications and misleading representations. After performing his own research and interviews with survivors of political violence in Guatemala. He indicates how he discovered significant problems and discrepancies in Menchú's life story adding that maybe she was just doing what advocates always do –exaggerating a little (xix). Fray Bartolomé de las Casas was also accused of fabrications and exaggerations in his account of the atrocities, slavery and abuse towards the indigenous. As an example, David Walker, among many other critics, insist that Bartolomé de las Casas's recordings were cynical and deceitful, since the friar himself succeeded well in his plans of enslaving thousands of Africans (instead of indigenous people) into very hard labor digging up gold and silver and working the plantations. (40). Díaz Herrera has also had to face as early as 1987 and until this day, critics who label him a hypocrite and a traitor, since after

years of profiting from his close relationship with the dictatorships, he decided to desert and denounce for his own personal benefit.

The importance of trustworthiness in a testimony has been a questionable issue due to the different literary techniques that an author employs to depict his or her experiences. The use of memory and discursive strategies such as hyperboles or exaggerations and metaphors in the process of testimony writing, makes readers ponder the veracity of the author's discourse. The literary strategies bring a degree of trust and suspicion and make them wonder which part of the testimony has been recollected and written; and which part has been omitted, blown out of proportion, or left unwritten. The following section addresses important issues of confidence and suspicion in testimony.

### **II.1.2 Trustworthiness in Testimony: Confidence and Suspicion**

I invite you to review this testimonial story, parts of which I lived, of the most immoral contemporary scandal of a world power, your own.  
—Díaz Herrera to U.S. President Barack Obama.

French Philosopher Paul Ricoeur writes about the untrustworthiness of the act of witnessing and argues that in order to discern the authenticity of a testimony, it is necessary to ask the crucial question: "To what point is testimony trustworthy?" adding "This question balances both confidence and suspicion. Thus it is by bringing to light the conditions in which suspicion is fomented that we have a chance of approaching the core meaning of testimony" (162). As he explains, in order to find a guiding pathway to determine a certain important measure of truthfulness in a testimony it is necessary to balance the dichotomy of "suspicion" and "confidence." Suspicion, because the veracity could carry the biased memories of the writer and a scope for controversy. Confidence, because the testimony is not solely based on reminiscence of the author, but on his knowledge, his expertise on the matter, and above all, on

the documented evidence of the past (164). Although all testimony contains subjective elements that can challenge their objectivity or veracity, at the same time it can have components that contribute to increase our confidence.

María Inés Mudrovcic in her narrative, *Historia, narración y memoria*, explains that testimonies contain a recompilation of memories of the author's past transformed in documented facts by the historian based on a collaborative effort, not only of what the author remembers at the moment of the action, but on collective memories (118-19). In other words, a testimony is not only what the author remembered, felt and experienced, but what history says about that haunting past as well. Testimony could lead the reader to a series of suspicions and doubts mainly due to the personal implications and subjectivity in it, and yet to trustworthiness because of the many credible signs and historical references it presents. All that information helps the reader discern what is true and what could be false.

Significant dichotomies of suspicion and veracity; falsehood and truthfulness, can be found in both Díaz Herrera's former denunciation (1987) and in his testimonial narrative *Estrellas clandestinas*. These dichotomies exist because of the relationship of power and authority existing between the author and the dictator within the military culture. Although, Díaz Herrera's testimony created many doubts and reservations, at the same time generated a large scale of support and trust. His denounce was resisted by critics (as is described further below in the analysis), and yet, at the same time his role of "specific intellectual" in military matters aided his veracity. Michel Foucault coined the term "specific intellectual" in a debate about intellectuals.<sup>10</sup>

The philosopher explains that someone is considered a "specific intellectual" when that person uses the intellectual capacities or the knowledge acquired to place himself on a dangerous

path for a particular cause. Usually a specific intellectual—rather than an universal intellectual—has been involved in a specific relationship of power and authority, and eventually draws away from powerful oppressors, and closer to the oppressed masses. The reasons for repositioning, he explains, are: “First, because it has been a question of real, material, everyday struggles; and second, because they have been confronted, albeit in a different form by the same adversary . . . namely the multinational corporations, the judicial and police apparatuses” (*The Chomsky-Foucault* 162). All of these mirror the colonel’s drastic separation from the dictator. Kenneth J. Jones called Díaz Herrera “an intellectual” because of his knowledge about everything that Noriega and some of his top officers were doing (42). Later, as he explained, he in turn, had been provoked by the same man who for years had antagonized the Panamanian people: that is Noriega, his ex-commander.

For example, in his narrative Díaz Herrera explains that he carefully calculated his move, due to the danger involved. He also notes that in Panama not even 1% of people knew the true dimension of the dangers that he faced at the moment of denouncing Noriega for his crimes and drug trafficking. As an expert knowledgeable in military tactics, he knew that he needed to wait for the appropriate moment to deal the final death blow to the dictator’s reign: “Tenía que hacerse únicamente con una actuación suicida, política, compleja, mediática” (54). [“It needed to be done in a suicidal, political, complex performance, in front of the media”]. He needed to use his intelligence to survive his accusations, to stun and grab the attention of a national and international audience, and to mortally wound the dictator and his military dictatorship.

Díaz Herrera was definitely an intellectual in military matters. His entire adult life was spent within that space of power and control, right at the top. He had been second-in-command

for all Panamanian dictators. His role of intellectual was specific in that field. The following explains both, the reliability and the suspicion that his specific knowledge created.

Reliability: His public denunciations came at a strategic moment and from a powerful source. That made Panamanian people believe because the accusations were not only eye-opening, but they were also the confirmation of what had been suspected for many years. His action also gave a sense of relief and assurance in Panama and abroad in a time when the hope for change was almost nil—everybody knew that the dictator was too big to be touched, too powerful to be defeated. More importantly, those accusations came at a strategic moment and from a powerful source: a firsthand witness. For example, the author in his narrative indicates that among those inspired by his courage was the three-time Panamanian president Dr. Arnulfo Arias Madrid. According to the author, Arias Madrid commended him “more than once” over the telephone for his moral audacity.

It is important to understand that Díaz Herrera places such emphasis on Arias Madrid’s commendation probably because ironically, Díaz Herrera himself “more than once” as well, helped Noriega to oust Arias Madrid from power with a coup d’etat with fraud and lies. But in spite of those actions, why not applaud and commend Díaz Herrera, in spite of the doubts his actions brought? Why not trust his denunciations and identify them as bravery? Who better to denounce Noriega than a colonel intimately implicated in years of corruption? Díaz Herrera insists that he placed himself on a dangerous path for a cause that he believed in. He writes: “¿Por qué tal conmoción? Precisamente porque ningún opositor habría podido llevar un desafío tan terrible y aventurado como el que lancé sobre el rostro de piedra del dictador, el cual quedó herido de muerte” (19) [“Why such commotion? Precisely because no opponent would have been able to carry out a challenge so terrible and dangerous as the one that I threw in the face of



the dictator, which wounded him to death”]. The author’s years in the military prepare him for that defiant act. His denouncement opened a door that seemed impossible at the time to be opened. Nonetheless, due to those years of corruptions his acts brought also instant suspicions. Díaz Herrera was part of a machinery of power that had killed, controlled and abused the people of Panama for years.

Suspicion: At the very same time that Panamanian people were celebrating Díaz Herrera’s denunciations, a feeling of alarm arose in the mind of the masses. Many questions were asked by many, such as: Why is Díaz Herrera denouncing Noriega? Why now and not before. In his testimony, Díaz Herrera writes at length about the reason for people’s suspicions. Even though, he recognizes and understands—up to certain degree—why it was too difficult to believe and give him the credit that he though he deserved, “Sabía que era difícil creerle a un oficial de alto rango, que era parte de la cúpula military” (10). [“I knew that it was difficult to believe an official of high rank who was part of the military cupola”]. Adding that: “Las denuncias temerarias que le hago al vulgar dictador—como Coronel recién retirado por una jubilación que yo mismo pedí, no como dicen otros, para irme de una Institución donde serví con orgullo y honor junto a Omar Torrijos y que se convierte, había quedado convertida, gracias a Noriega, en un cueva de gángsteres” (13). [“The brave denunciations that I do to the vulgar dictator—as colonel just retired by a retirement that I, myself, requested, not as others say, to leave an Institution where I served with pride and honor next to Omar Torrijos and that is been turned, thanks to Noriega, in a cave of gangsters”]. He also mentions—with resentment—three more reasons of certain people’s suspicion: “un gran celo y envidia política” (155). [“political jealousy and envy”], and also fear.

Díaz Herrera mentions that fear was spreading among politicians because they feared that he could get control of the thousands of Panamanians who were supporting him and his denouncement. They were afraid that he would form his own political party and therefore, control the masses. Additionally, the author resents that even some Panamanian historians have minimized his brave acts summarizing them as simple desires to take command. The following excerpts demonstrate Díaz Herrera's arguments that his cause was misunderstood and ignored by historians, mostly because scepticism and distrust:

Curiosamente, ni siquiera en el famoso documental ganador de un Oscar, "Panama Deception" que pude ver con mi esposa e hijos en mi exilio en Buenos Aires, me mencionan. Se saltan mis denuncias que originaron todo, y pasan únicamente revista a las locuras despechadas de Noriega y su machete declarándole la guerra a la potencia, como si tal hecho hubiese sido el huevo generador de semejante crisis. (69)

[It is peculiar that not even the famous Oscar-winning documentary, "Panama Deception," which I saw with my wife and children during my exile in Buenos Aires, mentions me. They skip my denunciations which began everything, and focus only on Noriega's crazy machete antics, declaring war on the superpower, as if this had been the trigger for such a crisis.]

Causa incomprendida por todos, aliados y rivales. Causa amarga y temeraria. Hasta la agrupación política que forjé . . . luego del golpe de 1968, me odiaba. Considerado un traidor por denunciar a quien sí era realmente un felón de aquellos ideales torrijistas ya exaltados por el pueblo, mis propios correligionarios me habían dado la espalda . . . Mis compañeros de armas eran mis acosadores y verdugos. (80)

[A Cause misunderstood by all: allies and rivals. A bitter and reckless Cause. Even the political group which I forged . . . after the 1968 coup, hated me. I have been considered a traitor for denouncing him . . . my own legionnaires had stabbed me in the back . . . My comrades-in-arms were my accusers and executioners.]

The original distrust and suspicions that the oral public denounce brought in 1987, is also a vital part in his written testimony. Elizabeth Burgos writes that, "suspicions" form part of a testimony because it is presented from the point of view of what the person in question experienced in the past. It contains a strong implication of truth, and yet a possibility that a particular testimony is

false. (xiv).<sup>11</sup> It is important to keep in mind that due to the degree of bias existing in testimonies, the voices of critics are important in this type of analysis. For example, among other critics, Kempe in his text writes lengthy suspicions against Díaz Herrera's actions. (Kempe 211-12).

Nonetheless, in spite of the criticism to his brave acts of 1987, and in his pursuit to keep people informed, Díaz Herrera bravely keeps fighting. With his testimony *Estrellas clandestinas*, Díaz Herrera writes a legacy to Latin American studies. With it, the author seeks to enlighten the reader with an important event in the history of the nation of Panama. What is more important, as mentioned, he aims to educate young people who are oblivious to this important part of Latin American history. These young generations, he says, are in danger of losing a historical memory. The last section analyzes and identifies the literary techniques utilized by the author in his literary discourse.

### **II.1.3 Literary Techniques in *Estrellas clandestinas***

Literary creation is not immune to the inexorable passage of time or the pull of habit. . . [It] cannot afford routine. . . . “The value of literature”, wrote Tomaševskij, “lies in its novelty and originality. Depending on the way in which the attention of the evaluating literary public responds to individual devices, these can be classified as perceptible or imperceptible. In order to be perceptible, a device must be either very old or very novel”.  
—Victor Erlich.

*Estrellas clandestinas* is not only a testimonial account of Díaz Herrera's ordeals and socio-political revelations, first and foremost, it is his literary work of art. As such, it is of paramount importance to understand the diverse literary devices that the author uses to craft his story. These techniques are important in literary works because they demonstrate the aesthetic mood which Díaz Herrera imbues his work to deliver his message. As Jay Braiman notes, a message is expressed by multiple devices that collectively comprise the art form's components, that is to say, the means by which authors create meaning through language, allowing the reader

to understand and appreciate the literary work (1). Díaz Herrera is the narrative voice or “autodiegetic narrator” due to his auto-presence in his auto-testimony. It is narrated from a first-person, homodiegetic perspective. The homodiegetic narrator not only narrates what happened in the story—based on history, his own memory and point of view—but he is the protagonist of his own testimony. French literary theorist Gérard Genette explains: “As for the function, I called “testimonial” for obvious reasons it has hardly any place except in homodiegetic narrating—of which the variant called “I-witness” is, as its name indicates, nothing but one vast attestation: ‘I was there, this is how it happened’” (130). Díaz Herrera is not only the “hero” in his own discourse, but—as explained above—he is also a “specific intellectual” according to the Foucauldian tenet.

*Estrellas clandestinas* generally follows a nonsequential chronology, that is to say, most of the events in his discourse are not organized following a sequence of time. For example, while it starts narrating about historical occurrences in Panama, most of the narrative jumps around, from introducing the reader to Noriega’s corruption and his alliance with the CIA, to the author’s own denunciations and ordeal in 1987, and then back again to the initial topic. The author constantly breaks the flow of his denunciatory memories of what was done to him and to the country, and dedicates an essential part of his testimony to writing something about Torrijos Herrera. An interesting example of nonlinear sequence is found in chapter one, pages thirteen and fourteen. Within two pages the author depicts events of 1989, 1987 and 1983. He writes: “Bush padre, y Manuel Antonio Noriega merecen ambos ir al mismo sitio celestial, por la cantidad, centenares, de muertos y muchos más heridos, según el informe . . . de aquel 20 de diciembre de 1989” (13). [“Bush, the father, and Manuel Antonio Noriega both deserve to go to the same celestial place, because of the amount of death and many more wounded, according to

the report . . . of that 20 of December of 1989”]. He then switches to his suicidal denunciations of 1987, followed by the recollection of a 1983 event of Noriega with the “capos colombianos” (14). This nonlinear order and fluctuation of time is a literary technique described as “Anachronism.”

Genette explains that: “An anachrony can reach into the past or the future, either more or less far from the “present” moment (that is, from the moment in the story when the narrative was interrupted to make room for the anachrony): this temporal distance we will name the anachrony’s reach” (48). The anachronous order, (rather than chronological) expands the understanding of the reader, and it is divided in two sequence: analepse (flashbacks) and prolepse (flashforward).<sup>12</sup> These techniques allow the author to create links between diverse vital dates and events of history. Anachronisms are frequently used in testimonial narrations. For example, Arabella Lyon notes that Guatemalan Rigoberta Menchú’s testimonial is “distinguished by its strange flashbacks to a Mayan history” (142). And Bruce Fox explains that the multiple uses of narrative anachronism in the Salvadorian Manlio Argueta’s testimonial novels are not part of “a stylistic flaws but rather a very appropriate narrative technique” (95). Other literary devices frequently used by Díaz Herrera as a narrative technique, are the use of motivating allegory and metaphor.

An allegory is a metaphorical narrative that authors utilize to tell or to teach their ideas. They use a particular concept to put into words an abstract idea. In *Estrellas clandestinas*, the author employs a variety of allegories to provide to the reader a metaphorical understanding of the authoritarianism and corruption that were in force within the Panamanian dictatorship. For example, Díaz Herrera uses the allegory of defiance portrayed in a biblical story. Giving reference to the story of Judith and the terrible General Holofernes, in the Deuterocanonical

Apocryphal book of Judith in the old testament of the Bible.<sup>13</sup> Díaz Herrera explains that Judith in order to save her people and city, she deceives Holofernes with drinks and pleasures to be able to decapitate him. In his pursuit of justice, as Judith did, Díaz Herrera explains that he needed to do what was righteous in the presence of God for the Panamanian people. Using this allegorical story in his testimony, the author not only explains his actions, but gives a clear example to the reader. Even though his actions were considered a military betrayal, Díaz Herrera argues that even God sometimes allows a strategic, illicit mission if it is for a noble cause. He writes, “utilizar medios reprobables con el sentido de la búsqueda de asuntos superiores, está aprobado solo en esos casos, por Dios” (57). Díaz Herrera thought that he could bring to ashes both the dictator himself and the military dictatorship-kingdom. At least that was his intention.

The Machiavelli’s allegorical expression “the ends justify the means” is used, as well. The author confirms that in order to eject the dictator, he needed to act cautiously. He uses the idea of the notable Niccolo Machiavelli (in *The Prince*) in order to portray what is permissible in a power relation. Díaz Herrera knew that his actions would be condemned by many and would provoke controversy and doubts, but in the end, Panama and its future history would profit from them. He writes: “Derrocar a Noriega militarmente era imposible, porque el propio Comando Sur lo impedía, además del engranaje de la CIA . . . Era una situación militar donde debo calcular los cursos de acción propios y los del enemigo. Lo que tengo en mente debe ser muy sorpresivo. Es uno de los principios esenciales de la Guerra” (56-57). [“Overthrowing Noriega militarily was impossible because the South Commando prevented it, as well as the CIA’s apparatus of power . . . It was a military situation where I must calculate my own course of actions and that of the enemy. What I have in mind must be a total surprise. It is one of the essential principles of War (56-57)]. History indicates that it would take two more years and a

stronger force: the blessing of Washington, as Díaz Herrera explains, to complete what he had begun.

The metaphore of “the chess game” is constantly used. In order to indicate his own moves and Noriega’s game of power with a wider net that includes the American government. The author writes: “Ya comprobaba al menos que Noriega no era sino un alfil de un ajedrez diabólico, donde el rey, la reina, las torres y los caballos estaban guarecidos en castillos más altos, en Washington” (10). [At least I knew that Noriega was not more than a bishop in a diabolic chess game, where the king, the queen, the rooks and the knights were given shelter in higher castles--in Washington (10)]. Interestingly, the chess-related allegorical expression also depicts the writer’s own participation in the game of power. Díaz Herrera was a significant piece in that powerful chess game of power as well. For example his allegations and revelations in his testimony place him as a move where a lowly pawn beats the lofty queen, as Bruce Pandolfini refers to in his book *Every Move Must Have a Purpose* (1). Nonetheless, Díaz Herrera was more than “a lowly pawn.” One can argue that Díaz Herrera metaphorically was a “powerful queen” in a game of power. He was a powerful queen needing to fight against a king for a must-needed final checkmate.

Among other main allegories forming part of Díaz Herrera’s literature, there is the allegory of “The little red riding hood and the perverse wolf.” He notes: “Si bien Estados Unidos neutralizó a las tropas colombianas como una “caperucita roja, grande y afable, lanzó luego sus afiladas garras de lobo perverso para atrapar a la joven criatura, devorándola poco a poco, dividiéndola políticamente . . . secuestrando la independencia del Istmo” (8). [“Even though the United States neutralized the Colombian troops like a great and friendly “Little Red Riding Hood,” soon it threwed its perverse wolf’s sharpened claws to catch the young creature,

devouring slowly, dividing her politically and . . . kidnapping the independence of the Isthmus” (8). In addition to the “Don Quixote” allegory (which has been discussed previously). All these literary devices make the reader understand Noriega’s corruption and abuse of power in a more insightful way. In order to grab the attention of readers, attract them to his cause, and most importantly to unmask the dictator and the mechanism of power involved, the author needed to present his written discourse *Estrellas clandestinas* in the same way he presented his oral discourse, using various strategies.

Finally, historical periods represented in testimony genre such as *Estrellas clandestinas* are also symbolized in the literary subgenre of “testimonial novels” (novela-testimonio)—as explained above. This is the case of Manlio Argueta’s *Un día en la vida*, Tomás Eloy Martínez’s *La Novela de Perón* (1985) and Miguel Barnet’s *Biografía de un Cimarrón* (1966)—among others. In these testimonial novels fiction and reality are brought together to denounce violence, control and subjugation of tyrant rulers. As Luis Veres explains, “la novela testimonio, género que goza de especial acierto entre 1970 y 1990 . . . En ella se trata material documentado extraído de hechos reales” (par. 7). [“the testimonial novel, genre that has special success between 1970 and 1990. . . It contains documented material extracted from real facts”]. Correspondingly, the contemporary Panamanian author Mauro Zúñiga Araúz, writes a fictional novel documenting similar historical facts that Díaz Herrera depicted in his testimony. Zúñiga Araúz fictional/reality novel—although not “testimonial” *per se*— depicts the existing realities extracted from real facts that reveal the abuse of power of the figure of the dictator.



## II.2 *El chacal del general: Fiction and Reality in Mauro Zúñiga Araúz's Novel*

The doctor had a tattoo in the back with the F-8 abbreviations, marked with an oxidized knife. It was the new mark from the killers, and it appeared for the first time on the back of a leader a few months after he had coordinated the first multitudinous movement against the dictator.

—Dr. Mauro Zúñiga Araúz.

*El chacal del general* is a novel about the dictatorship of Manuel Antonio Noriega, and it echoes the realities experienced by the Panamanian people. Using symbolic realistic scenes of actual persecutions, disappearances and tortures of those who dared to challenge the Dictator's authority, the author utilizes his dictator novel as a contestatory apparatus against Noriega. This analysis proposes that Zúñiga Araúz's novel forms part of the literary subgenre of dictator novel because of its denunciatory tone. It denounces the abuse of power of the Panamanian dictator. In his discourse of power, the writer openly establishes several important historical events that afflicted Panama, and other Latin American countries, for that matter, during the years of dictatorship. The story described in the *El chacal del general* correlates with the cruelty of and the exploitation of power by Latin American dictators.

Although the author himself characterized his work as a psychological novel because of all the mental and physical tortures and abuses that the characters suffer at the hand of the dictator, this study—as explained above—argues that Zúñiga Araúz's novel forms part of the well known and still alive, literary subgenre of the dictator novel. Noriega became one of those powerful dictators that in real life, and also as a literary character are defined by critic Angel Rama, as “a man who has conquered it all and clings onto power until he is nothing else but that: Power” (16). The manifestation of power of the Latin American dictator has been portrayed throughout the years emphasizing his concentration of power, and Zúñiga Araúz's novel contains

all of the characteristics that form part of the subgenre. More about this literary subgenre is examined in section II.2.4

The main plot of the novel is based on the last twenty-four hours of life of an aged pair of suffering parents who are looking for their disappeared son, before both are psychologically murdered by the jackal and his general. Chicho is an idealistic political-activist student who was abducted and assassinated in September of 1985. In the last chapter the author introduces the reader to the sudden death of the old parents, Virginia and Efraín, after they hear the explicit account of the infinite pain which their son Chicho had to suffer alive while being tortured and decapitated by the jackal of the general. The main protagonists are, Gilberto (the jackal) who becomes “a student,” and the cruel dictator. In the narrative, he is engaged in a series of perverse and murderous dialogues with his thug, Gilberto and with his personal confidant, Crispín. With the latter, a bond is created that increasingly resembles a psychologist-patient relationship, where the military general confides in Crispín.

Crispín is an honest engineer and businessman who refused all offers of illegal political positions, money and glory from the dictator. The dictator opens his heart to Crispín, between sipping his favorite drink “Chivas Regal,” and tells his most dirty and sadistic secrets. He reveals all the secret hostile plans (starting from the type of subordinates he demands near him) from the criminal organization that he created before and during his tenure as general of the military force in Panama. For example, in the novel one can hear the voice of the general dictator describing to his confidant Crispín everything about his policy of terror. Most importantly, in that drunken dialogue between the two men, the perverse general reveals the kind of control and submission that he demands from his jackals:

Conoces los orígenes del perro? . . . Creo que es algo poco conocido. Los que proceden del chacal son mansos y obedientes. Los que proceden del lobo son

leales, pero irreverentes. A los primeros los mandas, los humillas; se mueren fieles a ti. Los segundos te consideran un congénere, se ubican a tu nivel y careces de autoridad sobre ellos. En el servicio militar tiene que haber perros con sangre pura de chacal. Los que tienen genes de lobo son pretenciosos, peligrosos. Hay que eliminarlos. (143)

[Do you know the origins of the dog? . . . I believe that it's something little known. Those who come from the jackal are meek and obedient. Those who come from wolf are loyal, but irreverent. The first you order, you humiliate; they die faithful to you. The second consider you a congenial person, they put themselves at your level and you lack authority over them. In the military service there must be dogs with pure jackal blood. Those who have wolf genes are pretentious, dangerous. It is necessary to remove them.]

By the end of the novel, Zúñiga Araúz has meticulously allowed the reader to travel through the twisted landscape of terror experienced by the characters.

Zúñiga Araúz also uses the fate of the student opposing the Panamanian dictator to demonstrate important abductions and murders in the area. Besides making reference to his own abduction and torture in July of 1985, the author uses part of his fictional literature to represent the historical abduction, torture and assassination by decapitation of Panamanian activist, Dr. Hugo Spadafora in September of 1985. The Panamanian dictator, as Roberto Díaz Herrera explained in his denouncements and testimonial narration *Estrellas Clandestinas*, would abduct and assassinate thousands in his reign of terror. Zúñiga Araúz also uses his novel to give examples of the prototype of the Latin American idealistic student, and the fate of all those who opposed dictatorial regimens.

### **II.2.1 Abductions, Tortures and Authoritarianism in *El chacal del general***

Abductions: The character Chicho epitomizes the “desaparecidos” in dictatorial States and their families wondering about their whereabouts, and the many cases of violence and tortures utilized by dictators. Chicho is a representation of students who at all cost wants to fight against rulers and controlling governments. For example, he writes: “El 14 de Junio de 1978. Los estudiantes se reunían aquí . . . Organizaron la protesta por la visita del presidente

norteamericano, quien venía a ratificar los tratados. Los perros del G-2 se habían tomado la Universidad por asalto. Hubo un apagón en el campus. Se escuchó la balacera” (70) [On June 14, 1978. The students met here . . . They organized the protest for the visit of the North American president, who came to ratify the treaties. The animals G-2 had taken the University by assault. There was a blackout in the campus. The shooting was heard”]. By depicting the figure as the archetype of the opposition forces against dictatorships in his novel, Zúñiga Araúz allows the reader to witness an important part of history in Latin America. Gerardo Gómez Michel explains that the students were generally a common target of the state terrorism and its machinery of torture: “el reverso terrible de las dictaduras de esa etapa, fueron precisamente los estudiantes latinoamericanos un blanco común del terrorismo de estado y su infame maquinaria de tortura” (231). Above all, Zúñiga Araúz also uses the fate of a student to make allusion to the abduction and tortures that people suffered in dictatorial states, as is the case of the assassination by decapitation of Spadafora, and the author’s own experience with terror.

In the story, Chicho’s suffering parents Virginia and Efraín are used as the emblem of parents wondering about the whereabouts of their disappeared children. This situation depicts the greatest agony suffered by thousands of Latin Americans parents for that matter, in dictatorial regimes. It portrays Virginia’s ailing conditions and her constant state of terror; wondering about the life of her son Chicho; speculating if the decapitated body which was found packed in a mailbag was the body of her son. Her physical and psychological state mirrors the voice of the mothers of all the disappeared. The author gives an example of the agony: “¿Cómo se mide la esperanza? . . . Un día más, menos esperanza. Un día más, más dolor. Cuando todo termina , tus ojos nublados contemplan el cuerpo muerto. Se te da la oportunidad de llorar mirándolo. Pero cuando no sabes dónde está. ¿Estará prisionero? ¿Estará pidiendo ayuda?

¿Vivo?, ¿sufriendo?, ¿muerto? Vivimos en una incertidumbre desgarradora (47-48) [“How do you measure hope? . . . One day more, less hope. One day more, more pain. When everything is done, your teary eyes contemplate the dead body. You have the opportunity to cry looking at him. But when you don’t know where (your loved one) is. Is he imprisoned? Is he asking for help? Alive?, suffering?, dead?” We live in a heartbreaking uncertainty”]. Analogously, what this mother has to suffer and her constant worries correlate with other cases in which Panamanian mothers have had to deal with the abductions, disappearances, tortures and murders of their children at the hands of the hegemonic dictatorial government.

During the history of Latin America the voices of those opposing brutal regimes are silenced either by murders or by disappearances in the thousands of numbers. Their families, nonetheless have not kept quiet. They have continued demanding justice, exercising their international right to know the whereabouts of their loved ones. Guillermo Rolla explains: “El derecho de los familiares a conocer la suerte de sus seres queridos está en el Derecho Internacional tanto en tiempo de paz o de guerra . . . según la norma del Protocolo 1 de 1977 adicional al Convenido de Ginebra de 1949” (244). [“The right of the relatives to know the fate of their loved ones it is in the International Law whether in time of peace or in time of war . . . according to the norm of Protocol 1 of 1977 in addition to the Geneva Convention of 1949”]. In Panama in the years following the dictatorship of Noriega, a commission was created in order to deal directly with the need of desperate families looking out for justice. The Truth Commission “Comisión de la Verdad” was created to provide answers to these families, as well as the closure that they so much deserved. Whereas in Panama apparently the number of documented disappeared victims officially reported was only “116” cases,<sup>14</sup> in South and Central America the official number has exceeded five digits.

For example in Argentina during the Dirty War (1976-1983), more than 30,000 disappeared. They are referred to as “Los desaparecidos de la Guerra Sucia.” Since then, a group of women known as “Las Madres y Abuelas de la Plaza de Mayo,” wearing white head scarves representing the blankets of their missing and murdered children, has formed a group and came together during Argentina's military dictatorship. The group still continues fighting for justice.<sup>15</sup> In Chile approximately 3,000 Chileans disappeared during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet (1973-1990), and thousands were imprisoned and tortured during his systematic campaigns of terror.<sup>16</sup> In Nicaragua, with its thirty-two years of Somoza’s dictatorial dynasty, thousands were murdered and disappeared. In El Salvador, the Dictator Maximiliano Hernández Martínez left a legacy of massacre, known as “La Matanza,” where more than 30,000, mostly indigenous people, died. In the Dominican Republic, the dictator Rafael Leónidas Trujillo (1930-1961) dominated tortured, concealed and assassinated approximately 25,000 Haitian workers.<sup>17</sup> All these dictatorial governments are known for their brutality, absolute control and killings of thousands.

Tortures: Zúñiga Araúz gives his reader an example of the tortures and assassination using a fictional description in his novel, such as the “decapitated body found stuffed in a mailbag” (20). The author intentionally symbolizes the real disappearance and assassination by decapitation of Spadafora. Historical accounts reveal that Spadafora’s body was found in a U.S. mailbag, on the Costa Rica – Panama border, naked and tortured in all the unthinkable ways. The author makes indirect references (using fiction) to that significant account in Panamanian history. Example: “Encontraron a un hombre decapitado dentro de un saco de lona . . . Debe ser el del médico. . . No sé, no sé; vestía un pantalón color café que le hacía juego con una camisa de rayas del mismo color . . . Efraín palideció. Con esa ropa había desaparecido Chicho” (17).

[“They found a beheaded man in a canvas bag . . . It must be the body of the doctor . . . I do not know, I do not know; it was dressed in brown pants that matched his striped shirt of the same color . . . Efraín became pale. Chicho disappeared using the same clothing”].

Furthermore, the author uses an authentic description of Spadafora’s physical appearance in the novel. For example: “Un médico blanco, de una altura cercana a los seis pies, con el cabello negro . . . y canas dispersas sobre las sienes, ojos verdes, nariz larga con una pequeña protuberancia natural, con lentes por la miopía y la presbicia , de airoso arrogante caminar, de mirada retadora . . . había sido retirado de un transporte colectivo en la frontera con Costa Rica el mismo día en que Chicho desapareció” (16). [“A white doctor approximately six feet tall, with black hair. . . and sparse gray hair at the temples, green eyes, long nose with a small natural protuberance, with glasses for near-sighted and far-sightedness, with a graceful arrogant gait, with a challenging look . . . he had been taken from a bus on the border with Costa Rica the same day on which Chicho disappeared”]. The author transports the reader to a gruesome reality found in Panamanian historical archives. For example, the author Frederick Kempe gives a detailed account of the dreadful findings from Dr. Spadafora’s coroner report in 1985:

Sharp objects had pierced the skin under Spadafora’s fingernails, and then the nails were removed. His back was badly bruised. Two of his ribs were broken. His testicles were swollen. The groin muscles had been cut –“neat, symmetrical incisions” skilled surgery to facilitate homosexual rape. The autopsy showed Spadafora’s rectum badly deformed from forced entry – repeated and violent. Finally, a significant amount of blood was found in the stomach. The torturers had severed the head from the body while Hugo Spadafora was still alive; the dying body had swallowed the blood. (135)

In an effort to condemn the tragic events suffered by Spadafora, Zúñiga Araúz depicts the gruesome images correlating Chicho’s ordeal with Spadafora’s fate.

The author portrays Chicho’s torment with the following description: “Amarré a Chicho a la mesa de aluminio. Me miraba con los ojos de un pájaro libre . . . Empecé mi trabajo

profesional a la perfección. Con una sólida pinza cruzada le abrí la boca y utilizando un garfio le jalé la lengua hacia fuera y se la corté. Él se estremecía mirando el espejo. Le fui arrancando los dientes, y las muelas, aflojándoselas primero con un destornillador ordinario y un martillo” (223). [“I tied Chicho to the aluminum table. He was watching me with the eyes of a free bird . . . I began my professional work perfectly. With a solid crossed clamp I opened his mouth and using a hook I pulled out his tongue and cut it. He shook watching the mirror. I was pulling out his teeth and his molars, relaxing them first with an ordinary screwdriver and a hammer”]. Even though the torturous description given seems to be a hyperbole, Zúñiga Araúz uses it as a symbol of realistic torture suffered by thousands of men and women opposing military dictatorships in Latin America and the world. Moreover, the author chose to describe this type of torture as it is symbolically a way of dictators silencing their critics.

In a section of the novel belonging to chapter 12<sup>th</sup>, that could clearly bear the title “Methodology of tortures and agony by dictators,” the author gives the reader clear interpretation with graphic scenes of the variety of tortures and assassinations performed by the Dictator. For example, lecturing his jackal Gilberto, the perverse dictator instructs Gilberto on “los métodos tradicionales y modernos de torturas” (86). First method: the General describes: “La Macarena, un lugar lúgubre, oscuro, de un metro de altura, atestado de prisioneros de ambos sexo que evacuaban y orinaban sobre los cuerpos comprimidos”. [“The Macarena, a gloomy, dark, place of a meter of height, crowded prisoners of both sex who evacuated and urinated on the compressed bodies”]. Second method: “El Corral, un espacio rodeado de alambre de púas, donde se les dejaba a la intemperie y recibían la lluvia y el sol inclemente.” [“The Corral, a space surrounded by barbed wire, where they left them outdoors, receiving the harsh sun and rain”]. Third method: “La Despertadora, donde se les impedía a los reos dormir; se les mantenía



despiertos con punzones, picanas, martillos, cuchillos, látigos, vidrios, pinzas, cigarrillos encendidos, varillas”. [“The Alarm, where it prevented inmates sleep; he kept them awake with punches, cattle prods, hammers, knives, whips, glasses, pliers, lit cigarettes, rods”].

Fourth method: “La Charca, sitio cerrado al que llegaban las aguas negras; se les obligaba a los ocupantes a permanecer acostados boca abajo, mientras que otras personas orinaban sus espaldas”. [“The Water hole, a site closed to which came the sewage; forced the occupants to stay lying face down, while others urinated their backs”]. Fifth method: “La Tortuga, un piso de concreto sobre el que se acostaban a los prisioneros, boca arriba o boca abajo; se les colocaba encima un ancho y resistente tablón sobre el cual iban poniendo, lenta y progresivamente, barrotes de hierro hasta lograr el aplastamiento, mortal.” [“the Turtle, a concrete floor on which they fastened the prisoners, face up or face down; they were placed a wide and resistant plank on which were putting, slowly and gradually, iron bars until the prisoners were crushing, deadly”]. In addition to all of the above controlling forms of power over human bodies, the author also informs his reader of the perverse ways in which women were victimized and psychologically abused and tortured. A detailed explanation about feminine characters in the novel and the way in which the Dictator dealt with them is explained in the next section.

Another important event where fiction meets reality in *El chacal del general*, and the author depicts other case of abduction with tortures, is the indirect references to his own deadly experience with the dictatorial regime of Noriega. Zúñiga Araúz informs that it occurred in 1985 when he was the leader of the Civilist opposition group “Coordinadora Civilista Nacional.” The novel depicts the event as follows: “(Las siglas) F-9, marcadas con un cuchillo oxidado. Es la nueva marca de los matones, aparecida por vez primera en la espalda de un dirigente pocos meses después de haber coordinado el primer movimiento multitudinario contra la dictadura”

(21-22). [“(The sign) F-9 was tattooed with a rusty knife. It is the new mark of the killers, appearing for the first time on the back of an opposition leader (the author) a few months after having coordinated the first massive movement against the dictatorship”]. An exhaustive account of Zúñiga Araúz’s abduction and ordeal is written in his text “*Coordinadora Civilista Nacional. CO.CI.NA - Un Proyecto Nacional*, (2011). The text is a literary narration that gives details about the Civilist group and Noriega—more about this group will be discussed at a later point in this chapter. In it, Zúñiga Araúz explains about his abduction.

The following excerpt from *CO.CI.NA*. is relevant to the importance of the incident, to demonstrate how ‘fictions meets reality’ in *El chacal del general*. For that reason the explicit passage is quoted:

En el mes de julio de 1985 recibí en mi consultorio de la Clínica San Fernando donde ejercía mi práctica privada de Medicina interna, a una paciente que había atendido anteriormente por razones de salud . . . Una vez dentro me dijo que tenía informes de que se estaba tramando un atentado contra mi persona. No me dio detalles. Sólo me recomendó que me cuidara. ¿Cómo se podía cuidar un ciudadano que vivía en un país controlado por los militares? . . . lo consideré como un dato que no podía divulgar, en primer lugar, porque le podía hacer daño a ella ya que el G-2 de las FFDD llevaban el registro de todos los pacientes que me consultaban, y en segundo lugar, por razones éticas . . . El miércoles 21 de agosto . . . rumbo a (la provincia) Santiago de Veraguas . . . nos dirigimos al reservado del restaurante Quo Vadis . . . En eso escuché el grito de una persona que decía “nadie se mueva” . . . Me empujaron hacía un auto de color blanco . . . Me vendaron los ojos . . . Inmediatamente empezaron a golpearme en la espalda, los costados y en la parte posterior de la cabeza de donde emanaba un chorro de sangre . . . Posteriormente sentí que me cortaban la espalda con un material filoso y me derramaban licor. Me cortaron parte de la oreja derecha. Durante el trayecto me decían: “Doctorcito, tú hablas mucho”, “Te vamos a hacer lo mismo que al padre Gallegos. (201-02)

[In the month of July of 1985 I received in my office at San Fernando Clinic where I was exercising my private practice of internal Medicine , a patient whom I had tended previously for health reasons . . . Once inside she said to me that she had information that an attack against me was being plotted. She did not give me details. She only recommended that I take care of myself. How could a citizen who lived in a country controlled by the military be safe? . . . I considered it a fact that I could not divulge, in the first place because it could damage her since the G-2 of the Defense Force were keeping record of all the patients who

were consulting me, and in the second place, for ethical reasons . . . On Wednesday, August 21 . . . on our way to (the province) of Santiago de Veraguas . . . we went to the reserved side of the Restaurant Quo Vadis . . . Suddenly I heard someone shouting “nobody moves”. . . They pushed me into a white car . . . they covered my eyes . . . and immediately they began to strike me on my back, in my sides and on the back part of my head from where a stream of blood was flowing . . . Later I felt that they were cutting my back with a sharp object, and they were pouring alcohol on me. They cut off part of my right ear. During the ordeal they said to me: “Doctor, you talk too much,” “We are going to do the same thing to you that we did to Father Gallego.”]

Finally, another real event that demonstrates “fiction and reality” joined together in the novel are the well known descriptions of Noriega’s life and his path to power through authoritarianism.

Authoritarianism: The narrative depicts the Dictator’s childhood when he was a scapegoat of his family and surroundings (a clear explanation of the concept “scapegoat/scapegoater/scapegoating” can be read in chapter three, in this dissertation). Noriega was a mistreated and abused child who was bullied and belittled constantly. For example the general describes to his confidant Crispín events from his childhood: “Veía a la gente como animales escondidos que me seguían con sus miradas de lechuzas... soporté cargas pesadas, como piedras de canteras vigen” (80). [“I saw people as hidden animals who followed me with their owlish looks . . . I carried heavy loads, like stones from quarries in operation”]. Another description is about his days as a young adult. In those days he changed from feeling ignored and unloved to becoming a hero during his days in high school.

Paradoxically, in those days Noriega’s idealism for a good cause in Panama made him fight against military injustices, but at the same time he learned that he could be powerful. For example, the general tells Crispín: “El huevo cayó al piso en el colegio secundario. Se quebró el cascarón. Pedí la palabra en una asamblea de estudiantes. Hablé. Recuerdo lo que dije Crispín: Oligarquía y militarismo y movimiento estudiantil. Disparé mi furia con palabras gruesas de alto voltaje. Escuché aplausos y vivas. Esa noche pensé que el mundo podía entrar por mi boca.

Sólo lo pensé” (80). [“The egg fell to the floor in the high school. The shell was broken. I asked to speak at a student assembly. I spoke. I remember what I said, Crispín: Oligarchy and militarism and student movement. I shot my fury with heavy, high-voltage words. I listened to the applause and hurrahs. That night I thought that the world could enter through my mouth. I only thought it”]. Regrettably, that same young idealistic student who would fight corruption, later in life would start persecuting students and using them as scapegoats.

Finally, the author depicts the dictator’s authoritarianism in the early days as a captain in the northern province of Chiriqui and the chauvinist-machista treatment he gave to women (41). In his novel, Zúñiga Araúz represents the role of women in dictatorships. The forms in which the general would use his frustrations and power against women, clearly mirrors the diverse ways in which women are depicted as being used and abused in the dictator novel. The author outlines the different ways in which women are sexually exploited and deceived by the powerful man as a means of oppression in a dictatorial patriarchal society. Even though the author makes references to men and women civilists in masses protesting and marching in the Panamanian streets against Noriega, it is vital to understand that Zúñiga Araúz also dedicates an important segment to specifically describe the Panamanian women’s movement in the novel (also in “La Marcha de las Mujeres” en *CO.CI.NA*. 150). Historically brave women were rallying around the streets of the country and they would get together to protest against the Dictator’s murders and abuse of power.

Zúñiga Araúz described how Panamanian women repudiated the dictator and his government. Fearless women claiming justice, freedom and democracy in Panama. Some women were mocked, attacked, arrested, and even raped by the dictator’s jackals. For example: In chapter five Zúñiga Araúz makes references to the women’s march: “Virginia quería que la

llevara el sábado a la marcha de las mujeres . . . Fue una manifestación blanca apoteósica . . . Una inmensa mancha blanca” (74-75) [“Virginia wanted me to take her to the women’s march on Saturday . . . It was a white rally apotheosis . . . A huge white stain”]. In addition: “La rebellion de las abuelitas” Así se mofaban los lacayos del General . . . el General decapitó el espíritu social. Vi como subían a catorce mujeres en un carro policial. Catorce mujeres solas, las últimas. Nadie se enteró . . . Mujeres arrestadas, mujeres violadas, avergonzadas” (76) [“The rebellion of the grannies” This was how the servants of the General mocked the Women’s marches . . . The General beheaded the social spirit. I saw how they mounted fourteen women in a police car. Fourteen single women, the last ones. Nobody found out . . . They were arrested, raped, embarrassed”].

To represent this abuse, in his novel the author uses the female character Isis as a model of oppression. Zúñiga Araúz emphasizes the diverse forms of power in which the dictator undermines and disintegrates her mind and body, converting Isis not only in object, but in other of his “chacales.” Furthermore, in his novel, the author displays not only the ways in which Isis loses her voice, but the author also highlights the unorthodox way in which the character recuperates subjectivity and agency, that ultimately save her: becoming an accomplice to her own oppression and oppressor.

## **II.2.2 Representation of Women in the Dictator Novel**

The physical and intellectual violence against women has been studied directly and indirectly in Latin American dictator novels, placing them often in abject surroundings with their own form of oppression. The female characters are often victimized and locked in a space based on violence. Most feminine characters are either prostitutes or female slaves for lustful dictators. This has been explicitly demonstrated in many studies conducted about the feminine characters in

classic dictator novels—for example, Helene C. Weldt-Basson writes about the specific way in which the female characters are depicted in the classic novel of the dictator of Roa Bastos. Weldt-Basson notes: “Many literary portrayals of prostitutes exemplify how male authors may emphasize women’s complicity with their own oppression. By “choosing” to become prostitutes women demonstrate their acceptance of their exploitation and their internalization of this debased role” (213). Yet, little has been written about the detrimental treatment given to these characters in contemporary novels. In order to explain the pattern of physical and psychological violence against women in a misogynist “machista” culture of dictators, Zúñiga’s contemporary representation of feminine characters is juxtaposed with that of the classical novels of Miguel Asturias, Gabriel García Marquez and Mario Vargas Llosa.

Although diverse scenarios have been transformed in the dictator novel through the years, one of them is that the literary characterization of the powerful “macho” dictator has achieved a more accurate depiction of the dictatorial realities in Latin America, however, when placing feminine characters in the lives of the dictators, both old and new dictator novels portray women in settings framed with powerlessness, violence and prostitution. Even though *El chacal del general* is not an exception, it is important to acknowledge that in most of Zúñiga Araúz’s novels (as it will be discovered in the following chapters of this dissertation), the author presents positive portrayals of strong feminine characters willing to fight at all costs, despite the circumstances that they encounter, willing to subvert all notions of weakness and/or patriarchal control. Yet, in his dictator novel, once more, the feminine characters find themselves in a dead-end street, unable to escape the oppression and abuse. They are placed in precarious positions of inferiority by the dictator innumerable times.

In order to better understand the abuse of the feminine characters, this study places women in two groups. Group one features women who belong to an elite upper-middle class in the narrative. The women of the second group belong to the lower-poor class. The first example in group one is Isis from Zúñiga Araúz's novel. She belongs to the group of rich, distinguished women in dictator novels that include the wives and daughters of the dictators, as well as intimate collaborators such as: ministers, deputies, allied politicians and ambassadors. Isis, in the *El chacal del general*, is the beloved only daughter of the Commander-in-Chief of an important city in Venezuela who is an intimate friend of the Panamanian military. The dictator seduces, rapes, blackmails and finally forces Isis to stay by his side. In order to be able to survive, this woman ultimately becomes one of the dictator's jackals. Zúñiga Araúz, following the same narrative line of Vargas Llosa's *La fiesta del chivo* (2000), skillfully allows the reader to see that the Dictator's abuse of power is also directed at the cultured women, the women of his own lineage and ancestry.

The protagonist Urania Cabral—in *La fiesta del chivo*— who is the daughter of the Minister of State for the dictator of the Dominican Republic, is raped by the Dictator Trujillo. She does not succumb, but bravely fights for survival in order to fulfill her desire for revenge. Isis, in *El chacal del general*, paradoxically, not only suffers the rape and abuse from the dictator, but decides to actively become one of the dictator's partners in crime and loses her power and autonomy. Zúñiga Araúz, echoing Vargas Llosa sets their female characters in honorable surroundings, in the calm of beautiful homes as women of noble families. These characters are described as women who were born good and were sheltered by paternal protection, daughters loved and protected by their parents during their childhood, but ironically, their own fathers deprived them of such protection.

The second group found in dictator novels is typified, first of all, by poor characters to which the novel gives a monetary and sexual value. Zúñiga Araúz presents them as the prostitutes and sets them in a marginalized tract in the Panamanian Atlantic coastal city of Colon. The female characters are enclosed in a base deplorable environment, a brothel for the military. Zúñiga Araúz's representation of a brothel can be compared with Doña Chong's red brothel "El dulce encanto" in the classic novel *El señor presidente* (1946) by Guatemalan writer Miguel Angel Asturias. Similarly, there is a repugnant barracks at the rear of the dictator's mansion in the novel *El otoño del patriarca* by Colombian author Gabriel García Márquez. All these characters are part of the poor-suffering-lower class in the narratives. They are presented in the narratives as objects of desire for the dictator. Often the dictator's desire for them as persons is non-existent. These women are only objects, used to placate his erotic needs. These female characters are available to and at the disposal of the dictator. They can be taken, purchased or sold. They help the military dictator and his associates forget for a moment weapons and warfare. (262)

With respect to the characterization of these women, Zúñiga Araúz's contemporary dictator novel does not develop in detail the traits of prostitutes other than to describe them with four adjectives: white, slim, well-shaped, and blondes. On the other hand, Asturias and García Márquez place emphasize on their physical characteristics in order to accentuates their status of poverty and subordination: "Dicen que ellas sin parecerse, se parecen por el parecido que todas tienen en el olor a hombre, olor acre de mariscos viejos y algunas con los senos bailables, casi líquidos." (Asturias, 271) ["They say that without looking alike, they all resemble each other because of their similar odor of man, of the acrid smell of old seafood, and some with danceable, almost liquid breasts"]. García Márquez refers to them as "Las concubinas que dormían hasta



tres con sus sietemesinos en una misma cama” las cuales huelen a guiso viejo y con las cuales él se acuesta apartando cabezas, piernas, brazos sin saber “quién era quién, ni cuál fue la que al fin lo amamantó sin despertar, sin soñar con él” (74). [“Concubines who sleep in three with their sietemesinos in the same bed” they smell like old stew, and with whom the dictator sleeps, pushing away heads, legs, arms, without knowing “who was who, he even ignores who finally nursed him without waking, without dreaming about him”]. They are tall, short, fat, skinny, old, young, docile, wild, blonde, redhead, white, black women. Some of the women in the second group seem to regard their mistreatment and subordination as natural.

The acceptance of the oppression that surrounds them is due to their low self-esteem, the poverty in which they live, and the loss of their voice. These women are part of the oppressed groups which Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak denominates “subaltern” in her article, *Can the subaltern speak?* These women are voiceless not because they do not want to speak, but because though they shout loudly, no one listens to them. Factors such as the above reduce them to a state of apparent complicity with the dictatorial oppression. These women do not even have the right to put a price on their own bodies for their sexual service because they belong to the dictator. They have been chosen and prostituted by the dictatorial system. They have no agency, no power. Ultimately these women psychologically disappear as individuals. It is important to take into consideration that this is the representation of women in a misogynist culture, in a genre dealing with men (dictators) written by men (novelists).

Zúñiga Araúz and Vargas Llosa in their narratives expose the oppression of a dictatorial system, and they also let the reader understand that the oppression of these women, Isis and Urania, directly and indirectly, also comes from the paternal figure. These women experience a case of double patriarchy. The misogynist oppression comes from a dictatorial sphere, and from

within the walls of their own homes, from their fathers. For example, in Zúñiga Araúz's narrative the father of Isis, the Commander of the Venezuelan defense forces—although he was uninformed of the ultimate degradation of his daughter in the arms of the Panamanian military—cheerfully offers Isis to the dictator. He describes to the dictator the details of his still "virgin" daughter, a situation that arouses the lustful curiosity of the dictator, who ultimately rapes her. In Vargas Llosa's novel, the father of Urania, the Minister Cabral not only turns away his face and ignores Dictator Trujillo's intentions of using his daughter, but he voluntarily—he could have opted not to allow it—gives away his only daughter to the tyrant dictator, as a "sex gift" for his own personal and political benefit.

In order to survive, both women, Urania and Isis submissively succumb to the dictators. The first one submits and allows herself to be raped, first and foremost, because she is a fearful fourteen-year-old girl, and Dictator Trujillo is physically stronger than she is. Second, because she wants revenge. She wants her father to pay for her suffering "pensé tirarme por la ventana. Pensé que tenía que dejarme hacer lo que él quisiera . . . para poder vivir y, un día vengarme" (Vargas Llosa 551). ["I thought of throwing myself out the window. I thought that I had to let him do whatever he wanted to do to me . . . to be able to live, and one day avenge myself" (Vargas Llosa)]. Urania, in *La fiesta del chivo*, chose a more conventional and honored position for her survival. Isis, in *El chacal del general*, on the other hand, submitted because she, like Urania, was fearful, was blackmailed and physically weaker, but also because she loved the Dictator. Here Zúñiga Araúz besides introducing a romantic factor to the narrative—a sort of love story to the relationship of power and violence—he presents a more disturbing and depraved position for women in the dictator novel. In *El chacal del general*, Isis not only submits and

concedes to the abuse of the dictator because of weakness or love, but she becomes a full participant in her own afflictions, despite having many opportunities to look for escape or help.

Isis is the opposite of the prostitute who cannot escape or seek revenge because of her lower social position. For the prostitutes and concubines belonging to a lower class, their social position chains them under the dictator's control and power, and only death can set them free from his oppression. Isis, instead, chooses to stay and become an active participant in the same things to which she has been subjected: violence, blackmail, lies and murders. She mimics the dictator and becomes another Jackal of the general:

Cuando (Isis) se enteró de la decapitación de Chicho, no solo por los detalles de su autor, sino al ver la cabeza deforme dentro de un frasco grande lleno de un líquido transparente, se le clavó en el centro de su profundidad, una necesidad de compartir . . . Estaba decidida a participar del regocijo del General y Gilberto . . . El General la había colocado en el peor nivel de la escala moral, allá donde las alimañas compiten por los desperdicios . . . Fue entonces, pensó, que su vida carecía de valor por tener el alma indecente, impúdica". (218-19)

[When (Isis) found out about the decapitation of Chicho, not only by the details of its author, but by seeing the deformed head inside a large jar full of a transparent liquid, a necessity to share was nailed to the depths of her heart . . . She was determined to participate in the rejoicing of the General and Gilberto . . . the General had placed her at the worst level of the moral scale, there where abhorrent animals compete for wastes . . . It was then, she thought, that her life lacked value because of her indecent, impudent soul.]

In the dictator novel, women, without differentiation, in one form or another, are the property of the tyrant dictator. The dictator takes them and leaves them without hesitation, and places them in an abject space that makes them inferior to the man who dehumanizes them.

Zúñiga Araúz's novel places his feminine characters in a misogynous patriarchal culture of oppression that labels them as inferior and reduces them to only "sexual bodies." As Kathleen Barry indicates, "Patriarchal domination makes women undifferentiated among and from each other and makes them known, in the first instance, as different from men, and therefore lesser" (22). Even though Zúñiga Araúz could have opted for a more defiant and positive portrayal to

thwart female subjugation, as Vargas Llosa did with his heroine Urania Cabral, the Panamanian author opts not to. He keeps the feminine characters in *El chacal del general* physically, intellectually and physiologically handicapped and oppressed without autonomy in order to reflect the historical reality of repression, control, and power that afflict women under a dictatorship. While the above explained the particular degradation of women under dictatorships, the following section explains the literary subgenre of the dictator novel.

### **II.2.3 *El chacal del general* and the Dictator Novel in Latin America**

The dictator novel is a literary sub-genre in Latin American literature, which focuses directly on the powerful figure of the Latin American dictator and his hegemony of power. This literary sub-genre denounces, through narratives based on real or fictitious events, the archetype of dictator/dictatorship. It saw its beginning in the nineteenth century with a text that is considered to be the pioneer novel of this literary sub-genre. *Facundo: Civilización y Barbarie* (1845) (*Facundo: Civilization and Barbarism*) by Argentinean writer and politician Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, recounted the dictatorial regime in Argentina. It was not until 1967 that a project by inventive authors, such as Gabriel García Márquez, Mario Vargas Llosa and Carlos Fuentes, sought to create a literary work with narratives depicting a series of Latin American dictators. This project produced a literary niche of importance within the Latin American narrative. Literary critic, Michael Valdez Moses, explains how the initial meeting occurred:

In those heady days in 1967 when Gabriel García Márquez and his fellow writers of the Latin American literary "boom" regularly descended on Havana to attend Fidel's shrimp barbecues -- in an age when Che still dashed about the globe on behalf of the Marxist millennium to come -- two of "Gabo's" most illustrious companions, the Peruvian novelist Mario Vargas Llosa and his Mexican counterpart Carlos Fuentes, met in a London pub to hatch a grand literary enterprise. Together they projected an ambitious artistic project tentatively titled *Los padres de las patrias* (*The Fathers of the Nations*). To this collective undertaking a number of the foremost contemporary Latin American writers were each to contribute a novel about a dictator from their respective countries . . . Like

many centrally planned enterprises of the era, the project never quite materialized as envisioned. But during the long decades that followed that meeting, years that saw Castro transformed from the hemisphere's great emancipator into one of its last old-style caudillos and tyrants . . . a good many memorable examples of the Latin American dictator novel were published to considerable acclaim. (1)

Among those memorable classic dictator novels are: *El otoño del patriarca* (1975) (*The Autumn of the Patriarch*) by the Colombian Gabriel García Márquez, and *Yo el supremo* (1974) (*I, the Supreme*) by the Paraguayan Augusto Roa Bastos.

Novels like the above, according to critic Gerardo Gómez Michel, made literary critics pay close attention to this literary theme. They understood, he notes, that the dictator novel maintains a complex, contestable relationship with Latin American reality. He argues: “tratando de manera central el tema del dictador, hizo que la crítica se detuviera de manera más concienzuda en el estudio de este motivo literario en Latinoamérica . . . El dictador, el caudillo o el cacique, en las representaciones literarias en que aparece, no es un simple prototipo social . . . sino un esfuerzo de los autores por re-escribir parte de la historia” (215-16). [“giving a vital point the subject of the dictator, it made critics paused and pay attention to this literary motive, in a more conscientious way . . . dictator, the caudillo or the cacique, in the literary representations in which he appears, not as a simple social prototype . . . but as the writers’ attempt to rewrite part of the history”].<sup>18</sup> Zúñiga Araúz’s *El chacal del general* echoes classic novels where the archetype of the dictator is portrayed in a mystical powerful form, but it, as well, follows the realistic feature found in contemporary novels of dictators of the twentieth-first century such as *La fiesta del chivo* by the Peruvian Nobel prize winning novelist, Vargas Llosa.

Before discussing how contemporary novels approach to the genre, it is essential to examine important characteristics of the classic. For example, the dictator novels of the nineteenth and twentieth century, do not present an exact name or location of this strongmen because, as Rama indicates, these novels represent the life story of any Latin American dictator

because they make reference to all of them: “se está contando en el libro la historia de sus dictadores particulares, pues de Perón a Trujillo, de Gómez a Estrada Cabrera, de Machado a Somoza, aquí hay referencias de todos” (60). In addition, Robert Boyers indicates that: “Often, the dictator in these novels is a composite portrait modeled on various origins, with the consequence that the character is larger than life, so awesome in the range of his brutalities that he is less a person than he is a force of nature” (180). In other words, in order to obtain a better reflection of the dictatorial realities in Latin America, the figure of the dictator is personalized, yet not revealed.

Some classic dictator novels of the 70's try to break with the discursive strategies of novels of previous generations, such as the canonical novel *El señor presidente* (1946) by Miguel Angel Asturias. For example, Asturias's novel is characterized by scenes portraying dreams and deformed nightmares and a phantasmic city of paupers, where the obsessive dictator not only destroys the lives of his subjects and populates their dreams with atrocious nightmares, but his own figure continuously disappears in shades and dreams (Rama 20). On the other hand, García Márquez's *El otoño del patriarca* depicts a less mystical dictator. The personality and figure of his dictator is demonstrated and revealed in the narration. A dictator that is not just a shadow or shade, but he is a man who summarizes the figure of a caudillo, a man who was born poor, fatherless, and who, although slightly illiterate, became a dictator (even though he lives more than 200 years while clinging to power and dies three different deaths). Juan Carlos García, in his work “El dictador en la novela hispanoamericana,” argues that the dictators of these classic novels “emphasize the voluntary testimony and creativity of the author, but lack documented value. They are materials that recreate the era with a generalized view, which is often much exaggerated” (11). This era of novels places more emphasis on consolidating the

figures of the men as a whole, controlling everyone and everything, rather than on naming one particular dictator within one specific reign of dictatorship.

Starting in the year 2000 things started to change in the literary sub-genre. A more realistic style of writing slowly arose, featuring real Latin American dictators with Vargas Llosa's *La fiesta del chivo*. It is a narrative about the dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, and Zúñiga Araúz followed this realistic narrative style seven years later with *El chacal del general*. Like Vargas Llosa's novel, *El chacal del general* does not stay within traditional limits; it crosses borders and goes one step beyond employing new distinctive and key characteristics. Among those: the dictator is no longer unnamed. The reader now knows which dictator is being depicted in the narrative. The powerful man now has a name, a face, a voice. He is not merely one of the many. Vargas Llosa calls the Dominican Dictator by his proper name: Rafael Trujillo and also by his nickname, "El Benefactor." Zúñiga Araúz identifies The Panamanian one by his very unique nickname "Cara de Piña."

Even though Zúñiga Araúz does not explicitly mention the name Manuel A. Noriega *per se*, he gives all the necessary clues. The author leads the reader to believe, without much room for doubt, that the proper identity of the cruel dictator is, in fact, Noriega: "*Que muera cara...*" *apodo que expulsaba la gente por sus lenguas silenciadas para referirse al personaje que mandaba*" (93). ["Death face..." "nickname that the people dispersed because of their silenced tongues to refer to the character who commanded"].<sup>19</sup> It is common knowledge that the Panamanian people had nicknamed Noriega "Cara de Piña-Noriega" in reference to the skin condition of his face. It is important to take into consideration the problematic situation of using real names in fictional novels while the dictator is still alive, as opposed to using real names in fictional novels after the dictator has died.

Critics, like Moses Elías Fuentes, have emphasized, this new form of narration is a challenging form of listening to the voice of a dictator “who is no longer a being without name” (Par. 2). Now the dictator is not merely an exaggerated figure of power, the new novel of dictator challenges his presence and abuse of power with real evidence. Samuel Manickam notes: “Según el mismo Vargas Llosa, el tratamiento realista de Trujillo en su novela señala un camino nuevo en la novela del dictador porque ‘en muchas novelas el tratamiento del dictador ha sido más bien farsesco, extravagante, teatral’” (8). [According to Vargas Llosa, the realistic treatment of Trujillo in his novel signals a new path in the dictator novel because “in many novels the treatment of the dictator has been rather fake, extravagant, eccentric, theatrical”]. Zúñiga Araúz, correspondingly, witnesses real historical events, retrieves the voices of unheard people, denounces and contests a reality in Panama, and re-writes the dictatorial events in the country.

Even though for many Latin Americans, the literary sub-genre of the dictator novel, *per se*, was considered a thing of the past, reaching its end in the twentieth century, Zúñiga Araúz, with *El chacal del general*, keeps this literary sub-genre alive, denouncing the implacable figure, of hopefully the last, Latin American military dictator. Most importantly, Zúñiga’s novel attempts to use a real situation that has taken place in the last part of the twentieth century as a teachable tool. It is a reminder that if a nation does not pay attention to old traditions of power and control which are perfectly depicted in classical dictator novels, (and few contemporary novels), it can be recycled to a new “normality.” That is to say, the people may come to regard old forms of government as new and normal. Consequently, the dictatorial machinery of power can return as a repetition of the past. Some critics might regard leaders like Chavez in Venezuela or Castro in Cuba as examples of subtler forms of authoritarian power which, although less overt, use similarly repressive mechanisms. All of the above gives the reader a clear indication



that the literary subgenre is still alive. Zúñiga Araúz has demonstrated it with his novel, and more narratives could be produced depicting this powerful machinery and its exercise of power.

Finally, in order to provide a clear understanding of the story depicted in *El chacal del general*, the following section analyses the diverse literary techniques utilized by the author to guide the readers through the sometimes ambiguous world of the Dictator.

#### **II.2.4 Literary Techniques in *El chacal del general***

*El chacal of the general* is narrated by what Gérard Genette denominates a “Heterodiegetic narrator” (hetero: other). The heterodiegetic narrator is in general known as the “third-person-voice-narrator,” that is, the story is narrated by someone who recounts the tale from an external position. His or her focal point is from outside, and the narrator has no part in the story being narrated. This narrator is impartial. His impartiality and external position could be considered important in this type of narration because of the non-biased perspective. Nonetheless, it is necessary to understand that a heterodiegetic narrator has an “omniscient presence” within the discourse. In other words, his omniscient presence in the story allows him to know exactly what the characters are feeling, doing and saying. Paul Cobley explains the process as follows: “Narrator (is a) narrative **voice** that tells the **story** in the first or third person, for example, sometimes as a character in the story and, on occasion, even through omniscient narration” (237). Moreover, Zúñiga Araúz’s story also contains not only a main narrator voice, but a multitude of voices. Mikhail Bakhtin refers to Heteroglossia as the multiple narrative voices in the story which provide different perspectives of the events. Bakhtin describes it as the diversity of language used in a narrative. The author orchestrates the different voices and uses that polyphony in its characters’ speeches in order to break the monotony and create a special

momentum in the dialogue. Explicit examples of this dialogism in the novel will be revealed throughout this literary analysis.

Throughout the chapters the reader encounters real events portrayed in imaginary tales among fictitious characters. The example of the murderous dialogues between the dictator, the Jackal, and the confidant, Crispín, reveal the polyphony of voices that the author depicts in that dialogue, using different voices sharing in an exercise of power. Metaphorically, the general of the narration juxtaposes the jackal in opposition to the wolves. That metaphor depicts the association of abuse of power of the authoritarian General versus compliance and submission of his subalterns, like Crispín himself. Lepoldo E. Santamaría notes that the “chacal” is a useful instrument that replaces the psychological deficiencies that the general lacks (par 5). In other words: loyalty and humbleness. More importantly the author gives the reader a clear and harsh picture that emphasizes what a dictatorial reign is all about: control and power.

Heteroglossia reveals the dissimilar social levels found in the novel. Bakhtin describes the polyphony in a novel as the “diversity of social speech types (sometimes even the diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized” (262). Heteroglossia is useful also in describing how Zúñiga Araúz presents real events masked behind silences. The polyphony of voices can also include other nonconventional voices, such as the silences, the non-enunciated voices, and the laughs. As Francisco Higuero indicates: “De acuerdo con lo advertido por Bakhtin . . . las expresiones no convencionales, tales como el silencio, la risa y las palabras entrecortadas, pueden llevar a socavar el único orden artificial del orden establecido, impuesto por el poder opresor” (163-64). [“In agreement with Bakhtin’s suggestion . . . the nonconventional expressions, such as silence, laughter and intermittent words, can undermine the unique artificial order of the established order imposed by the oppressive power”]. In the novel

Zúñiga Araúz masks important events with silences, and immediately after wiping out those silences, unmask the event with allusions. This literary device allows the author to indirectly mention real difficult events occurring in the story.

One of the main reasons that silences and allusions are relevant and important in these types of narratives is because these techniques give the author an opportunity to make reference to a person or an event and to denounce a complex idea with subversive silences, pauses and allusions, without having to mention immediately the actual person or event. Nonetheless, the situation (or name) mentioned indirectly must be commonly known in order to be understood by the reader. This feature is useful in the contemporary narrative of the dictator novel (as explained previously) when the dictator is still alive, and the author chooses not to mention him but alludes to his real name. For example, in Zúñiga Araúz's novel, the name of Noriega is masked with silences; the writer uses suspension points to interrupt his thoughts and to avoid the unavoidable. Nonetheless, immediately afterward, the author breaks that silence with indirect mentions of the dictator's name, with his nickname "[pineapple face]" (93). The exploration of heteroglossia found in the dialog in the novel is important because sometimes these voices represent the mutilated voices that dictatorial regimens and their chroniclers are inclined to repress and silence.

Zúñiga Araúz uses silences and allusions not only in his dictator novel *El chacal del general*, but also in *El alumno* (2012). In this novel, once again, the author denounces not only the military Panamanian dictator, but also a new manifestation of corruption and oppression: a president of the country who in fact behaves as a civil dictator. Without mentioning his real name, the author once more denounces through allusion, masking the real name of the civil Panamanian dictator, but making clear to the reader the character whom he is denouncing in

order to challenge the oppressive dictatorial power in existence. The author uses extensively, metaphors and symbolism to depict the tortures and cruelty of the dictator. Other times he solely uses his own knowledge of medicine (the author is a medicine doctor) to portray the physiological and diabolical tortures to which the Dictator and his jackal subjected their victims' bodies and minds.

For example, he utilizes the philosophy of Machiavelli as a metaphorical expression to explain how the Dictator rationalizes tortures as justifiable means of protecting power. Flashbacks are part of the narrative as well. For example, the narrator begins telling about the disappearance of Chicho and the suffering of his parents, then interrupts the chronological sequence of the story and without previous warning jumps ahead and/or back in time. The literary technique of anachronism has been explained in detail in previous section (II.1.3). However, it is necessary to reiterate that this change in time periods is not done to bewilder the reader, but to paint the background of the situation that motivates Chicho's disappearance and the reasons for his mother's disturbance.

The following section explores significant juxtaposing points in Zúñiga Araúz's novel and Díaz Herrera's testimony.

### **II.3 Three Points of Contact and Divergence in the Two Narratives**

In addition to placing the emphasis on the account of Dictator Noriega's abuse of power in *Estrellas clandestinas* and in *El chacal del general*, both authors, Díaz Herrera and Zúñiga Araúz also make important references to the life, deeds and death of General Omar Torrijos Herrera, Dr. Hugo Spadafora, and the role of the Civic Crusades for Justice and Democracy. These significant topics are frequently mentioned by historians, writers and critics each time that the dictatorial regime of Noriega is discussed in politics, history or literature. Due to the fact

that both authors have experienced a different type of association with Torrijos, Spadafora and the nonpartisan opposition group, their stories bring forward inconsistencies due to the focal point of each author.

While both authors greatly differ in their elaboration of Torrijos' dictatorship and the role of the civic crusades in Panamanian history, their opinions correspond and yet diverge in their recounting of the Spadafora case. Díaz Herrera's perspective in the case of Torrijos is that of an insider who knows everything that was said and done inside the military coup. Zúñiga Araúz's perspective in the same case is that of an outsider who knows important facts about it, but is unable to know the truth. In the case of the Civilist Groups, their roles switch, this time giving Zúñiga the internal point of view due to the fact that in the year 1984 he was the principal leader of the first civic movement against military dictatorship, "Coordinadora Civilista Nacional," while Díaz Herrera was part of it.

In the case of General Omar Torrijos Herrera, whereas Díaz Herrera's observations about the life and death of Torrijos Herrera is described at length in his testimony (this is illustrated in section II.1), Zúñiga Araúz makes only a few references to Torrijos in *El chacal del general*. The author mainly alludes to General Torrijos as being one of the two leaders who had brought about the coup d'état initiating a dictatorial state in Panama in the year 1968. He notes: "El General era uno de los dos jefes que había dado el golpe de Estado" (34). In addition, "El primer problema con el otro jefe que participó en el golpe militar, se dio en la ciudad donde me trasladaron" (56). [The first problem with the other leader that participated in the military coup d'état occurred in the city where I was transferred to"]. The reason of this overlook is not established, but it is not difficult to understand due to the plot of the novel. Zúñiga Araúz placed his interest in portraying Noriega's dictatorship and Noriega as the cruel General in the story.

The story does not dwell in the previous dictatorship, and therefore Torrijos does not take an important role in the novel.

Nonetheless, Zúñiga Araúz, in his work *CO.CI.NA. Coordinadora Civilista Nacional* makes extended references about Dictator Torrijos. He depicts a contradictory account to that which Díaz Herrera writes about his cousin Torrijos (see section II.1). For example, Díaz Herrera, in page thirty-six in his testimony, writes wonderful things about Torrijos' leadership and about the treaty of 1977 that Torrijos signed with Carter. He notes that what Omar and Carter signed was not only a Victory for Panama, but it was a triumph for the Americas" (8). Zúñiga Araúz, however, opposes that point of view in his remarks. He as many other critics, considered that Torrijos and his military government gave Panama to the U.S. on a "silver platter," allowing U.S. intervention in any part of Panamanian territory, whenever they wanted. Zúñiga Araúz writes:

Tenemos que señalar que Omar Torrijos Herrera usurpó el concepto nacionalista se lo arrebató a los panameños, para terminar entregándose a los EEUU en la bandeja de los tratados Torrijos-Carter . . . Con el agravante para Panamá que firmó en 1977 los tratados Torrijos Carter, que le permiten a los EEUU intervenir, cuando ellos así lo estimen, en cualquier parte del territorio panameño. Ninguna excolonia del mundo ha firmado un acta de independencia que le permita al imperio colonizador, intervenir cuando ellos quisieran. (*CO.CI.NA.* 12, 42)

[We must indicate that Omar Torrijos Herrera usurped the nationalist concept, he snatched it from the Panamanians, in order to end up surrendering to the U.S. on the tray of the Torrijos-Carter treaties . . . With the aggravation for Panama who in 1977 signed the Torrijos-Carter treaties that permit the United States to intervene, when they so like, in any part of the Panamanian territory . . . Any former world colony has signed an act of independence that will allow the colonizer empire, intervene when they would like to do it.]

The above excerpt from *CO.CI.NA* depicted one of various important issues that the author differs from Díaz Herrera.

Regarding Dr. Hugo Spadafora's deeds and death, both authors portrayed him with great respect in their narratives. Díaz Herrera, besides dedicating the entire chapter eight in *Estrellas*

*clandestinas* entitled “Hugo Spadafora: el detonante anímico” (165), also makes frequent references of him throughout his text. Correspondingly, Zúñiga Araúz not only bases the entire plot of *El chacal del general* on the assassination of Spadafora, representing reality in a fictional narrative, but he also dedicates the last section of *CO.CINA* entitled “La decapitación del Dr. Hugo Spadafora” (208), to illustrate the repercussion of the death of such a significant figure in Panama. Furthermore, both works present two different versions of the aftermath of Spadafora assassination on September, 1985. For example, in *Estrellas clandestinas* Díaz Herrera gives a detailed account of what took place the fatal early morning inside the military copula. Zúñiga Araúz depicts the chaos and fury of the masses on the streets of Panama. Díaz Herrera writes:

El amanecer en la capital panameña de aquel 14 de septiembre de 1985 se dio paso entre una atípica niebla tropical, una densa y baja nube húmeda proveniente del Océano Pacífico. Eran aproximadamente las siete de la mañana y mi auto oficial, un Volvo, marchaba sin esforzarse abriéndose paso gracias al trato preferencial de parte de los agentes de tránsito que identificaban a los hombres de mi seguridad . . . Al arribar al Cuartel General, en mi oficina observé el rostro del Teniente Estribí, mi asistente, algo sombrío . . . –Mi Coronel, creo que esa gente del cuartel de Chiriquí ha secuestrado a su amigo el doctor Hugo Spadafora el día de ayer, aunque seguramente lo van a negar”. (165-67)

[The dawn in the Panamanian capital on that 14th of September, 1985 took place between an atypical tropical fog, a dense and low humidity cloud originating from the Pacific Ocean. It was approximately seven in the morning and my work vehicle, a Volvo, easily advanced through traffic thanks to the preferential treatment received from transit agents who identified the men of my security. . . . When I arrived my Headquarters, I observed in my office in the face of Lieutenant Estribí, my assistant, something somber . . . - My Colonel, I believe those people of the Chiriquí cuartel kidnapped your friend doctor Hugo Spadafora yesterday, although they will most likely deny it.]

Díaz Herrera also explains that that particular day he was the man in charge of the Commandancy, since Noriega was away in Paris. A mere strategy of the dictator to be absent from the country on that occasion, he writes. Noriega wanted Díaz Herrera to be the person in charge that day to confront the fury of the Panamanian people for the disappearance and assassination of Spadafora. Without doubts, he knew that Noriega had ordered it.

Zúñiga Araúz, in his recounts, describes the turmoil happening in the streets, the actions of the enraged masses asking for justice to be done, and the *grupo civilista* demanding the immediate removal not only of General Noriega, but of his second in command, Colonel Roberto Díaz Herrera, as well. Panamanians were proclaiming them as the culprits of the assassination. It was of common knowledge that Spadadora was enemy of Noriega, as Kemple notes: “Spadafora was the first person anywhere to accuse Noriega publicly of drug involvement, and he did it loudly and frequently. He was becoming a threat to Noriega, the Medellín Cartel, and—some say—even the CIA” (128-29). Even though Díaz Herrera (the colonel) was considered at that time participant on the murder by the people of Panama, Díaz Herrera (the former colonel and author) dedicates a good portion of *Estrellas clandestinas* emphasizing the good relationship he had with Spadafora. He also revealed the interesting fact that Spadafora was his intimate friend.

Finally, regarding The Civic Crusades for Justice and Democracy in Panama, both authors give reference to the *civilista* movement in different ways. For example, whereas Zúñiga Araúz believes that the movement is a “collective catharsis” (51), Díaz Herrera considers that it is a fallacy, and calls it a “waste of time” (76). Furthermore, Zúñiga Araúz uses his text *CO.CI.NA* to explain that the civilist crusades started as early as the year 1984 and was the first movement against Noriega’s tyranny. While he makes important references to the civil protest, referring to it as the “great white concentration for democracy, a movement that brought together one hundred and seven organizations” (*Chacal* 76). In contrast Díaz Herrera writes at the end of chapter-one in his testimony that the opposition groups were merely wasting their time by wrongfully thinking that they could dethrone Noriega’s reign of control. He writes: “Los partidos y el liderazgo civil contrario a Noriega y al PRD, jamás se imaginaron que para la época



de mis denuncias en junio de 1987, el dictador sencillamente no era derrocable. Sin mí, sin la prensa mundial que me entrevistó extensa e intensamente durante más de un mes . . . Por tanto ni cien “cruzadas civilistas” podían nada contra el dictador” (76). [“The political parties and the civilian leadership contrary to Noriega and the PRD, never imagined that at the time of my denouements in June of 1987, the dictator was simply untouchable . . . Without me, without the international media that interviewed me lengthily and intensely for over a month . . . Therefore not even a hundred “Civilist Crusades” could do anything against the dictator”]. In addition, Díaz Herrera reinforced his point, saying that: “All the noise of the alleged lobbies of the Panamanian opposition against the dictator was really a waste of time; and in particular a great loss of millions of Panamanian’s dollars” (76)]. Both authors juxtapose point of view—reflecting captivating differences and similarities, at times—are important in the analysis of discourse of power in Panamanian literature. Both authors represent the power, subjugation and normalization in the dictatorial era of Noriega.

**In conclusion,** throughout the powerful literature of fiction and reality of Roberto Díaz Herrera’s *Estrellas clandestinas*, and Mauro Zúñiga Araúz’s *El chacal del general*, an era of dictatorial power and control in Panamanian history has been analyzed. Both authors using different literary genres—testimony and dictator novel—denounced the dictatorial period exercising direct and violent control over the nation. Díaz Herrera employed his testimonial story to contest and denounce his former Commander-in-Chief Manuel Antonio Noriega’s criminal transactions and abuse of power. Zúñiga Araúz with his dictator novel depicted a reality masked in a fictional tale denouncing the murders and tortures of the masses opposing Dictator Noriega’s absolute power in the territory.

Díaz Herrera converted his personal testimony into a historical one due to its contestatorial significant and relevance to the dictatorial period of Panama. He had the specific knowledge essential for his denunciations, and this analysis has demonstrated that without his specific intellectual information, the strategies he used to “liberate” the Panamanian people from Noriega would not have been a powerful turning point. Furthermore, as he indicates, the dictator would have continued in his reign of control using and abusing Panamanian territory for his own selfish benefits for many more years. Zúñiga Araúz employing a variety of literary techniques in his fiction, used the life and fate of his fictional character Chicho as a medium for describing various real historical events that occurred in Panama. He depicted in an insightful way the abduction and assassination of Dr. Hugo Spadafora in September of 1985, his own kidnapping three months earlier, and the catastrophe of thousands of Panamanian civilians who were persecuted, harmed, scared, kidnapped, tortured and murdered during the years of terror.

There are two final fundamental points that have been proven to be obvious in the similarities and differences between the texts of Díaz Herrera and Zúñiga Araúz, described in this section. The first point deals with the treatment of Omar Torrijos Herrera by the two authors. Zúñiga Araúz’s position seems to be that although Torrijos was not "as bad" as Noriega, he was a dictator in every way, and that a dictator is always something negative for society. Díaz Herrera, on the other hand, seems to think that the problem is not the dictatorship itself, but who the dictator is. To Díaz Herrera, Torrijos was a good and honest leader in the military dictatorship, Noriega was corrupted and fraudulent. This is a fundamental ideological difference between the two.

The second point is the differing views of the two authors towards the actions of the masses. Díaz Herrera seems to express contempt for the efforts of any opposition movement.

According to Díaz Herrera it was he himself who was the instrument, more than anyone else, who caused Noriega's downfall. This reveals a vision of power that another "strong man" like Díaz Herrera, is necessary in order to be liberated from a strong man like Noriega. Zúñiga Araúz, in contrast, seems to attribute the fall of Noriega to a collective effort, which probably included many anonymous figures.

Both works are discourse of power that embraces the necessary elements displaying, as Foucault says, "power and knowledge joined together." This demonstrated that neither work is the dominant and accepted discourse, or the dominated and excluded discourse. Both works are unique in their literary genre, both denounced corruption, abuse of power, crime and injustice to those without voices. At the same time, both texts empowered the voices of those oppressed and/or silenced by the oppressor. The injustice described in their texts were first made known in oral discourse through public accusation and civic movement protest, and afterwards with written discourse. Both authors were "specific intellectuals" due to their familiarity with the dictatorship and their personal experiences. Díaz Herrera was close to all the benefits, money, secrets, power and control that his position of colonel and second-in-command provided. Zúñiga Araúz was a principal figure in the civilist group CO.CI.NA and in every other civil movement against tyranny in the Panamanian territory. In addition, both men have experienced the dictatorial crimes in their own lives. Both authors use their knowledge to confront and condemn. Roberto Díaz Herrera and Mauro Zúñiga Araúz's historical actions and literature are an important part of evidence of the Panamanian history, and beneficial for Latin American studies and criticism.

The following chapters of this dissertation examine a second kind of diffusion of power in Panamanian society as it is represented in its literature. A post-dictatorial period when power

and control shifts and operates in the Foucauldian manner—in a subtle way—through institutions and mechanisms of civil society and the global market, but with similar repressive effects, affecting and controlling the minds, bodies and behaviours of youth and women.

**CHAPTER III      Subjugation and Normalization in Manifestations of Violence, Inequality and Poverty (V.I.P.) in Rose Marie Tapia's *Roberto por el buen camino***

*Estos chicos son seres humanos como sus hijos, nacieron buenos, la sociedad y el entorno los corrompió.* [These boys are human beings like your sons, they were born good, society and their surroundings corrupted them].

—Rose Marie Tapia.

Rose Marie Tapia's *Roberto por el buen camino* (2004), is a contemporary Panamanian novel that uses the story of a group of marginalized young offenders to represent a hostile space within Panamanian society, and to denounce the powerfully repressive control of violence, inequality and poverty (V.I.P). These are invisible children who grow up voiceless, abandoned to their own luck, and submerged in a world of hostility, anger, and antagonism. The hostile space into which many young offenders are born, and inhabit during most of their childhood, lacks the socio-symbolic shield which should have been provided to them by their family and nation. The result of various contributing factors such as unequal educational opportunities, a hostile environment, and rampant poverty, is a negative backlash to the exclusion. Thus, they start blaming what they consider "normal society" for their hardships, and consequently, this group finds its voice, its power, and its authority through the creation of its own subculture (gang life), its own laws (scapegoating, violence and revenge), and its own underground economy (drugs and guns).

The novel presents manifestations of power through irresolvable dichotomies such as violence/peace, inequality/equality, poverty/wealth, which give rise to the questions that, constitute the key focal points of this chapter. For example: What are the causes of violence and destructive behaviors? Why is there an imbalance in the socioeconomic status of social groups? This chapter analyzes the wide range of social issues articulated in Tapia's novel, focusing on the culture of violence perpetrated by the "outsiders" (rejected-marginal individuals) and the

“underclass” (the lowest social class) due to three important phenomena in society: violence and destructive behavior, inequality in education, and poverty and the poor.

The chapter is divided into three sections. Section one gives an overview of the novel. It examines two lives stories in the novel: The life of the protagonist Tuti, and his gang of violent young offenders; and the life of Luis Carlos and his group of law-abiding citizens who follow the law of God and society. Although these two worlds appear as seemingly separated from each other and as simply good and bad, the novel complicates that simplistic dichotomy by showing that both worlds are manifestations of an unequal and exclusionary social order. It also briefly describes Tapia’s work as social activist. It shows the ways in which the author uses her social novel as a tool to denounce the relationship of power existing between social groups, focusing on those living in the margins of society.

The second section analyses *Roberto por el buen camino* literary techniques, narrative style and structure. It also gives a brief recount of the literary subgenre of the “social novel,” its importance and relevance in denouncing the living conditions, poverty and inequality of the poor in today’s society. The third section examines the syndrome of violence, inequality and poverty (V.I.P.) in the novel. The first part of this section studies the manifestation of violence in the novel. It explores, through a psychological and sociological perspectives, youth violence and its various ramifications. This includes the phenomenon of scapegoating, youth gang and the interpretation of destructive behaviours. The second part explores inequality in the narrative. It explains how the lowest link in a power relation is the most affected. Finally, this chapter closes with the third part of the social problem affecting the characters in the novel: Poverty, the poor and the culture of poverty.

### III.1 A Brief Description of *Roberto por el buen camino*

The story in the novel commences with poignant words that depict violence and terror: “Quiet *man*, ¡si respiras, te mueres!” (16). [“Don’t move, man; if you breathe, you are dead!” (15)].<sup>20</sup> The plot develops one fatal night in which the protagonist Tuti and his fellow gang members ambush, rob, and attack a young law student, Luis Carlos, and his girlfriend Susana. Susana is shot twice and is instantly killed. Luis Carlos, although shot and left to die, survives the ordeal. Tuti and Luis Carlos represent parts of society that are oblivious to each other’s existence. Yet, in the moment in which they cross borders, in a second their lives intersect and the spaces where they previously lived deterritorialized immediately.<sup>21</sup>

The first group is compounded by “Tuti,” a scapegoated criminal, and his gang of young offenders. Tuti grew up in a world of violence and abuse, illiteracy, poverty and abandonment. After having been confronted by Luis Carlos’ mother for his crimes and lack of remorse, the defiant Tuti responded: “¿Remordimiento? ¿Sabe que esa misma pregunta me la hice yo varias veces durante estos días? ¿Dónde está el remordimiento de su cochina sociedad por haber permitido que desde niño me golpearan y abusaran de mí, me metieran a la cárcel por cualquier cosa, me dejaran pasar días enteros de hambre? ¡Qué sabe usted de sufrimiento!” (37-38). [“Remorse? You know, I’ve asked myself that same question several times the last few days. Where’s the remorse from your pig society for having allowed me to be beaten and abused from childhood? They threw me in jail for anything; they let me go hungry for days. What do you know about suffering?” (40)]. Tuti experienced a short life filled with violence.

At thirteen years of age, he was already initiated into a gang and addicted to drugs. By fourteen, his fame and crimes promoted him within the criminal world. He was invited to participate in murders, something that he accepted as “un honor y un privilegio” (58). [“a great

honor and privilege” (57-58)]. At the same time, he got his first “shiny new gun” that gave him instant power, and he started to command respect and authority among other gangs as well as his friends. Paradoxically, the silver lining was that he used that power to do good for his family. He was able to provide food for his siblings, and protected them from the violence he endured at home as a small child, and was now perpetrating on others. He also was able to alleviate his mother’s need to prostitute herself.

At an early age and during most of his childhood, Tuti had to endure physical and psychological abuse by his parents, an alcoholic and criminal father and a promiscuous mother. He suffered a series of violent acts at the hands of his father due to his father’s own failures and frustrations: “Desde que tengo uso de razón, mi madre me llamaba . . . “desgraciado,” “infeliz,” “perro” . . . El que dicen que era mi padre, porque yo nunca lo vi así, por tantos golpes que me dio . . . Usted no puede imaginarse que a los siete años fue el día más feliz de mi vida, cuando trajeron a casa el cuerpo de mi padre, con ocho balazos que le había dado la Policía” (40-41). [“Ever since I can remember, my mother . . . called me ‘scum,’ ‘wretch,’ ‘dog,’ . . . The one that said he’s my father, though I never saw him as one because of all the beatings he gave me . . . You can imagine that my seventh birthday was the happiest day of my life when I saw they’d brought home my father’s body with eight bullet wounds from the police” (40)]. Without being able to protest, Tuti unwillingly became the “*chivo expiatorio*” (scapegoat) of his family (reference to the concept of “scapegoat” will be explained further below). When he came of age, he became part of a gang, armed himself, and began inflicting violence upon others as revenge for what was done to him.

Finally, at seventeen, Tuti not only changed his path 180 degrees, he even changed his name to “Roberto” for a fresh start. Although, after living a long period of his short life



engaging in violent acts, in spite of his recovery, he did not end up having the fairy-tale ending of “living happily ever after.” The author depicts the sad realities of gang culture and violence; Tuti does not survive the rupture with his old gang. His reintegration into society was not an easy task. His old associates wanted him to go back to his old ways, but he refused. At the age of eighteen, Tuti’s life was cut short by the very same group of young offenders to which he once belonged.

The second group, contrary to the first, is represented by law-abiding citizens who follow “the laws of God and society.” It is embodied by Luis Carlos, a young middle-class university law student, sheltered by his mother, María Cristina, his family, and society. María Cristina was a dedicated mother who passes through a period of pursuing revenge against Tuti for hurting Luis Carlos, which almost destroys both her son’s life and her own. She later confronts reality, has a change of heart, and becomes determined to help the very same groups that she once despised and hated. She becomes a strong pillar of redemption and helps many lives break free from violence, ignorance, and homelessness. However, the motives of her actions are not merely altruistic, but also pragmatic: “(Ella) buscaba alivio para sí misma, después comprendió que la única manera de evitar que otras personas pasaran por lo que ella sufría era atacar las causas del problema y ayudando a los delincuentes a salir de ese mundo de crímenes. Era algo así como un seguro de vida” (74). [“She was looking for relief for herself. It was only later that she realized the only way to prevent others from suffering like she had, was to attack the cause of the problem and to help delinquents leave their world of crime. It was like a life insurance policy” (73)]. María Cristina did not help Tuti, at first, just as a kindness of heart. It was a necessary act.

Finally, Luis Carlos and his family motivated Tuti to quit the gang, leave the streets, and become a good citizen. After Tuti's murder, they created the foundation "*Fundación Roberto por el buen camino*" [*Roberto Down the Right Path Foundation*], in honor of the once-criminal Tuti's transformation into the hero "Roberto." The foundation was a place dedicated to rehabilitating juvenile delinquents and to rescuing homeless youngsters from the streets and from violence. The place became a safe-haven for young offenders. It provided food, shelter, and a vocation; besides the important sense of value, self-esteem, and protection. The above demonstrate how Tapia uses her novels and her social work to denounce these powerful facts that afflict today's society.<sup>22</sup>

### **III.1.1 Rose Marie Tapia's Social Work with *Roberto por el buen camino***

In *Roberto por el buen camino* the author depicts ruinous actions that are performed by young adults who, as she suggests, are born good, but become scapegoats of society at an early age. Their surroundings corrupt them and, in like a cycle, they in turn blame others and learn to use the same bullying tactics on people in positions of vulnerability, making them their scapegoats. As a consequence, young and promising lives are destroyed. Tapia explains that, in her novels, she captures the lives of those affected by the degradation of today's society. She describes how everyone must cope with these consequences, and suggests changes and solutions to problems that threaten to destroy human values and lives. (75). In her role as a social activist, Tapia has been interviewed numerous times by local Panamanian newspapers and has given many speeches in correctional institutions and schools. During these she has fiercely advocated for young people with problems as well as criticized injustices committed against them and their right to rehabilitation. As an example of her work, in an article published in *La Estrella de Panamá*, a Panamanian newspaper, in November of 2011, Tapia denounced the beating of young

offenders by guards and law enforcement officers in a juvenile correction center in Panama. In her denouncements, Tapia argued that although some juveniles are delinquents and follow a life of crime, they are human beings. She indicated that her novel is a by-product of the reality encountered in society. She described that while writing *Roberto por el buen camino*, she dealt with a group of youth offenders, learned about their crimes but also about their efforts to pay for them and their desire to amend their lives and become better individuals. Due to its importance and relevance to her work with social issues affecting poor and young individuals, an abstract of the newspaper article is cited:

Mi comentario sobre el acto criminal de los miembros de la Policía Nacional y de los custodios contra los jóvenes del Centro de Cumplimiento no es una reacción, es una reflexión matizada por la consternación, el dolor, la frustración, el espanto. Es como hacer un viaje al pasado cuando las Fuerzas de Defensa masacraban a mansalva al pueblo panameño. Todos habíamos pensado que esa era una etapa superada . . . Somos conscientes de que estos jóvenes están pagando sus delitos con una condena a prisión. Lo que no entendemos es que esas condenas se convirtieran en sentencias de muerte . . . La Policía es la encargada de velar por la integridad de todos los ciudadanos, incluso aquellos que han delinquido. Constituirse en verdugos que al calor de un incidente, por violento que sea, ejecuten una sentencia de muerte es inamisible.

Hace años cuando escribí la novela: *Roberto por el buen camino* tuve la oportunidad de tratar a diecisiete jóvenes del Centro de Cumplimiento. Ellos asistían todos los meses a las reuniones del Círculo de Lectura Guillermo Andreve, coordinado por el profesor Ricardo Ríos Torres. Estos chicos son seres humanos como sus hijos, nacieron buenos, la sociedad y el entorno los corrompió. La mayoría desea tener la oportunidad de retomar el buen camino. En el corazón de estos chicos renació la esperanza y gracias a Dios muchos de ellos han logrado incorporarse a la sociedad como hombres productivos. Al joven fallecido se le cercenó esa posibilidad. ¿Es justo? (par 1-3).

[My commentary on the criminal act by the members of the National Police and the guards against the young people of the “Centro de Cumplimiento” is not a reaction; it’s a blended reflection of consternation, pain, frustration, fright. It is like taking a trip to the past when the Defense Forces massacred the Panamanian people without warning . We all had thought that that was a surpassed stage. . . We are conscious that these young people are paying for their crimes with a prison sentence. What we do not understand is that those sentences became death sentences. . . The Police are the ones in charge of guarding the integrity of all the

citizens, including those who have broken the law. To set themselves up as torturers who in the heat of an incident, however violent it may be, execute a death sentence is inadmissible.]

[Years ago when I wrote the novel *Roberto by the Right Path*, I had the opportunity to deal with seventeen youths from the Juvenile Retention Center. Every month they attended the meetings of the “Guillermo Andreve Circle of Reading” coordinated by Professor Ricardo Ríos Torres. These boys are human beings like your children, they were born good, society and environment corrupted them. The majority desires to have the opportunity to retake the right path. In the hearts of these boys hope was reborn, and thank God that many of them have been successful in society as productive men. That possibility was taken from the young deceased. Is that fair?]

Diverse newspaper opinions as the above give important details of the nature and work commitment of the author.

Tapia’s reference to the way in which the past oppressive dictatorship massacred and oppressed lives and minds of the Panamanian people is tremendously interesting because it leads the reader to understand how “the direct and brutal” control of Noriega switched to subtler forms of control in the postdictatorship era. Tapia further elaborates—in her novel *Caminos y Encuentros*—on the connection between the ways in which subjugation and power operated then (under dictatorship) and the subtle forms in which it operates now (post dictatorship) through normalization. Besides showing how people suffered as scapegoats during the Noriega regime, the author points out at the greatest degree that violence and inequality is increasing and manifesting in the life of the poor.

Por example, Tapia writes: “Al reflexionar sobre la situación de los pobres, me preguntaba, ¿por qué tantos panameños deambulan por las calles en busca de trabajo sin poder encontrarlo? La respuesta es fácil, no están preparados para trabajar. Panamá ha estado marcada por grandes injusticias. Las estructuras de desigualdad no sólo marginan al pobre, sino que lo excluyen, lo anulan” (*Caminos* 115). [“When reflecting on the situation of the poor, I asked

myself, why so many Panamanians wander the streets in search of work without being able to find it? The answer is easy; people are not prepared to work. Panama been has marked by great injustices. The inequality structures not only marginalize the poor, but exclude and nullify the poor”]. She uses *Roberto por el buen camino* to reveal these problems of V.I.P. and in order to bring attention to those matters; Tapia uses a wide range of literary devices, as shown below.

### **III.2 Literary Techniques in *Roberto por el buen camino***

*Roberto por el buen camino* is narrated from a heterodiegetic point of view, which is the narrative focal point of a third person that recounts all the details of the stories and characters in it, without being a character in the story.<sup>23</sup> Even though Tapia uses a chronological order, a moment by moment recount of what happened in the lives of the characters in most part of the narration, she also uses sporadic flashback moments with the main protagonist’s recounts of the memories of abuses he endured as a child. The author’s occasional uses of flashbacks are an attempt to paint a powerful background and give the reader a clear understanding of the cause and effects of the committed crimes.

The sequence in the narration begins with a series of actions that set the tone for the rest of the story. For example, the first chapter starts with a clear depiction of violence, hate and murder perpetrated by a youth gang. The main protagonist, Tuti, and a secondary protagonist, Luis Carlos are introduced to the reader in a clear and poignant way. Chapter two portrays the cause that fuels an eruption of feelings of revenge toward Tuti by the victim’s families. Chapters three to seven chronologically compound the three main components of V.I.P., that this work analyzes. The plot is compound by scenes of confessions, forgiveness, intrigues and redemption. Additionally, the creation of a juvenile delinquent rehabilitation center and the new challenge that threatens to destroy more lives and the dream of rehabilitation for young gangs.

Contrary to the first page of the first chapter of the novel, a page that starts narrating hatred and violence, the last page of the last chapter depicts the opposite end of human feelings. It ends with a demonstration of love and hope. Although the novel seems to be a closed narrative, the way in which Tapia ends it makes the reader understand that sequels' analysis of relevant social problems in Panama are in the author's future agenda: "En las mesas, los selectos invitados aprovechan la reunión para impulsar una carrera política, o la marcha de una organización; hay quienes se ingenian para exponer ante sus amigos la solución de los problemas de Panamá" (128). ["At the tables, a few of the guests take advantage of the situation to launch a political career or to get an organization off the ground; some devise ways to show their friends how to solve Panama's problems" (141)]. This reveals an open ending style.

The writing style of the novel is simple, straightforward and clear. However, despite its simplicity, very important social factors are poignantly described and the message is delivered in a meaningful way. Tapia uses a polyphony of voices in her narrative that could be described using Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of "Heteroglossia." According to Bakhtin's theory, novelists orchestrate different voices and use that polyphony in the characters' speeches in order to represent the wide range of social stratum and inequalities in the narrative (262). In the novel one can hear the voice of juvenile delinquents speaking to each other, using words with simple connotations of acceptance and brotherhood. The examples below present the voices of the poor young offenders in confrontation with "the others" (from different social classes, different ideologies and different ways of thinking): "¿Qué sopá?, ¿qué loqué?, ofi, chili, focop" (59). ["s'up, bro," "wapin" "sweet," "chillin," "focup" (39)]. These are everyday forms of communication that the economically disadvantaged young people use among themselves.

Their tone changes when they address a person belonging to a different culture. For example: “Mire señora, yo no sé si usted está loca o qué, pero yo no voy a oír todo ese montón de idioteces . . . Sí, señora. Aunque usted crea que yo salí de un basurero . . . vieja de mierda ricachona” (37-38). [“Look lady, I don’t know if you are crazy or what, but I’m not going to listen to this load of crap . . . Yeah, lady even though you think I came from a garbage can . . . You old rich bitch”] (39-40). Although the dialogue is more articulated the connotation is violent, aggressive and defensive. It depicts the speech patterns that juvenile offenders use in their own subcultures, in their own environment. These forms of speech make them outsiders since they fall outside of society’s accepted norms, as the author exposes. Tapia also presents language as “a form of social diversity of speech types, as heteroglossia is sometimes translated” (Benjamin Bailey 499). It is as a form of code-switching used in literature, to represent the worldview of the underclass. Lourdes Torres explains that the code-switching “is not only metaphorical, but represents a reality where segments of the population are living between cultures and languages” (76). Although Torres is referring to a discourse of the border and bilingual/bicultural communities, the same act of switching languages “between cultures” occurs in the distinct forms of language chosen by the youth offenders in the novel.

The form of their dialogue—as depicted above—and their interaction represent the culture of violence and poverty they live in. In addition, it also depicts the camaraderie and acceptance of rebellion acts they practice among themselves. The narrator indicates that their form of speech, their own speech patterns, and their distinct language is “estar en ambiente.” As well, it represents the special connection they have between themselves. It shows that they are trying to use old expressions with a twist of originality; or it may be a simple form of rebellion that is part of adolescence. The words are sometimes deformed, inverted, translated phonetically

from the English language so that, as Tapia indicates, “todo para sentir que son dueños de una porción del mundo que de otro modo se les niega” (59). [“it is all so that they can feel they own part of the world that denies their existence” (64)]. The above is depicted by the author in her social novel, and the following section briefly explains the importance of the subgenre “social novel” in the representation of social problems.

### **III.2.1 A Brief Recount of the Literary Subgenre of the Social Novel**

The representation of power in Panamanian social conflicts has been depicted in the social novel of which Tapia’s novel forms a part. The social novel is a literary subgenre that has been used as a vehicle for social analysis. The object is to denounce the standard of living of people belonging to economically disadvantaged and marginalized social classes. The social novel or social-problem novel, as Rosemarie Bodenheimer explains, was born in England in the Victorian era in the middle of the eighteenth century. It was a form of protest against the abuses within the industrial working class, including the conditions of poor workers in factories and mines; the predicaments of child labor and the abuses and discrimination against women: “These novels set themselves in a dramatic way to the task of giving fictional shape to social questions that were experienced as new, unpredictable, without culture” (4). Bodenheimer reinforces the idea that the social novel can be notable for its focus on specific social problems, such as poverty and women’s position.

Vance R. Holloway explains that the social novel offers significant testimony about a collective occurrence: “Muchas veces el significado social se expresa mediante un protagonismo colectivo y otras un individuo representa a un grupo mayor . . . la novela social se acerca a la cuestión de clases desde abajo, con una focalización centrada en miembro del proletariado y suele servir para denunciar la opresión social.” (127-28). [“Many times social meaning is



expressed by means of collective characters and other times an individual represents a larger group . . . the social novel approaches the question of classes from the bottom, with a focus on members of the proletariat, and generally serves to denounce social oppression”]. In the middle of the twentieth century the social novel, also known as the social realist novel was introduced in Spain becoming a dominant model in Spanish literary system (Mario Santana 78). Furthermore, in the first half of the twentieth century, this social problem form of writing was also the dominant style in Latin America. According to Philip Swanson, it captured the writer’s attempt to portray “local or regional social, economic or geographical conditions genuinely” (3). It is use, as well, as a propagandistic device to influence and motive the reader to react.

In Latin America this literary subgenre, which addresses social problems affecting the nations is use to denounce the substandard of living of people belonging to marginalized social classes. It exerts sympathy and conscience of the problem presented in the story—and affecting society—and above all it makes readers to take action towards a possible solution. Social novels are also known under other classifications, as well. For example “novelas indigenistas” are also social novels because they address social problems involving indigenous people—i.e. Miguel Angel Asturias’s *Hombre de maíz* (1949). Also in Panama—as has been explained in the introductory chapter—the historical novels known with the taxonomy of “novela canalera” also dealt, in great part, with historical social issues that affected Panamanian society before, during and after the construction of the Panama canal. Contemporary Panamanian writers also denominate their social problems novels as “realistic novels” and “psychological novels.” Their focal point goes beyond social problems, reflecting reality and the psyche affecting the characters in the narrative, as Tapia’s novel *La cárcel del temor*, depicts.

Finally, contemporary social novels that depict social problems originated by socio-political problems and economic corruptions involving corruptions and violence have been classified as “detective novels” and “political novels.” This is the case of Tapia’s trilogy: *No hay trato*, *Agenda para el desastre* and *El retorno de los bárbaros*. In addition to her recent novel, *El poder desenmascara*. These contemporary literary classifications of novels identify a more precise problem encounter by the characters. *Roberto por el buen camino*, however, correlates with the traditional social novel for the various forms of social oppression depicted. Tapia uses this social novel in order to denounce the world of youth offenders and the wide range of social inequalities found in all societies. As demonstrated, she focuses on the culture of violence perpetrated by the underclass and the cause-effect of violence in the novel. This is further explained in the following section.

### **III.3 Violence, Inequality and Poverty in *Roberto por el buen camino***

The syndrome of V.I.P. in the lives of young offenders has been analyzed and evaluated by social science disciplines for decades. Although “youth offender” is a term that was coined by the legal system with the purpose of identifying a young person who engages in delinquent behaviors (Winterdyk 36), the social impact and issues that cause those delinquent behaviors have been the warhorse of analysis and criticism not only of psychology and sociology, but of literature as well. For example, in order to explain how the minds and the worlds of young perpetrators of violence work, psychology and sociology analyze and explain the causes and consequences of violent acts, whether in family upbringing or societal surroundings. Whereas sociology studies socially unacceptable deviations and diversions of individuals in society—from harmless acts like “talking to plants” to dangerous activities like “copycat murders” (Winterdyk 13)—psychology analyzes the trauma and patterns of aggression received from childhood and

how they affect the psyches. Literature, however, with its literary subgenre of the social novel, provides an additional perspective on the realities that social science investigates.

Tapia's novel not only depicts real social problems in a fictional and poignant way, it also exposes social problems affecting the most vulnerable individuals in an unequal society. Although, Roland Barthes indicates that the role of literature: "is not to resolve nor evaluate this world, but to present it in its raw state to an audience who must experience it as a provocation" (qtd. in Wolfrey 258), Tapia's literature in fact, stirs the readers' feelings and provokes them to not just to be passive observers, but to go one step further: to be proactive spaces of power, engaging themselves with society, taking control of lives with the ultimate purpose of becoming agents for social change.

The effect of V.I.P. in youth behavior in literature are explored through a psychoanalytic lens, which helps explain and interpret destructive behaviors and helps to resolve psychological dysfunctions. It is important to understand that despite the fact that psychoanalysis of this kind of conduct is intended for real persons with real problems, it can also be applied to the interpretation of Tapia's novel because this analysis can help the reader understand the literary characters in a most insightful way. As critic Lois Tyson explains: "If psychoanalysis can help us better understand human behavior, then it must certainly be able to help us understand literary texts which are about human behavior" (11). Studies have demonstrated throughout time that violence and aggressive dysfunctions are learned in most cases through first-hand observation during childhood.

Classic Freudian psychoanalytic principles explain that the psychological history of aggressive and destructive dysfunctions begin with childhood experiences in the family or as the result of an early occurrence in adolescence (Tyson 12). Contemporary analyses of the psyche

of young violence, such as the one presented by Canadian social learning theorist Albert Bandura, explain that aggressive dysfunctions are usually caused by a process denominated “behavior modeling,” from observing others either personally through “parental modelling” or through the media and environment. (204-08). To be more specific, Bandura’s “Bobo Doll” experiment found that children imitate the aggression of adults in order to first, funnel their inner rage and second, to gain the approval of others (or themselves) in light of the reinforcement or reward received. (Isom par. 2). This kind of behavior aggression first – anger displacement later, as the following sections analyses, correlates with the life of the protagonist in Tapia’s novel.

### **III.3.1 Manifestation of Violence in *Roberto por el buen camino***

If psychoanalysis correlates patterns of violence and aggressive dysfunctions learned and experienced by children in their households with their aggressive contacts with others, then it is key to understand the phenomenon of “scapegoating” and its powerful effect in society and in the novel. Before proceeding, and in order to understand the role of the “Scapegoat” in youth violence, it is necessary to briefly examine the origin of the scapegoat. The semantic symbolism of the scapegoat has its origin in the Old Testament of the Bible as an animal (a goat) that carried away (to the wilderness) the sins of the people: “But the goat chosen by lot as the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the LORD to be used for making atonement by sending it into the wilderness as a scapegoat” (Lev. 16.10). The New Testament also refers to the action of taking on oneself the people’s sins, referring to Jesus’ actions. Although the actual word “scapegoat” is not mentioned in the New Testament, many religious and scholarly articles make reference to Jesus suffering as a “scapegoat.” His divine sacrifice was planned for the people’s salvation, but the fact that he needed to suffer, sweat and even become fearful of his mission to take away

humanity's sin—without any fault whatsoever—made Jesus' sacrifice an analogy to a "Scapegoat."

Throughout history, powerful situations of scapegoating have been portrayed as well. For example, in the case of Nazi-Germany, the Jews were made to be scapegoats. According to social critic and French philosopher René Girard, if the person or group that provokes hostility is not at hand then a scapegoat is chosen arbitrarily and is victimized: "When unappeased, violence seeks and always finds a surrogate victim. The creature that excited fury is abruptly replaced by another chosen only because it is vulnerable and close at hand" (2). Sociologist Martin Marger explains that minority groups in multi-ethnic societies "have served as convenient and safe targets of such displaced aggressions," adding that "if the frustration is continuous, we may begin to blame more remote groups or institutions like "the government," "bureaucrats," "blacks," "Jews," or "gays"(Race 85). Current displays of scapegoating in society against innocent groups have been seen in the United States and Canada.

Here is an example of these manifestations: In 1989 in Montreal, scapegoating as displaced hatred was directed towards a specific group of female students in the *École Polytechnique* where fourteen women were killed and many more were wounded by a young man with a history of physical and verbal abuse in his household. It was considered to be an anti-feminist attack against women. News reads that: "Before opening fire in the engineering class, he calls the women "*une gang de féministes*" and says "*J'haïs les féministes* [I hate feminists]" (CBC par. 3). Although the victims claimed not to be feminists, but rather students, the gunman killed them anyway. The killer blamed his problems on women.

The symbolism of "scapegoat" is used in various forms when referring to victimization and violence: The "scapegoat" or the innocent victim who usually pays for someone else's

problems; the “scapegoater” or the person or group who causes violence and pain to innocents; and “scapegoating” or the action inflicted upon a “scapegoat.” In psychology, scapegoating signals a serious family problem where one member of a family is constantly picked on, put down or abused. As Simon Crosby states: “The age-old phenomenon of scapegoating shows up everywhere. It causes great anxiety and misery. Scapegoats are found in almost every social context: in school playgrounds, in families, in small groups, and in large organizations” (Par. 2). Psychologist Lynne Namka explains: “In scapegoating, one of the authority figures has made a decision that somebody in the family has to be the bad guy, The mother or father makes one child bad and then looks for things (sometimes real, but most often imagined) that are wrong” (Par. 1) These domestic dysfunctions and manifestation of power are depicted in Tapia’s novel.

Another social manifestation of the phenomenon of scapegoating is what sociologist Herbert Gans refers to as the “undeserving poor,” who paradoxically serve the interest of some, particularly those in better economic position, in society: “The undeserving poor for example, can be used as ideal scapegoats . . . also serve as suppliers of illegal goods—drugs, for example—to the nonpoor. They create jobs for many in the better-off populations, such as social workers who attend to them, police and others in the criminal justice system who deal with them, and even social scientists who study them . . . Eliminating poverty, in this view, would require that poverty become dysfunctional for the people who most benefit from it: the affluent and powerful” (Qtd. in Marger 164-65). Gans explanation correlates with the ideas of Foucault when he considers that this type of problems are “essential to the general functioning of the wheels of power” (it is explained in chapter five of this dissertation, section V.6).

The syndrome of scapegoating in all its structural grammar displays—the scapegoat and the scapegoater (as a noun), scapegoat (as an adjective), and the scapegoating (as a verb)—is

clearly represented in *Roberto por el buen camino*. For example: Tuti sees his father inflicting pain on his mother, on his siblings and on himself, therefore he models the learned direct patterns of aggression and violence, and becomes a scapegoater. He learns to use the same behavior on people in positions of weakness and to make them his scapegoats or “*chivos expiatorios*.” Most of the young offenders depicted in the novel have suffered all kinds of abuse during childhood, so they experience impotence and discrimination.

Marger indicates that the essential concept of scapegoating is a situation of “hostility arising from frustration.” He explains that a disturbed person “in his or her efforts to achieve a highly desired goal tends to respond with a pattern of aggression. Because the real source of frustration is either unknown or too powerful to confront directly, a substitute is found on whom the aggression can be released. The substitute target is a scapegoat, a person or group close at hand and incapable of offering resistance” (*Race* 84). In the case of Tuti, he is initially the scapegoat of the family, and after feeling safe with gangs and violence, he later reverses position and begins inflicting violence by scapegoating others--a full circle completed.

Sociologist John A. Winterdyk writes about violence in young offenders and considers that when young people commit acts of violence, although the main focus is usually placed on what they have done, the abuse committed, he states it is important to remember that “young people are also the recipients of a great deal of violence, not only from members of their own age group, but also from adults” (27). Tapia illustrates what violence and abuse do to children, the most vulnerable agents in a power relationship in Panamanian society, and denounces the same society for not protecting children from abuse. Sometimes it is too late for later recriminations. In order to provide a current representation of the scapegoating phenomenon as reflected in the nation of Panama, (as it has been explained above) Tapia also portrays in her novels the powerful

Panamanian dictator Noriega's years of dictatorship, when thousands of people suffered as his "*chivos expiatorios*" and atoned for his own failure as a leader.

Another subject of violence that is important to address is the fact that every time youth and violence come together, the term that follows is: "gangs." But what does the word "gang" really mean? And why is it usually associated with youth violence and crime? A straightforward definition of "gang" is defined by Merriam-Webster as: "gang- *b* : group: as (1) : a group of persons working together (2) a group of persons working to unlawful or antisocial ends; *especially* : a band of antisocial adolescents." It has been demonstrated that gangs are a group of young individuals who engage in either minor rebellious acts of violence such as street fights—looking for approval from or in defiance of their peers—or major violent acts and criminal offenses such as drug dealing, murder, rape, and other acts of violence (*National Crime Prevention Council*).

Fred Mathews, in his study of youth gangs, observes that "gang" can be related to many things, and that the word itself has its share of ambiguity. For example, he explains that the word "gang" *per se* connotes fear, controversy and misunderstanding. It can be a "judgmental and overly negative term applied too liberally and inaccurately by adults to adolescent peer associations," or to "a group of friends who like to hang out and occasionally get into trouble" (220). He also points out that when that group of friends is involved in normal activities—whether or not they adopted a distinctive name or location—it is just a healthy part of growing up. Mathews considers that "There is nothing developmentally or otherwise unusual about young people hanging out in groups that, in themselves, should give adults concern; that is, unless they break the law or harm others or themselves through their activities . . . Sometimes this line is crossed accidentally; sometimes deliberately" (220) . When a group of young people



become violent or antisocial and break the law, it becomes what is commonly called a “youth gang.”

Mathews explains that, “A ‘gang’ in this context, would generally consist of at least three or more youth whose membership, though often fluid, consists in at least a stable core of members who are recognized by themselves or others as a gang, and who band together for cultural, social, or other reasons and impulsively or intentionally plan and commit antisocial, violent, or illegal acts” (221). John W. Santrock further clarifies that youth gangs’ involvement in violence gives them power. He explains that youth gangs are composed primarily of male members, that in the United States alone there are more than 750,000 adolescents involved in gang activities, and that they do so in order to prove loyalty and commitment to their groups.

Most of the young gangs are from poor backgrounds and come from ethnic minority groups, dealing with feelings of powerlessness, and therefore they participate in violent acts in order to obtain a sense of power (479-80). He also states that “Among the risk factors that increase the likelihood an adolescent will become a gang member are disorganized neighborhoods characterized by economic hardship, family members who are involved in a gang, drug use, lack of family support, and peer pressure from gang members to join their gangs” (479). Nonetheless, it is important to bear in mind that studies have also demonstrated that: “Young people of all socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds participate in gangs” (*National Crime Prevention Council*). Not only the poor or visible minority.

In Central America, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, there is an estimated 70,000 youth gang members, the worst heavily affected are Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala. Panama counts with a calculation of an approximate 1,385 youth gang members compounded in 94 gangs with an average of 15 members per gang” (60). The study on

“Crime and Development in Central America” by United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, focusing on youth gangs explains that in the region (similarly to everywhere else) violence and drug problems are often blamed on young people banded in “gangs,” especially on young men: “Globally, young men acting in groups do dominate many forms of crime, but a distinction needs to be made between criminal associations and true institutional gangs” (57). Mathews, in his analysis argues that gangs serve as “nonconformist alternatives” for young people as well.

Tapia’s novel shows the feelings of alienation, isolation and discrimination from society, that Mathews describes major reasons for youth gangs and criminal behaviors because of their “few or no satisfying interpersonal relationships with others” (225). Yet, young people group together as an expression of acceptance and love as Tapia states in the novel:

Los chicos de los barrios entraban a las pandillas atraídos por la sensación de poder y seguridad que les daban, ante un mundo amenazante que apenas si comprendían, pero antes de que se les insensibilizara por completo el alma, como ocurría cuando habían sido protagonistas de varios hechos de violencia, esos muchachos deseaban ser mejores personas, lograr un trabajo honesto, cuidar de sus familia. (75)

[The kids from the poor neighborhood were attracted to gangs because they provided feelings of power and security against a threatening world they hardly understood. But before their souls became completely insensitive, like what happened when they had been the perpetrators of several violent acts, those boys wanted to be better people, to have an honest job, to care for their families. (74)]

She argues that the government, the media, TV programs and their audiences and society’s indifference all have a share of accountability in this social problem. Here once again, the author is reproducing one of the categories of the social novel: that the reader sympathizes with the characters’ problems.

Another crucial element in the relationship of power in violence and gang activities is the peer pressure dynamic. Youth delinquents constantly face pressure from older or more experienced peers. Usually an older friend becomes a “mentor” and provides all the necessary

information to his addition to the crime family. Tapia's novel portrays it with Tuti and his encounter with the character "*El Muerto*" ["The Dead"] and with death itself. Tuti, through his friend nicknamed "the Dead," learned an easy and fast way to ascend the ladder of power, that is, from being the poor and ignorant young boy to being the respected and admired authority figure: by the replacement of his "rusty gun" for a powerful 9 millimeter and by involvement in heavy gang activities and drug dealings.

Guns and shootings are a central part of gang activity as well. The feeling of protection against other rival gangs makes the participants carry weapons, especially if illicit activities such as drugs and robberies are on their to-do list. The need to protect themselves against other perpetrators of violence gives them, in their own eyes, "the right" to be armed. Sociologist Thomas Gabor, in a study about gun crime in Canada, analyses the use of guns in crimes committed in large cities. He cites Toronto as the most consistent place of gun-related violence in Canada. As an example, it indicates that 300 people were murdered by guns in 2005, "Gun violence is a legitimate concern, particularly in various urban settings, given the escalation of gang violence and the brazenness [coldness] of many shootings" (147-48). This social problem is rapidly increasing rather than decreasing.

Sociologists James D. Wright, Peter H. Rossi and Kathleen Daly, in an analysis on weapons, crime and violence in America, explain that the United States has more gun deaths than any other country in the world. For example, they quote a study comparing the border cities of Detroit, Michigan and Windsor, Ontario's gun related deaths: The "sister cities" ratio is approximately 100 to 3 cases. (2-3). In the novel, Tapia depicts the protagonist Tuti realizing that the acquisition of a gun, his desired weapon, gives him not only a sense of authority among his fellow gang members, where he climbed the ladder of power and changed from being at the

bottom of the ladder to rapidly ascending towards the top, but he also found himself in the blink-of-an-eye not only the leader of his gang family, but the provider (through drug-dealing) and protector (through his gun) of his own family as well. The power that the gun anoints on Tuti, give him a sense of power and a dominant feeling. He became the leading party, imposing his will on and directing others, and not the other way around. He changed from being the oppressed to becoming the oppressor, from being invisible to becoming visible, from being voiceless to having a powerful and dangerous voice.

Although the dissimilarity portrayed in the novel between the two groups (the group of young offenders led by Tuti and the group of law-abiding citizens led by Luis Carlos and his mother) is manifested in large part through the dichotomy of violent and nonviolent circumstances, it is important to keep in mind that the protagonist's childhood—and that of the group of young offenders, for that matter—was not only robbed as a result of his status as family scapegoat and his violent upbringing, but also due to social inequality and poverty. The following section analyzes the social inequality that the novel presents.

### **III.3.2 Manifestation of Inequality in *Roberto por el buen camino***

Power underlies all forms of inequality. As a social resource, power refers to people's authority in groups and organizations. Some have the power, as a result of their positions, to command others, to get them to do things . . . The more important and broadly based the position, the greater the scope of one's power.  
—Martin Marger.

When referring to inequalities affecting the lowest link in a power relationship, as is the group of young offenders in Tapia's novel, the subject of "power" and how the powerful in society get the best of everything, including education, should be foremost in the discussion. As the philosopher and social theorist Michel Foucault argues, there is power in all human contact because power is the thin film that covers all human interaction inside or outside institutional

structures: “Power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitude, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives” (Power/Knowledge 38). His philosophy clearly extends to education, the institutions that provide learning, and the society that delivers it. It helps to explain the persistence of inequality in education and the maldistribution of wealth.

Public education has come to be known as an institution founded on the idea of equal opportunity for education for all, not only for the privileged. But as Marger explains, the original idea of equality was ironically implemented by educational institutions themselves, becoming agents in sustaining the structure of inequality. Marger considers that one of the main factors that contributes to inequality is: “The relationship between education and socioeconomic status operates in a cycle that is perpetuated from one generation to the next: The higher the income and occupational status of the parents, the greater the amount and quality of the children’s education. In turn, the greater the amount and quality of the children’s education, the higher will be their income and occupational status as adults” (*Social Inequality* 206).

This relationship between education and socioeconomic status is presented by Tapia. The novel depicts two different manifestation of power between the protagonists. It defines a series of patterns of inequality affecting the two groups depicted that indicate who has power and who does not. For example, due to the extreme poverty and ignorance in his household, Tuti is only permitted to attend school until the third grade. Luis Carlos, however, has the opportunity to attain the best education. As a consequence, when they crossed paths Tuti is nearly illiterate, he barely knows how to read, and is therefore unable to possibly attain any good opportunities in life, while Luis Carlos is an excellent student with a promising future ahead of him who later

advances unto a university law career. The dichotomous factors of familial guidance versus familial abandonment also illustrate the pattern of inequalities encountered in societies.

In the novel, the author describes unequal types of guidance and support that the two groups encounter at an early age that determine their lawful versus unlawful behaviors. Their familial and social class environments of which education—or lack thereof—is a key part, determine the encouragements and expectations that Luis Carlos receives and that Tuti does not. The following generalization from sociologist Marger, helps describing the reality affecting the families in the novel:

Generally, the higher the social class of the parents, the higher will be their expectations for their children's education. They will stress the importance of education and instill in their children values that are compatible with achievement. Poorer families, on the other hand, may undervalue education and fail to convey to children the long-range value of investing time and effort into educational pursuits. They may encourage children to enter the workforce rather than spend time and money on higher education". (*Social* 210)

For example, the protagonist Tuti does not have adult supervision or much-needed guidance and no one instills in him the importance of education; he only receives belittlement from his parents. On the other hand, Luis Carlos has his family as well as the society that surrounds him supporting his learning process. After the two main characters cross borders, and get to know each other, Luis Carlos himself says: “¡Qué diferente hubiera sido la vida de ese chico con mejores oportunidades para educarse!” (58). [“How different things might have been if this boy would have an opportunity for a better education” (57)]. This explains how Tuti was denied from better changes in life.

As the sociologist Jonathan Kozol explain: “We are children once; and after those few years are gone, there is no second chance to make amends. In this respect, the consequences of unequal education have a terrible finality. Those who are denied cannot be “made whole” by a

later act of government. Those who get the unfair edge cannot later be stripped of that which they have won” (180). Tuti’s lack of proper education and guidance forces him to enter the work force as a drug mule, dealing drugs as the main source of income for his household. A poor child like Tuti has had to become “the father” for his younger siblings, needing to work and to bring home the money. Luis Carlos lives an easy life without carrying the burden of needing to provide for his family. He is dedicated to his studies. Whereas Luis Carlos is protected and encouraged, Tuti is denied those important shields that should have been provided by family, educational institutions, society and government. Two lives are surrounded by a cluster of inequalities, and the life in a superior socioeconomic position produces better results.

Violent family environment and lack of education due to inequalities become vital factors and stepping stones for a criminal career. The fact that Tuti does not have supervision, love and guidance throughout life, as well as the lack of education and the premature need to enter the ‘workforce’ lead him to violence and murder. While Tapia presents the problems affecting society due to inequality in education and its consequences, she also illustrates in her story an alternative to that infirmity: a creation of better opportunities for those lacking proper education. This is exemplified in the opportunities that Tuti gets to learn new skills and find some value within himself. He is taught how to read at seventeen, and he becomes an avid reader. He learns how to express himself, and becomes a well-spoken individual. He is able to stay off the street and starts guiding other delinquent and homeless juveniles to break free from ties to violence.

Before his death the new ‘Roberto’ is able to do all that due to the perseverance of few in society. Few people who decide to open their eyes, leave discrimination and hatred behind, and start proactive actions to eradicate the same ailments that used to inflict them. However, Tapia’s proposal is not a “charity” of the rich for a few of the poor, but deeper and permanent changes

in the unequal structures of the society. She notes that: “Había llegado la hora de frenar la infortunada realidad de los pobres y efectuar los cambios que se requerían” (*Caminos* 116). [The hour had arrived to restrain the unfortunate reality of the poor and to carry out the changes that are required (*Path* 116)]. In *Roberto Down the Right Path* she stresses it and therefore the importance of creating a Foundation. The main focus of that foundation is to transform the whole society. Adding to the demonstration of social inequality in the narrative, Tapia portrays the manifestation of scarceness, confronting the readers with the harsh living conditions affecting Panamanian poor communities, as the following section demonstrates.

### **III.3.3 Manifestation of Poverty in *Roberto por el buen camino***

Before continuing to analyze how poverty affects the lives of the characters in the novel and in society *per se*, it is necessary to analyze poverty using the diverse definitions given throughout time—absolute, relative, extreme and moderate poverty. Sociology explains the great debate over defining the various degrees of poverty in society. Absolute poverty, for example, is generally accepted to mean the poor in society who are unable to acquire the necessities of life. Marger explains that absolute poverty is plainly a socioeconomic problems in which people are incapable of meeting their fundamental human needs. Marger notes “the standards and expectations of people in a particular society at a particular time” (142). For example, he explains: “A basic diet in the United States, for example, would not be the same as a basic diet in Bangladesh or Bolivia.” Relative poverty is basically the government’s measurable criteria to define who and under what condition someone belongs to that category, he notes.

Marger also adds that: “Government, in a sense, settles the argument about who is poor and what conditions actually constitute poverty by applying a uniform yardstick for counting the poor and measuring poverty. This is the official definition of poverty” (*Social* 142-44). Jeffrey



Sachs explains that extreme poverty is when people: “are chronically hungry, unable to access health care, lack the amenities of safe drinking water and sanitation, cannot afford education for some or all of the children and lack . . . a roof to keep the rain out of the hut, a chimney to remove the smoke from the cook stove and basic articles of clothing, such as shoes” (20). Pamela A. Viggiani describes moderate poverty as “a situation in which basic needs, as perceived by the society in which one lives, are barely met . . . On the global level, moderate poverty is measured by the World Bank’s standard of income, as having between U.S. \$1 and \$2 of purchasing power per day per person” (38). Some of these forms of poverty are interwoven into the life of despair that the characters inhabit.

Tapia depict a clear picture of the physical conditions of poverty that the protagonist Tuti and the group of young offenders are born into and live under most of their lives. It is a situation that circulates from generation to generation in poor neighborhoods in Panama City. Without naming a particular poor neighborhood in Panama City, the narrative describes the conditions of poverty: “La camioneta avanzó por la callejuela hasta desembocar en una maraña de casas de madera, cartón y laminas oxidadas de zinc. Estaban amontonadas como en un desafío a la gravedad y a la lógica, empinadas sobre unas pilastras de madera que alguna vez se ocuparon en otras obras, alrededor de una quebrada maloliente . . . montón de pocilgas y todas le parecieron idénticas, cada una tan destartalada como la otra” (45-47). [“The van advanced down the alley way that opened up to a tangle of houses made of wood, cardboard and tin, piled in defiance of gravity and logic, poised on wooden pylons that had been used elsewhere, surrounding a stench-filled brook . . . piles of shacks, and they all looked alike, each one as shabby as the other” (46)]. Houses with painted graffiti were everywhere. Tuti’s house had a sign at the rusty door written in silver spray saying: “If I don’t kill, they’ll kill me” (46). Small ghetto houses in unbearable

conditions surrounded by garbage, usually overcrowded. In the case of Tuti, his one room home housed his single mother and eight small siblings.

The story also depicts the usual way that people from the protagonist's poor neighborhood conduct themselves, starting with children: "Por la pequeña abertura salió el cuerpo desnudo de un niño que no podía tener más de seis años, restregándose los ojos con una mano, mientras se sostenía el pene con la otra, dirigiendo un extenso chorro de orines hacia el montón de basura que se extendía hasta donde podían ver sus ojitos adormilados" (48). ["A naked child, no more than six years old, appeared through the small opening towards the outside. He rubbed his eyes with one hand and held his penis in the other, directing a long stream of urine toward the pile of trash that extended as far as his sleepy little eyes could see" (47)]. "La puerta de lata estaba abierta y se percibía desde afuera un vaho desagradable y nauseabundo, un olor a heces que la paralizó . . . De la barraca salió una mujer despeinada, de modales parsimoniosos, vestida con harapos. Su cuerpo exhalaba un olor a cucarachas y humedad" (51). ["The tin door was open and a nauseating, disgusting odor emanated from within, an odor of excrement that paralyzed her . . . An unkempt woman dressed in rags came out of the shack unhurriedly. Her body reeked of cockroaches and humidity" (50)]. Besides demonstrating the daily high-stress and struggles in which entire poor families live, the author describes a clear distinction between the different behaviors encountered in what is known as the "Culture of Poverty."

The culture of poverty is a term coined by anthropologist Oscar Lewis in the 1960's. In a study Lewis conducted about poor Hispanic families in North American cities, he indicated that the culture of poverty tends to be perpetuated from generation to generation. This is often characterized by single-women households due to the abandonment and mistreatment of wives and children, the use of violence in settling disputes, the high consumption of alcohol, the belief

in male superiority and the martyr complex among women. He describes a series of disadvantages afflicting poor families with small children, and he explains that: "By the time slum children are age six or seven, they have usually absorbed the basic values and attitudes of their subculture and are not psychologically geared to take full advantage of changing conditions or increased opportunities which may occur in their lifetime" (qtd. in Marger *Social* 166). The novel clearly demonstrates the status quo of the young offenders in the novel. For example, the gang's motto on Tuti's door is a clear demonstration of the attitudes and values gained in their subculture of violence. They know that "if they don't kill" (becoming the perpetrators of violence) they "will be killed" (becoming the victims).

Tapia does not focus only in the living conditions of the poor; she clearly represents the other side of the Panamanian social class. The space of poverty of Tuti and his group of young offenders is depicted vis-à-vis with the high-class neighborhood in which Luis Carlos and his family live. Interestingly though, the story does not give any detailed, physical descriptions of the high-class neighborhood (as it does of Tuti's poor neighborhood), and yet, it gives it the name "La Cresta" as an indication of Luis Carlos' preferred social class. La Cresta is an exclusive neighborhood in Panama City. It is surrounded by expensive houses and high-rise elegant condominiums overlooking the Pacific Ocean.

It is important to consider that until this point, the focus has been placed on how Tapia presents the effects of poverty correlating with inequality and violence, focusing on marginal children as "victims" of society (as has been previously demonstrated). But her work does not end there. She also uses poverty in her novel in order to reveal other aspects produced by the phenomena of V.I.P. For example, the novel also gives dual agency to the poor protagonist Tuti. That is to say, he becomes powerful and takes control of his life as free agent in negative but as

well in a positive way. For example, Tuti not only chooses to become abuser and scapegoater, blaming society and those who have more than he for his shortcomings, but as well, Tuti uses his problems, poverty and living condition to empowerment. At the moment in which he decides to stop feeling like a victim of society, and chooses to amend his life, he takes constructive control of it.

Tapia shows Tuti's fights against the status quo of his poor neighborhood. For example, he participates in educational opportunities given by Luis Carlos and his mother, changes his illegal way of doing business by earning money honestly, and acquires a greater sense of confidence. Thus, in spite of his conditions, Tuti regains the feeling of empowerment and agency (before he is killed by the group of offenders). The opportunities that Tuti and the poor of society need in order to develop that healthier sense of self and society, does not depend exclusively on the "charity" of the wealthier members of society (like Luis Carlos and his mother), but rather must involve a transformation of the very structures of inequality that produce poverty. The change cannot simply occur in top to bottom fashion, but must engage all sectors of society (those represented by Tuti and Luis Carlos) in order to be effective. As Luis Carlos explains:

Antes del atentado mi vida estaba vacía. Lo tenía todo, cuando digo todo me refiero a lo material, aunque también tenía el amor de Susana y de mi familia, pero le faltaba sentido a mi vida. Después de la agresión fue peor porque me sentía inútil. No obstante, no era mi incapacidad lo que me hacía sentir de esa manera, sino el hecho de no servir para nada. Ahora la vida me da la oportunidad de hacer algo relevante y pienso que puedo hacerlo, por mí, por Susana, por el prójimo y por mi país". (54-55)

[Before the shooting, my life was empty. I had it all. When I say all, I mean the material things, although I had Susana's love and that of my family's, but my life was missing meaning. After the shooting, it was worse because I felt useless. Not because I was disabled but because of not being good for anything. Now life has given me the opportunity to do something relevant and I think I can do it, for me, for Susana, for my neighbor and for my country" (53-54).]

Tragically, Luis Carlos only learns that important lesson after vividly experiencing physically the structural violence that Tuti had experienced every day of his life.

**In conclusion**, Rose Marie Tapia's main message in *Roberto por el buen camino* is clear and poignant: Tuti and the group of poor young offenders are victims of society. And yet she reminds her readers that each individual is also responsible, up to a certain degree, of their own fate. The manifestation of scarceness faces the readers with the harsh living conditions affecting poor communities and depicting lack of resources and abandonment as primary sources of youth delinquency. However, while making an implicit call for proactive action against the problem of poverty, Tapia issues an explicit, challenging call to the readers of the novel: "if we all cooperate according to our responsibilities, I as citizen, and you as the media, the politicians, and the elected officials, don't you think we could achieve something?" (76). This call for help depicted in the Panamanian author's literature is an universal shout in Panamanian society and all societies where poverty—call it absolute, relative, extreme or moderate affect the well being of all those affected by it, especially children and young people.

While on *Roberto por el buen camino* Tapia has depicted youth bodies been afflicted and controlled by the non-conventional and the non-acceptable trend of V.I.P. (Violence, inequality and poverty), the next chapter analyses the lives of women in Mauro Zúñiga Araúz's narrative. It depicts the narrative of a young woman controlled and afflicted by domestic abuse. This then leads her to a full bloom form of prostitution promoted by globalization. Giving the same results: subjugation of bodies and minds.

**CHAPTER IV      Power and Subjugation in Mauro Zúñiga Araúz's *Espejo de miserias*:  
A Social Novel about Poverty, Abuse, and Prostitution**

Sexual exploitation objectifies women by reducing them to sex; sex that incites violence against women and that reduces women to commodities for market exchange. Sexual exploitation is the foundation of women's oppression socially normalized.

—Kathleen Barry.

Mauro Zúñiga Araúz's *Espejo de miserias* takes the reader to a deep journey through a diverse range of social problems affecting women in Latin America and other countries around the world. Focusing first and foremost on the subjugation and control of women's bodies through prostitution, the author demonstrates, once more, how patriarchal societies often victimize women starting at an early age. While in his novel *El chacal del general* (analyzed in chapter II) Zúñiga Araúz places women in spaces of power based on the brute violence performed by the Panamanian dictator; in *Espejo de miserias*, the exercise and manifestation of power manifest in more subtle ways, perpetrated by globalization and the sex market. Nonetheless, both novels demonstrate the diverse forms of power used by authoritarian figures to abuse women's bodies and minds. They are not only objectified (treated as objects), but they are commodified as well (treated as merchandise). In this novel the author constructs a central character that embodies what objectification and promiscuity can do to young girls. As a result, the protagonist is trapped in social deviations that ultimately make her turn her to prostitution as a form of escape from both the poverty and the domestic abuse that surround her. As depicted in the novel, the young protagonist—and vulnerable women, in general, for that matter—then becomes an easy prey for procurers, pimps and traffickers, who later lead her to the globalized sex market. The novel also offers a nuanced psychological representation of the effects of those conditions on the characters. It exposes the justifications, internal actions, frames of mind, passions and obsessions encountered by the woman in the world of prostitution.

This chapter analyzes and identifies three important manifestations of power in Zúñiga Araúz's literary work and demonstrates that, in fact, prostitution is one of those mechanisms of power whose wide net, as Foucault insists, touches everybody and everything (*Power/* 38). Firstly, it analyzes the display of biopower in prostitution and its liaison with the world economy and globalization. This Foucauldian concept of biopower is clearly depicted in the novel, and as explained previously, it refers to the "apparatuses" (i.e. economy, global market, sex trade, etc.) which subjugate and control lives and entire populations (*The History* 140). Secondly, it demonstrates the powerful obscurity and yet subtle role of procurers, pimps, traffickers and globalization in the equation of power. It exposes their recruitment methods to subjugate primordially young women in need, converting them into commodities in the sex trade. Lastly, it scrutinizes the power dynamics that underlie the "normalization" of the globalized phenomena of prostitution and trafficking.

In order to establish the points mentioned above, this work uses the notion of biopower to display two forms of power manifested in bodies bordering prostitution. The role of Omayra mirrors the diverse ways in which vulnerable young women in need are targeted. The sex trade lures and uses women's bodies as "productive/docile" and "physiological/ideal" bodies, for the lucrative economic purpose to sell them as commodities to the highest bidder. The notion of "commodification" explained by Karl Marx is also used to depict the diverse ways in which a mostly-male controlled market targets and leads women from their domestic sexual exploitation to the globalized sex trade of prostitution. As Susanne Kappeler notes, it is a market unified by one consistent factor: "the adult male agent of slavery, trafficking and prostitution" (219), adding that "male power is the power to use women and children as objects in male transactions." Transactions are economic: trade offs" (226). Furthermore, in his novel, Zúñiga Araúz

demonstrates that his protagonist not only needs to deal with unforeseen male pimps and traffickers. She is also confronted with the worst kind of pimp that a woman could face in her lifetime: her own mother. Zúñiga Araúz uses Omayra's objectification in order to echo the voices—or lack thereof— of thousands of women in Third World countries and around the world.

The notion of “normalization” is used to juxtapose two vital points of view about prostitution. Although in his novel Zúñiga Araúz demonstrates that prostitutes, like the heroine Omayra, feel violated of their human rights—and for that reason the author says that with his novel he wanted to denounce the hypocrisy of a society that uses and abuses women—it is important to introduce, as well, the voices of groups of prostitutes and/or their allies who (although opposing mistreatment of women) are in fact fighting for the normalization and decriminalization of prostitution. They want to have the freedom to choose their line of work, and at the same time, to be protected by the law against violence and prejudice. This raises the following question: Is prostitution a violation of human rights, or is it a human right? To answer this question, I will focus on the powerful binary dichotomy of “forced-prostitution versus free-prostitution.” Normalization demonstrates the continuum of apparatuses or administrative process that makes normalizing power acceptable to society (Foucault *The History* 144). This paradigm is used as another example of manifestation of power in the novel.

Besides revealing first and foremost the three manifestations of power, this chapter introduces its analysis by examining the power of language and the written expression in the diary that Omayra writes in the novel. It gives a concise explanation of the Diary as a literary genre, followed by an explanation of the literary techniques utilized by Zúñiga Araúz. It is important to keep in mind that although *Espejo de miserias* portrays other important social



marginalizations and other conditions affecting women such as abortion, and homosexuality, among others; the primary focus of this analysis is about prostitution and its manifestation of power. Prostitution is a detrimental reality encountered in every society, mostly affecting developing countries—where poverty is palpable—a situation that contributes to the psychological, economic, social and physical oppression of women. Besides analyzing the diverse ways in which the novel reveals subjugation and abuse of power, this chapter additionally demonstrates how it portrays, the possibility of overcoming those situations, as well. It represents a prostitute who decides to end her silence and recuperate freedom. As Tingting Zhao notes, when a prostitute indicates the breaking of the silence and the gaining of subjectivity and agency, she is declaring her freedom (166). In the text, Omayra's resistance to succumb allows her to recuperates not only her subjectivity, but also her humanity and freedom to manage her own life.

At this point, it is essential to be aware that although this examination is not necessarily intended to be a feminist study *per se*, the plot of Zúñiga Araúz's novel invites a critical analysis including the perspectives of these feminist theories. For example, Sarah Bromberg in "Feminist Issues in Prostitution," explains that whereas the Radical Feminist movement considers prostitution of women an oppression that "degrades women and furthers the power politics of the male gender," women belonging to the liberal feminist groups insist that women—in this case, prostitutes—"are free agents pursuing their legitimate economic interests to enter into any necessary contracts to meet their needs" (1-2). The combination of prostitutes' need for money and men's need for sex makes for an acceptable contract, according to the liberal feminist point of view. Most importantly, Bromberg adds that in spite of these liberal and radical points of view, "in all cases one thing is certain: feminism is about promoting a world in which women

enjoy an equal share of the rights and power” (1). This chapter discusses how Zúñiga Araúz’s novel depicts the above perspectives. The following section gives a brief description of the plot of the novel followed by the literary techniques that the author employs in his work.

#### **IV.1 Brief Description of Zúñiga Araúz’s *Espejo de miserias***

The master is he who speaks, who disposes of the entirety of language; the object is one who is silent, who remains separate.  
—Roland Barthes.

Zúñiga Araúz depicts cases of violence perpetrated against women through sexual exploitation using the story of his protagonist Omayra Huertas. Omayra is a good, poor, religious girl who endures a life of sexual abuse and aberrations from an early age. She lives in the ghettos, referred to as “the Cerritos,” in an unnamed city, but the narration makes a clear parallel with Panama City.<sup>24</sup> Omayra is sexually abused and nearly raped by her father before turning thirteen, and acquires the identity of a prostitute at 21-years of age. The sexual exploitation that she endures in her own household directs her first to sell her body in her local surroundings, and eventually she crosses borders into the global sex market. Although the early stage of the novel leads the reader to believe that the protagonist’s story is yet another tale of powerlessness and voicelessness, depicting women’s oppression, poverty and violence, the author quickly reveals the resilience of a heroine who, despite her world of lies and deprivations, is later unexpectedly able to undermine both her oppressors and oppressions with a powerful instrument—her diary. The diary of the prostitute portrays and reflects upon the diverse power relations that the narrative depicts.

Omayra’s diary is a significant tool that highlights the importance of language and writing. It is first the account of the domestic sexual abuse, problems, fears, deceptions and even dreams of a teenager. Later it is a chronicle of her silence and secrecy. Finally it is a full-bloomed exposure of the underworld of prostitution and trafficking of women in a global sex

market. It not only gives her the necessary strength to break free of oppression, but it is also a voice of hope to women in the underworld of prostitution. Zúñiga Araúz provides his protagonist with a tool of power which she employs from the moment she decides not to be silent anymore and starts putting her thoughts into writing and documenting her ordeals.

At the moment she breaks her silence, Omayra's diary becomes one of those knowledgeable voices of power which Kathleen Barry, in *The Prostitution of Sexuality* (1995), describes as a voice of hope that "breaks the barrier of sound overpowering the voices of despair of those who refuse to speak of sexual exploitation as violation and thus perpetuate it" (277). The constant examination of self and others (i.e. her family, friends and sex clients) in the diary gives the protagonist Omayra power/knowledge of her own body and the world of sex.

The written description of sexual degradation that she logged in a period of three years and half is an important device that allows the subject of the novel to become aware of her own condition. It makes her want to take proactive action to impede others to go down the same path. In her own words, she writes: "*Porque como soy una mujer que vive en el infierno, creo saber lo necesario para que nadie entre. . . . Al regresar de este sitio dantesco, nos obliga a impedir que la gente camine hacia él. Es una obligación moral*" (117). ["*Because I'm a woman who lives in hell, I believe I know what is needed for no one else to enter . . . . Upon returning from this Dantesque place, we are obliged to stop people walking towards it. It is a moral obligation*" (100)].<sup>25</sup> It serves as a teaching and learning device for both writer (the fictional prostitute) and reader of the novel. After having displayed in general terms the plot of the novel, it is vital to stop briefly with more details of an element in the story: the diary that Omayra writes.

The protagonist starts her writing in a notebook which she hid under the mattress: "Creías que lo que te sucedía a ti no les podía ocurrir a otros niños de tu edad y, como te

avergonzaba compartir tus pesares, decidiste hablar contigo misma. . . . Dudaste iniciarlo por el temor al robo y desnudar así tu intimidad; pero la idea de su lectura antes de morirte te dio el impulso final, *porque nunca perdiste la esperanza de que todo iba a cambiar*” (15), (énfasis agregado). [“You thought what happened to you couldn’t happen to other kids your age and, as you were ashamed to share your sorrows, you decided to talk to yourself. . . . You had doubts about starting it for fear of theft and of your privacy being stripped, but the idea of reading it before you die gave you the final boost, *because you never lost hope that everything would change*” (14-15), (emphasis added)]. Omayra develops a better understanding of how her world works when she decides to start writing her secrets and ordeals.

Omayra becomes knowledgeable of the social and economic forces that bring vulnerable women to a life of prostitution. She understands the subordinated position of women in paternalistic society and that when they (she) do want to escape, it is not an easy task to accomplish. Had she not started writing and recording her ordeals at an early age, she most probably would never have been able to understand it. As a result, she not only becomes stronger, but she may even also empower other female victims of trafficking and prostitution. The last chapter of the novel depicts how the protagonist uses this instrument of power as the key to her liberation. Every detail is written in the diary: the sexual molestation by her father, her dreams of good girl turned sour by the paternalistic society in which she lives, her encounter with love, deception, homosexuality and lesbianism. As well, the years in the global sex market in the Netherland Antilles, and the surgical physical transformation to which she was submitted in order to become “virgin” again and therefore more “valuable” in men eyes. The diary includes everything that the young -Omayra wants—real love and respect—and also what the adult Omayra pursues and dreams of, a wealthy husband. She ultimately finds that husband

through lies and deceit—although she loves him. He turns out to be an honest and wealthy man who marries her and gives her legal custody of all his possessions and fortunes. The last two entries in the diary read:

*3 de enero de 1991. Luis Eduardo me llamó una mañana inesperadamente . . . Me llevó a una oficina que yo no conocía y de la cual él era el Presidente. El Director me entregó unas escrituras que indicaban que mi esposo me traspasaba todos sus bienes para su custodia. Ignoraba que fuese un hombre tan rico. Ese día sentí un arrepentimiento demoledor. Caí en cuenta de que los excrementos tienen más valor que yo, porque al menos sirven para abono. ¿Quién so yo? Una puta ensuciada con los humores de la humanidad. Una mujer degenerada . . . ¿Mi seguridad? Eso es lo que dice mi mamá que debo buscar. ¿Qué seguridad puede tener un edificio construido sobre la base de mierda? . . . Soy una mujer indigna de un hombre tan amoroso y bondadoso. (192-93)*

*[January 3, 1991. Luis Eduardo unexpectedly called me one morning. I thought something was wrong. He took me to an office that I didn't know and of which he was President. The Director gave me a few deeds stating that my husband transferred all his possessions to me for safekeeping. I didn't know he was such a rich man. That day I felt a crushing remorse. I realized that excrement is more valuable than me, because at least the former serves as fertilizer. Who am I? A whore soiled by the humor of humanity. A degenerate woman . . . I have no right to be loved. My security? My mom tells me that's what I should look for. What security can a building have constructed on a foundation of shit? . . . I am a woman unworthy of such a loving and kind man. (162-63)]*

*6 de enero de 1991. Ayer fui a la notaría donde rechacé la custodia de sus bienes. Me voy. . . Anoche tuve el mismo sueño, pero en la habitación se iba reduciendo la basura . . . Mis andrajos fueron transformándose en un vestido blanco de encajes. De mi piel se desprendía la suciedad y logré verla de un tenue color rosado como debió haber sido algún día . . . Al momento en que te disponías a salir de la casa, con una maleta casi vacía, llegó Luis Eduardo. —¿Qué te ocurre?—Te preguntó. . . . Le entregaste el diario. (193-94)*

*January 6, 1991. Yesterday I went to the notary, where I refused custody of his assests. I'm leaving . . . Last night I had the same dream, but the garbage decreased . . . My rags were being transformed into a white laced dress with lace. The dirt loosened from my skin and I was able to see it as a faint pink color as it should have been one day . . . At the moment you were about to leave the house, with an almost empty suitcase, Luis Eduardo arrived. —What's happening?—he asked you. . . . You gave him the diary. (163-64)]*

At the very moment in which Omayra decides to break free from the oppression and lies, she sacrifices everything she wants. Her self-surrender is also a form of revenge against her mother who procured her. As Zhao notes about the prostitute's self-sacrifice and break in silence for subjectivity and agency: "although (sometimes) the result is death, the road towards her death is triumphant" (166). Omayra's life of prostitution, lies and misery finally comes to an end. That part of her life dies, and finally she gains her ultimate freedom.

There are two main sections in *Espejo de miserias* that depict the claws of domestic and global sexual abuse and promiscuity. For example, at the beginning of the novel the author illustrates the representation of a series of domestic familial abuse suffered by Omayra Huertas in her home. Omayra's naïveté makes her to continue believing in goodness and honesty until the day she finds herself despised and rejected. The physical and sexual abuse suffered at the hands of her drunken father is depicted in the novel, as follows:

Una noche, después de que el hombre-ogro maltrató, comió y se acostó . . . Te miró con ojos de bestia. Llevabas como única prenda un camisón. Viejo. Deteriorado. Por sus desgarraduras se alcanzaba a ver los pezones de virgen y parte del vello púbico. El hombre tomó el vaso y te levantó el camisón hasta la altura de las mamas. Te manoseó los genitales con sus manos sucias. . . . Tu padre te levantó con violencia, te tumbó en su cama y te volvió a subir el camisón al momento que te forzaba a abrir las piernas. Llevó su boca hacia las mamas redondas. Su fuerza animal fue doblegándote. (11)

[One night, after the monster abused, ate and went to bed . . . He looked at you with the eyes of a beast. The only clothing item you were wearing was a nightgown. Old. Deteriorated. Due to the tears one could see your virgin nipples and part of your pubic hair. The man took the glass and lifted your nightgown to the height of your breasts. He fondled your genitals with his dirty hands. . . . Your father got you up violently, knocked you down on his bed and lifted your nightgown again while forcing your legs open. He brought his mouth towards your round breasts. His animal strength overpowered you. (11-12)]

The above excerpt is important because it is one of Zúñiga Araúz's depictions of the patriarchal oppression experienced by the protagonist.

As Barry explains, young girls suffering this type of domestic abuse “particularly when it has been sustained over time, as in incest assault, has already predisposed women, made them particularly vulnerable to other sexual exploitations and to not fight back” (*The Prostitution of Sexuality* 23). In the novel, after Omayra succumbs to her father’s sexual molestation as a child and as an adolescent, she continues with the same pattern, this time at the hands of another masculine character, her brother Carlos. Carlos killed their father because he wanted to protect his little sister, but then he becomes the abuser. Omayra’s brother Carlos introduces her to the world of prostitution, sex, violence and murder. He also becomes the head of the family, repeating the same paternal abusive and violent patterns. For example, she logs: “Una noche [Carlos] trajo a una prostituta con quien copuló en presencia de ustedes; otra vez, a otra, lo que se convirtió en rutina” (16). [“One night he brought a prostitute with whom he had intercourse in the presence of you and your mother; another day he brought another, until it became routine” (15)]. This was Omayra’s frame of mind when she decided to start her diary in an effort to record her own thoughts. Her first entry is logged at the age of thirteen, in the midst of a desperate state of mind. Thirteen and a half years later, in a very different frame of mind, Omayra logs for the last time, on the day she decides to finally break free from oppression, recouping total subjectivity and agency over her life.

In *Espejo de miserias*, paradoxically, Zúñiga Araúz introduces an unorthodox form of oppression, unusual in his novels—matriarchal oppression. The protagonist Omayra also suffers at the hands and influence of the person who was supposed to protect her—her own mother. The protagonist’s mother not only pushes her only daughter to local promiscuity, but to the international world of prostitution and trickery as well. After living a life of sexual oppression and violence herself, she starts pushing her own daughter to the same oppressive world. The

mother procuring work started in a subtle way. She first starts with insinuations: “*Al comentárselo a mi mamá, me dijo que no lo pensara dos veces. Parece que a ella lo único que le interesa es el dinero*” (106). [“*When I discussed it with my mom, she told me not to think about it twice. It seems that she’s only interested in money*” (91)]. The mother also uses sarcastic silences and/or smiles: “*Hubiera querido escuchar de sus labios un “no”, aunque fuese débil pero en su rostro se dibujó esa máscara inocultable de la satisfacción. No le importaba el precio de su felicidad*” (107). [“*I wanted to hear a “no” from her lips, even if weak, but her face depicted that unconcealed mask of satisfaction* (92)]. The mother’s demands does not end there, they intensify even further.

Chapter six of the novel shows Omayra’s mother’s full-bloomed manifestation of both procurement and pimping after Omayra decides to leave her international “job” of prostitution. Her mother’s dissatisfaction is not only demonstrated, but the novel depicts her new subtle plans for Omayra’s comeback to prostitution, as well. Omayra writes her thoughts as follows: “*Cuando le dije a mi mama que no regresaba más a ese oficio sin adjetivos que podamos escribir, me miró con un rostro desafiante. ¿Qué le ha pasado? No puede ser que mi propia madre me exija continuar trabajando en ese muladar*” (125). [“*When I told my mom that I wasn’t going back to that profession without adjectives that can be written, she gave me a defying look. What has happened to her? It can’t be that my own mother requires me to continue working in that dump*” (107)]. Omayra’s mother in her pimping role, directs her daughter to a web of scams and frauds: “*Mamá ha planeado todo. Me voy a efectuar una cirugía plastic para que me reconstruyan el hymen*” (128). [“*Mom has planned everything. I’m going to have plastic surgery to reconstruct my hymen*” (109)].



The surgery that makes the protagonist a “virgin” again is another demonstration of the ways in which women are objectified. Omayra has to use her body as merchandise in a trading act. For example, she performs sex with a plastic surgeon who in exchange reconstructs Omayra’s vaginal hymen. When women are objectified in such a way, Kappeler considers age, beauty and inexperience with sex as vital factors in the sex trade and the “virgin” factor makes women a better investment in the market (227). Omayra’s mother knows that through a surgery Omayra can ultimately increase her opportunities to get a richer man.

The second section of the novel depicts Omayra as an “official prostitute,” now navigating through the global sex market. In this section the narrative shows the role of globalization through the ways in which the global market magnetizes and uses women’s bodies. The author points to impoverishment and vulnerability as main factors in women’s exploitation. For example, the narration shows the series of encounters that guide the young Omayra Huertas into prostitution, pimps and clients. These encounters allow the subjugation of women’s bodies as commodities through trafficking to richer countries for the ultimate purpose of financial gain for traffickers. The global sex trade is considered a “multibillion dollar illegal enterprise” (*Equality Now* par. 2).<sup>26</sup> This enterprise forms part of the mechanism of power that marginalizes and perpetuates subjugation, as is revealed in section IV.2. At this point, it is essential to establish the importance of the genre diary.

#### **IV.1.1 Diary as a Literary Genre**

The Diary is an important genre in literary studies. For example, Bruce Merry explains the importance of it in his article “The Literary Diary as a Genre.” He notes that it is a project that typically starts with simple words and as manifestation to remember and to not forget. He explains that as a genre, the Diary has been taken for granted by many scholars: “In a way the

diary is with us all, as an idea or a project or a curiosity which is instantly attainable. It is the most pliable and elastic of literary genres, in fact we are so familiar with it that we hardly include it in our assessment of important literary forms” because it is a form of writing that is considered “easy and casual” as a way of “throwing light” into someone life and world, “something to take for granted, something which is found after the death of a writer or a famous person” then it acquires more importance and therefore is published, but not without its necessary editing. However, he argues that Diary as a genre has as much on its contents that it easily correlates with novels.

*Espejo de miserias*, the diary of the protagonist Omayra shows that reality, it not only has the narrative style and devices of a novel, but even it can be considered as form of a testimony or even, a biography. Emilia Cano Calderón points out that “los diarios han sido una constante en la Literatura Universal a lo largo de todos los siglos” (53) [“diaries have been a constant in the Universal Literature throughout the centuries”], but it still has a difficult position in literature. Due to its connotation, it has been considered “obra no creativa y de reflejo de la vida privada” [“no creative work and a reflection of the private life”]. Nonetheless, as Merry points out, its position is vital in literary studies because—among other things—it contains “a personal dialogue between the writer and his private persona . . . (with) the mixing of personal pronouns” (4). He adds that “when the writer tends to “address himself as “you,” give himself instructions and reminders in the imperative, scolding himself from an identity once-removed . . . we are in the presence of a self-conscious artistic style of annotation” (4). This form of writing is described and explained in the following analysis of the writing techniques in Zúñiga Araúz’s novel.

#### IV.1.2 Literary Techniques in *Espejo de miserias*

Zúñiga Araúz's literary work and writing style are limpid, precise and engaging. He uses them as works of art. As Writer Ray Harvey notes, "Literature is the art-form of language, and words are its tools. As a painter uses paint, as a musician uses musical instruments, as a sculptor uses stone-and-chisel, so a writer uses words"(1). That is exactly what Mauro Zúñiga Araúz does. He draws with implicit and explicit language all the factual information he has gathered through the years about violence, sexual abuse and prostitution into his literary work. Like a work of art, Zúñiga Araúz seeks to paint a picture of the reality of prostitution and its powerful tentacles, primarily affecting poor women in third world countries. The author confronts the reader with reality in his fictional tale, and he communicates it clearly and directly. Zúñiga Araúz uses solid sexual descriptions and connotations whenever it is necessary to make an impact; and he is not afraid to do so.

Even though critic Isabel Barragán de Turner considers that the author introduces the reader to "un muestrario de las muchas aberraciones de la sexualidad humana, sin caer en el regodeo morboso y moroso que exhibe la pornografía"<sup>27</sup> (par. 15). ["a show of the many aberrations of human sexuality, without falling into the morbid and morose self-satisfied pleasure that pornography exhibits"], one can argue that, in fact, Zúñiga Araúz uses descriptions that actually shock and confront the reader with the reality of the abject in prostitution—even descriptions that can be considered by many as pornographic details. The abject in prostitution refers to Julia Kristeva's notion of the abject, which describes things that are rejected by society because they disturb systems and orders (2). An example of a disturbance is logged by Omayra as follows:

*8 de diciembre de 1986*

*Ayer sucedió algo horripilante. Entró solo un hombre pequeño, insignificante. Me pareció una persona inofensiva, tranquila. Me pagó ochenta dólares. Los clientes pagan al entrar. Me llamó la atención que permanecía mucho tiempo con la cara hundida entre mis partes. Yo lo dejé con mi acostumbrada hipocresía. Luego me pidió que me pusiera sobre él quien mantuvo la boca en el mismo lugar.*

–Súbete un poco más—solicitó el caballero a lo que accediste.

–Ahora, orínate en mi boca.

*Me quedé paralizada. Pensé que estaba alucinada escuchando voces del más allá cuando el hombre me repitió su exigencia. Qué es esta aberración ¿Cómo es posible que un ser humano sienta placer bebiendo orina? (115)*

*[December 8, 1986. Something happened yesterday. A small, insignificant man came in alone. He seemed a harmless, quiet person. He paid me eighty dollars. Customers spend time with their face buried in my parts. I let him do it with my usual hypocrisy. Then he asked me to get on top of him, who kept his mouth at the same place.*

--Go a little higher – asked the gentleman, and you consented.

--Now, pee over my mouth.

*I froze. I thought I was mesmerized listening to voices from beyond when the man repeated his demand. What is this aberration? How can a man feel pleasure by drinking urine? (98).]*

The above example is one of the many entries in the diary that Zúñiga Araúz uses to depict the sexual practices experienced by women involved in the sex industry that can shock conventional readers.

To keep the attention of the reader, Zúñiga Araúz uses a diverse range of literary devices to draft his literature. Although some of the literary techniques are similar to those encountered in his novel *El chacal del general* (discussed in chapter two of this dissertation), in *Espejos de miseria* the author uses new writing techniques as well. One of them is the distortion of language. The language in the diary changes according to who writes: Omayra-the-young-teenager or Omayra-the-young-adult. The written expression of the former makes grammatical mistakes and also displays ingenuousness. Although this also happens throughout the entries of the latter, the writing additionally reveals maturity and hardiness. This technique is important because with it the author portrays the academic knowledge—or lack thereof—of the

protagonist through the writing. For example: “*Me llamo Omayra Huerta y tengo 13 años ya no soy una niña me di cuenta de eso cuando manche las **savanas** de sangre me asuste mucho **pense** que mi papa me **abia** metido un **cuchicho** por **alla** abajo y yo no me di de cuenta*” (15, énfasis añadido a algunas palabras). [“My name is Omayra Huertas and I am 13 yrs old I’m not a girl any more I realized that when I stained my sheets with blood I got very scared I thought my dad cut me with a knife down there and I did not notice” ( 15). (Emphasis added on some words in the Spanish excerpt).

As Fermín Caballero notes, “El diario marca la diferencia con la tipografía, con letra desenfadada y con una desgarrada inocencia de la cristiana que Omayra lleva dentro . . . El patrimonio léxico del autor, denota un trabajo paciente y metódico . . . el doctor Zúñiga Araúz, [denota] la importancia del lenguaje en la narrativa que maneja la niña, la adolescente, la mujer, la prostituta” (Par. 9).<sup>28</sup> [“The diary marks the difference with typography, with unconstrained handwriting and with an innocence torn from the Christianity that Omayra carries inside. . . The lexical patrimony of the author denotes a patient and methodical work . . . doctor Zúñiga Araúz, [denotes] the importance of the language in the narrative that is used by the child, the adolescent, the woman, the prostitute”].<sup>29</sup> The language in the diary acquires its own personality.

The novel is written using a polyphony of voices. Although this literary device has been explained (in chapter two of this dissertation), it is important to revisit it due to the new element that Zúñiga Araúz brings into this narrative. *Espejo de miserias* is narrated by the voice of a homodiegetic narrator, a first-person narrator, who is the main protagonist. This narrator not only uses the first-person singular “I,” but switches at times to the first-person plural “we.” The narrator also addresses the protagonist as “you” in a second-person perspective. The second-person narrator narrates to a specific narratee and/or is immersing in an interior dialogue (John

Pier 190-92). In other words, the homodiegetic narrator is in complicity with the narrate. It is in an interior monologue, talking to her own conscience, speaking directly to herself. For example: “Tú ignoras la sensación de una caricia paterna. Tus tímpanos jamás han vibrado por los tonos de las palabras tiernas del hombre que depositó su simiente para darte vida” (11). [“You don’t know the feeling of a father’s caress. Your eardrums have never vibrated to the tender words of the man who deposited his seed to give you life” (5)]. With this form of writing, Caballero considers that Zúñiga Araúz’s reader sees a dance of narrators, centered mainly on the second person, mirroring the work of the talented Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes in his novel *Aura*. Furthermore, Zúñiga Araúz uses the narrative voice of an omniscient narrator.

An omniscient narrator is also the heterodiegetic or third-person narrator who recounts the story but is not a character. For example: “Con el puño de la mano derecha la golpeó en la oreja izquierda” (1). [“He struck her left ear with his right fist” (4)]. The story provides different perspectives of the events; it offers an example of what philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin refers to as “heteroglossia.”<sup>30</sup> That is to say, it introduces a multitude of narrative voices in the story. This fragmentation of voices depicting the main storyline, which is basically protagonist Omayra’s life experience of violence and prostitution, is narrated in what could be considered a chronological manner, but is not. In other words, although the novel does not present evidence of flashbacks or flash forwards, nevertheless, the author strategically uses a new literary technique in his story to interrupt the sequential order. This is a device known as “advance mention.”

With the introduction of advance mentions, the author breaks the linear approach of the main narrative. This technique is a narrative element, as Gerald Prince explains: “A narrative element the significance of which becomes clear only (well) after it is first mentioned; a

narrative “seed” the importance of which is not recognized when it first appears” (4). With it Zúñiga Araúz breaks with the familiar way of seeing, reading or perceiving a prostitute story. That is to say, a “chronologically familiar” story plot could easily become a continuous and monotonous sex content diary, replete with what is expected to be found in the diary of a prostitute—solely a discourse of sex, accompanied with periods of violence and sexual anomalies. This technique impedes the reader from reading in “efferent mode,” in other words, a rather monotonous “storehouse of facts and ideas” only (Tyson 173). Instead, the advance mentions allow the reader to perceive the novel in “aesthetic mode.” That is, in “the emotional subtleties of its language” which encourage the reader to judge and discern (Tyson 173). The advance mentions transform the story into something more personal to the reader because they show the humanity of the characters depicted.

Using this literary strategy, the author leads the reader to believe, at an early stage of the novel, that the mechanism of power is strictly placed in the sexuality that the diary reveals. The main narrative gives the impression that masculine characters in the narrative embody “male” power (i.e. chauvinism, perversity, machismo), and that feminine characters embody powerlessness and subjugation (i.e. objects of desire without agency, or the powerless victims of male domination). Nonetheless, this is not the case in *Espejo de miserias*. As demonstrated, power operates everywhere in the novel and touches everyone, male and female alike, without discrimination. Power is also conveyed in the novel through the use of advance mentions depicted in six “small-story” chapters in the novel. These small-stories are comparable to the “pétit recits” that French philosopher and literary theorist Jean-François Lyotard considers significant because they impede the concentration, or the power of the story, only on the whole grand narration (xxiv). These ‘petit recits’ or ‘pequeños cuentos’ offer a more nuanced version

of the role of male characters and their relation to power in the story. For example, in the novel, one small-story may consist of only a two, four or six-paged chapter, and yet be a complete narrative with poignant beginnings, intriguing middles and cliffhanger endings. In those stories, Zúñiga Araúz introduces new masculine characters who interact with the protagonist's difficult path. There are four small stories in *Espejo de miserias* that introduce four different masculine characters: Raúl, Guillermo, Manolo and Luis Eduardo.

By doing so, the author briefly illustrates the male characters' individual stories. He reveals the humanity of men and the diverse ways in which they themselves are impacted by patriarchy and machismo. In other words, the author demonstrates that male children are also innocent victims of patriarchy. Patriarchy is a massive machination of power that touches societies in all times and places, and is still causing struggles even in this century in Panama and throughout the world. These young boys form part of a tradition that perpetuates itself. That is, as they grow up, the boys then become chauvinists and perpetrators of hostility against women. Barragán de Turner indicates that the author also focuses on the problems that she calls "la fatal herencia del machismo" [the fatal inheritance of machismo] impressed upon boys. Patricia Muñoz Cabrera in *Intersecting Violences* (2010) explains that patriarchy and machismo influence men to commit violence against women. In her words, machismo "leads men into believing that they have 'a right' to abuse women psychologically, physically and sexually for it is 'natural male behavior'" (36). Without the informative background that the small-story chapter provides, the reader may have a preconceived idea of the male characters and of the relationship of power between the sexes existing in the main narrative.

The following excerpt from chapter two, entitled "Uno de Ellos" ["One of Them"] is a well-defined example of a small-story-chapter:



Raúl era el menor de dos hermanos. El padre apodado “el oso” era un hombre obeso, con el abdomen prominente. Vivían en una barriada de clase media . . . los dos hijos asistían a un colegio privado . . . El oso manoseaba mucho dinero, como lo apreciaba el mismo Raúl al ver los sacos de lona repletos de billetes. . . . La madre, una mujer tímida y silenciosa, se acostumbró a hablar con gestos. . . . Un sábado en la noche, cuando la familia celebrara el décimo cuarto año de Raúl, entraron cuatro hombres grandes a la casa. El padre los recibió en la oficina; pero se fue con ellos, luego de una charla de pocos minutos y de pocos amigos. . . . El oso no llegó esa noche, ni la siguiente . . . Tu padre está secuestrado. Tengo tres días para recolectar el dinero . . . En la madrugada del tercer día se presentaron los hombres con el oso vestido con la misma camisa. Sucia. Un olor pestífero emanaba de su cuerpo. Los desechos de la fisiología permanecían dentro de su ropa. Lo sentaron en una silla de la oficina. Preguntaron por el dinero. La suma no se había recogido . . . Le solicitaron a la mujer que se desnudara en presencia de sus hijos. La violaron . . . La escena se desarrolló completa con cada uno de los invasores. Cuatro. Miraban a los hijos con las muecas indolentes de un placer inesperado . . . Los revólveres se cargaron sobre la cabeza del oso. Varios disparos sin ruido. Después de la ejecución del padre, la familia se trastocó. El aislamiento fue total . . . “Todas las noches me acuesto con el recuerdo de esa noche fatal. Las pesadillas me aturden. Amanezco asfixiado.” (35-39)

[Raúl was the younger of two brothers. The father, nicknamed “the Bear,” was a fat man with a pot belly . . . They lived in an unpretentious middle class neighborhood . . . The two children attended a private school . . . The Bear groped a lot of money, as Raul himself saw in duffel bags full of cash . . . The mother, a shy and silent woman, was used to speaking with gestures. . . . One Saturday night, when the family celebrated Raúl’s fourteenth birthday, four big men entered the house. The father received them in the office, but left with them after a short, unpleasant talk . . . The Bear didn’t come back that night or the next . . . Your father has been kidnapped. I have three days to collect the money . . . Before the dawn of the third day the men appeared with the Bear wearing the same shirt. Filthy. A heavy stink emanating from his body. Physiological waste remained inside his clothing. They sat him in a chair in the office. They asked for the money. The amount had not been collected. . . . They asked the woman to undress in front of her children. They raped her . . . The entire scene unfolded with each of the invaders. Four. They look at the children with the indolent look of an unexpected pleasure . . . The guns were loaded on the Bear’s head. Several silent shots . . . After the father was executed, the family was disrupted. They were completely isolated . . . “I go to sleep every night with the memory of that fatal night. The nightmares stun me. I wake up stifled.” ( 31-34)]

At the moments in which Zúñiga Araúz breaks the linear narrative, introducing small-story chapters, such as the one above, he gives a deeper and more complex perspective of certain characters who in the rest of the text behave like mere blind instruments of the social structures

of power. Caballero explains that Zúñiga Araúz breaks with the pre-established canons of the linear narrative managing with temporal spaces, the internal clock of the story, “Rompe el autor con los cánones preestablecidos de la narrativa lineal y gestiona, con espacios temporales adecuados, el reloj interno de la historia” (par. 1). The above is also considered a form of “Defamiliarization” in literature.

Defamiliarization is a term coined by Russian formalist Victor Shklovsky. He explains that “the purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known.” He adds that “the technique of art is to make objects ‘unfamiliar,’ to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged” (12). Defamiliarization changes the monotony and perception of what is already known by the reader. Shklovsky uses the analogy of an ocean’s waves to make his point of view even more understandable . He gives an example of the importance of defamiliarity: “People living at the seashore, grow so accustomed to the murmur of the waves that they never hear it. By the same token, we scarcely ever hear the words which we utter . . . We look at each other, but we do not see each other anymore. Our perception of the world has withered away, what has remained is mere recognition.” (qtd. by Victor Erlich 176-77). “Making strange” (“Opojaz) a work of art (literature) makes the observer or the reader pause and wonder about what is being seen or read, instead of doing it in an automatic mode without paying attention to what is occurring in front of his or her eyes.

In the novel, for example, while chapter one is a complete representation of the various forms of violence and sexual exploitation that Omayra suffers in her private household; without preamble, the following chapter two is a small-story chapter. It begins with an entirely unrelated story event and characters. Once the small-story ends, it leaves the reader intrigued and

wondering about its relevance within the main story of Omayra. The perception or understanding of what is happening then requires re-visitation/re-reading until recognition is achieved. Shklovsky's device of defamiliarization is not merely used to cause confusion or curiosity, and certainly not only to cause suspense. Yet it transforms the perception which the reader thinks that he or she knows, but which was observed mechanically without paying attention—like the person who lives at the seashore, but no longer hears the noise of the waves.

Defamiliarization can also be used to demonstrate how diverse types of violence can pass unnoticed in society and need some revisitation, while other cases are perceived at first notice. In other words, while it is easier to pay attention and recognize the violence in traditional manifestations, situations that do not pass unnoticed and are called upon by society and the justice system immediately (i.e. the arbitrary and brutal acts of violence performed in Zúñiga Araúz's *El chacal del general* and in Tapia's *Roberto por el buen camino*), in the case of prostitution, governments and societies do not pay much attention to (or at least pretend not to) the subtle acts of violence perpetrated upon women. Women walking the streets by night (and even by day), or framed inside bawdy houses, dancing clubs, or massage parlors, are seen merely as “objects of desire” without being observed conscientiously and noticed as “subjects.”

It is a commonality of all societies to pretend that the problem of prostitution is a case of “personal choice,” and therefore, these women are not provided with the same protection that they deserve as human beings because after all, “they have chosen that path.” Prostitutes then become a case of what Barry considers as the “invisibility of the slave trade.” She declares that the fact that sexual slavery remains invisible (read: ignored) by authorities in spite of the presence of violence in its midst is because they, the authorities, have “accepted (the) sexual exploitation and violence as normal for particular groups of women under specific conditions”

(*Female Sexual* 8). Defamiliarization is also relevant to the physical violence of men against women (this time not referring only to prostitutes). This is a situation that generally—especially in developing countries—is still considered by many as a normal marital or familial occurrence.

Through the use of these literary techniques, Zúñiga Araúz's text empowers the reader with detailed literary knowledge of the real underworld of prostitution. The following section demonstrates the diverse forms of power manifested in the global sex market.

#### **IV.2 Manifestation of Biopower in the World Economy and Globalization.**

In *Espejo de miserias*, Zúñiga Araúz specifically highlights the ways in which globalization touches third world countries' local sex trades, countries such as Panama. Globalization produces subjects of sexuality, affecting primarily women, and therefore subjugating bodies through prostitution. The sex trade is a powerful machinery of power that permeates and regulates women's bodies. The control is often not by "authoritarian-bruteforce," but by "a productive subtle way," in a way that leaves one wondering who is really to blame for this social problem. This form of control in bodies and populations is illustrated in Foucault's notion of "biopower."

Foucault uses his specific notion of "biopower" to identify the two ways in which the human body *per se*, and therefore the entire population, are governed by a political hegemony of power centered around the regulation of the body and the control of the population (*History* 138-39). The philosopher investigated the two ways in which politics of power regulate life. In a nutshell, one way is exercising control on the "body as a machine system." The other way is exercising control on the "body as a species subject." He singled out the diverse ways in which the human body can be controlled by "the optimization of its capabilities" (i.e. easy to manipulate, direct, influence, it is both productive (useful) and manageable (docile) and therefore

able to produce good results in the economic system). Additionally, Foucault refers to the controlling mechanism on life reproduction. The ways in which the body reproduces and propagates “ideal bodies” through births, level of health, mortality, etc. This theory is important to the study of subjugation of women’s bodies in the global market—and to the understanding of Zúñiga Araúz’s novel—because bodies are being controlled by globalization, specifically by the global sex industry, in its productivity and the reproduction of “ideal bodies” to the market’s benefits.

Various scholars are dedicated to the study and analysis of the notion of bio-power and sexuality. For example, Elina Penttinen in her article “Globalization, Bio-Power and Trafficking in Women,” notes that biopower describes “how power institutionalizes a certain imaginary ideal body, which then individuals accept and begin to reproduce in their actions and everyday lives” (2). She places emphasis on how modern capitalism (as Foucault said) requires efficient and orderly bodies to benefit the productive system (2). Marc G. Ducet and Miguel de Larrinaga in their article “Tracing global sovereign and bio-political rule,” argue that bio-power draws the necessary lines between different populations (globalization), giving a sovereign power which demarks those who are (biologically) useful and those who are not (132). Johanna Oksala notes that bio-power is “an extremely effective form of social control that takes over the management of the life of individuals” (71). It has been demonstrated that the role of sexuality within the global sex market regulates primarily young women’s bodies and health. This situation has a significant impact on women’s self-esteem, and it also creates various negative psychological behaviors.

The following excerpts in the novel show a variety of subtle demonstrations of bio-power. They depict how power operates in women’s bodies, in its first form: as the “body as a

productive machine,” manipulating the protagonist’s body to produce money. First, it is an example of Omayra’s encounter with a bartender in a local strip club. This offer one year later escalates into an international job in a brothel in the Netherlands Antilles:

*31 de julio de 1984 . . . Era una taberna grande con muchas mesas y una pasarela iluminada donde los fines de semanas las mujeres bailaban quitándose la ropa hasta la total desnudez. El primer día de trabajo todo el mundo notó mi presencia. . . . Ese mismo día empezaron mis calamidades. Un hombre ebrio me metió las manos por detrás entre los dos muslos. . . . Parece mentira, pero nos acostumbremos a todo. Terminé entregándoles una sonrisa embustera a los que me tocaban las nalgas. Si de ahí no se pasaba... El primer mes llevé a la casa 600 dólares. (87-88)*

*[July 31, 1984 . . . It was a large tavern with many tables and a lighted runway where on weekends dancing women take off their clothes to complete nudity. On my first work day everyone noticed my presence . . . That same day my calamities began. A drunken man stuck his hands from behind between my thighs . . . It’s hard to believe, but we get used to everything. I ended up giving a phony smile to those that touch my buttocks. As long as it doesn’t go further than that. . . The first month I took home 600 dollars. ( 75-76)]*

*7 de agosto de 1987. Una noche el gerente me dijo que un señor quería entrevistarse conmigo al día siguiente a la una en el bar, cerrado a esa hora. Malos presagios se instalaron en mi mente: pensé que se trataba de esos señorones que creen que con el dinero todo se compra; pero no, era un caballero muy distinguido que me estaba ofreciendo un trabajo en una de las islas de las Antillas Neerlandesas donde nadie me conocía. La idea no me gustó; pero entre más dinero tenga una persona, más independiente es . . . Según la propuesta del caballero y dependiendo de mi trabajo, mi ingreso mensual podría superar los dos mil quinientos. (105-06)*

*[August 7, 1985. One night the manager told me that a gentleman wanted to meet me the next day at one o’clock at the bar, which was closed at that time. Foreboding settled in my mind: I thought it was one of those big shots who believe that money buys everything; but no, it was a very distinguished gentleman offering me a job at one of the islands of the Netherlands Antilles where nobody knew me. I didn’t like the idea, but the more money a person has, the more independent she is . . . As the gentleman proposed and depending on my work, my monthly income could exceed 2500 dollars. (90-91)]*

The example above exemplifies how women’s bodies are chosen like merchandise by club owners and clients, sellers and buyers in the sex market. As Kappeler notes, women in the hands

of adult men are no longer a subject but an object: “She is a ‘gold mine’ rather than wage labourer, means of production rather than worker, slave rather than legal subject” (227).

The notion of biopower in its second manifestation, besides focusing on the ideal body, also focuses on the control and supervision of the level of health of populations. The following examples demonstrate the control exercised on bodies in the sex trade:

*“7 de agosto de 1985 . . . La obligatoriedad de utilizar un preservativo en cada relación me otorgaba míseros desahogos: no adquirir enfermedades, no quedar embarazada y no sentir la piel directa del pene dentro de mi vagina separados por un plástico. (105-6) [The mandatory requirement to use a condom every time I have sex gives me miserable outlets: not getting diseases, not getting pregnant and not directly feeling the skin of the penis inside my vagina separated by a piece of plastic. (Mirror 91)]*

*2 de septiembre de 1986. La única obligación sanitaria que tenemos es acudir una vez a la semana a revisión. Una mujer grosera y prepotente nos examina y toma muestras. También nos analizan la sangre. No tenemos ningún problema porque utilizamos preservativos especiales, que por ser más gruesos que los corrientes, son más seguro; pero nos lastiman más. La pobre Ana parece ser la vaca garrapata, como le digo en broma. A los dos días de la última revisión la llamaron de la clínica. Yo la acompañé. La doctora acentuó su prepotencia: --Usted tiene gonorrea se tiene que inyectar y llevar este certificado a su trabajo . . . Si no lo hace, la reporto a la sanidad. (112-13)*

*[September 2, 1986. The only sanitary obligation we have is going to a check-up once a week. A rude and arrogant woman examines us and takes the samples. They also analyze our blood. We have no problems because we use special condoms, which, being thicker than the common ones, are safer, but hurt us more. Poor Ana seems to be the cow with ticks, as I tell her in jest. Two days after the last check-up she was called to the clinic. I went with her. The doctor emphasized her arrogance: --You have gonorrhoea. You have to inject yourself and take this certificate to your work . . . If she doesn't, I'll report her to the health department. (96-97)]*

Anyone can say that health supervision is important in life, but in this situation the manifestation of power is noticeable. It is not in the best interest of female prostitutes, but in the interest of the sex trade. Young, beautiful, healthy bodies are a must in the market. The manifestation of control being exercised in an intertwined web of power is clearly established in *Espejos de miseria*. There is no part of the novel where this reality can pass unobserved. For example, the

novel demonstrates that power is exercised in vulnerable, docile, ideal bodies. The perfect triad for subjugation and objectification is depicted in the following paragraphs:

*19 de mayo de 1981 . . . Carmen me había advertido que en cualquier momento el gerente me llamaría para ofrecirme otro trabajo para el cual ella no aplicó porque, al desnudarse, la cicatriz vertical sobre su bajo vientre le restaba hermosura a su piel. “El gordo rechoncho me ofreció subirme a la pasarela a desvestirme al compás de la música y luego bailar sin ninguna prenda sobre mi cuerpo.”* Adding the instructions given to examine the body: “Camine para adelante y para atrás. Dé la vuelta. Baile cualquier música rápida que se le ocurra. Acuéstese sobre la alfombra. Abra las piernas. Póngase boca abajo. Muévase como una culebra. Levántese. Acérquese a mí. *Escrutó mi piel con sus ojos libidinosos. Podemos firmar el contrato—te dijo. (103-04)*

*[May 19, 1981 . . . Carmen had warned me that the manager would call me any time to offer me another job for which she didn't apply because when she stripped, the vertical scar on her lower belly took away beauty from her skin. It happened as she said. The fat man offered to put me on the runway to strip to the beat of the music and then dance without any clothes on my body, except a few garters on my thighs so that customers could fill them with money . . . Walk forward and backward. Turn around. Dance to any fast music that comes to your mind. Lie down on the carpet. Spread your legs. Get upside down. Move like a snake. Get up. Come to me. He searched my skin with his lustful eyes. –We can sign the contract—he told you. ( 88-89)]*

The author demonstrates how everything and everybody is a full component in a relationship of power. Furthermore, in his novel, the author depicts an important component in the sex industry: “procuring,” “pimping” and “trafficking.”

### **IV.3 Relationship of Power between Procurers, Pimps, and Traffickers in Prostitution**

*Espejo de Miserias* offers a clear picture of the ways in which young women become easy targets and effortlessly managed victims for procurers, pimps and traffickers. The Procurers/Pimps/Traffickers are a triad of power that plays an important role in the objectification of women's bodies as commodities, especially when the international global trade is involved. Zúñiga, in the novel, demonstrates that the powerless world of molested and raped women by male abusers is only the beginning of a life of oppression. Such is the case of Omayra who was molested by her father and abused by her brother, her ex-boyfriend and her boss. In the



case of Omayra's friend Carmen (whose ordeals are not being identified in this study), sexual abuse even includes the role of a religious figure, "a priest." In addition, women are also tormented and burdened by poverty and low self-esteem, to the point that they are troubled by the ways in which the patriarchal society sees and undermines them, as "powerless objects of desire." Furthermore, their poverty, needs, and/or abandonment place them in another space of power and control: despair. The mixture of these fatal ingredients (sexual molestation, poverty, low self-esteem and despair) plus youthfulness and the "perfect body," make women easy targets for those looking for these powerful combinations and for those master manipulators constantly preying on women.

Before considering the ways in which women are affected by procuring and pimping, and before identifying the relationship of power manifested in prostitute/pimping, it is important to understand the origin of the "Procurers" known in postmodern times as "pimps." The *Dictionary Merriam Webster* (2014) simply defines "pimp" as a man who makes money illegally by getting customers for prostitute; and explains "procurers" as the persons who have "carved out a career as a *procurer* of high-priced call girls for wealthy, powerful men." According to Chris Bruckert and Tuulia Law, "anyone *who manages a prostitution business or lives off the avails of prostitution* can be termed a "procurer." It also adds that, "this definition is in fact much broader than the traditional image of the pimp, which refers to a person who *exploits one or more persons* in forced prostitution" (16). (Emphasis added to distinguish one versus the other). This indicates that having a small or large enterprise where women's bodies are being exploited for monetary reasons is the work of a procurer. One manages and lives off the avails of the business of trafficking, and the other exploits the women.

Scholarly researcher, Susanne Kappeler in her article “The International Slave Trade in Women, or Procurers, Pimps and Punters,” and Kathleen Barry in *Female Sexual Slavery*, both identify the roles of procurers and pimps as slave masters in the sex industry. Both studies denounce it as a male supremacy business. Barry notes that “together, pimping and procuring are perhaps the most ruthless displays of male power and sexual domination,” adding that they not only negotiate with women’s bodies, but even worse, both “pimping and procuring are the crystallization of misogyny; they rank about the most complete expressions of male hatred for femaleness. Pimping is a strategy, a tactic for acquiring women and turning them into prostitution; pimping keeps them there” (86). Kappeler also connotes this same idea, adding another vital male factor to this equation of power and abuse. She writes, “and, one should add, punters: (all) are the male agents of traffic, slavery and prostitution” (220-21). Although “men” seem to be the main and first factors to subjugation in this business, paradoxically, another male—this time the author of the novel about prostitution—brings along the role of a woman in the powerful business of procuring, pimping and trafficking.

In *Espejo de miserias*, Zúñiga clearly depicts the powerful influence that Omayra’s mother has on her daughter’s life of prostitution. One may wonder at the purpose of this important addition. In fact, it can raise the question that perhaps the author is male and prostitution is a male territory, so why not detour the blame and place it back on women? As Kappeler explains, the factor that prevents the framing of the problem of “the male agency of sex trading” is the “male control over knowledge and culture, science and philosophy, representation and perception [which] serves to legitimize male agency in political and social reality” (220). On the other hand—and perhaps in the author’s defense—one can also recognize that perhaps the presentation of the mother’s role in Omayra’s objectification is another example of the novel’s

use of defamiliarization. As has been said, this changes the monotony and perception of what is already known by society: that women are mainly abused by men.

Moreover, this situation also demonstrates the powerless condition of oppression lived by the mother of the protagonist, who herself has experienced a bout of control, sexual abuse and subjugation by the patriarchal figure and society. In turn, she now suppresses her own daughter with the idea of helping her not to suffer as she has. This situation is another common case of a demonstration of power through “scapegoating”<sup>31</sup>, where Omayra becomes “the innocent victim who pays for someone else’s problems.” All of this perpetuates, once more, subjugation by patriarchal domination. Omayra switches from violence and desperation (male control) to another place that is supposed to be heaven for most young women, and yet for Omayra, it is another hell. This situation correlates with the relationship of power of “double-patriarchy” suffered by the feminine character Isis in Zúñiga’s *El chacal del general* (in Chapter II.3). Kappeler demonstrates what can help readers understand the role of Omayra’s mother. In her article, she declares: “For women, sex is the primary and definitive form of labour: mostly bonded, occasionally waged. And beyond sex, women have further labour power to be exploited: work and service of every kind, marriage is the most common form of bonded sexual labour, combining sexual and domestic work” (225). The mother is a woman who is abused, bonded and unwaged for her sex labor from the protagonist’s father. This reaffirms the perpetual objectification of women.

Before women succumb to prostitution, they are undermined by what Penttinen considers subjugation through language and through a process of signification, a situation in which an individual becomes attached to a specific identity through self-identification and through categories presented by the dominating ideology (1). What Penttinen notes is quite important

because it illustrates the patriarchal ideology that demoralizes women submerged in poverty, violence and physical and moral violations; a situation that shapes them to believe that there is no way out. They are subjugated, and they believe that the best form of survival is through selling and showing their bodies. Here is an example of how Omayra sees herself:

*7 de agosto de 1985 . . . ¡Putá! Eso es lo que amablemente me solicitan que sea. Desde el momento que acepte, sentiré que mi ataúd de muerta se llenará de dinero. Sí, muerta. Una mujer que entrega su cuerpo con los sentimientos ausentes es un ser sin vida. Peor aún, una muerta que irá degenerando su conciencia al ritmo de la depravación del cuerpo. (106)*

*[August 7, 1985 . . . A whore! That's what they're kindly asking me to be. From the moment I accept, I'll feel that my corpse's coffin will fill with money. Yes, my corpse. A woman who gives away her body without feelings is a being without life. Even worse: a dead woman that will degenerate her conscience to the rhythm of her body's depravity. (90-91)]*

In *Especios de miseria*, the protagonist once more not only needs to confront the influence of male roles in her path to become a “commodity” for prostitution, but also the role of her mother who becomes the ultimate “madam procurer.”

### **IV.3.1 Commodification of Women through Prostitution**

Another manifestation of power is demonstrated in the diverse forms in which pimps and procurers choose their victims for trafficking to the international market of prostitution. Like predators, they pay close attention to young girls whose bodies are wanted in the sex industry, which bodies can be productive, and which ones cannot. This is a form of merchandising of women's bodies. It is also another form of biopower, that according to Foucault, does not concentrate only on one individual *per se*, but rather on mass production. The novel clearly demonstrates the economic benefits that can be obtained from female bodies in mass production within the hegemony of power in globalization. As in the case of the protagonist, pimps and traffickers convince—in subtle or forceful ways—their victims, offering economic resources in

exchange for their sexual favors. When it occurs, the human body is changed into “sexual merchandise” and becomes objectified for the best buyer.

As Wendy Kolmar and Frances Bartkowski explain, when the body of a woman is displayed as a commodity or a material object, it is with the intention to be sexually wanted, desired or “looked at” (35). Lois Tyson explains that “a commodity, by definition, has value not in terms of what it can do (use value) but in terms of the money or other commodities for which it can be traded (exchange value) . . . Commodification, then, is the act of relating to persons or things in terms of their exchange value or sign-exchange value to the exclusion of other considerations” (69). In the industrialized and globalized sex market, women become commodities. This is the case of Omayra the prostitute, even if she was not “forced” by violence, but by other subtle economic means. Her case is easily recognizable as a case of trafficking with the purpose of commodifying her body by special and expert agents in the “business transaction.”

As Kappeler writes: “The ability to offer a woman in trade depends on male power—as any woman soon finds out who attempts to offer herself in trade” (226). Marx’s theory of commodity expertly explains this powerful connection: “It is plain that commodities cannot go to market (read: sexual trade) and perform exchanges in their own account. We must, therefore, have recourse to their guardians, who are also their owners. Commodities are things, and therefore without power of resistance against man. If they are wanting in docility he can use force; in other words, he can take possession of them” (55). Nonetheless, when the situation is not produced by “physical force,” prostitutes have the fallacious understanding that they are the masters of their own bodies and are in control of business transactions when they need money—good and fast money—and men need sex or sexual fantasies. In other words, “women

are the merchandise and clients, of pimps and procurers, are the one who buy” (Kappeler 229). It is demonstrated in the following example in the diary.

In *Espejo de miserias*, Omayra the prostitute writes in her diary of her decision to increase her sex business transactions. She wants to make more money, faster in order to have the amount necessary to end the exploitation that she is subjected to. Omayra’s fallacious argument of wanting to end her own exploitation fast, leads her to believe that it can be done through more prostitution. This detail demonstrates that the economic factor is another form of power. It not only disempowers women, but leads them to believe that they need money in order to buy back their own rights of survival. Here is what Omayra logs: “*1 noviembre de 1986. Tomé la decisión de aceptar a dos personas en el mismo tiempo, lo que duplica mis ingresos. Dos hombres, dos mujeres o una pareja mixta*” (114). [“November 1, 1986. I decided to accept two customers at the same time, doubling my income. Two men, two women or a mixed couple” (98)]. And three months later she writes:

*25 de febrero de 1987. La puerta de mi cuarto se ha abierto hasta para ocho personas . . . Entre más gente, mejor, porque más rápido me largo de aquí. Aunque no se venza el contrato que se me cancelará si cometo alguna estupidez. Lo demás continúa igual: la soledad, el licor y el llanto que me ayuda a desahogarme. Hay clientes más exigentes y para complacerlos aspiro un poco del polvo blanco* (118).

[February 25, 1987. The door of my room has opened for up to eight people . . . The more people the better, because I can get out of here faster, even if the contract is still in force, as it will be cancelled if I do something stupid. Everything else remains the same: loneliness, liquor and crying, which helps me vent. There are more demanding customers and to please them I inhale a bit of white powder (101)]

The above quotation not only presents Omayra as the owner of her “own business” and her own acts, but makes the reader believe that prostitutes, in fact, have agency over their own subjugation, and therefore reinforces society’s belief that with compliance, there is not resistance, but acceptance.

Martin A. Monto and Deana Julka in “Conceiving Sex as a Commodity” note that when prostitution is framed as an economic exchange, it provides for some the possibility of understanding the nature and manifestation in which the act takes place (2). In other words, some people may argue that it is a consenting “business transaction,” and therefore it is suitable. Nevertheless, many voices, as is the voice of Barry, argue that that “economic exchange” which relegates women to commodities for market exchange is a sexual exploitation (1). Real women working in this form of exploitation echo Zúñiga’s fictional character. Young women who have been moved by traffickers to other countries, want—as the protagonist does—to be able to return to their country, to a “normal” existence, to do normal things, such as buying a good place to live and finding an ideal good job.

Most women who have worked in the sex industry aspire to have a decent job. In the novel, Omayra knows exactly the type of work she wants to have, “a daycare,” she writes. She wants to help children because, as she logs: “*creo saber lo necesario para que nadie entre. La puerta de entrada hay que sellarla desde que los niños balbucean*” (117). [“I know what is needed so that nobody goes into it. Its front door must be sealed from the moment children start babbling” ( 100)]. Omayra acknowledges how it feels to live in “hell” (read: subjugation and promiscuity). She knows how it all starts: with domestic sexual violence. She knows how it progresses: prostitution nationally and internationally.

As has been explained, Foucault’s notion of biopower serves to understand the sexual exploitation when women’s bodies are chosen for their biological structure, that is to say, for how their bodies look, especially for how punters demand them. For example, young, healthy, beautiful women are attractive to men’s eyes. Another form of manifestation of power is the way in which poor young women are seduced to sell their bodies for economical reasons,

sometimes in a disguised manner. Many of them ignore, early in the game, the reality that they are acquiring the identity of a prostitute at the very moment that they accept a monetary offer to sell or exhibit their bodies. Some of them accept in naïveté, others in ignorance, or because they were not informed by their trafficker recruiters that they were chosen solely as commodity in the sex industry in richer countries.

Whatever the form of manipulation of subjugation, it is important to keep in mind that despite the diverse reasons that drive women to prostitution, procurers and pimps (male or females) should be liable for their vital role in the business of subjugation and control. Barry notes: “The arbitrary and false distinctions made in the nineteenth century purity crusades between the international traffic in women and local prostitution still dominate thought today. Those distinctions, with the accompanying assumption that women are driven to prostitution (by economics, sadomasochism, or mental deficiency), screen the procurers, hiding their strategies and making pimping appear to be other than what it is” (*Female* 86). Women not only are being sold—as merchandise—but their human rights are being ignored and denied as well. Most importantly, the distortion of facts contributes to the continuing misreading of the real problem and ensures a perpetual misconception that “it remains unsolved and insoluble” (Kappeler 220). Until this social problem finds a solution, many vulnerable young women will continue to become “slaves” under the control of procurers. This problem is even more apparent in patriarchal societies where women start at an early age receiving wrong messages of what sex is, a situation that perpetuates even more their inability to fight for their rights.

The following excerpts from the novel demonstrate the protagonist’s attitude in diverse experiences with sexual life. This serves as an illustration of the various ways in which young woman’s feelings are defined by patterns established in a patriarchal society. The first example



shows an idealized encounter with love and passes from that very noble and pure human feeling to be framed within the parameters established by a “machista” society. The second extract is an example of the prejudices that she shares with the society that oppresses her, as well as the apprehensions with non-conventional sexualities that Omayra the young woman has. These are governed by the social normalization of what sex is and must be. It also demonstrates to what extent Omayra has internalized the prejudices and traditional ideas of what masculinity should or should not be. All of this has the ultimate purpose of demonstrating a young innocent woman’s transformation into a disheartened woman who ends up as commodity in the global sex trade.

#### Example #1

*30 de noviembre de 1981 . . . Raúl me llevó de la mano por un jardín adornado con flores de todos los colores, que en su conjunto emitían un aroma incapaz de ser captado por células olfativas que algún día perecerán. . . . Qué plácidez haber sido hecha mujer por un hombre que se me ha entregado abriéndome su pecho para dejarme mirar los latidos directos de su corazón. He dejado de ser un “yo” solitario y pequeño para convertirme en otro compartido que rebasa las fronteras de los dos cuerpos, mirados desde afuera como figuras humanas amándose. (68-9)*

*[November 30, 1981 . . . Raul took me by the hand through a garden adorned with flowers of all colors, which together emitted an aroma unable to be captured by olfactory cells that will die someday. . . . How peaceful it feels to have been made a woman by a man who has given himself to me, opening his chest to let me took at the direct beating of his heart. I am no longer a lonely and small “me” and have become another me shared beyond the boundaries of the two bodies, seen from the outside as loving human figures. (59)]*

#### Example #2

*14 de abril 1985. Guillermo me invitó anoche a una fiesta en su casa. Me dijo que era privada, lo que me permitiría, pensaba yo, codearme con gente de un mejor nivel social. Ya me había enamorado de él . . . A medida que entraba, mis narices empezaron a aspirar un olor desagradable que salía de la recámara principal de donde sufrían también unos gemidos extraños. Me asusté. . . . Dos hombres y tres mujeres completamente desnudos revolcándose sobre la cama que yo creía de mi exclusividad. Un hombre grande, trigueño y velludo tenía penetrado a Guillermo, quien a su vez estaba sobre una mujer de cabello rubio con las piernas levantadas . . . Vomité. Salí corriendo sin rumbo como una loca que no se reconoce a ella misma . . . Me invadió una sensación putrefacta de*

*mundo muerto . . . Nunca le noté a Guillermo gesto alguno que insinuara que era un hombre bajito de sal, que caminara por la otra acera; al contrario, lo consideraba un macho, un macho completo, un supermacho. ¡Cómo nos equivocamos! (101-02).*

*[Apri 14, 1985. Last night Guillermo invited me to a party at his home. He said it was private, which I thought would allow me to rub shoulders with people of a better social status. I had already fallen in love with him . . . As I went inside, my nose began to feel an unpleasant smell coming out of the master bedroom, where I also heard strange moaning. I was afraid. . . . Two men and three women were rolling around completely naked on the bed that I thought was exclusively mine. A big, dark, hairy man was penetrating Guillermo, who in turn was on top of a blond-haired woman with legs up in the air. . . . I threw up. I ran aimlessly like a crazy woman that doesn't recognize herself. . . . I was invaded by a sensation of a rotting dead world. . . . I never noticed any gesture in Guillermo that hinted he was effeminate, that he battled on the other side; on the contrary, I considered him a macho, a complete macho, a super macho man. How wrong I was! ( 86-87)]*

The exploitation of women's sexuality and trafficking depicted in Zúñiga's literature may be regarded from a feminist perspective as a form of oppression, and any kind of human rights movement would regard it as a violation to human dignity because trafficking correlates with slavery and is against human rights. Omayra's diary depicts the aberration, oppression and exploitation that women encounter in prostitution and the sex market. The sexual exploitation of women, with—and in most cases without—their consent, poses another important question: If prostitution is a violation of human rights, why is this old-time profession still being supported by many, including women themselves?

#### **IV.4 Prostitution: A Violation of Human Rights? Or a Human Rights to Choose?**

But the fact that prostitution is increasingly treated as merely another form of labor reminds us that slavery too is considered labor, not slavery, by slave masters and systems that support slavery.

—Kathleen Barry.

As has been demonstrated throughout this chapter, many studies and literary criticisms have invested a great deal of space and resources to researching, teaching and analyzing the globalized phenomena of the prostitution and trafficking of women. Most of them confirm in

diverse ways that in fact, prostitution is a violation of human rights, and numerous opposition lobbies continuously try to influence political policies against the sex industry and its economic exchange. In addition, while groups around the world, such as the international non-governmental groups “Coalition Against Trafficking of Women and Sex Workers (CATW)” and “Comité de América Latina y el Caribe para la defensa de los derechos de la mujer (CLADEM),” are against any practice of prostitution and trafficking, they consider “Trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation of women and children is a serious, pervasive and growing human rights violation that can and must end in our lifetime” (CATW par.6) Others like the “Sex Workers United Against Violence Society (SWUAV) argue the contrary. They want legal changes to improve the lives and working conditions of women working in the sex trade.

Furthermore, daily occurrence demonstrates how this powerful social dilemma manifests itself everywhere and touches everybody—not only young women and children in Third World countries, but in developing countries as well. It is depicted daily around the world in newspapers, magazines, scholarly studies, researches, movies, TV programs, and fictional literature, as in Zúñiga’s diary of the prostitute Omayra. All of the above debates raise important questions about prostitution. For example, if prostitution really is a violation of human rights, then why does this social problem persist in spite of the consequences? Second, if what is considered the “old-time profession” is a human rights violation, specifically a violation of women, then why are there people (mostly women) forming groups shouting that prostitution is—or at least must be—a matter of human’s right to choose? And why are these groups trying to challenge the laws that are supposed to protect women affected by this social problem? This second fact deconstructs the leading line of reasoning in the novel that prostitution equals

subjugation. It also makes this analysis take an unbiased position and scrutinize beyond the generalization that prostitution is oppression and for some, slavery.

While it is understood that questions such as the above, cannot have one specific and immediate answer, this study provides the reader with some knowledge about the powerful social problem. At least it is the intention.

#### **IV.4.1 Prostitution: Violation of Human Rights?**

According to Barry: “When the human being is reduced to a body, objectified to sexually service another, whether or not there is consent, violation of the human being has taken place” (*The Prostitution* 23). Moreover, she insists that the use of a body in sexual exploitation, over and over, is a call against human rights because “the human being is the bodied self that human rights is meant to protect and human development is intended to support” (*The Prostitution* 23). Therefore, globalization allows these violations because prostitution—generally influenced and increased by global trafficking—exploits vulnerable women through international prostitution. Indeed, it is a fact that certain women coarsely and “freely” choose prostitution, as the protagonist of Zúñiga’s novel does. But what other options does she have, other than to take those offered to her?

As the case of protagonist Omayra demonstrates, sometimes women’s rights are violated from an early age. Sexual exploitation and its ramifications begin right at home with incestuous assaults. In addition, the paternalistic society surrounding young women leads them to believe that there is no way out of oppression. Their bodies are not only sexually molested, but they are violated emotionally and psychologically when as children, they suffer from sexual abuse (*The Prostitution* 23). For example, a report about this problem in Panama explains:

Existen factores de alto riesgo que influyen directa e indirectamente en el hecho de que mujeres, adolescentes y niñas se conviertan en sujetas fáciles de ser

explotadas sexualmente: la violencia sexual, la violencia intrafamiliar/ doméstica, la pobreza, el desempleo y los bajos ingresos, las deformaciones y estereotipos contra las mujeres en los medios de comunicación, la violencia institucional, todas las formas de violencia contra las mujeres. (*Clara González Report* 283)

[There are high risk factors that influence directly and indirectly the fact that women, adolescents and children become easy subjects to be exploited sexually: sexual violence, domestic/intrafamilial violence, poverty, unemployment and low income, defamations and stereotypes against women in the mass media, institutional violence, all forms of violence against women.]

Besides suffering in their own home, and later in their homeland, ultimately the exploitation transcends to other countries. Globalization is another factor that helps reduce women to merely “bodies.”

Penttinen notes: “It is these women, [poor women] who most often facing a situation in their home country that they can no longer support themselves or their family, take on the opportunity of international prostitution, and thus use their bodies as means for exchange” (2). Furthermore, she writes that Doezema’s study insists “this can be seen as a form of structural violence taking place that in a situation of impoverishment and unemployment women are ‘forced to choose’ their own sexual exploitation” (2). The following scene in the novel provides a clear example of the correlation among sexual subjugation, prostitution (voluntary or involuntary ) and human rights violations. In the following two excerpts from the diary, the protagonist succumbs to choices that ultimately deprive her of her own rights as a human being:

*31 de octubre de 1985. Desde el momento en que acepté la propuesta y el día antes de montarme en el avión, me arrepentí muchas veces. Fueron noches inagotables que me dejaban extenuada . . . Sólo el pensar que sobre mí pasarían centenares de hombres de quienes ni siquiera sabré sus nombres, me llenaban de repugnancia. ¿Qué más podía hacer? . . . Soñar también, para olvidar a mi cuerpo ofrecerse para que esos miserables satisfagan sus instintos animales. (107)*

*[October 31, 1985. From the moment I accepted the proposal and the day before getting on the plane, I regretted it many times. They were endless nights that left me exhausted . . . Just thinking that hundreds of men whose names I’ll never know*

*would go through me, filled me with disgust. What else could I do? . . . Also dreaming to forget my body being offered to those miserable beings to satisfy their animal instincts. ( 92)*

*8 de diciembre de 1986 . . . ¿Será este el verdadero mundo de los humanos? ¿Será que el que se vive afuera no es más que un caparazón de esto que ya yo no sé cómo llamarle? ¿Será que yo compré un tiquete para visitar las interioridades de este Homo y conocer las inmundicias que se esconden debajo de las tranquilas aguas con las que exhibe su rostro puritano? ¿Qué somos las putas? El eco de sus conciencias. El espejo de sus miserias. (116)*

*[December 8, 1986 . . . Could this be the real world of humans? Could it be that the world we live outside is just a shell of his other which I no longer know what to call? Could it be that I bought a ticket to visit the inner worlds of the Homo and to see the filth that lurks beneath the calms waters with which he displays his Puritan face? What are the whores? The echo of their consciences. The mirror of their misery. ( 99)]*

Omayra's thoughts, demonstrate the ways in which the global market uses impoverishment, vulnerability and unemployment to exploit and subdue women's bodies as commodities. This is a very common condition primarily occurring and re-occurring in Third World countries for the ultimate purpose of financial gain.

It has been proven that women from Latin America, especially young women from poorer regions who deal with constant violence and/or sexual mistreatment, are offered "easy" financial solutions to their problems. For example, the United Nations's Office on Drugs and Crime published a report on crime and violence in Central America with a special focus on violence perpetrated against women and children. The report indicates that Nicaragua, a particularly poor country in Central America, presents one of the highest levels of domestic violence "encountered anywhere in the world." This country not only presents several severe cases of physical and sexual abuse, it also exports the largest amount of child trafficking throughout the region, as well as internally within the country. It is important to understand that Nicaragua has been named the second poorest country in Latin America.<sup>32</sup> The human trafficking data in Central America cited by the Organization of American States confirm that in

fact human trafficking movement takes place from poorer countries (such as Nicaragua) to richer countries (such as Mexico and Panama). It also reports that in order to avoid this social predicament, the increase of immigration requirements and regulations in countries such as Costa Rica and Mexico, have redirected the trafficking phenomena from Nicaragua to Guatemala.

Despite every opposition and denouncement, nothing gets in the way of human trafficking. The study shows that “2000 children (approximately) are sexually exploited in 600 brothels in Guatemala City alone.” Nevertheless, “in contrast to the other five countries in the region, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic and Panama have been implicated in extra-regional trafficking to a greater degree” (66). As the “CLADEM” (Latin American and Caribbean Committee for the Defense of Women Rights) reports, “La situación de Panamá, señalado como corredor de tránsito para el tráfico y trata de personas no sólo se mantiene si no que se agrava” (19). [“The situation of Panama, indicated as a transit route for human (mostly women) trafficking not only continues but worsens)]. More precisely, the report “Clara González. Situación de la Mujer en Panamá” gives a detailed explanation of diverse sexual exploitation affecting women and their human rights in Panama.

According to the MIDES-Clara González Report, exploitation represents a problem in the country, that cannot be statistically confirmed and neither properly denounced because it is not registered sufficiently, “since it happens in secrecy and it is usually seen as a form of ‘economic help’, done to young girls from their exploiters.” This issue allows a perpetual abuse of human rights. Among the several classes of sexual exploitation existing in the country, she mentions “pornography, trafficking, sexual tourism and commercial sexual operation” (280). The report indicates that Panama is affected due to its convenient transit route, and thus it has become a

high risk in human trafficking. The report presents a press release from the Embassy of the United States in Panama (2007) stating the following:

Las mujeres y los niños son principalmente comercializados dentro de Panamá para la explotación sexual. Sin embargo, existen informes creíbles sobre mujeres y niños traficados desde Colombia hacia Panamá para la explotación sexual. Las mujeres también son objeto de la trata, provenientes de Colombia, República Dominicana hacia Panamá, Costa Rica, Estados Unidos (a través de América Central y Europa). (285)

[Women and children mainly are commercialized within Panama for sexual exploitation. Nevertheless, credible information exists on women and children dealt from Colombia towards Panama for sexual exploitation. Women also are objects of trafficking, originating from Colombia and the Dominican Republic towards Panama, Costa Rica and the United States (through Central America and Europe).]

Zúñiga places his protagonist as a vivid example of the above condition of trafficking. He also demonstrates that, although some women in the poorer countries are not violently forced into trafficking, the loss of self-esteem due to the lack of economic means and the constant physical and sexual abuses endured in their own households; force them to accept the manipulation of the traffickers.

In a nutshell, prostitution and trafficking violate human rights. The global sex trade, compounded mainly by businessmen procurers, through their pimp-traffickers—as has been explained in a previous section—uses convincing tactics to recruit young women with the initial idea of “just dancing” in the entertainment industry. They are offered these “easy” jobs in richer countries in their area, or within Canada, the United States and Europe, to make good money and “have better lives.” Paradoxically, some women enthusiastically accept the abuse with the fallacious understanding that, after all, it is “work.” The fast and profitable salaries that they make for their craft makes them endure their objectification. This is especially because they are being paid a good amount of money for what some of them are forced to do for free in their own land.



As an example of this condition, in the diary Omayra writes: “*19 de mayo de 1987. Ni escribir me provoca. Mantengo la máscara de la hipocresía. El fin de semana me gané mil dólares aceptando un paseo en yate con tres hombres drogados que no me dejaron dormir. Es una buena suma por dos días. Estoy disponible si se repite la invitación aunque me dejen reventada*” (119). [“*May 19, 1987. I don’t even feel like writing. I keep on the mask of hypocrisy. Over the weekend I earned a thousand dollars by accepting a ride on a yacht with three drugged men who didn’t let me sleep. It’s a good sum for two days. I’m available if they repeat the invitation even if they make me work my butt off*”<sup>102</sup>]. The connotation of “earning money” makes it—not only to the men involved in the exploitation, but to the women themselves—an acceptable form of “work” because after all, they are working hard for their salaries.

Although the expression “work” *per se* is not written by Omayra, it is implied in its context. This explains well how the technology of power of “sex work,” through poverty and migration, is manipulated into people’s minds, bodies, and everyday lives as Foucault emphasizes with bio-power. These (poverty and migration) are circumstances that permit the subjugation of bodies and the control of population (*The History* 140). In other words, globalization not only allows migration and the easy transportation and trafficking of women from country to country, but the displacement of women’s bodies as commodities to the best buyer as well. As Penttinen argues: “It is recognized here that within those who are marginalized by globalization, it is the women who are most often in the weakest position” (2). This market affects and targets the most vulnerable, or the powerless link—women and children.

Nonetheless, while some women find the courage to stop selling their bodies and find better working conditions outside the exploitative sex industry—after a certain period of working

in the sector—as Omayra does, others stay and continue to allow the subjugation or to fight the system that exploits them.

#### **IV.4.2 Prostitution: A Human Right to Choose?**

No part of Zúñiga’s novel explicitly presents an unbiased view of prostitution, it rather demonstrate how Omayra despises everything and anything that has to do with prostitution—especially because she lived it herself. Her biased point of view against the oppression and the abuse of power that had governed her, not only from procurers and pimps, but from punters (customers) as well, is explained—once more—with her experience in the bawdy brothel where she worked:

*15 de diciembre de 1985 . . . Mi primera impresión, cuando iba camino de mi habitación, fue la de encontrarme en un almacén donde se expone la mercancía. Muchas mujeres estaban desnudas; otras con ropa interior; otras con blusas transparentes; otras con los senos descubiertos; unas de pie; otras sentadas en poses sugestivas. Todas provocativas. Me dijeron que podía salir al balcón. “Salir al balcón” significaba tirar el anzuelo a los tiburones con piernas humanas que miraban con ojos empalagosos a la presa más codiciada. Si alguien quiere conocer el centro de la miseria humana que pague. (109).*

*[December 15, 1985 . . . My impression, on my way to my room, was that I was in a store where merchandise is displayed. Many women were naked; others in their underwear; others wearing transparent blouses; others were topless; some standing; others sitting in suggestive poses. All were provocative. They said I could go out to the balcony. . . “Going out to the balcony” means throwing the bait to the sharks with human legs that stared with gooey eyes as the most coveted prey. If someone wants to know the center of human misery they can pay. (93-94)].*

Even though the above extract from Zúñiga’s fiction demonstrates Omayra’s indignation at the conditions that prostitutes need to endure, this also can be used as a good example to demonstrate a rather unorthodox way in which prostitutes (willingly and reluctantly) use their bodies and “sexual powers” to produce power and subjugate their users as well (a sort of oppressed/oppressor relationship).

As Omayra also says: “*Mi nuevo trabajo me provocaba rabia al principio, trasmutada en una sonrisa que se convertía en verdadera al ver la cara de los estúpidos que me miraban como animales excitados . . . Estaba en una jaula desde donde observaba plácidamente al bestiaro derramado a mis pies . . . ¡Pobres pendejos! Lo único que le importa a esta fauna sexual es satisfacer sus instintos corruptos*” (104-05). [“At first my new job provoked anger in me, transmuted into a smile that became real when I saw the face of the stupid men that looked at me like excited animals . . . I was in a cage from where I placidly observed the beasts pourer at my feet . . . Poor assholes! The only thing that matters to this sexual fauna is satisfying their corrupt instincts” 90)]. At the same time, some women reclaim agency and subjectivity by making their voice being heard.

For some women, prostitution is a double-edged sword that, not only brings unfavorable consequences to them, but at the same time, their line of work is used as a point of resistance and/or empowerment. They fight governments and laws that oppress prostitutes’ right to practice. Some prostitutes themselves form part of partisan groups that consider prostitution a human right to choose. For example, *The Evolution of Human Rights* (2004) informed that prostitutes feel “abused and afflicted by the unreasoned prejudices of many people in nations. After centuries of discrimination and abuse they are beginning to seek their full and fair rights as human beings” (7). Prostitutes are calling for normalization and decriminalization of their profession so as to feel “secure” and safe. According to Shelagh Day’s article “Prostitution: Violating the Human Right of Poor Women,” prostitution gives poor women and girls “survival income.” She adds that in order to make them feel secure, “particularly the poorest racialized women,” and to be able to escape violence and inequality of prostitution, decriminalization and legalization of prostitution is needed (9). Some groups, although opposing women trafficking

*per se*, consider that by decriminalizing and normalizing prostitution, trafficking and oppression of women can be prevented.

Zhao notes that by giving a voice to prostitutes, they “(she) sabotages these stereotypical images of the prostitutes” when “she dares to be a subject in a world that denies subjectivity” (166). In the novel, the voice of Omayra the prostitute is also noticeable, fighting for prostitute’s rights to be treated as human beings: “*Como somos las parias de la sociedad, cualquier mala pisada se interpreta como un crimen a la humanidad. –Nosotras somos seres humanos—le dijiste con elegancia—. Lo menos que merecemos es respeto*” (113). [“*As we are the outcast of society, any bad tread is interpreted as a crime to humanity. –We are human beings—you told her with elegance. The last (thing) we deserve is respect*” (97)]. This is relevant to the particular and very public fight of a prostitute who dares to stand up for her rights, for what she believes is right for her and her fellow prostitutes, against federal anti-prostitution laws.

For example, the “Terri-Jean Bedford versus Canada”<sup>33</sup> case can be taken as an example of an unorthodox fight against oppression of prostitutes and sex workers. Bedford, best known as the “Dominatrix” Madame deSade,<sup>34</sup> in Toronto, Ontario, writes in her book *Dominatrix on Trial: Bedford vs. Canada*, “Politics, not prostitution, is the world’s oldest profession” (255). Considering that prostitutes are victims of abuse of power, she also writes that “in particular, this type of victim is a victim of the law itself” (261). The law in Canada that was keeping prostitution illegal and sex workers’ lives constantly endangered was knocked down in 2010. It meant, Tracey Tyler explained: “prostitutes will be able to communicate freely with customers on the street, conduct business in their homes or brothers and hire bodyguards and accountants without exposing them to the risk of criminal sanctions” (Par. 2). Some politicians around the world are trying to solve the problem of crime in prostitution, rather than making it illegal, are

allowing prostitution to be normalized. Yet, other groups and politicians continue fighting to maintain the status quo.

When the prostitution law passed in Canada, Bedford notes: “the federal government announced an appeal within hours of its release” (255). In the final words of her book, echoing the voice of Zúñiga Araúz’s protagonist and the voices of women who, like her, reclaim subjectivity and power, she writes: “I have always been on trial, fighting to survive or to vindicate myself . . . Then I was fighting for others like me—women who were victims . . . I have survived . . . I am going out a winner” (260-61). In spite of the unpopular point of view, the Canadian dominatrix continues fighting for what she believes is right for her, for her fellow prostitutes and all women believing in their human rights to elect their own profession.

Furthermore, on May 17, 2013 the Human Rights Council of the United Nations published the written statement submitted by the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women. It states that due to the challenge of exploitative labor practices occurring in globalized supply chains, a more “sophisticated and precise analysis in order to effectively counter exploitative labor practices” is needed. It adds that in order to reduce sex exploitation—among other issues—it is important to: “consider the potential of decriminalizing sex work and practices around it, as a strategy to reduce the opportunities for exploitative labor practices in the sex sector” (4). As mentioned above, this is a problem that seems never will be resolved. As a general consent, and moral issue, as well, prostitution is wrong. It not only subjugates women, but it leaves them powerless and unprotected against any form of oppression perpetrated by all those looking out for their own interest, rather than focusing on the interest of the objectified, abused women.

**In conclusion,** Mauro Zúñiga uses *Espejo de Miserias* to demonstrate how vulnerable young women are targeted and exploited by the sex market. He depicts the abuse and violence committed against thousands of young women living in poverty, domestic violence and sexual exploitation in third world countries and all societies. The protagonist of the novel, Omayra Huerta, goes from being sexually exploited by an abusive father, her brother, the man she loved, and even her own mother, to being subtly engaged in sexual activities such as stripping and dancing, to being recruited by procurers, pimps and traffickers into the international sex markets. The novel focuses on the role that domestic sex abuse, poverty and globalization play in the subjugation and control of the body, not only in its “physiological/ideal” form, but in its “productive/docile” form as well, to become a commodity in the sex trade. The novel demonstrates the range of the exercise of power entangled everywhere and touching everybody in the global sex trade.

In the novel, Zúñiga uses Omayra’s diary as a significant tool that highlights the importance of language and writing. He demonstrates that the diary of a prostitute is not a mere book with secrets, but an apparatus of power which ultimately serves the protagonist well. Although with reserves and fears, the protagonist decides to become a prostitute because, as she wrote, she “never lost hope that everything would change” (15). In his novel, the author demonstrates the social and economic forces that bring vulnerable women to a life style of prostitution, including the subordinated position of women in a paternalistic society. Most importantly, Omayra is a voice of hope to all those suffering from prostitution—nationally or internationally. Omayra, after so many years of subjugation, is able to recuperate subjectivity and power when she decides to fight the system that oppresses her.

*Espejos de miserias* depicts women's bodies and minds being affected and controlled by poverty, and being objectified in bawdy houses by globalization and the sex market through the non-conventional ways that prostitution provides. The next chapter analyzes the lives of women—controlled by the global market as well—but in a more conventional way: by gambling in casinos and shopping in commercial malls. These are more acceptable tendencies in society, and yet, produce similar results—subjugation of bodies and minds.

**CHAPTER V            Power and Subjugation through Contemporary Addictions:  
Gambling and Shopping in Rose Marie Tapia's *Mujeres en fuga***

In her writings, Rose Marie Tapia uses the lives of characters affected with social problems to represent a realistically hostile space within Panamanian society. This has been ascertained in chapter III in her novel *Roberto por el buen camino*. In *Mujeres en fuga* (2008), the author depicts contemporary addictive patterns which control and affect women in society. Tapia depicts three different stories of addictions in her novel: Rebeca's pathological gambling addiction, Camila's affective addictive disorder, and Zorel addictive consumption. Certainly, these addictions affect many people in society in spite of their age and gender. However, as the novel reveals women are particularly susceptible to develop this type of addictions due to the place which they occupy in society, because they are particularly aimed at the publicity promoted by the mass media to incur in this type of conduct, and because women are more prone to escape the problems that hurt them.

Tapia herself says: "Cuando hice la investigación. Con relación a la adicción afectiva, las mujeres marcaron más del 80%. En la ludopatía, el 70% y en las Compras el 90%. La mujeres no solo son más vulnerables a la publicidad, sino que son más dadas a la fuga, al escape del conflicto que las aflige." ["When I made the research. In relation to the affective addiction, the women scored more than 80%. In compulsive gambling, 70%; and in Shopping 90%. Women not only are more vulnerable to publicity, but they are more inclined to give in and flee, to escape the conflict that is hurting them"]<sup>35</sup>

Although the novel presents three different kinds of addictions that disproportionately affect women, this work analyses only two. It is in depiction of the dynamics and effects of gambling and shopping that we can better understand how compulsive behaviors are influenced by the power mechanisms of global capitalism. In addition, how those global trends are



impacting contemporary Panamanian society. Consequently, this chapter will focus on two of the three protagonists in the novel, Rebeca and Zorel. The plot presents two very common situations of what seem to have started as “normal” gratifying leisure activities—a casual outing to a casino with friends seeking fun and perhaps a “streak of luck”; and, a very normal visit to a shopping mall “to discover the last-hit-of-fashion.” It portrays how they become powerful addictions, as well. Yet, as the novel demonstrates, these addictions are not merely the aftermath of an individual’s habits-gone-wrong. First and foremost, these are addictive pathological disorders influenced by globalization and its capitalist enterprises. Secondly, they are produced by deep and powerful psychological scars from a past that has been dormant in the characters’ subconscious. Both, gambling and shopping are considered by society to be normal activities, until these “normalcies” begin to entrap women within powerful, prostituted boundaries. Just as in Zúñiga Araúz’s *Espejo de miserias*, in this novel the protagonists navigate within the margins of lies, money and violence in order to sustain their needs. Their addictions are social problems that encompass not only young and poor individuals, but human beings of all ages, all genders and all social strata.

Indeed, this chapter explores the ways in which the mechanisms of power in casinos and malls have created fragmentation in Panamanian society. It argues that through the global economy— driven by the geographical position of the country—Panama has benefited with positive economic growth, but at the same time, its people have suffered from its negative consequences. The positive and strong growing economy of the country is interwoven with a negative web that touches the most vulnerable in society. As the novel demonstrates, the growth of these enterprises in the country influences the society and manipulates the masses. The novel reveals that both casinos and shopping malls create and nourish compulsiveness and addictions

that ultimately subjugate the protagonists and place them in social isolation and marginalization from their families and their society. In light of this, this chapter will address the following questions: How does the global market subjugate masses in general and women's bodies and minds in particular through casinos and shopping malls? What is the difference between social gambling and shopping, versus pathological addictions? What are the points of contact and differences between female pathological gamblers and compulsive consumers?

In order to answer these questions, this chapter interactively uses the theoretical approach of Michel Foucault's notion of biopower and Beatriz Sarlo's thoughts about the shopping mall. Foucauldian ideas focusing on what he refers to as the subtle non-disciplinary power which touches not only the "man-as-body," but the "man-as-living-being" or "as species" (*Society* 242), serve to identify the power existing in casinos and the way in which the gambling machinery subjugates bodies. The thoughts of Beatriz Sarlo, the Argentinian writer and social critic, reference the shopping mall in the city help to illustrate compulsive consumerism. This is a space of power to which Sarlo refers as a crammed "space capsule": "The constant presence of international brands and merchandise makes for the uniformity of this space without qualities . . . The space capsule can be paradise or nightmare" (11). Sarlo's critique of the mall and her analogy of the spaceship may be connected to Foucault's notion of biopower. Both perspectives contribute to the argument that globalization and the market not only create a "new culture," but "new bodies" inflicted with pathological and compulsive addictions.

This chapter is divided into five sections. Following the introduction, the second section conceptualizes "subjugation" and "globalization" in order to reveal the mechanism of power in the Panamanian economy, permeating what Tapia denominates "addictions in the dark." The third section summarizes the events in the novel together with the literary devices identified in it.

The fourth section explores power in casinos and shopping malls answering the question pondered: How does the global market through casinos and shopping malls subjugate masses in general and women's bodies in particular? It also focuses on the role of mass media effects in modern society, and displays the power that the media has in all types and forms of addictions. Finally, the fifth section analyzes diverse studies and theoretical developments about pathological gambling and compulsive consumption to identify the existing power of addiction through the lens of psychoanalysis. It answers the next questions: What is the difference between social gambling and shopping and pathological addictions? And, what are the points of contact and differences between female pathological gamblers and compulsive consumers?

### **V.1 Conceptualizing Subjugation and Globalization in the Panamanian Economy.**

Semantically, the expression “subjugation” means: a: “to defeat and gain control of (someone or something) by the use of force. or b: “to conquer and gain the obedience of (a group of people, a country, etc.)” (2014 Merriam-Webster, Dictionary). In literature, it is often linked to the oppression of bodies. This has been demonstrated in diverse ways throughout this dissertation—especially in chapter IV, in the discussion on prostitution. As well, it was established that the greatest manifestation of oppression is most noticeable when it refers to the physical oppression of women's bodies. The oppression (“use of force” and “gain of obedience”) is recognizable when the subjugation is explicitly inflicted (i.e. by violence and physical mistreatment), and—although in a lesser fashion—implicitly as well (i.e. through social inequalities and poverty). All these forms of control cause immediate reaction and condemnation by society. Nonetheless, when women are marginalized, defeated, and subjugated by socially acceptable institutions such as casinos and shopping malls (particularly the latter), the subjugation is less obvious, more subtle and therefore oblivious to those who

facilitate the capital enterprises: government and politicians. In fact, the phenomenon of gambling and shopping are even encouraged through the acceptable machinery of globalization. This is a machinery of power that affects societies in great magnitude and leaves powerful sequels such as pathological gambling and compulsive consumerism. In order to understand how globalization affects Panama, it is vital to first comprehend the semantics involved in the utterance.

The semantic connotation of Globalization is “the state of being globalized; *especially*: the development of an increasingly integrated global economy marked especially by free trade, free flow of capital, and the tapping of cheaper foreign labor markets” (2014 Merriam-Webster Dictionary). Scholars such as sociologist Martin Marger, define Globalization as: “world economic systems in which the economies of various politically independent countries are loosely tied together . . . This is what has been called the global economy” (*Social Inequality* 128). This globalized, economic togetherness plus Panama’s strategic position in the world—not to mention the fact that the money circulating in the country is U.S. currency—place Panama, according to national and international propaganda, as the ideal global trade market for “everything,” for business, for retirement, etc. It is one of the most important destinations in Central America for tourism; and as previously stated in this dissertation, is an ideal place for human trafficking as well. For example, chapters two explains Noriega’s drug deals using the territory; and four, the human trafficking of women. The global market has always had its eyes on Panama, whether for good commercial reasons, or for other motives.

In fact, the Wall Street Journal in an article published in 2013 predicted a stronger growth in the country’s economy based on its “boom in construction and transportation tied to the expansion of the Panama Canal . . . large infrastructure projects . . . (and) a boom in real estate

in Panama City, where high-rises increasingly dominate the skyline. (Darcy Crowe Par. 1-2). Other propagandistic business articles exalt Panama as a country with an “opening spirit” since colonial times which “has allowed an increasing development of international trade policies” and mention that its “Colon free zone, the Panama Canal, the flexible legal system and the geographical position of the Republic are factors that contribute to keeping the country in a significant place in world trade” (Arias and Muñoz 8-70). Also, Edward L. Jackiewicz and Jim Craine in “Destination Panama: an Examination of the Migration-Tourism-Foreign Investment Nexus, consider that “Panama is an increasingly important destination for the flows of people, money and ideas that circulate throughout the Americas” (29). Given that Panama is consistently endorsed nationally and internationally, there has been significant emphasis on the acquisition of more and more casinos and shopping malls in order to “to supply the needs of the masses.” As I will suggest below, that increase of casinos and malls may also be regarded as ultimately promoting more subjugation and control of the population as well. For example, in the novel *Tapia* explains how gambling is kidnapping Panama:

*Los casinos acaban con la economía de los panameños. Los juegos de azar se han apoderado del país. Un informe de la Junta de Control de Juegos del Ministerio de Economía y Finanzas reveló que desde que se autorizó la privatización de los casinos en Panamá operan cincuenta y tres casinos completos, salas de bingo, salas de máquinas tragamonedas, mesas de juegos, un hipódromo y las salas para las apuestas e deportes internacionales y de galgos, que reciben unos cincuenta millones de dólares en apuestas. Esto no incluye las promociones comerciales, los juegos pita, choclos, rifas, ruletas, clubes de mercancía y bingos televisados, que son considerados juegos transitorios. (29)*

[The casinos put an end to the Panamanian economy. Games of chance have taken over the country. A report by the Games Control Board of the Ministry of Economy and Finance has revealed that since the privatization of Panamanian casinos was authorized, 53 full casinos, bingo halls, slot machine halls, game tables, a race track and halls for betting on international sports and greyhounds, operate and receive about \$50 million in bets. This does not include commercial promotions, marble games, raffles, roulette, shopping clubs and televised bingo, which are considered transitional games.]<sup>36</sup>

Although casinos are located in tourist locations throughout the country, aiming primarily at tourist investors, Roberto Troncoso, president of the Panamanian Association of Business Executives has said, “también hay una creciente cantidad de ludópatas provenientes de las capas medias y de sectores marginales”. [“There is also a growing number of gamblers from the middle and marginal classes”]. He adds, “con 19 casinos completos que estarán en operaciones en 2013, Panamá destaca como el tercer país centroamericano con más casinos en el area.” [“with 19 full casinos that will be operational in 2013, Panama stands out as the third Central American country with the most casinos in the area”]. This situation harmfully impacts Panama’s families and the most vulnerable within society, regardless of their social strata.

In *Mujeres en fuga*, the author specifically depicts professionals and middle/high class-married individuals who at some point their lives switched. They change from having what was an orderly, normal existence (an undescribed situation in the narrative but implicit in their stories) to cohabitation inside what started as a perfectly accepted social behaviour (shopping and gambling) to a chaotic, anti-social, unaccepted behavior at the very moment in which they become compulsive addicts, losing control of their lives. They switched from a world of happiness, flair and fashion to unhappiness, confusion and desolation. Although Tapia uses an important part of the story focusing on the affective, emotional and relational problems that the women suffer and the ways in which they use these addictive patterns as an escape mechanism, this critical analysis exposes the real social problem brought on by globalization. It shows that despite the positive “economic boom” in the country’s post-dictatorial era, that same boom is increasingly negatively affecting the population with various social problems, especially the contemporary addictions that the author presents, and she calls them, “adicciones en la oscuridad.”

## V.2 *Mujeres en fuga*: “Addictions in the Dark”

Rose Marie Tapia, in her role as a Panamanian novelist and social activist, tries to stir public consciousness about the country’s problems. In *Mujeres en fuga*, she demonstrates that certain addictions—such as the ones suffered by the protagonists—are what she calls, “adiciones en la oscuridad.” They are ‘addictions in the dark’ because they are non-toxic addictions which do not leave easy tracks, and therefore are not easily recognizable at first until the addicts suffer severe consequences. When introducing the novel, the author confesses that the investigation was not an easy task: “La investigación sobre el tema fue muy ardua”<sup>37</sup>. In spite of this, and in order to depict a faithful representation of the addictions, Tapia becomes an ‘undercover detective’ in Panamanian casinos and shopping malls.

She describes it as follows: “En la investigación in situ, visité los casinos en una acción encubierta y percibí cierta peligrosidad, ya que podían sospechar mis intenciones, no obstante, era importante descubrir el mundo oscuro de la ludopatía. Fue toda una aventura y me sentía como una espía” (Par. 4). [“In research of the situation, I visited the casinos in undercover action and perceived certain danger, since they could suspect my intentions. However, it was important to discover the dark world of compulsive gambling. It was a real adventure and I felt like a spy”]. Tapia spends countless hours in the casino, asking patrons to show her how to use the machines. She writes that the overwhelming feeling—a “euphoria”—that she had when she won \$79.00 with her first 0.25 cents made her understand the power of the game. Then she was able to use the real experience in her literary characters since, as she says: “Entonces comprendí que ese era el primer paso para caer en el pantano de la pasión por el juego” (Par. 4). [“Then I understood that that was the first step of falling into the pit of passion for the game”].

Eduardo Verdumen is a Panamanian author who writes: “Rose Marie Tapia escribe con pasión, no sin antes investigar, sumergirse en el entorno y dedicarle tiempo de calidad a cada uno de sus libros”(23). ["Rose Marie Tapia writes with passion, but not before researching, immersing herself in the environment and dedicating quality time to each one of her books"]. Panamanian author Gloria Melania Rodríguez writes: “En esta novela nos cuenta . . . su preocupación por problemas de la sociedad actual que cada día crecen en número de víctimas. (Par. 3). [“In this novel she tells us . . . her concern for society’s current problems which each day grow in number of victims”]. Dr. Mauro Zúniga—the Panamanian author of two novels analyzed in this dissertation—besides focusing most of his critical analysis on the psychological aspect of *Mujeres en fuga*—points to the role of the market: “Los que promueven los casinos y otros centros de juego han estudiado muy bien las debilidades de estos individuos y las formas de atraerlos a través de técnicas que Rose Marie describe muy bien en su novela” (2). [“Those who promote casinos and other gaming centers have studied very well the weaknesses of these individuals and the ways of attracting them through techniques that Rose Marie describes very well in her novel”].

Regarding her research about compulsive consumption, Tapia says that whereas her field-research in the casinos was “revealing and yet fun,” researching the other contemporary addiction of consumerism in the shopping mall was a “tiresome task”: “La investigación de la adicción a las compras fue agotadora: observar a personas comprar sin control es abrumador” (Par.6). The following section summarizes the two contemporary addictions depicted in the novel.



### V.3 Brief Summary of Events and Literary Techniques in *Mujeres en fuga*

Tapia poignantly sets the scene of two different and yet similar views provoked by contemporary addictions influenced by globalization, in the first and third sections of the novel. The first section depicts the story of Rebeca, a forty-year-old educated, married woman addicted to pathological gambling. Her addiction makes her switch from euphoric happiness (due to her huge wins) to complete miserable depression (due to her loses). She is consistently distressed while waiting for “another stroke of luck” every time she loses. When losing and in state of depression and desperation, Rebeca says to herself: “Pronto va a pasar esta mala racha y todo será como antes” (17) [“Soon this bad luck will pass and everything will be like before”]. When winning: “La exelación que la embargaba era incontenible, se reía a carcajadas, saltaba y bailaba. Su placer por el juego estaba relacionado con la capacidad de disfrutar la vida, y el riesgo de perder el dinero la envolvía en una vorágine que la embriagaba, la hacía sentirse viva y en constante búsqueda de sensaciones” (24). [“The exaltation that seized her was uncontainable. She laughed out loud, jumping and dancing. Her pleasure for the game was related to her capacity for enjoying life, and the risk of losing the money wrapped her up in a whirlwind that inebriated her, making her feel alive and in constant search of sensations”]. Rebeca suffers from altered episodes of the ‘hope for the hopeless’ involved with gambling addictions.

In the presentation, the author points out: “En el caso de la ludopatía, esta adicción se confunde con el entretenimiento y sus víctimas dicen a menudo: “es solo diversión.” Caminan al borde del abismo y no lo saben. Entran al infierno y piensan que están en una fiesta.”] [“In the case of compulsive gambling, this addiction is confused with leisure and its victims often say: “it is only an entertainment.” They walk on the edge of the abyss and do not know it. They enter into hell and think they are at a party”]. In a rather dramatic first scene in the chapter the reader

is confronted with a scene of sex, anger and violence as by-products of the addiction. For example: “Por primera vez Rebeca sintió el olor de la ira: era similar al de la pólvora. El sudor empapaba su rostro, impidiéndole ver con claridad, mientras un fuerte dolor de cabeza acrecentaba su angustia” (13). [“For the first time Rebeca felt the smell of ire: it was similar to gunpowder. Sweat was soaking her face, preventing her from seeing clearly, while a strong headache was increasing her anguish”]. More pattern manifestations of the effects of gambling on the protagonist are further described.

The third section similarly drafts the story of Zorel. She is the mother of a five-year-old boy and the wife of a rich and influential doctor in high-class Panamanian society. Tapia portrays her as black and young, beautiful, retired model, who in her earlier years was a super-model in Panama. She graduated from an Italian modeling school and was pursued by the best modeling agencies. In spite of having all the necessary ingredients to live a successful life, Zorel’s life is not. The correlation with Rebeca’s misery, desperation and compulsiveness is established in the first scene. Although Zorel’s story, instead of demonstrating violence and anger (as Rebeca), she is imbued with highlights of fear and shame. For example:

Cuando llegué al consultorio de mi esposo . . . Temí lo peor y respiré profundo para darme valor. Antes de entrar al despacho sentí la visión borrosa e hice ingentes esfuerzos para mantenerme en pie. Sabía que debía enfrenar la situación, por terrible que fuera. —Alberto esperaba a su esposa acompañado del Jefe de detectives de la Dirección de Investigación. (93)

[When I arrived at my husband's office . . . I feared the worst, and I breathed deeply to give myself strength. Before entering the office I felt blurred vision and made enormous efforts to keep standing. I knew that I should confront the situation, no matter how terrible it was. —Alberto was waiting for his wife accompanied by the Chief of Detectives of the Investigation Office.]

Tapia places emphasis on her afflictions as consequences of the powerful disorder of compulsive buying that nearly destroys her life. Her ever-increasing consumerism makes her accumulate

debts, borrowing money (through lies) from her family, keeping multiple credit cards balancing thousands of dollars. She also commits an auto-robbery to cover her lies and deceptions. She throws all values and beliefs away in order to sustain her addiction.

Regarding the narrative voices in the novel, Tapia uses several. For example, Rebeca's story is presented in the heterodiegetic-third-person narrative voice. The narrative consistently follows a non-chronological order, and the narrator does not fluctuate. It remains the same narrative voice from the beginning to the end. Zorel's story, however, is narrated from a homodiegetic-first-person voice. It is the voice of the main protagonist, Zorel. However, the story presents the narrative voice of a heterodiegetic narrator (third-person), as well. It fluctuates from first-person to third-person interchangeably, from one paragraph to another. Flashback and flash forward intervene in the novel in order to give the reader a better insight into the story. The literary language of the narration in general is very simple, direct, uncomplicated, and easy to read—a common feature in all of Tapia's novels, because as the writer herself says, "I write to the average reader." As Rodríguez notes: "Mujeres en fuga (es) un texto que, con un lenguaje literario, eliminando todo retoricismo, toda palabra rebuscada, intenta dilucidar sus síntomas, desenmascarar la condición humana y la situación panameña" (Par.3). ["Mujeres en fuga (is) a text that, with a literary language eliminating all rhetoric and every unnatural word, tries to elucidate its symptoms, unmasking the human condition and the Panamanian situation"]. Tapia provides all the necessary information for the reader to be informed about the social issues, and she offers some solutions to the problems of her characters as well.

The author writes each case of addiction separately—each gets a chapter—and does not connect or give any clue to the reader as to how, where and when Rebeca and Zorel's addictions are going to be resolved. Neither narrative offers any advanced mention of whether the

protagonists' stories have a happy or unhappy, closed or open ending. Neither mentions how the stories of addictions evolve into a consolidated single story, only until the end. With this, Tapia keeps the reader alert and wondering at all times whether or not the women find redemption and are able to switch their lives around and get out of addictions. Additionally, she uses various powerful places to situate the characters. These are: physical locations, psychological scenarios, violence and victimization. For example, while in most parts of the novel both women are located separately: Rebeca in a casino and Zorel in a shopping mall in Panama City, they are unified by a common psychological scenario: desperation and addictive patterns. Tapia demonstrates that both addictions can cause many types of violence and victimization to their own bodies and to society. However, she describes how those situations differ from each other. For example, Rebeca's gambling addiction make her a violent person, Zorel's compulsive shopping addiction and desperation are depicted as subtle, nonviolent acts towards others, instead she victimizes her own self. In other words, Zorel does not hurt anyone physically—as Rebeca does—but the toll of her addiction is received by her own body. The constant lies, fears, anguish and sleepless nights make her body afflicted with bouts of cancer.

Rebeca's case differs a great deal due to the fact that gambling addictions create more stress and mental sickness. The gambling effects (as are developed ahead in the chapter) bring forward common dichotomies that disseminate instantly in the story. For example, Rebeca—in no particular order—switches from being a winner to a loser in a matter of minutes. She changes from literally winning thousands of dollars on Black Jack tables, to literally losing everything including her house and her dignity. First, Rebeca is robbed of the small fortune she has made at the table by an attractive man that she met in the gambling table, and sexually seduces her. Second, she almost loses her house's deed by a money-lender who tried to blackmail and rape

her. She switches from being a victim to becoming a victimizer. In other words, besides being victimized by the casino and its powerful manifestation through money, and being attacked sexually and blackmailed, Rebeca almost becomes a murderer herself. For example: “(Rebeca) parecía asesina . . . un monstruo . . . era el aspecto que necesitaba para encuadrar aquella furia asesina que le nublaban los sentidos” (13). [(Rebeca) seemed like a murderer . . . a monster . . . it was the aspect that she needed to demark the murderous rage that was clouding her senses”]. Tapia establishes, at the end of the novel, how the protagonists recapture subjectivity and power. The lives of the protagonists (including Camila’s, the third protagonist in the novel) collide in the office of a psychologist. The women recuperate and start to change at the very same moment they recognize their addictions. Through a series of therapy sessions, Rebeca and Zorel recover the power that they once found in casinos and in shopping malls.

The next section establishes how globalization through casinos and commercial centers exercise power in societies.

#### **V.4 Power in Casinos and Malls According to Foucault and Sarlo**

When considering the diverse manifestations of power that permeate and alter people’s lives, placing them in abnormal addictive normalizations—as happened to Rebeca and Zorel in the novel—the use of Beatriz Sarlo’s ideas on the shopping mall and Foucault’s notion of bio-power (power exercised in populations) and heterotopias (meanings of places and spaces) aid to understand and highlight diverse ways in which globalization through casinos and malls subjugate populations in general and create new addictive bodies in women in particular.

First, as chapter IV shows, the effects of biopower on women are manifested in their bodies and their psychologies. They are subjugated as sexual commodities due to the demand of their “docile/productive” and “healthy/beautiful” bodies.” In *Mujeres en fuga* biopower is

manifested in the ways in which the protagonists—and the Panamanian population for that matter—are subjugated by the entities of globalization (i.e. the state economy, casinos, shopping malls, etc.). Due to the fact that a docile/productive body is, as Foucault notes, “an indispensable element in the development of capitalism” (*The History* 140-41), the first manifestation of biopower in Tapia’s novel is depicted at the very moment in which the protagonists are coerced into using their bodies as services/products at a vulnerable time in their lives. As the philosopher explains, power over life is focused on the body as a machine (what it can do to the system) and on the extortion of its forces (its docility). In few words, he reiterates “the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic control” (139). Rebeca’s struggles to maintain control over her gambling habits—putting all her strengths in the game, and being controlled by it at the same time—is an straightforward example that shows a manifestation of biopower.

When the compulsive consumption of those services/products becomes normality, new addictive bodies are created. This manifests the second form of biopower. Foucault argues that this second form of power focuses on the regulation of the body, “imbued with the mechanics of life and serving as the basis of . . . propagation” (139). Tapia’s novel depicts clearly and consistently how the protagonists are manipulated in their everyday actions by the addictions that are subtly promoted by the nation, institutions—and in this case—the global market. The other form of manipulation (seen in the novel) is when the same entities which control populations, exercise their powers in issues such as birth and mortality—as has been clearly analyzed in chapter four—and exercise power over new addictive patterns. In other words, pathological gambling and compulsive shopping reproduce (“create”) new (“addictive”) bodies. It is an ailment that cannot be stopped, and in fact, is reproducing constantly.

Second, both Foucault and Sarlo argue that the dissemination of power is also subtly propagated through the non-hegemonic spaces in “architectural structures.” Sarlo calls it “spacial capsule” and Foucault “heterotopia.” For example, Foucault uses the notion of “heterotopia” to signal a specific space of power which invites activities that “inflict crisis” and not only take place, but at the same time reprogram and recreate new bodies. He coins it as “crisis heterotopia” As he notes, these places are “the places reserved for individuals who are, in relationship to society and to the human environment in which they live, in a state of crisis” (*Of Other Spaces* 4-5). It is important to consider that, although Foucault does not necessarily use his known theory of power in his definition of heterotopia, one can argue that “crisis heterotopia” is in fact a specific space of power (just as casinos and malls) where the activities of people in a state of crisis inhabit, or the place where the actual predicament takes place. This particular idea of heterotopia correlates with Sarlo’s metaphor of “Space Capsule.”

Sarlo draws on the metaphor of a spaceship “nave espacial” and space capsule “cápsula espacial,” to show how the shopping malls’ structures exercise power over populations. The idea of a spaceship and space capsule comes from Kisho Kurokawa in his essay “Capsule Declaration.” He explains that when man cannot live without a machine (i.e. car), a physical space or device (i.e. clothes, buildings, etc.) that means that he has created a “new organic body” out of that artificial environment. In other words, that device then becomes a living space in itself and an extension of his home. (in De Cauter 78). That is a capsule. Again, here the idea of “birth” of new bodies is denoted. Additionally, Sarlo uses the same figure of speech to explain that—just like a capsule—malls create that non-natural living space which Kurokawa describes. It is also an artificial space that makes people feel secure and protected, just as if they were in their own household. In the novel, the case of Zorel can be used as an example. That is to say,

sometimes addictive patterns separate consumers—just like Zorel—from their reality, and place them in a fake space of power (Tapia 92). Within the “spatial capsule,” Sarlo explains there is no need to worry about anything. In fact, inside the “capsule,” people do not even realize if it is raining, dark or shining outside, because, as Sarlo points out, the sounds and lights of the malls are regularized to produce good effects and tranquility and make people forget the time and date. Another issue is that in that “capsule” there is no need to travel long distances from one store to another because everything is within reach. There is no need to walk past “ugly buildings” as shoppers would in regular downtown streets. Inside the malls, everything is aesthetically organized.

The absence of history is another subtle control exercised over population in the postdictatorial era. In this regards, both malls and casinos have the ability to make pathological addicts to forget their past—and even their present—sometimes. Idelber Avelar in his article “Allegory and Mourning in Postdictatorship” explains that: “The literature produced in the aftermath of the recent Latin American dictatorships . . . confronts not only the need to come to terms with the past but also to define its position in the new present ushered in by the military regimes: a global market in which every corner of social life has been commodified” (1). Sarlo notes that malls erase memories: “History is absent, and even when there is some mark of historicity, there is none of that impassioned conflict that results when the impulse of the present is set against a resistant past” (13-14). Sarlo considers that: “A mall is all about the future” (13). However, in the case of the protagonists’ addictions, the only thing that actually matters is the present--that particular moment in which the shopping or the gambling is taking place (Tapia 97-98). Jean Franco, in *The Decline and Fall of the Lettered City: Latin America in the Cold War* points out, that for “Sarlo, the shopping mall is a machine of amnesia,” adding the role of



globalization and the mass media to the disease: “What gave a powerful inflection to the official policy of amnesia, however, was the fact that it occurred during a period of transition to a free market economy” (240). The masses even tend to forget to which social stratum they belong because they can all—at one point—share the same space and buying the same merchandise. Yet, as Sarlo explains: “Richer neighborhoods have formed their own centers, which are cleaner, more organized, more secure, and better lit, and which offer more materials and symbolic goods” (10-11). Nonetheless, she also points out that although the space capsule sometimes is a paradise, paradoxically for some—or even for the same individuals—it can also be a nightmare. (11). This dichotomy correlates with Zorel’s problems.

These ideas are relevant to Tapia’s novel because Sarlo’s argument concurs with the space of power where the protagonists experience addictions. Both references to “heterotopias” and “capsules” correlate with the feeling that Zorel experiences inside the malls. Sarlo’s explanation makes one understand how people are influenced and driven to consumerism alike, in every city/country by the global market. The “cápsula espacial” that she points out, looks the same everywhere, she says: “en Minneapolis, en Miami Beach . . . en ciudad de Buenos Aires” (13). Additionally, in her writing Sarlo notes: “La constancia de las marcas internacionales y de las mercancías se suman a la uniformidad de un espacio sin cualidades: un vuelo interplanetario a Cacharel, Stephanel, Fiorucci, Kenzo, Guess” (13). [“The constant presence of international brands and merchandise makes for the uniformity of this space without qualities. What we have here is an interplanetary flight to Cacharel, Stephanel, Fiorucci, Kenzo, Guess” (11)]. Interestingly, *Mujeres en fuga* correlates with the above when the author gives the reader a detailed account of the Panamanian shopping malls. Tapia calls them “centers of hypnotism,” due to the fact that they captivate the regular masses in “normal” shopping extravaganzas, and

magnetize and mesmerize bodies in their spaces. This issue promotes more consumerism and more compulsiveness. The following extract explains Zorel's feelings inside the mall:

*Inmersa en mis pensamientos llegué a uno de los almacenes más exclusivos del centro comercial. La vendedora me reconoció de inmediato, fue a buscar el vestido y me preguntó si deseaba volver a probármelo. Le dije que no era necesario y pagué la factura. Contemplé el vestido con satisfacción: inspirado en los cuentos fantásticos, este modelo de Guy Laroche me recordaba el atuendo de las princesas del Señor de los Anillos; bellas y sensuales atraían sin remedio a quienes se expusieran a los encantos de su atractiva estampa. Costó mil doscientos dólares, pero el vestido lo valía. (95)*

[Immersed in my thoughts I arrived at one of the most exclusive department stores of the mall. The saleswoman recognized me immediately. She went to look for the dress and asked me if I wanted to try it on again. I told her that it was not necessary and paid the bill. I contemplated the dress with satisfaction: inspired by fantastic fairy tales, this brand of Guy Laroche reminded me of the attire of the princesses of the Lord of the Rings; beautiful and sensual, they attracted without fail those who were exposed to the charms of their appealing vision. It cost one thousand two hundred dollars, but the dress was worth it.]

As Zorel explains, her love of shopping transfers her to a surreal space. She is transported to the world of the fairy tale of the “Lord of the Rings,” where women are from another century, a culture surrounded by the beauty and magic that she pursues. She forsakes her own reality, and instead, creates a new culture of acquisition, recklessness and even self-detestation.

Although the main argument of Sarlo is about malls, she finds a correlation between malls and casinos. She notes: “a diferencia de las cápsulas espaciales, los shoppings cierran sus muros a las perspectivas exteriores. Como en los casinos de Las Vegas (y los shoppings aprendieron mucho de Las Vegas), el día y la noche no se diferencian: el tiempo no pasa o el tiempo que pasa es también un tiempo sin cualidades” (15). [“unlike space capsules, malls have their walls sealed off against any view of the outside. More like Las Vegas casinos (and malls have learned much from Las Vegas), in a mall there is no distinction between day and night. Time does not pass or at least what time does pass is also a time without qualities” (12)]. Tapia

also depicts ‘time without quality’ inside that sealed space where her protagonist Rebeca is located. Rebeca has become an “object” of subjugation of the powerful economic apparatus that is the casino. She is objectified by the powerful gambling addictions that she suffers.

The novel illustrates, how everything starts right at the casino’s doors: “(En los casinos) la magnificencia de la entrada al local de juegos en verdad era todo un gancho para cualquier incauto que creyera en las promesas que describían cada uno de los accesorios de la entrada: las luces, los colores, los sonidos, los uniformes, las alfombras . . . las puertas adornadas con vitrales alusivos a reinos de magia y esplendor. (23-24). [“(In casinos) the magnificence of the entrance to the games area really was a hook for any naive who might believe in the promises that were described in each one of the entrance accessories: lights, colors, sounds, uniforms, rugs . . . doors adorned with stained glass windows alluding to magic kingdoms and splendor”]. Tapia names them “euphoric centers of happiness and abundance.”

Both casino and mall walls are like watertight compartments that offer resistance to the outside world. That is to say, these institutions of power and subjugation, like watertight doors separate the old persona (i.e. history) from the new self (with a new identity) that the addictions create. The idea of new bodies created by casinos and malls, reinforces the proposal that these institutions control lives and make women slowly begin to invest more time in gambling and shopping, and spending less time with their families and daily life situations that used to be important. Again, like watertight doors, they separate addicts from the rest of society.

Finally, Sarlo makes reference to Foucault’s metaphor of Panopticon, examining the way in which the Panopticon works. The scrutiny existing in malls keep consumers “safe” from any kind of treats due to the closed-circuit TV—which observes every move in the capsule—(110). That is, people can feel free to move around and shop without worries. Nonetheless, the same

idea of “Panopticon” can be used to argue that in fact, surveillance and scrutiny on consumers’ moves are sometimes detrimental to them. The information collected by the mall is used by mass media (TV programs, magazines, etc.) to manipulate the way in which consumers think about shopping. For example, the media makes individuals acquire things which they never knew existed before. This situation affects every social stratum—rich and poor, every gender—man and woman, and every age—young and old. People with acquisitive power buy things, and people without that power somehow make it happen. People, like Zorel, find themselves at all times in the addictive mood of desire. They are constantly thinking and/or dreaming about acquisition.

The market economy through mass media makes people forget their past at the very moment in which they are presented with new information. Franco considers that the way in which society is bombarded with images of information also aids in the erasure of memories (240). The constant gaze of new information attracts those who cannot control themselves—just like Zorel—back to stores to continue shopping. The continued accumulation of information can also be explained with what the German philosopher and literary critic Walter Benjamin points out: “that the eye of the city dweller is overburned with protective function” (207). The continuous “vigilance” that Benjamin notes, in the case of mass media, is used (and abused) at the moment in which manipulation and subjugation are exercised by the market. The market collaborates in the creation of fake-happy subjects of normalization. The fragmented changes in their lives—through the manipulative information—are “caesuras” that as Foucault explains, are “created and addressed by biopower” (*Society* 255). The following extract in the novel gives an example of the epistemology:

Encendí el televisor y comencé a pasar los canales como de costumbre . . . No tenía opción el único que me entretenía era Mall TV. De pronto salió en la

pantalla mi centro comercial favorito. Le hacían una entrevista a la dueña de un nuevo negocio que inauguraban ese día. ¿Cómo no me di cuenta antes? . . . Si me daba prisa llegaría a tiempo. Tomé mi bolso y salí de prisa . . . Salí del centro comercial sintiéndome la mujer más feliz, saciada y en trance, como si estuviera hipnotizada. Con esa compra en particular experimenté una sensación suprema. (103-04)

[I turned on the television and I began to surf the channels as usual. . . I did not have an option; the only one that could entertain me was Mall TV. Suddenly my favorite mall was on the screen. They were interviewing the owner of a new business that was opening that day. How did I not realize this before? . . . If I rushed I would arrive on time. I took my purse and left quickly. . . I left the mall feeling like the happiest woman, satiated and in a trance, as if I were hypnotized. With that particular purchase I experienced a supreme feeling.]

The power of mass media, as sociologist Martin Marger explains, must not be underestimated: “In all modern societies, control of information is critical: Whoever controls the means of communication has great power” (*Social Inequality* 253). Globalization, the state, and the market continuously use that medium for subjugation. The concepts of “capsule,” “heterotopias,” “panopticon” and “mass media” provide a clear picture of how globalization through casinos and malls subjugate populations in general and create new addictive bodies in women—in vulnerable positions—in particular.

The State and global market produce these contemporary addictions, which form a sort of cultural disease or epidemic, yet they do not provide a remedy or prevention measures. This leaves members of society looking out for help on their own (at least those who can). However, when this occurs, and people recover from their afflictions, wanting to be back to a state of “normality,” just as Rebeca and Zorel did, they become objectified in their search. In other words, they (addicts) become both a “subject” and a “case,” they are now useful to mechanisms in society to further disseminate power/knowledge over other bodies. The following last section of this chapter analyzes the deeper and powerful psychological scars that affect the protagonists

from a past that has been dormant in their subconscious, bringing them into addictions. This demonstrates how power permeates in psychological therapies.

### **V. 5 Power in a Psychoanalytic Reading of *Mujeres en fuga***

*Mujeres en fuga* depicts significant manifestations of power/knowledge. The section titled, “El encuentro” [“The meeting”] (118), identifies two vital points which provide insight on how a “regular” visit to a psychiatric clinic is governed by hegemony and power. The first manifestation is established through a psychoanalytic reading of the novel. Tapia informs the reader that the protagonists’ addictions are influenced as well by hidden unconscious events of their past. The “unconscious” is a central concept explained by the classic psychoanalytic theory of Sigmund Freud. Leigh Wilson explains: “The unconscious as theorized by psychoanalysis is that which does not fit, which exceeds our control, our reason, our ability to know. It is that which intrudes when it is least wanted, which undoes our mastery, which challenges the whole notion of identity” (810). The second manifestation particularly focuses on the “help” that the protagonists receive in a psychiatrist’s office. Even though, this second manifestation of power is not identified by the author, this analysis argues that as Foucault says, power is everywhere and instills itself in each and every manifestation of the body’s knowledge. In other words, when a visit to a mental health specialist (psychiatrist, psychologist, therapist, etc.) involves (which is usually the case) a search of information into knowledge the very intimate past (or present) of individuals—examining the “why” and “where” in order to “understand,” “frame” and “cure” the addiction—then according to Foucault, there is power/knowledge in action.

If the problems of the protagonists are seen through psychological lenses, which include any trauma received from childhood affecting the adulthood of these individuals, (correlating with what was previously explained in the analysis of Tapia’s *Roberto por el buen camino*), there

is a display of power. For example, in the case of Rebeca and Zorel, the hidden unconscious events which later contest their identity, started in their early days. As Rebeca confesses: “su padre siempre fue un apostador, hasta el extremo de jugarse el dinero de la comida. Y cuando su madre se preocupaba porque no había ni para los alimentos, él, burlonamente decía que de cualquier herida saldría sangre. Después de esas pérdidas, salía a empeñar lo que encontraba de valor” (147). [“her father had always been a gambler, to the extreme of betting with the food money. When her mother was worried because there was not even money for food, he, mockingly said that ‘blood would come from any wound’. After those losses, he would go out to pawn anything found of value”]. That painful repressed memory was buried and even forgotten by Rebeca.

Yet at the moment in which the casual action of going into a casino turned into a pathological addiction, it resurrected from Rebeca’s dormant-stockroom of bad experiences and became part of her compulsive behaviour. As Lois Tyson points out: “The unconscious is the storehouse of those painful experiences and emotions, those wounds, fears, guilty desires, and unresolved conflicts we do not want to know about because we feel we will be overwhelmed by them” (12). In Rebeca’s case, those unconscious wounds just needed a trigger. By the same token, Zorel’s life of superabundant money and prestige, as well as her life of loneliness, apparently are the causes that bring her to compulsive consumerism, until she realizes that the extreme condition of poverty which she endured during her childhood is one of the sources that triggers her addictions. For example, Zorel explains that she lived “la más horrenda de las incertidumbres” (148). [“the most horrendous of uncertainties”]. It was in part due to her widow mother’s lack of education and her lack of opportunities to find a job.

Zorel explains that due to their poverty, not only did she go to bed without having had anything to eat the entire day, but she was also never able to socialize with friends due to her lack of clothing: “La única ropa que tenía eran mis uniformes. Mi madre jamás me compró nada; aunque nuestra situación económica mejoró, ella siempre temió quedarse en la indigencia. Jamás dispuse de un solo centavo . . . El día que recibí mi primer salario, compré un vestido para cada una. Al día siguiente me obligó a regresarlos” (148). [“The only clothes that I had were my uniforms. My mother never bought anything for me anything; although our economic situation improved, she always feared remaining in poverty. I never spent a single cent . . . The day I received my first wage, I bought a dress for each of us. The following day she forced me to return them”]. The sad childhoods of both women, contribute to their movement toward spaces afflicted by addictions.

Furthermore, just as Rebeca does, Zorel explains how her poverty and lack of necessary things affected her living situation as a child. She experienced the lack of support from the State and educational institutions. For example: “su madre viuda . . . sin una profesión que le permitiera conseguir un empleo . . . muchas veces tuvieron que acostarse sin comer en todo el día” (148). [“her widow mother . . . without a profession that allowed her to secure employment . . . many times they had to go to bed without eating all day”]. The poverty (of both characters), lack of education or job, and lack of food and clothing are the result of unequal power structures that ultimately feed the characters’ compulsions to gamble and shop.

This show a manifestation of power that penetrates every particle of individuals and in every actions, as Foucault says. Although Foucault does not use the language of psychoanalysis (and in fact, he was critical of psychoanalysis)<sup>38</sup>, one may argue that the way individuals respond and react to the normalizing impact of power in society is influenced by their unconscious drives,



including repressed experiences from their childhoods. The unconscious, through the psychoanalytic lens, stores those earlier thoughts and, as Tyson explains “comes into being when we are very young through the repression . . . it gives them force by making them the organizers of our current experience: we unconsciously behave in ways that will allow us to “play out” without admitting it to ourselves” (Tyson 13). Elizabeth Loftus in “The Reality of Repressed Memories” explains that: “something shocking happens, and the mind (grabs holds of the memory and) pushes it into some inaccessible corner of the unconscious. Later the memory may emerge into consciousness” (1). The unconscious not only represses and controls, but also creates a situation that some studies note as “escapism.”

Finally, as Belle Gavriel-Fried and Mimi Ajzenstadt explain, repressed anxieties, created by a disorder named “escape gamblers” start with “normal escapisms” while trying to mask unpleasant realities: “in order to escape negative mental situations, loneliness, boredom, a difficult and complex life—or even a sense of being overwhelmed by housework and child-raising duties” (130). This leads to compulsive gambling (and even compulsive consumption). Tapia shows all the above “escapism” with the title of her novel: “*Mujeres en fuga*” [“Women in Escape”]. Besides these being promoted by casinos and shopping malls—as explained in previous sections—they are formed from earlier memories which then produce in the protagonists poor self-esteem, isolation, seclusion, boredom, and other complications in their lives.

The second manifestation of power is demonstrated through the visit to the psychiatric clinic. Rebeca and Zorel want to know what is wrong with them, and more importantly, they want to break free from their addictions. In fact, this is a good thing to do in society, and it is influenced by the State, health systems, educational institutions, family, etc. Yet, when these

emotional problems, buried in the women's unconscious, are "rediscovered" or brought back by a psychiatrist, makes them (the patients) a production of power in "local centers" of power/knowledge. According to Foucault, these "local centers" exercise power at the very moment in which issues such as: "self-examinations, questionings, admissions, interpretations, and interviews" (*The History* 98) take place. For example, as happens in the novel, the protagonists are interviewed by a team of intellectual specialists, in a way which Foucault explains as "the vehicle of a kind of incessant back-and-forth movement of forms of subjugation and schemas of knowledge" (98). That search for knowledge and some sort of regularization and normalization of the subject in question is where the real nature of power is evident.

Moreover, Foucault explains: "To put it very simple, psychiatric internment, the mental normalisation of individuals and penal institutions . . . they are undoubtedly essential to the general functioning of the wheels of power" (Power/knowledge 115-16). In other words, the patient (addicts) then becomes a subject of health discipline. He or she is no longer a person, but now is a case, an illness that needs to be treated. Tapia's narrative provides the reader a proportional account of the study. For example: "El equipo de la clínica estaba integrado por un siquiatra, un sociólogo, una sicóloga y un guía espiritual" (133). [The team of the clinic was integrated with a psychiatrist, a sociologist, a psychologist and a spiritual guide"]. Additionally, the narrative depicts the thoroughly individual investigation to which the rehabilitation patients are submitted to: "Se establecieron entrevistas individuales," and a file is created with the specific treatment: "Se elaboró un proyecto personal de tratamiento" (134), with different approaches. This at the end of the day complement each other because, again, their final goal was to cure the addictions and normalized the patient. In sum, this example explains that even

though the reach for help from addicts is their first step to empowerment, it is as well the first path to objectification, according to notions of power.

Furthermore, even though pathological gambling and compulsive consumerism are not—yet—being considered as what machineries of power label as “insane,” these contemporary addictions can correlate. John Brannigan argues: “The production of knowledge about “insanity” leads to the formation of institutions and technologies to treat it as a condition, and in turn, the establishment of such institutions and technologies means that there is a new power relationship between the insane and the sane” (314). He further explains: “The insane (or the addictive) are, according to this system of representations and relationships, deemed incapable of knowing or caring for themselves, and the sane (the team of specialists) are correspondingly deemed responsible for treating the insane” (314). All of the above subtly subjugates and disseminates the exercise of power. In a nutshell: Society needs more addictions/addicts in order to continue producing mental health institutions to treat the illness. Without the former, the later would not exist.

Lastly, this form of knowledge that produces power is identified in cultural studies as a liaison that controls and subjugates social life. Gordon Coonfield notes: “In *Foucault*, Deleuze (1988) describes ‘subjection’ as one form subjectivation takes, one which is composed, on the one hand, by those techniques of individuation installed by power which subject one to control, and on the other hand, by corresponding techniques of the self which tie the subject to its own identity through ‘conscience or self-knowledge’” (81). Coonfield further explains that the spread of addiction subjection is a power-knowledge formed by clinical judgement of ‘self’ disciplines of psychology, psychiatry, substance abuse treatment, etc. Which in a manner send a message, saying: “You are an addict”; and by the addict’s own confession: “I am an addict”. (82). All of

these, once again, as Foucault argues (and quoted above, but worth the repetition) are “essential to the general functioning of the wheels of power.” This subjugates, perpetuates and objectified individuals, leaving not much of a room to real agency and subjectivity.

**In conclusion,** with *Mujeres en fuga* Tapia has demonstrated how globalization permeates through the market economy and subjugate the Panamanian society, and female pathological gamblers and compulsive consumers (in particular). Diverse studies revealed that the control was first and foremost influenced by the global market through casinos, shopping malls, media and even health systems—as the last section showed. Following Foucault notions of power, these all are instrumental apparatuses in the political and economic machinery. It was also established that although, two of the protagonists’s addictions—Rebeca (gambling) and Zorel (shopping)—share many differences, the parallels were greater than the divergences. Because, after all, they form part of “contemporary addictions in the dark” (as Tapia notes). They are not only concealed from society and even family (nobody notices them until it is too late sometimes), but they are perfectly sunken in the protagonists unconscious. The existing traumas experienced in their childhood, and later manifested in their adulthood, allowed the creation of new identities (new bodies, new self representation, new images) that respond to the imperatives of globalized economic interests. In addition, it was also described how both—gamblers and compulsive shoppers—suffer from similar repressed anxieties, and both—driven by the same inner force to resist—look for help and recapture agency.

This study summarizes the ways in which addictions both complement and even perfect each other. That is to say, first, both institutions or establishments—casinos and malls—protect their ‘victims’ inside what Sarlo calls “capsules” and Foucault “heterotopias.” They are places where generally compulsive gamblers and shoppers use all their time and “all the money” that

they win in gambling in unnecessary purchases and or in more gambling. Both addictions produce chaos, due to the fact that both overlap, correlating to a web of compulsion and dependence. Also, their hidden identities produced separations from their family and their society. Both women become isolated in their own new world of addictions. Rose Marie Tapia once more, through her novel confront readers with a reality in her fiction, and raises a call to the conscience not only to those who already are addict but to others, like she says “*otros que piensan que se divierten y están a punto de caer en el abismo de la adicción*” [“those who think that are having fun, but that in reality are on the verge of fallings”]. The main point of the author is to deliver a positive message of hope, redemption and above all to promote the “cure” that addicts undeniably need and deserve, to break free and recuperate agency.

However, this study—especially the last section—revealed another way in which the novel (indirectly) depicts subtle powers permeating addicts’ lives. That is, at the very moment in which, the protagonists are analyzed within a psychiatric institution—by a group of, not one but, four specialists in multiple areas (a psychiatrist, a sociologist, a psychologist and a spiritual guide), the novel evidenced the complexity of subject formation. The analysis or study done by the institution reflects a fundamental paradox, which is: the same institution that alleviates or normalizes their problems is an institution that makes the subject investigated into a “case study” for power/knowledge. This reinforces the idea that therapy, and other treatments for these addictions, are not final solutions, but rather important steps in a network of much more complex problems.

Although it is not possible to deny the usefulness of institutions of health in society, (simultaneously with casinos and shopping malls), a Foucauldian view of power demonstrates how subtle powers permeate and normalize today’s society. These institutions are part of the

wheel of power, which in their worse manifestations, alienate individuals (make them a “case” a “subject of study”). If something characterizes the diffusion of power by the society, it is that the resistance to those manifestations of power are never simple or utopic. Frequently and paradoxically, these resistances to the oppression and subjugation operate in complicity with the same powers to which they struggle against. They make acceptable—and even possible—the perpetuation of subjugation of bodies.

## Conclusion

The study of the literary works of Roberto Díaz Herrera's *Estrellas clandestinas*, Rose Marie Tapia's *Roberto por el buen camino* and *Mujeres en fuga*, and Mauro Zúñiga Araúz's *El chacal del general* and *Espejo de miserias* has demonstrated the relationship of power that was established in two important transitional moments in Panamanian society. First, the dictatorial era of General Manuel Antonio Noriega (1983-1989), a period when power was exercised directly and violently by controlling people's lives and minds through corruption, abductions, and assassinations. This was followed by a post-dictatorial era (1990- ) when power operated in understated and subtle ways, permeating and subjugating the nation and its people through civil society, institutions, the global market and economy. In the analysis of the works investigated, I sought to demonstrate the links of power existing within them. The texts manifest the ways in which Panamanian society moved from the repressive dictatorial military apparatus to a new norm when Panama became a democratic nation but began to decay in new forms of control and power. Throughout the dissertation I argued that in spite of the rupture with controlling dictatorship rules and the new sense of freedom and progress in the country, Panama and its citizens struggled once more with the ideological state apparatus' forms of subjugation such as inequality in education and economic strategies of the globalized market.

The analysis of the writings about Noriega by Díaz Herrera and Zúñiga Araúz depicted the first period (military dictatorship). It focused exclusively on Noriega's abuse of power. The novels of Tapia and Zúñiga Araúz about social and psychological problems touching women and youth, concurrently gave evidences of the social syndrome of "V.I.P" (violence, inequality and poverty) affecting the lives of those living on the margins of society. This is in addition to the proliferation of casinos, shopping malls and the global sex market, whose impact is felt by

women in all strata of society. These narratives also suggested that power could take a seemingly agreeable and gratifying form to manipulate and oppress the masses. It is a form of manipulation which makes people believe that the State is providing society with institutions that foster the Panamanian economy and provide comfort and pleasure (i.e. casinos and shopping malls), but at the end turns out to be merely traps which objectify and oppress society, and thus perpetuate subjugation and poverty. As Foucault says: “If power were anything but repressive, if it never did anything but to say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn’t weigh on us as a force that says no, but it traverses and produces things, it produces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse” (Power/knowledge 119). In sum, I tried to show how power and subjugation still operate in subtle ways throughout Panamanian society, creating productive bodies and docile citizens, as Foucault has described. The fictional and non-fictional texts expose specific social problems from Panama’s history and from its present. The authors employ diverse literary genres and subgenres—testimony, dictator and social novels—to deliver their message. Through diverse narrative techniques, the texts present various forms of power producing different types of knowledge—and vice versa, knowledge which produced different types of power.

The valuable contribution that the authors provide, in their writings, to those interested in Latin American studies is undeniable. Their narratives impart important knowledge about Panamanian history and society. The works of Díaz Herrera, Tapia and Zúñiga Araúz demonstrates that Panama is more than a canal, as too often depicted in the popular mind. It has a growing literary culture that deserves to be better known, as it fills a gap within contemporary Latin American studies. These Panamanian writers examine history, culture, politics and social



problems affecting the country and its citizens. Many of the problems that these narratives call attention to are also important in other Latin American countries.

Chapter one discussed how Panamanian people, since the era of the Spanish colonization, have “needed” to conform to specific patterns of subjugation and control in order to survive. Starting with the time when imperial Spain first laid eyes on Panama, followed by the Colombia era, to the ultimate control of the isthmian nation by the United States of North America for almost a century. The important geographic position of Panama reinforced the hegemony of power used by imperialist countries to subjugate Panamanian people. That long history of compliance and subordination made it easier for the military hegemony to establish a dictatorship that lasted 21 years (1968 to 1989). That subordination of the Panamanian people then organically continued through the new democratic State. These Panamanian narratives are a reminder that this new era—although free from issues of direct imperialist control and dictatorial abuse of power—is still dealing with the problematic and fragmentary reality tarnished by socio-political and socio-economic problems (i.e. corruption, abuse of power, globalization issues affecting the country, issues of V.I.P., etc.), affecting every aspect of Panamanian society. Those problems touch not only those living on the margins of society (the poor and marginalized), but also those in the center of society as well (the middle, working professional class). In short, the web of power is the main characteristic that unifies and serves as a common denominator to the narratives analyzed.

Chapter two explored the first era, the historical moment of dictatorial oppression, using the works of Roberto Díaz Herrera and Mauro Zúñiga Araúz. Each author uses a different approach to deal with the same subject: “Noriega,” and both works offer their own versions of important situations that occurred during that dictatorship era. First, Díaz Herrera’s *Estrellas*

*clandestinas* was analyzed as a testimonial narrative that presented important moments in Panama's history lived and witnessed by the author. The core of *Estrellas clandestinas* focuses essentially on the retired coronel's June 7, 1987 public and lethal declarations against Noriega's corruption. Díaz Herrera publicly denounced General Noriega's crimes against the country and the Panamanian people. He did it in front of national and international media—and for that reason the retired colonel noted that he is alive today. Otherwise he would have been murdered, like the hundreds of Panamanians who were assassinated by Noriega. He was sentenced to five years of prison, but only served five and a half months after several countries negotiated for his freedom. Then he went into political asylum in Venezuela. The second important part of his testimony is also about Noriega's corruption and participation as a double agent, working both for the U.S. government's CIA, and for the drug cartel of Colombia.

I tried to show that the author's observation and participation in Noriega's regime make him an important historian-agent-expositor of Panamanian military culture. His text is vital to Latin American studies because, first and foremost, it contains a denunciatory tone that resembles the voices of hundreds of Latin American writers opposing injustice and abuse of power. It belongs to the category of "testimonial writing" which as I sought to explain, is a literary genre that denounces and educates, although it also lends itself to criticism and accusations. The degree of trust, but as well as of suspicion, that *Estrellas clandestinas* generates (where it makes the reader wonder which part of the testimony is true and which has been blown out of proportion, or left unwritten), correlates with the nature of every testimony. As Paul Ricoeur points out, in order to discern the authenticity of a testimony it is necessary to find out—or at least to try—whether a testimony is reliable, and to get to that light, it is

necessary for the reader to find a balance between “suspicion” and “confidence,” and those tensions are certainly present in *Estrellas clandestinas*.

Secondly, Mauro Zúñiga Araúz’s novel *El chacal del general*, raises and denounces several issues from Panama’s history under Noriega. His narrative uses scenes of actual persecutions, disappearances and tortures of those who dared to challenge the dictator’s authority, and creates a contestatory apparatus against Noriega. While the main plot of the novel discusses the extreme violence, basing it on the abduction and murder of a fictional political-activist student, Chicho, the chapter shows how Zúñiga Araúz used the fate of Chicho to reference two historical cases of abduction and torture in 1985: his own abduction and torture on July and the abduction, torture and assassination by decapitation of Panamanian activist, Dr. Hugo Spadafora in September of the same year. Both cases were widely discussed in his testimonial book *CO.CI.NA*. Furthermore, the author uses the case of Chicho to embody the prototype of the Latin American idealistic student who, at all costs, wants to fight against rulers and controlling governments. Through its examination of those abduction cases in Panama, the novel addresses the fate of the thousands of “*desaparecidos*” and “murdered” victims of the dictatorial regimes of Latin America. It echoed as well the painful dilemma that their families have to sustain while wondering about their whereabouts. The role of Chicho’s suffering mother, Virginia, may be regarded as an example of the thousands of mothers rallying around the world—dressing in white—seeking justice for their loved ones.

Although, *El chacal del general* can be considered as part of a “testimonial novel” for the correlation between history and fiction that it presents, I argued that Zúñiga Araúz’s novel also forms part of the literary sub-genre of the “Dictator Novel.” By doing so, this novel proves that the Dictator Novel is still alive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Its narrative style brings to mind classic

novels of Dictators such as *El señor presidente*, by García Marquez, *El otoño del patriarca* by Roa Bastos, but its style mostly followed that “realistic feature” found in contemporary novels about dictators of the twentieth-first century, such as Mario Vargas Llosa’s *La fiesta del chivo*. However, Zúñiga Araúz’s novel shows the chauvinist nature of Latin American dictatorships and the poor treatment given to women in dictatorial states. The novel’s treatment of women characters shares the same misogynist ‘*machista*’ limitations that one can see in the female characters in other dictator novels.

Starting in chapter three the post-dictatorial era literary works were analyzed. This section of the dissertation showed, through the work of Rose Marie Tapia’s *Roberto por el buen camino*, how violence, scapegoating, and gangs correlate powerfully with unequal educational opportunities and poverty affecting the lives of young offenders in Panamanian society. Tapia uses the story of a group of marginalized young offenders to represent this antagonistic relationship. In my analysis, I focused on the motives and expressions of power portrayed in the novel. For this group of young delinquents, violence was a demonstration of power because (unfortunately) it gives them a voice in a society that had ignored them. In the novel the protagonist Tuti, and his gang of young offenders grow up voiceless, abandoned by their families, society, and the State. They are left to confront their own fate, and submerged in a world of hostility. As a result, the young offenders blame society for their hardships, and consequently they find power through the creation of their own subculture (gang life), their own laws (scapegoating, violence and revenge), and their own underground economy (drugs and guns). Besides showing Tuti’s world, Tapia also depicts another story: the life of Luis Carlos and his group of law-abiding citizens. The two protagonists are oblivious to each other’s existence, but in a moment their lives cross each other’s borders, intersect, and the spaces in

which they lived converge. At that moment poignant events begin, including deaths, forgiveness, but also redemption. I have attempted to demonstrate that the syndrome of V.I.P. (violence, inequality and poverty) in an unequal society is another form of human rights violations enabled by the lack of the socio-symbolic protective shield which the State must provide to every individual, especially children.

Additionally, chapter five examines how Tapia also uses women's problems in her novels to shine a spot light on other social issues. The chapter establishes the ways in which Tapia's *Mujeres en fuga* deals with the lives of her middle-class, professional women protagonists who are affected with contemporary social addictions: pathological gambling and compulsive consumption. Even though the novel is actually about the narrative of three women (the third one suffers from emotional (loving) addiction problems), I focused on only two of them. I maintained that those are addictions largely controlled by a sort of globalized hegemonic power that, as suggested by Foucault, are exerted through conventional and acceptable tendencies in society: "gambling in casinos" and "shopping in commercial malls." Yet, both result in violence and the subjugation of bodies and minds. The novel shows how globalization and the global market, through casinos and shopping malls that reputedly benefit the economy of the country become enterprises that manipulate Panamanian society, contributing to its fragmentation, and affecting the most vulnerable beings. Although the main point of the author was to deliver a positive message of hope to victims of addiction, this study also revealed another subtle form of power affecting these individuals: the paradox that exists in clinical methods of analysis. While healthcare institutions are necessary in society to research, alleviate and manage illnesses and keep society "healthy and sane," according to the theories of power of Foucault, the same search for information turns the subject investigated into a "specimen" of laboratory, a "case study" (a

guinea pig) for power/knowledge, and part of a wheel of power, which alienates and perpetuates subjugation.

Chapter four returns to Mauro Zúñiga's narrative, this time with his social and psychological novel: *Espejo de miserias*, which was re-published in Spain as "Diario de una puta" (a more realistic title). I showed that the abuse and violence committed against young women living in poverty, domestic violence and sexual exploitation in third world countries and in all societies in general degenerates and escalates into a series of further abuses through the sex trade industry, locally and globally. In the novel, the protagonist Omayra Huerta, not only experienced the sexual exploitation of her father, and most of the male characters in the novel, but the abuse of her own mother. All of this molded her and prepared her to be subtly engaged in sexual activities, such as stripping and dancing, to being recruited by procurers, pimps and traffickers into the international sex markets. While the author's intention was mainly to present the hypocrisy of a society which abuses young women, the critical point in the novel interprets the role that domestic sex abuse, poverty and the global economic market play in the subjugation and control of women.

In this study, I sought to highlight the importance of language and writing in the diary of Omayra, which is used by the author to demonstrate that the diary of a prostitute is not merely a book with secrets (innocent, sad, terrible and dirty), but an examination of the social and economic forces that bring vulnerable women to a lifestyle of prostitution, including the subordinated position of women in a paternalistic society. Among the powerless, the world of molested and raped women by male abusers is only the beginning of a life of oppression. A clear picture was presented of the ways in which young women become easy targets and effortlessly managed victims for procurers, pimps and traffickers, especially when the

international global trade is involved. As noted by Foucault with biopower, power and control are not only exercised in the “physiological/ideal” body form, but in its “productive/docile” form as well. In sum, my analysis tried to demonstrate how the economic benefits that the commodification of prostitutes (directly and/or indirectly) bring to the globalized market are part of the hegemonic exercise of power in Panama and in the world. This is a form of power involved in human rights violations, literally entangling every(body) for the ultimate benefit of the globalized market economy.

Finally, The literary works of Roberto Díaz Herrera, Rose Marie Tapia and Mauro Zúñiga Araúz eloquently show various forms of power affecting Panamanian society and society as a whole, from the violent reign of Noriega’s dictatorship to the pervasive hegemony of power in the post-dictatorship era, which have resulted in violations of human rights and diverse social problems affecting Panama and its people. The three authors attempt to dramatize these social problems and get people to understand how dictatorial corruption and social abuse are born, reproduced, and mutated or morphed into new forms of violence and subjugation. The three authors clearly see a civic and pedagogical dimension in their roles as writers; their works are a call to the reader to stop, to analyze the situation, and to be proactive in searching for meaningful solutions. At the same time, their narratives attempt to give voices to those despairing in society. Ultimately, these three writers aspire to find a way to restore and to fix the lives of many young men and women—minority groups in Panamanian society—that have been broken not only by Panama’s dictatorship, but also by society’s indifference, by the market, and by institutions which embody sophisticated mechanisms of power of knowledge through observation, recording and surveillance with the purpose of control and subjugation.

## APPENDIX A

### Entrevista a Roberto Díaz Herrera

Esta entrevista es parte de mi tesis doctoral “Subjugated Bodies, Normalized Subjects: Representations of Power in the Panamanian Literature of Roberto Díaz Herrera, Rose Marie Tapia, and Mauro Zúñiga Araúz.” En ella examino la difusión del ejercicio de poder representado en las obras literarias de los tres autores. El escritor, Díaz Herrera ha accedido a contestar las veintitrés preguntas a continuación, las cuales forman parte de mi investigación. Las mismas reafirman directamente parte de lo ya investigado y, a la vez ayudan a expandir directamente un poco más la visión de la vida del escritor y las situaciones que lo han llevado a su trabajo literario. La entrevista a continuación ha sido realizada en dos facetas. Primero vía electrónica durante el mes de junio de 2014 y luego personalmente en el mes de julio en un viaje realizado a Panamá para concluir con la misma. La segunda parte tuvo lugar en su residencia en la ciudad de Panamá, el día 14 de julio de 2014.

Sara Escobar-Wiercinski: Coronel Díaz Herrera, ¿cuándo empieza su carrera literaria?

Roberto Díaz Herrera: Desde mi infancia. En mi hogar siempre hubo una pizarra y libros. A temprana edad leía desde pasquines o cómicas: *Mandrake*, *Capitán Marvel*, *Red Ryder* y *Castorcito*. De los seis a los nueve años mis primeros libros fueron tipo *Tom Sawyer* de Mark Twain y *La isla del tesoro* de Robert Stevenson. A partir de los once años leí libros tales como: *Los tres mosqueteros* de Alejandro Dumas, y otros de él. Más tarde otras obras como *Los miserables* de Víctor Hugo, combinado con poesías



crecientes. Empecé escribiendo versos escolares (acrósticos a chicas). Pero el gusto por la escritura empezó en la Escuela Normal.

SEW: ¿Qué personas o situaciones influyeron su carrera como escritor?

RDH: Mi profesor de español, Mario Riera Pinilla, egresado de México. Escritor de la novela social: *Rumbo a Coiba*, y dramaturgo de obras, como “La muerte va por dentro”. Él me descubre y estimula en mí el hábito de leer y escribir.

SEW: ¿Cuáles son sus autores preferidos? ¿Por qué?

RDH: Mis autores preferidos son: Rubén Darío, Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer. Luego, Federico García Lorca, Pablo Neruda, José Asunción Silva, César Vallejo, entre otros. Yo era muy sensible y romántico. Gradualmente, luego de Bécquer y Darío, me encanto el lenguaje metafórico de García Lorca: “Un horizonte de perros ladra muy lejos del río...” o, “Las piquetas de los gallos cavan buscando la aurora”. Con Neruda: “Me gustas cuando callas porque estás como ausente...”. Con Vallejo, el peruano: “Hay golpes en la vida, tan fuertes, yo no sé . . . golpes como del odio de Dios, como si ante ellos, la resaca de todo lo vivido se empozara en el alma”, etc. Todo un proceso, yo era muy melancólico, hasta introvertido, pensativo, profundo para mi edad. Nunca fui un cadete militar estándar. Pronto dirigí páginas literarias de revistas internas y escribía artículos y versos.

Como anécdota (quiero narrar), que a los 13 años y medio aproximadamente, el 10 de mayo de 1951 el Presidente Arnulfo Arias

deroga con decreto de gabinete inconstitucionalmente la Constitución vigente de 1946, y pone en vigencia la de su autoría intelectual, la de 1941. Hay una conmoción política con 18 muertos y muchos heridos. Mi padre era liberal, yo leía mucho los diarios y ya me interesaba la política. Hice unos versos luego de la expulsión de Arias por tropas de la Guardia Nacional y lo que recuerdo de esos versos, hoy, unos 63 años más tarde—no los tengo escritos, los publicó papá con contactos en (el periódico) La Estrella de Panamá. Los versos decían algo así: “Los acontecimientos del diez (de mayo), son algo sensacional . . . pues murieron diecisiete, y uno más . . . Arnulfo arias, un señor, hombre de mucho talento, quería hacerse dictador y bailaba de contento . . . pero al ver que Vallarino (el Comandante segundo), no lo quería respaldar, y Flores (el tercer Comandante) también le dijo “no, mi amigo, esto anda mal . . . entonces se fue solito, pensando que todavía él mantenía su jueguito y ninguno lo sabía” . Mi padre se impactó con mi precocidad política y obtuvo esa, mi primera publicación en un diario naciona.

SEW: ¿Me podría hablar un poco de usted, de su familia y su etapa de crecimiento?

RDH: Soy el séptimo de nueve hermanos. Nací en Santiago, Veraguas, de padres muy católicos. Anastasio Díaz, educador titulado en artes industriales y Gregoria Herrera, maestra sin título. Ella laboró en áreas indígenas y rurales, hasta que el egreso de maestros con títulos, la deja como ama de

casa. También trabajó como panadera y repostera para sus hijos y ventas a los vecinos, para recomprar insumos.

El entorno de mi familia fue muy gregario. Mis tías de apellidos Herrera, entre ellas la madre de mi primo hermano Omar Torrijos—luego un personaje histórico, nacional e internacional— el cual por llevarme unos 10 años no interactúa conmigo de niño o adolescente, por la distancia generacional. Ambos estamos juntos años más tarde, largamente, a partir de la vida militar y política que trasciende.

El ambiente de Santiago era semi urbano y semi rural y me hace convivir en ambientes campestres: un par de vacas de ordeño, un pequeño potrero, un par de caballos, árboles frutales. Crecí con modestia económica y por lo tanto disfruté de paseos a playas cercanas—no costosos. De niño y hasta adolescente solo dos o tres veces visité, por rotación de los hermanos, la capital de Panamá con mi padre. Sin embargo, dentro de la estrechez de recursos nunca faltó la tutela paternal y los alimentos. Anastasio Díaz, mi progenitor, no solo fue un gran padre, sino un maestro, dentro de casa y en la comunidad. Él escribía décimas y versos y tenía siempre libros en el anaquel de casa. Entre ellos, recuerdo mucho una colección de veinte tomos: “El Tesoro de la Juventud”. Libros de variadas secciones, con temáticas interesantes, desde cuentos, temas sociales y científicos, para un lenguaje entre 6 y 14 años que motivaban mucho.

SEW: ¿Dónde estudió y qué quería ser antes de empezar todo ese asunto con los militares panameños?

RDH: Estudié en la escuela “Dominio del Canadá” mi educación primaria. A los 14 años terminé mi noveno grado y mi única expectativa por la economía familiar, era ser maestro de primaria en la escuela Normal Juan Demóstenes Arosemena. No había otra opción en mi pueblo—no había un bachillerato entonces. Pero ya sentía afinidad por ser abogado. A los 13 años fui ayudante de un pariente abogado y a los 14, presionando a mi padre para que no me obligue a ser maestro, obtengo con mi tío Enrique, Alcalde de Santiago, mi primer empleo. Era bien rentado para mi edad: “Oficial Auxiliar del Registro Civil del Municipio”, ganando \$75 balboas mensuales de sueldo por mi capacidad para la mecanografía y tareas encomendadas de oficina. Mi plan era dar para mis gastos a la casa y ahorrar por un año, para el siguiente año (con esos ahorros) irme a la capital a hacer el bachillerato y luego estudiar Derecho.

El plan no fue posible porque mi salario resultaba de gran apoyo en una economía tan débil y de deudas hogareñas. Me sentí con doble sentimiento: Feliz de ayudar a la casa y, preocupado de quedarme sin escolaridad. Entonces—y realmente de modo insólito para alguien de 14 años y viviendo en un pueblo chico de unos cinco mil habitantes para entonces—desde la Alcaldía inicié llamadas a embajadas y consulados pidiéndoles a los presidentes una beca para terminar estudios secundarios. Lo hice luego de indagar sus nombres y direcciones.

Les hacía cartas parecidas, dándoles cuenta de mi aspiración: “Una beca completa con ropa, zapatos, casa y comida”, metafóricamente. O sea con internado y lo demás, incluyendo vestuario y libros. De unas 14 cartas me respondieron 3 ó 4 cartas a nombre de esos mandatarios, por 1955. Recuerdo la Casa Rosada, Argentina; Palacio de Miraflores, Venezuela y una o dos más. Pero, las respuestas muy diplomáticas decían “lamentar mucho no tener convenios bilaterales con Panamá para ese tipo de becas”. ¡Gran frustración!”.

SEW: Pero se hace militar, en vez de abogado o maestro. ¿En qué momento decide cambiar de carrera y por qué? ¿Dónde estudió?

RDH Para fin de ese año y cuando pensé que siempre tendría que ingresar en la Escuela Normal Juan Demóstenes Arosemena, para maestros, llegó un telegrama a mi nombre (¡insólito para un adolescente, y obviamente de tipo nacional!) y decía textualmente: “La Embajada de Panamá en Lima, Perú, le informa que le ha sido otorgada una beca para estudiar en el Colegio Militar “Leoncio Prado”, ubicado en El Callao, Perú. Para mayor información sírvase apersonarse a este despacho”. Estaba firmada por el Dr. Camilo Levi Salcedo, Director de Protocolo y Ceremonial, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Panamá.

¡La emoción fue muy grande! Ya no lo esperaba y nunca pedí un plantel militar. Luego entendí que yo pedía beca para terminar secundaria con todo incluido y eso no era común en ese escalón educacional. En ese caso Perú tenía ese plantel, interno, con internado, comida, uniformes,

libros, exonerado de pagos; menos mesadas para salir, aunque había propinas mínimas, para refrigerio. ¡Sorpresa! Nunca pensé en colegios ni posteriores carreras militares. No me agradaban los militares que conocía, me parecían rudos, toscos o hasta vulgares. Mi familia me hizo una vaca (colecta) para irme y me enfrenté a un mundo desconocido de patadas y rudeza militar, no afín a mi personalidad. Mi madre se enfermó y agravó en ese tiempo, y decidí buscar luego de esa secundaria en disciplina militar, una beca superior para una carrera de Oficial, igualmente becado y sin costos ya que la situación económica en casa era de mayor problema. Lo logré. Estudié el final de la secundaria (o bachiller) y se me concede la beca en la “Escuela de Oficiales de la Benemérita Guardia Civil del Perú” influenciada por la entidad similar de España. La elegí entre otros institutos armados, porque en el programa de estudios había materias de Derecho, combinadas con otras materias.

Allí hago cuatro años más de estudios, hasta egresar con el rango de Alférez (Subteniente), en 1961. Entonces ingreso en 1961 a la Guardia Nacional de Panamá. Mi primer trabajo (tipo pasantía) fue—recién llegado del Perú con rango de Subteniente—en la Cárcel Modelo. Trabajé como Oficial de Guardia, en entrenamiento para actividades de registros de los detenidos. Medio año sin sueldo esperando una vacante. Es curioso que allí también (en la cárcel, en 1987) terminara también mi vida como Coronel recién retirado, cuando soy juzgado sin defensa alguna. Siempre seguí pensando en ser abogado y recién lo logré en el año 2003.

- SEW: Ahora es abogado en Panamá. ¿Ejerce su profesión?
- RDH: Ejercicio poco, salvo casos familiares o de amigos y algunos clientes, temas migratorios o administrativos. Tengo años escribiendo.
- SEW: Además de ejercer como abogado, ¿se dedica a otra cosa?
- RDH: He realizado algo que me gustó y dominé relativamente, el tema de Bienes y Raíces. Logré gradual y crecientemente—con inicio de préstamos e hipotecas y luego inversiones—comprar y vender propiedades. Inclusive en Caracas en el exilio de seis años, con cierto éxito y auge realicé esa actividad. Era tipo inversiones familiares, como una empresa informal-familiar. Nos ha dado buenos frutos económicos. A un nivel de inversiones factibles, comprando, a veces lotes en el interior, y revendiendo, con ganancias. Tengo buen ojo para eso.
- SEW: ¿Y la enseñanza?, ¿ha enseñado en algún centro de instrucción, escuela, universidad, o en alguna otra parte?
- RDH: Dirigí muchos "Seminarios de Capacitación Política" por instrucciones de Omar Torrijos. Se les llamó "Farallón Año 1973 Far 1974-75-76 y 77" con oficiales y civiles, gremios sindicalistas, empresarios, etc. Fui siempre "Expositor y Facilitador de las cosas políticas". Fundé el "Instituto Militar General Tomas Herrera" con la aprobación del General Torrijos. Fundé el primer "Curso superior de Capacitación Política y Policial". Todo se inicia por el fin de los años 73 y 74. Invité a profesores de la Universidad de Panamá—áreas de Derecho Constitucional, Penal, Criminología—para oficiales del rango Mayores y Capitanes. Fui expositor en charlas de

universitarios en las Facultades de Derecho y Comunicación. Fui a países como Cuba, Argelia y Libia presidiendo delegación política. Fui parte de la delegación nacional a tomas de posesión presidencial en Costa Rica, México y en negociaciones sensitivas, por el conflicto de Centroamérica, a Venezuela y El Salvador.

SEW: En mi investigación yo argumento que su libro *Estrellas clandestinas* es parte del género “Testimonio”. Un género importante y controversial en estudios latinoamericanos. Ya que su obra contiene el mismo tono análogo a las voces de cientos de escritores latinoamericanos que se han opuesto a injusticias, crímenes y han levantado su voz en contra de abuso de poder. Por ejemplo, Rigoberta Menchú, entre otros. Su literatura educa a las masas sobre la historia panameña. En esa forma su obra se acerca a esos testimonios latinoamericanos. Pero, al mismo tiempo se puede considerar que también se aleja por haber sido usted parte de la corrupción militar y por muchos años. ¿Cómo explicaría esa dicotomía?

RDH: Curiosamente y francamente no me siento parte de corrupción alguna. La prueba más firme es que luego de la cárcel que me impone Noriega y su régimen, que denuncié, llegaron autoridades que persiguieron los crímenes y delitos del tiempo de gobiernos militares. Pese a menciones periodísticas y rumores sin bases legales, e historias torcidas, jamás ningún fiscal ni jueces—con muchos militares juzgados y condenados—fui objeto de un solo juicio o acusación legal formal. ¿Por qué? Por no haber causas ni méritos. Mi vida profesional de 26 años y meses jamás



conllevó ni una sola denuncia por violación de derechos humanos. Más bien merecí respaldos sociales y comunales, y más bien mi proximidad a sectores y gremios populares, sindicatos, campesinos, me creó cierta antipatía de clases económicas altas. Estas, al igual que a Torrijos, nos hicieron llamar “izquierdistas”.

Aprovecho y aclaro: El régimen de Torrijos (13 años) pese a tener excesos y crímenes—que mi primo no pudo controlar, y tiene una responsabilidad moral por ello. Para mí, por él estar absorto en viajes y negociaciones del canal—es muy distinto al régimen narcómano de Noriega. “Por sus hechos los conoceréis”. Torrijos cambió estructuras sociales, a favor de capas medias y bajas—préstamos, becas, oportunidades, hizo código de trabajo de avanzada, creó centro bancario, firmó tratados. Él sale sin fortuna. De Noriega, no hay ni que hablar.

SEW: Dándole seguimiento a mi pregunta anterior. Sus denuncias del 7 de junio de 1987 también conllevan un gran grado de sospechas y “bias” por la posición que usted ocupó dentro de la dictadura panameña por años. Usted mismo se auto-denuncia por varios delitos cometidos. ¿Cuál fue la razón? ¿Nunca se ha arrepentido de ese movimiento?

RDH: Lo mío del 7 de junio, incluyendo mi “auto incriminación”, fue una estrategia mediática—hasta hoy no entendida y para entonces secreta y táctica—por el peligro de muerte que enfrenté, insólito en la era republicana. Lo que dije textualmente fue: “Hasta mi casa fue medio robada, pero no cometí dolo”. Lo último—costumbre morbosa

periodística criolla—lo omitieron. ¿Qué pretendía yo? ¿Qué delito, real y punible cometí? Lo sustenté unos cuatro años atrás en vivo (buscar en la web Medcom-rpc- programa “Cara a Cara”- Entrevista al Coronel Díaz Herrera). Explico:

1. Necesitaba sí o si ganar credibilidad, precisamente porque con razón se podía pensar y decir: ¿Por qué creerle si él viene de la misma corrupción?

2. Si el pueblo—o gran parte de él—no me creían Noriega podía arrestarme o liquidarme en horas—se le tenía pánico. Ningún panameño se atrevía a declarar lo que yo dije contra él y pretender quedar vivo. Eso es real, necesitaba una conmoción y gente que al rodearme—por mi valor y temeridad y franqueza—me blindaran al menos por días de denuncias y atención nacional y hasta mundial. Fue algo totalmente logrado. Miles pasaban a toda hora frente a mi casa. ¿Por qué no a la de Arnulfo Arias, o a la de líderes de la “Cruzada Civilista” (Barria y otros), que se formó luego de mis denuncias, nunca antes? Porque sabían que el mayor riesgo de muerte lo corría yo, junto a mi familia. Admiraban mi temeridad, el valor que infundí con mi arrojo a gran parte del pueblo. Modestamente fue así y debo decirlo ante el egoísmo humano-normal. ¿Algún panameño, junto a su esposa e hijos pequeños enfrentó alguna vez tales amenazas de un régimen que ejecutó crímenes? Crímenes tan diversos como la decapitación de Spadafora o la masacre—con un tiro en la nuca—de una docena de oficiales en (la base de) Albrook.

3. Lo que expliqué y realizo en “Cara a Cara” es que lo que dije, digo y diré. Es esto: Acepté que el abogado (vivo y considerado muy honesto

hasta hoy) Licenciado José Pablo Velázquez, como concesión especial a su hijo, el ministro entonces de vivienda Roberto Velázquez, le conceda una especie de “monopolio” de la tramitación de visas a cubanos que deseaban salir de la Isla y cuyos parientes les apoyaban para esos trámites en los cuales se cobraba por los abogados idóneos, los honorarios profesionales-legales y hasta con tarifas en el Colegio de Abogados. Yo nunca cobré ni nunca vi a un cubano, ellos lo saben. El que los entrevistaba, arreglaba sus documentos etc. era el Lic. José Pablo Velásquez. Él y su hijo Roberto, eran los tramitadores y cobradores de esos honorarios, perfectamente legales, por lo cual no constituía tal cobro delito alguno. Menos para mi persona que ni siquiera cobraba ni entrevistaba a cubanos. Ni siquiera era abogado para entonces y, menos siendo coronel, jefe de Estado Mayor; es más, ni aún siendo abogado podía hacerlo. Por ello—y son datos verificables, las personas que menciono están vivas a esta fecha—no cometí delito alguno y lo que dije es cierto, que recibí dinero de los Velásquez y que además le dieron de esos honorarios a Noriega y al Coronel Justine. ¿Por qué entonces autoincriminarme sin fundamento? Esa fue la táctica y bien que resultó.

Al único que se lo comenté fue a mi primo hermano, entonces vivo, el Dr. Carlos Pérez Herrera, ex sacerdote y por tanto de toda mi confianza, y le expliqué a él que deseaba hacerlo como una operación psicológica de masas, o sea mediática, a fin de blindarme con el respaldo popular, porque si escuchaban que el Coronel Díaz Herrera confesaba culpas y no solo acusaba a Noriega, el pueblo me creería. Pérez Herrera me dijo que “eso era muy duro

para mi y mi esposa e hijos, echarme lodo a mi mismo, sin fundamento”. Pero le convencí al decirle: “Carlos, lo que ocurre es que si solo acuso a Noriega, y me la doy de que no era parte del grupo—aunque yo estaba bien distante a Noriega y sus crímenes, pero no tenía la gente que saberlo ni creerlo—ese dictador, dominando todo el Estado, me metía presos en horas”. La táctica mediática, y de eso se trataba, resultó totalmente. Sin embargo, el costo familiar fue durísimo.

Mi esposa se indignó y me echó en cara: “Por qué dices algo que no es delito y la gente lo va a creer.” Le rispoté: “Lo necesitamos, si no me apoya el pueblo, estamos listos para la cárcel.” Yo fui el creador de la Sección de Operaciones Psicológicas de la Guardia Nacional, creo que el único, por mandato del General Torrijos y algo había leído de autores que hablan de las emociones de las masas y sus reacciones. Total, el país explotó y no solo la prensa nacional me rodeó, sino el pueblo en gran medida y también periodistas de todos los países (ellos conocían ya el tema IRAN-CONTRAS y me veían como un futuro y pronto muerto por Noriega) una realidad potencial grande) por estar metiéndome no solo con ese dictador nacional sino con la CIA, la DEA, el Péntagono, el Departamento de Estado y el Régimen Reagan-Bush, echándole a eprder una operación mega de tráfico de drogas, para la operación militar contra el Régimen Sandinista, con mercenarios pagados con plata de esa droga y armas del mercado clandestino, que al final en nada de eso terminó y allí todavía el Sandinismo . . .

Queda pues aclarado sobre las visas a cubanos, que el abogado Velásquez y su hijo Roberto eran los que cobraban honorarios profesionales a cubanos o a sus familias por visas que Noriega autorizaba. De ese dinero (importante por la cantidad de visas), Roberto—el hijo—me daba plata a mí, al Coronel Justines y a Noriega. Y eso es cierto . . . Si no era delito el cobro de ellos por los trámites, menos lo mio. Si tu trabajas y le quieres dar algo a alguien por lo que ganas, así fuese por comercio, profesión, etc., si el hecho del cobro no es delictivo, ¿por qué lo será para quién le des de lo tuyo? Yo inventé una especie de “acto malo” de una ‘*mea culpa*’ solo por cálculo mediático y resultó. La gente se dijo: “Si Díaz Herrera dice que hizo algo malo y acusa a Noriega, hay que creerle y además—hablando en lenguaje criollo—si él arriesga de tal modo su vida y muestra los huevos que nadie se atreve a exponer, ese hombre es valeroso y se está buscando la muerte. Eso produjo la explosión de Panamá, mediática y políticamente.

¿Por qué nadie mencionó al abogado Velásquez, ayer ni hoy? Tampoco fue llamado a juicio, ni a la fiscalía. Porque no había delito. Nunca fue llamado formalmente ni a declarar por eso. Tampoco yo. ¿Por qué el propio Dr. Arnulfo Arias—el más connotado opositor al régimen y líder popular—me envió a felicitar me en casa a parte de su directorio nacional: Endara y otros? ¿Por qué líderes “probos” como el Dr. Ricardo Arias Calderón, Aurelio Barría, etc. corrieron a abrazarme, felicitar me y darme ánimos, incluyendo al Dr. Winston Spadafora y hermanas de Hugo Spadafora, su hermano decapitado? Hay fotos y pruebas. ¿No les parece suficiente?

¿Por qué no destacar lo que definitivamente—con honestidad y sin falsas modestias—fue un acto heroico, no solo mío, sino de mi esposa, mis hijos, adolescentes e infantes; mi suegra venezolana, mi suegro Ramón Gamboa, fallecido en esos días de asedio por un infarto. Mi hermana Rita, con marcapasos, sus hijos, menores, y mujeres y hombres, con otros niños y allegados? ¿Acaso el asalto violento con tropas de élite entrenadas en Israel por Noriega, que nos echan lacrimógenas y balas vivas de tipo miliar—el 27 de julio de 1987—fue una película ficticia? Fue algo real y nunca vivido en la vida política e histórica de Panamá. Punto. Quién lo niegue es mezquino.

SEW: Y hablando de su trabajo dentro de los casi 21 años del gobierno dictatorial. ¿Podría explicar cómo fue ascendiendo en su carrera militar?

RDH: Antes que todo, a mucha honra laboré bien pegado al General Torrijos. Jamás otro régimen ayudó tanto a los pobres y a la clase media; nunca antes se cambiaron las reglas de juego políticas y sociales. Jamás antes de ese período, hombres con cutarras y hasta indígenas sin calzados, fueron representantes legítimos de sus aldeas o pueblos pequeños y llegaron a ser “Representantes de corregimiento”. Por 1962 soy subteniente trabajo como Oficial de supervisión policial en Radio Patrullas—trabajo socialmente despreciado—pero que permite una visión práctica de hechos sociales: riñas domésticas y visión de la criminalidad, que para esa época muy primaria. Apenas había marihuana; casi nada de lo otro. No lo de hoy, con las drogas peligrosas como cocaína, por la velocidad de las redes de distribución, el pandillerismo, el consumo masivo, etc.

Luego el mayor Omar Torrijos es trasladado desde Colón a Chiriquí y me invita a laborar con él. Inicio un ciclo de 20 años bajo la guía de mi primo hermano. El me exigía a mí más que a los demás—seguro para crear ejemplo. Ese jefe (Torrijos) me envía a cargos fuera de la capital provincial, en Paso de Canoas, frontera con Costa Rica y Boquete. Luego me asigna a mi primera gran experiencia social y política: a remplazar como subteniente a un veterano capitán, Barroso, debido a un incidente criminal en el cuartel de Puerto Armuelles, sede de la Gerencia General de la United Fruit Company. Compañía que vigila operaciones en Chiriquí, Bocas del Toro y países productores del banano. Tales como, Costa Rica, Honduras, Guatemala y Ecuador, con enormes contactos económicos y políticos en un área explosiva. Además de contar con una fuerza sindical fuerte muy organizada, con asesores tales como el doctor Carlos Iván Zúñiga. También muy combativa contra los maltratos de muchas décadas de esa empresa contra sus obreros. Me toca intermediar y ser un árbitro social y policial. Lo cumplo muy bien y los obreros me van aceptando por no entregarme a la empresa. Allí me sorprende el 9 de enero y me toca enfrentar la primera gran crisis profesional.

SEW: En *Estrellas clandestinas*, en la pág. 119 en su diálogo con quien usted llama “Un gringo amable” habla abiertamente de cómo la CIA quiso asesinarlo una vez que usted denunció a Noriega. ¿Por qué culpa a la CIA y no al propio Noriega si la denuncia fue hecha hacia el Dictador?

RDH: Durante los 50 días de denuncias y asedios militares a mi casa, junio y julio, el Padre Fernando Guardia, jesuita—vivo hoy—me llevó a casa al Padre Bill

Davis, jesuita, de Nueva York, quién fue a Panamá, solo a verme. Él me afirmó tener pruebas de que George Bush, padre, estaba metido en operaciones clandestinas geopolíticas, junto a Noriega y otros y que por eso habían mandado ya a un sicario a eliminarme, y me entregó una carpeta con varias fotos, de rostros distintos. Me dijo: Es el mismo sicario que atentó contra el nicaragüense Edén Pastora en la penca.

Me afirmó que yo me estaba metiendo no solo con Noriega, sino con la CIA y otros organismos de seguridad de USA, al estropearles las operaciones en Centroamérica. Hoy hay demasiada información en la web, que involucran a Bush padre, William Cassey, el difunto ex Jefe de la CIA, Caspar Weinberger, ex Secretario de Defensa, el Almirante Poindexter y otros en el affaire Irán- Contras, que me relevan de mas detalles. Eso me ha costado hasta hoy que me nieguen visa sin darme razones para ir a los EEUU. Sencillamente por hablar sobre Bush y sus complicidades.

¿Qué tal si me hace usted o me ayuda a hacerlo, una averiguación en un Centro Jesuita de Nueva York y pregunta como localizas a ese sacerdote Jesuita, Bill Davis, que nunca más vi. Y le preguntas sobre lo que te acabo de contar? Me harías un gran favor.

SEW: En *Estrellas clandestinas* cada vez que usted menciona el nombre del Dictador Noriega, lo correlaciona con el Presidente Bush y la CIA en forma despectiva y con mucho resentimiento. ¿Podría explicar aquí el por qué de ese resentimiento hacia Washington?



RDH: No es resentimiento, el escándalo “Irán-Contra” se probó. Reagan tuvo que destituir por disimulo político (“show”) a grandes funcionarios, que luego Bush, de presidente indultó. Es historia real—la gran inmoralidad de meter millones de kilos de droga a USA para tener plata de drogas y comprar armas. Lea mi libro. Por último enviar a un ejército descomunal cercano a 30 mil soldados con bombas de exterminio, etc. Con la excusa de “sacar a un bandido”. Su bandido y socio hasta pocos días antes. Pudieron llevárselo con tres muertos, de su escolta solamente. Sabían cómo hacerlo en el propio Fuerte Amador, a metros de sus gates y cuarteles. Y no con esa masacre de cientos de muertos y heridos. Eso realmente es un delito de lesa humanidad. Una amoralidad, más grave que la inmoralidad.

SEW: Contrario a la pregunta anterior, en el libro cada vez que usted menciona el nombre del General Torrijos, del Presidente Jimmy Carter y del entonces Senador John Kerry lo hace con mucha admiración y respeto. ¿Podría explicar aquí el por qué de esa admiración, sobre todo a John Kerry?

RDH: ¿Por qué hablo tan bien o positivamente de John Kerry? Kerry, entonces ya un joven senador, tuvo el coraje moral de ser en el Senado quien primero denuncia la complicidad del gobierno republicano de entonces—año 81 en adelante, Reagan, Bush—con gentes del narcotráfico internacional, mediante operaciones clandestinas en Centroamérica. La Casa Blanca lo niega primero y luego tiene que aceptarlo "y dizque no sabía nada" y destituye funcionarios. Kerry cuando lo denuncia ante los grandes medios, éstos lo censuran y no le publican nada o casi nada. Concretamente Kerry consigue mostrar pagos

oficiales del Depto. de Estado por algo más de 800 mil dólares a mafiosos ex convictos por servicios de vuelos aéreos y cosas así. Se supone que vuelos que llevaban cocaína.

SEW: ¿Piensa usted que Panamá ha cambiado ahora cuando se considera un país sin dictadura, es decir, democrático?

RDH: La democracia que hay es mejor, pero incompleta, presidencialista, vertical, centralista. Eso ha permitido que el Presidente Martinelli—gracias a Dios por salir ya—dominara como títeres todos los otros dos órganos del estado. Con él hubo una real dictadura civil. Esperemos que eso cambie con Varela.

SEW: En varios, por no decir casi la mayoría, de los libros que he leído sobre Panamá y la dictadura casi no mencionan su nombre como una figura importante en la caída de Noriega. ¿Qué piensa de esto?

RDH: En los EEUU me hicieron un vacío informativo y calculado. No solo ocurrió con el documental “Panama Deception” (ganador de Oscar), también con otras publicaciones, y me extrañó no tener la mínima mención de mis denuncias de junio del 87. ¿Por qué? Lo he dicho, porque de incluirme tendrían que haber puesto mis declaraciones contra las inmoralidades del Régimen Reagan-Bush santificado por sectores. Igual cosa en otros libros. ¿Conoces tú y otros profesionales, y los educadores de Estados Unidos el alcance inmoral del tema “¿Irán-Contras? En mi país hay egoísmos de historiadores y periodistas. Pero mucha gente del pueblo me admira y me reconoce mi valor y aporte a la democracia, miles, y eso me basta. Y de los

Estados Unidos admiro que sí registran la historia, hasta la que no les conviene a grupos de poder. Ojalá esta entrevista ayude a eso.

SEW: Con respecto a su familia y seguidores, en las páginas 81-83 de *Estrellas clandestinas*, usted explica que ellos fueron afectados por su acción del 87. Cómo lo veían a usted sus hijos (especialmente) en ese período tan difícil para ellos. ¿Cómo un héroe o como un aventurero idealista? Por favor, ¿puede hablar un poco de su familia nuclear?

RDH: Mi esposa e hijos, algunos del primer matrimonio y uno antes de él, José Manuel y Roberto Díaz Jr. tenían 17 y 15. Sufrieron vejaciones y cárcel de días. Mi esposa Maigualida Wendehake y su madre con mis hijos pequeños, Daniel 8, Romai 7 y Carlo, 5, soportaron una semana de cárcel en la fuerza aérea junto a mi suegra venezolana con guardias con fusiles cerca de sus camas (mientras “me ablandaban” en la celda incomunicado). Fueron los más heroicos por sus sexos y edades. Al menos yo era el militar, me aman y los amo, me admiran y los admiro.

SEW: Y ahora ¿Cómo se sienten ellos—sus hijos—al ver que después de tantos sacrificios, que su nombre se ignora en la historia panameña?

RDH: Se sienten todos orgullosos de participar en una real liberación de una tiranía militar narcómana apoyada entonces increíblemente por un régimen en los Estados Unidos que a la vez le sostenía cargos por narcotráfico en Florida. ¿Cómo entenderlo, Doctora? La historia de eso, he tenido que escribirla yo, sin soportes grandes, con mezquindades, lo que es muy común.

SEW: Usted fue Coronel. El Coronel Roberto Díaz Herrera. Le importa que lo llamen ex-Coronel o prefiere que esa parte de su vida sea olvidada y que le llamen licenciado, por ejemplo?

RDH: Se dice muchísimo “ex coronel” y es impropio. A un médico jubilado o retirado no se le dice “ex doctor”. Se debe decir Coronel retirado, y es como se me llama más. Poco se me llama como licenciado, que lo soy en Derecho. Y muchos, humildes, me llaman “Roberto”. Me gusta.

SEW: Yo considero que su libro es una obra testimonial del siglo XXI importante para los estudios latinoamericanos. Panamá no tiene muchas obras conocidas. ¿Qué piensa usted al respecto?

RDH: Francamente sí. Es un recuento testimonial histórico, aunque se conozca poco afuera. Me complace que en Panamá, muy inusualmente, la venta ha abarcado una cifra de aproximadamente 3,500 libros. Creo que es un récord para ese tipo de obras. Más que por el dinero colectado, por la difusión de la valiosa información. En Panamá, aún hoy, ni el 5% de los nacionales conocen la trama geopolítica que vivimos y que viví personalmente. Hasta en historiadores y periodistas veteranos les observé registrar los hechos pero se quedaron viendo los árboles (“que si Noriega tal cosa, que si Díaz Herrera se puso bravo porque lo jubilaron a la fuerza”) y se quedaron en la “luna del valle de Antón” sin saber nada, cero del caso Irán-Contras.

SEW: ¿Piensa seguir escribiendo? Le gustaría seguir incursionando, por ejemplo, en el género novelas?

- RDH: Escribo ahora mismo precisamente una novela histórica testimonial: *El canal, sangre, codicia y coraje* (2014). Justo acabo de presentarla en la Feria del Libro, en nuestra capital. Gracias a Dios con mucha acogida; me tuvieron que pedir más libros para los ‘Stands’ de dos librerías. Ya hoy circula en varias tiendas. Deseo aprender a ponerlo en internet, ya veré. Me lo piden del extranjero. Te tengo el tuyo guardado.
- SEW: Que legado quiere dejarle a la literatura panameña y a los panameños en general?
- RDH: Sin ínfulas de escritor, me siento en el deber moral de legar memoria histórica, ante una ausencia muy grave de ella y cuando gobiernos como el que está pasando, cometieron el exabrupto moral y pedagógico de suspender la materia “Relaciones de Panamá o Estados Unidos” castrando la mente juvenil y adulta. Creo que lo han hecho para buscar borrar del inconciente colectivo la imagen y trascendencia de Omar Torrijos Herrera, cosa imposible.
- SEW: Muchas gracias Coronel y licenciado, Díaz Herrera, por su participación y por haber escrito *Estrellas clandestinas* este libro que es un tesoro para los estudios latinoamericanos y la historia panameña.
- RDH: Gracias a ti Sara, por tu gran interés de hacer conocer nuestra historia fuera de Panamá.

## APPENDIX B

### Entrevista a Rose Marie Tapia

Esta entrevista es parte de mi tesis doctoral “Subjugated Bodies, Normalized Subjects: Representations of Power in the Panamanian Literature of Roberto Díaz Herrera, Rose Marie Tapia and Mauro Zúñiga Araúz.” En ella examino la difusión del ejercicio de poder representado en las obras literarias de los tres autores. La escritora Tapia ha accedido a contestar las 23 preguntas a continuación, las cuales forman parte de mi investigación. Las mismas reafirman directamente parte de lo ya investigado y, a la vez ayudan a expandir directamente un poco más la visión de la vida de la escritora y las situaciones que la han llevado a su trabajo literario. La entrevista a continuación ha sido realizada en dos facetas. Primero vía electrónica durante el mes de junio de 2014 y luego personalmente en el mes de julio en un viaje realizado a Panamá para concluir con la misma. La segunda parte tuvo lugar en su residencia en la ciudad de Panamá, el día 14 de julio de 2014.

Sara Escobar-Wiercinski:     Escritora Tapia, usted es una autora que ha invertido mucho de su espacio literario en escribir sobre asuntos sociales y socio-políticos que afectan a la población panameña, pero también sobre asuntos familiares. ¿Me podría hablar un poco de usted, su familia, su crecimiento, religión?

Rose Marie Tapia:     Con gusto. En especial mi madre era mi religiosa, una de sus mayores virtudes era el servicio generoso al prójimo y sus enseñanzas han sido pilar fundamental de mi vida y de mi literatura. Mi madre tuvo seis hijos, murió hace 28 años, pero su legado de amor y de valores permanecerá para siempre en todos sus hijos. Mi padre un gran lector que compartió su biblioteca conmigo desde que era una niña. En fin toda mi familia ha contribuido en mi

carrera literaria. Por otra parte, mi delicada salud me hizo más sensible al dolor de las demás personas. Mi enfermedad me obligaba a pasar muchas horas de reposo y mi único entretenimiento era la lectura. Esa fue la base fundamental de mi formación literaria.

SEW: ¿Qué personas o situaciones influyeron su carrera como escritora?

RMT: Además de mis padres, mi profesor de español de tercer año de secundaria, el profesor Roberto Carrizo. Él me hizo amar la literatura, cuando nos enseñó a analizar las obras literarias.

SEW: ¿Cuándo empieza su carrera literaria?

RMT: El 24 de junio de 2000. El día del Santo patrono de Chitré, escogí esa fecha para que no se me olvidara. Sin embargo, el deseo de ser escritora lo tuve desde los doce años. Cuando entré a trabajar en la compañía de mi hermano a los veintitrés años, le dije (a mi hermano): trabajo por veinticinco años y después me retiro para dedicarme a la literatura.

SEW: En el año 2012 cuando empecé con mis investigaciones sobre autores panameños, usted tenía dieciséis novelas publicadas. Desde entonces ha publicado dos más. ¿Podría decir que es lo que la motiva a escribir incesantemente como lo hace? ¿En qué tiempo escribe?

RMT: La vida es mi mayor motivación para escribir, es la mejor manera que encuentro de expresarme, de encontrarle un sentido. En ocasiones hay injusticias que no logro explicarme y tengo la esperanza de provocar en el lector y en la sociedad la reflexión o al menos que salgan de esa indiferencia que no nos permite hacer de este mundo un lugar mejor. La literatura convoca

emociones, nos humaniza. También es un espejo donde nuestra virtudes y defecto. Escribo todos los días dos horas diarias de 4 a 6 P.M. Leo tres horas diarias y atiendo a mis lectores tres horas diarias. Por lo tanto cumplo con una jornada completa.

SEW: ¿Cómo fluyen sus personajes y las diversas ideas que aplica en sus novelas?  
¿A qué tipo de lector pretenden sus novelas influir?

RMT: No sé si logro influenciarlo, mi deseo es que después de leer mi libro, piense y se haga preguntas y si esa reflexión lo mueve a actuar, magnífico. Si no es así, por lo menos que no muera la esperanza, pues la esperanza es potencia pura. Es contante en mi narrativa el mensaje de la esperanza como fuerza motivadora.

SEW: ¿Podría hablar un poco sobre su educación? ¿Dónde estudió? ¿A qué se dedicaba antes de iniciar su carrera literaria?

RMT: Me gradué de secundaria en Chitré en el colegio José Daniel Crespo, en esos años no había universidad en Chitré y mi precario estado de salud no me permitía trabajar y estudiar a la vez. Por esa razón, mi formación es autodidacta. Los fines de semana estudiaba acostada con varias almohadas. En ese tiempo vendían libros de administración y ventas de casa en casa. Estudié administración, venta, auditoría y otros. En ese tiempo las Naciones Unidas daban cursos en el interior para capacitar a los empresarios. Asistí a todos y gracias a esa preparación fui gerente, con mucho éxito, en Raúl Tapia y Compañía S.A, donde desempeñaba los siguientes cargos, Gerente de ventas, gerente de recursos humanos, gerente de la financiera de la empresa y llevaba



la auditoría y los cobros. A esas múltiples actividades se debe mi éxito en el mercado editorial, pues cuando me cambié de actividad, no fue difícil hacer varias tareas a la vez.

SEW: Específicamente, en qué forma los conocimientos adquiridos en el campo de los negocios la han ayudado en el mercado editorial?

RMT: El libro es un producto de eso no hay duda. Mis conocimientos y experiencia en mercados contribuyeron en mi nueva profesión de escritora, promotora, editora, distribuidora y cobradora. Ahora Gracias a mi esfuerzo tengo editor: Distribuidora Lewis y ahora solo me encargo de escribir, promover mis obras y atender a mis lectores. También he continuado mi aprendizaje, estudié por mi cuenta: creación literaria, psicología para caracterizar a mis personajes, diagramación para diagramar mis novelas para bajar los costos. Seguiré aprendiendo hasta el fin de mis días porque el aprendizaje debe ser una actividad permanente.

SEW: Además de ser escritora, ha formado los grupos literarios “Letras de fuego” y “Siembra de lectores”. ¿En qué forma ayudan a la juventud panameña, y qué es lo que realmente pretende promover en esos grupos?

RMT: Lo más importante para mí es promover la lectura, a través de la lectura nos instruimos, la educación es la clave del desarrollo social y herramienta para luchar contra la pobreza. Por otra parte, un pueblo culto no se deja manipular cumple con sus deberes y exige sus derechos. En la Feria Internacional del libro en Panamá, observé con gran satisfacción los frutos del Programa Siembra de lectores, personas de escasos recursos comprando sus libros.

Cuando les pregunté me respondieron que eran miembros de Siembra de lectores. Una persona pobre que lea camina con paso seguro a una mejor vida. Porque la educación es la puerta de salida a la pobreza. También me alegró mucho la gran cantidad de niños y jóvenes que me visitaron en la Feria del libro.

SEW: ¿Qué tipo de literatura lee y cuáles son sus autores preferidos?

RMT: Los géneros literario que leo son novela y ensayo, los domingos leo poesía. Mis autores. García Márquez, Varga Llosa, Isabel Allende, Haruki Murakami, Katherine Pancol, Petros Markaris, Ana María Matute, Ken Follett, Jorge volpi, Umberto Eco, Camila Lackberg y Kate Morton.

Literatura Panemeña: Ernesto Endara, Salvador Medina, Ariel Barría, mi sobrina Rosamaría Tapia y el Dr. Mauro Zúñiga, entre otros.

SEW: La escuché recientemente en un video en su página web decir que ama escribir, y que ello es el centro de su vida. ¿Me puedes aclarar por qué "el centro de su vida"?

RMT: Mi salud siempre fue muy frágil. Seis meses antes de dedicarme a la literatura se presentó una grave enfermedad, la literatura me rescató de la muerte. Pasé años sin diagnóstico. Tengo Lupus y esta enfermedad atacó: los pulmones, riñones, tiroides, las articulaciones, lesión cerebral, los ojos y la piel con vasculitis, en fin varios sistemas. El mismo doctor Zúñiga creyó que no sobreviviría. En el año 2000 comencé a escribir y no fue un escape, fue un refugio donde la muerte no pudo o no quiso encontrarme.

SEW: Menciona al Dr. Zúñiga. ¿Se refiere al escritor-doctor-político, a quién también investigo en mi trabajo doctoral? ¿Podría decirme cuál es la conexión entre los dos, además de lo obvio que los dos son escritores panameños?

RMT: El Dr. Zúñiga ha sido mi médico de cabecera por treinta años, además de colega escritor, es mi amigo. Cuando estuve gravemente enferma, el Dr. Zúñiga me adoptó, es tal su dedicación con los enfermos que cuando estos lo necesitan, él siempre está dispuesto a ayudarlos.

SEW: Además del género novela, ha incursionado en otro género literario? Por ejemplo, poesías, teatro. Si su respuesta es negativa, ¿Piensa que esa sería alguna alternativa para el futuro?

RMT: El Ensayo puede ser una alternativa para el futuro. No obstante, me siento tan cómoda con la novela que nunca dejaré de escribir ese género.

SEW: Una de las dos novelas que estudio en mi trabajo doctoral: *Roberto por el buen camino*, ha tenido una gran acogida en el mercado panameño. ¿Por qué cree que esta ha sido su novela más vendida y leída?

RMT: Porque es un tema social que nos afecta a todos y en cierta forma me adelanté a los hechos, porque en el 2004 todavía la delincuencia y el pandillerismo no eran graves problemas. En cierta forma quise hacer una advertencia. Además, pienso que la delincuencia juvenil no es solo un flagelo social, es una deuda que tiene la sociedad con esos chicos que no han tenido la oportunidad de una buena educación. Un 90% de los delincuentes juveniles han desertado del

sistema educativo y el gobierno no cumple con su deber de rescatarlos del pantano de la miseria.

SEW: Esa novela, trata de tres cosas muy importantes en la sociedad panameña y yo la analizo como el síndrome de V.I.P: “Violence, Inequality and Poverty.” Tres manifestaciones de poder conflictivas que han afectado sociedades por generaciones. ¿En qué forma piensa usted que el Panamá democrático del siglo XXI (después que fue abolida la era dictatorial en 1989) ha tomado rumbos distintos para erradicar, o por lo menos minimizar estos problemas de violencia, desigualdad y pobreza que afligen sobre todo a las masas marginadas del país?

RMT: Ha habido esfuerzos en minimizar este grave problema, pero casi todo en el marco de la represión del delito. Falta una política de prevención, de rehabilitación y de educación para que estos jóvenes puedan ganarse la vida honradamente, en fin, hay mucho trabajo por hacer. Por otra parte, hay mucho paternalismo, pero poco compromiso, no es dando dinero que se resuelve este problema, es trabajando de manera conjunta con estos jóvenes, con sus padres y con los ministerios social y de educación.

SEW: Cuando empezaba a analizar sus novelas, me di cuenta de la falta de análisis críticos académicos a *Roberto por el buen camino*, a pesar de ser esa su novela más vendida. Por esa razón le envíe un correo electrónico preguntándole lo siguiente: “Según su opinión, ¿por qué usted cree que hasta ahora, las universidades panameñas o extranjeras no han utilizado mucho sus novelas para análisis críticos literarios?” Su respuesta fue la siguiente:

RMT: “Las universidades extranjeras no han utilizado mis novelas para análisis críticos, porque la literatura panameña no sale de nuestras fronteras. No tenemos los mecanismos para importar nuestros libros. Las universidades nacionales solo se ocupan de los escritores cuya trayectoria en las letras supera los treinta años. Dentro de veinte años le aseguré que lo harán. Sin embargo, hay muchos trabajos sobre mi narrativa en tesis de estudiantes de licenciatura.

SEW: El sociólogo Pierre Bourdieu señala al espacio literario como un “campo de batalla” que dificulta la entrada a los autores nuevos. Ya ha pasado más de un año desde esa comunicación electrónica, y usted sigue escribiendo sin parar y sus novelas siguen siendo muy leídas. ¿Cree usted que esa situación difícil se mantiene en Panamá para los nuevos autores nacionales, o ha habido algún cambio, editorial y/o académico?

RMT: En Panamá hay muy pocas editoriales y solo se interesan en una autor que haya alcanzado un éxito indiscutible, esa es la manera de asegurar su inversión. Por otra parte, son pocos los escritores que promueven su obra literaria. El gobierno solo publica los libros que han ganado concurso literario. El escritor tiene que ser emprendedor, publicar sus libros, triunfar y solo entonces consigue una editorial. No es tan difícil como muchos dicen. Yo lo hice y cuando logré salir en la lista de los más vendidos por varios años, al fin pude tener editor y distribuidor.

SEW: La otra novela analizada en esta disertación es: *Mujeres en fuga*. En esa obra literaria dos de los tres problemas que aquejan a los personajes: “la ludopatía” y “la compra compulsiva” reflejan las manifestaciones de poder que la

globalización de los mercados internacionales ejercen influencia en Panamá. La proliferación de casinos y los centros comerciales han puesto al país en una forma de apatía o indiferencia en donde todo se normaliza y se acepta rápidamente a pesar de los estragos que hacen a la sociedad panameña. ¿Cree usted que a través de obras literarias, como la suya, los lectores puedan tomar conciencia a este problema al verlo frente a ellos y actuar?

RMT: De esa novela tengo varios, fue como un espejo donde muchas adictas se miraron y se horrorizaron antes sus propias imágenes. No obstante, ellas aceptaron su adicción y buscaron ayuda profesional. A nivel de las autoridades no logré ninguna acción o ¿será que nuestras autoridades no leen?, ¿están ocupados en servirse del poder que no tienen tiempo para la lectura? ¿Cómo es posible que en barrios de extrema pobreza encontremos casinos?

Tengo un testimonio muy importante sobre esta novela. Estaba almorzando con los ejecutivos de una editorial, negociábamos los términos del contrato de edición de todas mis novelas, cuando llegó una señora y me dijo que *Mujeres en fuga* había cambiado su vida. Casada por más de diez años, maltratada y con muy baja estima, leyó la novela. Buscó ayuda psicológica. Se divorció de su esposo, tuvo un año en terapia. Ese preciso día, celebraba su matrimonio con un hombre que no solo la amaba, sino que respetaba y la trataba como una reina. Esas fueron sus palabras textuales. Los ejecutivos quedaron muy impresionados por el testimonio y enseguida aceptaron mis condiciones.

SEW: Evidentemente el consumismo y la adicción al juego son fenómenos que afectan a toda la sociedad. ¿Por qué específicamente mujeres en las novelas? ¿Cree usted que las mujeres son particularmente vulnerables a desarrollar este tipo de adicciones debido al lugar que ocupan en la sociedad, y/o que son particularmente objeto de la publicidad mediática que promueve ese tipo de conducta (comprar, jugar)?

RMT: Te cuento que cuando hice la investigación. Con relación a la adicción afectiva, las mujeres marcaron más del 80%. En la ludopatía, el 70% y en las compras el 90%. Las mujeres no solo son más vulnerables a la publicidad, sino que son más dadas a la fuga, al escape del conflicto que las aflige. Intentan llenar sus vacíos con cosas y los medios de comunicaciones se las muestran. También hice una investigación encubierta y me hice pasar por una jugadora. Cuando se me terminó el dinero, me ofrecieron prestarme 10,000 dólares, pero tenía que dejar mi carro o mi apartamento como garantía. Descubrí que los casinos encubren toda clase de negocios ilícitos, entre ellos: la prostitución.

SEW: *Roberto por el buen camino*, en la pág. 77 presenta una oferta de resistencia a los problemas examinados en la obra. Se siente la propuesta a un llamado activismo general para resistir los problemas de V.I.P., donde dice: “Si todos colaborásemos en la medida de nuestras responsabilidades . . . ¿No cree que algo se lograría?”. ¿Es realmente posible eso, Rose Marie? ¿A qué se debe que hasta este momento no se dé esta colaboración en Panamá?

RMT: La sociedad panameña está colaborando, hay una fundación Jesús Luz de oportunidades que ayuda a los chicos delincuentes a rehabilitarse y a retomar

el buen camino. otra parte, está la iniciativa de delincuentes que han logrado salir de ese mundo y ayudan a sus compañeros. Conozco el caso de los diecisiete chicos que estaban en el círculo de lectura cuando inicié la investigación para la novela *Roberto por el buen camino*. El líder del grupo está pendiente de que sus compañeros tengan trabajo, pues si su situación económica es apremiante vuelven a delinquir.

SEW: Veo que ha escrito muchas novelas de política. ¿Le interesa la política?

RMT: Me encanta la política, esa es otra de mis grandes pasiones, lo mismo que la literatura. Soy una estudiosa de la política. Comencé a leer libros de política desde los catorce años. Por otra parte, la política debe aspirar a una sociedad justa, si entendemos la política como la promoción del bien común.

SEW: ¿Piensa usted que Panamá ha cambiado ahora cuando se considera un país sin dictadura, es decir, democrático?

RMT: Sí, los cambios son innegables, en mi primera novela *Caminos y encuentros* recreo la realidad política de los años 1980. Si leen mi trilogía política: *No hay trato*, *Agenda para el desastre* y *El retorno de los bárbaros*, verán los cambios. Lo mismo, que en mi novela más reciente: *El poder desenmascara*. No obstante, hay vicios políticos que persistente y los denuncié en mi novela de manera contundente. Para escribir sobre el tema de la política se requiere valor, por esa razón son pocos lo que se atreven.

SEW: En su nueva novela usted habla de un poder que “desenmascara” en vez del poder que oprime a las masas. ¿Podría hablar un poco sobre esta novela y también sobre la significación del título?



- RMT: En esta novela se desenmascara a cada uno de los personajes: soberbia, arrogancia, intrigas de palacio, los conflictos familiares pesando en el desempeño público de hombres y mujeres cercanos al poder. Una fuerza pública armada que no resiste la tentación de ejercer como el fiel de la balanza. Es muy usada la frase: “el poder corrompe”, pienso que el poder no corrompe, el poder “desenmascara” a los corruptos que estuvieron reprimidos cuando no tenían poder.
- SEW: En algunas literaturas panameñas de este siglo se escribe sobre dictadura civil versus dictadura militar. ¿Cree que existe esa dictadura civil en Panamá? Si su respuesta es afirmativa, ¿cuál es la diferencia? en su opinión.
- RMT: Aunque, hay abuso y exceso de poder, no creo que sea una dictadura civil. Este pueblo luchó mucho por restablecer la democracia y cuando se ha dado vestigios de despotismo, el pueblo reacciona violentamente en las calles y defiende su democracia. Nos costó mucho restablecer la libertad y la democracia: muertes, exilio, encarcelamiento. Jamás permitiremos que un gobernante nos cercenes nuestro derecho de libertad y democracia. Por otra parte, ellos están más ocupados en hacer negocios y en obtener grandes beneficios que en imponer una dictadura.
- SEW: Rose Marie, ¿Qué legado quiere dejarle a la literatura panameña y a los panameños en general?
- RMT: Deseo dejar un legado de esperanza. Deseo un país: decente, justo, solidario y responsable. Además, quiero compartir el reconocimiento más importante que

me han otorgado en mi carrera literaria. A la biblioteca de la Universidad Americana le asignaron mi nombre: Rose Marie Tapia Rodríguez.

SEW: Muchas gracias, Escritora Tapia por su participación y por haber escrito *Roberto por el buen camino* y *Mujeres en fuga*. Dos novelas de mucha importancia para los estudios críticos y la literatura panameña.

RMT: Gracias a usted profesora Sara Escobar-Wiercinski por escoger mis obras para su tesis doctoral.

## APPENDIX C

### Entrevista a Mauro Zúñiga Araúz

Esta entrevista es parte de mi tesis doctoral “Subjugated Bodies, Normalized Subjects: Representations of Power in the Panamanian Literature of Roberto Díaz Herrera, Rose Marie Tapia and Mauro Zúñiga Araúz.” En ella examino la difusión del ejercicio de poder representado en las obras literarias de los tres autores. El escritor Zúñiga Araúz ha accedido a contestar las 23 preguntas a continuación, las cuales forman parte de mi investigación. Las mismas reafirman directamente parte de lo ya investigado y, a la vez ayudan a expandir directamente un poco más la visión de la vida del escritor y las situaciones que lo han llevado a su trabajo literario. La entrevista a continuación ha sido realizada en dos facetas. Primero vía electrónica durante el mes de junio de 2014 y luego personalmente en el mes de julio en un viaje realizado a Panamá para concluir con la misma. La segunda parte tuvo lugar en su residencia en la ciudad de Panamá, el día 23 de julio de 2014.

Sara Escobar-Wiercinski: Doctor Zúñiga, ¿Cuándo empieza su carrera literaria?

Mauro Zúñiga Araúz: Desde joven pensé en escribir. Diría que sólo escribí el título de ese ideal. He sido un lector desde que estaba en la secundaria. Mi primera novela la leí en el bachillerato: *Doña Bárbara*, de Rómulo Gallegos. Me gustó tanto que desde entonces no he parado de leer. En 1988 escribí el monólogo *Vida de otra Forma* y se lo llevé a la profesora Isis Tejeira para que me revisara la ortografía. Me sugirió que lo enviara al concurso Ricardo Miró, el más importante de las letras panameñas. Así lo hice y gané el premio en teatro. Desde entonces estoy escribiendo.

SEW: ¿Me podría hablar un poco de usted y su crecimiento.

MZA: Nací en Panamá, el 25 de febrero de 1943. Soy el mayor de cuatro hermanos. Hemos vivido casi todo el tiempo en la ciudad de Panamá. Nuestros padres mantuvieron un matrimonio ejemplar. Nos inculcaron sólidos valores éticos y morales. Estoy casado. He tenido tres matrimonios y seis hijos en total. Cuatro nietos. Mi familia materna es conservadora rural. Estudié en un colegio jesuita. En la actualidad no estoy vinculado a ninguna religión, ni a ningún partido político.

SEW: Usted es médico también. ¿En qué momento decide estudiar medicina y por qué? ¿Dónde estudió y ejerció? ¿Tenía otros intereses?

MZA: Mi carrera médica me la inspiró el doctor Tomás Guardia, un médico que me visitaba en mi hogar cuando era un niño. Tenía ataques de asma. Lo miraba como si fuera un apóstol. Desde niño quise estudiar medicina con el objeto de servir a los demás. Me gradué de médico en la Universidad de Panamá en febrero de 1968. Estudié mi especialidad en Medicina Interna en el Hospital General de la Caja de Seguro Social, en Panamá; en el Hospital Escuela José de San Martín en Buenos Aires, Argentina y en el Hospital José Joaquín Aguirre en Santiago de Chile. (1970-1973).

Ejercí la especialidad en David (1973-1976) y luego en el Servicio de Medicina Interna del Complejo Hospitalario Metropolitano de Panamá (1976-2008, cuando me jubilé). Dentro de ese marco ejercí la profesión durante 40 años. Luego fui nombrado investigador en la Universidad de Panamá por un periodo de tres años. Mi interés en estudiar la medicina es la de servir a los demás. Posteriormente se unió mi lucha por los derechos humanos y la justicia social.

- SEW: ¿Qué personas o situaciones influyeron su carrera como doctor y cómo escritor?
- MZA: Como doctor emular al doctor Guardia. Como escritor pienso que mi profesión y la vida me han enseñado mucho, lo que quiero plasmar en mis obras.
- SEW: ¿Cuáles son autores preferidos y ¿Por qué?
- MZA: Los autores rusos del siglo XIX, en especial Tolstoi y Dostoievski. Para mí, *Ana Karenina* y *los hermanos Karamazof* no han sido superados. Fueron autores integrales y profundos. *Los hermanos Karamasof* es una novela psicológica vigente. Escribí recientemente un ensayo: “Los hermanos Karamasof, una novela escrita mañana”, en la que afirmo que es una novela que no ha perdido actualidad.
- SEW: Usted ha publicado exitosamente dentro de los géneros literarios: cuento, novela, ensayo, investigaciones científicas. ¿Qué género prefiere, y en cuál ha tenido mayor éxito?
- MZA: Prefiero la novela porque la considero más completa. Es en ese género en el que se me ha conocido más. Mis novelas son de críticas sociales, lo mismo que mi obra de teatro. Los dos ensayos son históricos, uno de Panamá y el otro sobre la historia de la democracia, sus luchas y sobre el hecatombe que nos espera si mantenemos el modelo vigente.
- SEW: ¿Dicta clases en algún centro universitario? ¿Desde cuándo?
- MZA: Fui profesor especial de medicina interna en la facultad de medicina de la Universidad de Panamá hasta mi jubilación, luego me nombraron investigador en el Instituto de Estudios Nacionales de la Universidad de Panamá durante un período de tres años.

SEW: ¿Forma parte de alguna asociación, grupo cívico, social en Panamá o en el extranjero?

MZA: Soy miembro del Movimiento por la Identidad Nacional. Se trata de una agrupación de panameños y panameñas preocupados por rescatar nuestras raíces históricas. El año pasado logramos que el “9 de enero” fuera reconocido por Ley como “Día de la soberanía”. Además que no fuera incluido como día puente y se celebraran actos alusivos. El 9 de enero de 1964 fue una fecha de inflexión en nuestra historia. Ahora tratamos que se reincorpore al pensum de estudios la cátedra de las Relaciones de Panamá con los Estados Unidos. Estamos en vías de formar una Fundación para que se escriba la verdadera historia de Panamá.

SEW: ¿Cuándo empezó su vocación política? ¿Cuándo era estudiante de medicina, o después?

MZA: Desde que ingresé en la Universidad de Panamá en 1960. Me di cuenta de las grandes injusticias sociales. Fui presidente de la Asociación de Estudiantes de Medicina de Panamá, de la Asociación de Estudiantes de Medicina de Centro América, de la Unión de Estudiantes Universitarios. Luchamos intensamente por la reforma universitaria. Después de los hechos de enero de 1964 se consolidó en Panamá el movimiento nacionalista que reclamaba la abrogación del tratado Hay-Bunau Varilla firmado en 1904. Mientras ese movimiento se fortalecía la oligarquía estaba entretenida en luchas intestinas por el poder, al punto que enjuiciaron al presidente Marcos Robles.

Todo eso dio como resultado el golpe de estado de los militares el 11 de octubre de 1968 con el apoyo de los Estados Unidos. Los militares acabaron con

ese movimiento ejecutando, arrestando, desapareciendo y exilando a sus genuinos dirigentes. Fueron 21 años de represión y terror. Es importante destacar que la verdadera historia de Panamá se mantiene oculta. Panamá es un protectorado gringo desde 1846 cuando se firmó el tratado Mallarino-Bidlack. Los tratados Torrijos-Carter legalizan el protectorado al permitir una clausura, la De Concini, que autoriza a los Estados Unidos a intervenir en Panamá cuando ellos así lo estimen. El propio Torrijos dijo, una vez firmado el tratado, que estábamos “bajo el paraguas protector del pentágono.”

El gobierno de Martinelli Berrocal (expresidente) ascendió la deuda pública a más de 24 mil millones de dólares. Una deuda impagable. He sostenido en mis escritos que cuando las corporaciones financieras internacionales exijan el pago de esa deuda, tendremos que vender nuestro activo más importante que es el Canal, como ha ocurrido en otros países.

SEW: Y continuó en el liderazgo político. ¿Puede hablarme sobre ese período?

MZA: Al graduarme, fui secretario de la Asociación de Médicos, Odontólogos y Profesionales Afines de la Caja de Seguro Social durante cuatro períodos (ochos años en total); dirigí el primer movimiento contra la dictadura de Noriega en 1984: La Coordinadora Civilista Nacional. El 21 de agosto de 1985 los militares me secuestraron y torturaron.

Mi vocación política no ha sido para ocupar un puesto público: he rechazado varias ofertas para ser ministro. Al único partido que he pertenecido fue el PAPO, Partido Acción Popular que los militares defenestraron. Considero que el modelo de oferta/demanda que impera en el mundo desde que se formó el

Estado, hace 5,000 años está acabando con la humanidad y el ambiente. En esa línea escribí el ensayo *¿Qué es la Democracia Absoluta?* Creo que el modelo de recursos/necesidades es el que hay que retomar.

SEW: Sobre el movimiento político que usted dirigió, ha escrito su libro *Coordinadora Civilista Nacional CO.CI.NA*. Es un gran legado para historiadores y la academia porque por su contenido y estructura tiene todos los componentes que forman parte del importante género literario “Testimonio” por tratarse sobre su lucha contra la injusticia y corrupción en Panamá. Además de ser un género vital dentro de los estudios latinoamericanos. ¿Podría decirme qué lo motiva a escribirlo, sobretodo en el año en que lo hizo, 2011—año de extradición del dictador Noriega a una cárcel en Panamá?

MZA: Cuando terminó el movimiento, recogí todos los manuscritos para escribirlos, pero preferí dejarlos que se “enfriaran” para hacer un testimonio más objetivo. La fecha fue casual. Me llamó la atención que ese movimiento no se incorporara a la historia de Panamá, lo que me animó a dejar escrito mi propio testimonio.

Tenemos que recordar que la deuda externa de los países del tercer mundo empezó en 1972 (Panamá la inició en 1969). A Panamá nos enviaron al señor Nicolás Ardito Barletta que era el vicepresidente del Banco Mundial para ocupar la Presidencia de la República. Llegó a ese puesto luego de un enorme fraude que los militares le hicieron al Dr. Arnulfo Arias Madrid. Barletta hizo aprobar en la Asamblea el primer ajuste estructural en América Latina, conocida como ley de servicios, lo que provocó un gran descontento nacional. Se organizó CO.CI.NA. y se logró derogar la ley.



SEW: ¿Por qué cree usted que el período de acción del movimiento CO.CI.NA., el que usted lideró y formó, ha sido ignorado en la historia panameña?

MZA: Sí, porque fue un movimiento dirigido por las capas medias de la sociedad: médicos, educadores, estudiantes, pequeños empresarios y otros profesionales. En nuestro país las clases dominantes no permitirán que otros sectores dirijan el Estado, por eso se reagruparon en la Cruzada Civilista Nacional, formada en 1987, con el apoyo de los Estados Unidos.

SEW: Además de político activista y escritor, es médico. Se siente más político que médico, o escritor? En pocas palabras, ¿qué le apasiona más?

MZA: Todo. Cuando me introduzco en una actividad trato de dar lo mejor de mí. Lo hago como un fin en sí mismo. Cuando dirigí el gremio médico fue con la intención de mejorar las condiciones de los asegurados. Precisamente dos días antes de mi secuestro, había empezado una gira por el interior (del país) denunciando el reducido renglón del presupuesto del gobierno central en salud y educación y el elevado costo en equipo militar y pago de la deuda pública. Hablé en varias emisoras de gran audiencia.

SEW: La primera novela que analizo en mi disertación es *El chacal del general* la cual hace referencia directa a la dictadura en Panamá, específicamente al dictador panameño. Pero usted no se queda allí, ya que en el año 2012 escribe otra novela *El alumno*, y esta vez ese dictador militar entrena a lo que usted denuncia como un dictador civil. ¿Podría hablarme sobre esa novela, *El alumno*?

MZA: Quise que los lectores conocieran las interioridades del poder y escogí como modelo al presidente (panameño) de entonces, haciendo la salvedad de que

cualquier semejanza era pura coincidencia. Naturalmente que el maestro fue el personaje del Chacal del General. La novela trata sobre todas las perversiones que realiza este señor antes de llegar al poder, guiado por su maestro.

SEW: En *El chacal del general* usted pone muchas indicaciones que ese “General” es Noriega, pero no menciona su nombre. ¿Quiere explicar un poco sobre esto, y cuál es el motivo de la alusión pero no la mención específica?

MZA: En mis novelas no me gusta mencionar nombres reales: para ello he escrito ensayos. En ambas novelas hay ficción. Es decir, trato de mezclar realidad con ficción. Mientras que *El alumno* me tomó pocos días por conocer bien al personaje, para escribir *El chacal* tuve que investigar mucho sobre la vida del personaje, su historia, las técnicas militares, los sitios de torturas, etc: hechos reales. En las novelas nos tomamos muchas libertades ya que incorporamos, a lo que hemos leído y escuchado, la imaginación.

SEW: ¿Cómo explica usted la diferencia entre dictadura militar versus dictadura civil?  
¿Según su opinión, cree que ese es el caso de Panamá?

MZA: La finalidad es la misma. La militar la dirigen los militares, en tanto que la civil no es un uniformado. Martinelli Berrocal (expresidente panameño) fue un dictador civil, de corte fascista. El gran problema que hay en Panamá es la Constitución, que fue hecha en 1972 durante la dictadura y solo se ha refirmado algunas veces. El régimen presidencialista es muy centralizado y da cabida a este tipo de dictadores. En Panamá estamos luchando por una constituyente originaria, participativa e incluyente, pero cada día me convengo más de que es muy difícil, ya que los Estados Unidos no lo va a permitir.

SEW: ¿Piensa usted que Panamá ha cambiado ahora cuando se considera un país sin dictadura, es decir, un país democrático?

MZA: ¿Se refiere a los gobiernos pos dictadura? Para mí la democracia representativa fracasó. Ya pasó la época de los partidos políticos. Ahora son agrupaciones de amigos y conocidos que aspiran asaltar al gobierno de los estados para hacerse con los bienes públicos. Unos más, otros menos. El mundo se ha globalizado de tal manera que es el capital financiero quien dicta las políticas a todos nuestros estados nación.

SEW: La otra novela que analizo es *Espejo de miserias*. En mi análisis hablo sobre la influencia de la globalización y en el mercado sexual que influye el tráfico humano, afectando específicamente mujeres y niñas para prostitución en otras partes del mundo. Su novela refleja esa realidad en una forma específica. ¿Fue ese uno de sus propósitos?

MZA: No exactamente. Quise rescatar a las prostitutas que la sociedad las ubica en los puestos más bajos. Ellas son el espejo de las miserias humanas. También pretendí señalar lo hipócritas que somos tanto los hombres y las mujeres que las buscamos para saciar apetitos, pero en público las rechazamos. La novela es un diario, donde ella relata todas sus experiencias desde su niñez.

SEW: ¿Cree usted que el poder y control de la globalización de mercados están afectando más a la nación panameña en este siglo XXI?

MZA: Naturalmente. No sólo a Panamá sino a todo el mundo. Es esa línea escribí el ensayo “¿Qué es la Democracia Absoluta? Una utopía o una realidad.” El prólogo me lo hizo Daniel Estulin, escritor de los *bestsellers* sobre El Club de Bilderberg.

En él analizo el modelo de oferta/demanda que hoy cabalga en el mundo y lo antepongo al de recursos/necesidades. Explico que todos los problemas de la humanidad se iniciaron con el surgimiento del Estado, la propiedad privada y las jerarquías sociales hace aproximadamente cinco mil años.

SEW: La misma novela *Espejo de miserias* fue publicada en España en el 2013 como: *Diario de una puta – Espejo de miserias*. ¿Me puede hablar sobre esto?

MZA: El cambio de título me lo sugirió la editorial Verbum y yo lo acepté porque en realidad es un diario. En él la protagonista relata toda su vida, desde sus maltratos en la infancia hasta el momento en el que se enamora de un hombre, algo que ella daba por descontado.

SEW: ¿Qué lo motivó a escribir sobre prostitución, y dónde hizo sus investigaciones para dilucidar tan específicamente ese tema?

MZA: La idea surgió desde que practicaba la medicina y tuve la oportunidad de atender a varias de ellas en mi clínica. Posteriormente conversé con dos de un prostíbulo local y me narraron su vida que sirvió como eje central a la novela. En una de las entrevistas, la mujer me contó actos humanos que son verdaderamente repugnantes y que por supuesto no incluí en la novela.

SEW: ¿Escribe usted en algún lugar especial?

MZA: ¿Artículos de opinión? En Panamá, en La Estrella y en el exterior en el diario digital Rebelión de España. Mis últimas novelas me las ha publicado la editorial Verbum, de España. En Panamá escribía semanalmente en el diario La Prensa, pero el Presidente Martinelli ordenó que prohibieran seguir escribiendo.

También me censuraron las dos televisoras comerciales que hay en Panamá. No solo denunciaba las actuaciones del presidente, sino al propio modelo.

SEW: ¿Piensa seguir escribiendo? ¿Qué tipo de literatura?

MZA: Sí. Actualmente tengo dos novelas, un ensayo y una obra de teatro inéditas. Estoy revisándolas.

SEW: ¿Qué legado quiere dejarle a la literatura panameña y a los panameños en general?

MZA: “Ser cultos para ser libres” como dijo José Martí. Hay que leer, pero además, hay que ser creativos. No dejarse influenciar por las opiniones de los demás, sobre todo en este mundo que trata de establecer un pensamiento único. Estamos bombardeados de publicidad que alaba las bondades de este fatídico sistema de oferta/demanda que va a acabar con la humanidad. Se nos esconde lo que realmente ocurre en el mundo. Aquí no se hace nada sin la autorización de los gringos.

SEW: Muchas gracias, Doctor Zúñiga por su participación y por haber escrito “El chacal del general” y “Espejo de miserias”. Estas dos obras son de mucho beneficio para la crítica literaria, para la academia y para los estudios latinoamericanos.

MZA: Me siento muy honrado con su distinción. Le auguro el mejor de los éxitos. Un abrazo cordial.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> For a useful overview of critical works on Panamanian literature until 2003, see López Cruz's "Bibliografía general de Panamá." Other useful sources on Panamanian fiction in the 20<sup>th</sup> century include Magdalena Perkowska, Fábrega R. Him, and Sonja Watson.

<sup>2</sup> This is my translation. All translations in chapter one—otherwise stipulated are mine.

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed history of the French connection in the construction of the Canal, see <http://www.pancanal.com/eng/history/history/french.html>, "The History, Panama Canal, French Canal Construction." It is a complete report about the construction of the Canal by the French.

<sup>4</sup> For the importance of nationalist sentiments in Panamanian literature, see: Ricardo Segura Jiménez in "Panamá cien años de República" by Pedro Salazar Chambers, et al., Carlos Wilson G. in "Aspectos de la prosa narrativa panameña contemporánea," and Elba D. Birmingham-Pokorny and Luis A. Jiménez in "Patria, mujer y sociedad en la obra poética de Amelia Denis de Icaza."

<sup>5</sup> There are several academic works that analyze the work of Rosa María Britton, and Justo Arrollo. For example Fernando Aparicio's "Análisis del contexto histórico de la novela, No pertenezco a este siglo," and Carmen Steer-Candal "Hacia Justo Arrollo: La novela en la literatura y la realidad panameña."

<sup>6</sup> The significance of qualitative analysis is explained by Antony J. Onwuegbuzie et al, in the article "Qualitative Analysis Techniques for the Review of the Literature." It gives 23 vital benefits for this type of research in literary works. For example, it "distinguish what has been undertaken and what needs to be undertaken, identify variables that are relevant to the topic . . . distinguish exemplary research . . . identify contradictions and inconsistencies, and identify strengths and weaknesses" (1).

<sup>7</sup> Michel Foucault explains about the rule of the tactical polyvalence of discourses in *The History of Sexuality*. Discourse transmits, produces and reinforces power but at the same time it undermines and exposes making it fragile and hindering. He adds that “Discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it . . . We must make allowance for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. (100)

<sup>8</sup> Note that all translations of Roberto Díaz Herrera’s *Estrellas clandestinas* are mine.

<sup>9</sup> The relationship Noriega/Drug Cartels is mentioned in his testimony, but not in depth. One can argue that the reason is because he could not provide proven facts about the dubious affiliation, as he did with the Noriega/CIA relationship. Most of the information Díaz Herrera provides, is—as he well depicts—in the web.

<sup>10</sup> Foucault makes the distinction between what is to be a “universal” and a “specific” intellectual. Usually a specific intellectual—rather than an universal intellectual—has been involved in a “specific” relationship of power and authority, to which he or she becomes an expert. The “universal” intellectual, however, has the expertise of many fields, the “just-and-true-for-all.” He is considered “the man of justice, the man of law, who counterposes to power, despotism, and the abuses and arrogance of wealth, the universality of justice and the equity of an ideal law” (164).

<sup>11</sup> Elizabeth Burgos—the anthropologist who interviewed Rigoberta Menchú and wrote “I, Rigoberta Menchú”—explained the facts of the controversy on the creation of her book in the foreword to the 2008 Edition “How I Became Persona Non Grata” in Davis Stoll’s book.

<sup>12</sup> American literary critic Seymour Chapman gives a clearer explanation about this technique explaining that the normal sequence in a story and discourse which follows, for example the continuity “1- 2-3-4” gets interrupted by the “anachronous ” sequences of flashback (analepse) and flash forward (prolepse). The analepse breaks “the story-flow to recall earlier events (2 1 3 4) and prolepse is when “the discourse leaps ahead” (64). This is a significant literary technique that makes the literature more poignant and interesting.

<sup>13</sup> The Story of Judith and Holofernes is described in the book of Judith, one of the Deuterocanonical or Apocryphal books of the Old Testament. The Apocryphal books only form part of the Catholic Bible and not of the Protestant or Hebrew Bibles.

<sup>14</sup> The Panamanian Truth Commission (Comisión de la Verdad) “issued its final report to organizations representing the victims of torture, assassination, and disappearance during the military regime headed first by General Omar Torrijos and then by General Manuel Antonio Noriega. The report confirms the culpability of the military and recommends reparations to relatives of the victims.” --Article from: Noticen: Central American & Caribbean Affairs

<sup>15</sup> Annie Kellie gives an important recount about the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo movements and its past and present significance: “For more than 30 years the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo have been a symbol of courage against adversity and the enduring battle against injustice . . . Clad in white headscarves, the Mothers first appeared during the dark days of the Argentine dictatorship, a group of ordinary women valiantly facing down a brutal military government as they silently marched in front of Argentina's national congress demanding information about their missing children. In 1977 mothers of some of the disappeared started to meet every Thursday outside congress in Buenos Aires to demand information about their missing children. With the return to civilian government in 1983, the Mothers resisted the



decision to pardon "dirty war" officials and vowed to continue their fight for justice.” Kelly, Anne. Article in *The Guardian*, Sunday 12 June 2011. Buenos Aires.

<sup>16</sup> Regarding Chilean’s dictator Pinochet, G.Stolyarov II explains that: “Pinochet became Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces following the resignation of Allende supporter General Prats in 1972. After the 1973 coup, he was named President of Chile. Pinochet temporarily suspended civil rights, arrested Allende supporters, banned Marxist parties, and imposed strict political censorship. He declared himself dictator in March 1974 and began the de nationalization process of the economy. Pinochet promised "democratic normalcy" through a gradual transition. However, many claim that 3000 Chileans had "disappeared" during his rule, and that thousands were imprisoned and tortured for alleged "anti-government" activities. Pinochet called this a period of "repressive pacification" aimed at stabilizing the turmoil, after which the military would relinquish its absolute hold on government.” In *Two Dictators of Chile: Salvador Allende and Augusto Pinochet*. Yahoo Contributor Network.

<sup>17</sup> (Charlip and Burns’s “Latin America: an interpretive history” give a detailed information about all the Dictators and Populists in Latin America. They describe the form of power, control, torture and assassination of all the L.A. dictators. All these dictatorial governments are known for their brutality, absolute control and killings of thousands.

<sup>18</sup> This is my translation. All translations in chapter two—otherwise stipulated are mine.

<sup>19</sup> Note that all translations of Mauro Zúñiga Araúz’s *El chacal del general* are mine.

<sup>20</sup> All translations of Rose Marie Tapia’s *Roberto por el buen camino* are taken from the English edition: “Roberto by the Right Path” (2009). It was translated by Pat Alvarado.

<sup>21</sup> Deterritorialization is a term coined by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, and as JulianWolfreys explains it in *The Continuum Encyclopedia Modern Criticism and Theory*:

“Deleuze and Guattari’s approach towards literature and philosophy is an affirmation of their theory of territorialization, deterritorialization and reterritorialization as described in *A Thousand Plateaus*. From an infinite and univocal becoming, always in movement and infinitely divisible, certain territories or identities are formed. And once these territories are formed, they can be deterritorialized . . . it can free itself from its origin and circulate widely.” (306).

<sup>22</sup> Part of chapter III of this dissertation was presented in the conference “The Image of the Outsider in Literature, Media, and Society” of the “Society for the Interdisciplinary Study of Social Imagery,” Colorado State University-Pueblo on March 8, 2013 in Colorado Springs. My article: “Scapegoat, Criminal, and Hero: The Lives of Young Offenders in Rose Marie Tapia’s *Roberto Down the Right Path*” was selected among those presented, and published on the Proceedings on July 2013.

<sup>23</sup> A detailed explanation about the Heterodiegetic Narrator can be seen in Chapter II in the Literary Techniques sections.

<sup>24</sup> The introductory note of the novel’s translator, Stella Saied Torrijos, explains that although Zúñiga does not identify where the events take place—that is, the country of origin of the protagonist—she considers that it is, in fact, Panama: “but from the narrative we know it’s a warm Latin American country where it rains most of the year”, adding that “every reference to money is made in dollars, which makes me think that it must have taken place in Panama, as the latter is the only Spanish-speaking country that used the dollar as its standard unit of currency in the 70s and 80s.” (2-3)

<sup>25</sup> The English translations of excerpts from *Espejo de Miserias* are borrowed from the English version *Mirror of Misery* translated by Stella Saied Torrijos, on August 2012.

<sup>26</sup> Part of chapter IV of this dissertation was presented in the conference “The Image of the Outsider in Literature, Media, and Society” of the “Society for the Interdisciplinary Study of Social Imagery,” Colorado State University-Pueblo, on March 20, 2014, in Colorado Springs. My article: “A relationship of Power between Prostitute and Procurer: The Ultimate Heroine and the Ultimate Villain in Mauro Zúñiga’s novel *Mirror of Misery*.” was selected among those presented, and published on the Proceedings on July 2014.

<sup>27</sup> Isabel Barragán de Turner introduces Zúñiga’s novel, and it can be seen on Mauro Zúñiga’s website <http://www.maurozunigaarauz.com/criticasliterarias.html> in the “Críticas literarias” section.

<sup>28</sup> Fermín Caballero is from Editorial Verbum (Verbum Publishing) in Madrid, Spain.

<sup>29</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all translations in English from Spanish are mine.

<sup>30</sup> In Chapter II of this dissertation, there is a clear analysis of Bakhtin’s polyphony of voices.

<sup>31</sup> In chapter III, I give a detailed explanation about the scapegoat/scapeating/scapegoater.

<sup>32</sup> The Rural Poverty Portal in its website: [www.ruralpovertyportal.org](http://www.ruralpovertyportal.org) focuses on the poor in Nicaragua in: Who are Nicaragua's rural poor people? It explains that “The most vulnerable people in rural areas include the families of small-scale farmers and landless farm workers, and families that combine both agricultural and other income-generating activities on the farm. Off-farm activities are an important source of income. In most rural families, at least one member works off the farm. Households headed by women, young people under 15 years of age and indigenous people are among the poorest and most disadvantaged groups in rural Nicaragua. About 17 per cent of rural households are managed by women, but only 15 per cent

of women hold title to land under their own names, and they receive only 11 per cent of loans. Most rural women cultivate land that is not theirs.”

<sup>33</sup> Terri-Jean Bedford, Canada’s most famous dominatrix, writes the story about her personal life of abuse as a child and professional life as a prostitute, dominatrix, defendant, and plaintiff in a constitutional challenge to Canada’s prostitution law. In “*Dominatrix on Trial: Bedford vs. Canada*” (2011) (Preface ix).

<sup>34</sup> Bedford explains what a “Dominatrix” is in her book: “The stereotypical image of the dominatrix is a woman in a fright wig, a leather corset, and thigh-high boots carrying a whip or riding crop, whipping a man in bondage or having him grovel at her feet. . . . A dominatrix is an actress and a therapist. She helps a man escape from his normal self through play and the invocation of feeling and emotions outside of his normal experience” (208).

<sup>35</sup> Among other questions about her life and work, this is one of the questions that I asked the author about the novel in an interview. The interview is in Appendix B.

<sup>36</sup> Unless otherwise stipulated, all translations to *Mujeres en fuga* are mine.

<sup>37</sup> In a conference at the University of Panama, Tapia introduced her novel as: “Addicciones en la oscuridad: Mujeres en fuga.” This information is available in her website, and in various excerpts through the analysis of the novel.

<sup>38</sup> Foucault, throughout his discourse of power, in several of his books, make one understand clearly the diverse ways he contest psychoanalysis and psychology. For example when referring to madness and mental illness—which well includes addictions—he notes, in *Madness The Invention of an Idea*: “There is a very good reason why psychology can never master madness; it is because psychology became possible in our world only when madness had already been mastered and excluded from the drama” (143).

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## ABSTRACT

### SUBJUGATED BODIES, NORMALIZED SUBJECTS: REPRESENTATIONS OF POWER IN THE PANAMANIAN LITERATURE OF ROBERTO DÍAZ HERRERA, ROSE MARIE TAPIA AND MAURO ZÚÑIGA ARAÚZ

by

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This dissertation examines the dissemination of power represented in the works of Panamanian writers Roberto Díaz Herrera, Rose Marie Tapia and Mauro Zúñiga Araúz. My work focuses on two important periods in Panama's history: the repressive dictatorial era of Manuel Noriega and the post-dictatorial era during which subjugation and power operate in subtle ways, through institutions, mechanisms of civil society, and globalization. The primary sources are Díaz Herrera's testimony, and the novels of Tapia and Zúñiga Araúz. In my analysis, I draw upon the notions of power, subjugation and normalization developed by the French philosopher Michel Foucault. I also draw upon the thoughts of Mikhail Bakhtin, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud and Beatriz Sarlo.

Chapter one presents the historical overview of Panamanian history and its literature. It shows how power, subjugation and normalization have operated in Panama at different points of its history. Chapter Two analyses the political terror of Noriega through Díaz Herrera's *Estrellas clandestinas* and Zúñiga Araúz's *El chacal del general*. Both narratives are challenges against

Noriega, using scenes of actual persecutions, disappearances and tortures. Chapter Three explains how Tapia uses *Roberto por el buen camino* to denounce a wide range of inequalities existing in the post-dictatorial society. She focuses specifically on the culture of violence perpetrated by the underclass. Chapter four analyses how Zúñiga Araúz's *Espejo de miserias* takes the reader to a deep journey through a diverse range of social problems affecting women in Latin America, focusing on the subjugation and control of women's bodies through prostitution. This chapter uses Foucault's notion of biopower to illustrate how subjugation operates through globalization and the sex trade market. Chapter five uses Tapia's *Mujeres en fuga* to show globalization and the global market—through casinos and shopping malls—manipulating society, and contributing to Panama's socio-economic fragmentation. In addition to bringing attention to the literature of a country that is often ignored in contemporary Latin American Studies, my analysis demonstrates how these writers examine problems and questions concerning the use and dissemination of power that remain vitally important not only in Panama, but also throughout Latin America.

## AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

### SARA ESCOBAR-WIERCINSKI

I was born in Panama City, Panama and moved to Canada with my family in 1988. At first I lived in Montreal, Quebec and since 1993 I have lived in Windsor, Ontario. In Panama I obtained my undergraduate degree in Administration at the *Universidad Santa María La Antigua*. In 2001 I received my M.A. in Spanish Language and Culture from the *Universidad de Salamanca* in Spain. In 2007 I was accepted to the Ph.D. program in Modern Languages—Spanish (major) Literary Criticism (minor)—at Wayne State University in Detroit, MI.

I always wanted to pursue graduate studies in Spanish. My love of teaching began in Montreal during my spare time. While working full time at Gillespie Munro Inc., a Canadian international freight forwarding firm in Montreal, I began teaching Spanish to friends and a co-worker during my free time. In Windsor I became a Spanish instructor at St. Clair College where I taught part-time for approximately 16 years, first in the evenings as an instructor in adult continuing education, and later in post-secondary education. I also assisted in the creation of the Spanish Certificate Program and became the coordinator of that program. Additionally, I led groups of adult students for Spanish immersion in Salamanca, Spain, during several summers, and in Cuernavaca, Mexico. I also initiated my own small enterprise called “Sara Spanish School for Children and Teenagers” and “Sara Spanish Services.” I taught children and teenagers part-time, in various locations (including my home). In addition, I taught in early childhood education centers, such as The Children’s House Montessori Schools in Windsor. Moreover, I specialized in tailoring to the needs of executives doing business with Latin America in companies such as Hiram Walker, Allied Domecq and Valiant Corporation. In January 2007, I began working at the University of Windsor as a sessional instructor, and at Wayne State University in Detroit, as a part-time instructor. In 2008, as a student at Wayne State, I obtained a Graduate Teaching Assistantship position which I held for five years. In 2013 I was nominated for the “Roslyn and Marvin Schindler Excellence in Teaching Award for Graduate Students.”

During the past three years, I have participated in several, diverse academic conferences within the U.S. and also in Panama. In most, I had the opportunity to present part of my doctoral research. Two of my presentations were selected and published as articles in the Proceedings of the “Society for the Interdisciplinary Study of Social Imagery” at Colorado State University-Pueblo. The articles are titled: “Scapegoat, Criminal, and Hero: The Lives of Young Offenders in Rose Marie Tapia’s *Roberto Down the Right Path*,” (2013) and “Relationship of Power between Prostitute and Procurer, Pimp and Trafficker: The Ultimate Heroine and the Ultimate Villain in Mauro Zúñiga Araúz’s novel *Espejo de miserias*,” (2014). I also had a basic Spanish textbook/workbook published by Pearson Custom Publishing: *Vamos a hablar español*, fourth edition, 2004. One other activity that I pursued was studies in Alzheimers and gerontology. I worked for four years (2001-2005) as a care giver of dementia and Alzheimer’s residents at Sunrise Assisted Living in Windsor. It was one of the most rewarding jobs of my life! I was nominated as Employee of the Month on one occasion, and was chosen to participate in a promotional video, featuring my work with the elderly.

Besides loving to spend time with my family and friends, I enjoy and relax while reading, playing chess, gardening, travelling, playing piano (very basic level) and watching T.V.