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Looking back on the Trujillo Era

Throughout the novel *In the Time of the Butterflies*, Julia Alvarez mentioned a lot about Rafael Trujillo and Dominican Republic. The Dominican Republic has, “Suffered from tumultuous periods of political instability and corrupt regimes (Historical and Literary Context).” After reading the novel and learning more about the time when the book was written I realized how crazy everything really was during the years that Trujillo was the dictator of the Dominican Republic. Trujillo’s thoughts, hate and power made it possible to practically own the Dominican Republic community and treat everyone the way he wanted to treat them. I still wonder what was going through Trujillo’s mind for those three decades where he was considered “chief.”

To begin with, Trujillo rose to the top by slowly but wisely killing the other leaders or generals until he was the only one left. According to chapter two, Julia Alvarez (1994) states how Trujillo, “Shot them both dead; very soon after that, Trujillo became head of the armed forces” (18) after reading this I could not imagine living with that type of dictatorship. The people were forced to cope with Trujillo’s greediness and that really touched me because they had no option and no one to go to for help. Trujillo was a harsh predator like dictator who didn’t care what anyone thought of him. Early on in the novel Trujillo comes across Lina Lovaton and falls in “love” with her and wants her to be in this presence. Lina was only about 17 and Trujillo was a grown old man but of course he had the chance to meet her and make her feel special; he ruled everything. Julia Alvarez (1994) states that when he asked for Lina Trujillo, “Wouldn’t take no for an answer, Sor Asuncion finally gave in and sent for Lina Lovaton (21). You could not say no to Trujillo also known as “El Jefe.” Trujillo made Lina feel like she was special by giving her gifts and taking his time to see her but he would do that just to get what he wanted. I cannot imagine myself living in the Dominican Republic under the Trujillo regime. Knowing that young girls were put at risk and handed to Trujillo forcibly by his commands was not the only thing that angered me.

In addition, Rafael Trujillo also liked his name to be heard and put out there. According to Historical and Literary Context, “By 1925 he was the army’s commander-in-chief.” During his regime Trujillo made everyone in the Dominican Republic to have, “A gold plaque that reads, ‘In this house, Trujillo is chief’ (Historical and Literary Context).” When I read those words in my mind I was thinking, did this man really need all this attention to himself? I believe that Trujillo was extremely selfish and was in need of some love. He forced everyone to have that gold plaque displayed which is meaningless because everyone had the plaque and they had it because they were forced to have that plaque which is worthless and has no value. That proves that Trujillo was in need of some love which angers me because he doesn’t deserve any love. I believe that by his actions the only love he deserved was the one he would receive in hell.

Furthermore, Trujillo would threaten to kill and or murder people and that is what he would do if people in the Dominican Republic would not listen to his commands. Some people were taken by Trujillo and or his people and never seen again. In the novel *In the Time of the Butterflies* Trujillo murders Minerva, Patria, and Maria Teresa which are also known as “Las Mariposas” and makes their death look accidental, but in reality he killed them and made it seem like a car accident. This shows how Trujillo was a smart man, however; he would use his smartness for the wrong purposes and to harm people. This particular characteristic of Trujillo reminds me a lot of Adolf Hitler because he was also smart but used is intelligence for wrong purposes too. This observation or connection pushed me to compare Rafael Trujillo and Adolf Hitler and they ended up being very similar.

To sum it up, the novel *In the Time of the Butterflies* Alvarez informed me about Rafael Trujillo and the Dominican Republic. Without the book I would have not been exposed to all the information that I now know and comprehend. I do not like referring to Trujillo as “El Jefe” because the term “jefe” means boss and even though Trujillo was the boss of the Dominican Republic for a few decades I do not believe that he deserves being called the boss because of his brutal thoughts and actions. After all, Julia Alvarez (1994) wrote in the Epilogue how Trujillo was killed, “Trujillo was assassinated by a group of seven men, some of them his old buddies” (304). Since the assassination the Dominican Republic has changed, however; some problems will always exist.

Works Cited

Alvarez, Julia. *In the Time of the Butterflies*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin of Chapel Hill, 1994. Print.

By 1925, He Was the Army's Commander-in-chief. "NEA Big Read." *NEA Big Read*. N.p., n.d. Web. 31 Oct. 2016.