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# New perspectives on Latin America in Soledad Álvarez's poems

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**ABSTRACT:** The poetry of Soledad Álvarez goes from *Vuelo posible*, in which reality is investigated through an erotic and sensual use of words to *Las estaciones íntimas*, in which eroticism is shaped into softer words reflecting the eternal conflict between reason and emotion. The perspective of the female figure emerges in her texts as a means to achieve and redefine the identity of Santo Domingo through a painful and hard course towards the disclosure of human soul. This article will investigate the new perception of words in relation to the new chance of building a Nation's identity through themes that are not only historical.

**KEYWORDS:** Soledad Álvarez, Santo Domingo, Central America.



## Introduction

The key role of literature as instrumental in creating the identity of Latin American nations is known since the colonial period. The historical and political events that marked the '70s and the '80s, however, forced literary output to face reality. Lack of freedom, especially freedom to express dissent, in the different countries, created a need to reassert one's own voice, especially in Central America with the spread of testimonial narrative (*testimonio*) (Arias, 1995: 75). The whole of the literary approach underwent a change, as a result of the withdrawal from the political scenario or the death of public figures embodying the regimes and the consequent ascent to power of the party faithful who, under the circumstances, implemented *pseudo*-democratic processes. Novelists and poets felt the desire to go beyond the mere endeavour to reaffirm their own *self* through the reformulation of knowledge coming from privileged cultural centres such as Europe or the more suburban Buenos Aires and Mexico (Arias: 75). They embarked on a path of criticism towards themselves and their social, political and cultural subordination, as well exemplified by the development of testimonial narrative and by the literary innovations of Nueva Novela Histórica. Peripheral literary studies developed and the need grew to formulate cultural and non-cultural messages that could coherently express all the voices of a given national culture. This involved the reformulation of both the concept of nation and of Latin America hitherto used by the ruling class to identify the nations of the continent<sup>1</sup>. By making use of irony, dialogism and carnivalization, to cite some examples, Central American literature renewed itself, adopting in particular a self-critical approach where individuals were, with their own resignation, the first executioners of themselves. As highlighted by Arturo Arias, the need for Central American intellectuals to

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<sup>1</sup> The political concepts informing the idea of nation in Latin America come from the outside and over the years have proved to be incompatible with the situation in Latin America. See Palacios; Moraga, 2003: 107-131. *Historia contemporánea de América Latina, Vol. 1 – 1810-1850. La independencia y el comienzo de los regímenes representativos*. Editorial Síntesis: Madrid, 2003, p. 115, pp. 107-131.

“imitate” the privileged and peripheral cultural centres had led them to a sort of “sclerotic” viewpoint and formal approach in analysing reality. In recent literature, Arias still points out, the construction of national identity as judgment passed on the State is no longer the prerogative of the whole narrative, but has become the focus of testimonial narrative, whereas “la literatura llamada ‘formal’ se ha desplazado hacia el espacio libidinal, hacia el espacio del deseo, donde articulan discursos que reocupan el espacio de la subjetividad pero sin un afán totalizador y sin un afán consensual” (Arias, 1995: 78). Intellectuals have thus come in contact with themselves and with a context which they decide to live without reservation, even participating in militant politics.

The present study will explore Soledad Álvarez’s poetry with a view to highlighting the similarities between the evolution of the female Self - related to intimate feelings and memories - and the evolution of society and intellectuals in the Spanish-American historical context after having realized the failure of the revolutionary processes.

#### Life and works

Despite being focused on the emotions of a female character, the poetry of Soledad Álvarez mirrors, in our opinion, the change in Hispano-American perspective that occurred in the Dominican Republic after Rafael Trujillo’s death. Álvarez’s poems struck, first and foremost, for the empathy requested to the reader. The strong introspective appeal of her verses is meant to lead the reader to understand the emotions of a woman’s life, which personify the realization of her struggle on the path towards maturity and the acceptance of her womanhood “en tiempos de lucha tenaz y suicidio” (Álvarez, 1994: 23). To gain a deeper understanding of this initial statement it is necessary to briefly turn to Álvarez’s essays and focus on the idea of ethical literature emerging from her writings. In “Los intelectuales y su laberinto” (Álvarez, 2009) - intentionally alluding to the title of the novel – the author urges Dominican intellectuals to contribute, by means of the word, to creating new world views and symbols and to offering practical teachings. Thus, the use of the word in intellectual work and, more specifically, in poetic work, remains a voluntary and ethical expression on the part of intellectuals, who can, in so doing, reflect on themselves and come into direct contact with the reader; “la poesía es un acto de fe, [...] escribo poesía porque aspiro a la reconciliación del alma, a la recuperación de los valores humanos” (Álvarez, 2009: 21).

The “ethical” message in Álvarez’s work precisely stems from taking into consideration the context in which she writes. The importance of the autobiographical element pervades her whole view of poetry

and, although references to Santo Domingo and Dominican history only appear in a few poems in her two published collections, they are nonetheless essential to interpret her work: “Todo poema, toda creación literaria es autobiográfica aunque no encontremos en ella datos puntuales o experiencias biográficas constatables.” (Interview with Soledad Álvarez, 31 October 2010).

Born in Santo Domingo in 1950, Soledad Álvarez spent the first years of her childhood under the dictatorial regime of Rafael Trujillo. At a very early age, in the late '60s, she joined the literary group *La Antorcha* and took part in the movement known as *Joven poesía dominicana* (Young Dominican Poetry). In this period, she also started publishing in various magazines and newspapers, such as *El Caribe* and later *El Nacional*. In 1975, she moved to Cuba, where she studied and graduated in Philology at the University of Havana with a focus on Latin American literature. During her studies in Cuba, she worked at the Centro de Investigaciones Literarias (Centre for Literary Research) of Casa de las Américas, where she met some of the most notable literary figures of the time and enjoyed the cultural atmosphere of Casa de las Américas. Back in the Dominican Republic, she continued her work as poet and critic. In 1980, she was awarded the Siboney Essay Prize for her book *La Magna Patria de Pedro Henríquez Ureña. Una interpretación de su americanismo*. In 1994, her first collection of poems *Vuelo posible* appeared, followed by *Las estaciones íntimas* in 2006. Álvarez's poems have been translated and published in various national and foreign journals and have appeared in numerous anthologies of Dominican poetry, including *Sin otro profeta que tu canto*, *Poesía joven dominicana*, *Antología de Literatura Dominicana* y *El Paisaje Dominicano. Pintura y Poesía*<sup>2</sup>. Her poetry opens up the possibility of reconstructing collective identity also through the analysis of an introspective approach. Her view, centred on an independent female Self, enables the reader to enter into contact with the “other” reality of politics, namely life stemming from the psychological introspection of a Self that faces and copes with the daily disappointments of existence, mirroring disillusionment related to the context.

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<sup>2</sup> Despite appearing in anthologies of Dominican literature, the almost total lack of international criticism of Alvarez's poems shows that there exists a peripheral cultural circuit to which Dominican literature belongs (among the least widespread of the continent) that binds the literary message to the idea of redefining identity also at the sociological and political level, which would be worth studying. The debate on this subject with references to Central American literature is well underway. For further information see Liano, 2007: 77-85.

*Vuelo posible*: looking for maturity<sup>3</sup>

In *Vuelo posible*, the female Self is constantly struggling with its own inner ghosts. The main themes of the collection are loneliness, death and remembrance of the past; the poetic Self, which is the central character, lays emphasis on feelings and emotions pervading the female figure's task to "review" her own experiences. Emotions are described by means of highly sensory images combined with dreamlike themes which make readers active participants in the text, prompting them to overcome reality and pushing them towards comprehension.

In "Pasaje de sueño", the opening poem of *Vuelo posible*, Álvarez uses metaphor and accumulation to depict, right at the start, the strength of the emotions that will be experienced by the Self: "En vano me sumerjo en las honduras del discernimiento / Mis palabras crecen duelen conjuran. / Voracidad del todo por el todo" (Álvarez, 1994: 7). The verb "crecer" (to grow up), together with the semantic value of pain and conspiracy (as we shall see later on, it is an alien conspiracy, non-voluntary, belonging to others) constitute a single semantic unit that, through the depth and growth metaphors, anticipates the experience of the poetic Self. It is essential to grasp the nuances in Álvarez's poetry, precisely because her writing, and therefore her words, are a *leitmotif* both in *Vuelo posible* and in *Las estaciones íntimas*. Writing is a refuge, an "experiential" moment during which the Self "lives" when the only hope in real-life is death (or suicide). In 'Clase de cocina', the birth of poetic work is seen as a process of discovery and research that involves the human being in a visceral way and ultimately becomes one with poetic creation itself: "Arrancarle la piel a la cebolla. / [...] como en el poema / la palabra. / Atravesar sus capas tiernas, / [...] llegar a su rotundo hencido corazón / [...] Con las manos tendré que desgajarla / con las uñas escarbar su carnadura, / y lloraré incontenibles lágrimas / y su sabor será mi sabor / y su olor agrio mi marca" (Álvarez, 2006: 57).

Soledad Álvarez herself argues that "la visión de la poesía y la manera en que nos acercamos a ella no sólo no difiere de nuestra manera de ver el mundo sino que la define, la determina"<sup>4</sup>. Writing then, both in her poems and her essays, may also be a means to enable the Self to deepen its awareness, as is evidenced by the fact that the topic is reverted to in "Variaciones del silencio": "Aquí la mesa donde el poema escribe / su hendidura / – abismo del pensamiento en el que me extravió / queriendo decir la belleza que crece al filo / del deseo, y sangra –" (Álvarez, 2006: 59).

<sup>3</sup> De Sara Carini.

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Soledad Álvarez, 31 October 2010.

Through the description of emotions, Soledad Álvarez reconstructs how the female Self gains awareness of the surrounding reality. It is noteworthy that in “Pasaje de sueño” the rhetorical question asked by the poetic Self is a clear allusion to the inner strength that will support the female figure even in her worst moments: “¿Puede el miedo de la vida resistir el llamamiento / de la vida?” (Álvarez, 1994: 8). Initially, the female character in *Vuelo posible*, described as lonely and worn-out, seems to contrast with the stoicism that underpins Álvarez’s view of womanhood; there are indeed several references to loneliness, death and the inability to communicate one’s own experiences: “La soledad es el silencio / tan cerca de mí / tan leve afinidad corpórea” (Álvarez, 1994: 7-8) or still a “Sola yo / volantinera del mundo-muerte / En el momento en que todos miran” (Álvarez, 1994: 9). Despite this, however, the emotions of the poetic Self are to be intended as an expression of anger at its situation, in which it is the victim of an emotional state. The concept is well exemplified in “Tiro de dados”, where the title itself explicitly recalls the condition decided for the woman by fate, and in which she must find answers to define herself along the path to wisdom. In this light, loneliness and exhaustion appear almost obligatory steps towards gaining awareness of one’s womanhood which, as it will be discussed later on, is closely related to the concept of cycles often associated with seasons: “[...] En vano consultas oráculos, tablas de la ley / una señal al menos de lo que eres / de lo que son las cosas. / No pregunte. / Alguien soñó por ti este vacío / eligió tu nombre entre todos los nombres / y escribió con cenizas la cábala de la locura. / Preferirías un viaje por las más intrincadas galerías / pero eres prisionera de ningún fin.” (Álvarez, 1994: 11) .

The frustration felt by the female figure in *Vuelo posible* stems from the awareness that emotions linked to experiences are bursting and violent, and prevent her from living her own reality as she would like to. On the other hand, in “Circense”, she feels like a “volantinera en el vacío” (Álvarez, 1994: 9), but this does not prevent her from transforming her emotion into life: “Sola yo / Volantinera del mundo-muerte / En el momento en que todos miran / Allá abajo / Sin el antifaz atroz / En esta carpa que enciendo con mis ojos / En este oscuro que encandilo con mis manos / Y apaciguo / Al escapar / Hacia arriba” (Álvarez, 1994: 9).

The female figure in *Vuelo posible* is aware of her condition, and although she carries the weight of her situation, she is strongly inclined to accept a change that will take place with the passing of time. Her “resignation” is conveyed through the intensely physical orientation of feelings, experienced, through the poetic Self, not as a moment of relief and pleasure, but almost as pain caused by fear or maybe by the awareness that it is impossible to live love as a feeling of unity and shared path with the other. There is indeed no male partner, only fleeting lovers who leave emptiness behind them and whose memory is a traumatic event related to nostalgia. The female figure is left alone to face her own choices, which could be

interpreted as a metaphor of the woman victim of her marginal condition, also from an historical point of view. This attitude results in the conscious search for something that goes beyond mere “knowledge” and that leads her to a full understanding of life: “nada poseo y nada quiero / como no sea entender la ráfaga iluminada del misterio / el sentido / su revés” (Álvarez, 1994: 19). There is almost a sort of “surrender” to feelings in the expectation that they will cease to break violently into her life.

Álvarez’s poetry is characterized by a sober and measured style. Expressions related to the eternal struggle between reason and emotions are somewhat softened by a rational and studied use of words, which blend perfectly with the images they stand for. The rhetorical strategies used are not particularly complex, but the repeated use of devices such as parallelism, antithesis, metaphors, similes and oxymorons urge the reader to participate in the poetic event in a sensory way, feeling empathy with the poetic Self. Through metaphors and the skilful choice of words describing sensory experiences, Álvarez can profusely describe situations even as intense as the physical union of lovers or the bodily expression of desire, letting the reader sense the image described. The physical orientation in these poems becomes a means to reach the soul of the other and, at the same time, discover oneself.

Repeated use of metaphors, similes and parallelism with recurrent references to the sea and water symbolize the sense of loneliness and isolation of the poetic Self, which is an unavoidable condition not only for man, but also for poetic creation. The careful use of the word *soledad* is particularly important. It often appears in Álvarez’s poems; it is noteworthy that in ‘Heridas’ it is written with a capital letter, thus shifting from being a general *soledad* to becoming a *Soledad* explicitly identified with the authorial Self.

The description of the female Self gains intensity when compared with the few poems not devoted to women included in Álvarez’s two collections. They deal with topics related to history or to the city of Santo Domingo and embody the exterior *matiz* connoting the female situation. In this sense, it is ‘Historia’, the last of four poems dedicated to Santo Domingo, the most meaningful work, where the cornerstones of Spanish-American identity reconstruction are discussed, namely the recontextualization of the past and the amazement caused by the succession of events: “El aguacero ha destruido el palacio de papel / por el descampado navegan astillas de palabras / y un estupor naufragado / más cruel que esta noche / y la derrota” (Álvarez, 1994: 67).

The political situation and the precarious state of affairs hiding behind the “palacio de papel” (paper building) are the elements which challenge the whole of personal and collective life. The “*aguacero*” (downpour) referred to by Soledad Álvarez is easily identifiable with the dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo and

the ensuing “democratic” government. Indeed, during the ’70s and the ’80s, the Dominican Republic, as well as Latin America in general, were paralysed by historical events. This was partly due to the lack of interest shown by Western nations in implementing transparent policies to develop Latin America. The “*descampado*” (waste land) embodies the bewilderment experienced, after the end of the regimes, by Latin American societies, left in the hands of inefficient institutions and historical truths imposed on them. Under such circumstances, just like what had happened during the independence period, literature was empowered to represent the “other” voice from an objective point of view (at least politically) (Shaw, 1999: 260-263).

In describing the evolution of her female figure, Soledad Álvarez portrays the uncertainty reigning in Latin America at the time, with the precarious socio-political situation mirrored in the insecurity faced by the woman. Just like she finds herself prey to her own emotions and ends up fighting against disillusionment, so Latin America ended up fighting against the end of the idea of freedom.

Attention to context becomes even more pervasive after the publication of *Las estaciones íntimas*. As argued by José Mármol in the introduction to the collection, in this second set of poems Soledad Álvarez has managed to go from the “gravitación de la duda en el plano de la existencia” to an “interpretación del cuerpo femenino asumido como subversión radical de la realidad y la herencia cultural, política y social del contexto latinoamericano, y particularmente caribeño-latinoamericano” (Mármol, 2006: 13). Indeed, compared to *Vuelo posible*, *Las estaciones íntimas* is about the evolution of the female Self and of her own world.

#### *Las estaciones íntimas*: maturity gained<sup>5</sup>

Álvarez’s poetry in *Las estaciones íntimas* is conscious and bold, resulting from the maturity reached by the female character herself who, through the various stages of her life, has learned to face and cope with her own emotions. The sensory and physical dimension is still relevant, but it is experienced with the awareness of beauty’s ephemeral nature. The woman accepts the passing of time and its inevitable traces on the body with a sense of nostalgia, but also with irony, being confident that the body is but “the fence of the soul”, a mask under which the soul lies in all its richness. Álvarez herself argues that the female figure has undergone a change between *Vuelo posible* and *Las estaciones íntimas*.

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<sup>5</sup> De Clara Foppa Pedretti.



In *Las estaciones íntimas* the female figure looks at the process of body decay with nostalgia, but also with the irony that comes from wisdom. She feels the signs of decay in her body, and far from denying or rejecting them, she reinforces the process in front of man's eyes: she takes off the undress which covers her ("desnuda estoy del desnudo que me disfrazo") to stop being an object of desire and become a soul mate<sup>6</sup>. Such concept is well exemplified in "Trofeo", where Álvarez describes the envy felt by the poetic Self of the explosive sensuality of another woman. Age and experience lead the woman to a maturity that enables her to enjoy and accept, both spiritually and intellectually, her condition:

"Yo quise alguna vez verme en su imagen, / aprender de sus encantos ardides / estrategias de la carne como escudo del alma / que sólo sabe de incertidumbres y dádivas. / Pero ahora ella envejece / impenetrada y sola en el azogue, / puros huesos su cuerpo cubierto por colgajos de piel; / no le bastan a la muerte sus ardides" (Álvarez, 2006: 69).

The bodily element brings individuals near to their origins, their primordial being, and becomes the means through which a higher communion, a transcendent, absolute and perfect love are sought. Sensuality and eroticism go back to a primitive stage that is represented as somewhat animal-like courtship and behaviour. This is well exemplified in "Primer encuentro": "Marco mi territorio con la lengua, / [...] este lento acariciar mamífero en la noche del primer fuego, / hombre y mujer descubriéndose, / olisqueándose donde crece una flor viva" (Álvarez, 2006: 25), or still in "Zoología": "[...] Puedes acariciar su lomo. Contar una a una / vertebra y articulaciones. / Olerlo. [...] / Rozar la boca sin riesgos. Sin lengua. Sólo / con los labios. / [...] No te fíes: despierto clavará las garras" (Álvarez, 2006: 27).

The last verse embodies once again a key element in Álvarez's poems: loneliness, considered the original condition of all human beings and, at the same time, described with pain and disillusionment, though never with resignation.

Reference to the cyclical nature and passing of time is likewise evocative. Time is seen as an inevitable source of wisdom and is explained in allegorical terms through the description of the seasons in the poem *Las estaciones íntimas*. Consisting in turn of four poems named after the four seasons, *Las estaciones íntimas* highlights the value of experience precisely through the depiction of the elements proper to each season. Thus, spring witnesses curiosity and hope blooms: "como la hoja recién nacida que encontramos bajo la nieve / anunciando la primavera" (Álvarez, 2006: 43). Summer is an explosion of vitality and synonymous with maturity: "El verano ha madurado los frutos. / Rotundo, rebosante de su savia se derrama / [...] El verano rezuma en los cuerpos, / arabesco incesante multiplica sus huellas, /

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Soledad Álvarez, 31 October 2010.

desata alegre impudicias en las muchachas [...]” (Álvarez, 2006: 45). Autumn is described as the “estación templada de la vida”, where memory and emotions make past experiences relive in the poet’s soul “y es como volver a ser piel de otra piel” (Álvarez, 2006: 47). Winter, too, is seen as the season of remembrance, a time when, being close to the end, human beings recall their past and console themselves with memories, unspoiled by disappointment: “Acaso el invierno no sea solamente / la estación de las lluvias y del frío: / abrigo del recuerdo ovillándose en sí mismo, / evocada plenitud, cuando todo termina” (Álvarez, 2006: 49). It is noteworthy that, in the poems devoted to summer and autumn, the female Self expresses her desire and the will to awaken feelings, showing that she is no longer afraid to be daring, as she was in *Vuelo posible*. She can now abandon herself to emotions: “Ah, sí como a los frutos el verano madurara el deseo, / y llegue – al fin – el deshielo a mi corazón” (Álvarez, 2006: 45). “¿Quién revuelve las hojas del parque / y las hace crepitar, / como una vez mi cuerpo?” (Álvarez, 2006: 47).

The passing of time has a dual role in the evolution of the female figure. Not only is it a source of intellectual enrichment, but also a source of maturity in accepting one’s own body and sensuality. The past is not just full of nostalgic memories, but it is seen as a path to wisdom, so that the traces left on the body by time are viewed by the woman as seals of experience.

In her second collection, Soledad Álvarez gives us glimpses of private spaces, such as family, the memories of “Nocturno festín”, the alcove of “Una cama no es una cama”. She also describes new geographic areas such as Mount Desert Island in “Primavera”, Rock Creek Park in “Otoño” and Fez in “Misterio de Fez”, making the reader her travelling companion along memories and thoughts and trying to find a way to control the emotions which in *Vuelo posible* were causing her so much anxiety and exhaustion.

In her poems, Álvarez offers us an original portray of the female body, viewed as the intimate side of the being through which the woman can express what she is with naturalness. In so doing, she breaks away from considering the body as an instrument of demand, establishing an intimate relationship with it, without any shames or conflicts. It is through the physical dimension that she can experience pain and pleasure.

The author’s style in this second collection of poems is likewise refined and rational. The fluency of words stimulates the readers’ senses and awakens their feelings. Although similes, oxymorons, parallelism, synesthesia and prosopopoeia are present, it is metaphor the most widely used rhetorical device. Like in *Vuelo posible*, it refers to water, symbol of life and passion: “en el blanco océano de las sábanas” (Álvarez,

2006: 27), “[...] en un mar de aguas huracanadas, / y la cama es una ola en su rompiente, / un torbellino de espuma abierta / en el que se arremolinan los pulpos del deseo” (Álvarez, 2006: 31), but also of death, as exemplified by the various references to shipwreck. And to death, Soledad Álvarez devotes an entire poem, “Preguntas”, the last of her collection, where she tries to define death through the threefold repetition of the question “¿Qué es la muerte?”: “Es tu olvido en esta noche que no termina” (Álvarez, 2006: 71). The “life and death” pair is used to suggest that pain suffered in life makes one experience death.

In sum, introspection, pervading all of Soledad Álvarez’s poems, is the theme that helps the reader understand the evolution of the poetic Self, which cannot be considered separately from its historical context. Even poems that are seemingly devoted to general topics hide references to the identity and the history of Santo Domingo. In ‘Merengue final’, for instance, allusions to music and dance – which involve the individual in a total and liberating way – directly refer to the Dominican identity, and recall the poetry of the Dominican poet Mieses Burgos<sup>7</sup>, strengthening the stoicism described in the last verse: “yo bailaré este merengue como si no fuera el final, / condenado a morir antes de la madrugada” (Álvarez, 2006: 40). References to history are also evident in “Variaciones del silencio”, where exile is the background against which the female figure’s thoughts are expressed:

“¿a quién buscar en los pasillos recorridos por hormigas ciegas, / [...] sin otra perspectiva que el desastre? / [...] Si pudiera transponer la cancela del destierro / llegaría para abrir puertas y ventanas. / [...] y en la mano abierta, sin enigmas, / la contraseña para el retorno. / Pero ha sido una visión fugaz, / como soplo de nada” (Álvarez, 2006: 61).

#### Concluding remarks

Soledad Álvarez’s poetry makes the reader experience the evolution of consciousness both in intellectuals and in Latin America during the transition from authoritarian regimes to democracy, a transition which was characterized by a constant need to redefine the nation and the process itself. Álvarez herself considers poetry inextricably linked to the Dominican and Latin American historical context:

Me veo a mí misma y a mi poesía como un producto de las particulares condiciones históricas de los años ’60 – ’70 dominicanos, [...] Mi marca, como la de muchos escritores y amigos fue la rebeldía y el talante contestatario, a los que se unían el convencimiento de que desde nuestro lugar en la sociedad podíamos contribuir con un futuro mejor para la humanidad. [...] Luego vino la derrota, el descubrimiento de que los sentimientos, los sueños, la juventud y también las

<sup>7</sup> As argued by José Mármol in the introduction to *Las estaciones íntimas*: “La voz de Soledad Álvarez retumba, pues, con acordeón, güira y tambora en la histórica realidad dominicana que resumiera Mieses Burgos en un inigualable verso final: ‘el furioso merengue que ha sido nuestra historia’”, p. 16.

utopías se las ha tragado el tiempo. Pero ese destrozo no es negativo, no es vergonzoso. Por el contrario, es enriquecedor, es la esencia que nos define y nos enriquece.<sup>8</sup>

By no means does the work presented here cover all the aspects of Soledad Álvarez's poetry, nor those related to Dominican poetry or literature in general. Rather, it is intended as starting point in what could be, in our opinion, a new analytical perspective on Latin American literature and poetry. Revaluation of cultural products coming from peripheral circles and the analysis of the devices used to reformulate the elements typical of Latin American literary tradition are essential in outlining a literary "history", or even a complete panorama of Latin American literature and the contextual factors that have characterized it.

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<sup>8</sup> Interview with Soledad Álvarez, 31 October 2010.

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