

‘Get Yourself Some Power’: Materialist Feminist Struggles in the Apocalyptic Present of José Rivera’s *Marisol*

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True emancipation begins neither at the polls nor in courts. It begins in woman’s soul. History tells us that every oppressed class gained true liberation from its master through its own efforts. It is necessary that woman learn from that lesson, that she realize that her freedom will reach as far as her power to achieve her freedom reaches.

—Emma Goldman (1869-1940), anarchist

In *Marisol*, José Rivera introduces us to an apocalyptic New York City—gangs of skinheads roam the city setting homeless people on fire, MasterCard holders who surpass their credit limit are tortured by covert government agencies, and the moon has disappeared from the sky, among other unfathomable circumstances. The protagonist and heroine—a successful young professional Puerto Rican woman—attempts to navigate this world with a fierceness inherent to native Bronxites like herself, and fails. Over and over again, as Marisol ferociously clings to the institutions that have supposedly empowered her to date, she drifts increasingly further from gaining control of her fate, until at last she recognizes her systematic marginalization and chooses to rebel. *Marisol* is a feminist parable that exposes the capitalist, cultural, and religious hegemony’s insidious capacity to drain the contemporary Latina’s agency and self-determination. However, the alternative world that the play suggests as a salve to this social oppression problematically retains roots in the hegemonic structures it seeks to overturn. In this essay, I will call upon the feminist and materialist writings of Christine Delphy, Rosaura Sánchez, Irene Blea, Jill Dolan, and Gloria Anzaldúa, as well as Denys Turner’s analysis of Marxist views on religion to engage with both the play’s critique of Latina social oppression, as well as its proposed solution to this conundrum.

Immediately upon *Marisol*’s opening, the play invites us to interpret it with a simultaneously feminist and materialist mindset. The play’s title alone indicates its intent to focus on a central female, and as the lights come up, the first character we see is a young black woman—Marisol’s Guardian Angel who “*radiates tremendous heat and light...an urban warrior*” (Rivera 5-6). When next the lights reveal Marisol herself, we meet “*an attractive Puerto Rican woman of twenty-six...a young urban professional: smartly dressed, reading the New York Times*” (6). The image of these two apparently powerful young women of color lays a solid feminist foundation for the unfolding drama, but Rivera wastes no time in cracking the base he has created. As the homeless Man With Golf Club enters Marisol’s subway car, he relates the previous night’s events:

GOLF CLUB: I was sleeping: nothing special walking through my thoughts ‘cept the usual panic over my empty stomach, and the windchill factor, and how, oh *how*, was I *ever* gonna replace my lost Citibank MasterCard?
(7)

The Man With Golf Club’s startling specificity with regard to his financial woes, and his juxtaposition of the cold hunger of poverty with the middle- and upper-class emblem of

credit, momentarily redirects our focus from the strong female images that ushered us into this world, and illuminates the economic factors that intermingle here. Furthermore, Marisol's condescending response to the Man's continued ramblings, "Man, why don't you just get a job?!" fully entangles the feminist and materialist energies of this first scene (7).

The joint application of feminist and materialist critical theory is an organic pairing, perhaps best articulated by Christine Delphy in her essay "For a Materialist Feminism," in which she observes:

A feminist...science aims at explaining oppression...If it is coherent, it inevitably comes up with a theory of history in which history is seen in terms of the domination of some social groups by others...A feminist interpretation of history is therefore 'materialist' in the broad sense; that is, its premises lead it to consider intellectual production as the result of social relationships, and the latter as relationships of domination (Delphy 60).

But Delphy fails to address an essential third factor that further complicates gender and class dynamics, which is certainly at work in *Marisol*: ethnicity. Rosaura Sánchez speaks to the inseparability of ethnicity, gender, and class analyses in her essay "The History of Chicanas: A Proposal for a Materialist Perspective":

Chicano women...are interpellated by a series of different, competing and overlapping ideologies...For this reason Chicano female historical discourses cannot be primarily feminist in nature for the subject positions and identities which they articulate emerge from a complex material reality which includes class, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, age, family, locality and education (Sánchez 5).

In other words, a materialist feminist reading of *Marisol* is innately appropriate, as the play explores a woman's (Marisol's) position in social relationships of domination, but a materialist feminist analysis that fails to consider ethnicity's role in these power struggles would be reductive.

Here it bears worth to briefly address a matter of terminology regarding Marisol's ethnicity. We know conclusively that Marisol is Puerto Rican, which some would term more generally as Hispanic or Latina. In her book *La Chicana and the Intersection of Race, Class, and Gender*, Irene Blea offers a helpful clarification of these ethnic labels:

The term *Hispanic* refers to persons of Spanish language culture and may include Central Americans and Latin Americans, persons from Cuba and Puerto Rico, Spanish Europeans, and Chicanos. *Latino* also refers to the groups above, but includes Mexico and Central and Latin America (Blea xii).

Interestingly, Blea further notes:

A Chicana is generally thought of as a Mexican-American female, a minority female whose life is characterized by racism and sexism...The word Chicana is rooted in the Chicano movement of the 1960s and is a political, ideological term describing

a group of people with shared cultural characteristics and shared political interpretations of their experiences. Therefore, some Latinas who are not Mexican-American also refer to themselves as Chicanas (xi).

For the sake of consistency and clarity, throughout this essay, I personally will refer to Marisol as a Latina, though I may call upon critical theory by authors who discuss the experience of Latinas, Hispanics, and Chicanas, and Mestizas (typically defined as a Latina of Spanish and Native American heritage). I do so fully respecting the nuanced differences in social situation that women who self-identify across each of these broad groups may experience. However, for the purposes of this exploration, I am interested in the general commonalities experienced between the women of these groups as they pertain to the character of Marisol, who, as Blea illustrates, could very well identify as any and all of the above. Thus, if a theorist presents a particularly insightful argument about Mestiza consciousness which directly correlates with Marisol's reality in the play, that analysis seems worthy of review.

Having established a materialist feminist critical outlook, and taking care to examine how ethnicity informs both arms of this approach, what can we make of Marisol's character? Well-dressed and well-read with a career in publishing, scorning the jobless, penniless Man With Golf Club, and shortly thereafter her noisy neighbors ("Some people work in the morning!"), Marisol has clearly bought into the dominant American capitalist system (Rivera 10). Blea speaks to this cultural synthesis:

As Chicanas interact with more dominant Americans, they learn and even internalize Anglo values, language norms, and roles. Social institutions promote this internalization of Anglo values at the same time that Chicano values are deemed unworthy, unscientific, old-fashioned, or impractical (91).

Indeed, Marisol has so fully embraced Anglo capitalist ideology that her coworker and (white) friend June dubs her "Miss Puerto Rican Yuppy Princess of the Universe" (Rivera 20).

To be sure, Marisol's internalization of Anglo values surfaces repeatedly throughout the play as she struggles to make her way through an imperiled world. We next witness Marisol devalue her heritage when June invites Marisol to move in with her, after the Man With Golf Club attacks Marisol on the subway:

JUNE: You think the Bronx needs you? It doesn't. It needs blood. It needs to feed. You wanna be the blood supply for its filthy habits?
MARISOL: But the Bronx is where I'm from.
JUNE: So friggin' what? Come here. (Rivera 31)

Ostensibly, June wants to "survive the millennium as a team" with Marisol, looking out for each other with sisterly affection (31), and despite a fleeting moment of hesitation, Marisol readily accepts June's offer. However, June's sharp dismissal of the Bronx's merit as part of Marisol's heritage is striking, as is Marisol's privileging of June's white Brooklyn neighborhood over her own Latino home in the Bronx. This exchange illustrates Sánchez's caution that "the problem of exploitation and oppression goes beyond the boundaries of gender for working class and ethnic minority women. We need to remember...that women

are equally adept at exploiting other women as well as men” (Sánchez 5). Disturbingly, it’s hard to tell who is exploiting who in this case.

As Marisol’s fortunes take a turn for the worse, she finds herself forced to join the marginalized credit defaulters and homeless people trying to survive on the street. When Marisol encounters the Woman With Furs—an escapee of the federally funded torture center for people who have gone over their credit card limit, who literally hides her prisoner’s pajamas under the wealthy extravagance of a fur coat—she positions herself for the Woman’s help and companionship with the assurances one would expect a white, pro-capitalist consumer to desire:

MARISOL: No, no, no, I’m okay; I don’t belong out here; I have a job in publishing; I’m middle class— (Rivera 44)

Not surprisingly, the Woman With Furs turns on Marisol as a “brown piece of shit,” but this racist outburst does not deter a dumbfounded Marisol from pleading her case to the Man With Scar Tissue who steps in to help:

MARISOL: (*Really shaken*) She thinks I belong out here, but I don’t. I’m well educated...anyone can see that... (46)

But it’s not just Anglo socioeconomic cultural oppression that Marisol readily accepts.

Religion is perhaps the most complicated ideological structure at work in the play, in part because it is so thoroughly interconnected with the ethnic and capitalist forces of Marisol’s world, and also because its existence is so fraught with uncertainty. Given these factors, Denys Turner’s essay “Religion: Illusions and Liberation,” which dissects Karl Marx’s attitude toward religion, offers a useful framework for understanding the religious landscape of *Marisol*, and naturally complements a materialist feminist stance. Turner begins his discussion by directly quoting Marx’s infamous assertions that religion “is the opium of the people,” and the “illusory happiness of the people,” and that “to call on [the people] to give up their illusions about their condition *is to call on them to give up a condition that requires illusions*” (Turner 320, italics in Marx’s original). Having thus established Marx’s platform, Turner asks, “Why must the people have illusions at all?” and more specifically, “Why do they need religious illusions?” (321). It’s difficult to imagine a query better suited to the central problem of *Marisol*.

In fact, the play raises the subject of religious illusions as soon as the lights first come up on the set, revealing a brick wall spray-painted with a poem:

The moon carries the souls of dead people to heaven.
The new moon is dark and empty.
It fills up every month
with new glowing souls
then it carries its silent burden to God. WAKE UP. (Rivera 5)

in which, the stage directions explain, “*The ‘WAKE UP’ looks like it was added...by someone else*” (5). We might initially wonder whether this graffiti commentary means to question the existence of God or simply the moon’s function, but the graffiti’s visual juxtaposition with the presence of Marisol’s Guardian Angel establishes that divine

powers do, in fact, inhabit this world, and that the play is interested in religion as what Turner calls an “illusory way of relating to [the world]” (Turner 322). In particular, the play zeroes in on Marisol’s religious illusions.

A devoted Roman Catholic, Marisol prays aloud nightly by “*a large romanticized picture of a traditional Catholic guardian angel on the wall*” (8). One might argue that Marisol’s Catholicism reflects an interest in her Puerto Rican heritage, but I would counter that her religious devotion more significantly functions as yet another adherence to hegemonic ideology, akin to her belief in the capitalist way. As Blea states, “Chicana feminists point to the Catholic church as one of the most oppressive institutions in their culture. It is charged with exerting influence in not allowing women to define their own secular and spiritual lives” (Blea 111). The total lack of self-determination that Marisol’s faith and religious practice imposes upon her is a painful, difficult fact for her to accept.

Until the evening upon which the play begins, no one has confronted Marisol with the reality that, as her Guardian Angel explains, “The universal body is sick...Because God is old and dying and taking the rest of us with Him” (Rivera 15). Even when confronted with this evidence that logically explains why the world around her has so thoroughly fallen apart—delivered by a heavenly being, no less—Marisol loudly recites prayers over the Angel’s words, trying not to hear that her angelic protector can no longer watch over her, as the Heavenly Hierarchies have determined to overthrow God in an attempt to restore order in the universe:

ANGEL: There’s going to be war. A revolution of angels.
 MARISOL: GOD IS GREAT! GOD IS GOOD! THANK YOU FOR OUR NEIGHBORHOOD!
 ANGEL: Soon we’re going to send out spies, draft able-bodied celestial beings, raise taxes...
 MARISOL: THANK YOU FOR THE BIRDS THAT SING! THANK YOU GOD FOR EVERYTHING! (16)

Mere moments ago, Marisol demanded of her Guardian Angel, “Why are apples extinct? Why are they planning to drop human insecticide on overpopulated areas of the Bronx? Why has the color blue disappeared from the sky?” and so on, but when the Angel’s answer threatens Marisol’s illusory belief in a benevolent, protective God, she cannot abide it (14). To call on Marisol to “WAKE UP” and give up her religious illusions would be, in Marx’s words, “*to call on [her] to give up a condition that requires illusions*” (Rivera 5, Turner 320). If Marisol were to accept the Angel’s claim that God is senile, then she would be compelled to admit that there is no longer an omnipotent force who can provide order in her disordered world, that God is no longer holding up His end of the covenant, and that there is no longer a valid excuse for her to stand by idly allowing the world to descend into destruction—a frightful prospect for someone who has fervently adhered to what Turner identifies as “an ethic of submission” her entire life, by which she has seemed to get by just fine (321).

The religious hegemony in which Marisol has invested so much of her faith and energy has such a sly, oppressive hold over her that she would prefer to relinquish her power to that institution than to think and act for herself:

- ANGEL: When I drop my wings, all hell's going to break loose and soon you're not going to recognize the world—so get yourself some *power*, Marisol, whatever you do.
- MARISOL: What's going to happen with me without you...?
- ANGEL: I don't know.
- MARISOL: I'm gonna be meat! I'M GONNA BE FOOD!! (Rivera 17)

Despite her resistance to the irrefutable truth, however, Marisol is eventually forced to join the marginalized credit defaulters and homeless people trying to survive on the streets, where she finally wrestles with doubt in the religious tenets she has always held so dear, simultaneously bringing her cold, capitalist values into question, as well as her cultural loyalties.

Marisol's gradual awareness of her complicity with the hegemonic structures that render her powerless and afraid finally begins in her encounter with the Man With Scar Tissue, referenced earlier. Marisol recounts her life to date:

- MARISOL: Born 1966—lived on East Tremont—then Taylor Avenue—Grand Concourse—Mami died—Fordham—English major—Phi Beta Kappa—I went into science publishing—I'm a head copywriter—I make good money—I work with words—I'm clean...*(She holds her head and closes her eyes)* I lived in the Bronx...I commuted light-years to this other planet called—Manhattan! I learned new vocabularies...wore weird native dress...mastered arcane rituals...and amputated neat sections of my psyche, my cultural heritage...yeah, clean easy amputations...with no pain expressed at all—none!—but so much pain kept inside I almost choked on it...so far deep inside my Manhattan bosses and Manhattan friends and my broken Bronx consciousness never even suspected... (Rivera 48-49)

At last, pushed to desperation on the street where her social status is meaningless, Marisol admits that she is part of the problem, and recognizes that her economic success has come at the price of her cultural identity. Blea broadly observes this phenomenon in the Chicana experience, as well:

Chicanas are not born into the Anglo norm...If they adhere to the social norms, if they behave as Anglos, they may succeed; but they will nonetheless be discriminated against because they are women, and women of color. Even when they appear to be accepted by Anglos, they are accepted only as long as they do not act Chicano. Thus, a Chicana must deny her own identity and take up the identity of the norm (Blea 124).

In playing the game, Marisol has been played by Anglo capitalist ideology.

The key turning point in Marisol's awakening comes as she continues south on foot through New York in search of her lost friend June. Cold, dirty, hungry, and utterly at her wit's end, Marisol addresses God, represented in the play by a gold crown encased in a glass box, suspended in the air, and then her Guardian Angel, and then God once again:

MARISOL: Okay, I just wanna go home. I just wanna live with June—want my boring nine-to-five back—my two-weeks-out-of-the-year-vacation—my intellectual detachment—my ability to read about the misery of the world and not lose a moment out of my busy day. To believe you really knew what you were doing, God—please—if the sun would just come *up!*...*Blessed guardian angel!* Maybe you were right. God has stopped looking. We can't live life as if nothing's changed. To live in the sweet past...Dear God, All-Powerful, All-Beautiful, what do I do now? How do I get out of this? Do I have to make a deal? Arrange payment and bail myself out?...DEAR GOD, WHO DO I HAVE TO BETRAY TO GET OUT OF THIS FUCKING MESS?! (Rivera 55)

This passage in particular exemplifies what Jill Dolan identifies as a materialist feminist theatre that builds upon the legacy of Brecht's epic theatre as "a direct, politically based critique of representational structures that create mythologized subject positions and that mystify social relations" (Dolan 106). Materialist feminist theatre, says Dolan, uses Brechtian strategies to "undermine the tyranny of male narratives of desire" and expose the dominant ideology that perpetuates them (105). In the same way that Brecht wished to disrupt the audience's passive intake of realism's normalized institutional ideology, so too does materialist feminist theatre seek to "denaturalize" the representation of gender, race, sexuality, and class, alerting the audience to the structures through which they are produced in our society.

It is through this materialist feminist lens that we can recognize *Marisol's* epic leanings, and appreciate their function as an intervention in the audience's identification with the play toward a political end. In the monologue above, Marisol finds herself fully immersed in the play's hellish apocalyptic world, fighting for her life in the literal sense, as well as the more figurative idea of her way of life—the system of beliefs that has always given her life meaning. Whereas Brecht proposed to effect alienation by way of historical distance, here Rivera effects alienation by locating the play in an allegedly "present" time which fails to align with our notions of reality; *Marisol* displaces the audience in a familiar but yet-to-be-realized world, futuristic in its sensibilities, and thereby engenders an epic temporal distance through which we can examine the play from an alert, analytical position. Thus, when Marisol bemoans her lost financial security and cries out for help from God, it is not just her complicity in the capitalist system that a materialist feminist reading illuminates, but also that system's betrayal of her well-being, and its collusion with the church in sustaining a culturally mandated ideology that is quite literally destroying herself and the world around her. Rivera's pseudo-epic alienation by temporal distance from this (un)recognizable apocalyptic world allows us to observe the fundamental problems of its construction, and connect them to our own milieu free of the interference that realism's hegemonic ideology would impose.

In recognizing her complicity, Marisol develops what Gloria Anzaldúa calls "a new *mestiza* consciousness...a consciousness of the Borderlands" in her essay "La Conciencia de la Mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness" (Anzaldúa 765). Anzaldúa characterizes the Mestiza experience of mixed (partially Latina) heritage as involving a "clash of voices result[ing] in mental and emotional states of perplexity...The *mestiza's* dual or multiple personality is plagued by psychic restlessness...*la mestiza* undergoes a struggle of flesh, a struggle of borders, an inner war" (765). Marisol echoes this struggle in her conversation

with the Man With Scar Tissue, as she taps into the deep-seated pain she has hidden in wrestling with her identity as a Latina striving to advance in the dominant white society. However, says Anzaldúa, “By creating a new mythos—that is, a change in the way we perceive reality, the way we see ourselves, and the ways we behave—*la mestiza* creates a new consciousness” (767). This change is precisely what *Marisol* (and Marisol the character) effects as the play comes to its conclusion.

The first semblances of this new consciousness come together in what is perhaps the play’s most bizarre apocalyptic turn of events, as June’s brother Lenny appears on the street, allegedly pregnant with Marisol’s baby. Stunned by this impossible and yet, somehow possible, occurrence, Marisol can hardly believe her eyes:

MARISOL: I think you’re a freak, Lenny. I’m supposed to know that men don’t have babies. But I don’t know that anymore, do I? If you’re really pregnant, then we have to start at the beginning, don’t we?...

LENNY: I’m no freak. Every man should have this experience. There’d be fewer wars. *This* is power...I worship my new organs...the violent bloodstream sending food and oxygen...back and forth...*between two hearts*...Two surging hearts! *That’s* a revolution! (Rivera 59)

In the context of the new *mestiza* consciousness Anzaldúa describes, this incomprehensible incident starts to take shape as a step toward transcending the “duality that keeps [the *mestiza*] a prisoner” (Anzaldúa 767). Anzaldúa explains:

The answer to the problem between the white race and the colored, between males and females, lies in healing the split that originates in the very foundation of our lives, our culture, our languages, our thoughts. A massive uprooting of dualistic thinking in the individual and collective consciousness is the beginning of a long struggle, but one that could, in our best hopes, bring us to the end of rape, of violence, of war (767).

Absurd as it may seem, Lenny’s pregnancy certainly serves to disrupt the typical male role of father and female role of mother, proposing instead an alternative gender narrative. Furthermore, with Lenny having conceived—literally “conceived,” as he tells Marisol, “For days and days all I did was think about you and think about you and the more I thought about you, the bigger I got!”—his child with Marisol, the baby is of mixed race, again transcending the duality of white and Latina in favor of a new paradigm (Rivera 5). Lenny’s pregnancy is the first, albeit unconventional step toward the play growing a new consciousness to patch the rift in the failing world.

Ironically, Marisol’s new consciousness is further activated in her death. When she finally decides to reclaim her autonomy by taking a stand with the angelic rebellion against God, she takes a fatal bullet in the process. Marisol again runs into the Woman With Furs, who is now armed with an Uzi, and unhappy to hear that Marisol has chosen to side with the angels:

WOMAN WITH FURS: We don’t need revolution here. We can’t have upheaval at the drop of a hat...

MARISOL: ...Unless you want to join us—?

WOMAN WITH FURS: Traitors! Credit risks! (Rivera 66)

Here again the play explicitly connects religious and economic institutions as joint oppressors, and Marisol's rejection of their authority frees her from the tortures of the world, albeit into death.

As she dies, however, she narrates the epic holy war from an ethereal perspective, articulating her role in opposing injustice and joining the universe:

MARISOL: My blood cells ride those bullets into outer space. My soul surges up the oceans of the Milky Way at the speed of light...It looks like the revolution is doomed...then, as if one body, one mind, the innocent of the earth take to the streets with anything they can find...and aim their displeasure at the senile sky and fire into the tattered wind on the side of the angels...Inspired by the earthly noise, the rebels advance! New ideas rip the Heavens. New powers are created. New miracles are signed into law. It's the first day of the new history...Oh God. What light. What possibilities. What hope. (67-68)

Marisol's speech, which concludes the play, parallels Anzaldúa's meditation on *mestiza* consciousness:

I am cultureless because, as a feminist, I challenge the collective cultural/religious male-derived beliefs of Indo-Hispanics and Anglos; yet I am cultured because I am participating in the creation of yet another culture, a new story to explain the world and our participation in it, a new value system with images and symbols that connect us to each other and to the planet...I am an act of kneading, of uniting and joining that not only has produced both a creature of darkness and a creature of light, but also a creature that questions the definitions of light and dark and gives them new meanings. (Anzaldúa 767-768)

Indeed, by the end of the play, Marisol has become "an act of uniting" and "a creature that questions the definitions of light and dark and gives them new meanings" (768). She has recognized and come to terms with her hegemonic blind spot, and has taken her fate into her own hands to join the battle for reinventing and improving the world, even though it has required her own ultimate self-sacrifice.

True to its feminist aesthetic, *Marisol* leaves us with more questions than answers when the play comes to a close. Of greatest concern, the heavenly rebellion does end with the angels dethroning God, but is their triumph cause for celebration?

When she first bid Marisol goodbye, the Guardian Angel looked forward to "crown[ing] the new God" (Rivera 16), and at the play's end, she "*holds the crown out to the audience*" as Marisol reflects aloud, "Oh God. What light. What possibilities. What hope" (68). Who or what is the new God? The play is not clear on this matter, but it does seem to reinscribe the need for a God-like authority to reign over humanity, and this poses a significant problem. Returning to Turner's Marxist analysis of religion's illusory power, we must consider that, in Turner's words, "Theism itself—wedded to not matter which politics, whether left or right—is alienating, for ultimately and to some degree, it must always place the destiny of the human species under the control of forces other than those

purely human” (Turner 328). Indeed, the very waging of this war was driven and totally facilitated by angels, not humans. The angels claim—and the vast majority of humanity eventually believes—that they are acting in the humanity’s best interests, but the fact remains that with the angels’ triumph, humanity is once again dependent on the will of divine beings to steer its destiny. How long will it be this time before we recognize the oppressive nature of the new dominant power crowned by the angels?

Furthermore, can we really call the war a success from a materialist feminist standpoint when the play’s Latina heroine must sacrifice her very existence to further the cause? Is this development actually progress, or is it yet another example of how, as Anzaldúa says, “The dominant white culture is killing us slowly with its ignorance. By taking away our self-determination, it has made us weak and empty” (Anzaldúa 771)? It is literally the white, fervently capitalist Woman With Furs who shoots and kills Marisol—a pointed and distressing image that in and of itself offers no hope for the strategic social and cultural advancement of Latinas. Isn’t the true reason to celebrate Marisol’s journey of self-discovery her brave choice to put aside her comfortable complicity in hegemonic institutions and oppose a tyrant? What, then, is the purpose of her death’s entanglement with her bravery? How is this dramatic conclusion a win for the contemporary Latina?

Even the basic organizational structure of the new society created by the angels seems suspiciously like more of the same, as Marisol tells us, “New ideas rip the Heavens. New powers are created. New miracles are signed into law. It’s the first day of the new history...” (Rivera 68). Powers? Miracles signed into law? New history? These “new” moves on the part of the new ruling body are strongly reminiscent of the Old Testament God’s omnipotence and commandments. What evidence do we have that this new history will chart a course materially different from that of the existing history, particularly when it was borne of war and strife?

In putting materialist feminist theory into practice, *Marisol* simultaneously offers a cautionary tale as well as a call to “WAKE UP,” as the set’s graffitied wall advises. It’s no coincidence that Marisol’s journey of self-discovery as a Latina directly correlates with her entrance into the street where “no spoken language works” (Rivera 33), and with the angelic coup to overthrow an oppressive and senile God; rather, materialist feminism illuminates the interwoven nature of these factors and the privileging of hegemonic institutions and ideologies over any alternative, and particularly that of the independent Latina. The lingering question is, should we be satisfied with the “hope” Marisol sees as the lights go down?

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