Amplifying Subaltern Voices: (Media)tion and Marginalized Identities in Guatemala, Mexico, and Brazil

By

Copyright 2014

Tiffany Dawn Creegan Miller

Submitted to the graduate degree program in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese and the Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

________________________________
Chairperson Jill S. Kuhnheim

________________________________
Santa Arias

________________________________
Stuart A. Day

________________________________
Antonio Luciano De Andrade Tosta

________________________________
Brent E. Metz

Date Defended: May 16, 2014
Amplifying Subaltern Voices: (Media)tion and Marginalized Identities in Guatemala, Mexico, and Brazil

Chairperson Jill S. Kuhnheim

Date approved: May 16, 2014
Abstract

This dissertation explores manifestations of mediation and their relationships with representations of marginalized, principally indigenous subjects, in print and digital media. In my understanding of mediation, I draw from the debate concerning the role of Elizabeth Burgos in the authoring of Rigoberta Menchú Tum’s testimonio. This project goes beyond Menchú Tum’s classic case to address broadly the role of mediation in a variety of artistic productions in connection with larger social movements. For my purposes, mediation generally refers to two primary processes: the editorial processes involved in the creation of cultural production and the ways in which audiences influence and participate in these procedures.

Using a postcolonial and performance studies approach, with particular emphasis on orality, each chapter explores the politics of collaboration and how marginalized subjects negotiate their self-representations. Grounding my study in Rigoberta Menchú Tum’s seminal text, Chapter 1 draws from the plethora of definitions of testimonio to explore how Victor Montejo, Kaqchikel poet Calixta Gabriel Xiquín, and the artists who created the murals in San Juan Comalapa have used the genre as a way to project their own voices, albeit mediated, and represent their Maya identities. The next chapter explores poetry by Juan Yool Gómez and Humberto Ak’abal as well as online performances by Ak’abal and Kaqchikel children. These examples demonstrate how Maya speakers have agency in their representations, yet they also show how Internet users other than the original performers influence these texts and recordings. Chapter 3 continues to analyze Maya identities, this time in the context of the Zapatista Movement in Mexico, focusing on issues of collaboration in the artists’ books and Facebook account
of Taller Leñateros, a collective publishing house in Chiapas. The final chapter shifts
contexts quite radically to analyze the negotiation of local and international cultural
forms in music by people affiliated with the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem
Terra in Brazil in order to explore relationships between mediation and representation of
identity in a non-indigenous context. Finally, my conclusion offers possibilities for future
work on the relationship between mediation and representations of marginalized
identities in other regions of Latin America.
Acknowledgements

To complete a task of this magnitude requires a network of support, and I am indebted to many people for their help in bringing this project to fruition. My family has always been there for me, offering their words of encouragement. I am particularly grateful to my “Madre,” “Padre,” and sister for their unwavering confidence in me. Brian and Ila have selflessly made their own sacrifices for this project, often putting their needs second. Apart from his culinary talents, invaluable babysitting, and general emotional support, I will never take for granted my incredible good fortune of having my own IT support, 24/7. Brian has been my personal technological guru whose help has been crucial.

I am also appreciative of Professor Jill S. Kuhnheim, my trusted director and mentor, for giving me the freedom to explore in this project, yet holding me to high standards. Her dedication to my professional development as a scholar has pushed me to levels of success that I previously thought impossible. I cannot thank her enough for her wealth of wisdom and gentle guidance along the way. The other members of my committee—Professors Santa Arias, Stuart A. Day, Antonio Luciano De Andrade Tosta, and Brent Metz—must be acknowledged for their invaluable insight and support. I would also like to thank other professors at KU for their unique contributions to my intellectual development. Standing out among these are Professors Vicky Unruh, Jonathan Mayhew, Yajaira Padilla, Robert Bayliss, and Amy E. Rossomondo. I would also like to thank Erin Finzer, Meghan Farley Webb, and Paul Sneed for reading preliminary drafts of this project along the way, and I am grateful to fellow graduate students in the department
Pablo Celis, Jacob Rapp, and Jennifer Abercrombie for lending their ears whenever necessary.

At KU, I would like to acknowledge the Office of Graduate Studies for funding a year of my doctoral work. I would also like to thank Professors Brent Metz and John Hoopes for inviting me to present in KU’s Latin American Studies Seminar Series at the Hall Center for the Humanities and the Center of Latin American and Caribbean Studies for inviting me to give a guest presentation; both experiences provided me with formative feedback on my work. I am grateful to the Center for awarding me with a year-long FLAS (Foreign Language Area Studies) Fellowship to study Kaqchikel Maya. Similarly, I would like to thank the Stone Center for Latin American Studies at Tulane University for also granting me a FLAS for Oxlajuj Aj, their summer Kaqchikel Maya language program in Guatemala, and the medical NGO, Wuqu’ Kawoq, for inviting me to their Kaqchikel Maya language field school, Kab’lajuj Ey. I am also deeply grateful to the Tinker Foundation for providing me with financial support to work in Guatemala for a summer doing initial fieldwork. From UNC-Chapel Hill, I wish to acknowledge Juan Carlos González-Espitia, the director of my M.A. Thesis and trusted mentor, and the members of my committee: María A. Salgado, Rosa Perelmuter, Sharon Mújica. They each played a key role in the beginning stages of the research that has informed my dissertation.

In Guatemala, the following organizations have facilitated my research: Wuqu’ Kawoq, CIRMA (Centro de Investigaciones Regionales Mesoamericanas), and PLFM (Proyecto Lingüístico Francisco Marroquín). The following people have very collegially helped me establish contacts in Guatemala: Anne E. Kraemer Díaz, Peter Rohloff, Judith
Maxwell, Walter Little, Joyce Bennett, Lajuj Tijax, Ixkaj, Ixkamey Magda Sotz, and Ixim Nik’te. I am incredibly indebted to Ixkaj for taking time away from her work to share her town’s murals with me, patiently explaining the images as I photographed each panel. I would like to thank my Kaqchikel instructors—at KU and in Guatemala—for their admirable patience working with me as I improved my proficiency in this indigenous language. As language instructors are not limited to people who exclusively work with academic programs, I am grateful to the numerous native Kaqchikel speakers in the market and other places in town who took time out of their day to talk to me and let me practice the language. I am particularly grateful to the family I met in Chaqa’ Ya’ and their welcoming hearts, including me in family celebrations and reassuring me after I asked about my tortilla-making skills that “Manäq, man itzel ta, xaxe man ütz ta” (“No, your tortillas are not evil, they are just not good”). Maybe eventually I will learn to tortilllear properly, but for now, even though I was the only one who could stomach my thick, hard way, thank you for sharing your masa with me.
To Brian and Ila
# Table of Contents

Introduction: Beyond Rigoberta Menchú Tum .......................................................... 1

Chapter 1: Marginalized and Marginalizing Maya: Conflicting Versions of Maya-ness and Subalternity in Guatemalan Testimonios of the Civil War ........................................... 35

Chapter 2: “(N/K)inya(ʔ/a) chike(ʔ/e) jub(ʔ/a/iq’), xa man ronojel ta(j)”: Negotiating Maya-ness via Performances of Kaqchikel and K’iche’ Songs and Poetry .................. 102

Chapter 3: Tzotzil Maya (Net)working: The Politics of Collaboration in Taller Leñateros’s Artists’ Books and Facebook Account in the Highlands of Chiapas, Mexico ................................................................................................................... 147

Chapter 4: Marching to a Different Beat: Rurality, Internationalization, and Landless Identities in Music by the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra ............ 222

Afterword: Other Mediations and Marginalities of the Twenty-First Century ........... 291

Works Cited .................................................................................................................. 305
List of Figures

Figure 1: The murals along the main highway leading into San Juan Comalapa beside the town’s cemetery. ................................................................. 49

Figure 2: Inter-Maya conflicts during the Guatemalan civil war ......................... 53

Figure 3: Civil Patrol Members ......................................................................... 53

Figure 4: Guatemalan flag stabbed in the back of a man .................................. 56

Figure 5: Untitled poem to deceased father ....................................................... 58

Figure 6: Exhumation within the community .................................................... 59

Figure 7: “Papumay” poem .............................................................................. 61

Figure 8: Untitled poem in Kaqchikel Maya and Spanish ................................. 64

Figure 9: Comalapan woman weaving ............................................................. 69

Figure 10: Comalapan artist painting ................................................................. 70

Figure 11: Dreaming of a future with increased literacy and access to computers .... 70

Figure 12: Dreaming of a future with increased access to plumbing ...................... 71

Figure 13: Taller Leñateros’s Cover Photo (April 22, 2014) ............................... 207

Figure 14: Taller Leñateros’s Profile Picture (May 10, 2010) ............................. 209

Figure 15: Taller Leñateros event advertisement available on Facebook .............. 213
Introduction: Beyond Rigoberta Menchú Tum

….on a global scale, marginalized groups are insisting on entering into dialogue with lettered knowledge, from alternative epistemological grounds.
—Mary Louise Pratt

…unmediated representation is never possible and, moreover, in the age of digital culture, the processes of mediation themselves require analytical attention, perhaps more than before.
—Nancy Thumim

When Elizabeth Burgos worked with Maya-K’iche’ Rigoberta Menchú Tum in the 1980s to create the latter’s testimonio, Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú Tum y así me nació la conciencia (which I will refer to as Me llamo), this collaboration resulted in more than another Latin American text. It sparked a series of debates in academic circles; these debates include the polemic surrounding the “Culture Wars,” the later controversy between anthropologist David Stoll and the Maya-K’iche’ spokesperson for her people concerning the veracity of her claims, as well as a heated exchange between scholars over the defining characteristics of the testimonio as a genre.

Scholars have generally agreed that the testimonio features postcolonial, excluded subjects who previously did not have a voice in their own representation, allowing new voices to participate in both literature and politics. Testimonio scholar Misha Kokotovic

1 This quotation appears in her essay, “I, Rigoberta Menchú and the ‘Culture Wars’” (41).

2 This quotation appears in Self-Representation and Digital Culture (56).

3 The term “postcolonial” can be understood in two ways, as Boaventura de Sousa Santos has indicated. On the one hand, it refers to a particular moment in history following the wars of independence. On the other, it is also a “set of (mainly
claims that “[i]n such texts the colonized, silenced “others” of Western discourse intervene in that discourse as selves and claim the authority to speak in order to contest their exclusion from history” (emphasis in original, 29). For George Yúdice, the testimonio also recuperates the collective Other who was previously absent from hegemonic literary and cultural discourses insofar as it provides a “new means for popular sectors to wage their struggles for hegemony in the public sphere from which they were hitherto excluded or forced to represent stereotypes by the reigning elites” (“Testimonio” 50, 53). John Beverley also underscores that the testimonio offers previously excluded subjects the opportunity to represent themselves:

[I]t represents the entry into literature of persons who would normally, in those societies where literature is a form of class privilege, be excluded from direct literary expression, who have had to be ‘represented’ by professional writers. There is a great difference between having someone like Rigoberta Menchú tell the story of her people and having it told, however well, by someone like, say, the Nobel Prize-winning Guatemalan novelist Miguel Ángel Asturias. (Testimonio 29)

Much of the debate concerning Rigoberta Menchú Tum’s testimonio focuses on issues about how to define the genre and who is allowed to create new knowledge and literary (performative) practices and discourses that deconstruct the colonial narrative as written by the colonizer, and try to replace it by narratives written from the point of view of the colonized” (144). When I use the term “postcolonial,” I am referring to both understandings, with an emphasis on this second definition because it denotes the voices of resistance.
forms. Scholars recognize, however, that the *testimonio* has provided marginalized subjects an opportunity to produce their own representations and shape previously existing ones.

That said, *testimonios* are not just the voices of subaltern subjects. A third party often mediates these narratives; these outside agents transcribe the accounts from the oral to the written, and they also often determine its presentation as a published book. Elizabeth Burgos, for example, has included epigraphs at the beginning of each chapter from the Mayan sacred text, the *Popol Wuj*, and from *Hombres de maíz* by Miguel Ángel Asturias, connecting Menchú Tum’s *testimonio* to Mayan religious traditions and emphasizing the influences of orality. The role of mediators like Burgos has been the focus of much academic debate:

> In many cases the narrator is someone who is either functionally illiterate or, if literate, not a professional writer, the production of a testimonio generally involves tape-recording and then transcription and editing of an oral account by an interlocutor who is an intellectual, often a journalist or a writer…The nature of the intervention of this gathering and editing function is one of the more hotly debated theoretical points in the discussion of the genre. (Beverley, “The Margin at the Center” 26)

In the case of Menchú Tum, there has been a range of opinion about her role and that of Burgos. In an interview with Guatemalan journalist and critic Luis Aceituno, historian Arturo Taracena reveals that Burgos did not complete the transcription; rather, she hired Paquita Rivas, a young woman from Cuba, to do so. Burgos then worked with Taracena to edit it, despite the fact that Burgos has assumed full responsibility for this editorial
intervention (Aceituno 85). Apparently, there were various editors involved in the process. However, according to Aceituno, Menchú Tum never saw how Burgos and Tarcena edited her story (84). Although testimonios provide subaltern speakers with a medium through which to communicate their concerns and life stories, without the proper education and access they must work with someone willing to perform the editorial tasks of the publication process. Editors and compilers influence and shape these narratives. For these reasons, some readers have justifiably questioned to what extent the narrative is the words of the subaltern speaker, and how far removed the published account is from the original version of events.

Despite much excellent work on the debate concerning Burgos’s role in the authoring of Menchú Tum’s testimonio, scholars have not broadly addressed the role of mediation in literary and cultural texts by marginalized authors and artists, examining a variety of artistic production in connection with larger social movements. Yet, without such an understanding, we are left with a limited comprehension because such analyses of Menchú Tum are contextually specific to the narrative genre and the Rigoberta Menchú Tum controversy. This study takes steps toward remedying this gap in the literature by examining the mediation in various genres of literary and cultural production not only in Guatemala, but also in Mexico and Brazil. The sub-questions informing this study are: What are some of the ways that mediation is manifested? How do these processes of mediation influence “self-definitions” of marginalized identities as well as regional and national discourses? What do these mediated subaltern voices add to the broader cultural conversation with their representations?
Identity etymologically stems from the Latin *identitas*, whose root is *idem*, which literally means “the same.” As such, D. Roque Bárcia explains that psychologically “identity” refers to the “conciencia que una persona tiene de sí misma” (10). Because of its roots in one’s sense of self, as distinct from others, implicit is a process of Othering. Given its intersections with Otherness, identity is also intrinsically connected to a subject’s projection(s) of oneself in society—his or her subjectivities. As cultural studies critic Nohemy Solórzano-Thompson and creative writer Cristina Rivera Garza have explained,

> More a relational label than a given fact in and of itself, identity as a category invites an analysis of the production of subjectivities, collective as well as individual, that emerge, or can be perceived, in the realm of daily social practices and the physical experiences of the body. (187)

Identities, and consequently subjectivities, are in a constant state of flux as subjects negotiate physical and social surroundings. They are dynamic, and as such, continuously change in response to everyday experiences. Generally, there are a number of social factors that affect identity, such as race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, and others. Given the plurality of such markers, it is more appropriate to discuss identity in its plural form; these social factors cannot be isolated and thus simultaneously shape subjectivities and the formation of identities in distinct ways. In the context of Latin America, and more specifically the countries analyzed in this project, given the predominant indigenous and African heritage in these regions, issues of race and ethnicity significantly figure into discussions of identities, which are also shaped by issues of gender, class, and other social constructs.
In this project, because identity will be examined via cultural products, the concept of representation is also pertinent. According to Stuart Hall, whose work was crucial to the development of the field of cultural studies, there are three primary schools of thought to conceptualize representation: the mimetic, the intentionalist, and the constructivist (24-26). Adopting a constructivist approach, Hall argues that representation is largely a fluid concept in that it is impossible to assign a unique and invariable meaning to language to understand the outside world. Rather, things and the outside world are constructed through representational systems (25), and are thus subjective depending on the perspective. With the prefix “re,” re-presentation denotes repetition, yet with each new iteration, the resulting representation may be different. There is an unstable relationship between the original and its representation. In the chapters that follow, we will see a variety of examples of representations of Mayan and Landless identities, which depict these marginalized identities in distinct—and at times conflicting—ways.

The meaning of the term “Maya” has changed over time—it is a marker of indigenous identity that is constantly in transformation. As anthropologist Diane Nelson explains, Maya-ness is “part of this practice of formando, making or forming this new, pan-indigenous identification” (5). Until the mid 1980s archaeologists and anthropologists used the term “Maya” almost exclusively to refer to the builders of Tikal who lived several centuries ago. In post-war Guatemala, however, Maya activists have appropriated the term. They employ this word that outsiders historically used to define them as a political signifier “to claim everyone related to the linguistic trunk that unites such disparately identified groups as the pre-Conquest K’iche’s, Kaqchikeles, and
Tz’utujiles” (Nelson 5). In Guatemala, and more generally in Chiapas, Mexico, the designation “Maya” encompasses all indigenous people who identify with one of the many indigenous languages deriving from the Mayan linguistic tree. What is “Maya,” then, is an identity group comprised of plural identities: “individuals and groups [are] composed of irreducibly plural parts, of many registers that change according to context, of identities that are always in the making, of internal contradictions that are not the exception, but the rule” (Hale, “Mestizaje” 37). Given the cultural and linguistic differences between the indigenous who identify as “Maya,” conflicting identities abound. The artists and authors in this project expose these conflicts and reveal the heterogeneity of Maya-ness.

Turning our attention to the MST in Brazil, my use of the term “Landless” comes from the work of cultural critics Else Vieira and Malcolm K. McNee. According to Vieira, “Landless” is the adjectival form of “landlessness,” which entails denial of access to the land as a means of production and subsistence, as well as exclusion from any social benefits to be derived from territorial stability, such as education, health assistance and housing. It also means lack of affiliations and recognition which consolidates the asymmetries of power, both symbolic and otherwise, which the sem-terra perforce inhabit. (“Enhancing Cultural Studies” 116)

---

4 In another context in Central America, political scientist Virginia Tilley has observed that more and more in El Salvador non-Maya adopt Maya tropes and traje to appear “more indigenous” for international grants and tourism.
The Landless are marginalized in multiple ways, and their lack of land contributes to their disenfranchisement in society. Malcolm K. McNee capitalizes Landless and Landlessness throughout his study of MST music “so as to emphasize the identititarian dimensions to the movement, beyond the material want that the terms literally designate” (“Soundtracking Landlessness” 131). Given these social dimensions, the term “Landless” encompasses the physical denial of land as well as the resulting politics of identity.

These examples of Mayan and Landless identities are subaltern subjects because of their historical lack of voice in dominant discourses and their general marginalization. In the field of postcolonial studies, there has been debate regarding whether subaltern subjects can speak or, if they do speak, whether the dominant can listen. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has argued that the subaltern never has a voice and that, upon speaking, s/he is no longer subaltern (“Can the Subaltern Speaker?” 32). In her historical overview of subaltern studies, Ileana Rodríguez describes Spivak’s approach as focusing on the “ventriloquized nature of the representation of the subaltern (spoken for and spoken about […]”) (3). Doris Sommer, however, proposes that “[t]he pertinent question is whether the other party can listen. Privilege gets in the way of hearing even a direct address” (Proceed with Caution 20). According to Sommer, subaltern speakers have always been present, though they have not always been understood or heard. It is not that these speakers have gained a voice for the first time; it is more the case that the elite have traditionally ignored them. The subaltern has always spoken; what has been an issue is whether or not we were able to access their voices and willing to listen. Therefore, one of the questions at hand in this study is not whether they speak, but rather the effects of mediation on those already present voices.
In the context of cultural studies of representation, I conceptualize the term “mediation” in two primary ways: to refer to the editorial processes involved in the creation of cultural products and to describe the ways in which audiences influence and participate in these procedures. Drawing from Nancy Thumim, a communications studies scholar who works primarily with digital media, this first form of mediation describes close readings of the processes (techniques, technologies, ideologies) which shape a representation that is produced [...]. In this sense, mediation is about the processes that must come between those represented in a particular media text and their audiences [...]. Such scholarship has explored questions like how the representation is put together, what it focuses on, what one is used, what it looks like, what is excluded and so on. (54)

There is a focus on production and editing styles and how the values of the agents realizing these processes influence cultural texts, as with Burgos’s task of organizing the recorded interviews with Menchú Tum to compile the latter’s testimonio.5 These processes may occur with a specific individual or with larger institutional entities, such as publishing houses and their editorial staff and/or translators.6 Now that we also deal with

5 Communication studies scholar John Corner has discussed this phenomenon in the context of BBC television programming, noting that certain individuals and groups have “editorial control over the content and form” (22).

6 Other scholars have analyzed these editorial processes and interventions, such as Paul Eggert and Margaret Sankey in their edited volume, *The Editorial Gaze: Mediating Texts in Literature and the Arts* (1998).
digital circulation of material, due to the fluid, dynamic nature of digital media, audiences may potentially shape these texts even after they have been created. As we will see, audience members are not necessarily passive recipients of messages; through the interactive interfaces of digital servers such as YouTube there are new opportunities for participation, collaboration, and production online. British sociologist and media theorist David Gauntlett explains that “the separate categories of ‘producer’ and ‘audience’ are collapsing, as a growing number of people become creators, arrangers and remixers of digital media” (149). Audiences influence cultural products online by commenting on videos of performances or contributing to discussions on forums such as Facebook, among other options. As Thumim describes, “research on media audiences must now take account of audience activity that today includes (for increasing numbers of the audience) representing themselves in media spaces” (63). Through their user profiles audiences communicate their ideas and present their respective identities to virtual communities. In the context of this study, the term “mediation” denotes the processes by which agents other than the original subaltern speaker(s), including but not limited to publishing houses, editors, and audience members, shape cultural products, both at the creation stage and after such processes are supposedly completed.

---

7 Although there are increased opportunities to actively engage in cultural production online, not all audience members do so. According to Jonathan Dovey and Martin Lister, specialists in digital culture research, “[w]eb business builds on the 98 per cent: 2 per cent rule—98 per cent of traffic will pass through the site whilst only 2 per cent will stay and get involved in the social network or other ‘producerly’ activities” (142).
To address the connection between these media and their potential audiences, I also draw from social-cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai’s concept of “mediascapes.” According to Appadurai, the term refers both to the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information (newspapers, magazines, television stations, and film-production studios), which are now available to a growing number of private and public interests throughout the world, and to the images of the world created by these media. (35)

The anthropologist then explains the complicated structures imbuing mediascapes, which he states depend “on their mode (documentary or entertainment), their hardware (electronic or preelectronic), their audiences (local, national, or transnational), and the interests of those who own and control them” (35). With the innovation of new forms of media, or “hardware” as Appadurai describes them, there is a potential increase in opportunities to engage domestic and international audiences, and consequently participate in flows of globalization.

Because of its cultural, economic, and political connotations, globalization is a complex topic; however key to its understanding is the relationship between the global and the local. Néstor García Canclini has emphasized this connection: “[e]n la globalización no sólo se reorganiza lo local, sino las relaciones local-local” (131). The innovations in communicational technologies have caused local cultures to be in contact with others from across the globe (García Canclini, “Globalización e interculturalidad 131; Jameson 55). With this heightened connectivity, there are more opportunities for cultural exchange and the “dissemination of symbolic processes that increasingly drive
economics and politics” (Yúdice, The Expediency 29). The resulting mobility and cultural exchange has been the cause of a variety of reactions. As Fredric Jameson notes, we can celebrate the heterogeneity resulting from different “cultures around the world […] placed in tolerant contact with each other in a kind of immense cultural pluralism,” or we may instead lament globalization’s homogenizing influences, or what Jameson describes as “the worldwide Americanization or standardization of culture, the destruction of local differences, the massification of all the peoples on the planet” (57). When local cultures come in contact with one another, there are opportunities for more acute awareness of cultural differences, although there are also possibilities for an erasure of particularities with deterritorialization. As such, anthropologist Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing has noted that these global links are full of tensions and frictions, “reminding us that heterogeneous and unequal encounters can lead to new arrangements of culture and power” (5). For the purposes of this study, globalization is a relational process that involves the increased movement, or mobility, of places, ideas, and things, either physically or via communicational technologies such as the Internet, social media, and other digital media, which inadvertently affects identities and their representations via cultural products.

---

8 From an ethnographic perspective, according to cultural anthropologists Edward F. Fischer and Peter Benson, “[e]thnographic sensibilities tend to privilege the local over the global, often assuming a broad backdrop of globalization as either hegemonic imposition into a local world (a globalized locality) or local resistance against distant market forces (a localized globality)” (7).
Appadurai’s concept of “ethnoscapes” speaks to the ways in which ethnic subjects engage in processes of globalization. The term encapsulates the contradictions in the perspectives and the representations in traditional or conventional ethnography: “[t]he landscapes of group identity—the ethnoscapes—around the world are no longer familiar anthropological objects, insofar as groups are no longer tightly territorialized, spatially bounded, historically unselfconscious, or culturally homogeneous” (48). In the examples that I study, these speakers are not rooted in one place but travel abroad, publish in translation, and work through the Internet in order to represent themselves in international circles. They have increased their participation in global flows of production, and thus, their potential visibility as well. That said, issues of control relating to power and authority shape the representations of subaltern, ethnic subjects, or “ethnoscapes,” available to audiences through these different media.

To examine how these subjects have participated in these “ethnoscapes,” I analyze published poetry collections, painted murals, and testimonial accounts as well as texts available electronically, such as online videos on YouTube and Vimeo; images, advertisements, and other materials that comprise Facebook profiles; and digital archives.

9 Other scholars have addressed Appadurai’s concept of the ethnoscope. Perhaps one of the most noted contributions to the conceptualization of the ethnoscope was by Anthony D. Smith, Professor Emeritus of Nationalism and Ethnicity at the London School of Economics. Smith connected the ethnoscope to issues of memory and nationalism, defining it as “the idea of a historic and poetic landscape, one imbued with the culture and history of a group, and vice versa, a group part of whose character if felt by themselves and outsiders to derive from the particular landscape they inhabit” (11).
of poetry and songs. While published poetry and testimonies are available in conventional books and the materials available online are located on digital servers, I treat each as discourses, drawing from the word’s etymological root of “discurrir.” According to D. Roque Bárcia, “discurrir” means “andar, caminar, correr por diversas partes y lugares” (217). This definition recalls the geographic mobility the term connotes when combined with the idea of ethnoscapes, which speaks, in turn, to the various ways in which ethnic speakers participate in processes of globalization. That is, the circulation of this art, poems, songs, and testimonies is not limited to local, possibly marginalized communities—they reach audiences across the globe, addressing extensions of their community and a range of outsiders.

As José Rabasa has explained, the local and the global are not mutually exclusive. The concepts are intertwined: “[b]eyond representation, the local manifests its impossibility in its bind to the global. Ultimately, the local must be seen as a catachresis for the national and the global in all their contradictions” (194). The local cannot be separated from the global for various reasons. Subaltern subjects and their respective movements work through print and digital media to potentially attract international audiences and participate in processes of globalization. Moreover, their representations of their marginalized identities—and their ethnoscapes—are not solely based on their particular local cultures. In many cases, in response to international cultural exchanges marginalized subjects innovate their traditions and engage with modernity.
To understand “modernity” in relation to colonialism, I look to Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano’s conceptualization in terms of the coloniality of power.¹⁰ For Quijano, concepts of race developed during the colonization legitimized the superiority and dominance of the white conquerors in contrast with the inferiority of the original inhabitants of the Americas, the indigenous (534). Race relations naturalized the prevailing ideology of Eurocentrism, and this hegemony has also translated to global relations and models of power, or “modernity.” According to the Peruviant theorist, following the encounter between Europeans and indigenous communities in the Americas, “a new space/time was constituted materially and subjectively” (547)—it is one of the first examples of broad-scale globalization, or the exchange of goods and ideas from one continent to another. In this historical context that opened doors for the capitalist world market, modernity and rationality were seen as exclusively European products and experiences because of Europeans’ naturally superior status in race relations; “white” was synonymous with what was new and most advanced of the human species (542). Europeans were destined to profit from such exchanges and wage-labor relationships, whereas the dominated, conquered peoples of the Americas would provide

¹⁰ For examples of scholars who have theorized modernity in terms of colonialism or coloniality, see Samir Amin, Enrique Dussel, Alexander Laban Hinton (Annihilating Difference 1-40; Genocide); and Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (Oprimidos pero no vencidos). Other scholars have also addressed this connection, specifically situating their work in dialogue with Quijano’s concept of “coloniality of power,” and examples include Walter Mignolo (Local Histories 16-7; Darker Side 437-38) and Emilio del Valle Escalante (8-9).
the work force, rarely receiving a wage. In other words, “paid labor was the whites’ privilege. The racial inferiority of the colonized implied that they were not worthy of wages” (539). In the context of this project, I use modernity to refer to the new global power structured by Eurocentrism which has largely continued into the present-day, in which economic and social relations distinguish the racially dominant subjects of Latin American from their inferior counterparts, who were/are primarily indigenous or of African-descent. From the relationship between the conquerors and the conquered, a series of dualisms developed: “East-West, primitive-civilized, magic/mythic-scientific, irrational-rational, traditional-modern—Europe and not Europe” (542). Under this lens, the indigenous and other dominated subjects were seen as opposed to projects of modernity.

However, subaltern subjects are not really at odds with modernity. As Quijano explains, “[i]f the concept of modernity only, or fundamentally, refers to the ideas of newness, the advanced, the rational-scientific, the secular (which are the ideas normally associated with it), then there is no doubt that one must admit that it is a phenomenon possible in all cultures and historical epochs” (543). In Latin America, many indigenous communities had implemented extensive irrigation techniques, as in the case of Incan terracing, and the Maya had developed a calendar which was more accurate than its Gregorian counterpart. However, while colonized peoples of the Americas may draw from practices from the past, they also engage the present. For example, according to Allan F. Burns, a Mayan scholar who focuses on orality within the Yucatec Maya, indigenous speakers are not people from a previous age holding on to the past. Nor do they shed their cultural identity in order to be “modern.” Rather, their culture represents a
compromise between the two poles that constantly changes and appropriates cultural elements from other contexts (5). Similarly, Martin Lienhard states that, for European audiences, oral literatures have traditionally appeared incompatible with modernity; to correct this misconception he argues that scholars should consider innovations in oral traditions. For example, Lienhard explains that young people in Peru influenced by Western styles have modified oral texts to be at the service of their own social concerns, causing a change in the overall reception of the texts; he describes it as less “ritual” and more socially “conscious” (333-35). In other words, subaltern, oral cultures are not bucolic entities that have remained in the past. Instead, they continually adapt and change with the passage of time.

Speakers constantly negotiate their oral traditions with respect to modernity. Oral literary production evolves with what happens in the world, modifying traditions; as Lienhard demonstrates speakers innovate oral texts by extending them to outside audiences (335-36). Drawing from Ángel Rama and José María Arguedas, Raúl Bueno also indicates how oral speakers may engage modernity without alienating themselves from the values of their respective communities. Although indigenous communities may assimilate some aspects of foreign cultures, despite these changes they remain different from the cultures that are the sources of their appropriations (Bueno 258). Thus, while these speakers preserve ties with their respective oral traditions, they are not isolated from modernity or globalization.

---

11 Bueno references José María Arguedas’s seminal text, *Formación de una cultura nacional indoamericana* (1975).
Since the inception of writing, technology has influenced the transmission of oral texts. Walter Ong, for example, elaborates on the opposition between written and oral discourses, distinguishing between primary and secondary orality. Ong describes primary orality as “the orality of a culture totally untouched by any knowledge of writing or print” and secondary orality as “sustained by telephone, radio, television, and other electronic devices that depend for their existence and functioning on writing and print” (Orality and Literacy 11). While there are few examples of primary oral cultures in the context of the twenty-first century, a multitude of secondary oral cultures exists that modern technology may influence. In addition to the technological media that Ong describes, oral poetry scholar Paul Zumthor adds others to the equation, which he describes as mediats, a word which refers to the “media using audiovisual modalities” (18) to the exclusion of any form of the press. YouTube, for example, is a medium with audiovisual modalities. Generally speaking, print and digital technologies are tools to record oral texts, which exemplify secondary orality and mediats. That speakers use different media to communicate oral texts further complicates the conventional opposition between orality and writing. Moreover, it evidences how oral speakers innovate with the media that they use to engage their audiences.

Ángel Rama’s theoretical explanation of the ciudad letrada, or the lettered city, also informs my approach to marginality and orality. As Rama has shown, in colonial Latin America the creole intelligentsia sustained laws and delegated their power primarily through written discourses of the lettered city. They produced laws and literature at the service of the nation: “[l]a escritura construyó las raíces, diseñó la identificación nacional, enmarcó a la sociedad en un proyecto” (Rama 97). Rama
distinguishes the lettered city and urban areas associated with intellectuals from the oral traditions of the countryside during the nineteenth century in Latin America. He explains that the creole intelligentsia maintained their power in the Americas by imposing order and culture on the countryside in the name of progressive Westernization. More recently, John Chasteen has summarized Rama’s conceptualization of the city as a “nexus of lettered culture, state power, and urban location” (vii). The historian elaborates by specifically drawing attention to the relationship between writing and power embodied in an official language: “[w]ritten documents articulated the Spanish and Portuguese empires, ideologically and organically, and their ability to write the official language of empire gave the letrados privileged access to power” (vii). In this way, the creole intelligentsia marginalized oral cultures by establishing writing as the nexus of hegemonic power, ostracizing those who did not have access to the discourses of power written in Spanish or Portuguese.

The lettered city and the oral countryside, however, were never really isolated from one another. There has always been movement between the two—their borders are porous. Rama recognizes that oral traditions have always had a presence in dominant discourses, and he is also cognizant of the fact that creoles have historically had the agency to represent these traditions, rather than the oral subjects themselves. Although creoles incorporated indigenous oral traditions in dominant, national discourses, they did not allow these oral subjects to represent themselves—only the elite had the permission to represent and speak for them. Antonio Cornejo Polar is another intellectual who has complicated the opposition between the countryside and the city by proposing a series of dichotomies, which he describes as “conflictive heterogeneities” (Escribir en el aire 13).
Examples of binaries that he addresses include Western and not Western, colonizer and colonized, city and countryside, as well as writing and orality (Bueno 253). For Polar, however, it is not simply an issue of “us” versus “them.” Rather, he underscores the diversity inherent in Latin American identities and recognizes that their various aspects may appear complementary or conflictive, depending on the particular situation. Instead of conceptualizing Latin America homogenously in terms of the lettered city and the countryside as Rama largely does, the Peruvian theorist sees more heterogeneity in the issue. However, like his predecessor, Polar also conceptualizes the movement of oral discourses as going primarily from the countryside to the cities. He argues that many authors in Latin America have incorporated representations of orality in their writing, and observes a nostalgia in written discourses’ return to orality and the spoken form in Latin American literature of the twentieth century. Thus, although he recognizes an ambiguous space between the lettered city and the countryside, he does not completely break with Rama’s analysis, for he also sees the movement largely as a process of incorporating oral discourses into writing.

Yet, throughout history oral subjects also have an active role in this movement—they are also agents, though their activities may have gone unnoticed. For this reason, Ileana Rodríguez explains that when the field of Subaltern Studies was developing, Spivak and others advocated for the recognition of marginalized subjects as “active social, political, and heuristic agents” (3). While Rama and Cornejo Polar primarily attribute the agency to incorporate oral discourses (or not) to the lettered city, research in general has not often taken into account the broad range of possible discourses (signs and expressional and/or communicational acts that extend beyond linguistics) and their
reciprocal movements. In his study of precolonial writing Walter Mignolo has argued that there are many different hierarchized writing systems in Latin America that researchers must take into account: the Latin alphabet introduced by the Spaniards, the picto-ideographic writing systems of Mesoamerican cultures, and the *quipus* in the Andes (“Colonial and Postcolonial Discourse” 125). These various forms of writing demonstrate how indigenous subjects are performative, capable of representing themselves, and speak to their potential to further diversify, or heterogenize, the multiple discourses that migrate from the periphery to the centers of Latin America (Bueno 255). John Beverley also emphasizes the need to recognize that migrant subjects have agency in this dynamic, calling for researchers to be aware of the possibility of what he calls “reverse transculturation” (“Siete aproximaciones” 271). That is, oral discourses do not just move from the countryside to the city, but their speakers may also innovate their oral traditions by incorporating discourses from the city. In addition to the urban centers that appropriate orality, speakers who dominate oral discourses may use writing for their own needs and agendas (Moraña 246). In this sense, there has always been movement both to and from the lettered city simultaneously. In the examples of the works that I study, we see how subjects have used various forms of writing, orality, and performance (via books, websites, Facebook, and online videos) to project their voices and make their own causes visible in a public realm. These subjects do not limit themselves to either oral or written

---

12 Mignolo has elaborated on the multiple forms of writing and recorded knowledge in indigenous Latin America in *Writing Without Words*, a series of essays addressing indigenous writing and recorded knowledge.
expression—their cultural expressions are heterogeneous. Their use of digital technologies has further complicated the unstable dichotomy between writing and orality.

This reciprocal movement has gone on long before the historical event of Columbus spotting land in the Caribbean. For example, the notion of center and periphery associated with the cities and the countryside was also present in the organization of Mayan societies. Prior to the arrival of Europeans, the indigenous erected cities across the Americas. For example, in Mesoamerica the Maya established Tikal, Uxmal, and Palenque (Burns 4). These indigenous cultures had their own systems of writing, often hieroglyphs or other pictographic representations depicted on stelae or handmade amatl paper (Mignolo, “Colonial and Postcolonial Discourse” 125). Thus, within the Mayan city organization, there were people who had access to writing (and power) and others who did not. Moreover, their writing included some voices while excluding others. Even in the organization of Mayan cities, the indigenous elite marginalized other Maya by denying them access to representation, or a voice in, these discourses. Like the European colonizers, the Maya are not a homogenous group; they are individual subjects, each participating in relations of power in distinct ways. While conventional research has addressed the movement between the urban centers and the countryside in the historical context following the Encounter between the Europeans and

---

13 I use the word “event” according to Hayden White’s commentary in Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism. For the historian, an event refers to the realization of an objective occurrence whereas a fact includes processes of interpretation since “the facts do not speak for themselves, but that the historian speaks for them, speaks on their behalf” (125).
the Americas, this dynamic also existed in Pre-Colombian organization of indigenous societies before the arrival of the Spanish and the Portuguese on American soil.

Grounding my study in Rigoberta Menchú Tum’s seminal text, the first chapter draws from the abundance of definitions of the testimonio. In Guatemala, authors such as Miguel Ángel Asturias have given voice to Mayan culture and oral traditions through his short stories in Leyendas de Guatemala (1930) and his longer narrative Hombres de maíz (1949). Nevertheless, in recent decades Maya indigenous speakers have used the genre of the testimonio as a way to project their own voices, albeit mediated, and represent themselves. For instance, apart from Rigoberta Menchú Tum, Victor Montejo also published two testimonial accounts: Testimony: Death of a Guatemalan Village (1987) and Brevísima relación testimonial de la continua destrucción del Mayab’ (Guatemala) (1992). There has been less criticism of Montejo’s texts than Menchú Tum’s; including often-neglected testimonies, this study helps to bridge a gap in scholarship. Comparing his testimonies to that of Rigoberta Menchú Tum demonstrates how they complement and/or conflict with how Menchú Tum has represented indigenous identity and how her work has been interpreted, particularly in the context of the Guatemalan civil war.

I also examine other formats of the genre in this first chapter to explore the relationship between testimonial form and constructions of indigenous identity, specifically focusing on examples of pictographic and poetic discourses. For instance, I study visual representations of the Guatemalan civil war in the murals of San Juan Comalapa, a Kaqchikel Maya town in the Highlands. In Brevísima relación testimonial de la continua destrucción del Mayab’ (Guatemala), there are images throughout the text that appear to be drawn by hand. I analyze these pictographic testimonies in order to
include representations outside of writing. Pictographic discourses have traditionally played a significant role in Maya cultural production—they have been present in Mesoamerican forms of writing, as is evident in the indigenous codices and books produced on amatl paper. Moreover, I have also incorporated an example in verse: Kaqchikel poet Calixta Gabriel Xiquín’s testimony. She has divided her poetry collection *Tejiendo los sucesos en el tiempo / Weaving Events in Time* (2002) in seven sections; the sixth section is entitled “Testimonio / Testimony” and thus exemplifies another artistic manifestation of the genre. In my examination of testimonial representations of Mayan indigeneity, this poetry demonstrates an intrinsic connection to orality in Mayan communities and how the lyricism present in the *Popol Wuj* informs oral traditions in present day Mayan cultures. Studying Xiquín’s testimony and the pictographic representations in the murals of San Juan Comalapa and *Brevísima relación testimonial de la continua destrucción del Mayab’ (Guatemala)* shows how the use of culturally significant media also affects depictions of identity and indigeneity.

The following chapter, “‘(N/K)inya(‘a) chike(‘e) jub(‘a/ iq’), xa man ronojel ta(j)’: Negotiating Mayaness via Performances of Kaqchikel and K’iche’ Songs and Poetry,” examines representations of Maya indigenous identities in contemporary Guatemala after the civil war. Specifically, I focus on poetry that Juan Yool Gómez and Humberto Ak’abal released through publishing houses affiliated with the Pan-Maya Movement as well as performances by Ak’abal and Kaqchikel children on digital servers (YouTube and Vimeo). All of these speakers take part in the formation of “Maya” ethnoscapes through their presence on the Internet and by releasing their poetry in
translation—directing their verses and their performances of what is Maya to international audiences beyond Guatemala.

Although these examples demonstrate how Maya speakers have agency in their representations, they also show how people apart from the Maya mediate these texts. For example, in the poetry collections other agents shape these texts through cultural and linguistic translation and the editorial organization of the written page. Online audiences influence the video files available via YouTube and Vimeo by recording performances, posting them online, and framing these performances by providing the accompanying titles, descriptions, and comments. That said, the poets and singers have various ways of maintaining control of their texts. Since these speakers do not translate everything for their foreign audiences, for example, to some extent they limit their audience’s agency, obliging them to “listen” to the performers’ indigenous voices. Although withholding information from their audiences is a form of maintaining agency, in this chapter I problematize how working through orality affects who is able to identify him/herself as “Maya,” and thus who is capable of projecting a “Maya” voice as a performer. In other words, I examine the consequences of associating what is Maya with orality for indigenous speakers who identify with conflicting forms of Maya-ness.

Chapter 3 continues to analyze Maya indigenous identities, but in the context of the Highlands of Chiapas, Mexico. In this context I study different forms of cultural production that Taller Leñateros has published in collaboration with North Carolina native Ámbar Past. Taller Leñateros is a collective publishing house comprised of mestizos and indigenous people alike that Past founded in 1975. The cooperative publishes handmade books in Tzotzil, which they translate to other languages including
Spanish and English. While Mexican authors such as Rosario Castellanos have published books which include representations of Chiapas’s indigenous subjects, *Balún Canán* (1957) and *Oficio de tinieblas* (1962), Taller Leñateros is an organization that offers these conventionally marginalized, subaltern speakers an opportunity to represent and speak for themselves. They have used handmade books as well as the Internet to promote their products and activities. I discuss the group’s print and digital forms of communication to produce a comprehensive understanding of Taller Leñateros’s artistic and cultural production and to analyze how working through these distinct media affects audience access and their texts’ overall visibility.

I begin by investigating the handmade books, focusing on Taller Leñateros’s poetry collection, *Conjuros y ebriedades: Cantos de mujeres mayas* (1997), to study the mediation inherent in the distinct forms of collaboration that occurred in the production of this text. As the editor, compiler, and author in the official credits, Ámbar Past plays a fundamental role in the publication of Taller Leñateros’s handmade books, including *Conjuros y ebriedades*. Specifically, Past is a key agent in the creation of this text as an author as well as a cultural and linguistic translator. Past, however, is not the only non-indigenous author who has worked with the cooperative—there are other foreign subjects that participate in the creation of *Conjuros y ebriedades* as well as Taller Leñateros’s other handmade books. That the Tzotzil poets working with Taller Leñateros have collaborated with Past and others demonstrates that they are innovating their traditions and dialoging with non-indigenous cultures in the creation of their poetry. The Oxford English Dictionary offers a number of definitions for the term “tradition,” all of which speak to the social aspect of culture. Tradition is “that which is
generally, the Facebook account and the poems in *Conjuros y ebriedades* further
evidence this trend of negotiating indigenous traditions; on the Internet and in this
collection of incantations Tzotzil Maya address issues such as environmental awareness,
Neoliberalism and the presence of foreign products in Chiapas, immigration to the United
States, and the Zapatista initiatives against gender inequalities regarding the physical and
sexual abuse of indigenous women.

I also analyze Taller Leñateros’s account profile on the social media site,
Facebook, because it is an interactive archive that offers unique opportunities for
mediation. Facebook is an organic archive—it constantly changes and evolves. What is
part of the archive in one moment may no longer be available weeks, days, or even
minutes later. Links can be broken; it is possible that once users remove information from
the public domain, others may no longer be able to access it. Facebook’s digital archive

thus handed down; a statement, belief, or practice transmitted (esp. orally) from
generation to generation.” This cultural manifestation of society survives over time due to
“the action of transmitting or ‘handing down,’ or fact of being handed down, from one to
another, or from generation to generation; transmission of statements, beliefs, rules,
customs, or the like, esp. by word of mouth or by practice without writing” (“Tradition”).
These explanations of “tradition” underscore the orality inherent in maintaining traditions
within a community.

15 Although I concentrate on this social media account, I treat the other websites
where Taller Leñateros has a presence as secondary sources to account for all of their
manifestations on the Internet. For example, Taller Leñateros also maintains a website
promoting their cultural activities and products: http://www.tallerlenateros.com/.
further complicates the notion of access because Taller Leñateros must confirm you as a “friend” in order to give you access to their profile. As a “friend,” a Facebook user is able to view Taller Leñateros’s profile information, photos, and videos. One is also able to “like” and publish comments on the various components of their account, such as photos, videos, links, and status updates. Thus, other Facebook users influence the content available in this digital archive, even though the members of Taller Leñateros post the majority of the information to update their page. Similar to the case in Chapter 2 in which audience members mediate the YouTube and Vimeo performances, Facebook users also shape Taller Leñateros’s digital archive on the social media network.

The fourth and final chapter shifts contexts to analyze the role of an anthropologist in the organization and presentation of cultural products by people affiliated with the Movimento sem Terra (MST) in Brazil. Specifically, I focus on a digital archive that Else Ribeiro Pires Vieira created of poetry, songs, essays, photography, and other information related to the Landless Movement in Brazil. This archive is the result of Vieira’s two years of fieldwork in Brazil (2001-2002). According to Else R. P. Vieira and Bernard McGuirk, there has been little historical attention given to the expressions of the landless themselves; these critics posit the question, “What do their own voices and sounds, poems and songs, tell us of the plight of those who go through the travails of landlessness and yet have had little or no access to any hearers at all?” (xix).16 In other words, not only do they not have land, but they have also been

16 Vieira and McGuirk use the term “hearers,” but drawing from Doris Sommer I treat these subjects as “listeners,” given the agency linguistically implicit in the verb “to listen” which is not present in the verb “to hear.”
deprived of a voice in discourses surrounding their situation. Prominent literary figures and academics, such as Graciliano Ramos in his novel *Vidas Sêcas* (1938), have spoken *for* them, rather than permitting the Landless to speak for themselves. Vieira indicates that this digital archive is an attempt to empower the voices of those who have historically been silenced (“(Re)searching the (Sem) Terra” xxvi). However, Else Vieira determines which texts are available via this archive, and consequently which are not silenced. Although these Landless subjects speak for themselves, they do so through Vieira.

There are a number of components in *As Imagens e as Vozes da Despossessão*, but because of the long tradition of using music to gain voice in Brazil and the interplay between regional and international influences, I examine two collections of music: *Arte em movimento* (1990s) and *Um Canto Pela Paz* (n.d.). In the lyrics and the musical styles of the songs, there is a dialectic between local and international influences. As part of a political action movement, the Landless have presented their local grievances specific to the Brazilian countryside via global flows of production. *Movimento em Arte* and *Um Canto Pela Paz* include local cultural forms, such as rural musical styles and images from the Northeastern and Amazonian regions, but these are tempered by forms of internationalization. The lyrics generally reference Latin American history as well as famous figures from the region, including Che Guevara, José Martí, and Mario Benedetti, which contribute to the construction of a Pan-Latin American identity. The artists who created *Um Canto Pela Paz*, however, go beyond Latin America—they incorporate political conflicts and nuclear disasters from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, such as the attacks on the World Trade Centers in New York City. These references connect
these songwriters with other victims across the globe. Given that the juxtaposition of local and international influences may seem conflicting, this chapter explores how these tendencies may both complement and/or contradict one another, specifically focusing on how these artists internationalize their music and Landlessness to create a “common” marginalized identity with Latin American and broader international audiences.

The common thread that connects these texts from Guatemala, Mexico, and Brazil is the relationship between manifestations of mediation and representations of marginalized subjects in various forms. I include technology because of its influential relationship on regional and national discourses (Martín Barbero 44). For example, often times when a coup takes place, one of the first parts of the existing infrastructure that the new regime takes over is the communications systems. They do so in order to (re)produce their legitimacy and authority to not only the citizens of the country, but the international community as well. Although Guatemala differs from Mexico and Brazil in the degree of governmental instability, all three countries have experienced social movements with goals of increasing the rights and representation of marginalized communities. In different contexts, the Pan-Maya Movement of Guatemala, Taller Leñateros in Mexico, and the MST of Brazil have all advocated for rights and representation for marginalized—often indigenous—people within regional and national discourses.\(^{17}\) In

\(^{17}\)Moreover, liberation theology has played a role in the ideologies of these social movements. For an overview of the influence of liberation theology in the Landless Movement in Brazil see Ondetti (13, 53-54), for a history of liberation theology in Guatemala see Rohloff (375-77), and for a detailed analysis of Bishop Samuel Ruiz’s role in the Zapatista Movement see Nash (164-72).
each case, governments are strategically interested in keeping an image of political
stability for the international community in order to attract foreign investment and other
resources. They hide, or at least downplay, any conflicts within the country so as not to
interfere with international economic relations. Speakers from each country, however,
have not limited themselves to local contexts; instead, they have used media and print
technologies to engage domestic and foreign audiences, many of whom in turn influence
their texts. My analysis focuses on this interplay between subaltern speakers and their
mediators to examine how such relationships have impacted representations of different
marginalized identities in regional and national discourses in the globalized twenty-first
century.

It may be strategic for marginalized speakers to use digital media technologies
and the Internet due to their efficiency in terms of time and cost. In her study of Latin
American literary engagements with web-based technologies, cultural and literary critic
Debra Castillo argues that “the Internet’s instant and international distribution
possibilities […] offer obvious attractions. Writers can get their works out to an ever-
larger international community of casual readers, fellow writers, and literary scholars,
and do it extremely rapidly and efficiently” (233). There is more immediacy with media
such as YouTube and Facebook; moreover, the Internet is a relatively inexpensive means

18 Communications scholar Pamela Wilson and anthropologist Michelle Stewart
propose a similar idea in their discussion of indigenous media; they explain that such
technologies offer “increased effectiveness and reach” (2).
Given the benefits of communication via technology, according to social sciences scholar Valerie Alia,

[s]ome of the world’s least powerful people are leading the way toward creative and ethical global media citizenship. Locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally, Indigenous peoples are using radio, television, print, and a range of new media to amplify their voices, extend the range of reception, and expand their collective power. Emerging from the shadows of a shared colonial inheritance, the international movement of Indigenous peoples has fostered important social, political, and technological innovations. (7)

Because almost anyone with computer access can produce a YouTube video, maintain a blog, open a Facebook page, or engage in other digital forums, the Internet has innovated

19 In Latin America, access to the Internet is not necessarily limited to people of a relatively high socio-economic status who own a personal computer with an Internet connection. Political scientist Pippa Norris has theorized such discrepancies as the “digital divide.” For Norris, this concept refers to a multidimensional phenomenon; for her, “the global divide refers to the divergence of Internet access between industrialized and developing countries” (4). Although much of Latin America has confronted a global divide, there are more and more Internet cafés where one can gain relatively inexpensive access to a computer.

20 Alias explains that she capitalizes the term “Indigenous” because “the lower-case ‘indigenous’ is sometimes used by governments and others, to mean merely ‘local’ or ‘national’” (xx).
possibilities for self-representation, opening more spaces for conventionally excluded speakers to express themselves.

I began this introduction with Nancy Thumim’s idea about mediation as an inevitable part of representation: “unmediated representation is never possible and, moreover, in the age of digital culture, the processes of mediation themselves require analytical attention, perhaps more than before” (56). The Internet has provided new forms of self-representation, however, because many of these forums are dynamic and interactive, such self-representations of marginalized identities are often unable to escape the influence of outside audiences. Other speakers may shape these digital texts by commenting on them, “liking” them on Facebook, creating descriptions and/or titles to accompany such files, or via other means. I focus on these manifestations of mediation in order to show that even though the Internet provides new opportunities for Maya to publish photos and written and recorded versions of their performances, the Internet is unable to completely escape mediation since in many cases audiences can act as mediating agents after the files are available online. Such phenomena are also possible via print technologies because marginalized speakers often release their texts in translation or through prominent publishing houses. This study shows that the politics of collaboration not only affect texts authored collectively, such as the handmade books by Taller Leñateros or the MST songs on Else Vieira’s digital archive, but also the texts available via publishing houses or online forums like YouTube or Facebook.

More generally, while in Guatemala, Mexico, and Brazil these subaltern speakers historically have received little academic attention, their perspectives must be considered to respond to Eurocentric representations. This study seeks to revindicate such
perspectives that have not only been excluded from regional and national discourses, but from academic ones as well. Since literary and cultural criticism has ignored the testimonial accounts, poems, songs, and artwork of many of the speakers I discuss, this study draws attention to their mediated cultural and socio-political contributions.
Chapter 1: Marginalized and Marginalizing Maya: Conflicting Versions of Maya-
ness and Subalternity in Guatemalan Testimonios of the Civil War

“…we should expect an age such as our own—also one of transition or the
potential for transition from one mode of production to another—to
experience the emergence of new forms of cultural and literary expression
that embody, in more or less thematically explicit and formally articulated
ways, the social forces contending for power in the world today.”

—John Beverley

It is perplexing to consider why Menchú Tum’s testimonio became the focus of
so much controversy. There were already other examples of the genre—Me llamo was
not the first testimonio in Latin America. Some others include Biografía de un cimarrón
(1966) by Miguel Barnet, which was transcribed by Esteban Montejo and was awarded
the Premio Nacional de Literatura de Cuba in 1994, and “Si me permiten hablar…”:
Testimonio de Domitila, una mujer de las minas de Bolivia (1977) by Domitila Barrios de
Chungara, both of which appeared before Me llamo (1982).

Neither was Menchú Tum
the first indigenous woman to produce a testimonio; Barrios de Chungara was also female
and indigenous. Why then was Menchú Tum’s testimonio so polemical? Was it the
significance of the Central American Wars, and the consequent U.S. relation to these? Or
did the polemic stem from Me llamo’s reception, which resulted in a Nobel Prize for
Rigoberta Menchú Tum? The presence of a subaltern Maya dressed in traje (typical
woven Mayan clothing) speaking out against the human rights violations of the
Guatemalan government and army against the Maya attracted much-needed international

---

21 This quotation appears in Testimonio: On the Politics of Truth (30).

22 Another example is Don’t Be Afraid, Gringo: A Honduran Woman Speaks from
the Heart (1987) which Elvia Alvarado published after Me llamo.
attention to the war in Guatemala. Because of the political implications of her message, the world at large cared about what she had to say.

Since they started to discuss the term, cultural and literary critics related the testimonio to literary genres or movements with which they were already familiar. Many of them trace the roots of the testimonio back to the colonial crónicas of the Encounter between the Spanish and the indigenous of the Americas (Beverley, Testimonio 31; Kokotovic 29; Zimmerman, “Testimonio in Guatemala” 102).\(^\text{23}\) The testimonio also stems out of the “national” essays and war diaries of the nineteenth century and sociological or anthropological tape-recorded narratives of the 1950s. Like these previously listed genres, the testimonio draws on “direct-participant account, usually presented without any literary or academic aspirations whatever” (Beverley, Testimonio 31-32). The testimonio is also connected to the picaresque novel since both literary formats present a hero who recounts events of his or her life; one fundamental difference between the two, however, is that in the picaresque novel, there is a singular “I” narrator that tells the story in first-person, whereas in the testimonio the “I” represents a larger, collective entity (Beverley, Testimonio 33).\(^\text{24}\) Relating this form to other literary influences of the time,

\(^{23}\) Although critics did not mention colonial indigenous texts in their treatment of the Encounter between the Spanish and indigenous of the Americas, we could add seminal texts such as Bernardino de Sahagún’s Códice de Florentino. This example is particularly significant given the focus of this project on manifestations of mediation, given that Sahagún worked with native informants to produce this text.

\(^{24}\) Other scholars have noted the dialectic of the personal and the collective in testimonios (Kokotovic 29; Sklodowska 143; Yúdice, “Testimonio” 42, 54).
critic George Yúdice draws a parallel between the *testimonio* and Postmodernism when he asserts that in testimonial writing “the master discourses attaching to prevailing institutional arrangements are being dismantled” (“Testimonio” 49). These scholars used their previous knowledge of literary genres and movements to theorize their definitions of *testimonios*. Rather than recognizing the possibility of a new form of cultural and literary production, academics conceptualized the *testimonio* as following in the footsteps of genres that already existed.

Initial definitions of the *testimonio* addressed how the text connects with the real world. They theorized how the accounts represented what was actually occurring beyond the confines of the book. The *testimonio* is an account of events that actually occurred; thus, the reader experiences an encounter with “the Real,” which critic John Beverley describes as “the knock on the door that interrupts our dream (either as outside the dream or as another reality in it), for example, or, more prosaically perhaps, the piece of gum or dog shit that sticks to the sole of our shoe resisting all attempts to dislodge it” (“The Real Thing” 274). The *testimonio* is inextricably linked to the world outside literature via politics. It has been read as a more political than literary form—the *testimonio* has come to be inseparable from its preeminent political agenda and the solidarity movements of

25 In this way, Beverley finds common ground with his colleague, Elzbieta Sklowdowska (*Testimony* 121). Sklowdowska connects the *testimonio* to an anthropological genre, the ethnography: “si es que por etnografía entendemos una textualización de la experiencia de culturas no-europeas, muchos de los *testimonios* hispanoamericanos suscitados y configurados bajo la Mirada del editor nos remitirán justamente al contrato etnográfico” (109).
the Left during the early 1980s expressing their support of those speaking out against the genocidal practices in the Central American civil wars (Moreiras 196). The connections between these texts and the Real are explicit because there is often political urgency. Their authors want other people to be aware of what happened. Because authors embrace, rather than avoid, these real-life connections, there is an “unguarded possibility” for the encounter with the Real (Moreiras 195).

As we have seen in the Introduction, although there has been much debate on what constitutes a testimonio, most scholars agree on three characteristics: first-person narration, mediation, and real-world connections. The first person narrator is a direct participant, or eyewitness, which generally increases the veracity effect because of his or her presence at the event. These narrators are usually subaltern, excluded subjects who have not previously produced their own written account of what happened—in the past they have not had a voice in their own representation. Although the narration is in the first person, the “I” refers to a larger, collective entity: a representative voice. Furthermore, in the most classic cases of testimonio, other people have made audio recordings and transcribed, or mediated, these accounts. Lastly, the content of testimonios establishes connections with the outside, political world: the Real. In this chapter these central characteristics will outline my definition of testimonio as I analyze four other Guatemalan examples that draw on elements of the genre that have not received as much critical attention as Menchú Tum’s: the collection Tejiendo los sucesos en el tiempo (Weaving Events in Time) (2002) by Kaqchikel poet Calixta Gabriel Xiquín, the images and poems in the murals created in 2002 in San Juan Comalapa (henceforth Comalapa), Testimony (1987) by Victor Montejo, and Brevisima relación testimonial de la continua
destroyación del Mayab' (Guatemala) (1992) (henceforth Brevisima relación testimonial) edited by Montejo and Akab'. Comparing the testimonial traits of these representations of the Guatemalan civil war to Menchú Tum’s well-known account shows how other examples converge and/or diverge from these characteristics of the testimonio. Moreover, this comparative analysis complicates how Maya authors and artists represent Maya-ness, or what is “Maya,” in the context of the Guatemalan civil war.

That said, through a process of strategic essentialism, Maya may overcome such tensions to form a unified identity. Spivak defines the concept this way: “strategically you can look at essentialisms, not as descriptions of the ways things are, but as something that one must adopt to produce a critique of anything” (“The Problem of Cultural Self-representation” 51). Some Maya have essentialized what they culturally share, minimizing their differences to produce a common “Maya” identity for outside audiences. Out of strategic necessity they overcome differences that exist within the group in order to construct a collective identity, rather than basing it exclusively on any one of the particular language groups in Guatemala, such as K’iche’ or Kaqchikel. It is a “movimiento general en el que participan todos los pueblos […], que trasciende sus particularidades culturales porque enfatiza su dimensión civilizatoria común” (Bonfil Batalla 78). Instead of underscoring characteristics that divide the group, they highlight those which all of its subjects share, simplifying their identities to produce an “essence”

26 Although Marc Zimmerman analyzes Testimony by Montejo in an essay featured in Gugelberger’s edited volume (“Testimonio in Guatemala” 123-25), this is one of very few examples of literary criticism focusing on this text.
with which everyone identifies. Because most Mayan communities were the targets of violence during the Guatemalan civil war, some Maya spokespeople have unified their identities to publicly denounce the genocide and crimes against humanity they suffered. In some of the testimonios in this chapter we will see how certain artists and authors essentialize their identities to forward their political agenda of speaking out against Maya

---

27 Although he does not use the exact terminology that Spivak has proposed, anthropologist Gary Gossen also conceptualizes the negotiation of a Maya subjectivity in the EZLN (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional). According to Gossen, “[w]hat is Maya about the Zapatista movement must therefore be sought not in particular variants of Maya or other Indian cultural identity but rather in general principles of values and conduct that all might share, be they Tzotzils, Tzeltals, Tojolabals, Chols, or Zoques” (“Maya Zapatistas” 536). The search for a common Maya identity is not only manifest in contemporary Guatemala (during the armed conflict and later in the context of the Pan-Maya Movement), but also in other contexts such as the Zapatista Movement in Mexico, as we will see in Chapter 3.

28 Essentialism may be a strategic tactic for political mobilization, as Spivak has noted. However, it may also be the resulting stereotypes in “outsider” understandings of an ethnic group or culture. That is, because people who do not pertain to Mayan communities may not be familiar with the particularities of each language group or municipal affiliation, they may conceptualize them more generally as “Maya.” Moreover, it must be noted that this phenomenon is not limited to Mayan identities, but rather can be extended to other identity groups.
oppression during the armed conflict and to secure a continual presence in national politics, economics, and society.

The essentialism of Maya-ness, however, is migratory—in some accounts, the speaker presents a common Maya identity, whereas in others he or she destabilizes this essentialized identity. In effect, hybrid identity categories like Maya-ness are nomadic. As Néstor García Canclini has claimed in his conceptualization of hybridization, groups and peoples that are the product of cross-cultural relations develop strategies to “entrar y salir de la modernidad,” as the title of his seminal work conveys. The dynamism of hybridization as a process rejects identity as a stable “essence” of an ethnicity (García Canclini, “Introduction” xxviii). Rather, cross-cultural subjects constantly negotiate their relationship with “authentic” traditional identities and those that react to ever-changing stimuli from globalization and other cultures in general. Focusing on hybridization as a process shows that cross-cultural groups and peoples are constantly changing. Processes of hybridization are also subject to similar movements; Cornejo Polar observes that these cross-cultural identities are able to “entrar y salir de la hibridez, aunque estos tránsitos no siempre obedezcan a las necesidades, o a los intereses o a la libertad de quienes los realizan” (“Mestizaje e hibridez” 868). In other words, cross-cultural subjects may choose to make transitory moves to and from their hybrid identities or circumstances, or they may be granted access to or excluded from these processes.

In representations of the Guatemalan civil war Maya-ness moves between essentialisms and deconstructions of a “common” identity. There are conflicting versions of Maya-ness in these accounts that call attention to linguistic and cultural diversity among the Maya, as well as social and political differentials of power. Some Maya
authors and artists have essentialized what it is to be Maya, whereas others, albeit at
times unknowingly, expose inequalities among the Maya, destabilizing this common
identity. Rigoberta Menchú Tum, Calixta Gabriel Xiquín, and the poets who wrote the
poems in the murals of Comalapa essentialize Maya-ness through certain vocabulary and
the grammatical construction of the first person plural. However, Victor Montejo and the
artists who created the images in the murals of Comalapa do not essentialize Maya-
ness—rather, they depict inter-Maya conflicts. How do inter-Maya conflicts affect the
genre of the testimonio? In the case of Menchú Tum, her testimonio had political urgency
in that it sought international recognition and assistance for the Maya victims of the
Guatemalan civil war. By exposing the differing levels of agency and general tensions
among the Maya, the testimonios in this chapter bring to the forefront the complex
politics among the Maya and their victimization during the armed conflict. The violence
affected—and continues to affect—each person in a unique way, causing distinct levels
of marginalization; in some cases, the Maya even marginalized and mediated other Maya.
The mediation in the testimonios counters a “common” identity because it shows that not
all Maya have the same level of agency in their representation. There are varying
manifestations of subalternity among the Maya; not everyone in this “common” identity
group has the same agency to speak for and represent themselves.

**Pach’un tzij pa ruwi’ ri violencia (Kaqchikel Poetry on the Violence): Tejiendo los
sucesos en el tiempo (Weaving Events in Time)**

My first example comes from the work of Kaqchikel poet Calixta Gabriel Xiquín
who writes poetry about the violence of the civil war. Specifically, she describes personal
experiences with death in her family and how she perceives the Maya in general. In her
collection, *Tejiendo los sucesos en el tiempo (Weaving Events in Time)* (2002), there are seven sections, but my focus will be on the sixth, entitled “Testimonio / Testimony,” which includes five poems: “Tres hermanos / Three Brothers,” “Cruz / Cruz,” “Mis hermanos mártires / My Martyred Brothers,” “Arrancarán nuestras vidas / They Will Take Away our Lives,” and “Ansiedad / Anxiety.”

The first three poems focus on the death of her three brothers during the war. “Arrancarán nuestras vidas” describes the persistence of the Maya in the face of oppression, and the final poem affirms the continued existence of those who died during the armed conflict. Her poetry addresses the effects of the civil war on an individual and collective level. The poetic voice not only discusses consequences of the violence for her but also for the Maya in general.

By using vocabulary associated with collective entities as well as the first person plural, “nosotros,” Gabriel Calixta Xiquín’s poem “Cruz” essentializes what it means to be Maya. The poetic voice extends the adversity faced by her brother, Cruz, to all Maya in general. When describing the poor conditions of the food, the speaker connects it to other Maya with the term “hermanos” and the use of the possessive adjective, “nuestros.”

---

29 The other sections of *Tejiendo los sucesos en el tiempo / Weaving Events in Time* address social and political problems that resulted from the Guatemalan civil war. Several poems focus on the refugees that fled the country and their feelings of uprooting, such as “Mi decisión / My Decision” (26-27), “El andar del pobre / The Walk of the Poor” (52-53), and “El llanto de la mujer / Women’s Weeping” (80-81). Other poems thematically center on the general oppression of indigenous people since the Spanish Conquest, including but not limited to “Indio / Indian” (2-3) and “Comunismo, capitalismo, socialismo / Communism, Capitalism, Socialism” (34-35).
She states that the “frijoles sin sal nadando en el agua, / y a veces frijoles descompuestos que les sobraban del día anterior” (41-42) is what plantation owners “dan a miles de nuestros hermanos” (my emphasis, 38). The poetic voice continues to use this adjectival form in the concluding verses of the poem when speaking directly to Cruz: “te diste cuenta de la miseria del hombre, / comprendiste la situación y entendiste nuestra pobreza” (my emphasis, 46-47). She uses her brother’s life as an example of the oppression that the Maya have faced. Rather than focusing on the individual circumstances of her brother’s context, she speaks of his hardships in terms of the larger Maya entity.

The poetic voice of “Arrancarán nuestras vidas / They Will Take Away Our Lives” uses the word “maya” in addition to the first-person plural possessive adjective “nuestro” to lexically unite the group and represent the collective as “Maya.” The speaker states: “no acabarán con las nuevas generaciones / y serán ellos el futuro del pueblo maya” (9-10). After identifying the collective entity as Maya in general, the poetic voice continues to use the future tense to underscore that they will persist in spite of adversity. To conclude, the speaker once again draws from the metaphor of all of the Maya as brothers, proclaiming that

La sangre derramada de nuestros hermanos,

nos alimenta, nos fortalece

nos compromete a seguir adelante,

confirma en nosotros el carácter de un pueblo en comunidad. (24-28)

The final verse, comprised only of the word “comunidad,” emphasizes the identification
of the Maya as a unified, cohesive group. The speaker constructs the collective identity of her brothers as Maya in general, rather than resorting to more specific markers such as language groups or municipal affiliation. The group is an essentialized entity, drawing from characteristics they all share as Maya, rather than individual differences that separate them. Through the term “maya” and the first person plural possessive adjective “nuestro,” the poetic voice essentializes the Maya as a collective group in the face of oppression. By using a collective “I,” Gabriel Xiquín aligns her poetry with literary characteristics of the testimonio. In testimonios like Rigoberta Menchú Tum’s text, there is generally a first person “I” narrating the account, although it often refers to a collective entity, or larger group.

Gabriel Xiquín’s vision of Maya-ness is gendered because of her references to weaving. Her perspective on the civil war speaks to a collective Maya identity that is intrinsically female. The title of her poetry collection connects the poetic voice to the historically female traditions of weaving. As anthropologist Wendy Ashmore explains, “[w]eaving is commonly associated with […] Maya women” (240). In Maya cultures, weaving is not exclusive to using thread to create clothing or other textiles. In the context of Kaqchikel Maya poetry, one of the terms for poetry is “pach’un tzij,” which literally means the weaving of words. Historical events can also serve as the raw material for weaving, as Menchú Tum has explained, “[o]ur sacred dream is to say our people are weavers—a people who have woven history with our hunger, sacrifice and blood (n.d., 30).

30 Textile expert Elizabeth Wayland Barber demonstrates that weaving is not just associated with Maya women, but women cross-culturally in her analysis of women’s textile work throughout the last 20,000 years (29).
qtd. in Vaughn and Cabrera 91). At the onset of the poetry collection, Gabriel Xiquín uses the image of weaving to position her locus of enunciation as a Maya woman before she addresses the violence of the civil war and some of the social issues that resulted from this historical moment.

As a female poetic voice relating the loss of her male relatives as a result of the violence of the civil war, Gabriel Xiquín presents a gendered vision of Maya-ness in *Tejiendo los sucesos en el tiempo / Weaving Events in Time*. The speaker’s personal experiences and identification with the injuries and causalities of the civil war are particular to women. According to women’s rights activists Lisa M. Vaughn and Gabriela de Cabrera, the Guatemalan civil war affected women—particularly Maya women—in unique ways:

As a result of the violence and the 36-year war, most of Mayan men were killed, leaving many widowed women behind with a very low social status. These women became both the breadwinners and leaders of their families (Tooley 1997). Another reported outcome of the war was *tristeza*, a psychological condition similar to depression and PTSD. Women were left to pick up the pieces emotionally. Men who remained alive turned to alcoholism and domestic violence. (93)

Although the poetic voice describes the death of her brothers, and is thus not a widow, she is an example of a woman who has survived. She too emotionally laments the loss of her brothers. Moreover, Xiquín’s use of her male sibling to personify the collective Maya struggle connects her text to Menchú Tum, who also describes the death of her brothers in detail.
That said, Gabriel Xiquín’s use of the collective “I” breaks with literary traditions governing poetic voice after Romanticism. Subsequent to this literary movement, the speaker in poetry is generally a singular “I.” A notable example of a Central American poet that follows these conventions of a singular poetic voice is Salvadorian poet Roque Dalton. In “Historia de una poética” (107-09), the possible verses that national poets could paint on the walls for the people all feature a first person singular poetic voice:

“‘fulge, lámpara pálida, tu rostro entre mis brazos’ / o / ‘yo te libé la luz de la mejilla’” (my emphasis, 50-52). Through the collective “I” in her poetry, Gabriel Xiquín distances her verses from other examples of post-Romanticism poetry. Although the Kaqchikel poet’s account is written in verse, in terms of genre, the form of the poetic voice is more aligned with the testimonio than with contemporary Latin American poetry. Gabriel Xiquín has renegotiated the “I” in her poetry, rendering her verses more like a testimonio.

While Gabriel Xiquín grammatically and lexically essentializes Maya-ness in her poetry to produce this collective “I,” as we will see, the following testimonios that I will analyze do not represent what is Maya in this way. My next example, the murals of Comalapa, exposes the differences between the Kaqchikel Maya from this town in Highland Guatemala.

**Painting qatinamït (our town): The Murals in San Juan Comalapa, Guatemala**

In July 2010 walking up the street by the cemetery walls of Comalapa, I listened carefully as Ixkaj, a young Kaqchikel girl dressed in traje who is originally from the town, proudly explained the symbolism informing the images in the murals. There are two large murals in Comalapa that line both sides of the street as you enter the town passing beside the community’s cemetery. On my way to the Feria de San Juan in
Comalapa in June 2010, I first saw the murals out of the window of a chicken bus making its way into town. As my own travels to this predominantly indigenous town evidence, the murals have become a tourist attraction (Carey and Little 8, Pérez Marroquín n. pag.). They have attracted both domestic and international visitors, including academics and dissertating graduate students like me.\textsuperscript{31} Despite this growing popularity, few scholars have researched the murals; among those who have analyzed their meaning and history are anthropologists David Carey and Walter Little.

\textsuperscript{31} As such, I took all of the photos in this chapter. They are my personal intellectual property, not to be reproduced or used in any way without explicit permission from the author.
In Comalapa, people of all ages from the community worked together to paint the images and write the poems in the murals. The murals were “[c]reated in 2002 by community members, the mural along the cemetery walls begins with portrayals of pre-Hispanic life replete with pyramids, corn, and gods, then shifts into the colonial era before focusing on the recent past” (Carey Jr. 709). A journalist who wrote about the murals in *El Periódico*, identified as BIG, elaborates on the communal efforts that contributed to the realization of the murals: “Los murales llevan la idea de creación colectiva, donde participaron niños, jóvenes y adultos de distintos sectores sociales para
una conciencia histórica, cultural, y étnica de esa población kaqchikel” (n. pag.). The creators of the murals of Comalapa, the town’s children and elders, met to discuss their oral histories. Working with the elderly made it possible for the artists to use the community’s oral traditions to inform the images. The majority of the murals feature painted images with vibrant colors depicting Comalapa’s Pre-Hispanic history, the Spanish Conquest, and events from the twentieth century, including the 1976 earthquake and the civil war. Dispersed amongst the panels are also four poems. A recent addition to the landscape, these murals show how the people of Comalapa represent themselves as Maya in relation to these historical events.

According to Carey and Little, the muralists in Comalapa negotiated what to include and what to exclude. They debated what elements from the oral descriptions of their history should inform the murals. Often community members disagreed when determining what they needed to depict in the murals: “with so many pent-up memories, no one visual portrayal could capture the past and present as Comalapenses know it” (Carey and Little 19). On the one hand, some Comalapenses have made laudatory comments about the murals; for example, “Ixq’anil, an elder whose husband was shot and killed in front of their home during the civil war, remarks: ‘I like the mural because it has history in it, and it is accurate’” (Carey and Little 19-21). On the other, they point out their shortcomings. Andrés Curruchiche’s granddaughter, who is also a painter in Comalapa, stated that “[the mural] is good, but there is still much history missing from it” (qtd. in Carey and Little 19). Oxi’ Q’anil, a local Kaqchikel ethnohistorian, has criticized the dearth of images that depict life in Comalapa before the Spanish Conquest, but overall he recognizes the murals’ value. He explains his position, “I did not like the
mural…I would have liked to see more pre-Hispanic panels. There are only three of them. But of course, we do not know much about that. They did present more of *la violencia* and culture. But it was a good initiative” (qtd. in Carey and Little 21). A local teacher comments, “The mural…presents history well. I bring students there to teach them about history. Even though some parts [of our history] are left out, many foreigners come and when they see it they learn about our *tinamït* [pueblo/nation]” (qtd. in Carey and Little 21). Each of these three people from Comalapa note what is missing from the images. They do not criticize what the artists included, but they argue that the muralists should have included more. Though the murals are from the perspective of the Kaqchikel Maya from Comalapa, it is impossible to pinpoint a definitive version of their history. The people of Comalapa created the murals, yet other Kaqchikel Maya from Comalapa criticize the murals’ contents.

As Rigoberta Menchú Tum informally retorted at the Latin American Studies meeting in 2002, “critique is a sign of privilege” (Sommer, *Cultural Agency* 4). Traditionally literary and cultural scholars criticize cultural production, and we (myself included) speak from differing positions of authority. In the case of the murals, academics are not the only agents who criticize what they do and do not include—the Maya themselves also fulfill this role. Indigenous people not only create artifacts worthy of study, but they may also offer their own critiques of their work. Conventionally in the Academy, “[t]he objects of research [have not had] a voice and [have] not contribute[d] to research or science” (Smith 61). The people of Comalapa, however, show that they also engage in dialogue about the overarching representations of their history in these murals. By including their comments in their study, Carey and Little counter the idea that
they are only worthy of being studied. Like anthropologists and graduate students who research the murals for dissertations and publications, Comalapenses also assess the murals’ strengths and weaknesses. Thus, not all Kaqchikel Maya are always disenfranchised and marginalized from discussions concerning the objects they create.

Indications of differences in terms of power among the Kaqchikel Maya of Comalapa is not a recent development. During the Guatemalan civil war, some Comalapenses had positions of power, whereas others did not. Some Kaqchikel Maya from Comalapa (and other towns in Highland Guatemala) collaborated with—and had positions of authority—within the army. Others, however, were the victims of violence. In one panel of the murals depicting the violence during the civil war, three people in the Civil Self-Defense Patrols (Patrullas de Auto-Defensa Civil) gather around a tree, surveying the area for subversive behavior. To their left, three more people dressed in the army’s camouflaged clothing attack two civilians of Comalapa dressed in Western style clothing; the three soldiers restrain their victims’ heads and are in the process of securing nooses around their necks to hang them from the nearby trees. The victims are destined to join a woman who has already been hanged. In these images the skin-tone of the faces of the soldiers is nearly the same as that of the victims; because both the representatives of the army and the victims have dark-skin, they are all represented with indigenous heritage. The images remind viewers that some Maya collaborated with the army and had power over their neighbors who were not affiliated with the State; consequently, these Maya worked with the army to target other Maya for any suspicious subversive behavior. As Carey and Little note, “internal strife also ravaged the community” (15). Not all Maya were victims of the violence; some Maya engaged in acts of violence against other Maya.
That said, I must mention that some of these “complicit” Mayas who served for the military did not do so by choice. Obligatory recruitment for the Civil Self-Defense Patrols was a widespread act by military leaders, and it was another form of violence against the social fabric of the community, as it positioned Mayas against one another and tore young men from their homes.

![Figure 2: Inter-Maya conflicts during the Guatemalan civil war](image)

![Figure 3: Civil Patrol Members](image)

There are still current differences in terms of access among the Maya of Comalapa. For example, not everyone’s socio-economic status permits him or her to take time from their work to contribute to the realization of the painted images of the murals,
or even to ponder them. One woman by the name of Ixrusil commented, “I like the mural but I do not have time to look at it since usually I am doing an errand or some other task while going by it” (qtd. in Carey and Little 21). Few have access to the necessary resources to take pleasure in the murals: “[t]he idea that this form of public art is accessible to everyone is an elusive ideal…Since many Maya are victims of their nation’s grossly unequal land distribution, inadequate public education, and racism, few have time to enjoy art, no matter how public it is” (Carey and Little 21-22). Although a collective group from Comalapa painted the images and wrote the poems, there are still community members who were silent in the exchange of ideas in the creation of the murals and in the debates concerning the murals’ contents. They did not have the education or the resources to participate, so their subalternity has continued. Only some people in the town had a voice in how to depict events from Comalapa’s history.

Similar to the murals, in some cases subsistence agriculture associated with the milpa (subsistence plots of maize and beans) is also a dying tradition. In the context of Neoliberal economic policies, many Maya do not have time to take off from work or the space to cultivate their milpa. In postwar Guatemala, some Maya have recognized the economic benefits of growing other cash crops, like broccoli, in place of their traditional milpas. Anthropologists Edward F. Fischer and Peter Benson explain that many Maya opt to grow broccoli and other export crops because they realize that growing only milpa will not afford the standard of living that they desire for their families (24). Read as a performance, the milpa—like the murals—is an outward representation of Maya-ness, of cultural identity and even spiritual tradition, and both are Maya traditions that have come in conflict with distinct forms of globalization.
Outsiders, however, did not participate in the creation of the murals or mediate their contents. The State was not involved. In the scenes depicting the peace process following the civil war, their absence is most obvious because the muralists have used the Guatemalan flag as a weapon. David Carey Jr. describes one section of the panel: “No flag, constitution, national anthem or other symbol of the state appears in that scene. In an earlier panel, stabbed into the back of one victim, the Guatemalan flag with blood dripping from two guns stands in stark contrast to the official version” (709). Because Guatemalan politics have historically oppressed dissident opposition, representations that criticize the government would not have been possible if the State had helped produce the murals, and thus influenced the overarching narrative. The murals of Comalapa present the accounts of the town’s people, without the intervention of non-community members, editorially or otherwise. As a result, these poets and artists have used a visual means through which to condemn the government and its role in the violence of the civil war. According to Carey and Little, this is the first time that the Comalapan Maya have engaged in revisionist history of the civil war in a public domain that openly counters official government discourse (6).
For example, an untitled poem speaks to the violence and widespread death of the residents of Comalapa during the armed conflict. This poem specifically addresses the common experience of searching for the corpses of loved ones in the years following the
civil war. The speaker indicates his or her lack of knowledge concerning the circumstances of the death of his father:

No supe nada de ti papa

de como fué tu muerte.

Ojalá supiera en donde

fuiste enterrado para

poder visitar tu tumba

y llevarte flores Papa. (10-15)

Like many Maya, the poetic voice does not know where his or her father’s remains are. These victims’ friends and family have not had closure and “continue to suffer the psychological effects of having lost loved ones and not knowing what happened to them or being able to provide them with a proper burial” (Carey and Little 16). Without such funeral rites, the corpses and their families are never free from the violence. Until friends and family members locate the remains, their loved ones “todavía están en guerra, escondidos en la montaña” (Moller 25). This poem addresses the effects of the violence at the personal, even spiritual, level, underscoring the psychological trauma that many Maya suffer because they have been unable to lay the assassinated to rest. The end of the civil war did not bring closure to many Maya who continue looking for victims’ remains.
Not all Maya, however, have had the same experiences when dealing with the corpses of their loved ones. The images surrounding the poem convey that some Maya have found the remnants of their deceased friends and family. In this panel of the murals, three clandestine burial sites are depicted. To the right, a woman prays alongside several
men facing a site with a photograph of a deceased individual on top of bones. Forensic anthropologists have uncovered numerous mass clandestine burial sites in the area surrounding Comalapa (and other Mayan communities in Guatemala) (Spradley et al 23; Carey and Little 16). Only some families have successfully located the bones and other remains of their loved ones that the army tortured and murdered during the civil war. The Maya have mourned the widespread death during the civil war in varying ways. The juxtaposition of the poem with images of the exhumations complicates the grieving process that the Maya have faced. Various Mayan communities experienced the deaths of their friends and family, regardless of language affiliation or geographic location. Nevertheless, as in most traumatic situations no two Maya have had the same encounter with death—there is not a universal experience.

Figure 6: Exhumation within the community
Also addressing the civil war, the poem “Papumay” describes the violent acts that the army committed, causing the death of Maya in Comalapa as well as other indigenous areas in Guatemala. The poetic voice informs the reader that because of the town’s “pecado mortal” (2), which is perhaps their assumed connection with guerrilla forces or their indigenous heritage, “lo borraron del mapa, / cuando entraron a las casas / prendieron fuego matando” (3-5). After explaining what happened to the people, the poem finishes with a series of questions seeking to understand the reasoning behind the violence:

justicia nos matan?
¿porqué nuestros sufrimientos?
¿porque somos objetos de
discriminacion y desigualdad? (6-9)

This poem draws attention to the physical consequences of the violence by noting the destruction of the people’s homes and town. It also explicitly comments on some of the underlying problems that the Maya of Guatemala faced during the civil war, which still continue today: social inequality and discrimination.
Figure 7: “Papumay” poem
Rather than specifying the name of the town in this poem as Comalapa, the first verse identifies the townspeople as “ciudadanos de Xibalba.” In this way, the poem essentializes the townspeople that suffered this violence by identifying them with the name of the Mayan Underworld. By drawing this connection to the *Popol Wuj*, the quintessential sacred text for Mayan communities throughout Mesoamerica, the poetic voice simultaneously underscores the violence while also identifying the townspeople with a text that is sacred not only in their town, but in all Mayan regions in general. The reference to Xibalba unites Comalapa with other Maya towns, regardless of their distinct cultural traditions, such as language, dress, or municipal and national origin.

In another untitled poem in the murals, the first person plural grammatical constructions in Spanish and Kaqchikel also connect Comalapa to images apart from Xibalba that have been culturally significant in pan-Maya religious beliefs for centuries: corn, the sun and the moon, ancestors, and Mother Earth. Similar to Gabriel Xiquín’s poetry that we have already seen, this grammatical form creates a collective identity. In this poem the first person plural identifies the Maya with these traditional images from their pre-Conquest heritage. The first two verses begin with the first person plural

33 In another panel of the murals not connected to “Papumay” or this other untitled poem, there is another connection to the *Popol Wuj*. A vase with four ears of corn, red, black, yellow, and white in color, symbolizes the four cardinal directions. Above the corn, there are four heads amidst flames. This image represents the creation of man from corn, as the *Popol Wuj* relates.

34 This is the only poem in the murals in both Spanish and Kaqchikel. The creators of the murals write all other poems exclusively in Spanish.
absolutive pronoun “öj” as an anaphora: “öj ruwäch ixim / oj yalk’wa’, qati’ik’, qamam q’ij.” After these verses in Kaqchikel, the poetic voice translates them to Spanish to conclude the poem: “somos el rostro del maíz, / somos hijos de la abuela luna, del abuelo sol / hijas e hijos de la madre tierra.”

35 The translation of these verses maintains the emphasis on the collective through the use of the verb “ser” conjugated in the first person plural, “somos.” One of the consequences of forming a collective identity in this way is that this untitled poem links the townspeople to traditional notions of Maya-ness that they inherited from the past, essentializing what is Maya based on traditional images that date to before the Spanish Conquest.

35 The verses in Spanish are an accurate translation of the Kaqchikel original; however, in the Spanish version there is an extra verse at the end that is not present in the Kaqchikel, “hijas e hijos de la madre tierra” (6). Perhaps this addition in the Spanish version is due to the connotations of the Earth implicit in the references to the corn, the moon, and the sun.
The images that surround this poem are in many ways stereotypical of what is “Maya.” They reinforce the connection between the Kaqchikel Maya of Comalapa and their Pre-Hispanic past. Specifically, there are representations of glyphs, textiles, and Mayan rulers, as well as motifs common in classical Mayan art. These images link the town to Kaqchikel spiritual beliefs deriving from the Cholq’ij (the Mayan calendar), weaving traditions, and the iconography in ancient Mayan architecture. Lining the vertical frame are the twenty glyphs that correspond to the day names of the Cholq’ij. By including the day names, this image indirectly references the members of the community, as everyone (for the most part) takes his or her name from the calendar. It also inscribes the scene with historical circularity, which is significant given Mayan conceptualizations of time. Mayanist scholars have long discussed that the ancient Mayan concepts of time were cyclical. For example, Gary Gossen, an anthropologist with extensive experience in
the Highlands of Chiapas as a researcher involved in the Harvard Chiapas Project in the 1960s, elaborates on this concept:

A simplistic statement of this principle is that what has occurred in the past is also occurring in the present, and will occur in the future. There is an entire series of cyclical calendars through which the ancient Maya marked time. These include the 260-day Sacred Round (tzolkin), the 365-day Solar or Vague year (haab), a combination of the tzolkin and haab that forms the fifty-two-year cycle called the Calendar Round, as well as the nine-day Lord of the Night cycle, which cycles every 467 years with the Calendar Round. Other cycles existed, but these were the primary ones used by the ancient Maya. This cyclical nature of time appears to relate specifically to the ritual activity of the Maya. (Telling Maya Tales 165)

In this way, the circularity of the glyphs include those dead from the past violence, during the Guatemalan civil war and other events, the present citizens of San Juan Comalapa, and future Maya communities. On the bottom border of the panel, there is a Mayan weaving in Earth-tone colors in the shape of a diamond, which historically symbolizes the four cardinal corners of the world. In addition, there are images of corn and Maya rulers that feature similar pictographic characteristics as the depictions of ancient Maya rulers in codices or on archaeological stelae. By including illustrations that typically represent the Pre-Hispanic Maya, the artists appeal to anticipated ideas of what is “authentically” Maya. They essentialize Maya-ness using images that audiences may expect as “Maya,” perhaps in order to comply with tourists’ stereotypes of what should
be depicted in “Maya” murals so as to ensure their continued economic investment in the town.  

The images and verses in this poem idealize Comalapa’s Pre-Hispanic history. Stereotypical references such as corn, day name glyphs, woven textiles, and other Maya iconography have historically symbolized Mayan patrimony. As art historians Asturias de Barrios and Mónica Berger explain in their analysis of Kaqchikel painting in Comalapa, the local concept of primitivismo explains the difference between “la Comalapa pintada” and “la Comalapa real.” For them, the former is “antigua, tradicional, campesina y artesanal,” whereas the latter is “en proceso de cambio cultural y socioeconómico” (189). Huipiles, or women’s woven blouses, that preserve older designs, houses made of adobe with tile roofs, and cofradías (religious fraternities) are all typical images that embody “la Comalapa pintada.” “La Comalapa real,” however, has engaged in capitalist forms of production, featuring men that wear Western-style clothing and Comalapenses transporting artisan products they created on a commercial loom in pick-up trucks to sell to tourists at the market. Drawing from their ideas, anthropologists Carey and Little explain that “‘painted Comalapa’ is “the idealized imagined past and traditions,” as

36 This is similar to Maya organizations in the Pan-Maya Movement that, as Kay B. Warren has noted in her study of activism in the Pan-Maya Movement, “in their identifying logos […] use glyphs that represent pre-Hispanic writers, calendrical day names, creation myths, and cosmological directions” (68). Warren provides some examples of such activist logos, such as the Maya publisher Cholsamaj, the Academy for Maya Languages of Guatemala (ALMG), the linguistics group Oxlajuuj Keej Maya’ Ajtz’iib’ (OKMA), and the Center of Mayan Documentation and Investigation (CEDIM).
opposed to “real Comalapa,” which depicts the “everyday—not always pretty—life of residents” (7). The images in the poem and the accompanying pictographic representations that correspond to “painted Comalapa” appeal to the interests of the many tourists and other outside audiences that visit the murals. While these images that correspond to “painted Comalapa” may be stereotypical for tourists, for the Maya, they may also unify the community itself, similar to how iconography that stems from the Popol Wuj connects Comalapenses to other Maya throughout Mesoamerica. The murals also deconstruct these stereotypes by addressing issues pertinent to the everyday reality that the Kaqchikel Maya experience in “real Comalapa.”

The murals remind audiences that Maya are not stuck in the past; rather the past and present complement one another in Comalapa. Tradition and modernity can coexist, as the circularity of the Maya calendar demonstrates. That is, “one can be Maya and modern” (Carey Jr. 711). The symbiotic relationship between the two is two-fold in the murals: it is evident in both the painting techniques and the images themselves. While there is a long history of painting in Comalapa with artists like Andrés Curruchiche Cúmez (1891-1969) (Carey and Little 6; Carey Jr. 709), the muralists have innovated their artistic traditions by appropriating European materials and techniques (Pérez Marroquín; BIG). The images show past and present cultural activities together: “[t]he paintings depicting poor men and women dreaming of computers, opportunities to study, and functioning freshwater wells illustrate these resistances and critiques […]. That said, the murals also highlight youth’s learning how to weave on a handloom in the community’s distinctive style and listening to elders (perhaps soliciting their advice)” (Carey and Little 19). These panels of the murals demonstrate that tradition and
modernity are not mutually exclusive, as we saw with García Canclini’s theorizing of these concepts at the beginning of this chapter. More and more, Maya engage flows of globalization by importing products and technologies from abroad, yet they also preserve their cultural practices, such as painting and weaving. In this exchange, they also put new technologies to work toward promoting traditional crafts.
Figure 9: Comalapan woman weaving
Figure 10: Comalapan artist painting

Figure 11: Dreaming of a future with increased literacy and access to computers
Because the artists include both past and present cultural practices, they challenge the conventional idea that the only aspects of Maya culture worthy of mention are those that glorify their pre-Conquest societies. Throughout Guatemalan history, as sociologist and political scientist Marta Elena Casaús Arzú explains, racism has been integral to the dominant discourses and ideology of the State (90). In the murals, instead of recreating hegemonic images depicting contemporary Kaqchikel Maya as antiquated and at odds with modernity, the artists celebrate their current cultural contributions to the nation-state. By presenting the coexistence of the past and present, the murals contest depictions of the Maya in the official history of Guatemala. That is, they contradict such dichotomous representations of the Maya:

Even today in Guatemalan public schools, Mayan students, teachers, and parents chafe at representations of Maya as backwards, ignorant, dirty, and lazy. Though textbooks exalt ancient Maya, their authors argue that by the
time the Spanish arrived, Maya were a degenerate group and have largely remained that way. (Carey and Little 10-11)

The images and poems in the murals do not repeat these stereotypes. The artists that created the murals in Comalapa have painted images that commemorate Mayan Pre-Hispanic history as well as their current contributions to society. Although the artists and poets may essentialize Maya-ness as part of their Pre-Hispanic past, they simultaneously destabilize these stereotypes by showing that the Maya engage modernity. That is, although they essentialize what is Maya by associating Maya-ness with traditions that date to before the Spanish Conquest, they also deconstruct how national discourses of the State have essentialized Maya-ness.

Since the muralists include representations of contemporary Kaqchikel Maya, they combat the idea that the Maya are unable to coexist in the same time as their audiences, such as the State as well as tourists and academics. According to anthropologist Johannes Fabian in his analysis of the relationship between anthropology as a discipline and constructs of time, there is what he calls a “denial of coevalness,” or “a persistent and systematic tendency to place the referent(s) of anthropology in a Time other than the present of the producer of anthropological discourse” (31). Rather than representing the Kaqchikel Maya of Comalapa as exclusively existing in their Pre-Hispanic past, the creators of the murals show that the community is not exempt from the effects of modernity. The Maya are not just people who created the archaeological ruins like Tikal, but many also envision a future that takes advantage of technological innovations from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, including but not limited to computers and indoor plumbing.
One primary difference between conventional testimonios like Menchú Tum’s account and the murals of Comalapa is the medium they use to communicate. Menchú Tum’s Me llamo is a prose narrative, whereas the murals feature pictographic representations. While they may seem to be radically different forms, this is not the case within the context of Maya cultural production. In the introduction to her study on Classic Maya ceramic painting, U.S. archaeologist Dorie Reents-Budet acknowledges that in Mayan languages there is no linguistic or semantic differentiation among the words for painting, drawing and writing; all are referred to by the verb stem ts’ib. 

[…] For the Classic Maya, then, the making of images was born from the brush, be it writing, drawing or painting. Technically and conceptually, all were the same creative activity. (8)

Unlike Europeans and others influenced by Western understandings of writing, the Maya did not distinguish painting from writing; both were implied under the root verb “ts’ib.”

By using iconography to create their account of their town’s history, the muralists employ a culturally significant medium that the ancient Maya historically used in codices and at archaeological sites, rather than the Greco-Roman alphabet that Europeans began to impose during the sixteenth century. Moreover, by working through visuality the muralists may have a larger audience—they are able to reach people who may not necessarily be able to read texts written in alphabetic script. In my next example, we will

---

37 Walter D. Mignolo explains in the afterword of Writing Without Words that this tension between European alphabetic writing and Amerindian writing systems caused conflicts of consciousness in the Americas after the arrival of the Spanish (295).
see a narrative testimony whose author identifies the text as an example of this literary genre in the title.

**Testimony: The Attack in Tzalalá on September 9, 1982**

*Testimony: Death of a Guatemalan Village* (1987), by Victor Montejo, recounts the violence during the Guatemalan civil war in Tzalalá, a town in the Guatemalan Highlands where Montejo worked as a primary school teacher. On September 9, 1982, the Civil Self-Defense Patrol of this indigenous town in the northwest of Huehuetenango Department in Guatemala “mistook an army detachment dressed in olive fatigues for guerrillas” (*Testimony* 13). As a result, the army launched a counterattack on the village, accusing them of being sympathetic to the guerrillas. In the opening pages to *Testimony*, the narrator is in the schoolhouse trying to keep the children of Tzalalá safe from the bullets: he “ordered the students to stretch out on the floor and barred the door and windows with old broomsticks” (17). The narration begins with the attack on September 9, 1982 and continues for six days recounting the army’s campaign to identify and eliminate all subversives from the town. Like Menchú Tum in her *testimonio*, Montejo is also the first person narrator of the prose account. Although most of the book is about Montejo’s experiences, the author also incorporates the accounts of other Maya from Tzalalá who were present for the events that day.

---

Because he makes editorial changes when he presents these other testimonios, Montejo is both author and mediator in Testimony. For example, in an anecdote from an elderly woman in the chapter entitled, “I watched my son die,” he alters the narrative structure, influencing her story. After introducing her as Doña Malcal, the narrator speaks of her in the third person: “I saw it all’ she told me” (29). However, in the following paragraph the narration shifts and the reader receives her experiences in the first person as she describes one of her last encounters with her son before the army killed him:

“No, Sebastián, stay here and hide!” I said to him, but he would not heed me. He kept on running down the hill while the bullets whistled and struck the adobe wall of our house. He was my only son, and because I knew the risk he was taking, I went after him. (my emphasis, 29)

The narrative structure remains the same throughout her account until its conclusion, when the first person narrator returns, stating, “[t]his is what the woman told me in Mayan language” (34). Montejo includes this narrative shift to make it appear that readers hear first hand from her, yet they do not receive the information directly from Doña Malcal. Even though Montejo presents this vignette as if it were what Malcal actually said, readers do not know if he has altered anything. The “I” in this account is not Doña Malcal—she does not speak for herself; Montejo speaks for her.

The authority of Montejo’s and Doña Malcal’s claims hinges on the “I” in these eyewitness accounts. That is, their veracity is based on first-hand reports of what they saw. After detailing the violence that occurred under the administration of Romeo Lucas García, Montejo states that he “was now experiencing first-hand all this violence unleashed against the poorest Indian communities of Guatemala” (102-03). Doña Malcal
also presents herself as an eyewitness; she communicates to Montejo “I saw it all” (29). By doing so, she foregrounds her account as veracious before telling her story. The larger testimonio by Montejo and the anecdote from Doña Malcal feature observers who narrate experiences that they personally saw. In this way, the first-person “I” in each of these accounts is an eyewitness, as in Me llamo and other testimonios. Menchú Tum and Montejo are both eyewitnesses, but the veracity of their claims is different.

The authenticity of Menchú Tum’s claims has been questioned, as we have seen with anthropologist David Stoll, among others. Despite the presentation of her narrative in the first person, there are some events that she did not witness. For example, she states that she and her family members watched as members of the army burned her brother alive (202-05). However, in his report on the challenges to Menchú Tum’s story, Larry Rohter informs readers that her brother actually died under other circumstances. Menchú Tum defends the truth of her testimonio because she is a representative voice for all indigenous people of the Americas; her story “encarna la vida de todos los indios del continente americano” (9). Such discrepancies of veracity, consequently, have affected critical reception. For this reason, critics like Stoll, among others, have described Menchú Tum’s testimonio as lies.

Understandings of what is authentically true affected the critical reception of both Testimony and Me llamo. The questionable claims to veracity in Me llamo have negatively impacted the reviews of the text, whereas this has not been an issue for Testimony. While scholars such as Stoll have criticized Menchú Tum, stating that Me llamo “cannot be the eyewitness account it purports to be” (Stoll xxii), this has not been the case for Testimony. The back cover of the book features a quote by David Unger of
Present Tense, who writes that Montejo’s *testimonio* is “[f]ree of metaphors, rhetoric and, most importantly, lies” (n. pag.). Implicit is the idea that Montejo’s account contains what Menchú Tum’s narrative lacks—authenticity and more complete adherence to conventional Western ideas of “truth.” Since by definition *testimonios* are supposed to be accurate representations, the veracity of the account may affect its critical reception. *Mellamo* has been the subject of extensive controversy for a variety of reasons, among these the fact that Menchú Tum did not witness all of the events that she claims to have seen first hand and that some of the information is inaccurate. Some scholars like David Stoll have noted this incongruency, citing examples like the death of her brother, as we have already seen. However, a polemical reception is not an automatic characteristic of *testimonios*. Not all *testimonios* are fictional and subject to critique, as Montejo’s *Testimony* evidences.

Apart from their critical reception, another point of contention between the reception of Montejo’s and Menchú Tum’s versions of Guatemalan history is how they represent the perpetrators of the violence. Menchú Tum voices a “gran manifiesto de una etnia,” demanding rights and cultural recognition for herself and all Maya in general (10-11). Montejo, however, adds more detail when he describes the inter-Maya conflicts that contributed to the bloodshed of fellow Maya during the civil war. He highlights the role

\[39\] Given the polemics surrounding Menchú Tum’s *testimonio*, it would be interesting to further investigate the reception of other *testimonios* about the Guatemalan civil war, focusing on whether the Menchú Tum controversy has affected the reception of these other accounts.
that the villagers in general and the civil patrols in Tzalalá played in the assassinations of other Maya in the community. The narrator conveys to readers that anyone can condemn to death his own neighbor with the slightest accusation or rumor. It has become conveniently easy to get rid of a person for reasons of revenge or other personal differences, simply by denouncing him to the army as a leftist sympathizer. (35-36)

Later in the account, in a flashback to August 30th, the narrator describes an episode between the civil defenders and two men who were living on the outskirts of the village. The civil patrol captured the men for being subversive. Despite the victims’ pleas to spare their lives, the civil defenders responded that they would not release anyone who fell into their hands, even if he or she was family. The narrator observes this shift in the culture of the village: “This military doctrine had gradually undermined the foundations of an indigenous culture, causing the Indian to act against his own will and best interests and destroying what is most sacred in his ancient Mayan legacy: love and respect for one’s own neighbor, which translates into a policy of mutual support” (63). Unlike Menchú Tum, Montejo shows that the army was not the only party guilty of victimizing the Maya. Rather, there were inter-Maya conflicts that led to an atmosphere of deceit and mistrust. Maya marginalized other Maya, often causing their torture and death.

Another difference between Menchú Tum and Montejo is the mediation in their testimonios. Unlike Montejo, Rigoberta Menchú Tum is not a mediator in _Me llamo_. Rather, like Doña Malcal, editorial changes by Burgos and others also influenced her account. In the official credits, Menchú Tum has fought for recognition as co-author, but Burgos appears in most editions as the sole author (Beverley, “The Real Thing” 267-68).
Montejo and Menchú Tum are both Maya, yet, in terms of their relationships to the narrative of events, Montejo has more in common with Burgos in this comparison since they both mediate Maya testimonios of the Guatemalan civil war. As mediators, Montejo and Burgos both have power and authority over authorship because they had agency over the editorial decisions concerning the transcription and organization of these oral accounts onto the written page. While some aspects of mediation can be seen as negative, there are positive consequences as well. Mediation can be necessary for subaltern speakers to have access to publication and, in some cases, to ensure the overall comprehension of the account.

Since most audiences may be unable to listen to or read the stories directly from monolingual speakers of Tzalalá, the narrator’s mediation as a translator may combat the further silencing of these subaltern subjects. The narrator translates the accounts of individuals who only speak “Mayan” languages, which he does not specify as any language in particular. Without the narrator’s ability to do so, these personal stories

40 That said, Montejo was more transparent than Burgos about his role as mediator because he positions himself as such in the text, explicitly noting when Doña Malcal speaks. Aside from her comments concerning the editorial process of publishing Menchú Tum’s testimonio, Burgos completely erases her involvement on a textual level. Audiences are not privy to the dynamic of the exchange between Burgos and Menchú Tum throughout the text; rather, they only have access to the finished, edited version.

41 Montejo perhaps does not specify which specific Mayan language they speak since many audience members may not be familiar with the different Mayan languages spoken in Guatemala. As such, I do not consider this an example of Spivak’s concept of
would be lost to audiences who are not proficient in native languages. In addition to the episode that Doña Malcal originally recounted in an indigenous language, there are other moments when the narrator in Montejo’s book informs the reader that the people of the village talked to him in a Mayan language. During the first combat scenes between the civil patrols and the army, the narrator explains that one of the members of the civil patrol “shouted in Mayan” to encourage his fellow defenders in their fight. In response to the death of the community’s men whom the army forced to serve in the civil patrol, the women in the village “cried out in Mayan their grief and pain” (60). In another instance, the narrator describes the plight of a pregnant woman fleeing from a soldier who clutched at her dress with the intention of raping her; he states that “she stopped to ask me for help in her native language, which the soldiers did not understand” (27). In each of these examples, mediation goes beyond simple editorial influence over the presentation of the text. It is a more complicated political tool that serves to bring *testimonios* to larger audiences outside of Mayan linguistic communities. Similar to Rigoberta Menchú Tum’s *testimonio*, apart from the mediation of language in *Testimony*, there is also the mediation of culture. As cultural and linguistic translator, the mediator resembles a guide and advocate.

To ensure a meaningful understanding of the content, Montejo is a cultural translator for non-Guatemalan audiences. Because Montejo lived in Tzalalá for ten years (*Testimony* 11) and speaks Spanish and Q’anjob’al, he is able to fulfill this role. The glossary exhibits Montejo’s translation of cultural traditions—cultural and linguistic strategic essentialism, but rather a generic reduction of the different languages to “Mayan” in general given potential audiences.
mediation go hand in hand. The entries deal with cultural facets of daily life in Tzalalá, such as the typical diet. There are explanations for “atole,” a “drink made with boiled or toasted maize,” “milpa,” which is “seed-time, or land set aside for the cultivation of corn,” and “nixtamal,” “maize boiled in lime water to make tortillas” (n. pag.). The glossary of untranslated terms speaks to the needs of readers who do not pertain to these communities and/or do not speak Spanish. Even if his readers speak Spanish, they may not understand the implicit nuances of indigenous cultural practices. That is, they may not realize the traditional significance of corn in Mayan diets. Many speakers in testimonios do not pertain to the same cultural milieu as their audiences, who require supplemental cultural information to comprehend these accounts.

The mediation in Testimony has multiple effects. In some cases like Doña Malcal’s story, Montejo’s mediation of her account perpetuates her subalternity. Rather than receiving Malcal’s version of her son’s death directly from her, readers get it through Montejo. Similar to Burgos, Montejo has the education and resources to realize the editorial tasks of recording her oral account in his book that Malcal and the other monolingual speakers do not have. Montejo’s mediation of other Maya voices further silences them, contributing to their overall marginalization. That said, his mediation is not entirely negative. He presents their accounts so that outside audiences who require cultural and linguistic translations can understand these Mayas’ accounts. Montejo’s erudition both marginalizes and augments the overall visibility and accessibility of these other Mayas’ accounts.

42 That said, glossaries can also be seen as spatially marginalizing the terms or concepts in question, as they are physically located at the end of the text.
There are different levels of subalternity—Maya are not equally marginalized because they have different access to education and other resources to speak for and represent themselves. Montejo, for instance, is a Jakaltek Maya who received his M.A. at the State University of New York, Albany and his Ph.D. at the University of Connecticut. Because of his educational background, Montejo wrote his own testimonio without the assistance of a transcriber or scribe, and, as a North American academic, he perhaps did so with a critical understanding of what testimonio is and does. Menchú Tum, however, did not have the educational background to be able to write her own account in Spanish, a language which she claims she learned as an adult (146). Maya have varying levels of education, and thus not all of them require assistance to write and publish their accounts. If Montejo had required assistance to write and publish his texts, perhaps he would have faced similar scrutiny as Menchú Tum. Rather than being mediated like Menchú Tum, Montejo is often the mediator between indigenous speakers, such as Doña Malcal in Testimony, and the Academy as a cultural and linguistic translator. Because of the varying manifestations of subalternity in the relations of power between the Academy and indigenous speakers, Maya can be mediators and mediated at different times in testimonios. In my last example, Brevísima relación testimonial, we will see other effects of editorial mediation—how using conventions from the Academy affect the overall presentation of testimonios.

(Post)coloniality, Past and Present: Brevísima relación testimonial de la continua destrucción del Mayab’ (Guatemala)

Working with other Mayas, Victor Montejo later published another testimonial account, this time solely in Spanish, Brevísima relación testimonial (1992). According to
the official credits, Montejo co-edited the book with Q’anil Akab’, who is actually a pseudonym that anthropologist Kay B. Warren says, “evokes the collective collaboration inherent in the work and the inspiration he receives from Maya culture in his writings. Q’anil Akab’ is both many voices and the transcendent unified diversity that Montejo advocates for Maya culture in Guatemala” (122). *Brevisima relación testimonial* is a collection of prose testimonios organized in six “lamentos” which date from 1982 and presents the perspectives of what he calls “plaintiffs,” or speakers, who were Guatemalan refugees who had fled to southern Mexico to escape the violence (Montejo and Akab’ 1).

As Warren indicates in her study of Pan-Maya activism, Montejo traveled to Chiapas during the summers of 1988, 1989, and 1992 to interview these refugees as part of his dissertation research. *Brevisima relación testimonial* is the result of his collaboration with other Mayas to document the Guatemalan government’s repression of the country’s indigenous population (122).

Because Montejo recorded, transcribed, and translated the accounts, *Brevisima relación testimonial* is also the product of editorial mediation. In the “Nota introductoria,” Montejo explains that he recorded “sus testimonios en lengua Maya” (2). Similar to the process that Burgos undertook when she drafted Menchú Tum’s testimonio, Montejo transcribed the interviews and testimonios that they recorded in Chiapas, translated them from Mayan languages to Spanish, and published them in this collection. Like Burgos, Montejo speaks for the refugees rather than these subaltern voices speaking for themselves.

Also similar to Burgos, Montejo faced editorial decisions concerning what to include and omit. According to Warren, “Montejo’s selection of these particular
testimonies, among all other possibilities, and his editing of the taped interviews would seem to reflect two interlocking and urgent issues: the public secret of ‘disappearances,’ which were in fact widespread brutal killings in isolated highland villages, and the involvement of Mayas in this violence” (123). Unlike Burgos, however, in the testimonios that Montejo includes the Maya are not always the victims. At times, they commit acts of violence toward other Maya. In Lamento 4, Tumaxh K’em explains that “[l]os jefes de las patrullas civiles en las comunidades indígenas (la mayoría ex-militares), se jactaron de ocupar posiciones de control sobre su propia gente y así cometieron crímenes libremente porque ellos decían cumplir con las órdenes del ejército” (91). In this lament the commander of the civil patrol, Mario, captures the narrator along with two others. Mario orders another civil patrol member, Trinidad, to tie up the detained and take them to the military barracks, where the prisoners would likely face torture and death. Trinidad is hesitant, but he eventually complies:

“Hermano, no es mi costumbre amarrar y hacerle el mal a mi misma gente.”

“Pues tendrás que hacerlo, por ser autoridad. Y si no, dame el lazo y lo voy a hacer yo mismo,” dijo Mario.

[...]

“Perdóname hermano que tenga que hacer esto, pero te desataremos más adelante.” (92-93)

Although Trinidad is reluctant to tie up the narrator and the other two prisoners, he complies because of pressures from the commander. This story exemplifies Maya
complicity in the violence. Members of the civil patrol were pressured to act against their fellow Maya, and they obeyed to spare themselves harm.

Among the testimonios in Brevísima relación testimonial, adults were not the only victims. Children were also targets in the crossfire. Montejo spoke with numerous children and included their drawings and short narratives about the civil war in Brevísima relación testimonial. As Montejo and Kaxh Pasil indicate, during this period of violence in Guatemala,

\[
\text{los niños fueron los más afectados, pues sufrieron a la par de los adultos la persecución a que habían sido sometidos por los soldados. [...] al haber presenciado y vivido esta represión en sus propias comunidades, los niños fueron traumatisados y así han crecido con esas imágenes de miedo y terror que les sigue afectando en los campamentos de refugiados en México. (107)}
\]

Even the indigenous youth were not exempt from the army’s campaign to rid the countryside of guerrilla insurgents. The army killed many Maya children, and those that survived often found themselves orphans. The involvement of children in the violence emphasizes the brutality of the civil war. All of the Maya suffered, regardless of their age. At the end of Brevísima relación testimonial, there is a list of “desaparecidos” entitled “Lista de las personas que perecieron en la masacre de la comunidad de la finca de San Francisco Nentón, acontecida el 17 de julio de 1982, en la región de los Kuchumatanes, el noroccidente de Guatemala” (123-25). This list includes names of the victims and their corresponding ages. Several victims are under one year of age, including but not limited to Andrés Paíz García who was 1 month, 20 days as well as
Bartolo Gómez García who was 3 months old at the time of his execution. Like the adults, the children from the various Mayan communities who experienced the violence also provide their accounts in *Brevísima relación testimonial*. Children are among the subaltern who traditionally do not have a voice in official discourses. By including their *testimonios* and drawings, Víctor Montejo provides these youth with a venue to communicate their version of the events to the outside world.

Similar to the adult accounts, Montejo mediates *Brevísima relación testimonial* when transcribing the children’s oral discourses. Montejo and Kaxh Pasil explain their methodology for collecting the materials that the children created in “Lamento 6”, which features children’s versions of the violence:

> Yo, Víctor Montejo, tuve la oportunidad de visitar varias veces una escuelita de niños refugiados en el campamento de Guadalupe Victoria, donde uno de los maestros refugiados (Kaxh Pasil) enseñaba a los niños. [...] le pedí al maestro Kaxh Pasil que me permitiera hablar con los niños de la escuela y pedirles dibujos y testimonios sobre lo que podían recordar de su país. De esta forma obtuve los testimonios y dibujos que se presentan aquí, los cuales provienen de niños refugiados cuyas edades oscilaban entre los 7 a 11 años. (110)

A plurality of children’s voices contributes to *Brevísima relación testimonial*, and their accounts are recordings that Víctor Montejo created to “dejar un registro de la historia que ha vivido el pueblo Maya en exilio” (2), as he explains in the introduction. Montejo describes his travels from Guatemala to the United States and to the refugee camps in Mexico, and each time he met someone in exile, he recorded their *testimonio* (Montejo,
Similar to the adults featured in the collection, Montejo speaks for these children as opposed to permitting them to speak for and represent themselves, perpetuating the children’s subalternity. Nevertheless, since the children’s accounts are visual representations via their drawings, their testimonios are perhaps not as mediated as the adults’ because Montejo does not translate or transcribe their drawings in the way that he would an oral account.

The transcription of oral discourses, however, is not the only manifestation of mediation. The presentation or organization of information influences how audiences approach and understand it, and therefore is another form of mediation. Because Montejo determined how to compile the information, he mediates between the speakers in the individual accounts and audience members. He makes stylistic decisions concerning how to present the testimonios, which in turn contributes to their overall framing. In this way, presentation is potentially a form of political activism for subaltern speakers to gain recognition and assistance. In Brevísima relación testimonial, Montejo organizes the children’s prose testimonies by including each one on a separate page. At the top there is a scanned copy of the original testimonio that the children wrote on pieces of notebook paper, with a transcription that follows, located at the bottom of each page. Often the handwriting is illegible due to a combination of the general quality of a child’s penmanship and the deteriorated state of the documents themselves, so there is need for transcription. Montejo includes the original narratives on pieces of notebook paper adjacent to their transcriptions, which shows that their transcriptions are loyal to the originals. In Me llamo the reader is not privileged to the original recordings or earlier written transcriptions of Menchú Tum’s oral account. This, however, does not undermine
the validity of the editorial processes in the publication of *Me llamo*; it simply means that readers were not privy to this information. Perhaps to avoid the controversy surrounding the veracity and editorial changes in Menchú Tum’s account, Montejo’s inclusion of the children’s original accounts maintains transparency in their editorial process. The juxtaposition of the original accounts with their transcription also may evidence the authenticity of these accounts.

The children’s testimonies in *Brevísima relación testimonial* also contribute to the authenticity of the adult accounts because the children echo what the adults communicate. Since the prose and pictographic testimonies reference many of the same images such as helicopters, they are more likely to be accurate and free of fabrication. As Montejo and Pasil indicate, “[e]stos testimonios tan elocuentes confirman también los testimonios de los adultos que hablan de la violencia y las masacres de sus comunidades en Guatemala” (110). For instance, Montejo and Kaxh Pasil describe the helicopters bombing entire communities: “los helicópteros iban a bombardear a las comunidades que no se identificaran con el ejército” (*Brevísima relación testimonial* 28). Helicopters are also a predominant image in the children’s prose testimonies. They inspired fear in Guatemalan children: “los niños pequeños huían o se escondían debajo de las camas cuando comenzaban a escuchar el ruido de los helicópteros, que constantemente rugían sobre sus comunidades ametrallando matorrales y caseríos” (Montejo, *Brevísima relación testimonial* 107). All of the children’s drawings contain depictions of helicopters, except for one on page 60. Nevertheless, the children’s drawings do not exactly repeat the children’s written testimonios—they differ in how they represent Guatemala versus Mexico.
Prose accounts of the violence are basic—the children construct a rudimentary relationship between their villages in Guatemala and their new residence in Mexico. They provide simplified generalizations in their descriptions of each place. For example, Catarina Domingo, a ten-year-old girl from Ixtahuacán in Huehuetenango, relates that

Las cosas en mi aldea están bien malas.

Cuando los soldados entraron a la aldea,
empezaron a matar a las personas y a quemar las casas.

Entraban a las casas a robar dinero
y nosotros teníamos miedo.

Por eso salimos

y aquí en México estamos tranquilos. (Brevísima relación testimonial 115)

Domingo’s account depicts Guatemala and Mexico as binaries—the former is heavily laden with violence and fear, whereas the latter is peaceful. The pictures that the children draw, however, do not corroborate these conceptualizations of Guatemala and Mexico.

The children’s drawings complicate the simplistic dichotomy of violent Guatemala and peaceful Mexico. The images contradict the idea that the violence was confined to Guatemala. In the drawing on page 14 the border between Mexico and Guatemala runs diagonally from the upper left to the lower right of the page, with Guatemala on the right and Mexico on the left. The portion of the image dedicated to Guatemala features a helicopter flying above, and members of the army are setting fire to adobe homes and shooting people with rifles. In the other half of the image dedicated to Mexico, there are several men and a woman holding a child’s hand while carrying a baby on her back; all of whom are leaving Guatemala by foot. However, some of the army’s
bullets have struck another small child who had already crossed the border into Mexico. In contrast to the children’s prose accounts, this image conveys that geopolitical borders did not neatly contain the State’s human rights violations—the army’s abuses were not limited to Guatemala. The violence leaked into Mexico, so often times refugees were not safe even though they had fled Guatemala. To conceive of violent Guatemala in opposition to a peaceful Mexico is an oversimplification of the situation, albeit perhaps to be expected from a child. The juxtaposition of the children’s prose and pictographic accounts exposes conflicting representations of the violence. The overall presentation of the collection as a whole, however, has a different effect—it connects the violence of the civil war to other moments in Guatemala’s history.

Specifically, Montejo presents the accounts in *Brevísima relación testimonial* using conventions from the Spanish Conquest. He frames the collection as a continuation of the violence against the Maya stemming from the encounter between Spaniards and the indigenous people of the Americas. Similarly, Nelson also understands the Guatemalan civil war as a legacy of the violence and oppression of the Conquest. What she terms “Quincentennial Guatemala” “refers to the five-hundred-year anniversary of Christopher Columbus’s 1492 voyage, encompasses [the] anxieties and aspirations in the context of the country’s recent history while emphasizing the still painful wounds of the Conquest” (4). Montejo, for example, connects the civil war to the Conquest by incorporating practices that the sixteenth century explorers used in colonial discourses. For example, Montejo includes pictographic representations—a map and hand-drawn sketches by children. He also appropriates the title of *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* by Bartolomé de las Casas. Like Las Casas’s influential work,
Montejo’s collection details the abuses and injustices that the Maya have suffered. The atrocities did not end with Guatemalan independence from Spain, but rather they have continued. The editor of *Brevísima relación testimonial* builds on other pivotal texts from the Conquest to reinforce his argument, such as the *Libros de Chilam Balam* and the Florentine Codex; in this way Montejo validates the accounts of the atrocities against the Maya during the civil war by comparing them to the Spanish Conquest. As a result of the relationships of inequality introduced during the encounter between the Spanish and indigenous peoples, the author tells us that similar systems of social control are legacies that have persisted into the present-day (Montejo and Akab’ 7). The subalternity of the Maya did not develop out of the civil war, but rather, grows out of centuries of oppression, as we saw more generally with Quijano’s conceptualization of the coloniality of power in the introduction. Because Montejo draws from various colonial rhetorical techniques, a more detailed analysis of these devices will show different ways in which literate mediators manipulate conventions of the Academy to potentially engage academic audiences and readers.

Montejo unites distinct Maya identities in his presentation of the individual accounts. Because he echos colonial forms, the entire book feels like a text dating to the sixteenth century. Specifically, the Maya author draws from pictographic techniques concerning cartography that colonial writers used when describing the Americas to show that the violence of the civil war affected a Pan-Maya identity. Spanish explorers sent maps of the regions they “discovered” to the Spanish Crown. In *Brevísima relación testimonial*, Montejo follows in this tradition by also incorporating a map of the area that he describes as Mayab’, or the Maya Region. This map includes Belize, Guatemala,
Honduras, El Salvador, and southern Mexico (Chiapas, Tabasco, Campeche, Yucatán, Quintana Roo, and parts of Veracruz and Oaxaca). It also features cities and towns, both contemporary ones as well as those dating to before the arrival of the Spanish. Rather than working through language group or municipal affiliation, including a map of Mayab’ identifies the speakers in *Brevísima relación testimonial* with this region in general. The editor of this volume joins what were once disparate identities of Maya-ness to strategically essentialize the similarities of the different groups for political purposes.

Presenting this text as a continuation of the violence from the Spanish Conquest serves to help the Maya—it seeks recognition and assistance using the epistolary genre in a creative way in the introductory pages that precede the six “lamentos.” Montejo explicitly conveys that the oppression has continued in a letter in the form of a prologue to Spain’s current monarch, King Juan Carlos I, which is analogous to the one that Huamán Poma de Ayala wrote during the seventeenth century (Arias, “Después de la guerra” 505). Like Poma de Ayala, Montejo advocates on behalf of the indigenous in the face of violence:

es comparable al genocidio cometido durante la invasión de estas tierras a principios del siglo XVI. En otras palabras, el grupo de testimonios presentados en esta *Brevísima relación testimonial de la continua destrucción del Mayab’* (Guatemala), tienen una tremenda similitud con los hechos de sangre ocurridos durante la llamada “conquista” de Guatemala en 1524 por Pedro de Alvarado. (8)

Montejo includes this letter comparing the civil war to the arrival of Alvarado to appeal to other mediating agents, namely King Juan Carlos I. The editor of *Brevísima relación*
testimonial may have been seeking the Spanish King’s recognition of the oppression of the Maya and help to exert international influence on the country to enact change. Or perhaps he was simply mimicking Bartolomé de las Casas. Regardless of motivation, not only does Montejo mediate the collection, but readers like King Juan Carlos I potentially do as well. Despite their efforts, however, the King did not respond when Montejo sent him a copy of the book (Warren 122-23).

By citing formative colonial texts, Montejo establishes his authority and the veracity of his claims. He provides readers with full bibliographical citations to their references. In the process he conveys his intellectual erudition and knowledge of these fundamental colonial discourses. At the end of the text entitled “De las profecías de los sacerdotes Mayas,” the reader learns in a footnote that it is a selection that pertains to the Libros de Chilam Balam and that the fragment is on pages 80-82 of El reverso de la conquista, edited by Miguel León Portilla and published in 1974 by Editorial Joaquín Mortiz in Mexico. Directly following this selection, he includes a section entitled, “Los presagios según los informantes Sahagún” which features the sexto and octavo presagio funesto. The footnote which appears after the title attributes this selection to pages 2-5 of the Florentine Codex as it appears in Visión de los vencidos: relaciones indígenas de la conquista, edited by Miguel León Portilla (1984). Because Montejo references the bibliographical information, he explicitly conveys to readers that he is educated and

43 Similar to Montejo’s Brevísima relación testimonial, León-Portilla’s publishing of Visión de los vencidos was also a highly political act. By citing León-Portilla, Montejo potentially places the Mayab’ in dialogue or solidarity with Mexican indigenous movements of the same time period.
familiar with bibliographical conventions of the Academy. As a Maya he has been a marginalized, subaltern subject who was a victim of violence during the civil war. That said, he is not completely disenfranchised given his access to education.

Montejo reaffirms his intellectual erudition by referencing more contemporary academic issues surrounding the testimonio. By indicating to readers that he is aware of these literary texts and academic debates, Montejo communicates that he has the scholastic authority to claim that the violence during the Conquest and the Guatemalan civil war are similar. Specifically, he mentions scholarly debates regarding how to understand the Other. In the introductory note, he claims that his objective is to “escribir la parte más dolorosa de la historia de nuestro pueblo, pues sabemos que mientras los debates intelectuales se desgastan en retóricas estériles sobre cómo entender al “otro”, los pueblos indígenas siguen viviendo las injusticias más horrendas que se han perpetuado a través de los siglos” (Brevisima relación testimonial 3). Although he demonstrates his understanding of these academic debates surrounding how to theorize the Other, he simultaneously criticizes these discussions—he calls them sterile, and thus unproductive, and juxtaposes them with the everyday violence that indigenous communities experience.\footnote{Although Montejo does not cite any specific critic, postcolonial critic Edward Said is perhaps most famous for his discussion of the “Other.” Said maintains that Orientalism is inextricably linked to the West and affirms that the two depend upon one another in order to exist. After problematizing the geographic connotations and the dissimilar nature of the Orient, Said presents his central thesis: “[o]rientalism is—and
He also claims that the *testimonio* is the literary genre that authors most typically use to represent the Other: “el testimonio no es un género literario que queremos escribir por gusto, sino por necesidad y como un compromiso con nuestros pueblos marginados” (*Brevísima relación testimonial* 1). Montejo has presented this information as a *testimonio* out of need—he is aware that the concerns of marginalized communities are conventionally presented via this literary genre, as we have seen with Rigoberta Menchú Tum in *Me llamo*. Implicit in this affirmation is the question of whether working through the *testimonio* is a requisite for subaltern speakers to acquire critical attention from the academic community. Whatever the case, Montejo argues that these scholarly debates do not result in change for the indigenous communities that suffered during the Guatemalan civil war.

The explicit references to conventions and scholarly debates are proof of Montejo’s ability to appropriate the tools of the Academy for his own purposes. This negotiation gives his work another type of audience and is available to him only because he has an education and access to these conventions. While he establishes *Brevísima relación testimonial* in dialogue with seminal texts from the sixteenth century and the debates concerning the *testimonio* at the end of the twentieth century, addressing the Academy is a strategic move. After attracting scholars’ attention, Montejo takes advantage of academic audiences to voice his critique of the Academy’s primary focus on the purely rhetorical debates surrounding the *testimonio*, rather than the often bloody events that examples of this genre attempt to communicate to the outside world.

does not simply represent—a considerable dimension of modern political-intellectual culture, and as such has less to do with the Orient than it does with ‘our’ world’ (12).
Conclusion

The speakers in the accounts of the Guatemalan civil war in this chapter have a range of relationships to subalternity. While in some respects these Maya authors and artists are (or have been) marginalized, they are no longer as disenfranchised as they once were. Montejo was oppressed and held prisoner in Tzalalá, yet when he wrote Testimony and Brevísima relación testimonial he has power insofar as he has mediated other Maya like Doña Malcal in Testimony and the prose and pictographic accounts in Brevísima relación testimonial. The artists in the murals of Comalapa took a voice in their own representation, yet in the creation of the murals, not all of the people in Comalapa were able to contribute to this project. Some had a voice whereas others remained silent and subaltern. Authors like Calixta Gabriel Xiquín are marginalized insofar as they have suffered loss during the civil war. However, she is not completely disenfranchised either—as an author, she has access to the lettered city and its corresponding infrastructure to publish her verses. It is impossible to pinpoint to what degree each of these speakers is subaltern. Factors that cannot be isolated influence subalternity simultaneously.

Drawing from characteristics of the genre of the testimonio, the poetry, murals, and narrative accounts that we have seen complicate how Maya authors and artists represent Maya-ness. Contrary to the essentialized representations of all Maya as victims in Rigoberta Menchú Tum’s Me llamo and Calixta Gabriel Xiquín’s Tejiendo los sucesos en el tiempo, the Maya were not equally marginalized during the Guatemalan civil war. Being Maya did not equate innocence in the bloodshed. Rather, these accounts show the
internal strife among the Maya, exposing the complex identity politics informing Maya-ness and their victimization during the armed conflict.

Because the army forced Maya to become members of civil patrols, the Maya had an active role in the violence against other Maya. In none of these examples, however, do the artists and authors of the accounts describe violent acts that they themselves committed against other Maya. As Kay Warren states in her analysis of *Brevísima relación testimonial*, “most significantly, no one in this collection actually speaks of his own personal violence towards others” (125). This is not only true in Montejo’s text, but also in the case of Gabriel Xiquín’s poetry collection, the murals in San Juan Comalapa, and Montejo’s other testimonial account. Could this difference between Menchú Tum’s testimony and these other accounts, in terms of how they represent the Maya during the war, be in part due to their public visibility? To obtain international and domestic sympathy and recognition of the abuses that the Maya suffered during the armed conflict, perhaps it was not strategic for Menchú Tum to admit that the Maya were also the perpetrators of such violence. Precisely because of her fame and ability to attract an audience, it was not in the best interest of her cause to reveal that the Maya were not always the victims.

Menchú Tum is a well-known public figure both in Guatemala and abroad who has the power to attract an audience. After her *testimonio* grew in popularity, she gained fame as the winner of a Nobel Peace Prize and ran in the presidential elections in 2007 and 2011 with the WINAQ political party. Given that she has access to power, is she still subaltern? When revisiting the issue of the *testimonio* in 1991, Beverley declared that Menchú Tum is not subaltern, but “rather something more like an ‘organic intellectual’ of
the subaltern who speaks to the hegemony by means of a metonymy of self in the name and in the place of it” (“Through All Things Modern” 11). As an empowered indigenous woman who has spoken on behalf of other Maya, she is an international icon for indigenous rights activism. Even on May 10, 2013, during Judge Jazmín Barrios’s delivery of ex-dictator Efraín Ríos Montt’s guilty verdict during his trial for genocide and crimes against humanity of the Ixil Maya during the civil war, prominent U.S. newspapers turned their attention to Menchú Tum when detailing who was in attendance. Mike McDonald, a reporter for the *Chicago Tribune*, noted that “Nobel Peace Prize winner Rigoberta Menchu was among them [the Maya women wearing colorful traditional clothes and head-dresses closely followed the proceedings]” (n. pag.). Although eventually the Constitutionality Court (La Corte de Constitucionalidad) overturned the guilty verdict on May 20, 2013, as Guatemalan journalists Byron Vásquez and Manuel Hernández reported in *Prensa Libre*, this trial is another example of the attention that Menchú Tum commands in a room, who has an influential presence even decades after the publication of *Me llamo*.

Although they are not as famous as the Maya-K’iche’ Nobel laureate, Calixta Gabriel Xiquín and the creators of the murals use culturally significant means—poetry and pictographic representation—to engage their audiences. Gabriel Xiquín breaks with lyric convention and uses a collective “I” which allies her poetry to *testimonio* and the epic tradition. With the murals in San Juan Comalapa, tourists and anthropologists have been the primary audiences. Traditionally, anthropologists have studied indigenous cultural production in terms of their Otherness. In Carey and Little’s anthropological study of the murals, however, they “place the significance […] within the oral historical
narratives and ethnographic contexts of the artists” (6). However, cultural and literary critics may analyze issues including but not limited to audience and representation, as I have done here. Could it be that Maya who produce their versions of these historical events through poetry and visuality have found strategic media through which to represent the armed conflict, while simultaneously escaping the scrutiny that narrative prose accounts like *Me llamo* have received?

Even though Montejó appropriates the word “testimony” in the titles of his texts, identifying both *Testimony* and *Brevísima relación testimonial* with the genre, the Jakaltek Maya writer’s prose accounts were not the focus of the kind of critiques associated with the Menchú Tum controversy. With *Me llamo*, for example, academic audiences denounced the mediation by Burgos, problematizing her influence on the overall representation of the narrative. In Montejó’s *Testimony*, while Montejó editorially influenced the testimonies of other Maya, we see that mediation may not always be negative. It can be necessary to make the accounts accessible to audiences that require cultural and linguistic translation to understand them. Are audiences more forgiving when another Maya does the mediation? Is it perhaps that non-Maya audiences recognize that Maya have the necessary cultural capital to reveal what Menchú Tum described as their “secrets?”

45 With *Brevísima relación testimonial*, Montejó dialogues with academic

45 At the end of her account, Menchú Tum concludes by stating, “Claro, aquí, en toda mi narración yo creo que doy una imagen de eso. Pero, sin embargo, todavía sigo ocultando mi identidad como indígena. Sigo ocultando lo que yo considero que nadie sabe, ni siquiera un antropólogo, ni un intelectual, por más que tenga muchos libros, no saben distinguir todos nuestros secretos” (my emphasis, 271). For a more detailed
audiences by referencing colonial texts and conventions from the sixteenth century as well as more recent debates concerning the testimonio as a genre, yet this text has also escaped criticism relating to polemics of the testimonio. This is perhaps because his relationship with the Academy is multi-faceted. On the one hand, Montejo published Brevisima relación testimonial with the Guatemala Scholars Network, an organization of academics whose research interests lie in Guatemala. Because the Guatemala Scholars Network agreed to publish his text, he knew from the outset that academics were interested in the book. Despite his alliance with this organization, he distances himself from the Academy and their preoccupation with the testimonio and its surrounding debates. In this way, he simultaneously uses the Academy to publish his account, yet he also criticizes academics for focusing more on the controversies concerning veracity and definitions of the genre of the testimonio than the bloody events these accounts describe. Montejo negotiates an ambivalent relationship with the Academy, which is particularly interesting given that he himself is an academic.

In this chapter, we have seen how Maya have appropriated the genre of the testimonio to take a voice in their own representation in relation to the violence of the civil war and their own identity as Guatemalan Maya, and consequently how they have mediated a relationship with different audiences. The ways in which audiences have approached and understood these accounts underscores that reception is a key characteristic of testimonios. The following chapter will continue to address how Maya have used different media to represent themselves in the context of the Pan-Maya analysis of Menchú Tum’s rhetorical use of secrets, see Doris Sommer (Proceed With Caution 115-37).
Movement that grew out of the post-war negotiations between the Maya and the Guatemalan government. This analysis specifically examines how Kaqchikel and K’iche’ poets have maintained and lost agency by working through culturally significant means deriving from orality: poetry and songs.
Chapter 2: “(N/K)inya(’a) chike(’e) jub(’a/iq’), xa man ronojel ta(j)”: Negotiating Maya-ness via Performances of Kaqchikel and K’iche’ Songs and Poetry

The early years of the [Pan-Maya] movement were focused on issues of cultural origin and self-definition—“Who are we if we are not the negative stereotypes we have been taught?”
—Kay Kay B. Warren

From 1978 to 1983 under President Fernando Romeo Lucas García and his successor Efraín Ríos Montt (1982-1983), the Guatemalan military regime launched a genocidal campaign in the mountainous countryside to counter any form of subversive behavior, as the testimonios analyzed in the previous chapter describe. Many K’iche’ and Kaqchikel have described this period as “ri violencia.”

In the years that followed, the

46 In addition to the section headings, the title of this chapter incorporates both Kaqchikel and K’iche’. Because the texts that I will examine are in both languages, they each contribute to the titles, so there is not a privileging of one language over the other. When there are conflicting orthographies, the Kaqchikel is presented first and then followed by K’iche’ in parenthesis. Where there are glottallized vowels in Kaqchikel, I have indicated the corresponding duplication of these vowels in K’iche’. Kaqchikel and K’iche’ are similar languages in terms of phonetics and share many cognates; however, the orthographic conventions governing them are different. That established, the first part of the title translates to English as “I give you all a little, but not everything.”

47 This excerpt is from Indigenous Movements and Their Critics: Pan-Maya Activism in Guatemala (37).

48 In Spanish, this historical period is known as “la violencia,” a term which underscores the brutal force that the government used in their offensive. In Mayan languages, “ri” is a definite article like “the” in English. Similar to its English
Guatemalan government established the Historical Clarification Commission (Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico) to investigate the human rights violations from January 1962 until December 1996, with the signing of the Peace Accords. In her study of the Montt administration, Virginia Garrard-Burnett notes that the truth commissions estimate that 80% of the victims during the early 1980s were Maya (7). Although the military targeted both ladino and indigenous people, during the final years of the armed conflict the majority of the victims were Maya. Following the conflicts of the 1970s and 1980s, the country proceeded with the truth commissions and was more willing to listen to its indigenous, marginalized speakers—government officials allowed the Maya to give their testimonies in these national assemblies. More recently in May 2013 in the Guatemalan courts, Ixil women who survived the civil war testified against Efrain Ríos Montt when the former dictator was on trial for crimes against humanity and genocide.49

counterpart, “ri” does not carry any form of gender agreement, whereas definite articles in Spanish do, “el” or “la.” The expression “ri violencia” is a linguistic appropriation of the Spanish term into Kaqchikel, which evidences how the Kaqchikel use Spanish terms when speaking in the indigenous language. The expression “ri violencia” exemplifies that the borders between Spanish and Kaqchikel are often fluid given that the Romance language has linguistically infiltrated the indigenous one.  

49 Garrard-Burnett has noted that there are hundreds of testimonies of survivors in the truth commissions. They have commented on the torture and death of their loved ones, such as for example, a widow who said, “I was left like a bird on dry branches” (qtd. in Garrard-Burnett 9).
The government permitted Maya to have a voice in dominant discussions, allowing them to speak for, and thus represent, themselves. After the violence the State established spaces that they were willing for their indigenous populations to occupy. Borrowing from Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, Charles R. Hale and Rosamel Millamán describe the indigenous subject in these circumstances as an “indio permitido.” Hale and Millamán explain that the expression refers to “the identity category that results when neoliberal regimes actively recognize and open space for collective indigenous presence, even agency” (284). At the crux of the Neoliberal mindset, every subject is a self-centered, rational actor within the market seeking to accumulate resources for him/herself, egotistically acting in his or her own best interests (Keohane 52-53; Krasner 190; Strange 487). In the context of Guatemala following the period of conflict, the elite have renegotiated how much to cede to indigenous Guatemalans to avoid what they feared would turn into an indigenous revolt.\(^5\) Although Maya are using their voices and

\(^5\) In his study concerning racism in Guatemala, Hale traces the fear of an indigenous revolt to the events in Patzicia in 1944, when an indigenous community organized an uprising and killed fourteen Ladinos (\textit{Más que un Indio} 122). In the context of Guatemalan race relations, the term “Ladino” is similar to a mestizo. More specifically, Guatemalan critic Mario Roberto Morales has claimed that “Ladino refers to those who, accepting or not an evident biological and cultural miscegenation, identify with the values of the so-called ‘Western culture,’ follow their models and accommodate them to the reality of their countries, usually scorning what they perceive as autochtonous, indigenous, and different from those models, unless the differences are viewed as an archaeological trace of a mythic, splendidous past” (1). \textit{Ladinos} have an
have some agency in their representation, given that the government allowed this, the 
elite still maintained power to permit—or deny—the indigenous citizens of Guatemala a 
voice in national discourses.

While the Maya and the government were renegotiating their relationship in 
postwar Guatemala, the Maya extended their agency to form the Pan-Maya Movement. 
Given that most of the massacres occurred in the countryside against the Maya, issues of 
ethnicity played a central role in the negotiations preceding the Peace Accords of 1996:

In many ways, the social struggles of the armed conflict opened up 
discussion about ethnicity and its place in the future of Guatemala:
Beyond their implications in other aspects, the social struggles of the 
1970s were decisive in defining the ethnic problem, emphasizing Maya 
agency and testing in real life any unfounded beliefs and superficial 
theorizing on the subject. After what has happened, no one denies the 
depth of the conflict nor, in progressive sectors of society, the legitimacy 
of ethnic identity. (Payeras 132)

These discussions about ethnicity and legitimate forms of Maya agency lead to the first 
manifestations of the Pan-Maya Movement. In many ways indigenous community leaders 
built the Pan-Maya Movement out of the ashes of the violence (Garrard-Burnett 15). The 
Maya took advantage of their recent legitimacy and agency to promote the revitalization 
of their languages and cultures with the Movement.

ambivalent relationship with their indigenous past—they emphasize their European 
heritage, yet they also exalt their Pre-hispanic indigenous ancestry.
The lack of a voice that some Maya have in dominant discourses (indigenous, Guatemalan, or otherwise) establishes these excluded subjects as generally subaltern. In the Guatemalan Pan-Maya Movement of recent decades, however, it is not that the Maya have gained a voice for the first time; it is more the case that the elite have traditionally ignored their voices. At times, this had terminal consequences, for not only did their audiences not listen, they silenced Maya voices altogether by massacring the people. This was the case during the 1970s and 1980s when the military government launched its campaign against the guerrilla insurgency in rural Guatemala. What initially began as a way to combat “subversive ideologies” eventually led to some of the bloodiest years for the indigenous population of the country.

Although the global visibility of the indigenous people of Guatemala has increased since the 1980s due to the Pan-Maya Movement, the Maya have in fact engaged in processes of transcultural communication for centuries. The Maya had contact with other cultures before the arrival of the Europeans to the Americas, which can be observed through linguistic differences and points of contact. For example, to the north the Mexica dominated the central valley of Mexico, and there are influences of Nahuatl in languages that derive from Proto-Maya given the contact between the Maya and the Mexica (Tedlock, “Towards a Poetics” 189; Maxwell and Hill 62-67). Moreover, most scholars agree that there are 22 linguistic communities, whereas some quote that there are 23. Although Rabinal Achi and K’iche’ are the same linguistically, the ALMG (Academia de Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala) considers them as two separate languages for political reasons. In other words, cultural differences shape the organization of language communities, and even within language communities there are cultural and
linguistic differences that separate speakers of one region to another. In her study of Kaqchikel language use in San Marcos La Laguna, Julie Becker Richards indicates that “the language variety spoken in each municipio is distinguishable from all others by pronunciation and other linguistic features. Lake area inhabitants regularly use features of pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary to mark their own cultural identity as well as to identify the origin of others” (80). These constructions of identity based on linguistic and cultural difference demonstrate that the Maya have historically had contact with people who do not form part of their communities—their geographic and linguistic neighbors. In this sense, the Maya have had contact with “outsiders” for centuries; their cultures have never been completely isolated from other communities.

One characteristic of the Pan-Maya Movement, however, that sets it apart from other indigenous movements is how they have, perhaps ironically, needed to geographically and ethnically “detterritorialize” their Mayan identity in order to specify it. Arjun Appadurai’s concept of “ethnoscapes” speaks to the ways in which ethnic subjects like the Maya engage in processes of globalization.\textsuperscript{51} Though in the Pan-Maya Movement, the indigenous of Guatemala have traveled abroad, published in translation, and worked through the Internet in order to represent themselves in international circles, and participate in these Maya ethnoscapes. Maya have increased their participation in global flows of production, and thus, their potential visibility as well. In the context of the twenty and twenty-first centuries, more and more Maya use modern technology, refuting “ethnostalgia,” a term which anthropologist Diane Nelson has coined. According to

\textsuperscript{51} For more information on Appadurai’s ideas concerning “ethnoscapes,” see my introduction.
Nelson, “Maya-hackers are decoding and reprogramming such familiar binary
oppositions as those between past and future, between being rooted in geography and
being mobile, between being traditional as opposed to being modern” (249). She shows
how many Maya contest the idealization of tradition and modern citizens’ longing for a
connection to the sincerity and mystery of the past (249). It is not incongruous to
conceive of the Maya as appropriating the technological tools of the Information Age. In
my analysis of Maya ethnoscapes, I will focus on poetry—published in collections as
well as online videos—because of its intrinsic connection to orality in Mayan
communities; the lyricism present in the Popol Wuj informs orals traditions in present
day Mayan cultures.

Specifically, I will examine the work of some Maya, such as Juan Yool Gómez,
Humberto Ak’abal, and Kaqchikel children who have involved themselves in processes
of globalization. I will discuss Juan Yool Gómez’s collection of Kaqchikel children’s
poetry Pach’un tzij kichin ak ’wala’ and the YouTube recording of children singing,
presented online as “Mayan Children Singing.” I will compare these texts with Humberto
Ak’abal’s various versions of “Xalolilo lelele’,” an onomatopoeic song in K’iche’.
Ak’abal has published adaptations of the song in various poetry collections: Entre patojos
(2002); El animalero (1990); Ajyuq’: El animalero (1995); El animalero: The Animal
Gathering (2008); and his selection in Arte indígena: literature y pintura (2008). All of
these poets and performers take part in the formation of “Mayan” ethnoscapes through
their presence on the Internet and by releasing their poetry in translation—directing their
verses and their performances of what is Maya to international audiences. Each speaker
thus performs his/her own version of Maya-ness, essentializing his or her ethnic identity for their spectators in different ways.

Although these examples demonstrate how Maya speakers have agency in their representations, they also show how other people apart from the Maya continue to influence—and mediate—these texts. In the translations I examine the authors have various ways of maintaining control of the texts; since these speakers do not translate everything for their foreign audiences, they limit their audience’s agency, obliging them to “listen” to the performers’ indigenous voices. Although withholding information from their audiences is a form of maintaining agency, working through orality may ultimately limit who is able to identify him/herself as “Maya,” and thus who is capable of projecting a “Mayan” voice as a performer. While essentializing Maya-ness via orality amplifies the voices of some Maya speakers, it negates the validity of other speakers who may identify as Maya, but who are not necessarily proficient in a Mayan language. Put differently, at the same time that the use of indigenous languages increases the agency of some Maya voices, it marginalizes those who identify with conflicting forms of Maya-ness. This summary outlines the framework for this chapter and refers to a number of theoretical concepts that I will define as they become pertinent to my analysis.

Rí Maya’ taq ama(a)q’: Essentialization of Maya-ness

Even though the Maya may belong to distinct linguistic communities that do not share all the same traits in the Pan-Maya Movement, people have united to present a “Maya” ethnicity to outside audiences, as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has explained with her concept of strategic essentialism. The participants in the Pan-Maya Movement have

\footnote{52 For more information, see Chapter 1.}
essentialized what they culturally share, strategically minimizing their differences to produce a common “Maya” identity for outside audiences. As well as eliding linguistic differences, those that are affiliated with the Pan-Maya Movement have promoted Maya-ness as a specifically indigenous form of knowledge. In her summary of the development of the Pan-Maya Movement, anthropologist Kay B. Warren indicates that many Maya intellectuals have taken a public role in the movement, exemplifying the fusion of cultural identity and professional occupation that rarely existed prior to the early 1970s (37). These figures draw on various markers to identify as Maya, such as language and dress. These factors then contribute to their performance of “Maya-ness” in the public eye, and thus their authority to speak from this position, which is imbued with identity politics at the national level. This unique locus of enunciation is strategic since it is a subject position no one else can occupy and political interests no one else has to defend. The essentialism is tactical and situational: they advance this position to claim unique authority as social critics. Their goal is clear: to undermine the authoritativeness of non-Maya, or kaxlan, accounts—be they Guatemalan Ladinos or foreigners—which, until the recent indigenous activism and resistance resurfaced, monopolized the representation of Maya culture and national history. (Warren 37)

---

53 Examples of these public intellectuals are Demetrio Cojtí and Victor Montejo.
Since historically non-Maya accounts have monopolized the representation of Maya culture in national discourses, this projection of a uniquely Maya form of knowledge is a way to take back authority to represent and speak for themselves.\textsuperscript{54}

Some of the essentializing, however, is beyond the control of the indigenous speakers. For instance, in the specific examples of poems and songs to be discussed in this chapter, although their authors linguistically pertain to K’iche’ or Kaqchikel communities, the majority of their international audiences do not speak either language and are unable to distinguish between Amerindian languages. These sounds may simply be decoded as “Maya” to outside audiences even though the texts are in Kaqchikel or K’iche’. Another example of how essentialization of Maya-ness escapes the Maya is the way in which foreign audiences may perceive traditional clothing. For many outsiders seeing the typical woven Mayan is synonymous with seeing “Maya-ness.” For this reason, anthropologist Diane M. Nelson describes Mayan clothing as sight specific, “apparently making identity completely available to the gaze: seeing traje means one is seeing an Indian” (181). Although each town has a distinct design, to the viewer who may not be familiar with these differences, the clothing translates as “Maya” regardless of its municipal affiliation which can be distinguished by insiders. In this way, outsiders may essentialize Maya-ness in ways indigenous actors cannot always determine.

\textbf{Ri taq performance kichin (keech) ri maya’ taq ama(a)q’: Mayan Performances and Performativity}

\textsuperscript{54} Since only the Maya are able to occupy this position of authority, many non-Maya in Guatemala have contested that these indigenous efforts are merely a reverse form of racism (Hale, \textit{Más que un Indio} 117-18).
Humberto Ak’abal, Juan Yool Gómez, and the Kaqchikel children in the YouTube video “Mayan Children Singing” also perform Maya-ness to their international audiences. In their respective performances of “Maya” ethnicity, they direct their performances (in part) to people who do not belong to the indigenous communities of Guatemala, addressing audiences that are culturally different from themselves. To use Edward Said’s terminology, these performers may regard some of their audiences as “Others.”\(^{55}\) In turn, the audiences may also perceive the indigenous performers as “Others,” thus reinforcing their differences from these Maya speakers. Marvin Carlson, whose work is crucial to the development of performance studies as an academic discipline, has affirmed that in the term “performance” there is always a doubling, an elusive “other.” For him, a performance is for someone else, an “other,” even when the audience may also be the person doing the performance (73). Given the alterity that is often inherent in these performances of Maya-ness, the speakers do not just present the texts but their ethnic difference as well.

In the performances we will analyze here the repeated presentation of Maya-ness also evidences what Judith Butler has described as “performativity.” In her explanation of the concept as related to gender, Butler argues that structured repetition constructs and reinforces what may otherwise appear “natural”:

> [G]ender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceede [sic]; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts* […].

\(^{55}\) For more information regarding Edward Said’s conceptualization of the “Other,” see Chapter 1.
Significantly, if gender is instituted through acts which are internally discontinuous, the appearance of substance is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief. (Emphasis in the original, 270)

Such repetitions legitimate constructions of gender identity; for Butler, these social constructions are naturalized and reinforced each time they are performed. Maya-ness may also be naturalized through repeated acts. Both in the Pan-Maya Movement and outside of it, through performativity or repeated acts we recognize and naturalize markers of “Maya” ethnicity. Traditional clothing and details of appearance as well as words and discourses that pertain to oral traditions play prominent roles as markers of ethnicity and Maya-ness. To ensure that their audiences recognize their performances as legitimately (or authentically) Maya, the speakers incorporate these visual and auditory characteristics when they stage Maya-ness in their self-presentation.

**Ri qula(a)j chuqa’ ri performance: Orality and Performance**

Because I analyze Kaqchikel and K’iche’ oral discourses, it is important to define “orality” in the particular context of Amerindian languages. According to K’ulb’il Yol Twitz Paxil, the Academy of Mayan Languages of Guatemala (AMLG), in Mayan contexts orality is a medium through which the acquisition and transmission of cultural values, knowledge, and cosmovision occur. The organization claims that “la oralidad es entonces un sistema de expresión perfectamente auténtica de una sociedad, que se transmite en el transcurrir del tiempo como un bagaje de conocimientos que cada pueblo lo va adquiriendo” (“Introducción” 7). This definition illustrates how orality and
authenticity are concepts that have historically been linked; this connection renders this definition problematic because “authenticity” is a subjective construction that varies depending on perspective. That aside, this explanation is still relevant because it describes the communication of the cultural information in a community over time. It also demonstrates that concepts of time and the presence of a collective knowledge are key in Guatemalan indigenous definitions of orality.

Moreover, orality entails a repeated negotiation of meaning. In his research concerning oral traditions in what was once Yugoslavia, Albert B. Lord draws attention to this issue. According to Lord, “[t]he world of “orality” is a world of talk. One literally hears of what has happened in the past, as well as of what is happening in one’s own day” (emphasis in original, 19). He suggests that by listening to oral poetry, the sounds suggest certain images as well as ideas that are represented in the mind’s eye, conveying these independently of other media. Lord also recognizes the variability in oral discourses:

*Variability* is a possible term, if one understands by it that there is not the urge to use exactly the same words one used the last time that one expressed a given idea. One does not think about it. One may use the same words as last time, but the last time was no more formative than any other time. Alternatives, options, have been developed over generations, and the speaker or singer recapitulates the process in his own experience. This concept of variability and multiformity is present in varying degrees in all types of oral discourses; it is inherent in sound itself. (Emphasis in the original, 20)
Oral poetry is not the same from one performance to the next. There are options to convey ideas, indicating that orality is characterized by fluidity and dynamism. Like orality, translation is also subject to variability—there is often more than one way to translate a given text, both linguistically and culturally speaking.

(N/K)inquasaj ri tzi(i)j chuqa’ (n/k)inquasaj ri b’a(a)nob’ä(a)l: Translation and Cultural Translation

I am using the term “translation” to refer both to the linguistic and cultural transaction between two languages. On the one hand, translation denotes the negotiation of one language to another. It is perhaps for this reason that Translation Studies was originally subsumed under the field of linguistics. That notwithstanding, texts are not only imbued with linguistic meaning, but cultural meaning as well:

[T]he translation of a literary text became a transaction not [just] between two languages, or a somewhat mechanical sounding act of linguistic ‘substitution’ as Catford had put it, but rather a more complex negotiation between two cultures. The unit of translation [is] no longer a word or a sentence or a paragraph or a page or even a text, but indeed a whole language and culture in which that text was constituted. (Trivedi 3)

Each language embodies a particular cultural perspective, so one goal of translation is to situate the words in their cultural context. In addition to the semantic meaning, language is a vehicle of culture, influenced by the specific way in which speakers of the source language view the world. According to David Carey, this is one of the reasons why

people should care about language death; he states that “each language reflects a unique encapsulation and interpretation of human existence” (44). Following this logic, by learning other languages, we learn another way of understanding the world and human experience within it.

One of the basic premises of a translation is to make a text accessible for a reader who does not speak the source language. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak explains that there is recognition that the speakers of the source language are different from those that speak the target language, yet they are similar enough to warrant including them in the potential readership. In the words of Spivak, “[a]bsolute alterity or otherness is thus differed-deferred into an other self who resembles us, however minimally, and with whom we can communicate” (370-71). Homi Bhabha has also addressed the issue of cultural translation in terms of alterity. Drawing from Walter Benjamin, Bhabha underscores the German critic’s use of the concept of “foreignness” to posit cultural translation as a process of human migration, or movement from what is known to what is foreign, or unknown (321-27). For the purposes of this paper, the term “cultural translation” refers to the processes that must take place so that foreign audiences are able to comprehend the various poems and songs, in addition to the finite linguistic act of providing versions of the texts translated into other languages such as Spanish and English. Because “translation” involves processes during the creation stage, it is a dimension of mediation; throughout this chapter I problematize the effects of cultural and linguistic translation in relation to performances of “Mayan” identities.

57 Bhabha draws from Benjamin’s seminal essay, “The Task of the Translator” (1923).
The central argument of this chapter is to examine the effects of essentializing Kaqchikel and K’iche’ orality to represent what is Maya via performances of poetry and songs by Yool Gómez, Ak’abal, and the Kaqchikel children in the YouTube video. In my analysis, we will see how these examples share four elements. First, these speakers transfer oral discourses to the written page in the published poetry collections and to cyberspace in the videos on the Internet, essentializing Kaqchikel and K’iche’ orality in different ways. They extend their texts to audiences who do not necessarily pertain to their oral communities. Consequently, it is important to analyze how they translate their texts to these “outsiders.” Second, although these examples demonstrate how Maya speakers have become agents in their representation, the essentialization of Maya-ness also gets away from those who initially began the process. Other people become “co-performers” by mediating these representations. Third, I will discuss how these speakers maintain at least some of their agency through techniques that resist appropriation. These multiple agents complicate questions of collaboration and equality amongst these “performers.” Finally, we will see how this form of retaining agency for the Maya affects who is able to project a “Maya” voice.

“(N/K)insipaj chike(’e) qak’aslem”: “I give you all our life”

As I have indicated in the introduction to this project, indigenous voices often were absent from literary canons and discussions concerning politics and law dominated by the lettered city, both regionally and nationally. In the Pan-Maya Movement, however, many writers have appropriated the lettered city’s infrastructure. They have worked through conventions of writing by using presses to publish texts that have traditionally existed via orality. Part of the function of the Pan-Maya Movement has been to found
organizations which solely address Mayan themes, such as Fundación CEDIM, Cholsamaj, and Editorial Piedra Santa. All of these entities have supported the publication of various Maya authors, including but not limited to Yool Gómez and Ak’abal. Arturo Arias describes this move as a “belated embrace of the ‘lettered city’” (*Taking Their Word* 79). That said, the Maya publishing in the context of the Pan-Maya Movement have worked through print discourses in a distinct way insofar as they have created their own spaces of representation within the lettered city. Maya intellectuals have developed publishing houses for the indigenous of Guatemala to project their voices.\(^{58}\) In this process, Maya poets have varying levels of visibility—no two have received the same amount of attention.

Humberto Ak’abal, for example, is perhaps one of the most well-known Maya poets today.\(^{59}\) He has released his poetry with numerous presses. Nationally, he has worked with Cholsamaj, Artemis Edinter, Editorial Cultura, and Ediciones Tz’ukulik. He has also published his work with presses in other countries such as El Salvador,

\(^{58}\) Although Maya writers have developed their own publishing houses, this is not the first instance of subaltern representation within the lettered city. Since the nineteenth century subaltern voices in Latin America have been represented through print technologies (primarily via newspapers).

\(^{59}\) In his study of Guatemalan resistance poetry Marc Zimmerman states that few writers from Guatemala, indigenous or not, have received the visibility that Ak’abal has (*Literature* 332).
Venezuela, Mexico, and Spain. His poetry has also been featured in literary anthologies, such as *The Oxford Book of Latin American Poetry* (2009). He has published in K’iche’ and in translation in English, Spanish, French, Italian, German, Japanese, Catalán, and Swedish. In 2004 Ak’abal received the Miguel Angel Asturias Literary Prize, but he declined the award for political reasons. Thus, Ak’abal’s poetry has received substantial attention within Guatemala as well as abroad.

Other Maya poets, such as Kaqjay Juan Yool Gómez, have not enjoyed as much visibility as Ak’abal. Unlike the K’iche’ poet, Yool Gómez has solely worked with organizations within Guatemala directly associated with the country’s Pan-Maya Movement to publish his poetry. In 1996, he released *Pach’un tzij kichin ak’wala’: Poesía infantil en idioma kaqchikel* through CEDIM/FAFO. He has also written several collections of poetry that bilingual educators use for the instruction of Kaqchikel as a

---

60 The following are some of the presses with whom Ak’abal has worked abroad: Editorial Piedra Santa (El Salvador), Editores Latinoamericana (Venezuela), Editorial Praxis (Mexico), Centro de Ediciones de la Diputación de Málaga (Spain), and Excmo. Ayuntamiento de Carmona (Spain).

61 It was the first time in history that the Miguel Ángel Asturias Literary Prize, the country’s most prestigious, was awarded to a Maya writer. However, Ak’abal declined the award, “citing a long list of racist acts and abuses that would have made him feel treasonous to his people had he accepted this ‘Ladino’ award” (Arias, *Taking Their Word* 180).
second language in primary schools. His poetry, consequently, is primarily available through publishers within his country of origin. These differences in publication history between Ak’abal and Yool Gómez mean that each pertains to a specific context and enjoys a distinct level of visibility within the lettered city.

Ak’abal and Yool Gómez adapt oral discourses to written form in each of their texts. Their transcription onto the written page changed the written presentation of their texts. However, even when transcribed, these oral discourses still pertain to certain discursive contexts and are not static. The suspended orality continues in a distinct context each time the text is read; authors cannot predict with certainty who will continue these discourses by reading their texts. Ong has argued that “[n]o utterance can exist outside discourse, outside a transaction setting. Putting an utterance into script can only interrupt discourse, string it out indefinitely in time and space. But not ‘fix’ it” (“Text as Interpretation” 148). Because it is impossible to “fix” oral discourses through writing, orality and writing are both dynamic. Therefore, the written versions of “Xalolilo lelele”

---

62 In 1990, working with the Instituto de Lingüística at the Universidad Rafael Landívar in Guatemala, Juan Yool Gómez published a series of monolingual educational texts written in Kaqchikel for children: Ri xokoq’ a’ (Level 1), Ri kinimaq’ ij ri chikopi’ (Level 2), Ri xta koyopa’ (Level 3), and Ri tzijonik kichin kan qate’ qatata’ (Level 4). These texts comprise the collection entitled, “Lírica y narrativa tradicional de Guatemala.” This same year, he also published Ri chikopi’ pa Kaqchikel: Ri xtaq tz’ikin chuqa ch’aqa chik xik’anela, which is a bilingual textbook concerning the birds of the region, written in Kaqchikel with a Spanish translation.
and *Pach’un tzij kichin ak’wala’* are not static either, despite the fact that they are printed adaptations of oral performances.

In some cases it is possible for speakers to renegotiate oral traditions and appropriate conventions of writing. Raúl Bueno has proposed that in late 20th century Peru these negotiations of orality occur in what he describes as an “oral city.” This hybridization of the lettered city and the oral countryside creates an alternative city: “hecha de acuerdos verbales y de transgresiones a la normal impresa. Es decir, una ‘ciudad oral’ […] , no necesariamente analfabeta, sino basada en una formalidad ajena a la escritura, y por lo tanto ajena a la oficina, el documento, el sello, la firma y los papeles oficiales” (259). According to Bueno, indigenous communities may innovate written tradition in order to combat the potential annihilation of their cultures. Describing the process as a result of Western influence, modernization, and globalization, Bueno argues that: “si la alternativa a morir es cambiar, entonces se cambia lo aparente como estrategia de preservación de lo inmanente y sustancial” (258). In order to continue to exist, authors may engage in renegotiations of their traditions, often times specifically in relation to orality.

Ak’abal and Yool Gómez, for example, renegotiate the presentation of the oral discourses that inform their poetry through translation. In his discussion of the Mayan poetics of the *Popol Wuj*, Dennis Tedlock enumerates the various levels of translation in this sacred work that has passed from the oral to the written—first, from hieroglyphs to a Greco-Roman alphabetization, and then to other languages like Spanish or English. For Tedlock, what is significant is that the poetry is not just *what* is translated, but rather *it* is what is translated insofar as “translation is one of the principal means by which the
poems are constructed in the first place. Translation into a further language at a later date, like nonverbatim quotation at a later date, then, becomes a continuation of a process already under way in the poem itself” (“Toward a Poetics” 189). According to Tedlock, linguistic and cultural translation is one of the initial processes in the creation of a poem. Humberto Ak’abal and Juan Yool Gómez both translate their verses from the spoken realm to Greco-Roman alphabetizations of their respective indigenous languages in their written poetry collections. They then translate much of their verse to other languages such as Spanish and English.

In Ak’abal and Gómez’s poetry the translation from oral to written also informs the organization of the texts on the page. Another level of “translation” from oral poetry occurs when it is made to comply with Western conventions concerning written verse. Ethnopoetry scholar Dell Hymes indicates that, in poetry, how to present an oral text on the page “implies an assumption as to its form, and that form involves lines” (“Use All There is to Use” 85). When transcribing oral poetry into a written work, there is an anticipated set of formal expectations for organizing the work on the written page.

Ak’abal and Yool Gómez insert line breaks, stanza divisions, ellipses, punctuation, and other technical devices in the presentation of their poetry. These editorial decisions may be arbitrary, as the plurality of written versions of Ak’abal’s “Xalolilo lelele” evidence.

Ak’abal’s versions of the K’iche’ song reaffirm the fluidity and dynamism associated with oral traditions by showing how the same text can be adapted to the written page in multiple ways. In Ak’abal’s published editions of the K’iche’ song, there are discrepancies concerning orthography and the organization of the verses on the page. In the majority of the poetry collections, for example, the first words of the text,
“Xalolilo, xalolilo” do not feature a repetition of the vowels in the middle. Yet, in the version of the text in *El animalero: The Animal Gathering* (2008), Ak’abal extends the vocalic “a” to indicate that the sound spans a longer duration of time. This same poetic technique appears in the verses that incorporate, “xaaa.” With the exception of *El animalero*, in each poetry collection Ak’abal spells the word in this manner. In the latter, instead of a triplification of the vowel, it is spelled with six: “xaaaaaa.” Apart from the vocalic extension of the words in “Xalolilo lelele’,” the published versions also differ with respect to how Ak’abal divides the verses. In all of the poetry collections Ak’abal structures the poem in a similar way; in these editions the words “Xalolilo, xalolilo” (1) are both part of the first verse. In *El animalero*, however, the poet separates the words so that each occupies its own verse: “Xaaaaalaalolilo / xaaaaalolilo” (1-2). These differences illustrate that even what is supposedly the “same” text can take a variety of forms each time the author adapts from oral to written. Furthermore, the vocalic elongations as well as the breaks in the stanzas offer various ways of organizing the text in terms of extension and pausing, which are markers of time that generally vary in orality from one performance to the next.

Each technology—recording or writing—presents different ways of renegotiating the media through which these speakers communicate. And with continued developments to improve these existing technologies, the potential media speakers can use continues to evolve. All of my examples so far illustrate what Walter Ong has described as “secondary orality” and Paul Zumthor’s concept of *mediats*, both of which evidence ways in which
orality has been influenced by mass media technologies. Unlike books which may visually present oral texts, mediats recuperate the voice and restore it to its authority in orality. While mediats may or may not incorporate visual characteristics, the voice benefits from these media technologies insofar as mediats provide ways of recording and reproducing voices (18-19). Taking into consideration Ong and Zumthor’s commentaries, our knowledge of written cultures influences the way we “hear” the performances. Although audiences may expect online videos to be closer to real “oral” performances, all of these are recorded versions of the original performances that are mediated by print culture.

The act of transcribing and translating poetic performances indicates a search for audiences outside of the authors’ respective indigenous communities. According to Dell Hymes, in traditional oral cultures a sense of community exists insofar as the “[p]erformer and audience share an implicit knowledge of language and ways of speaking” (“Introduction” 6). However, given the various levels of translation in the poetry collections and the online videos, these speakers have projected their voices to audiences both within Guatemala and abroad—there may or may not be shared cultural background. In this they, like the indigenous poets Lienhard observes in the contemporary Andean region, “parecen indicar un cambio en la recepción […] un <<auditorio>> fuera de las zonas dominadas por la oralidad” (335-36). The poets, Humberto Ak’abal and Juan Yool Gómez, as well as the children singing in Kaqchikel, redefine and extend the audiences for the oral discourses that inform their verses.

---

63 For more information on Ong’s conceptualization of primary versus secondary orality and Zumthor’s understanding of mediats, see my introduction.
Although online videos may reach larger quantities of people, they diminish the “collective” aspect of the performance because viewers often observe performances through these media individually. Zumthor recognizes this dynamic in his treatment of mediats when he states that “[r]ecords, tape recorders, cassettes and radio, the auditory mediats tend to eliminate, along with vision, the collective dimension of reception. Then again, individually, they reach an unlimited number of listeners” (190). Zumthor discusses audio media, but we can extend his ideas to online videos. The videos examined here are accessible to anyone with an Internet connection.

When these texts are presented to outside audiences they are cultural exchanges marked by alterity: representations of self and others. The speakers culturally translate their discourses, and in this way, they perform not only songs or poetry, but their ethnic difference as well. They present versions of what it means to be Maya to their audiences. These speakers link what is Maya to orality, essentializing Maya-ness via orality, and although their performances hinge on orality, they also use visual markers in their presentations.

“Jeb(’e/e)l, jub(’e/e)l atz(y/i)aq”: “Your clothes are very beautiful”

As we have seen in the earlier discussion of traje, traditional clothing marks ethnic difference in Latin America as in other regions. As Marcia Stephenson affirms in her study of traditional clothing in Andean Bolivia, “from colonial times to the present, the racialized continuum between ‘visibility’ and ‘invisibility’ has endowed clothing, hairstyle, and language with crucial symbolic resonance” (157). Stephenson underscores the ability of clothing to make a “different” identity visible, recognizing that there are varying degrees of this visibility. Wearing traditional clothing is a visual cue that signals
“Maya-ness.” Traje in Guatemala may influence audiences to legitimate performances as “authentic” since it manifests difference. Consequently, if a person is not wearing traditional clothing, it can counteract his or her ability to perform Maya-ness.64

The performances I examine here visually connect to Mayan textile traditions, albeit in different ways. In the collection of Pach’un tzij kichin ak’wala’, the cover of the text includes woven prints of stars and children holding hands. Within the text itself, Elmer Heberto Colaj Cun has provided illustrations that depict Maya women dressed in traditional huipils (po’t), skirts (üq), and belts (pa’s); the men in these illustrations are wearing traditional hats (pawí’), jackets (koton), pants (wexaj), belts (ximb’äl), and traditional woolen cloths worn in front of the pants (xerka).65 The poetry collections by Humberto Ak’abal, unlike Juan Yool Gómez, often feature a photo of the K’iche’ author. In each of his photographs and online performances, the poet is always wearing traditional clothing. By donning traditional clothing, these speakers “look the part” to their audiences—they appear “legitimately” or “authentically” Maya.

64 For example, Menchú Tum consistently wears traditional clothing as a sign of her identity when she is performing in public; however, she often changes into blue jeans and other Western items for comfort in private. Arturo Arias argues that Menchú Tum recognizes that traditional clothing is about social identity as well as constructions of gender and ethnicity, which are fluid entities (“Constructing Ethnic Bodies and Identities” n. pag.).

65 In Pach’un tzij kichin ak’wala’, there are texts in which the speakers urge their audiences to continue wearing traje, such as the poems “Ixch’umil” (1) and “Nuk’exel” (3).
The YouTube video “Mayan Children Singing” presents a different situation. The four children singing are dressed in Western style clothing—T-shirts, jeans, and soccer flops. The only evidence of traditional clothing in the performance is seen in the older woman sitting behind the children, to the right-hand side of the frame of the video. Yet, the only traditional garment that the woman is wearing is the corte, or skirt; along with the skirt, she is also wearing a simple, white short-sleeved shirt. As Stephenson has indicated, when indigenous people in Latin America opt for Western style clothing as opposed to traditional clothing, the boundaries are blurred between the ethnicized Other and the rest of society (157). In the video of the Kaqchikel boys singing, audiences would most likely not identify the children as Maya solely by appearance. Based upon clothing alone, their Western dress may obscure their ethnic difference. It is perhaps telling that the title of the video, “Mayan Children Singing,” establishes the children’s Maya-ness on the basis of their singing as opposed to their clothing.

The presence of the older woman wearing a traditional skirt, perhaps only minimally, serves as a visual marker of Maya-ness to viewers who watch the YouTube video. In this example, it is the audience, not the speakers, who exhibit their Maya-ness through clothing. This woman also actively participates in the performance of the text as it is presented online. She is always in the frame of the video, and at times, she periodically laughs at the children as they sing. As such, she becomes part of the performance of Maya-ness. More importantly, we see how a subject apart from the speakers may influence the essentialization of Maya-ness in the performance.

“Man xk’is ta(j) nutzijonem”: “I wasn’t finished talking”
Cybernetic audiences also influence—and mediate—the performances on YouTube and Vimeo. After someone in the audience of the live performance makes the recording, then s/he uploads the video to the Internet. S/he takes an original performance, which may be only intended for a small group of people in a family or community, and relocates it to a different context. In the process, the user creates a title for the file, a brief description, and tags to accompany the video on the Internet, in turn exerting his or her agency on the overall performance. There is a series of words and/or expressions that situate each file in the online servers with each online video. When another user online introduces these terms to the servers’ search engines, then the link to the corresponding video appears in the results. This contextual information that the user provides guides other Internet users to the file. In the title, tags, and other accompanying information, the audience member/Internet user “translates” these videos on various levels. The language that s/he chooses to present this information shapes the linguistic and cultural communities that could potentially have access to the video. As agents, similar to Burgos, these “outsiders” also have a role in the performance. Like Burgos, the Internet users who upload these video files are part of the production, yet they do not necessarily pertain to the communities of the regions of orality.

“Mayan Children Singing,” for example, exhibits a linguistically hybrid community of performer(s). After the children sing in Kaqchikel in the performance, those who are filming respond with applause and exclamations of praise, such as “Wow!” and “Yeah!” Although Kaqchikel figures more predominantly in the audible content of the video, TeamGuat includes the English language in the written content that accompanies the file. The title is in English, and the description accompanying the video
states, “[t]he little boys sang us a song in Kaqchikel.” Even though TeamGuat
acknowledges that the children sing in Kaqchikel, there is an overall preference for
English in their presentation of the text on YouTube, which extends the recording more
to English speakers than those proficient in the indigenous language.

In the online performances of “Xalolilo lelele” by Ak’abal, the people that have
uploaded the recordings have made these performances accessible to multiple linguistic
communities by writing the contextual information for the videos in several different
languages. Like “Mayan Children Singing,” the video which YouTube user Lucycletramp
has presented online as “Humberto Ak’abal at the Ullapool Book Festival 2010” also
privileges the English language. However, the information that accompanies Ak’abal’s
performance available via Vimeo—which took place in France on October 14, 2010—is
in French. In another video of “Xalolilo lelele,” YouTube user Tranquanghai presents
the title of the video in English (“Humberto Ak’abal from Guatemala in the role of
shaman for a ritual”); however, s/he provides a description of the file in Italian: “Nato a
Momostenango nel 1952, Humberto Ak’abal è un poeta guatemalteco divenuto famoso
grazie alla sua originale poesia scritta e cantata nella lingua may k’iche.”

Although they
are also part of the Maya speakers’ audiences during the live performances, these
YouTube and Vimeo users are also agents in the transmission of these performances
online. That is, they transfer these videos files to other linguistic contexts, amplifying the
potential audiences to include speakers of other languages who may or may not speak

66 The description in Italian translates as “Born in Momostenango in 1952,
Humberto Ak’abal is a Guatemalan poet who has become famous thanks to his original
poetry written and sung in the Maya-K’iche’ language.”
Kaqchikel or K’iche’. These Internet users culturally translate the performances as well; they implicitly share their interpretations of the performances through the contextual information they provide with the video file. In this way, the people who have uploaded these files are mediators who shape the content of the videos for their online viewers, potentially altering their expectations and interpretations.

Many of these Internet users include terminology that connects these recordings to orality in their descriptions of the videos. For example, terms such as “poetry”, “song,” and “live music” appear as tags for the video of Ak’abal’s performance at the Ullapool Book Festival, establishing a relationship between the video and orality. In the description that he provides of the video in Italian, YouTube user Tranquanghai also underscores the oral dimension of Ak’abal’s performance, describing it as “poesia scritta e cantata.” In the video of the Kaqchikel children, the use of the verb “singing” links the performance to orality. Although they may or may not speak Kaqchikel or K’iche’, the Internet users who have published the recordings on YouTube or Vimeo underscore the influence of orality on these performances. In addition to presenting these videos as oral performances, they have also portrayed these speakers, and consequently their performances, as ethnically different.

The information that accompanies the videos of “Xalolilo lelele’” depicts these performances as exotic. As noted earlier, Tranquanghai titled the video he posted to YouTube, “Humberto Ak’Abal from Guatemala in the role of shaman for a ritual.” The title connects the song to ancient Mayan religious practices and by using the word “shaman,” Tranquanghai approaches possible religious themes, and thus Maya-ness in general, by means of ethnic difference. In the description of the video from the book
festival, Lucycletramp states that Ak’abal “brought his poems and songs down from a mountain….to the Village Hall in Ullapool.” In this, he appropriates the expression from one of Ak’abal’s earlier publications, *Poems I Brought Down from the Mountain* (1999) and contrasts Ak’abal’s mountain to his own locus of enunciation, the Village Hall in Ullapool. By connecting Ak’abal to a mountain, Lucycletramp depicts the song in opposition to “modern” cultures from metropolitan areas, recurring to the old opposition between the city and the country. Although these interpretations of “Xalolilo lelele’” are quite different from one another, they demonstrate how processes of Othering in both establish the performance as “different.” While both of the users who put these recordings online exoticize the performances, they present distinct “readings,” or ways of interpreting the videos.

In the YouTube video “Mayan Children Singing,” in addition to TeamGuat, the Internet users who have commented below the video are also mediators who have responded culturally to the performance. Although some of the comments are simple and laudatory, “nice kids!!!” and “cool,” other viewers have responded to the performance differently. MexiEmpleadoCorrupto, for instance, translates this performance of Maya-ness to Mexico, a region located outside of the areas where Kaqchikel is spoken. He first writes in English, and then offers a Spanish translation.

---

67 Here, I focus on the YouTube video “Mayan Children Singing,” because, as opposed to the videos of performances by Ak’abal which to date do not have comments, the YouTube video of the boys singing in Kaqchikel features various, dating from six years ago to last year. Viewers have published their reactions to the performance in both Spanish and English.
Yes they still talk mayan language but unfortunately we the Mexicans have a government corrupt the keep the mexican in poverty, Si todavía hay gente que habla el lenguaje maya desafortunadamente tenemos un gobierno corrupto que nos mantiene en la peores de las pobrezas mientras los corrupto enriqueciendose con el trabajo del mexicano. (n. pag.)

Perhaps in response to MexiEmpleadoCorrupto, other online viewers have also read the Maya-ness that this video presents in terms of Mexico. The username andrespunks states, “[e]n Guatemala y en mexico donde se concentraron la mayor parte de estas etnias (quizás las mas brillantes de toda la historia) pero lastimosamente fue herencia española la que nos ha enseñado por años a marginar a estas personas” (n. pag.). Ultimately, s/he argues that it was their Spanish heritage that taught them to marginalize these ethnicities. Orthographic and grammatical errors aside, MexiEmpleadoCorrupto and andrespunks culturally translate this version of Maya-ness to Mexico as a way to comment on marginal identities in general. Both read a political agenda into the performance due to the indigenous identity and language. Like the online videos, other readers or mediators also influence the presentation of the poetry collections.

Ak’abal’s publications of “Xalolilo lelele’” and Juan Yool Gómez’s Pach ‘un tzij kichin ak ’wala’ are products of collaborative efforts, despite the fact that formally speaking, the poets are the sole authors.\(^68\) In Pach ’un tzij kichin ak ’wala’, directly

\(^68\) Also of importance in the presentation of the author is the fact that his Kaqchikel name “Kaqjay” is not included in the formal credits of the text. The publishers preserve his Spanish name, whereas they omit his Kaqchikel name and this part of his identity.
following the title and preceding all other information, the publishers, CEDIM (Centro de Documentación e Investagación Maya) and FAFO (Programa Noruego para Pueblos Indígenas), provide their own information. The title page also credits other individuals as collaborators and illustrators, communicating that this was a collective project. Humberto Ak’abal, however, has featured “Xalolito lelele’” in several of his poetry collections, which he has released with Piedra Santa Editorial, Cholsamaj, and Editorial Cultura. Like Yool Gómez, in his work with these organizations Ak’abal has also worked with illustrators, such as with his 1990 publication of *El animalero* when Luis Alfredo Arango illustrated the book. Although the poet composes his verses in his native K’iche’ and translates them to Spanish, he requires the assistance of translators for other languages. This is the case, for example, with Ak’abal’s translation of *El animalero* into English—published in 2008. While the official credits corresponding to these texts denote a communal effort, the collections do not indicate whether all parties who influenced the publication pertain to the poetry’s original community.

In different ways, then, multiple agents simultaneously mediate the online videos as well as the poetry collections, bringing into question notions of equality among the contributors. In their study regarding collaboration and ethnopoetics, Felipe S. Molina and Larry Evers argue that “what constitutes ‘equal’ participation in a given project is determined not only by the roles and desires of the participants but also by the particular historical context within which they work” (15). In other words, what may seem progressive at one moment in history may appear conservative at another. Politics of collaboration influence these online videos and poetry collections insofar as individuals who do not originally pertain to these oral communities are also agents in the
performances. Since conditions are never entirely equal, the results of collaborating in these projects must also be problematized to question the level of participation and representation between the contributors.

Although people other than these indigenous speakers shape their performances, they are linguistically unable to gain access to these texts without the presence of a translation because most audiences are not proficient in either of the Mayan languages. Therefore, although outside audiences may present their interpretations of these performances, they often do not provide explanations that go beyond stereotypes and exotic representations of Maya-ness because they are not fluent in Kaqchikel or K’iche’ and do not understand the broader cultural contexts. This, in turn, raises questions of how these various levels of translation alter representations of the self or community.

“Man (n/k)inqasaj ta(j) ronojel”: “I do not translate everything”

Juan Yool Gómez and Humberto Ak’abal have influenced who is able to have access to the oral discourses that inform their poetry by translating (or not) their verses. They decide the language in which they present their texts. Although negotiating the presentation of these oral discourses potentially increases the texts’ visibility, when a speaker opts to translate certain poems and/or verses, they provide these audiences with access to only the texts of their choosing. In electing what they translate for outside audiences, these indigenous speakers maintain an agency in shaping what will be part of their work—or which part of their works they foreground for distinct audiences.

Through their translations indigenous speakers may invert the idea of the “indio permitido,” negotiating the level of inclusion they are willing to grant foreign audiences with respect to Kaqchikel and K’iche’ orality. As we have already seen, in their use of the
expression, Hale and Millamán first recognize that dominant subjects of the State establish spaces of representation permissible for indigenous speakers, allowing these “indios permitidos” to have a presence in dominant discourses. Within these spaces Hale and Millamán also acknowledge the possibility for indigenous agency. When Ak’abal and Yool Gómez extend, or deny, their poetry to people outside of their linguistic communities via translation, they are no longer the permitted ones. Instead, they are the ones granting access (or not) to their poetry to these outsiders.

Neither Ak’abal or Yool Gómez translates vocabulary that derive from orality in their poetry. “Xalolilo lelele’” by Ak’abal is comprised entirely of onomatopoeic words, which the poet does not translate from K’iche’. However, Yool Gómez only leaves certain words and phrases in Kaqchikel. Often these are affective terms, linguistically speaking; in Mayan languages, examples include but are not limited to the names of birds and instruments. As Dennis Tedlock explains, “[s]ome animals, especially birds, received their names from their cries. In this way, the name of the birds and the sound that the creature produces are in an isomorphic relationship (“Towards a Poetics” 179-80). That is, in Mayan languages the sound that the bird makes—and more generally the influences of orality—cannot be divorced from its name. Affective words that Juan Yool Gómez has left in Kaqchikel are “ch’ik,” “pich’olöl,” and “tukür,” which are all names of birds. While the target language may have its equivalent to “name” the object, the word in translation may or may not incorporate the oral characteristics that contribute to its meaning in the original, indigenous language. Some vocabulary in Kaqchikel and
K’iche’, then, is untranslatable.⁶⁹ Even if the speakers wanted to translate these parts of their poetry, they cannot do so without sacrificing the orality that informs their verses.

Of the two, it is more difficult to understand “Xalolilo lelele’” by Ak’abal than Yool Gómez’s poetry because the latter provides contextual clues to orient his Spanish-speaking audiences concerning the vocabulary that he leaves in Kaqchikel. They are “clues” because the poet conveys this information through translation choice, which he never explicitly explains via notes or appendices in the poetry collection. In the poem “El ch’ik,” for example, although the poet does not actually translate the word “ch’ik,” by taking liberties with the translation of the poem, he indicates to the Spanish-speaker that a “ch’ik” is a type of bird. In the first verse, the verb choice is the primary indicator because it denotes the singing specifically of a bird: “Trina… trina…” (1). The verb “trinar” conveys to the reader at the onset that the poem concerns a bird, though s/he does not specify the particular species.⁷⁰ At no point in the translation does the poetic speaker inform the reader that the translation for “ch’ik” in Spanish is “cenzontle,” or “mockingbird” in English. Similar to the poem “Ri ch’ik,” there are clues in “Pájarito Pich’olöl” to orient the Spanish-speaking audience. But in this text they appear in the title. The addition of the word “pájarito” in the translation of the title communicates that

---

⁶⁹ Trivedi describes what is untranslatable as “culture-specific” (3).

⁷⁰ Apart from the title, the word “ch’ik” appears as a noun, “pequeño ch’ik, pequeño ch’ik” (2) and then as the only word forming part of a short monologue: “¡Ch’ik… ch’ik… ch’ik!” (5). These dual linguistic functions create confusion for the reader who is unfamiliar with Kaqchikel. The use of the verb “trinar,” however, conveys that the text is about a type of a bird.
the text is about a small bird. While it is never explicit that the word “pich’olöl” translates as “gorrión” or “sparrow,” the title communicates to the Spanish-speaker that the Kaqchikel word refers to a type of bird.\textsuperscript{71} In both “El ch’ik” and “Pich’olöl,” Yool Gómez compromises how accessible his verses are for his non-Kaqchikel speaking audiences, but he provides contextual clues so that the meaning behind these words is not completely lost.

There are other poems in the collection that do not offer such assistance—the reader simply stumbles across isolated, untranslated words in Kaqchikel. In the poem “Tukür,” for example, the reader encounters instances in which Yool Gómez has not translated everything into Spanish. The first occasion is the title. Like the previous examples, “tukür” is an affective word, so it is also a noun that represents the sound it produces. The orthographic liberties in the word “tukur” in the third verse of the poem evidence the influence of orality in the text: “Tukuuur, tukuur.”\textsuperscript{72} Directly following, the

\textsuperscript{71} The poem begins with a verse with only one word, “Pich’olöl” (1), which functions as an apostrophe, addressing the sparrow. Later, the term also represents the sound that the bird makes: “Pich’olöl, Pich’olöl” (6). Like “ch’ik,” the word “pich’olöl” also serves two linguistic purposes, to name the bird as well as the sound it makes. However, because of the added word in the title of the translation “Pájarito Pich’olöl,” the poetic voice establishes “pich’olöl” as connected to birds.

\textsuperscript{72} Although in different dialectical variations of Kaqchikel, orthographically speaking, the “u” is optional (Patal Majzul 464), the duplication of the “u” here represents the different extensions of the vowel and accounts for oral variability in its spoken form. Yool Gómez also extends vowels in Spanish to denote the prolongation of a
reader faces another verse in which a translation of the Kaqchikel is absent: “muq, muq” (4). The entire second stanza of what the author claims is a translation remains in the Mayan language, instead of Spanish. Without text immediately surrounding, the non-Kaqchikel speaker has limited access to the verses, so it is questionable if the reader would deduce the meaning of “muq,” which roughly translates to English as “burial” or “death.” Nonetheless, the lack of translations for “muq” and “tukü” do not render the poem incomprehensible.

By leaving certain verses in Kaqchikel, Yool Gómez requires his readers to “listen” to this text, as opposed to just “hearing” it. Oral poetry scholar Jed Rasula distinguishes “hearing” as receiving and registering what is provided, whereas he claims that “listening” denotes correcting and displacing what one just heard (233-34). In the poem “Tukü,” it is possible for readers to simply take in the words (“hear”) in the four other stanzas that Yool Gómez has translated, without having to pay extra attention (“listen”) to linguistically understand them. However, when the Spanish-speaking reader encounters an entire stanza untranslated, s/he has to negotiate the meaning. While the reader’s interpretation of the words in Kaqchikel may or may not resemble their meaning in the indigenous language, the reader still negotiates his or her own understanding of the verses. Thus, despite the moments in Yool Gómez’s poetry in which the reader does not entirely understand the words, s/he may still discern meaning from the text by “listening” closely.

sound and connect the word to orality, as is the case in the last verse of “Sagrada lluvia” (translation of “Loq’olaj jāb’”). He translates the verse “katan pee...” (14) to Spanish as “Ven, ven, veeen...” (10).
Much like Juan Yool Gómez, Humberto Ak’abal also negotiates what he translates for his audiences. In the published versions of the K’iche’ song “Xalolilo lelele’,” like Yool Gómez, Ak’abal also provides subtle hints which affect the overall accessibility and level of inclusion of his audiences. In the edition of El animalero in 1990, the K’iche’ poet entitled an entire section of the collection, “Xalolilo lelele’,” without offering a translation from the K’iche’ for his Spanish readership. The first poem that follows is “Canción pastoral / (tradicional),” which informs readers that “Xalolilo lelele’” is a traditional song from the country. Ak’abal, nonetheless, does not provide a translation for the indigenous words, nor does he explicitly connect the text with the over-arching title of the section. In the edition of the poetry collection that Ak’abal released in 1995, Ajyuq’: El animalero, and also in Entre patojos from 2002, Ak’abal establishes the text within the genre of the pastoral song. In these two editions, three lines hierarchically organized in a vertical manner comprise the title: “Xalolilo lelele’ / Canción pastoral / (tradicional).” Despite these differences in degrees of explicitness, in all of these editions Ak’abal demonstrates to his readers that he is familiar with Western literary traditions through his references to the pastoral genre. At the same time, however, he offers little insight regarding his own K’iche’ literary and/or musical traditions.

In other versions of “Xalolilo lelele’,” the supplemental information that Ak’abal provides does not increase the comprehensibility of the text for his non-K’iche’-speaking audiences. Rather, it has the opposite effect, further ostracizing them. In his selection of poetry that appears in the anthology Arte indígena: Literatura y pintura (2008), the editors of the collection present readers with translations of the poems in Spanish. Upon arriving at the final poems of Ak’abal’s selection, however, there are poems in K’iche’,
without translations. Specifically in the poem “Xalolilo lelele’”, below the title of the text, the poetic voice only explains in parentheses, “B’ixonik re ajyuq’.” This expression in K’iche’ translates to English as “A song from the hill.” Without a translation in the text this information does not aid the Spanish-speaking reader; it adds to the language barrier, instead of easing it.

In El animalero (2008), the organization of the song on the page and the accompanying footnotes underscore the absence of a translation. In this collection, the translation of the poems in English is on the even pages and the version in Spanish on the odd. In the middle of the collection, however, the poetic voice introduces “Xalolilo lelele’” with a blank page where a translation would normally appear. At the bottom of the page, a footnote informs the reader that the text is an “[o]nomatopoeic song in Maya-K’iche’, untranslatable to another language” (38). On the page on the right, where there are generally versions of the poems in Spanish, the reader encounters a text that is completely written in K’iche’, with the same footnote included in the preceding page, but this time translated to Spanish. By leaving the page blank and including these footnotes, Ak’abal directly manifests the text’s untranslatability, underscoring the absence of a

---

73 Some poems, like “Xalolilo lelele’,” are entirely in K’iche’; examples include “Na’tisib’al” and “Keb’uwa’l B’oqoch.” Other poems are primarily in the indigenous language with minimal Spanish, as in “Cantos de pájaros,” a text whose title is all that appears in Spanish.

74 A difference between the two translations is that the version in Spanish translates “song” as “poema”; the footnote in Spanish establishes that it is a “poema onomatopéyico en maya-k’iche’, intraducible a otro idioma” (39).
version in other languages. In this way, the poet obliges his readers to recognize their alienation; since they do not speak K’iche’, Ak’abal leaves them with a blank page.

In sum, both Yool Gómez and Ak’abal simultaneously include and exclude their audiences. They potentially direct their verses to more people by translating their work to other languages, yet they do not translate everything. They withhold information from outsiders, not permitting people who do not speak these Mayan languages access to their verses. Like Menchú Tum guarded her community’s secrets and omitted them from her testimony, as Doris Sommer has observed (*Proceed with Caution* 115-37), these poets keep some information related to Kaqchikel and K’iche’ oral traditions from outside audiences, constantly reminding them of the boundaries of translation. Because these speakers influence how much access foreign audiences have to their texts, they still maintain agency in this exchange.

Furthermore, since Humberto Ak’abal’s poetry features onomatopoeia and Juan Yool Gómez incorporates affective words, it is necessary to listen to these texts in order to appreciate them. Because the majority of their audiences are unfamiliar with the phonetic systems of Kaqchikel or K’iche’, they are unable to pronounce the words just by reading these verses. Audiences that do not belong to Kaqchikel or K’iche’ oral communities, therefore, depend on an interpreter fluent in the indigenous language to be able to listen to the onomatopoeic devices and their corresponding sounds.\(^\text{75}\) In this regard, by incorporating onomatopoeia and affective terms, which by definition

\(^{75}\) The term “interpreter” refers to the person who orally transfers words from one language to another. It is a form of linguistic translation via the spoken voice, rather than writing.
emphasize auditory characteristics, Ak’abal and Yool Gómez relegate the audiences of their poetry to passive roles, obligating them to “listen” to voices speaking in the indigenous Mayan languages. To achieve these goals, not just anyone is able to claim a voice—s/he must be a K’iche’ or Kaqchikel speaker, respectively. In the online videos, even though audiences are able to hear the texts by listening to the indigenous speakers, they still face difficulties in accessing these performances since none of the videos include translations.

Because the Vimeo video shows multiple texts, online audiences also see how the translator contributes to the overall inclusion—or exclusion—of non-K’iche’-speaking audiences. The Vimeo video of “Xalolilo lelele” illustrates these limitations more than the YouTube recordings since the file servers are distinct. YouTube permits the publication of videos of up to fifteen minutes and thirty seconds; however, Vimeo stores a maximum of 500MB, so video files that exceed YouTube’s time constraint can be compressed to comply with Vimeo’s storage limitations. Because Vimeo houses video files that are longer, they often feature entire performances, including transitions between the texts, whereas YouTube files often include just one song. The Vimeo video features a sequence of songs and poems in which there are not consistently translations. Whether there are translations for each text in the performance causes French-speaking audiences to have a heightened awareness of when the speaker grants them access to the verses in K’iche’.

Throughout the performance the physical presence of the translator emphasizes the level of inclusion of the audience. During the first approximately seven minutes, the camera bounces back and forth between Ak’abal and his translator. After the K’iche’ poet
recites a poem in the indigenous language, the woman to his left on the stage communicates the verses in French. However, just preceding Ak’abal’s presentation of “Xalolilo lelele’,” the camara changes its focalization, zooming out to include both the poet and the translator in the frame. Later, the camera remains fixated on Ak’abal because the translator will not provide the audience with French translations for the remainder of the performance. It is not until the end of the video that the online viewer realizes that the translator physically exited the stage, retreating behind the curtains because she no longer has a role in the performance. She does not return to the stage until the conclusion of Ak’abal’s presentation of his poems, when the poet raises a hand in her direction so that the audience seated in the auditorium also directs their applause to her. When the translator is onstage offering versions of Ak’abal’s poetry in French, she bridges the linguistic gap between the poet and his French-speaking audiences, increasing the level of inclusion of these Francophone speakers. However, when the camera no longer focuses on her after she leaves the stage, her absence contributes to the exclusion of non-K’iche’-speaking audiences.

In summary, Yool Gómez, Ak’abal, and the children singing in Kaqchikel all simultaneously include and exclude their potential audiences. They negotiate their potential audiences’ level of access to and comprehensibility of their poetry collections and online videos. The distinct media through which the speakers present their verses and the levels of translation that these texts undergo indicate that the speakers have influence over whom they wish to form part of their audiences. That many authors provide translations of their work indicates that there is some degree of recognition that often foreign audiences are interested in understanding indigenous cultures. As we have seen,
these authors appeal to “outside” listeners through translation and in the process they redefine the roles that audiences are able to assume in the performances of these texts by choosing what to translate. They withhold certain information, obliging their audiences to perform a more passive role in these performances. The danger in this is that audiences who cannot distinguish between one Mayan language and another perceive the performance as a representation of “Maya-ness” in general, without necessarily understanding the meaning of the words.

**Conclusion**

I began this chapter focusing on the effects of essentializing Kaqchikel and K’iche’ orality in presentations of Maya-ness. As we have seen, the lack of access to the languages and cultures that inform these oral performances and texts means that audiences may stereotype and essentialize, but that they also must listen to voices speaking in the indigenous languages. Yet, how many indigenous people are capable of—or have the authority to—represent themselves in this way? In Guatemala, not all indigenous people who identify as “Maya” dominate an autochthonous language; this trend is especially true among the younger generations. Moreover, among those who do speak a Mayan language, not everyone is familiar with their respective oral traditions, including but not limited to stories, songs, and poetry. That is, even among adult Kaqchikel speakers, there are people who are linguistically proficient in the language, but who do not know the traditional stories and songs that their ancestors maintained via orality. In the examples of poetry and songs analyzed here, we have seen that writers and performers negotiate these traditions to perform a version of Maya-ness that is intrinsically connected to orality. In so doing, they may limit not only the agency of their
audiences, but also who is capable of realizing the performance. To put it another way, linking Maya-ness to orality excludes people who may identify as “Maya” but who do not have the capacity to project their voices in an indigenous language.

While essentializing Maya-ness via orality amplifies the voices of some Maya speakers, it negates the validity of others who may identify as Maya, but who are not necessarily proficient in a Mayan language. For example, the Ch’orti’ communities that are located in Eastern Guatemala and Honduras may identify as Maya, even though, as anthropologist Brent E. Metz notes, most of them no longer speak Ch’orti’ or wear traditional dress (1). Put differently, at the same time that it increases the agency of some Maya voices, it marginalizes those who identify with conflicting forms of Maya-ness who may not use language as the primary marker of their identity. There are numerous possible markers of indigeneity and Maya-ness. For some, language use and orality are important factors; for others, traditional dress or subsistence agricultural traditions may hold more weight, while others may prioritize the religious practices derived from the 260-day Cholq’ij (daykeeper’s calendar). Furthermore, since these factors are often not isolated from one another, this raises questions of how Maya identify when they may have one or more of these “markers” missing. In this way, this chapter further complicates these politics of identity, performance, and ultimately exclusion, and demonstrates that by essentializing and performing Maya-ness via Kaqchikel and K’iche’ orality, it is possible that individuals who speak other Mayan languages may also find

---

76 For Metz, the lack of representation of the Ch’orti’ in the Maya Movement and Maya Studies “raises the question of what criteria are being used to define indigeneity (indigenous-ness) and Maya-ness” (2).
themselves excluded from these representations of Maya-ness. As we have seen, it has become increasingly more difficult to define what is means to be Maya in the context of a globalized twenty-first century.

The level of exclusion will depend on the other Mayan languages in question. For example, speakers of Tz’utujil would likely experience little difficulty in understanding Kaqchikel or K’iche’ because of linguistic similarity. However, someone who speaks languages such as Q’eqchi’ or Mam may understand very little (if any) of the verses due to more pronounced linguistic disparities when comparing these languages to Kaqchikel or K’iche’.
Chapter 3: Tzotzil Maya (Net)working: The Politics of Collaboration in Taller Leñateros’s Artists’ Books and Facebook Account in the Highlands of Chiapas, Mexico

“We sold 1,500 copies of Conjuros faster than even our wildest dreams. […] The overwhelming positive response to our work inspired us to translate the original book into Italian, French, and English. […] The celebration of 500 years of Indian resistance and the Zapatista uprising has fostered an ever-growing appreciate for art and literature of Native peoples. We found ourselves immersed in a reawakening of the spirit of Amerindian culture”

—Ámbar Past

In the Highlands of Chiapas, Mexico, Taller Leñateros is a publishing cooperative comprised of indigenous and mestizo people that poet Ámbar Past founded in 1975. As journalist Dinitia Smith explains, Past “came to Chiapas in 1973 as a self-described hippie and renegade housewife, escaping an unhappy marriage. She stayed with some Mayan women and taught herself Tzotzil, one of the local Mayan languages” (n. pag.). Taller Leñateros publishes handmade books in Tzotzil, which they translate to other languages including Spanish and English. Since the inception of the organization, the cooperative has published the following hand made books: Conjuros y ebriedades: Cantos de mujeres mayas (1998), La Jícara (1995), Diccionario del corazón (2002), Bolom Chon (2007), Palabras de Chan K’in (1997), Altar maya portátil: Tres hechizos de bolsillo (2007), and the Libros de Kartón series, which includes Alquimia para

78 This quotation appears in Incantations: Songs, Spells, and Images (21).

79 Tzotzil is an indigenous language spoken by the Tzotzil Maya in Chiapas, Mexico; Tzotzil, Tzeltal, and Ch’ol are the most predominantly spoken languages of the region. Tzeltal is the language most closely related to Tzotzil, and together the two form the Tzeltalan sub-branch of the Mayan language family.
principiantes (2009), Yoo, Natalia Toledo (n.d.), Spare Poems (2001) by Alejandro Murguia, Cuando era hombre (2001) by Ámbar Past, Nocturno para leñateros (2001), and Dedicatorias (2005).\footnote{80} After the publication of Conjuros y ebriedades: Cantos de mujeres mayas in Spanish, the Taller published a handmade, English version in 2005, Incantations by Mayan Women, and they released a tradeback copy through Cinco Puntos Press in 2009, Incantations: Songs, Spells and Images by Mayan Women. All of these editions were edited by Ámbar Past. Historically, well-recognized Mexican authors like Rosario Castellanos have published books such as Balún Canán (1957) and Oficio de tinieblas (1962) to give voice to Chiapas’s indigenous population.\footnote{81} Taller Leñateros, however, is an organization in which these conventionally subaltern speakers can represent and speak for themselves through their cultural production. However, because the members of Taller Leñateros have allied with poets such as Ámbar Past, and other non-indigenous agents in the region, we must think about the extent to which Past and others shape and influence these texts. Jan Rus and Diane L. Rus, scholars who have

\footnote{80} Each of the three small books that accompany Altar maya portátil contains one of the following poems: “Hechizo para matar al hombre infiel” by Tonik Nibak, “Hechizos de amor” by Petra Hernández, and “Sortilegio para vivir muchos años” by Manwela Kokoroch. Versions of the poetry included in the first two small books also appear in Conjuros y ebriedades.

\footnote{81} As Mexican poet Juan Bañuelos has noted, in addition to Castellanos, he and other authors “have been witnesses to the discrimination, injustice, and exploitation perpetuated against the Indios of the area” (197). Here, he uses the pejorative form “indio” which underscores their marginalization.
worked in the Tzotzil-Maya speaking region of the Highlands of Chiapas since the early 1970s, have proposed a similar question to problematize their own work as non-indigenous participants in Taller Tzotzil; they wonder: “Just whose culture and politics [come] into play in making choices about form and content, even when these were made collectively with indigenous colleagues?” (145).

Ámbar Past’s role exemplifies the increasing trend among the indigenous communities in Chiapas to ally with non-indigenous subjects. Anthropologist Gary Gossen discusses such coalitions in the Zapatista Movement, arguing that many pan-indigenous movements strategically enlist the services of a non-indigenous leadership to promote their visibility:

Mayas have always constructed ethnicity, cosmology, historical reckoning, and political legitimacy by drawing freely from symbolic and ideological forms of other ethnic and political entities—particularly those perceived to be stronger than themselves—in order to situate and center themselves in the present. (“Maya Zapatistas” 535)

That is, indigenous alliances often strategically work with foreigners to strengthen their political and social positions, for their arguments may have more leverage if they unite with non-indigenous speakers and entities. In the Zapatista Movement, for example, the ELZN (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional) has worked with University-educated mestizo, Subcomandante Marcos. In the case of Taller Leñateros, Ámbar Past is a figure

---

82 Taller Tzotzil is another literary and artistic workshop similar to Taller Leñateros in Chiapas, which “published more than thirty booklets by indigenous authors in Tzotzil-Maya” (Rus and Rus 144) between 1976 and 2002.
with whom the members have strategically allied. Consequently, both Marcos and Past exemplify the trend that Gossen describes in which indigenous and non-indigenous people collaborate.

To define the term “collaboration,” I draw from ethnopoetry scholars Felipe S. Molina and Larry Evers, who describe it as a process in which more than one subject works together. I use examples from ethnopoetry studies because through the prefix “ethno,” this discipline highlights the politics of difference in marginalized identities who pertain to oral cultures. Molina and Evers explain that they recognize that in studies of oral traditions what have been called collaborations are highly variable endeavors. […] collaboration connotes a much more intricate sharing of the work of recording oral traditions as well as an aspiration to make that work less hierarchical than it has been in the past. […] collaborations, even those that involve the same participants at different times, are never static processes. (15)

As we have seen in previous chapters, because of the relations of power between all participants involved, it is necessary to examine possible inequalities in collaborations and question how such discrepancies affect the dynamic of the projects in general. In the case of Taller Leñateros, the organization is a racial and cultural collaboration between mestizos, indigenous, and U.S. born, non-indigenous people. As such, relations

---

83 Although Molina and Evers address the division between academics and native informants, Larry Evers and Barre Toelken also elaborate on the issue of collaboration between “scholars” and “natives,” questioning the familiar divisions in the Academy. For Evers and Toelken, “natives” can also be, and in many cases are, scholars as well.
of race, ethnicity, nation, and class that have different relationships to hegemonic power, history, and languages influence and shape the collaborative efforts of the publishing house.

Nevertheless, in some ways Taller Leñateros has destabilized traditional hierarchies between indigenous and non-indigenous participants in their ethnopoetry projects. As we have seen in the example of Rigoberta Menchú Tum’s testimonio in Chapter 1 and the publication of poetry Kaqchikel and K’iche’ poetry collections in Chapter 2, indigenous people have historically not been involved in all stages of collaborative research endeavors. Molina and Evers explain that ethnopoetry investigations often occur within the context of the Academy, and as such, indigenous people are not usually part of each step of the process:

Projects that produce American Indian oral traditions as “oral literature”—as texts for ethnopoetic analysis, discussion, and appreciation—have been sponsored most frequently in institutions of “higher education” (colleges and universities) and conducted by individual scholars as a part of their own research agendas. These projects generally have proceeded from conception to publication through four phases: planning, performing/recording, transcribing/translating, and analyzing/writing. Community-based American Indian intellectuals have been most involved in the second phase, as performers, and in the third phase, as transcribers/translators, and most uninvolved in the first, as planners, and the last, as writers. (“Introduction” 15)
Indigenous intellectuals have historically served as native informants in ethnopoetic projects, seldom as an equal among the team of principal investigators. In Taller Leñateros, all members of the organization are involved in the planning of the texts and their later publication, via artists’ books or the Internet. However, only certain members are able to collaborate in the translation of these texts from their original Tzotzil Maya to more dominant languages such as Spanish and English. Even though the members of the

---

84 In the context of Chiapas, the “native informant” model of research was the basis of the Harvard Research Project in the 1960s. Anthropologist Evon Z. Vogt initiated this project and documented his observations in *Fieldwork Among the Maya: Reflections on the Harvard Chiapas Project* (1994). More generally, the dynamic of collaborations between native informants and non-indigenous researchers can be traced back to Bernardino de Sahagún’s work with Nahua informants to document their beliefs, cultures, and history during the sixteenth century, which resulted in Sahagún’s publication of the *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España* (1569), on which the *Códice Florentino* is based. For this reason, scholars such as Miguel León-Portilla (2012) have referred to Sahagún as the first anthropologist of the Americas.

85 Visual theorist and cultural critic Johanna Drucker defines the term “artists’ book” as “a work of art that is conceived and executed as a book and does not exist in any other form or format” (16). The concept of the artists’ book recognizes the intersection of art and the presentation of this object as a book. To emphasize the artistic qualities of Taller Leñateros’s handmade books, I will use the term “artists’ book” as opposed to “book object,” since the latter does not sufficiently highlight the characteristics of the object as a work of art.
cooperative contribute to each step of the creation process, their distinct roles and abilities demonstrate that some members of Taller Leñateros participate more fully than others.

In this chapter, my on-going analysis of mediation will focus on distinct forms of collaboration in Taller Leñateros’s Facebook account as well as the various editions of their artists’ book and poetry collection, *Conjuros y ebriedades: Cantos de mujeres mayas* (1997) (henceforth, *Conjuros y ebriedades*). Because Taller Leñateros is a publishing collective, I will first analyze this artists’ book to examine the role of non-indigenous people (such as Past) in its creation. Past is a key agent in the creation of this poetry collection, as one of its authors, as well as a cultural and linguistic translator.

Apart from the publication of artists’ books, the organization also maintains a Facebook account, which is an interactive, digital archive that offers unique opportunities for mediation. In addition to members of Taller Leñateros, other Facebook users are able to influence the content available on the Taller’s account by clicking “like” or publishing comments on the various components of this online archive. I analyze their Facebook account because, like the examples in the previous chapter, it demonstrates how non-indigenous subjects can interact with and shape the Taller’s cultural production and overall online image without physically traveling to Chiapas. Thus, they are able to “collaborate” with Taller Leñateros from all across the globe. That the Tzotzil poets working with Taller Leñateros have collaborated with Past and other non-indigenous agents evidences that they are innovating their traditions and incorporating non-indigenous cultures into their poetic creation. More generally, the Facebook account and the poems in *Conjuros y ebriedades* further evidence a trend of re-negotiating indigenous
traditions; for example, in these media Tzotzil Maya address issues such as environmental awareness, neoliberalism and the presence of foreign products in Chiapas, immigration to the United States, and the Zapatista initiatives against gender inequalities concerning the physical and sexual abuse of indigenous women.86

Cultural and Linguistic Translations of Oral Poems on the Written Page

When Taller Leñateros published *Conjuros y ebriedades*, the text received much attention, and many of its reviews focused on how the collective used Tzotzil Maya traditions surrounding bookmaking to create the text. The critical attention may be attributed to the socio-political context in which the poetry collection was released. The collection was published in 1998, just four years after the EZLN staged their uprising in Chiapas (1994), which attracted considerable domestic and international attention to indigenous rights organizations in Mexico. In a review of the collection which appeared in *La Jornada* in 1998, journalist Gloria Hernández describes the work as “un libro-objeto-máscara cocinado con el sudor de las mujeres, con la presencia natural de la región de donde provienen estas poetas.” In her description, she uses the word “natural,” which perhaps connotes the commonly accepted association of indigenous communities and nature, as well as their use of materials from the Earth that are part of their bookmaking. Hernández describes the text as having been “cooked” because the women

86 Jan Rus and Diane L. Rus observe similar themes in Taller Tzotzil’s publications, which focus on contemporary issues such as “contract labor on coffee plantations, the struggle for land, organization of artisan and agricultural cooperatives, indigenous rights in the city, undocumented migration to the United States, and reactions to the Zapatista rebellion” (144).
physically combine these materials to create the books. Another journalist, Raquel Peguero, reports on the procedure resulting in the physical construction of each book in another book review of the anthology, which appeared on September 27, 1998:

Estas artistas, remojaban cajas de cartón, cepa de plátano y pelos de elote, para después amasarlo todo y molerlo con flores y café. Con ello, una por una, fueron formando las carátulas en molde y dejadas a secar al sol. El papel para las guardas del libro fue realizado en una región de Tierra Caliente por un grupo de mujeres mame. Ese papel fue llevado, hoja por hoja, a San Cristóbal, donde se tiñó de negro y se prensó en un tórculo. Otro equipo formateó los textos, hizo los negativos, cortó el papel para los interiores y aprendió el manejo de una máquina offset, para su impresión. Después, encuadernadores mayas cosieron y pegaron a mano cada tomo, y abrieron los ojos de la máscara, que aparece como portada del libro, con un fierro que inventaron.

The process by which the poets create each text underscores the fact that various agents contributed to—and collaborated—to produce the handmade books. These reviews also demonstrate that the Tzotzil poets in Conjuros y ebriedades used Maya traditions regarding books and the written word in this process. More generally, the materials that the women use show how they also incorporate Tzotzil Maya traditions that illustrate the identification of Tzotzil Maya with the Earth. By incorporating cultural influences like

87 Because the authors of Conjuros y ebriedades are women, Hernández’s use of the verb “to cook” suggests that she uses this word because it is women who do the work, and “cooking” has typically been an activity relegated to women.
their Maya bookmaking practices, Taller Leñateros links their indigenous identities to their Maya heritage.

The physical text of *Conjuros y ebriedades* also connects the poetry collection to the Earth because the cover of the book features Kajval, the goddess of the Earth. In this way, it is not only that the materials are originally from nature, but also that the text is imbued with the sacred connotations of the land for many Tzotzil Maya. Journalist Dinitia Smith explains that “[t]he cover is a three-dimensional rendering of the face of Kaxail, Mayan goddess of the wilderness, in recycled cardboard mixed with corn silk and coffee. Her eyes are excised and she stares out with an eerie power” (n. pag.). That Dinitia Smith, a reporter for a highly reputable U.S. newspaper (*New York Times*), has reviewed this text indicates that the book has attracted the attention of international audiences. This new audiences’ reading of the text—and consequently their interpretation of the face of Kajval—demonstrates the alterity in this cultural exchange. Apart from commenting on the physical materials used to create the mask, Dinitia Smith describes the eyes as having an “eerie” power. In this case, this adjective may describe the unknown. The eyes are “eerie” or unsettling because they are culturally different.

Smith’s review also evidences that the authors working with Taller Leñateros do not strictly limit themselves to natural materials as conveyed by their use of cardboard and coffee. Originally, Europeans imported coffee to the Americas from Africa; it is not an indigenous product and thus was not used in the traditional papermaking techniques of the ancient Maya. Ámbar Past also lists non-indigenous materials in the production of the mask in a posting to an online forum entitled *Book_Arts-L*: “Starting in 1996, painter Roselia Montoya from Huixtán directed the making of the 4444 masks for the cover of
the book, using old cardboard boxes, corn silk, rabbit skin glue, tar, camphor leaves, and
instant coffee” (April 6, 2005). Although the poets work through Mayan papermaking
techniques, there is nothing natural about instant coffee, which Past specifies as
“Nescafé” in the “Notas sobre los colaboradores” of Conjuros y ebriedades (Past 184).
While the poets working with Taller Leñateros incorporate conventions of using
resources from the land to create their texts, they also innovate tradition in a dynamic,
though not necessarily conscious way, by appropriating non-autochthonous materials.

Walter Benjamin’s explanations of aura and authenticity are pertinent to
understanding the originality of each of these artists’ books in terms of their reproduction.
Benjamin wrote “The Work of Art in the Age of Reproduction” in 1936, twelve years
after the publication of André Bretón’s Le Manifeste du Surréalisme (1924). He theorized
the mechanical reproduction of a work of art at a time that was marked by the avant-
garde, which cultural and literary critic Vicky Unruh has described as a moment in which
the search for “authenticity” was associated with origins, and the general connotations of
primitivism (232; 236). According to the German theorist, the replication of a work of art
compromises its authenticity, which is irreproducible and fundamentally linked to an
object’s origin. Benjamin describes “authenticity” as

the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its
substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has
experienced. Since the historical testimony rests on authenticity, the
former, too, is jeopardized by reproduction when substantive duration
ceases to matter. And what is really jeopardized when the historical
Benjamin connects authenticity to an object’s aura, which he describes as “that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction” (“The Work of Art” 1169). According to Benjamin, reproducing a work of art with an industrial machine that results in an exact copy distances it from its traditions, or its origins. The members of Taller Leñateros create copies of the books by hand, a practice that struggles against Benjamin’s concept of mechanical reproduction. The creation of each text maintains its authenticity and thus preserves its aura, rejecting certain aspects of modernity. Confronting early industrialization, Benjamin claims that authenticity cannot be duplicated; however, the members of Taller Leñateros do not produce identical copies of each of their texts. Although the Taller follows a similar template, every book functions as a work of art in itself. The members of the collaborative work within Mayan traditions, and arguably against modern reproduction, by producing the paper for each text using long-established indigenous papermaking techniques. In this way, the Taller creates a hybrid identity, both traditional in some respects and contemporary and innovative in others.

Another way that the Tzotzil creators of *Conjuros y ebriedades* renegotiate their traditions is by working with non-indigenous artists to design the artists’ book. Apart from Ámbar Past, they have also worked with Norwegian artist Gitte Dachlin. As Dinitia Smith explains, the mask that serves as the collection’s cover “was designed by Gitte Dachlin, a Norwegian artist living in the nearby state of Oaxaca” (n. pag.). Tzotzil Maya members of Taller Leñateros simultaneously work through their Maya traditions and communities, while also engaging with the present and including “outsiders.” The
resulting collaboration with non-indigenous artists—and the ensuing cultural hybridity—may affect the overall presentation of their indigenous identities. There are multiple consequences of this collective work; although it may have positive effects and attract wider audiences, it may also influence how Tzotzil Maya cultures are represented.

As another way to increase the text’s overall accessibility for audiences, the poets who originally created *Conjuros y ebriedades* in Tzotzil Maya have also worked with translators to make this collection of incantations available in both Spanish and English. Although the native tongue of the majority of the women in Taller Leñateros is Tzotzil, by working with Past they have opted to offer editions of the book in English and Spanish, making it available to more readers. *Conjuros y ebriedades* features the original versions in Tzotzil accompanied by the Spanish translation on the adjacent page. The English artists’ book is organized in a similar way, with English translations where the Spanish were in the original publication. The tradeback edition, however, does not include the original poems in Tzotzil Maya; audiences only have access to the English translations. There are more people who speak these Western languages than Tzotzil; even if an individual speaks a Mayan language, the odds that it would be Tzotzil are slim.

---

88 In both the Spanish and English translations presented as artists’ books, *Conjuros y ebriedades* and *Incantations by Mayan Women*, the table of contents does not include the Tzotzil titles of the poems. Perhaps anticipating that most readers will read the poems in translation, the authors of the collections only include the Spanish and English titles of the poems.
given the large number of indigenous languages in Mesoamerica.\textsuperscript{89} Because many of the poets working with Taller Leñateros are not proficient in Spanish or English, they have opted to use a translator for each of their publications.

A poem in the English versions of the collection, both the artists’ book and the paperback edition, speaks to the fact that non-indigenous readers will have access to the poems. In the “Notes on the Creators” of the handmade English version, Ámbar Past explains that each copy of the text is “censed with copal while Xpetra Ernáñdes prays” (\textit{Incantations by Mayan Women} 292):

\begin{quote}
We are happy, sacred paper,
sacred book,
sacred words,
sacred paintings.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
You’ve come out in another language
called English,
the tongue of the white folks
who have blond hair.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{89} By “Mesoamerican languages” I am referring to all indigenous languages in the region including southern Mexico, parts of Honduras and El Salvador, and all of Guatemala and Belize; linguistically it contains several hundred different languages pertaining to seven different language families. For the purposes of this study, it is also pertinent to note that speakers of Mesoamerican languages were among the first to develop traditions of writing.
Don’t scold us, book,  
be of one heart,  
sing and dance  
because you are going to travel far away  
to another land. (Past, *Incantations: Songs, Spells and Images* 18; Past,  
*Incantations by Mayan Women* 292-93)90

In addition to the poems being translated to English, the physical books geographically move from the Highlands of Chiapas to other places in the world because Taller Leñateros ships the texts to consumers across the globe. So not only are the poems available in this non-indigenous language, but the books themselves are not restricted to the physical Tzotzil communities. Both processes contribute to increasing the overall accessibility of these poems for non-indigenous communities, both linguistically and ge-politically speaking. Similar to what we saw in Chapter 2 with the Mayan ethnoscapes related to the Pan-Maya Movement in Guatemala, these Tzotzil poets also participate in processes of globalization by releasing their poetry in translation and physically shipping the books from Mexico to other countries.

Aside from her role as the editor, Past is also the primary translator of these poems. She explicitly describes her role, claiming that her goal as translator was to recreate – in another language – poetry as beautiful and fresh as the original. Both the Spanish and English versions

90 This poem also appeared in the comment that Post posted to the Book_Arts-L mailing list on April 6, 2005.
of the texts were translated directly from the Tzotzil. Some concepts – Kajval, Pukuj, Kaxail, wayhel, Potzlom – and plant names – tukum, xjuj, konkon – for which I could find no equivalent, were left untranslated. The Mayan metaphors were respected; the syntax, metric, and titles are my own. These are not line by line translations, but renderings of the magic. (Incantations: Songs, Spells and Images 89)\(^{91}\)

The language that Past uses, describing the poems as “magic,” presents the poems as exotic or other-worldly. Past frames these incantations as inherently different from other texts with which non-indigenous audiences are familiar. She affirms that she wanted to preserve what makes these poems culturally different and create a version of the poems in another language that was as close to the original as possible. Past recognizes that she has not provided literal, line-by-line translations, for something would be lost if she translated all the terms. In this way, Past’s approach is similar to Elizabeth Burgos’s when she transcribed Rigoberta Menchú Tum’s testimonio.

Like Past, Burgos also explained that she did not alter the content of the K’iche’ Maya woman’s account. Burgos describes the process through which she edited Menchú Tum’s account, stating that “[p]rimero descifré por completo las cintas grabadas

\(^{91}\) Past’s commentary with regard to her role as the translator is only present in the English translation. The equivalent information is not available in the Spanish version perhaps because more and more indigenous people in Latin America are proficient not only in their native language, but the dominant language in society as well, which in most of Mesoamerica is Spanish (the exception being Belize, where English is the official language).
(veinticinco horas en total). Y con ello quiero decir que no deseché nada, no cambié ni una palabra, aunque estuviese mal empleada. No toqué ni el estilo, ni la construcción de las frases” (17-18). She did not eliminate details concerning the religious ceremonies, cultural norms surrounding birth, and other cultural information that Menchú Tum includes in her testimonio, as some of her editors advised her to do (18). Instead, she disregarded their suggestions, arguing that

mi respeto por Rigoberta me ha impedido obrar de otro modo. Si Rigoberta ha hablado, no ha sido únicamente para que escuchemos sus desventuras, sino, y sobre todo, para hacernos comprender su cultura, de la que se siente tan orgullosa y para la que pide reconocimiento. (18)

Although Burgos’s editors believed that she risked boring her readers with Menchú Tum’s extensive explanations of K’iche’ Maya culture, she maintained this information out of loyalty to Menchú Tum, recognizing that perhaps part of the latter’s objectives in her testimonio was to tell the world about her culture. Similarly, Past is also a non-indigenous translator who has prioritized preserving the Mayan culture that the Tzotzil women describe in their poetry. Although both Burgos and Past made some changes in the presentation of the content, they each affirm their goal of maintaining the Mayan cultures in the texts that they translate.

Past, however, is not the only person who contributed to the translation of the Spanish and English editions. According to Past, “El sabor y la frescura del habla de Xun Okotz y Petra Ernándes se aprecia en el lenguaje que empleamos en las traducciones” (Conjuros y ebriedades 181). For her, the influence of both Xun Okotz and Petra Ernándes is present in the style. Although Past claims that Okotz should have been
included in the collection as a co-translator, his name does not formally appear in the credits; she explains that Okotz himself asked that he be removed. In a letter addressed to Past in the “Colofón” of the book, Okotz justifies his decision:

(N)o quiero que pongas mi nombre en tu libro, porque no todo es mi trabajo; allí está el trabajo de Petra, el trabajo de la mamá de Petra, el trabajo de María Tzu, de Xunk’a’ Utz’utz’ Ni’. Entonces no me siento contento, y además los textos están bien feos; casi como brujería. Fue muy fiero lo que me leíste aquella vez; dijiste: que una termita giganta coma su pene, que una culebra muerda su panza, que una avispa pique su culo, que un lombriz devore su corazón, dijiste. Entonces, cuando dijiste que me ibas a poner como cotraductor, pues ¡puta! me espanté, porque si mis compañeros me ven ahí, me van a matar de una vez. (Conjuros y ebriedades 181)

Okotz explicitly communicates his fear of what his “compañeros,” the others in town, would think if they knew that he helped produce a collection of poems in which female poets openly pray for men to be punished. Perhaps because of the social ramifications

92 In Tonik Nibak’s “Hechizo para matar al hombre infiel” (Past, Conjuros y ebriedades 131), for example, the poetic voice invokes the gods to admonish a man’s infidelity:

Métele un cuchillo en su corazón,
clávale un clavo en su cuerpo.
Que una termita gigante crezca en su ombligo.
Una avispa. Una hormiga en su oreja.
surrounding the content of the incantations, Xun Okotz did not want to be associated with
the collection, much less credited as a co-translator. That said, years later with the
publication of the trade edition by Cinco Puntos Press, Ámbar Past explains that
“[f]inally, Xalik Guzmán Bakbolom (alias Xun Okotz), who had originally disguised
himself, has given permission for his real name to be used in the credits as one of the
Fathermothers of the Book” (Incantations: Songs, Spells and Images 21). The issue of
who exactly translated the poems and to what extent presents complications given the
possible consequences of participating in the creation of Conjuros y ebriedades. Apart
from Okotz and Past, there are other women who influenced and participated in the
translation processes, and they probably do not confront the same stigma as Xun Okotz
since they are women. So why are they not present in the official credits either?

Apparently, even though more than one person may work together to create a text,
not all names appear in the official credits. As ethnopoetry scholars Molina and Evers

 Que penetre nueve veces en su cráneo.

[...]

Que los gusanos coman su alma, coman su miembro.

Que se agrande su panza.

Que se atragante con un frijol.

Dále chorillo, sécale su semen.

Hazle chiquita chiquita su verga. (11-15; 19-23)

Explicitly commanding the goddess of the Earth, Kajval, to physically
alter the men’s
body parts, including their members, is socially a high-stakes endeavor because of the
poetic voice’s outright attack on masculinity.
explain, “when community-based American Indians do participate in ethnopoetic projects their contributions are rarely represented on title pages and in copyrights” (23). Indigenous intellectuals often serve as native informants, and are not actually recognized as creators of knowledge. In the Spanish and English editions, Past receives credit for the authorship as the collections’ editor. The copyright information is solely attributed to Past, without recognizing the other authors and artists from the Taller that collaborated in its production. In terms of the official copyright, she is the only person recognized as the creator of this text, even though it was produced by the Taller which is a collective publishing house.

The title pages of the books and the distribution of royalties, however, recognize other artists and poets as authors. The title page of the Spanish translation states, “Versiones en castía por Ámbar Past con la colaboración de Xun Okotz y Petra Ernándes;” the English artists’ book lists Ámbar Past, Xun Okotz, and Xpetra Ernándes; and the trade paperback states that the authors are “Ámbar Past with Xalik Guzmán Bakbolom and Xpetra Ernandes.” There are several authors listed on each of these title pages. Moreover, even though Past is the sole owner of the copyright, she is not the only one who has benefitted from the royalties. Past explains that all of the creators of the text have received a portion of the texts’ profits, including “the authors of the incantations, […] the painters who created the graphics, and also […] the artisans who molded the mask covers and printed and bound the texts and the forty-four original silk screens” (Incantations: Songs, Spells and Images 21). In this way, there are both similarities and differences between Taller Leñateros’s collections of incantations and Rigoberta Menchú Tum’s testimonio. Past—like Burgos—is the sole person identified on the copyright.
However, whereas Burgos is the sole recipient of the profits of Menchú Tum’s *testimonio*, Past says that she divides the money among the members of the Taller that helped create the artists’ book editions. The Tzotzil Maya artists and authors financially benefit from the sale of their books, whereas Menchú Tum does not. 93 For centuries, colonial subjects have adapted their ways of life to changing circumstances, and these Tzotzil Maya’s renegotiation of a communal authorship for an individual one is another example of this common phenomenon. In many cases, the cost of doing business with non-indigenous cultures is ceding parts of their traditions.

Historically only select Tzotzil women preserved and sang these poems to the other members of their communities. According to Past, the poems are a written record of “cantos [que] les fueron entregados por sus antepasados, los Primeros Padresmadres, quienes conservan el Gran Libro donde guardan los conjuros” (*Conjuros y ebriedades* 149). The source of the poems is a sacred text with which only a select few have contact; these oral poems have historically existed in the memory of community members. According to the Tzotzil poets, the First Fathermothers whisper the poems into their ears in their dreams, and they share these texts with others via song. There is not equal access to the poems since the First Fathermothers do not share the texts with the entire community. Despite this layer of detachment from the source, there have historically not been individual authors associated with each poem—traditionally they are the expression of the community.

---

93 Although Menchú Tum has not directly received any of the royalties from the publication of her testimonio, she has benefitted from its publication, as evident by her Nobel Peace Prize.
In both of the English translations of the collection the poets also renegotiate individual authorship by redefining who is able to assume the role of the Fathermothers. On the title page of each of these books, the authors are presented as the Fathermothers. In the artists’ book edition, the title page indicates, “Fathermothers of the Book: Ámbar Past with Xun Okotz and Xpetra Ernáñes,” and the trade paperback lists the Fathermothers as “Ámbar Past with Xalik Guzmán Bakbolom and Xpetra Ernandes.” Like the Fathermothers, the authors are responsible for sharing these texts with others who do not have access to the original incantations. The Fathermothers are to some extent authors who share the poems with only select members of Tzotzil Maya communities, and in the case of Taller Leñateros’s publications, the “Fathermothers” are select members of the publishing cooperative who have shared the poems with their readers. By redefining who is able to assume the role of the Fathermothers in this cross-cultural exchange, the Taller has not only renegotiated traditional Mayan concepts of authorship, but religious beliefs as well.

Apart from the title pages, the presentation of the poems on each page manifests another way that traditional collective authorship is renegotiated. Specifically, the organization of the collection attributes individual authorship to each text. There are the names of twenty-five different Tzotzil poets in the Table of Contents, including but not limited to María Tzu, Xunka Utz’utz’ Ni’, and Petra Ernáñes Lópes, all of whom are women. Dinitia Smith explains that “150 Mayan women from Taller Leñateros […] have produced what may be the first book of Mayan women's poetry created almost entirely by them, and translated into English” (n. pag.). Here the poets present their work using Western literary conventions of singular authorship.
Another way in which these poets have renegotiated their communal traditions is by presenting the poems in written form. The fact that *Conjuros y ebriedades* is a recorded account of oral poetry illustrates a further removal from their Tzotzil traditions concerning orality. By writing the incantations down, the medium through which the Tzotzil Maya communicate their oral incantations changes. As Ramón Arzápalo Marín, a researcher in Anthropological Linguistics of Mayan Philology, explains, at the end of the sixteenth century, to protect their oral poetry from the threat of cultural annihilation that the Spanish Conquest posed to indigenous traditions and ways of life, Maya scribes produced the *Ritual de los Bacabes*, a written collection of incantations whose original codex is from Nunkini, Campeche (10). Later at the end of the twentieth century with

---

94 Similarly, Maya scribes created a version of the *Popol Wuj* using Greco-Roman alphabetization. As Dennis Tedlock has explained in his introduction to his translation of the sacred text, the authors of the first alphabetic form of the *Popol Wuj* “were members of the three lordly lineages that had once ruled the Quiché kingdom: the Cauecs, the Greathouses, and the Lord Quichés[, and t]hey worked in the middle of the sixteenth century.” This action was a form of resistance against the colonial systems of power—the Maya “learned to use the Roman alphabet as a mask for ancient texts” (“Introduction” 25). These scribes used alphabetic substitutes for hieroglyphic works as a means of protecting ancient Maya literature from being destroyed by missionaries like Fray Diego de Landa. Later, “[b]etween 1701 and 1703, a friar named Francisco Ximénez happened to get a look at this manuscript while he was serving as the parish priest. He made the only surviving copy of the Quiché text of the Popol Vuh and added a Spanish translation” (Tedlock, “Introduction” 27). Not only is there hybridity in the media through which the
the creation of *Conjuros y ebriedades*, the Tzotzil poets working with Taller Leñateros transcribed their oral discourses into poetic verses in this handmade “artists’ book.” As a result, what once existed exclusively via orality became “literary poetry.” In each of these cases, though the content remains largely the same, by presenting them as a codex or a poetry collection, how outside audiences perceive them changes. The labels “codex” or “literary poetry” shape audience expectations. The term “codex” causes audiences to understand the incantations as non-Western, indigenous cultural knowledge. Presenting *Conjuros y ebriedades* as “literary poetry,” however, has a different effect on these verses—incantations presented in this way follow conventions regulating the form and function of “high culture” and what is considered Literature.

The presentation of the collection as a book of poetry dialogues with Western literary conventions. The word “poetry,” describing a group of verses typically organized in stanzas with varying degrees of rhyme and meter, is largely a Western concept.

Although Maya communities have poetic traditions comparable to Western examples, the Tzotzil and other Maya do not refer to their verses in the same way. Past explains that in Tzotzil, the term “tz’ib” is used to describe “that which is painted or written down,” and what is considered poetry is “nichimal k’op,” or the “word in flower” (*Incantations: Songs, Spells and Images* 30).95 This distinction speaks to the importance of orality in

*Popol Wuj* has historically been presented, but also in terms of the agents who have realized the transcription, including both Maya and non-Maya authors. In both manuscripts, the scribes linguistically and culturally translate the text.

95 For a more in-depth look at the connotations of the root “tz’ib” (variation “ts’ib”), see U.S. archaeologist Dorie Reents-Budet’s study on Classic Maya ceramic
poetic expression in Maya cultures. Moreover, the use of the word “flower” underscores the creative component of verse, from these words will grow something more meaningful. Tedlock has noted similar imagery in the opening of the *Popol Wuj*: “Waral xchqtz’ib’a wi / xchiqatikib’a wi Ojer Tzij,” which he translates as “Here we shall inscribe / we shall implant the Ancient Word” (“Toward a Poetics” 182). For him, the stem “tiki-” to denote planting does not refer to the literal sowing of seeds to produce a milpa or other food, but rather

the sense of planting (or transplanting) something that is already a plant in its own right. That something is the Ancient Word, which the authors are transplanting from one book, written in the words and syllables of the Mayan script, into another book, written in the consonants and vowels of the Roman script. In both cases the signs of the graphic field are planted in rows. (“Toward a Poetics” 182-83)

Even in examples that date as early as the *Popol Wuj*, there is cultural hybridity between European and K’iche’ Maya traditions. The resulting manuscript of the *Popol Wuj* that Tedlock describes was no longer a pure representation of Maya-ness, as it exhibited influences of European conventions, namely its passage to Greco-Roman alphabetization. Centuries later, Taller Leñateros’s *Conjuros y ebriedades* is another example of a book that simultaneously dialogues with Tzotzil Maya and European traditions. It too is an

painting, which was introduced in Chapter 1. In this same chapter through examples from Kaqchikel poet Calixta Gabriel Xiquín’s work, we saw that another way some Maya communities refer to their poetry is through images of weaving, using the expression “pach’un tzij” (woven words).
example of how European literary conventions shape the presentation of what are supposedly authentic representations of what is Maya.

As we have seen, because non-indigenous and indigenous agents collaborate to publish these collections of incantations, there are diverse levels of cultural exchange and hybridity in each text. This exchange is not necessarily serendipitous, but rather a strategic negotiation of distinct cultural identities—there is a give and take. While Taller Leñateros may concede the traditional collective authorship of these poems, there are immediate effects of such compromises. By working with non-indigenous artists and translators like Past, the poets are able to potentially reach larger audiences. The collaboration between Tzotzil Maya and non-indigenous artists and authors provokes the question of the level of involvement—and control—each exerts in the creation of these books. Given the history of colonialism in these regions, to what extent are these alliances continuations of the structures of power imbued in coloniality that critic Aníbal Quijano has described, as we have seen in the Introduction? In some ways, through collaboration the incantations may become influenced by non-indigenous agendas—there is a confluence of indigenous and non-indigenous goals. Nevertheless, depending on the dynamics of the relationships between all parties involved, indigenous agendas may not be fundamentally different from non-indigenous ones. As Quijano has noted, there has historically been a series of dualisms characterizing the relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous. The particularities of collaboration may in effect destabilize such dichotomies.

**Cultural Products, Neoliberalism, and (Im)migration**
Cultural hybridity is not only present in the publication processes, but also in the poems themselves. Ámbar Past’s first experiences with the incantations speak to this cross-cultural exchange. Past first realized that Tzotzil women knew the incantations in *Conjuros y ebriedades* and its English translations as a result of an outbreak of an epidemic that plagued Magdalenas village. Journalist Dinitia Smith describes Past’s account of the first time that she heard the poetry in 1975: “In the cemetery, she said, she saw a woman carrying her dead baby lying on a board and wrapped in a shawl for burial. The mother offered her dead child a last sip of Coca-Cola and uttered a prayer” (n. pag.). According to Smith, Ámbar Past is still able to recall the prayer from memory:

> Take this sweet dew from the earth,
> Take this honey.
> It will help you on your way.
> It will give you strength on your path. (n. pag.)

Contrary to what the lyrics of this prayer convey, the speaker did not offer traditional honey, but instead gave the child another sweet, liquid substance. The use of Coca-Cola, a possible symbol of U.S. capitalistic imperialism, evidences that the Tzotzil Maya have adapted to foreign influences. In the twenty-first century of global politics and Neoliberalism, the Tzotzil are not isolated from external forces as was commonly believed in the past. There is a continual exchange between indigenous communities and the rest of the world, causing mutual influences.

Despite the presence of products from other cultures in the Highlands of Chiapas, the Tzotzil women working with Taller Leñateros maintain their traditional symbolic ties to the Earth. For example, apart from the goddess of the Earth, Kajval, there are also
references to the *wayhel* in the incantations. As anthropologist Gary H. Gossen explains, all Mesoamerican indigenous people have a *wayhel*, or animal soul:

for all Tzotzils, indeed the vast majority of over 15 million Indians in Mexico and Central America today, have a private spiritual world of the self that is expressed through the concept of animal souls or other extrasomatic causal forces that influence their destiny. […] Mesoamerican souls are fragile essences that link individuals to the forces of Earth, society, the cosmos, and the divine. […] These alter ego coessences can become lost, afflicted, manipulated by witches, or frightened by sexual excitement or some unexpected event. If these forces are fatally injured, their human counterparts die. […] They are also centrally present in the language, beliefs, practices, and symbols used in traditional health maintenance and curing. (*Telling Maya Tales* 226-27)

The incantation has historically been used to combat illnesses, so it is not surprising that the animal soul, or the *wayhel*, has a marked presence in the lyrics of the poetry collections. In his study of the *Ritual de los Bacabes*, Ramón Arzápalo Marín establishes this connection between the incantation and illness. The *Ritual de los Bacabes* is 68 texts that are: “en su gran mayoría conjuros para la curación de enfermedades, producto de una armoniosa combinación de conocimientos médicos, botánicos, mágicos y religiosos, presentados en un lenguaje literario y esotérico” (10). When they incorporate the *wayhel* in *Conjuros y ebriedades*, the Tzotzil poets draw from their ancient Mayan traditions relating to the Earth and the genre of the incantation. Even though they incorporate
materials that have not conventionally been used in incantations, the poets have positioned themselves within the conventions surrounding incantations.

The *wayhel*, however, has not been able to escape foreign influences either. Past describes how the animal soul’s accommodations in the sacred mountains along with their ancestors, the *Padresmadres*, feature technological amenities: “Allí tienen todo tipo de cosas: radios, rocolas y hasta computadoras y videocaseteras” (*Conjuros y ebriedades* 151). Although the Tzotzil poets working with Taller Leñateros have continued to identify with the Earth and have preserved traditions concerning the *wayhel*, these conventions have not remained stagnant. Rather, Tzotzil Maya have also adapted the concept of the animal soul to the social and technological changes that the indigenous communities in Chiapas—and other parts of Mexico and Mesoamerica—have had to negotiate with increasing frequency. What is “traditional” for Tzotzil communities is an organic concept that evolves over time. In the case of the collections of incantations, the poets maintain their traditional connections with the Earth and the land, but they do so in an innovative way, simultaneously addressing contemporary social issues. For instance, Tzotzil poet Juana te la Cruz Posol addresses the traditional dependency of the Maya on

---

96 Anthropologist William R. Holland also comments on the function of sacred mountains and their relation to Tzotzil understandings of the Earth. He conveys that the “sacred mountains play a very important role in the ceremonial life of the Tzotzil” (304), and Evon Z. Vogt, who has done significant research on ancestor worship and sacred mountains in Zinacantán, attributes Holland with discovering evidence that certain “sacred mountains are related to particular patrilineages which trace their origins mythologically to these mountains” (“Ancient Maya” 194).
the Earth, whereas “Encanto para no tener que ir al otro lado” by Tzotzil poet Xunka Utz’utz’ Ni’ speaks to the growing issue of immigration in Tzotzil Maya communities.97

In “Para sembrar la tierra” (19) by Juana te la Cruz Posol, the poetic voice connects the poem to the Earth. Many Maya depend on the Earth, which controls so much of their destiny, and “Para sembrar la tierra” is a supplication to the “Tierra Sagrada” to ensure that a good harvest results from the seeds that the poetic voice intends to sew. As Calixta Guiteras Holmes notes from her interviews with Tzotzil Maya native informant Manuel Arias Sojom, the Earth is the most powerful entity and any good fortune that falls upon the people is her creation: “She is the cause of all harm that may befall the entire group. Only by obtaining her permission may man occupy her with his home and fields. Any change of residence, any enlargement of the milpa must be her gift” (290). Many Maya rely on food from the land in order to sustain themselves, so they pray to the Earth, asking her to provide a good harvest: “Quiero que llenes mi jícara, Tierra Sagrada. / Quiero que llenes mi olla” (19-20). The use of the subjunctive in each of these verses underscores the uncertainty of whether the Earth will actually provide for them. The speaker may invoke the Earth to enrich the milpa and other crops, but the Earth may not actually deliver. This prayer also highlights Maya vulnerability with regards to the Earth, who may not grant their requests.

97 For an example of theatre by Tzotzil Maya playwrights and actors that also addresses immigration, see Workers in the Other World by Monkey Business Theatre. This play appears in the recent anthology by anthropologist Robert M. Laughlin and the theatre troupe Sna Jtz’ibajom, entitled Monkey Business Theatre.
The parallel verses in “Para sembrar la tierra” (19) by Juana te la Cruz Posol also connect the incantation to ancient Mayan poetics. In the *Popol Wuj*, for example, Dennis Tedlock has observed parallel verses, in both syntax and meaning, in the poem that the first four humans recited in response to the gods. Their first verse, “Qitzij chik,” (Truly now), is followed by a distich with a play of form against meaning by pairing the words “double” and “triple”: “kamul k’amol, / oxmul k’amol,” which translates as “double thanks, triple thanks” (“Toward a Poetics” 180). Similarly, Ramón Arzápalo Marín also comments on this literary technique in the *Ritual de los Bacabes*, stating that sometimes analogies are juxtaposed “por la ‘igualdad’ relajada de los sinónimos” (14). Arzápalo Marín is cognizant of paradoxical concepts that appear alongside one another. That said, he does not interpret such allusions in the literal sense, but rather in the metaphorical: “La paradoja considerada como metalogismo, merece aquí una reflexión más profunda, ya que al entrar al campo de la lógica no podemos descartar la posibilidad de que “la lógica maya” esté culturalmente condicionada” (18). He provides the expression “Yo soy tu madre, yo soy tu padre” as an example, stating that it could metaphorically mean “Yo soy tu progenitor / de mi dependes, soy el origen” (18). In *Conjuros y ebriedades*, Past has observed similar poetic structures in this more contemporary collection of incantations, which is written “en versos pares; pares de versos que quieren decir lo mismo, o que dicen lo contrario uno del otro” (172). Specifically, in “Para sembrar la tierra” by Juana te la Cruz Posol, the verses, “Quiero que llenes mi jícara, Tierra Sagrada. / Quiero que llenes mi olla” (19-20) are an example of the parallelisms that are typical in Maya poetics. Here, although the verses literally translate as “I want you to fill my small bowl, Sacred Earth. / I want you to fill my pot,” the juxtaposition of these verses speaks to the
need for the Earth to provide for each person and the community as a whole. Not only does the small bowl for the individual need to be filled, but the larger pot as well. The overarching idea is that it is ultimately the Earth’s responsibility to provide for the Maya, both collectively and individually.

Despite the tenuous relationship between the Tzotzil Maya and the Earth, the speaker in “Encanto para no tener que ir al otro lado” (Conjuros y ebriedades 39) by Xunka Utz’utz’ Ni’ is unwilling to leave the land and migrate to foreign lands for work, given the strong links between Maya communities and the Earth. An anecdote that Past includes in Conjuros y ebriedades speaks to this complicated relationship. She discusses the danger of traveling to foreign, unknown territories via a story about Tzotzil poet María Tzu, whose work also appears in the collection. Tzu feared for her granddaughter’s soul when the two were in Mexico City, an urban environment in stark contrast to the natural landscape of Chiapas:

Los niños corren mucho riesgo de perder sus almas en lugares que no se conoce. Hace veinte años, cuando María Tzu y su nena, Xunka’, fueron a la Ciudad de México, ella a cada momento llamaba y pastoreaba al espíritu de su criatura para que no se perdiera en el hormiguero del Metro.

(Conjuros y ebriedades 151)  

98 The prayer that María Tzu repeated during her journey to Mexico City was:

Xunka’, Zuuuunka’, vente a tu casa.

Vente a tu cuerpo.

Regresa, Xunka’, con tu madre.

Ya vuelve ya a tu ropa.
From the very title of the poem, “Encanto para no tener que ir al otro lado” (39), the author creates a dichotomy implicit in the term “lado”—the side from which the speaker presents the poem, and the other with which the poetic voice does not identify. The resistance implicit in the anaphora “No quiero” communicates that the other “lado” corresponds to the latter, that with which the speaker does not identify:

No quiero trabajar en ninguna finca.
No quiero ir a otra casa.
No quiero ningún trabajo lejos.
No quiero ir a Los Ángeles.
No quiero ir a La Florida. (13-17)

According to this stanza, the other side refers to physical, geopolitical places; specifically, the speaker refuses to separate herself from the land that she knows in Chiapas. The allusions to “ninguna finca,” “otra casa,” and “ningún trabajo lejos,” refer to ambiguous spaces that potentially could be close to Chiapas, yet the indeterminacy indicates that the speaker does not want to go anywhere else, not even within Mexico. The direct references to “Los Ángeles” and “La Florida,” two places with a significant demographic of migration from Latin America, explicitly convey that she does not want

Ya retorna ya a tu pañal.
No tengas miedo de los caminos.
No te asustes con los carros.
Que no se quede enredada tu alma allí
en la mano del Anjel Diablo. (Past, Conjuros y ebriedades 151, emphasis in text)
to abandon her homeland to migrate north either. In other words, the speaker resists migrating from Chiapas to any other region.

Albeit through different approaches, both “Para sembrar la tierra” and “Encanto para no tener que ir al otro lado” focus on the traditional identification of the Maya with the land. In her poem “Para sembrar la tierra,” Jwana te la Krus Posol foregrounds the longstanding history of Maya dependency on the land so that readers understand the significance for the people to stay in Chiapas before reading the next poem in the collection, “Encanto para no tener que ir al otro lado.” Because the poems build on one another thematically, this poetry collection is a “social act.” This is Uruguayan author and researcher Hugo Achugar’s description of the architecture of a book of poems that must be read in the order in which they appear to capture the meaning of the book as a whole; he says:

The book of poems is a unity whose motive is individually articulated with social processes. It has a syntax that draws together poems, epigraph, dedications, and so on, overdetermining and sometime romanticizing them. Thus it proposes a particular reading of the whole, and the isolated poem should be read in such a way that its integration into the whole of the book changes its meaning. This syntax, violated each time we read the book at random, disregarding the proposed organization, is a formalization of voice. This basic speaker’s voice is shaped for this syntax and is informed by an aesthetic-ideological perspective. (653, emphasis in text) For Achugar, by reading a book of poems in the order in which its components appear, respecting the overall “ideological cultural system,” the collection may become a social
act. *Conjuros y ebriedades* exemplifies Achugar’s commentary, as the poems in the collection build upon one another to voice a politically charged message. The poetic voice in Xunka’ Utz’utz’ Ni’’s poem draws from the traditional Maya connections with the land that Juana te la Cruz Posol establishes to address issues of immigration and illustrate the relationship that Tzotzil Maya have with the Earth. In the context of the twenty-first century, the dialogue between these poems demonstrates how Maya workers have also formed part of diasporic communities abroad.

Specifically, one way that Xunka’ Utz’utz’ Ni’ connects her poem to the traditions which Juana te la Cruz Posol establishes, linking the Tzotzil Maya to the land, is through the verb “dar.” Utz’utz’ Ni’ incorporates a poetic voice who ambiguously asks that Kajval “give:” “Toma en cuenta, Kajval, / qué me vas a dar” (11-12). This is much like the speaker of “Para sembrar la tierra,” who traditionally asks that gods “give” her a good harvest to fill her gourd and pot with food, as we have seen. In Utz’utz’ Ni’’s poem, the speaker appeals to Kajval “to give” so that she does not have to abandon the land to which she is intimately connected. The poetic voices in both texts work through the verb “dar,” but for different purposes. Utz’utz’ Ni’’s poem evidences a renegotiation of traditions concerning the land and the relationship between the indigenous and their gods in “Para sembrar la tierra” to comment on the hardships that contribute to migration to the United States.

---

99 For more information concerning contemporary Maya immigration, see anthropologist Joyce Bennett’s recent doctoral dissertation on Kaqchikel Maya migration patterns and social identity and anthropologist Patricia Foxen’s study of K’iche’ Maya immigrants from Guatemala to Providence, Rhode Island.
The collection, however, does not exclusively speak to the physical movement of people to Mexico’s northern neighbor. The publication processes of the book itself have also moved across the border through the 2009 English edition of the collection. This more recent publication relocates the collection’s physical creation to El Paso, Texas. Far from the Maya Highlands of Chiapas, the founders of Cinco Puntos Press, Bobby and Lee Byrd, describe the company as “a small, very independent publishing company rooted here in El Paso, Texas, not three miles north of the US-Mexican border” (Cinco Puntos Press). One consequence of releasing *Incantations: Songs, Spells and Images by Mayan Women* via Cinco Puntos Press is that the overall presentation of the text is different. Rather than an artists’ book which the Tzotzil poets produce using traditional Mayan papermaking techniques, this is a mass-produced text, which follows the form and function of a conventional book. As such, unlike Taller Leñateros which published a limited number of copies of the artists’ books, the paperback edition is widely available for sale. Rather than the list price of 700 pesos ($52.95) for the handmade book in Spanish, or 1300 pesos ($98.34) for the original English translation, Cinco Puntos Press’s paperback edition retails for $26.95.\(^{100}\) Because of the significantly less expensive price...

\(^{100}\) I calculated these currency conversions on February 19, 2014, but they are subject to change. It is ironic that the price of the handmade artists’ book is less than the English edition. Both texts were created in the same way, with Past providing the translations for each. Since the materials and resources are the same, the price discrepancies are not because it was more expensive to produce the English edition. Such price variations may be due to differences in the targeted audiences—the Spanish edition targets audiences within Mexico as well as other parts of the Spanish-speaking world,
of the edition from Cinco Puntos Press, readers of a wider variety of economic means have access to this text. More people and libraries are able to afford the paperback edition, so it is not limited to consumers and institutions that belong to higher socio-economic circles.

Because the tradeback edition from Cinco Puntos Press is for sale on Amazon, a selection from the collection is available online. As is customary on Amazon, consumers are able to “Look Inside,” which provides a preview of the collection’s contents. The standard options in this view are the front cover, copyright, table of contents, first pages, back cover, and a section entitled “Surprise Me!” Each time an Amazon user clicks on this last hyperlink, the pages displayed vary. However, apart from select poems and images, there are consistently portions from the “Introduction,” the “Notes” section, and Ámbar Past’s description of Tzotzil culture and poetics in the essay “She of the Great Writing, She of the Glyphs.” Because parts of the collection are available digitally, readers are not limited to accessing the text through the physical book. As I mentioned in my introduction, anyone who has a personal computer and Internet connection or uses the relatively inexpensive Internet cafés that are prevalent in Latin America and other parts of the world has access. Consequently, readers who are interested in this text are able to read—at least sections of—the collection digitally on whereas the English translation is for international audiences more broadly who do not speak Spanish.

Although a digital version of parts of the book is available online, as of February 19, 2014, there is still not an electronic version available for tablet readers, such as a Kindle or Nook device.
Amazo
Moreover, based on the books consumers view, Amazon uses an algorithm to recommend other thematically similar books to potentially increase the company’s sales. As such, because of the tradeback edition’s online presence through a large commercial entity like Amazon, domestic and international audiences alike have increased access to the collection.\(^\text{102}\)

Amazon is not the first place where portions of *Conjuros y ebriedades* have been available online. Some poems have also been available on a blog.\(^\text{103}\) This link was

\(^{102}\) In terms of access, the ways that audiences approach a commercial, mass-produced paperback is different from the ways in which they read artists’ books. Often artists’ books are housed in museums or distinguished libraries, including but not limited to the rare books collections at UNC-Chapel Hill, University of California at Riverside, Princeton University, and Harvard University. As such, readers access artists’ books less directly, through glass displays in museums and are unable to actually turn the pages. In museums, artists’ books are presented more like a work of art than a book, in that they are not meant to be read. In libraries, patrons must comply with the institutional regulations, and readers may be unable to remove artists’ books from their physical locations. In special collections in prestigious libraries, artists’ books retain their book-like qualities insofar as library patrons are able to read them, yet they must do so under special circumstances. In the case of the edition that Cinco Puntos Press released, however, readers are not limited to accessing the text solely in the physical confines of a museum or library; instead, they can read the book like they would any other commercial, mass-produced paperback—wherever and however they desire.

\(^{103}\) The blog’s url address is http://cuhwww.upr.clu.edu/exegesis/35/portada.html.
originally published in 2006, was still available in May 2010, but as of February 2014, it had disappeared. As digital texts on the Internet they enjoyed some increased circulation, yet this blog is no longer in the public domain. That the Tzotzil poets have used technology evidences that they renegotiate the medium through which they present their texts, similar to the way that technology has influenced the traditional concept of the wayhel. As opposed to solely working through their oral traditions within their communities, the poets take advantage of the Internet because it is a strategic medium through which to communicate to larger numbers of people. However, because online texts are not permanent, although the Tzotzil women may augment the overall visibility of their poems by using digital media, there is the risk that this increase is only temporary.

Taller Leñateros’s use of the Internet is in some ways comparable to that of the Zapatista Movement. As José Rabasa has explained, “[t]he Internet was […] conceived by the Zapatistas in Chiapas as one of the channels to convey their communiqués to an international community” (193), principally via http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/. Both Taller Leñateros and the EZLN have increased international attention to their respective causes by distributing their publications online. However, the characteristics of their online publications differ. While the Zapatistas release their communiqués via their website, Taller Leñateros’s incantations that are available online to some extent still resemble an artists’ book, even though it is a tradeback adaptation. In this specific sense, although both the EZLN and the Taller use the Internet for strategic purposes, the texts that they have made available online speak to the varying forms of indigenous self-representation, even among the Maya who reside in roughly the same geographic
location. Generally speaking, such discrepancies can be attributed to their distinct agendas. Whereas the Zapatistas are a primarily socio-political organization that has also addressed cultural issues such as the arts, Taller Leñateros’s priorities focus on Maya cultural production, while also engaging in socio-political issues such as immigration, or as we will see in the following section, gender inequalities.

**Ritual de los Bacabes, the Zapatista Movement, and Gender Inequalities**

In the introduction to the Cinco Puntos Press trade edition, from which I have taken the quote at the beginning of this chapter, Past describes Taller Leñateros’s work within the context of the growing appreciation for indigenous arts and literatures in the context of the Zapatista Movement. For Past, “[t]hese are inspiring times for the Maya” (21), and to substantiate her claim she describes the events surrounding the EZLN Caravan, or the “March of the Color of the Earth.” Participants in this 2001 march pushed for the Mexican government to honor the San Andrés Accords of 1995 and, more generally, to advocate to the Mexican Congress for indigenous rights. According to Past, this mobilization of Mexican indigenous groups

grabbed our souls and hearts, taking us all over Mexico […]. Twenty-four Mayan *comandantes* and a cosmopolitan entourage filling more than a hundred buses toured the country for almost a month. Multitudes turned out to receive the Caravan wherever it went. Men and women and school children dressed in white gathered in the plazas of the cities and towns. They waited for hours along the highways waving sugarcanes, they hung off bridges, holding up banners and hand-lettered signs of support for Amerindian rights. (*Incantations: Songs, Spells, and Images* 21)
After describing this moment in Mexican history, Past includes an English translation of parts of Comandanta Esther’s famous discourse in Congress. The selection addresses the marginalization of indigenous women in Mexico. Esther draws attention to disparities in terms of domestic violence, ethnic racism based on dress and language, and (the lack of) access to education, health care, and marital autonomy. Past follows by noting that the government has still not signed the San Andrés Accords and that “[y]ears after the Acteal massacre of 45 Tzotzil Mayans—most of whom were women and children—the perpetrators of this barbarous act are still at large. How many women must be killed in the world before we begin to hear their voices?” (Incantations: Songs, Spells and Images 26). Although a significant portion of Past’s introduction addresses Zapatista initiatives regarding indigenous rights—particularly for women—she does not explicitly connect Taller Leñateros, or the collection, to the EZLN. However, because she uses words with positive connotations such as “inspiring” and “barbarous” in her description of this event, the perpetrators were representatives of the government, who had previously displaced indigenous people of their homes.

104 On December 22, 1997, 45 indigenous people died as a result of the massacre in Acteal. As Rosalva Aída Hernández Castillo notes,

32 mujeres y 13 hombres del campamento de desplazados Los Naranjos, en la comunidad de Acteal, municipio de San Pedro Chenalhó, fueron asesinados por hombres fuertemente armados, a algunos de los cuales los sobrevivientes identificaron como integrantes de las bandas paramilitares priistas que semanas antes habían destruido sus casas y sus cosechas, obligándolos a buscar refugio en el Acteal. (15)
her tone is sympathetic to the Zapatista cause. Past manifests a strategic alliance to the EZLN; she does not outwardly proclaim the publishing cooperative’s allegiance to the movement, nor does she deny it.\(^{105}\)

In her poem “Para que no venga el ejército” (103), Xunka’ Utz’utz’ Ni’ subtly references ideas of the Zapatistas as well as events in their Revolution. Much of the rhetoric of the EZLN focuses on the metaphor of a sleeping society destined to be awakened by Zapatista rhetoric. For example, on January 1, 1994 the EZLN began to disperse pamphlets called *The Mexican Awakening* (*El despertador mexicano*). This idea is also present in “Para que no venga el ejército” (103): “Venimos a despertar tu conciencia. / Venimos a despertar tu corazón” (5-6). By using the verb “despertar” in these verses, the Maya poetic speaker links the poem to this Zapatista metaphor.

\(^{105}\) According to community studies scholar Carter Wilson, similar to Taller Leñateros, the theatrical cooperative Sna Jtz’ibajom (Monkey Business Theatre), has also strategically positioned themselves as neither for or against the EZLN:

The Zapatista offensive of January 1994 brought two-thirds of the Mexican Army into the state, as well as hundreds of journalists. Indian communities were forced to declare themselves “pro-Zapatista” or “loyal” to the Mexican government, a difficult and in some ways false set of alternatives. As Robert Laughlin points out, the Monkey Business troupe responded to the situation with plays that were more critical of the existing order. But they resisted the either/or of pro- or anti-Zapatista, understanding how that choice would polarize their home communities and work against a growing collective Mayan spirit. (xvi)
Although the verb “despertar” connects the poem to the EZLN, because of the absence of explicit references to the Zapatistas, the poetic voice does not directly establish an allegiance with the EZLN. Rather, she uses subtle allusions in a tactical way to not identify as either pro- or anti-Zapatista.

However, the juxtaposition of the verb “despertar” and the title of the poem “Para que no venga el ejército” (103) call to mind the events that occurred in Chiapas during the Zapatista uprising on January 1, 1994. This date marks the implementation of NAFTA, and social and political activist Tom Hayden elaborates that on that day “3,000 members of the EZLN occupy six large towns and hundreds of ranches in an armed uprising” (11). The National Army consequently came to “restore order” in Chiapas, sexually assaulting women all over the region. For this reason, as Past explains, “Xunka’ Utz’utz’ Ni’ suplica a la Madre Cerro que defienda al pueblo de los ejércitos que lo amenazan” (Conjuros y ebriedades 161). She prays:

Que no nos lleguen a pegar.
Que no nos lleguen a torturar.

Historically, many Tzotzil women have described their first sexual interaction as a violation. Past describes this trend:

La gran mayoría de las mujeres mayas confiesa que sus padres las casaron o, como dicen ellas, las vendieron a hombres que jamás habían visto antes y que su primera experiencia sexual, llamada en tzotzil la mordida del murciélago, fue en efecto una violación, aunque algunas, andando el tiempo, llegaron a querer a sus maridos. (Conjuros y ebriedades 164, emphasis in text)
Que no nos lleguen a violar
en nuestras casas, en nuestros hogares. (13-16)

Antagonism has long formed part of the history of Chiapas since the arrival of Europeans to the Americas due to the acts of violence that the Spaniards committed. Nevertheless, the juxtaposition of verses with the verb “despertar” and references to the sexual and physical violence against women implicitly call to mind events that resulted from the Zapatista uprising in 1994. The poetic voice speaks out against the physical and sexual abuse of indigenous women, both of which are issues that the EZLN has addressed in their Women’s Revolutionary Law, which was “accepted internationally in 1993 and made public on January 1, 1994” (Forbis 238). Although Xunk’a Utz’utz’ Ni’

107 Apart from physical and sexual abuse, this law also addresses women’s right to participate in the revolution, work and receive a just salary, decide their reproductive future, receive proper medical attention and education, freely choose their partner, and occupy positions of leadership. Subcomandante Marcos has referred to this as the “revolution before the revolution” (Forbis 238). However, as anthropologist Lynn Stephen has observed, the creation of this law is one thing, and its enforcement is entirely another. The law is “implemented variably (or not at all) in the varying levels and types of Zapatista organizations” (180); for example, Stephen notes that

[i]n many Zapatista base communities, the ability of women to participate equally with men is constrained. Local gender roles often limit women’s activities to the domestic arena or require that women ask their husbands for permission to leave the house or community, and the division of labor
addresses contemporary issues of gender inequality that have become pillars of the feminist ideals of the EZLN, she works through the traditional genre of the incantation. In other words, while Utz’utz’ Ni’ dialogues with political and social issues of the twentieth century, she does not abandon some of the communal conventions governing incantations, which largely derive from the *Ritual de los Bacabes*.

One of the characteristics of the *Ritual de los Bacabes* is the direct, insensitive tone of the speaker when addressing the Bacabs. Anthropologist Michael Edwin Kampen identifies the Bacabs as: “[a] set of four brothers […] with complex cosmological and ritual associations, [who] play a major part in the structure and operation of the Maya world. The four Bacabs stand at the four corners of the world, hold up the sky and sprinkle rain on the Earth” (27). Anthropologist and historian Ralph L. Roys explains makes it difficult for women to attend distant meetings (and easier to attend local ones). (180-81)

While the creation of the Women’s Revolutionary Law was progressive in terms of addressing gender inequalities, there is still much to be gained.

Drawing from Fray Diego de Landa’s *Relación de las Cosas de Yucatán*, Mayan studies expert John Eric Sydney Thompson names the four Bacabes: the Bacab of the east who presided over Kan years; the Bacab of the north, Can Tzicnal, who presided over the Muluc years; Zac Cimi, the Bacab of the west who presided over the Ix years; and the Bacab of the south who presided over the Cauac years (276). In the words of Fray Diego de Landa:

Entre la muchedumbre dioses que esta gente adoraba, adoraban cuatro llamados Bacab cada uno de ellos. Éstos, decían, eran cuatro hermanos a
that the poetic voice in the *Ritual de los Bacabes* gives the gods “peremptory orders, often in harsh language. At times he seems to threaten them or even curse them for responsibility” (xi), blaming the Bacabs for any malady to befall the community.

Traditionally, the Tzotzil recited this sort of religious invocation to a deity to avoid natural disasters or anything else, such as illness or physical infirmity, which could cause harm. For example, the poetic voice forcefully addresses the Bacabs in this incantation to cure the wind of *Nicte Tancas*, or “Erotic Frenzy” (León Portilla and Shorris 529-30) which may afflict a person:

Three times I summoned you with my flute,

oh, *Bacabs*, who are in the center of the skies.

Three times I summoned you with my flute,

oh, *Bacabs*.

I summoned you from the center of the earth,

oh, lords, of gods!

*Chac Pauahtun*, “Magnificent Red Pauahtun” is your symbol.

---

Los cuales puso Dios, cuando creó el mundo, a las cuatro partes de él sustentando el cielo [para que] no se cayese. Decían también de estos bacabes que escaparon cuando el mundo fue destruido por el diluvio. Ponen a cada uno de éstos otros nombres y señalanle con ellos a la parte del mundo que dios le tenía puesto teniendo el cielo, y aprópianle una de las cuatro letras dominicales a él y a la parte que está; y tienen señaladas las miserias o felices sucesos que decían habían de suceder en el año de cada uno de éstos y de las letras con ellos. (61)
You must surmise that the wind is in the center of the flower,
in the center of the skies,
in the center of the underworld,
in the caverns of the skies,
in the caverns of the earth.
That is why I stood up to seize the wind
in the center of the flower
I have hurled you to the center of the skies,
to the center of the underworld. (7-22)

In this selection, the poetic voice directly informs the Bacabs of what they must do; rather than asking in a respectful, deferential way, the speaker explicitly gives such orders in an authoritative tone. The speaker is a powerful entity in this dialogue, as the action of hurling the Bacabs to the center of the skies evidences.

Similar to the Ritual de los Bacabes, “Para que no venga el ejército” (103) by Xunka’ Utz’utz’ Ni’ also incorporates a forceful tone and direct orders. In the first four verses, the speaker invokes sacred entities using informal commands—there is an anaphora with the command “Escucha” preceding their names:

Escucha, Sagrado Relámpago,
escucha, Santo Cerro,
escucha, Sagrado Trueno,
escucha, Sagrada Cueva: (1-4)

The repetition of these commands underscores the severity and urgency of the speaker’s demands. Moreover, the poem begins—and concludes—with a forceful tone and direct
commands. The poetic voice explicitly addresses Kajval, asking the goddess of the Earth to accept her gifts: “Kajval, acepta este ramillete de flores. / Acepta esta ofrenda de hojas, acepta esta ofrenda de humo.” (*Conjuros y ebriedades* 24-25). The speaker’s use of informal discourse when posing demands to Kajval and other sacred beings has two purposes. In the first example, she unrelentlessly calls their attention to her situation, which she shares with other indigenous women in the area. At the end of the poem, the speaker resumes her more inferior role, asking that Kajval accept her gifts in exchange for the goddess of the Earth’s listening to her complaints to (hopefully) ultimately defend the indigenous women from the National Army’s acts of violence and sexual abuses.

More generally, Xunka Utz’utz’ Ni’s accumulation of sacred entities aligns the poetics of her incantation with traditions deriving from the *Popol Wuj*. In addition to the sacred beings in the first stanza and the invocation of Kajval, the second stanza lists others:

- **Gran Florido San Juan, Gran Florido Patrón,**
- **Santo Dueño de la Tierra, Sagrado Guardián del Cielo,**
- **Padre del Cerro Huitepec, Madre del Cerro Huitepec,**
- **Padre de la Cueva Blanca, Madre de la Cueva Blanca,**
- **Padre del Cerro San Cristóbal, Madre del Cerro San Cristóbal**

[…]

- **Sagrado Padre de Chaklajun, Sagrada Madre de Chaklajun.** (17-21; 26)

In these verses, there are parallelisms between similar entities or concepts in each verse, speaking to the dualisms often present in Maya poetics in the *Popol Wuj*, the *Ritual de los Bacabes*, and other poems in *Conjuros y ebriedades*. The nouns that the speaker
juxtaposes in each verse are proper nouns. As Dennis Tedlock explains, although in the *Popol Wuj* there is a tendency to use parallelisms to paraphrase, “[p]roper names would seem to have at least the potential for bringing words and objects into stable, isomorphic relationships, but they are not exempt from the poetics of saying things in more than one way” (“Toward a Poetics” 180). In other words, although the proper names in “Para que no venga el ejército” by Xunka’ Utz’utz’ Ni’ may appear to be separate entities, it is possible that they really are not. They may in fact complement one another in this tradition of parallelisms that resist isomorphism, creating a detotalizing effect for Western readers. Parallel poetics and even the use of proper nouns “stands opposed to the philosophical or scientific project of developing an object language whose meanings have been shorn of all synonym and polysemy” (Tedlock, “Toward a Poetics” 187). In other words, the parallelisms in the proper names in the Xunka Utz’utz’ Ni’’s poem challenges the stable relationship between nouns and what they represent that is common in European semantics.

To put it another way, the accumulation of proper names in “Para que no venga el ejército” (103) by Xunka’ Utz’utz’ Ni’ resists European concepts of the representation between the sign, signified, and the signifier, to use French linguist Ferdinand de Saussure’s semiotic conceptualization of language. For Saussure, the word “sign” denotes the relationship between a concept and a sound-image. He proposed “to retain the word sign [*signe*] to designate the whole and to replace *concept* and *sound-image* respectively by *signified* [*signifié*] and *signifier* [*significant*]” (67). In his classic example of the tree, the sign relationship is comprised of the signifier, which is the word “tree,” and the signified, which is the visual-aural concept of what the word denotes, the often large
organic mass which naturally exists outdoors. In Mayan poetics, there is an instable relationship between the signified and the signifier—what is signified has multiple possible signifiers. In Xunka’ Utz’utz’ Ni’’s poem, these proper nouns are likely not literal, but rather metaphoric; there is a variety of possibilities in terms of their meaning.

Xunka’ Utz’utz’ Ni’ uses a poetic voice informed by poetic traditions from the *Ritual de los Bacabes* and the *Popol Wuj* to combat misogyny. She has worked through religious and oral traditions to dialogue with issues of gender inequalities that the Zapatistas have also addressed. In this way, while she breaks with communal norms in some ways, she preserves them in others, and is thus not blatantly at odds with all traditional values. By strategically working through a permitted realm, Utz’utz’ Ni’

---

More generally, The Tzotzil poets who created *Conjuros y ebriedades* present the poetry collection as a text informed by the *Ritual de los Bacabes*. At the onset of the text, they provide their readers with the following verses, which they attribute to this ancient text:

¿Quién es su madre?
Glifos de los cielos.
Glifos de las nubes.
¿Quién es su madre?
y se dice,
Ix Hun Tah Dzib, *La de la Gran Escritura,*
Ix Hun Uooh, *La de los Glifos.* (*Conjuros y ebriedades* 6)

The expressions, “Glifos de los cielos” and “Glifos de las nubes” directly reference folio 51 (51.131 - 51.132) of the *Ritual de los Bacabes*, which are: “[uoh ti can] < Uooh tii
may encounter less opposition, which may facilitate her ability to forward her agenda concerning gender inequalities and combat the abuse of indigenous women.

While Xunka’ Utz’utz’ Ni’ does not rise up in arms with the EZLN, she appropriates Zapatista written discourses in her poetry as a form of opposition. She has used the word as a weapon to revolutionize social norms and promote an egalitarian future, taking a stance against physical and sexual abuse. Activist Ana Lau summarizes this general goal of feminism in Mexico: “Este movimiento, en última instancia, busca transformar y revolucionar las relaciones entre los sexos, alcanzar una condición igualitaria entre ellos y democratizar a la sociedad” (13). Since the uprising of the EZLN in 1994 gender norms have considerably changed as a result of the Revolutionary Women’s Law; however there is still much to be gained. Consequently, Zapatistas and feminists alike will continue to work together for inclusion in the projected vision of the country and demand: “Nunca más un México sin nosotros (los indígenas)” and “Nunca más un México sin nosotras (las mujeres).”

**Tzotzil Maya Bookmaking and Environmental Awareness on Facebook**

Apart from the published editions of *Conjuros y ebriedades* and the English translations, Taller Leñateros has also promoted their publications and social initiatives online on their social media account on Facebook. Facebook has enjoyed an immense

---

caan> (Glifos de los cielos), / Ix [uoh ti] < uooh tii>> munyal (Glifos de las nubes)” (Arzápalo 304). At the beginning of *Conjuros y ebriedades*, the poets establish their poems within the traditions of the *Ritual de los Bacabes*.

---

110 Cultural and literary critic Monique J. Lemaître León features this combination of demands in her online publication.
popularity in European countries and the United States in recent years, and Latin America has not escaped its influence. According to *Inside Facebook*, in September 2009, Facebook had approximately two million users in the region, and by November of this same year, 3.9 million users had joined the social media network (Eldon “Facebook Growth”). Within Latin America, Colombia and Chile have been the most active in terms of the introduction of Facebook (Eldon “Mexico”). However, lately Mexico has had the most growth because, according to the statistics from October 2009, “[i]t gained 470,000 users to reach 5.12 million” (Eldon “Mexico”). As of May 2010 in Mexico there were 11,792,360 users (“Facebook Statistics Mexico”), and by May 2013, according to online marketing and sales analyst Maximilian H. Nierhoff, there were 42,384,520 social media users on Facebook in Mexico. Although Facebook may have originated from Harvard alumnus Mark Zuckerberg, as Charles Peterson has indicated, according to company statistics dating to 2011, approximately seventy percent of its users are not in the United States (“Press Room”). Despite the lack of statistics breaking down these numbers in terms of racial or ethnic categories, there is evidence that at least some Facebook users are probably indigenous since there are several organizations using social media to advocate for indigenous rights in Mexico, such as Votán Zapata and Tlacaélel. Votán Zapata is based in Mexico City and manifests alliances with the contemporary Zapatista Movement, and Tlacaélel, a Facebook group with a Nahuatl name, explains on their page that they have “la intención de dignificar nuestro pasado indígena y dar la promesa de un futuro digno para las nuevas generaciones” (n. pag.).

Taller Leñateros has also participated in the social media fervor, but Facebook is not Taller’s only Internet presence. The organization also maintains a website, “Taller
Leñateros: Papel hecho a mano,” to promote their products and cultural activities for local, domestic, and international audiences, and the Taller has several performances on YouTube. Thus, there are diverse ways for Internet users interested in the collective publishing house to access information about the organization and their oral poetry performances. This is perhaps because there are a variety of people who update and post information about Taller Leñateros online.

For example, there are multiple agents responsible for uploading the recorded performances to YouTube. There are numerous YouTube users who have uploaded videos about Taller Leñateros. To name a few, the username Bobby Byrd (presumably the same Bobby Byrd affiliated with Cinco Puntos Press) added the video “Incantations: Maruch Mendez. OJOCOSMOGONICO, a username who identifies as Arturo García Hernández (a journalist for La Jornada), has also recorded performances by Taller Leñateros, entitled “Poesía y rezos tzotziles 1 – CONJUROS Y EBRIEDADES” and “Poesía y rezos tzotziles 2 – CONJUROS Y EBRIEDADES.” He created these recordings from the Quinto Festival de Poesía en Voz Alta, which took place at the Casa del Lago in Mexico City on October 24, 2009. Taller Leñateros has featured these recorded performances under the “Videos” section of their official website. In these examples, audience members record the live performances and upload the digital files to YouTube. Like the videos of “Xalolilo lelele’” and “Mayan Children Singing” analyzed in the previous chapter, the recordings of these performances may escape the control of the subjects who were involved in the original performance. Although it is common for some element of authorial control to get lost in reproductions, this is perhaps more

---

111 Taller Leñateros’s official website is: http://www.tallerlenateros.com/.
common with publications via digital media like YouTube. Here, there are a variety of videos about the publishing cooperative, none of which were actually uploaded by Taller Leñateros.

The account profile on Facebook is also the product of more than one agent. On April 26, 2010 I sent Taller Leñateros a private message via Facebook to inquire about who is in charge of the upkeep of the account profile, and I received the following response: “la cuenta la actualizamos y le damos seguimiento entre todos los integrantes del Taller.” Since it is logistically difficult for all of the members of Taller Leñateros to collectively update the information on the account, we must question to what extent they share these responsibilities. In other words, is it entirely a collective labor, or is it that only some of the members have a role in these decisions, while others do not? Although the account has the appearance of a cohesive representation of the Taller in its totality, it is possible for some members to have more visibility and a greater role in constructing the group’s image than others.

Taller Leñateros’s Facebook account creates a virtual presentation of the cooperative, or a mask to project to other users of the social media network. Political scientist and anthropologist James C. Scott’s term “public transcript” is one way to

---

112 Given that Taller Leñateros is located in San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, Mexican author Octavio Paz’s conceptualization of the mask is pertinent in terms of the publishing cooperative’s sociological and historical context: “Viejo o adolescente, criollo o mestizo, general, obrero o licenciado, el mexicano se me aparece como un ser que se encierra y se preserva: máscara el rostro y máscara la sonrisa. Plantado en su arisca soledad, espinoso y cortés a un tiempo, todo le sirve para defenderse” (32).
describe Taller Leñateros’s account profile. According to Scott, the term “public” refers to the “action that is openly avowed to the other party in the power relationship” and defines a transcript in terms of juridical processes as a “complete record of what was said” (2). Scott defines this public transcript in relation to the hidden one, explaining that “the frontier between the public and the hidden transcripts is a zone of constant struggle between dominant and subordinate—not a solid wall” (14). There is continuous negotiation between the public and the private. According to Scott, “[e]ach hidden transcript […] is actually elaborated among a restricted ‘public’ that excludes—that is hidden from certain specific others. A second and vital aspect […] is that it does not contain only speech acts but a whole range of practices” (14). In the case of Taller Leñateros, on the one hand, the members of the publishing cooperative share a hidden transcript corresponding to the Taller that does not appear in their account profile on Facebook. On the other, the members of the organization who engage in the public transcript online (presumably not everyone involved in the Taller) may protect certain aspects of their individual hidden transcript from view in their daily interactions with Taller Leñateros at the local level. That is, there are at least two forms of private transcripts—the collective one of the Taller and the individual one that members do not share with the rest of the organization in Chiapas or audiences online.

Facebook’s digital archive further complicates notions of access because Taller Leñateros must confirm you as a “friend” in order to have access to their profile.\footnote{An essayist for the \textit{Chronicle of Higher Education}, William Deresiewicz, has questioned the social fabric of “friendship” on Facebook. For him, “[w]e live at a time when friendship has become both all and nothing at all,” and he poses the following}
a Facebook user is able to view the Taller’s profile information, photos, and videos. S/he is also able to click on the “like” icon and publish comments on the various components of their account, such as photos, videos, links, and status updates. Thus, other Facebook users influence the content available in this digital archive, even though the members of Taller Leñateros post the primary information to update their page. As digital humanities scholars Anne Burdick, Johanna Drucker, Peter Lunenfeld, Todd Presner, and Jeffrey Schnapp have explained, digital media provide unique ways to interact with an archive because they imply “a user-centered approach” (48). Archive users determine how they will access—and engage with—information from the past. Similar to the case in Chapter 2 in which audience members frame the YouTube and Vimeo performances through the descriptions, titles, and other information that accompanies each video, Facebook users also mediate Taller Leñatero’s digital archive on the social media network through their “likes” and comments.

In some ways Taller Leñateros’s Facebook account exemplifies performance studies scholar Diana Taylor’s understanding of an archive, in contrast to the repertoire, because it represents the intersection of embodied memory and recorded discourse.

question: “If we have 768 ‘friends,’ in what sense do we have any?” In the context of mediated online relationships, “friends” on Facebook are similar to “little dehydrated packets of images and information, no more my friends than a set of baseball cards is the New York Mets” (n. pag.). In this sense, while Taller Leñateros may have a number of “friends,” we must question whether these relationships are really meaningful. While these Facebook users may be the Taller’s “friends” on Facebook, to what extent do they really engage with the cooperative’s initiatives?
Taylor proposes that the memory that resides in the archive exists in various forms, such as “documents, maps, literary texts, letters, archeological remains, bones, videos, films, CDs, all those items supposedly resistant to change” (19). In contrast, she describes the repertoire as that which “enacts embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing—in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge” (20). On Taller Leñateros’s Facebook archive, there are photos, personal account information, public comments on the organization’s wall, as well as other social media users’ likes and comments that have been publicly displayed. Since Facebook is a social network in which the users create their own virtual public transcripts, or the masks that they present to others via the digital platform, the components of the account profile form part of the archive that Taylor describes. Because it is an archive, dynamics of power influence Taller Leñateros’s Facebook account. Specifically, its administrators have selected and privileged certain photos and other information that are part of the archive over materials that were excluded, such as some of the Taller’s voice or performance recordings available via YouTube. There is an interplay between those materials that are public and visible to outside audiences within the archive versus those that the organizer(s) did not incorporate. Juan Carlos González Espitia has discussed changing relationships between the private and public components of the archive. González Espitia describes the “public area of the archive” as the “open archive” and the “banned section where the [...] discarded elements are relegated” as the “carnero” (16). For him, the dividing line between the public and the private is arbitrary. That is, the archive’s organizer(s) include those elements which s/he categorizes as useful whereas others are “concealed or banned
except for authorized persons” because these are “[t]he documents that for one reason or another someone has deemed useless, confidential, or dangerous” (16). The organization and selection of the texts featured in the archive, therefore, is a subjective process. In the case of Taller Leñateros’s Facebook account, the administrators distinguish what information, both textual and pictographic, to include. There are certain domains of the social media site that are public, such as the account wall, which are part of the open archive. Others, like private messages, are not, and are thus exiled to the carnero. This dialogue between the open archive and the carnero on Facebook affects the files to which online audiences have access. By choosing what to include on their public Facebook account and profile, the cooperative has agency in determining what public image they would like to project to their “friends” and other Facebook users. In this way, they maintain much of the power in determining how they represent themselves to their online audiences. In their Facebook account, they have specifically privileged photos, event advertisements, and other texts, whereas the recordings of their performances which underscore their orality are not in the visible domains of their Facebook account.

Given the dynamic, interactive nature of Facebook, this digital archive presents unique possibilities for the relationship between the record and the performance. Facebook is an organic archive—it constantly changes and evolves. Specifically in terms of a Facebook account, the information that is present on a user’s wall in one given moment may be different at another. As new information is added, the older posts feed down the page, and may become lost. For this reason, Deresiewicz has lamented Facebook as “an eraser of memory” (n. pag.). Similarly, it is possible for the pictures corresponding to the profile picture or the cover photo to be replaced, and social media
users are able to update and change the biographical information corresponding to the account. Since I officially became “friends” with Taller Leñateros on Facebook in the Spring of 2010, the collective has varied the items that they include in their account profile on multiple occasions. The Taller is not static, but rather the cooperative—and their self-portrayals—are organic, adapting to whatever initiatives they are prioritizing at the moment.

Taller Leñateros’s textual account information, for example, underscores the Maya identities of its members by emphasizing their commitment to indigenous languages. As is the custom in Facebook, each social media user must include personal information in the “About” section of their account profile. By following these norms, s/he achieves what Facebook’s digital platform measures as the account’s “level of progress.”

Under the “Work and Education” category on Facebook, the Taller includes information describing their goals: “Taller Leñateros, es una sociedad cultural, alianza de mujeres y hombres mayas y mestizos con el objetivo de preservar los idiomas indígenas” (n. pag.). By referencing their objectives of preserving autochthonous languages, the publishing cooperative not only affirms that they publish indigenous texts, but also that they present them in the original Tzotzil Maya. However, despite the stated importance of indigenous languages for the artistic creation of Taller Leñateros, in the publishing house’s Facebook account there is scarce use of these languages in the virtual archive.

---

114 To obtain an adequate level of progress, one must establish a profile picture and add “friends,” among other criteria.

115 The majority of the members of Taller Leñateros speak Tzotzil, although there are other related indigenous languages spoken in this region, such as Tzeltal and Ch’ol.
This is perhaps because they recognize that many of the other social network users are not proficient in Tzotzil. Therefore, although they present their indigenous identities via Facebook, they negotiate certain aspects of their Maya-ness so that they may potentially reach larger audiences.\(^{116}\)

For example, Taller Leñateros’s cover photo emphasizes the group’s work with Mayan traditional bookmaking techniques. The cover photo became an integral part of users’ account profile when Facebook updated its interface in 2011. Erica Ho, a TIME Magazine Reporter who has published on technology and pop culture, explains these updates:

Facebook’s new ‘Timeline’ interface was unveiled at the annual f8 developer conference. […] It feels like a giant album cover of your life put on display (which also explains why you can add a ‘cover photo’ to your profile). Frankly, it’s an attractive and somewhat radical interface. With a two-column stream of updates, this redesign utilizes more space than ever before.

\(^{116}\) Now, it is possible to change Facebook’s settings so that the interface is in other indigenous languages. For example, linguist Robert Henderson collaborated with a group of engineers and the medical NGO, Wuqu’ Kawoq, to develop this application, which was available for public use on August 9, 2013 (Rosales n. pag.). “Facebook” is literally translated to Kaqchikel as “wachwuj.” The script to run Facebook in Kaqchikel is available at http://www.wachwuj.com/. Perhaps with this changing trend, other indigenous languages may have a more pronounced presence on the social media site.
The current cover photo as of February 28, 2014 depicts five Tzotzil women standing around the finished artists’ book edition of *Conjuros y ebriedades*.\(^{117}\)

![Figure 13: Taller Leñateros’s Cover Photo (April 22, 2014)](image)

Although the photo on Facebook is in black and white, there is also a color version available on the Taller’s official website.\(^{118}\) By using Facebook to present the photos of their traditional artists’ books, Taller Leñateros is simultaneously using old and new means of communication. Similar to other indigenous groups engaging in modernity like the Zapatistas, the Taller has taken their Tzotzil Maya identities to the Internet. While using the Internet may counter stereotypical representations of Maya-ness, more and

\(^{117}\) This image is available online at: https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10151886527034707&set=a.10151078314474707.458649.657794706&type=1&theater.

\(^{118}\) This photo is available in the Taller’s photo gallery at: http://www.tallerlenateros.com/img/fotos/galeria/14.jpg.
more Latin American indigenous communities are strategically using the Internet to represent their ethnic identities and promote their social initiatives.

In addition to the cover photo, the profile picture is a significant part of the account information on Taller Leñateros’s Facebook page. It is particularly important in terms of the mask that Taller Leñateros projects to the Facebook world because it has a high level of visibility since it accompanies any publication that the cooperative posts. Taller Leñateros’s profile pictures connect their Maya identity to their ancient Mayan past. As of May 20, 2010, the cooperative’s profile picture featured a representation of a Maya man in the middle of a black circle with adornments on his body. The form of the circle links this image, and consequently the Taller, with the Mayan cyclical conceptualizations of time in the traditional calendar.119

---

119 This photo is available on Facebook at: https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=123656964706&set=a.432347249706.214477.657794706&type=3&theater.
To further connect Taller Leñateros’s participants to their ancient origins, in the middle of the circle, the Maya man is designed like the noble Maya in ancient cultural production, particularly the man’s face (Goertzen 21). The figure in this image has a curvilinear face, large nose, and round eyes, which are characteristics that mark representations of Maya nobility in the glyphs found at archaeological sites and in the codices that date to before the arrival of the Spanish. The adornments on his body convey that this individual has received honors for his labors as a warrior, elevating his social status. This image may be linked to another socio-political context of indigenous alliances, the Pan-Maya Movement. In the case of the Guatemalan Pan-Maya Movement, anthropologist Kay B. Warren has addressed the use of Mayan imagery for political purposes (68), as we saw in Chapter 2. Like the Pan-Maya Movement, members of the Taller have chosen this image to dialogue with their ancient past. By doing so, they show that cultural traditions of the ancient Maya are not completely divorced from
contemporary Maya voices. For example, in the context of Guatemala, in contemporary
daykeeper ceremonies it is common to invoke the ancestors—the qatata’ qamama’—to
give thanks for anything positive occurring in the community, such as childbirth,
marrriage, health, etc. Indigenous subjects who participate in such religious ceremonies or
cooperative organizations, like Taller Leñateros or publishing houses affiliated with the
Guatemalan Pan-Maya Movement, have maintained their relationship with their ancestors
when representing Maya-ness. Given the cyclical nature of Mesoamerican
conceptualizations of time, past generations and ancient Maya traditions are always
present in everything that is done in the present, or that will be done in the future.

This image of a Maya on a bicycle also connects the organization to
contemporary ideas surrounding environmental awareness. Currently, many ecological
movements generally promote the use of this means of transportation instead of those that
are more harmful to the Earth, such as cars and planes. Apart from establishing the links
between contemporary ecological movements, representing this man on a bicycle denotes
movement in general. Indigenous identity is not frozen in a bucolic past; rather it is
constantly changing—and evolving—to adapt to reality. Indigenous people are not
isolated from global changes, but their traditions and cultural production have changed
and developed with the passing of time. Taller Leñateros’s self-representation
demonstrates that not only is the planet Earth changing, but all of its inhabitants are as

120 This idea is also present in the information available on Taller Leñateros’s
Facebook page. In the space designated for their education, the publishing cooperative
has included the following: “Creación de libros, Protección del medio ambiente, Filosofía
de la vida” (n. pag.).
well. All human beings, including the indigenous, have a stake in the preservation of the planet.

The Maya man riding a bicycle is key because it repeats in several of Taller Leñateros’s profile pictures. It has a presence in four of the sixty pictures that have served as the organization’s profile pictures.¹²¹ For example, one of the profile pictures of a Maya man on a bicycle, which appears as the seventh oldest in the series, features this image in the context of an announcement for one of the Taller’s promotional events in

¹²¹ As of May 2010, this image appeared in four of the fifteen profile pictures available for Taller Leñateros’s account. Because there are still only four pictures with this image but a larger number of total pictures available in the profile picture album, this indicates that this image was much more popular in Taller Leñateros’s earlier days on Facebook. However, after a Facebook user changes his or her profile picture, the exact dates denoting when this picture served this purpose are unknown. The only clues as to how long a photo has been the contemporary profile picture are available at the top of the “Profile Pictures” album, where there is information that indicates when the social media user last updated the profile picture. As such, although there are four profile pictures, it is uncertain as to how long each of these pictures served the purpose of the organization’s profile picture. In other words, Taller Leñateros could have used each picture for varying amounts of time, so it is unknown as to how much of a central presence each of these profile pictures occupied in the publishing cooperative’s overall Facebook archive.
Mexico City on May 23rd and 30th of 2009.122 In the left half of the flyer the Maya man on a bicycle is white, juxtaposed with a black background. However, since this image’s purpose is also to disseminate information about the publishing collective in the nation’s capital, at the top of the page in white lettering are the words: “Taller Leñateros: ‘La única editorial indígena en México.’” Both this image of a Maya man and the accompanying text in this flyer underscore Taller Leñateros’s indigeneity. That they reinforce their autochthonous identities may be linked to the cultural revitalization of indigenous literature and arts in Mexico following the Zapatista uprising, as Past describes in the introductory quote to this chapter. The EZLN opened spaces for renewed interest in, and promotion of, indigenous cultures throughout the country. Perhaps taking advantage of the cultural milieu in Mexico following the Zapatista uprising, Taller Leñateros’s participants have underscored their indigenous identities as a potential way to attract attention to their organization and their initiatives.

---

122 This image is available on Facebook at: https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=82263844706&set=a.432347249706.214487.657794706&type=3&theater.
Taller Leñateros appeals to another value of their potential audiences, who expect the Taller to preserve their Maya-ness through this image. In this image on the Taller’s Facebook account, the organization shows that they have preserved their indigenous identities by claiming that they use natural fibers to create their books. That is, they continue to use materials from the Earth, instead of man-made, artificial components. In the right half of the announcement, in red lettering, are the words: “Reciclado de papel y fibras naturales.” The other image on this page depicts an indigenous woman wearing traditional clothing creating a book by hand. By using materials that are naturally available in the region to manually produce the copies of their books, the Taller communicates to the potential guests of these events and other Facebook users that they do not publish their texts in a modern, industrialized way. They are an indigenous publishing collective that has preserved some of their Maya heritage surrounding the
creation of books. Although the event on this flyer centers on the Taller’s handmade artists’ books, the cooperative has used Facebook to promote this event. This is a strategic approach for publicizing this workshop given the immediacy and the high number of social media users on the Internet who potentially could have seen the advertisement.

In many cases, indigenous subjects must own, and perform, their ethnic identity to be considered “indigenous.” Historian and anthropologist James Clifford explains that to fully own the “self,” ownership in addition to an exhibition of what is owned. Rey Chow has also elaborated on this phenomenon in what she calls the three forms of mimeticism that contribute to cross-ethnic identities. For Chow, the third aspect of mimeticism is “the level at which the ethnic person is expected to come to resemble what is recognizably ethnic” (107); in this context “the original that is supposed to be replicated is no longer the white man or his culture but rather an image, a stereotyped view of the ethnic” (107). Ethnic subjects do not only strive to imitate the standards of the dominant, white

123 According to Chow, the first level of mimeticism corresponds to the way in which “the white colonizer, his language, and his culture stand as the model against which the colonized is judged; the latter is expected to imitate, to become like his master” (104). However, despite the attempts on the behalf of the colonized, s/he will always remain inferior, an “improper copy.” In this way, Chow’s ideas resonate with Quijano conceptualization of racial and social relations in Latin America in terms of Eurocentrism. The second level of mimeticism is a complication of the first in that “the existential efforts made by the colonized, rather than being dismissed as inadequate, begin to assume a certain complexity [as indicated by] the ambivalent wishes and
culture, but they are also expected to own and exhibit the ethnic components of their identities. In the context of Taller Leñateros, the Tzotzil Maya poets and artists have to own their indigenous identities in order for some of their audiences to consider them as truly “indigenous.” To do so, they appropriate ideas of what non-indigenous may anticipate to be authentically Maya, promoting their books and activities in terms of Mayan traditions. As Chow has explained, “[i]n cross-cultural representation, if conditions are not entirely equal—and they are, of course, never entirely equal—the problematic of stereotyping, which is also the problematic of privileged, prejudiced, out-of-focus viewing…will increasingly emerge (100). Ultimately, the impossibility of an equally balanced representation causes stereotyping and further marginalization that is multi-directional. It is not just indigenous, ethnic people who are stereotyped, but they also are agents in the creation and perpetuation of their own stereotypes.

**Conclusion**

In sum, due to foreign influences in Chiapas, the poets working with Taller Leñateros not only renegotiate Tzotzil Maya traditions governing incantations, but also the cultural references and materials informing such discourses. Ámbar Past attributes this phenomenon to the effects of neoliberalism: “Claro está que el Nuevo Liberalismo ha hecho sus mañoserías con el habla moderna, y no queda de otra que rezar para la pexi cola o aludir a Los Ángeles o La Florida en las oraciones” (*Conjuros y ebriedades* 170, resentments embedded in the identitarian plight” (104). Here, Chow situates her work in dialogue with Homi Bhabha’s conceptualization of ambivalence, arguing that the cross-ethnic in this case is a split subject, who wants to be white, yet concurrently exists with the shameful position of his inferior social position (105).
emphasis in text). These poets innovate their traditions by including references to Pepsi Cola and U.S. cities and using Coca-Cola in the prayer for the deceased baby. They have also used books and social media as a way to promote their interest in issues such as immigration, gender inequalities, and environmental awareness as many contemporary authors and social media users do, regardless of their ethnicity. In the context of the twenty-first century, indigenous people across the world have become more and more like their non-indigenous counterparts who also publish via print and online media to take a stand on contemporary social and political issues. Indigenous people are not isolated from such debates, so they have also explored different media options to potentially engage larger audiences.

As another way to potentially reach larger audiences, Taller Leñateros’s participants collaborate with people such as Ámbar Past who serve not only as linguistic translators, but cultural ones as well. Past’s self-identification as the “Tzotzil tour guide” illustrates her role as cultural and linguistic broker. Specifically, she describes a trip that members of Taller Leñateros took to Mexico City for the formal presentation of Conjuritos y ebriedades in the Tamayo Museum. In the museum Past commented to her fellow Tzotzil patrons that the Great Temple had been an important church for the First Fathermothers blah blah. Just inside the door we stumbled upon a ritual pile of skulls and I stammered a bit about human sacrifice, the taking out of the heart. The Tzotzils took it a lot better than I thought they would. How would you feel if you found out your great-great-grandmother had
been a cannibal, or that she kept slaves and took part in ‘satanic rites?’”

*(Incantations: Songs, Spells and Images 20).*

In this exchange, Past makes the representations of indigenous history in the museum relevant to her Tzotzil colleagues by explaining them in terms that they would understand. She also translates non-indigenous ways of conceptualizing indigeneity for the indigenous people whose cultures the museum supposedly represents. In addition to translating Tzotzil Maya language and cultures to non-indigenous audiences, Past also translated representations of Maya cultures to the Tzotzil Maya; her translation—and mediation—is multi-directional; there is movement and dialogue between indigenous and non-indigenous subjects and cultures as they represent themselves, and are represented.

Apart from Past, the Tzotzil Maya working with Taller Leñateros have also collaborated with cultural anthropologist Robert Laughlin, the Curator of Anthropology at the Smithsonian Institute who has worked with Tzotzil Maya communities in Zinacantán for decades to preserve their oral traditions. For example, Laughlin has published via Taller Leñateros what he describes as a Tzotzil Maya romance, *Mayan Hearts* (2002). According to the cultural anthropologist, since before the arrival of the Spanish there have been many metaphors with images including hearts in Tzotzil culture:

[a]n unknown friar, trained by the Dominicans in the venerable halls of Salamanca, […] found in Tzotzil “infinite expressions derived from this word, heart.” He learned that the heart was the seat not only of the soul and of emotion, but also of thought, of judgment. Everything we call “human” was there in the heart. Only under Spanish rule did the mind become divorced from the heart and set in the head. As our friar delved
Similar to the sixteenth century friar, Laughlin has also compiled numerous heart metaphors in his collection, underscoring the influence of anthropomorphism in Mayan languages. Like Past, this anthropologist is another example of a cultural and linguistic broker between Tzotzil indigenous people and their non-Tzotzil audiences.

When we consider collaboration, we must not analyze it in terms of binary oppositions. We have seen how collaboration between indigenous and non-indigenous subjects is not necessarily negative, and conversely, how indigenous alliances that do not feature non-indigenous subjects are not inherently positive, or better. As representations and self-portrayals of indigenous identities have evolved over time to adapt to changing socio-political contexts, so have the complex politics behind collaborations between indigenous and non-indigenous people. More and more, scholars and other people

---

124 In colonial Mesoamerica Spanish missionaries learned about indigenous languages and cultures in order to facilitate their conversion to Catholicism. For example, during the eighteenth century Francisco Ximénez studied Kaqchikel, K’iche’, and Tz’utujil and published *Arte de las tres lenguas Quiché, Cakchikel y Tzutuhil* (a grammatical treatise); *Tesoro de las tres lenguas Quiché, Cakchikel y Tzutuhil* (a dictionary); and a Spanish translation of the *Popol Wuj* which he entitled, *Empiezan las historias de el origen de los indios de esta Provincia de Guatemala*. Although Ximénez consulted a copy of the *Popol Wuj* written by an unknown Maya source, ultimately it was a European who had the privilege to represent and write about Mayan cultures in lettered circles, rather than the Maya themselves.
involved in community initiatives working with indigenous subjects have examined the ethics of collaboration, and they have found that collaboration can be positive as long as all parties involved recognize the intrinsic power dynamics.

For example, most scholars and activists have denounced extractive research in the anthropological sense, or research in which academics do not directly give back to—or benefit—the communities on which (or where) they are conducting their investigations. Indigenous education scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith has promoted research projects that “serv[e] a greater good ‘for mankind,’ or serv[e] a specific emancipatory goal for an oppressed community” (2). For her, research must in some way have a positive effect on the communities of study. Geographer Don L. Hankins and Jacquelyn Ross, the director of the University of California’s Community Futures Initiative, have also pushed for research to be the means to similar ends; they advocate for researchers to conduct “research in and for native communities” to move away from the “legacy of extractive research” (240). The juxtaposition of the prepositions “in” and “for” speak to the idea that scholars should realize studies that will somehow work for these communities. Although these are but a few examples, the repetition of academics denouncing extractive research speaks to this overall trend in the Academy. Now it has become the norm for researchers to conceptualize their work with indigenous subjects in terms of the effects on native communities. As such, most scholars have also moved away from the native informant model that I mentioned earlier when referencing the Harvard Chiapas Project in the 1960s.

Literary critics have also urged readers to “proceed with caution,” as Doris Sommer has suggested. In her analysis of minority writing, Sommer explains that there is
some degree of collaboration between marginalized people who have authored the text and their readers, who are often more socially privileged:

Educated readers usually expect to enter into collaborative language games with a range of writers, as if asymmetrical relationships flattened out on the smooth surface of print culture. But particularists can counter those expectations with less flattering and more promising games. Instead of summoning collaboration in stories that become ours by dint of effort, they invite us to play variations on follow-the-leader. Perhaps we can learn to step differently, to respect distances and explore the socially enabling possibilities of acknowledging our own limits. (xiii)

According to Sommer, as in life beyond the confines of the written page, the relationships between minority writers and their readers are never equal. What is different in the context of print culture is that through their writing, marginalized authors may subvert the power dynamics, enjoying more agency and power over their readers. Rather than receiving the text as a neatly organized package ready for consumption, these writers may play games with their readers. They withhold information from their readers as Sommer notes in the case of Rigoberta Menchú Tum’s secrets (115-37), defer translation (xviii), like we have seen with Humberto Ak’abal, or engage in other rhetorical tricks. These games make readers acutely aware of their positionality in the exchange, calling for us to acknowledge and respect such differences.

In the next chapter, I will examine the influence of another anthropologist, Else Vieira, on the presentation of poetry and songs affiliated with the Brazilian Landless Movement, the *Movimento sem Terra* (MST) in another online archive. In this context, I
will compare and contrast the hyperlinked digital database that Vieira has created with what I have noted here regarding the archive of materials on Taller Leñateros’s Facebook account. Moreover, in this last case study I will explore how these artists and songwriters have positioned themselves and negotiated their marginalized identities, both domestically and internationally. In the Brazilian MST, however, not all supporters—or participants—are indigenous. What connects the example from the MST to the previous ones is that each features marginalized subjects who negotiate their identities for local and international audiences. As such, this last chapter will serve as a point of comparison to what have so far been exclusively indigenous examples. Examining mediation through the example of the MST shows that this phenomenon is not limited to indigenous people, but rather affects representations of other marginalized groups.
Chapter 4: Marching to a Different Beat: Rurality, Internationalization, and Landless Identities in Music by the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra

Unidos campo e cidade vamos construindo
e um dia contra a burguesia vai ser jogo duro.
Reforma Agrária!
—Zé Pinto, “Não somos covardes”

To extend a question once famously cannibalized by modernist poet Oswald de Andrade, “Tupi or not Tupi” became “to be country, or to be city?”
—Alexander Sebastian Dent

As in the previous chapters, my analysis here on Landless identities in music by the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra demonstrates that what may appear to be incompatible influences on a marginalized group really are not. We have seen how Maya authors and artists in Guatemala and Mexico have negotiated their indigenous identities in the contexts of the Guatemalan civil war, the contemporary Pan-Maya Movement, and the Zapatista Movement in Mexico. Although traditional notions of indigeneity and modernity may seem inherently at odds with one another, the examples in the previous chapters have shown that these concepts are not mutually exclusive. In my analysis of the Landless of Brazil, we will see another example of identity characteristics that are complementary, even though at first glance they may not appear so. In this case, the Landless artists and songwriters affiliated with the MST have negotiated their marginalized identities to dialogue strategically with rural and international influences.

In addition to music, MST supporters have worked through other media to promote their social and political initiatives. According to Wesley Lima and Alan

125 This quotation appears in River of Tears: Country Music, Memory, and Modernity in Brazil (18).
Tygel, two members of the MST who contribute materials to mst.org, the MST has gained international attention for their fight for “Reforma Agrária, cultura, o combate a violência sexista, democratização dos meios de comunicação, saúde pública, educação do campo, diversidade ética, soberania alimentar” (n. pag.). In addition to land reform, the MST also addresses other social inequalities including women’s rights and unequal access to health care.\textsuperscript{127} Roseli Salete Caldart, an expert on MST art and literatures, has observed examples from music, poetry, painting, and art that dialogue with these social and political issues (19). Apart from these genres, we can also add other artistic forms, including but not limited to essays, short stories, novels, and theater. For example, there are theater groups such as the Grupo de Teatro do Acampamento Dorcelina Folador from Arapongas, Paraná which presented \textit{Nossa padaria} in May 2001 and the Grupo de Teatro “Vida em Arte,” based in the Rondinha Settlement in Rio Grande do Sul, which performed \textit{Retorno à Terra} in 2000. Members of the MST have also promoted their ideas

\textsuperscript{126} Roseli Salete Caldart, an expert on MST art and literatures, defines cultural production as the “mediação básica entre o social e o individual, sendo através dela que o indivíduo se realiza como encarnação singular da própria sociedade como um todo” because for her “é através da mediação cultural que o indivíduo travałha para a reprodução da sociedade em que vive” (19). Problematizing her own definition, Caldart recognizes that cultural productions may also create a new vision of society, instead of reproducing what is already present, as in the case of the MST.

\textsuperscript{127} For more information regarding gender inequalities in the MST, see journalist Tetê Moraes’s documentaries \textit{Terra para Rose} (1987) and \textit{O Sonho de Rose—Dez Anos Depois} (1997).
through capoeira and forró dance forms, such as the examples performed in the Congresso Estadual dos Jovens Sem-Terra in Recife, Pernambuco in 2000. MST members have also created murals under a collective authorship, such as Daniel and Elda Broilo’s work, “Reforma Agrária: Por um Brasil sem Latifúndio” created for the Quarto Congresso Nacional in 2000. Araci Cachoeira, MST member and poet, has used declamation poetry to denounce injustices surrounding agrarian reform. Other members of the MST like musicians Zé Pinto and Ademar Bogo have worked with other Landless artists and songwriters to release CDs promoting the MST’s initiatives: Arte em Movimento (1990s), Uma Prosa sobre Nós (2000), Plantando Cirandas (2002), Canções que Abraçam Sonhos (1999), and Um Canto pela Paz (n.d.). Rather than an exhaustive list, I have noted these examples to provide a brief overview of the artistic milieu of the MST. Although each merits investigation, because of the long tradition of using music to

---

128 Photos of these performances are available on Else Vieira’s digital archive: http://www.landless-voices.org/vieira/archive-04.phtml?ng=p&sc=1&th=8&se=0.

129 For an example of Araci Cachoeira’s work, see a video of her performance in Brasília entitled, “VI Congresso do MST: Araci Cachoeira, em poemas, denuncia as injustiças. 12/02/2014,” which is available on YouTube.

130 In addition to being part of this digital archive that Else R. P. Vieira compiled, the MST has also released these albums on CD in Brazil, so potential audiences have access to the physical disc and/or the song files online. Because the songs are available online or on CDs, this is similar to what we saw in the last chapter with the poems in Conjuros y ebriedades that are available in the artists’ books as well as online, via blogs and digitized selections for preview on Amazon.
gain voice in Brazil, this chapter will focus on examples of music. Specifically, I will analyze *Arte em Movimento* and *Um Canto pela Paz* because of the overt interplay between regional and international influences, both politically and musically.

Brazilian studies critic Malcolm McNee has examined manifestations of rurality in the lyrics and instrumentation of the MST’s music. For McNee, the MST re-localize and reaffirm their rural roots in each of their albums: “Landlessness is articulated as a political subjectivity and cultural identity, both as a means to a more universal freedom from want and a freedom to be different, to remain or re-become, in a particular sense, rural” ("Soundtracking Landlessness" 131). In many ways, MST musicians strategically draw from rural cultural forms to connect their Landless marginalized identities to the land, affirming their roots to the soil for which they are fighting. However, for a comprehensive understanding, we must also consider the international dimensions of the MST’s music. While it is true that the songs reaffirm regional cultural specificities of the Brazilian countryside, they also dialogue with references and political issues from other countries in Latin America as well as other continents across the globe. In other words, MST musicians have created songs that simultaneously reinforce the rurality and international scope of their Landless identities.

In this chapter, I will focus on the dialectic between local and international influences in the lyrics and the musical styles of the songs on *Arte em Movimento* and *Um Canto Pela Paz*. As part of a political action movement, the Landless have presented their local grievances specific to the Brazilian countryside via global flows of production,
making them part of an MST ethnoscape.\footnote{We first saw Arjun Appadurai’s term “ethnoscape” in the introduction as a way to conceptualize ethnic subjects in relation to globalization. As the anthropologist explains, individual and collective ethnic identities are not homogenous or spatially bound to a particular location. In the case of the MST, while Landless voices may specify their ethnic identity as regionally specific to the countryside of Brazil, they also deterritorialize their Landlessness by presenting their marginalized identities to audiences across the globe. Specifically, the Landless and their allies engage in processes of globalization by writing in translation and using the Internet to potentially increase their visibility. Although in many cases the Landless have remained in Brazil, they electronically and culturally “migrate” across the globe, similar to the marginalized, indigenous subjects in the previous chapters who participate in Maya ethnoscapes.} These albums include local cultural forms, such as rural musical styles and images from the Amazon and the Northeast. These are tempered by internationalization: the lyrics ambiguously reference historical characteristics of the region’s colonization that all Latin America shares, such as the general violence that Europeans committed against the indigenous, as well as references to famous figures and social movements from the region, including Che Guevara, José Martí, Mario Benedetti, and the Zapatista Movement in Mexico, which contributes to the construction of a Pan-Latin American identity. The artists who created Um Canto Pela Paz, however, go beyond Latin America to create a postmodern, global perspective—they incorporate political conflicts and nuclear disasters from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries: the explosion in Chernobyl, massacre in Tiananman Square, bombings from World War II, Vietnam War, attacks on the World Trade Centers in New York City,
and subsequent Wars on Terror in Afghanistan and Iraq. They internationalize what happened in Pará by comparing this local massacre in Eldorado dos Carajás to these other events in which national governments and other agents have committed acts of violence against other nations as well as their own people. Given what may seem like conflicting influences, in the analysis that follows I will examine how these tendencies complement and/or contradict one another, specifically focusing on how these artists internationalize their music and Landless identities to satisfy outsider expectations and to attract international attention to the MST plight.

One of the reasons I focus on examples of the MST’s music is because their multiple levels of performance provide opportunities to potentially engage both domestic and foreign audiences. On the one hand, the CDs are recorded versions of original performances; on the other hand, when members of the MST participate in marches, they often sing these songs as they walk (“Músicas foram compostas”). A video available

132 In his book which outlines key moments in the historical trajectory of the MST, political scientist Gabriel Ondetti describes this massacre. He states that “[o]n April 17, 1996, the Military Police confronted a group of some twelve hundred MST campers blocking a highway in southeastern Pará, a region notorious for its deadly land conflicts. The police opened fire, killing nineteen and injuring more than sixty” (151).

133 There are three videos available on the online archive, As imagens e as Vozes da Desposessão which depict local marches, two of which feature music. The video entitled “Raízes da Terra,” for instance, includes the song “Acampamento” by Chico Buarque de Hollanda. The song’s title reaffirms the MST’s connections to the land, yet the presence of a song by Chico Buarque de Hollanda, one of Brazil’s most renowned
Performances are not limited to the Internet. The Landless perform these songs to regional audiences in local demonstrations as well as to national and international audiences via their CDs and digital recordings available online. Potential audiences for the music are both domestic and international, yet they gain access to the songs in different ways. In this way, by working through these distinct media, the MST may augment their potential audiences—they not only engage the people physically present in the encampments, but also supporters of the movement from abroad.135 This international

134 This video is available at http://www.landless-voices.org/vieira/archive-05.phtml?ng=p&rd=MANAWOMA866&sc=1&se=0&th=5.

135 In an interview, Aleida Guevara, a Marxist Cuban physician and activist who is also the eldest of Che Guevara’s four daughters, discusses the encampment structure and objectives with MST leader João Pedro Stedile, who explains that after the initial occupation, land is distributed among the families. For the first year, the goal is to eliminate hunger and produce food. Beginning in the second year, they begin to “producir algo para el mercado, porque de ahí sale el dinero para comprar ropa, para comprar televisión, para pagar la luz” (45). The third stage of the settlement is to create alliances among the Landless occupants, “ya sea en una asociación, o en una cooperativa, o en un grupo de familias” (46). Different encampments are in distinct points in these three
dimension should not be surprising because the “MST has always worked with international organizations and in an international context” (Wright and Wolford 330). They have established alliances via solidarity tours in countries such as Mexico, Cuba, the United States, Europe, the Philippines, India, and South Africa (Wolford 102) and have used their official website, which features a link entitled “Eu apoio o MST,” to potentially attract international support.136

In Brazil the issue of land reform, which is so central to the MST’s (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra) experience and background, has a complicated history. After the Armed Forces organized a coup d’état in 1964 to overthrow democratically elected João Goulart, Brazil experienced a brutal military dictatorship until 1985 when José Sarney became president. One of the reasons why Goulart faced such staunch opposition was because of his initial support of agrarian reform. Directly stages, so “el nivel de producción y de pobreza es muy variado, de acuerdo con la etapa donde ellos se encuentran” (46). Apart from eliminating hunger, another primary, long-term goal in MST encampments is educational programs for the Landless children in which MST militants are the instructors who develop the pedagogical goals of the curriculum (73-4).

136 Although the MST has actively sought alliances with MST supporters in other countries, Angus Wright and Wendy Wolford note that “[t]here is surprisingly little expectation or solicitation of direct support for the MST. The assumption is that the MST will benefit most when its allies in other countries improve their own societies. Of course, part of this has to do with improving the way other governments, especially the United States, exert their influence in the world” (333).
following the Brazilian coup d’état, the initial leaders of the dictatorship also backed mild agrarian reforms to avoid political and social uprisings; MST expert Mitsue Morissawa has noted that Castelo Branco’s Estatuto da Terra in 1964 was “em resposta à necessidade de distribuição de terras como forma de evitar novas revoluções sociais, como a que acabara de acontecer em Cuba, em 1959,” although it was never implemented (99). Despite this initial initiative partially driven by other historical events in the hemisphere, subsequent leaders of the Brazilian dictatorship did not support agrarian reform. For example, President José Sarney followed with an “authoritarian right-wing regime backed by the United States” (Avelar and Dunn 18) and took control of the country in the Cold War climate, responding to the growing fear that the people were organizing to demand land reform and rights for urban workers. According to environmentalist Angus Wright and developmental sociologist Wendy Wolford’s historical contextualization of the popular mobilization for land reform in Brazil,

Shortly after the introduction of a moderate land-reform program in the Brazilian Congress, the military struck, and President Goulart went into exile. Immediately after the coup, the new military rules of Brazil began to attack and dismantle peasant groups, trade unions and student organizations, imprisoning many of the organizations’ leaders and exiling, torturing and executing many others. (4)

Following the military-backed coup d’état, Brazil experienced one of its most repressive periods in history. The dictatorship was intolerant of dissidence, confronting any form of opposition with abuses of human rights and “disappearances.” In this context Brazilians
promoting land reform, or any other idea that the regime did not support, had limited ways to express themselves.

    Toward the end of the military dictatorship the MST was officially born.

Although the MST was founded in 1984, decades of struggle for land precede this historical moment. Brazilian geographer Bernardo Mançano Fernandes describes this process:

    In the long history of the struggle for the land, the MST is a continuation of the Ligas Camponesas (Peasant Leagues), organized in 1945, repressed and destroyed in 1947, re-organized in 1954 and made extinct by the military government of 1964. [...] During the formative years of the MST (1979-1984), the landless constructed their first experiences, aware that they were heirs to a long history of peasant resistance. [...] During the first half of the 1980s, with the support of the Pastoral Land Commission, the landless organized themselves in five states: Paraná, São Paulo, Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, and Mato Grosso do Sul. (n. pag.)

As the peasant organization for agrarian reform evidences, the official formation of the MST is not the first moment in Brazilian history marked by peasant movements for land. Throughout the twentieth century, there were other manifestations of popular organization for land reform. However, according to political scientist Shepard Forman in his analysis of political movements in Brazil, “[t]hey were primarily local expressions of immediate felt needs, temporary outbursts against misery and oppression. They were largely atomistic movements, confined in time and space, and characterized by a lack of
unity and effective communication” (3). What distinguishes the MST from these earlier manifestations is the level of organization among its constituency.

After two decades of repression, the country in general was not accustomed to open dialogue on issues such as land reform. At this moment of transition, although the government no longer resorted to physical means to control its people, such as imprisonment and torture, the military regime had not completely shed its former mindset of censorship and authoritarianism. As Brazilian Studies critic and anthropologist Else R. P. Vieira describes in her assessment of the MST’s cultural production available online, “even though the demands of these rural workers were legitimate, constructive dialogue remained difficult: the government would grudgingly, if at all, listen to them.” The government instead opted to prioritize transnational markets and bodies in power-brokering and decision-making (Vieira, “Enhancing Cultural Studies” 116). Given the government’s resistance to dialogue with the Landless, Brazilians fighting for a public voice in discussions concerning land reform, including but not limited to MST supporters, unify many speakers with their subaltern situation.

**MST, Landlessness, and Rurality in *Arte em Movimento* and *Um Canto pela Paz***

The MST’s first collection of music is *Arte em Movimento*, which they released in the 1990s. This CD includes twenty songs by various artists who participate in the MST by writing music and participating in occupations and marches. Specifically, the songs on this album are the fruit of a march in Brasilia in 1997 (Vieira, “Music”

---

137 The date in the liner notes is “1990s,” without specifying the exact year of release.
They embody a unique dialectic between music and performance; the musicians include what was originally part of live marches in the recordings on this album intended for circulation among the MST and beyond—to international contexts and audiences. Of the MST’s CDs, the collection *Um Canto pela Paz* is the most recent—it was “organized by the Pará State Directorate [of the MST] in 2001” (McNee, “Soundtracking Landlessness” 141). The album features fourteen songs, of which the majority accredits the MST as their author. The only two songs that do not list the MST as the author are “Os deuses das matas” and “Eldorado dos Carajás.” In the former Eduardo Dias is responsible for the musical lyrics, whereas in the latter the author is Manos da Baixada de Grosso Calibre. Else Vieira explains in parenthesis on the song’s webpage in *As Imagens e as Vozes da Despossessão* that this is “um grupo de favelados em Belém, capital do estado do Pará, que integra o movimento hip hop da favela” (n. pag.). Although *Arte em Movimento* and *Um Canto Pela Paz* are the products of two distinct historical contexts of the MST, with over a decade separating their release dates, both albums feature multiple songwriters. There is a plurality of voices providing a variety of perspectives on what it means to be Landless.

---

138 That said, it is important to recognize that this disc is only a recording of this historical march; it is not the original performance.

139 The url for the song is at http://www.landless-voices.org/vieira/archive-05.phtml?rd=ELDORADO504&ng=p&th=49&sc=1&se=0&cd=SONGFORP638.

140 The representation of marginalized identities in the albums is similar to the Guatemalan examples discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. Although there are nearly two decades between the civil war and the Pan-Maya Movement, in both of these historical
As such, *Arte em Movimento* and *Um Canto Pela Paz* exemplify cooperative action in the MST. According to social movement critics Tim Jordan, Adam Lent, George McKay, and Ann Mische, the collective occupies a central place in the context of social movements and protests of the twenty-first century. The power of the movement and the collective identity “is integral to a globalizing world as it is often the only way in which communities or activist groups can express their choices and needs when power and decision making are increasingly gravitating to transnational markets and bodies” (5). The collective is key for solidarity among members of social movements who seek to promote their initiatives in the twenty-first century in which globalization and international economic relations have become more influential. As such, various artists contribute to *Arte em Movimento* and *Um Canto pela Paz*, including but not limited to Ademar Bogo and Zé Pinto, who are well known for writing many of the lyrics of the songs. In addition, there are people featured on these albums who fight as part of the armed forces of the MST, such as Jacir Strapazzan-Milico, who is more recognized as a soldier (“milico”) than as a musician (“músico”).\(^{141}\)

In addition to this plurality in terms of authorship, the artists featured on both *Arte em Movimento* and *Um Canto Pela Paz* incorporate a variety of musical genres and styles in their songs. In his overview of *Arte em Movimento*, McNee explains that although contexts Maya have voiced their concerns through a collective, essentialized “Maya” identity.

\(^{141}\) “Milico” is his nickname; however, given the focus of this project on marginality, it is necessary to also note that in Brazil this term can also have pejorative connotations.
“[g]enres traditionally identified with rurality are most present, specifically forró and sertaneja,” there are also other genres present, such as samba, axé, samba-reggae, romantic ballad, and classical anthem with instruments including the accordion, cavquinho, acoustic guitar, and percussion instruments such as the triangle. With the exception of “O Hino do Movimento Sem Terra,” an exclusively vocal track performed by the University of São Paulo Choir, the songs’ instrumentation features keyboards and electric bass-guitar, which recall “stylistic features of brega music, including brega sertaneja, a genre that leaders of the Culture Sector have since identified as a counterpoint to the authentically peasant rurality [that MST members] defend” (McNee, “Soundtracking Landlessness” 136). *Um Canto Pela Paz* also presents a musically eclectic assortment. According to Vieira’s explanation that accompanies the song “Eldorado dos Carajás,” there are urban rhythms deriving from hip hop. McNee also adds that the album includes “a number of local Paraense forms as well as national and international genres from rap to samba and reggae” (*The Arts in Movement* 199). Unlike *Movimento em Arte*, in *Um Canto Pela Paz* “there [is] little emphasis on rural cultural authenticity” (McNee, “Soundtracking Landlessness” 141). However, what connects the two albums is that in both there is a mixture of local and international musical forms, such as genres that are commonly associated with Brazil like the regional musical styles of Pará and samba as well as intercontinental genres like reggae.

Scholars and musicians have long engaged in the debate as to whether international influences in Brazilian popular culture constitute an “authentic” version of “brasilidade” (the cultural elements that are supposedly representative of a Brazilian essence), and the Landless musicians affiliated with the MST are no exception. This
controversy traces back to Oswaldo de Andrade’s “Manifesto Antropófago,” which was published in May 1928. In his influential essay, Andrade argued that cannibalizing other cultures and incorporating them into Brazilian culture increased Brazil’s strength and vitality. More recently, Brazilian Studies scholars such as Sean Stroud have addressed the incorporation of foreign influences in Brazilian cultural production, specifically in terms of popular music. According to Stroud, “[t]hroughout the twentieth century Brazilian music was periodically subjected to the influx of foreign influences, principally emanating from the United States and, to a lesser extent, Europe” (22). While some argue that international tendencies do not speak to the roots of the country, others say that the participation of Brazilian artists in international dialogue and the incorporation of foreign cultures in the music correspond to the reality of the country, given that Brazil is not isolated from influences that come from beyond its geo-political borders. The Landless singers featured in Arte em Movimento and Um Canto Pela Paz are examples of Brazilian artists who have negotiated international and local forms in their representations of brasilidade. Like many indigenous people from Guatemala and Mexico, these Landless artists have also had to strategically position their marginalized identities within their country of origin and beyond.

The regional vocabulary in the lyrics of Arte em Movimento invokes the rurality commonly associated with the MST. “Terra sertaneja” by Ademar Bogo, for instance, establishes a possible connection between the album and the countryside. There are references to the land in the title as well as the lyrics in the repetition of the word “terra.” In the first stanza, the masculine voice in the declamation states that “a terra vale ouro” before identifying the poets and singers as “filhos da terra” in the second stanza. The
speaker connects these artists to the land, before later indicating that land is also their common goal for the future. As the first track of Arte em Movimento, “Terra sertaneja” sets the tone and possible themes of the album. The constant use of the word “terra” reiterates one of the central themes of the album, and the MST in general—the struggle for land redistribution. The repetition of the word “terra” also underscores the urgency of this fundamental component of the MST’s goals. As such, this first song sets the stage of a tone of unwavering resolve for songwriters of the MST to communicate their dedication to agrarian reform.

Ademar Bogo also links “Terra sertaneja” to the countryside because of the accompanying adjective “sertaneja” in the song’s title. Although this is an explicit reference to the sertanejo, or backcountry, it is impossible to discern whether the songs on Arte em Movimento stylistically draw from the genre of música sertaneja. In the musical structure of “Terra sertaneja,” the masculine voice is prominent, occupying a more dominant role than the instrumentation of the guitar in the background. The liner notes reinforce this dynamic because the official credits only recognize Ademar Bogo’s role as the composer of the lyrics; we do not know who is playing the guitar. With minimalistic instrumentation, the only connection to the sertanejo is the title, without explanation of its possible meaning. Audiences are left wondering if it is a reference to the musical style, the region, or perhaps to Brazil’s level of “progress,” namely their social, economic, and political development of the countryside. Since neither the lyrics or the instrumentation of “Terra sertaneja” reveal a definitive answer, the introductory song begins the collection with an ambivalent approach to the sertanejo.
As a musical genre, *música sertaneja* has often symbolized the MST’s rural roots in their songs. Ethnomusicologist Anthony Seeger defines *sertaneja* music in his analysis of Suyá indigenous groups and music:

*Música sertaneja* is the general term used to cover a number of genres of commercial secular music popular in rural parts of Brazil and in the neighborhoods of cities occupied by migrants from rural areas. It is largely “European” styled popular dance and song and consists of songs performed by soloists, duos, and small groups, often accompanied by acoustic instruments including accordion and strings, and often set to a danceable rhythm. (123)

Seeger describes *música sertaneja* in terms of its rural origins, yet he also addresses its market. Because of its commercialization, audiences who listen to *música sertaneja* are not limited to Brazil’s rural areas. Dissemination of examples of the genre, by the Landless and other musicians who are not affiliated with the MST, occurs in large metropolises as well as the countryside—*música sertaneja* is not solely a rural genre.

Performers of *música sertaneja* innovate Brazilian country music to incorporate contemporary stylistic tendencies. Linguistic anthropologist Alexander Sebastian Dent distinguishes between the two genres by explaining that *música sertaneja* “performers hope to update what they view as outmoded *música caipira* via electronic instruments, an emphasis on love, smooth singing, Standard Portuguese, and designer clothes” (20).

Xororó, a *sertaneja* performer who sings in the famous duo with Chitãozinho, describes the situation:
It doesn’t work anymore—singing música sertaneja for some public that just doesn’t exist—that lights its houses with kerosene lamps. We love talking about the lasso, about the dirt—that stuff is beautiful—but on most farms they already have VCRs, microwaves, and satellite dishes. Today’s caipira surfs the Internet and buys stuff on the phone with credit cards. He wants everything that technology has to offer, and our music wants to reach him. (qtd. in Nepomuceno 418)\textsuperscript{142}

Xororó and other músicasertaneja performers strive to create music that responds to the reality of their audiences. As a result of globalization, the constant movement of people, products, and culture in general, the Brazilian countryside is not isolated from technological advances. These changes affect remote areas and their inhabitants, as with the Landless creators of Arte em Movimento and Um Canto Pela Paz.

“Terra e Raiz” also incorporates images of the land in connection to music. The lyrics of the song focus on the role of land for mankind—Mother Earth must provide for her people. According to the chorus,

\begin{quote}
A terra guarda a raiz
da planta que gera o pão
a madeira que dá o cabo
da enxada e do violão. (5-8)
\end{quote}

In these verses, the land must provide plants as well as wood for the construction of hoes and guitars. The plants produce food, and people can craft musical instruments from the

---

\textsuperscript{142} Nepomuceno includes this quote in English, although the person responsible for translating it from the original Portuguese is unnamed.
wood of the trees. In this way, the fertility of the land produces sustenance for humans, not only literally through crops, but culturally as well through the materials used to create music. In the third stanza, there is a reference to the viola, and as ethnomusicologist John P. Murphy explains the “accompaniment by viola or acoustic guitar” is a traditional characteristic of música sertaneja (119). The speaker sings, “o grito da natureza / viola de um cantador” (11-12); the musical instrument and the word “natureza” underscore the connection between the countryside and Landless songs. Although it is worth noting that these instruments are not exclusively used in rural musical genres, the juxtaposition of the guitar and the viola with references to the land and nature emphasize the rurality influencing their music. More than establishing “Terra e Raiz” with a particular musical genre, this focus on the land and the countryside reinforces the MST’s goals of obtaining land where they can live and cultivate crops for their subsistence.

“Florió” by Zé Pinto, the fourth song of Arte em Movimento, uses a regional colloquialism in its title from the Northeast of Brazil. Since some audiences are not native to this particular area or even to Brazil, they may not be familiar with the linguistic characteristics of the region. As such, a footnote explains the meaning of “florió” in the liner notes as “jeito caipira de dizer ‘floresceu’, deu flor. O caipira é o habitante do campo ou da roça, caracterizado por um modo peculiar de falar, resultante de uma cultura predominantemente oral e da premanência de arcaísmos” (n. pag.). Using this word that belongs to the oral register of speakers from this rural area creates an intrinsic connection between the countryside and this song. Although Pinto resorts to an especially oral, rustic form of expressing this idea, his inclusion of a footnote suggests that Pinto has produced
this song with potential international—or domestic—audiences who are unfamiliar with rural expressions of Brazilian Portuguese in mind.

Zé Pinto’s song, “Floriô,” embodies the caipira lifestyle, which turns toward the idyllic past before technological advances altered the countryside. Pinto and other proponents of this way of life “hope that their music will help to keep things the way they were before what they deem to be an exclusively financial orientation arrived to destroy brasilidade” (Dent 21). In música caipira there are thematic overtones of purity and nostalgia for a country music that predates the more contemporary and globalized sertaneja form. Performers opt instead to create music that dialogues with their regional folkloric roots. In the case of MST musicians, my purpose here is not to discern which musical features the songwriters borrow from the sertanejo versus the caipira ways of life, but rather to note that these artists draw from elements of both to reinforce their rural roots and connections to the land.

Although these songs are influenced by rurality, they show aspects of internationalization as well. Even in the caipira that is supposed to be a “purer” form of the countryside—that is, less globalized and affected by modernity (Dent 21)—MST musicians are unable to avoid the international dynamic of their songs. The caipira lifestyle may be a more rustic, or “authentic” way of life, yet the footnote demonstrates that the Landless musician using this rural vocabulary does so in a strategic way. In the references to música sertaneja, in some respects this genre connects to the countryside, yet it has also been highly globalized.

Invoking the sertanejo, then, speaks to the highly controversial nature of this musical form. Música sertaneja is a polemical genre because of its emphasis on simple
themes, commercialization, and appropriation of U.S. country music forms. For example, the song “Pura emoção” by Chitãozinho e Xororó describes a woman with a “jeito de cowboy num corpo de mulher,” using the English word (which has become a common word in everyday Brazilian Portuguese) to describe this way of life. Apart from linguistic appropriations, Chitãozinho e Xororó also borrow the melody and instrumentation from Billy Ray Cyrus’s signature song of 1992, “Achy Breaky Heart.” As a result, some forms of música sertaneja may be more international than local because of their incorporation of foreign influences, particularly from the United States. Brazilian musicians create and consume popular music, and in the process it is internationalized. As Charles A. Perrone and Christopher Dunn note: “[w]hether focused on the era of radio or the age of the Internet, discussions of […] popular music in Brazil inevitably involve in some way interhemispheric soundings, the interplay of the local and the global, a multifaceted dynamic of internationalization” (2). Given technological developments, there are a number of different media through which to disseminate Brazilian music, both regionally and internationally. Some Brazilian musicians and artists dialogue with musical styles and genres from abroad, as we have seen. Perrone and Dunn describe this form of internationalization in terms of “mimesis or stylistic imitation, whether in relatively unaltered local versions of foreign forms (e.g., rock’n’roll), selective applications and adaptations thereof, or appropriations of the exogenous” (2). What distinguishes MST songwriters is how they position their Landlessness in terms of foreign cultural production. Rather than imitate United States models as many Brazilian artists have done, these Landless musicians have selectively looked to other nations as models with which to identify.
Local and International Politics of the Eldorado dos Carajás Massacre

*Um Canto Pela Paz* also dialogues with this local and international dynamic in its treatment of the massacre at Eldorado dos Carajás, a local event that gained international attention. Several of the songs from *Um Canto Pela Paz* reference this massacre, establishing it as a central theme in the music. The title of the song “Dezenove,” which is the number of people that died in the attack, alludes to the assassinated. However, instead of personalizing the victims with their names or other particularities, the title references them as a number, a statistic. The song “Procissão dos retirantes” also explicitly mentions the massacre, and the speaker of the song informs audiences that

No Eldorado do Pará,

Nome Índio: Carajás

---

The song “Eldorado dos Carajás” mentions other massacres that also occurred in Pará, explaining that the violence in Eldorado

[p]romoveu execuções sumárias, uma

tragédia parecida

Com a da Candelária, Carandiru, Vigário

Geral, Corumbiara. (133-36)

By noting that the attack in Eldorado dos Carajás was not an isolated event, the songwriters denounce the violence against the MST. The musicians criticize the government for their violence against the people, depicting them as the antagonist in this dynamic. What distinguishes the massacre in Eldorado dos Carajás, and its more prominent presence in *Um Canto Pela Paz*, is that it had more visibility in the mass media, both domestically and abroad.
Um massacre aconteceu.

Nesta terra de chacinas,

Essas balas assassinas (21-25)

The singer notes that the massacre in Eldorado dos Carajás was not an isolated event. There have been other bloody episodes in the region. In another song of the album, the MST authors refer to this event in a song whose title is the place where the violence occurred: “Eldorado dos Carajás.” The first verses of the song establish its focus on the massacre because the speaker names the date and location of the event: “1996 / Quarta-feira, dezessete de abril, / Eldorado dos Carajás, Sul do Pará, Brasil” (1-3). Since the massacre is an image that occurs in numerous songs, it is a central, overarching theme in the album. On the one hand, this augments the overall importance of the event, reminding domestic and international audiences of what happened. On the other, it allows the MST to provide their side of the story.

After the massacre in Eldorado dos Carajás, official versions depicted the MST as at fault. Sue Branford and Jan Rocha, journalists who have each spent a significant amount of time living in and reporting on Brazil, explain that

The military police confiscated some of the early film footage, mainly, it seems, so that it could maintain the fiction that the sem-terra had attacked first […] The scenes were shown widely on Brazilian television, though the accompanying commentary always repeated the official view that the sem-terra had begun the violence. (145)

Technology and mass media significantly influenced regional and national discourses. Generally, in situations of political instability, one of the priorities of the State is to
secure the communications systems. They do so in order to (re)produce their legitimacy and authority to not only the citizens of the country, but the international community as well. Political scientist Gabriel Ondetti explains that “[s]ome news commentators placed part of the blame for the killings on the MST” (153), and as an example, he provides the column by Luis Nassif, “O sertão vai virar mar,” which appeared in the *Folha de São Paulo* on April 21, 1996. In the songs in which they address the event, the MST seeks to revise the official historical account. This idea is explicitly manifest in “Dezenove,” when the singer proclaims in the final verse, “[v]amos passar a limpo essa história” (35). They manifest a desire to “clean up” other versions, which are dirty, or untrue. According to MST sources, as journalist José Levino explains in a report published on the sixteenth anniversary of the massacre,


(n. pag.)

In this way, MST musicians voice a need to rectify previously accepted versions of the events. The MST did not initiate the violence; other agents realized the killings.

The songs from *Um Canto Pela Paz* name the real perpetrators of the violence. They specifically blame the political leaders and other authorities. Because the policemen carried out official orders from the government, the songwriters do not accuse them.
Branford and Rocha comment on the MST’s distinction between political agents and the police. They attribute this discrepancy to the general lack of work in Pará:

> [t]hough the MST has repeatedly called for justice, it has been careful to blame the officers and the authorities, not the policemen themselves, for the massacre. In a region with such a high level of unemployment, it is scarcely surprising that a few members of sem-terra families have joined the police. (146)

Given the economic situation among Landless families, many have sought employment with the police, so it is strategic for the MST to not denounce the policemen to avoid alienating people who may identify with and support the MST, but who—for lack of options—have also had to align themselves with governmental institutions. In “Dezenove,” the singer communicates that the police only kill because they were ordered to do so: “Todo mundo sabe que a polícia mata / Sempre que a ordem vem da corte” (29-30). That is, the police have to follow orders from higher-ranking officials from the “corte,” a place that was once associated with the colonial monarchy located in Brazil’s metropolitan centers. This underscores the fact that this history of oppression is not new. Because they do not have complete agency over the decisions governing the violence, the police are not fully responsible for their actions. Another song, “As pedras gritarão,” also denounces the government for authorizing the massacre:

\(^{144}\) The coerced nature of the police’s acts of violence in these massacres is similar to the Civil Self-Defense Patrols during the Guatemalan civil war discussed in Chapter 1. In both cases, people—who in many ways are oppressed themselves—hurt and kill others who may identify with the same marginalized group.
Governava o Brasil em 17 de abril, dia do massacre vão
Um tal Fernando Henrique que era o presidente, chefe da nação
Governava o meu Pará Dr. Almir Gabriel,
Que determinou a operação
Mais foi um tal de coronel Mário Pantoja que deu a ordem de atiração (3-10)

By explicitly naming the politicians who authorized the massacre, this song is an outward attack on Brazilian power relations and national hierarchies which contribute to the marginalization—and in some cases death—of the Landless. The singers in “Dezenove” and “As pedras gritarão” name the real culprits behind the massacre in their musical revisionist history. The Landless were not to blame, despite some of the accounts that circulated in the mass media.

In addition to the perpetrators, the songs also note the MST victims. In “Dezenove,” for example, near the beginning of this song the speaker lists their last names: “Eram Silvas, Pereiras Almeidas, Santos, / Dias e Nascimentos” (15-16). As common surnames in Brazil, these names speak to the victims as representative of the collective struggle, emphasizing the impossibility of escaping the violence. “As pedras gritarão” also lists the victims; however, in this song, the speaker emphasizes their first names rather than the surnames, as in the song’s chorus:

Três Antônios, um Oziel, Um Lourival, um Joaquim, um Amâncio, um Manoel, um
Leonardo e um Altamiro, João Rodrigues e
João
Carneiro, um Abílio, um Raimundinho, dois
Josés, um Graciano, um Robson e um
Valdemar (28-34)

Multiple people with the same name are grouped together, which marks the victims as common people representing the larger collective entity. Although this is a less personal presentation because the victims are not listed individually, the song demonstrates that ordinary people were the victims of the power of the State. In both songs, the victims’ plight was not unique; rather they embody everyday men and women of the larger MST struggle.

Other songs from Um Canto Pela Paz, however, include more information about each victim. In “Eldorado dos Carajás,” the singer provides specific details about select victims. This is the first time in the album that the musicians do not present the assassinated as a group. The singer specifically describes three people who died in detail: Lourival, Robson, and Oziel.\footnote{These victims’ full names are: Lourival Costa Santana, Robson Brito Sobrinho, and Oziel Alves Pereira. For a complete listing of the nineteen victims that died on April 17, 1996, see the image of a display poster, “Sem Terra Assassinados no Pará” at http://www.landless-voices.org/vieira/archive-06.phtml?ng=e&sc=2&th=28&rd=LANDLESS555.} Audiences learn not only that they died, but also how. The singer first presents Lourival and his reaction to the violence, explaining that

Lourival não conseguiu correr,
Audiences learn about the human side of Lourival; caught in the gunfire, he was paralyzed with fear, shot in the chest, and then fell forward dead. Lourivel embodies the lack of options that many Landless face, indicating that there is no way to overcome such oppression. The next up-close look at a victim occurs with Robson, who “foi arrastado pelo cabelo / E não foi culpado” (118-19). Although the police attack him in a different way, Robson is another example of an individual who cannot avoid the violence. The last anecdote features the story of Oziel in which audiences learn of the brutality that he suffered before he was shot and killed. The colonels dominated Oziel, leaving him powerless to suffer before he was ultimately given his death sentence and put out of his misery. Although the lyrics do not explicitly name the agents who realized the violence, because the singer uses the passive voice to communicate what happened, they imply that the police are responsible for the physical repression. In each of these cases, listeners are privileged to a more detailed account of what happened to these victims. Lourival, Robson, and Oziel are no longer merely statistics on the page, but there is a human dimension to the victims. Appealing to their emotions, audiences have a more pronounced opportunity to get to know the deceased—and perhaps identify with them.

Lourival, Robson, and Oziel’s situations are socially determined—the ultimate demise of these victims evidences that their resistance to the State was futile. Louis Althusser’s structuralist understandings of ideology and the ideological state apparatuses are useful to conceptualize the social determinism of these victims; there was no escape
for Lourival, Robson, and Oziel from the state apparatus.\footnote{146} For Althusser, “[i]deology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (123). In other words, it refers to how subjects identify with the dominant social order, which is typically that of the ruling class and the State. Ideological state apparatuses, then, “function massively and predominantly \textit{by ideology}, but they also function secondarily by repression” (112).\footnote{147} They know that they must conform to the dominant ideology because failure to do so results in State interventions in the form of physical or symbolic repression. As such, in his explanation of ideology Althusser is largely dismissive of standard notions of free will—subjects’ actions are coerced since they are unable to escape ideology. In the case of the song “Eldorado dos Carajás,” Lourival, Oziel, and Robson symbolize the marginal person’s inability to escape ideology or the power of the State. Each of these victims recognized their general lack of options as members of the exploited class in the state apparatus at the massacre of Eldorado dos Carajás. They resisted the dominant order and ultimately paid for their actions with their lives.

\footnote{146} As a Marxist, Althusser negatively describes the State as “a ‘machine’ of repression, which enables the ruling classes (in the nineteenth century the bourgeois class and the ‘class’ of big landowners) to ensure their domination over the working class” (106).

\footnote{147} Althusser distinguishes ideological state apparatuses from repressive state apparatuses by noting that the latter operate “massively and predominately by repression (including physical repression), while functioning secondarily by ideology” (111-12).
Given the State’s repression at the massacre, there was a need for the MST to tell their side of the story. Consequently, a predominant theme in the song “As pedras gritarão” is the impulse to speak out about what happened—the MST must not be silent. The first two verses of the song reinforce this need: “[t]estemunhamos pra contar a nossos filhos / e suas gerações” (1-2). The use of the verb “testemunhar” means testifying or bearing witness and may also refer to the literary genre of the testimonio. As we saw in Chapter 1, there is political urgency in this literary genre because its speakers want their audiences to know what happened. To emphasize the need for the Landless to make themselves heard, the singer proclaims that “se calarmos, as pedras gritarão” (61), incorporating the same expression from the title. Literally speaking, if the Landless present for the massacre were not to testify about what they saw, the stones that lined the road and lay in the field would. The subalternity of the nineteen Landless victims of the massacre is compounded: they were marginalized before the event, but after their deaths their assassins completely stripped them of the possibility of having a voice.\(^{148}\) It is up to the stones, primitive self-defense weapons, to launch the counter attack. The stones, like the Landless in their resistance, are not malleable and will thus continue to advocate for the victims, and MST initiatives more generally. That the stones have been charged with this responsibility in this song shows that it does not matter who tells the rest of Brazil

\(^{148}\) For a more detailed overview of subalternity, see the introduction.
and the world what really occurred that day. What is important is that someone, or
something, does.\textsuperscript{149}

The singer of “Eldorado dos Carajás” explicitly mentions the international
repercussions of the massacre. Although it was a local event in Pará, it was widely visible
beyond the geopolitical borders of Brazil. According to the song’s lyrics,

\begin{quote}
E Eldorado dos Carajás é um caso a mais

Que revela realmente do que ela [Policia Militar] é capaz

Julgou a opiniao publica nacional

Causou repercussao internacional

Mas depois de um certo tempo

Caiu no esquecimento” (137-42)
\end{quote}

The massacre was highly public immediately after it occurred, yet it did not remain at the
forefront of history. With the passing of time, people forgot about it. This event,
however, is a central theme in Um Canto Pela Paz. The songwriters remind audiences
across the globe of what happened in their musical testimonies of the violence. They urge
them to not forget the violence and what really happened, rather than believing other
versions of history.

History is not objective. Events happen, but people narrate—as such, history is a
subjective account imbued with interpretation. It is erroneous to assume historical
impartiality. As Hayden White explains, there is an “inevitability of a recourse to fiction

---

\textsuperscript{149} The motif of “As pedras gritarão” is also manifest in the title of the news
article previously referenced, “O massacre de Eldorado dos Carajás: se calarmos, as
pedras gritarão.”
techniques in the *representation* of real events in the historical discourse” (123). In other words, history, like literature, includes a narrative. Historians are also authors in the sense that they construct an official narrative from a series of fragmented facts. These “facts do not speak for themselves, but [...] the historian speaks for them, speaks on their behalf” (White 125). Historians—and other intellectuals—then, become mediators who may speak for subaltern subjects when they provide their accounts of what happened. As Walter Mignolo explains, these intellectuals, or people with history, write the history of those people without (*Local Histories* 3). As we have seen throughout this study rarely do subaltern subjects have an agency in the creation of their own histories, but rather outsiders often create these official discourses for them. Moreover, there are always multiple versions to any moment in history because people interpret these events in different ways. Thus, it is possible for various, perhaps conflicting, versions of history to co-exist, and the massacre in Pará is no exception.

**Transnationalism and the MST**

An added international dimension of *Um Canto Pela Paz* is the connection between the massacre in Eldorado dos Carajás and similar events in other parts of the world. The speaker in the song “Bioretrospectiva” compares the Brazilian massacre to other historical events when a country’s leader ordered the police to open fire on their own people. The verses of the second stanza of “Bioretrospectiva” feature an explicit reference to the Chinese government’s repression of the student movement in 1989 in Tiananmen Square: “Mao-Tsé-Tung, Shailin descansem os / mortos da Praça da Paz Celestial” (39-40). Political scientist Andrew J. Nathan explains that Beijing students protested for “continued economic reform and liberalization” (3). The Chinese
government responded to their demonstrations with violence, ending the protests with force, “including the bloody clearing of Beijing streets by troops using live ammunition” (2). Similar to the massacre in Eldorado dos Carajás, the Chinese police encircled the demonstrators, silencing their cries with their tanks and gunfire. The violence that occurred in Brazil on April 17, 1996 is one of many, and as such, is part of a greater problem. Implicit is that the MST does not seek to focus exclusively on their own repression, but rather address the larger systemic issues.

In addition to Tiananmen Square, Um Canto Pela Paz references another violent attack. In the song “Chacina Cyber,” the singer mentions the bombing of Guernica, a small town in Spain’s País Vasco, memorialized in the famous painting that Picasso created shortly following the event: “Viu, Picasso pintou Guernica que vai pintar / Eldorado” (1-2), connecting the images following the bombing of Guernica to the aftermath of the massacre in Eldorado. During World War II, Spain’s Nationalist dictator, Francisco Franco, joined Germany and Italy in the Axis Alliance. To provide Nazi airplanes with a place to test their aerial bombing capacities, Franco authorized German pilots to launch an air raid on Guernika. Although the Spanish leader was not the one who pulled the trigger, he was still a primary assailant. Because the song “Chacina Cyber” references Picasso’s mural, and consequently the bombing, the singer compares the violence of Eldorado dos Carajás to what happened in Spain. In both cases, political authorities were responsible for the bloodshed of citizens of their respective countries. Although the weapons were different, to use Althusser’s terminology, in both events the repressive apparatuses wreaked death and destruction on their own people. Thus, both examples speak to the betrayal of a country’s citizens by its own government.
The song “Bioretrospectiva” addresses another form of man-made nuclear disaster: accidents at power plants, in Brazil and abroad. Oppression is not limited to physical violence from bombs and gunfire, but can also stem from energy source calamities. The singers explain that mankind “[t]ambém destruiu Cubatão, Itaorna, / Chernobyl” (21-22). Cubatão and Itaorna are Brazilian events, whereas Chernobyl occurred in the Ukraine. In their study of the Ukrainian disaster, environmental scientist Jim Smith and radioecologist Nicholas A. Beresford explain that shortly after 1:00 am on April 26, 1986 “the accident occurred during an experiment to test the behaviour of an electrical system which powered the station in the event of a failure of the main electricity supply” (2). Although the Brazilian events did not receive as much international attention, they are “local” examples from Brazil of human beings’ harmful effects on the Earth and the biosphere. Itaorna is a Brazilian site for a nuclear reactor that environmentalists have scrutinized; Kathryn Hochstetler and Margaret E. Kech explain that the criticism is partly because “of its logistical failings (lack of an evacuation plan in case of accident for the nearby population) and its improper siting (near a geological fault, on the beach of Itaorna, which in indigenous language means ‘rotten stone’)” (Hochstelter and Keck 85). Similar to the massacre in Eldorado dos Carajás, in both cases human life was—or is—at stake. Given the geological instability where Brazil’s nuclear reactor is housed, it is at high risk for disaster. In the context of Chernobyl, Russian biologist and historian Zhores Medvedev has discussed its health impact in the former Soviet Union. He explains that “[t]he number of fatalities caused by Chernobyl officially stands at 31, the number announced in 1986. [...] As a result of the accident, 600,000 people have been classified as having been ‘significantly exposed’ to radiation,” which
causes biological damage, reduced life expectancy, and in some instances, radiogenic cancers (129-30).\textsuperscript{150} What distinguishes the nuclear situations in Itaorma and Chernobyl from the Brazilian massacre in 1996 is the destructive effects (potential in the case of Itaorma) on the land, which is symbolic given that one of the MST’s primary goals is agrarian reform. Not only does the State enact policies which oppress the people, but it also can cause irreversible damage to the environment.

The references in “Bioretrospectiva,” however, are not limited to nuclear disasters. The song also addresses Cubatão, the site of a significant oil spill. According to environmental law scholar Lesley Krista McAllister, in 1983 “[d]ynamite explosions in a stone quarry caused a rockslide that ruptured an oil pipeline and provoked an oil spill of over 1.5 million liters near Cubatão on the São Paulo coast. The spill was considered to be the worst ecological disaster that had occurred in the country” (68). Cubatão is a concrete example for the Brazilian government and its people that projects to develop the country’s natural resources can end in calamity. Consequently, the regional ecosystem suffered; the oil affected the biological components of the area’s plants and animals. In the movement in recent years to make Brazil more green, or environmentally friendly, activists have referenced Itaorma and Cubatão as evidence of the Brazilian environment’s tenuous state. By juxtaposing these issues with a reference to Chernobyl, the singers who created “Bioretrospectiva” signal to their audiences the potential dangers that Brazil

\textsuperscript{150} Apart from radiogenic carcinogens, Medvedev notes other health consequences of the nuclear disaster in Chernobyl that did not involve immediate death: “[t]wenty-four people were disabled by the accident, some of them so severely that they are invalids who cannot care for themselves” (129).
could experience: if the Brazilian people do not fight to save the Earth now, they may have a similar situation as the Ukraine. In a country in which hundreds of people are Landless and have allied with the MST, Brazil cannot afford to lose any land that could be productively used for farming and subsistence to man-made chemical destruction.

In the liner notes, the creators of Um Canto Pela Paz also turn their attention to other international contexts, namely that of the United States. In the letter of thanks to the friends who made the album, the authors mention wars that feature United States’ involvement from the twenty-first century. The writers specifically address the contemporary conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan after the attacks on the World Trade Centers in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington D.C. on September 11, 2001. They situate their call for peace in the album’s title not only in the Brazilian context, but in other international ones as well. The letter begins referencing this seminal date in United States history:

Um Canto Pela Paz, ecoa num momento onde o império declara guerra aos pobres do Afeganistão, como represália ao atentado contra as torres

---

151 The World Trade Centers could be interpreted as symbols of the United States’ importance in international capitalistic affairs, which is particularly significant given the influence of economic policies in Brazil from institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which are largely backed by the United States. Angus Wright and Wendy Wolford have commented on this dynamic, explaining that such multinational entities have “pressured the Brazilian government to minimize social expenditures and promote economic policies favorable to international investors,” which largely do not include agrarian reform initiatives (280).
Following these attacks, the United States, which the writers describe as the empire, the new Rome of the twenty-first century, enters a state of crisis because of the challenges the attacks posed to their capitalist ways. Angus Wright and Wendy Wolford comment that in this context “[f]or Brazilians, and especially MST members, the US government now seems to be acting like an empire aroused to anger and vengeance in self-defense” (332). The War on Terror that President George W. Bush initiated as the nation’s response left many innocent victims in its path. According to the MST writers of this letter, the “‘guerra ao terror’ faz vítimas entre crianças, culpadas por serem os alvos mais faceis dos míssies estadunidenses à procura dos filhos de Maomé” (n. pag.). In the twenty-first century, the United States has caused death and destruction in Afghanistan and Iraq. The call for peace that resonates throughout Um Canto Pela Paz is not just applicable in Brazil, but also in the rest of the world, particularly because the MST released this album after 9/11, when wars continue to ravage the planet.

The writers of this letter also incorporate past examples of U.S. involvement in international conflicts and wars: the Vietnam War (1959-1975) and World War II (1939-}

---

152 The description of the United States as an empire also appeared on the cover of Veja, a right-wing newsweekly magazine published in São Paulo and widely available throughout Brazil. On September 19, 2001, the image on the cover depicted one of the planes directly after impact with the World Trade Center with the caption, “O Império Vulnerável.”
1945). To emphasize their criticisms, the authors note that during the Vietnam War there were “mais de um milhão de mortos, sobrinhos do Tio Ho, no Vietnã.” To further denounce the U.S., they reference Hiroshima and Nagasaki where the U.S. dropped an atomic bomb. The writers of this letter explicitly reference these events, again underscoring the innocence of the victims. They state that there were “centenas de milhares de almas inocentes desaparecidas no desabrochar atômico de Hiroshima e Nagasaki” (n. pag.). By juxtaposing the War on Terror with previous events that occurred during World War II and the Vietnam War, the creators of this letter show that the United States has not changed. As an international superpower, the country continues to commit acts of violence against other countries, causing the death of countless innocent people. The authors of this letter sympathize with the victims. Similar to the assassinated and injured in the massacre of Eldorado dos Carajás, their deaths were unnecessary. Moreover, they draw attention to these events so that audiences do not forget that the War on Terror was not an isolated event. Instead, it is one of many examples of U.S. involvement in international politics resulting in bloodshed. Juxtaposing contemporary conflicts and wars with others from the twentieth century manifests the confluence of past and present.

Nevertheless, openly criticizing the U.S. may affect potential audiences in different ways. U.S. politics and international relations have historically been highly controversial, particularly when concerning Latin America and, in recent decades, the Middle East and parts of Asia. On the one hand, audiences of *Um Canto Pela Paz* may disagree with the criticism that the writers of this letter level against the U.S. On the other hand, however, this is perhaps not surprising. The collection takes part in a long line of
Latin American artists and intellectuals negotiating how to position the region with respect to the U.S., including but not limited to figures such as Cuban José Martí in “Nuestra América” (1891) and Nicaraguan Rubén Darío in his “Oda a Roosevelt” (1905), and more recently Chilean poet Pablo Neruda in Canto general (1950) and Eduardo Galeano’s Venas abiertas de América Latina (1971). Even though there is the possibility of alienating listeners who sympathize with United States international politics, for Latin American audiences, this overt criticism of the U.S. may actually attract more people to the MST cause, increasing their number of supporters.

The liner notes connect the album to other parts of Latin America in other ways. The epigraph to the letter of thanks to the friends who made the CD is from Uruguayan poet, Mario Benedetti. Specifically, it includes verses from his poem “Por qué cantamos,” which appeared in his collection Cotidianas (1979). The verses are translated into Portuguese: “Cantamos… / Porque nossos mortos e os sobreviventes querem que cantemos.”

Benedetti published this collection six years after the Uruguayan coup d’état, when the government used repression and torture to control its people. Uruguay is one of several countries in South America, including Argentina, Chile, and Brazil, in which the government committed human rights violations against their citizens. Because of Uruguay’s political situation, Mario Benedetti fled the country. Benedetti’s poetry references another example of a country whose political authorities have realized acts of violence against their own people. By comparing Eldorado dos Carajás to the dictatorship in Uruguay which was well-known for its use of torture and assassination to subdue its citizens.

---

153 The original verses of this poem are “cantamos porque los sobrevivientes / y nuestros muertos quieren que cantemos” (22-23).
people, the singers underscore the brutality of the Brazilian authorities who realized the massacre and the innocence of the Landless victims. More generally, in addition to the previous events mentioned, the incorporation of this reference from Uruguayan history reinforces the idea that the CD advocates for peace and combats violence, both past and present.

The creators of *Um Canto Pela Paz* also connect the album with the fight for peace—and land reform—in another Latin American country: via the Zapatista Movement in Mexico. Since the EZLN’s (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional) uprising in 1994, there has been mutual support between the MST and the EZLN. For example, in 2007 for the V Congresso Nacional do MST, Subcomandante Marcos proclaimed Zapatista solidarity with the Landless. As journalist Pedro Carrano reports, in their document to the MST, the Zapatistas state that “Aqui, nas montanhas do sudeste mexicano há gente que os quer, que os admira e que aprende com vocês; há gente que sabe que não se renderam, há quem sabe que as nossas lutas têm o mesmo destino: o de liberdade e da justiça para nossa terra.”

The MST reinforces their solidarity with the EZLN in the promotional statement that accompanies the liner notes of *Um Canto Pela Paz*, which begins with the following quote: “A cultura que queremos não se impõe, dança. Não golpeia, fala. Não põe obstáculos, os retira” (n. pag.). The writers explain to readers that they have borrowed this quote from the Zapatistas: “Pegamos emprestado esta definição dos nossos irmãos Zapatistas sobre a cultura, porque compartilhamos dela”

---

154 For more information about the Zapatista Movement, see Chapter 3.

155 For the complete text from the Zapatistas, see the end of Pedro Carrano’s article.
Because of their similar goals to the EZLN, the writers of this promotional statement inform audiences that “[a] cultura que também queremos, não é aquela que apenas chora, é aquela que canta” (n. pag.). The MST members who created this statement underscore their solidarity with the EZLN by using the words “irmãos” and “também.” Both the EZLN and the MST are social movements concerned with land and other social issues whose governmental authorities have responded to their demands with violence.\footnote{I am referring to the massacre in Acteal, as discussed in Chapter 3.} Moreover, similar to the EZLN, the MST has also strategically used the Internet, publishing many of their materials on their official website.\footnote{The official website of the MST is www.mst.org.br.} By highlighting their alliance with the EZLN, these MST singers show that like the Zapatistas, they are also a group fighting for social equalities and land reform that is not at odds with modernity. This idea is stressed by MST activist João Pedro Stedile in his interview with geographer Bernardo Mançano Fernandes when he explains that some people “confundem a defesa que fazemos da reforma agrária com uma espécie de volta ao passado. Identificam nossa luta com o atraso. Nada mais falso” (126). Like the EZLN, the MST also engages globally and adapts to their changing circumstances; neither group is trapped in the past.

In these ways the Landless songwriters in Arte em Movimento link their music, and the MST, with other Latin American social movements. In “Luz da América,” for instance, the Landless situation is connected to revolutionary mobilization in Cuba. As Branford and Rocha note, in its early days, the MST admired Cuban communism, and the island nation’s agrarian reforms which resulted in the collectivization of agriculture
As such, the second stanza of “Luz da América” includes explicit references to this Caribbean country: “Pátria de Martí e de Che Guevara” (13). Because both Martí and Guevara were figures in Cuba’s successful revolutionary movements, in “Luz da América,” Cuba is an example of successful mobilization:

É Cuba pequena que nos dá o exemplo
é massa e fermento neste caminhar
Mostrando que é possível dar um passo à frente
Arrastando toda a gente para triunfar. (16-19)

Cuba and its corresponding revolutionaries perhaps represent the possibility of “winning;” Cuba is an example of effective organization and mobilization. If the MST employs Cuban strategies, perhaps they too will triumphantly realize their objectives of agrarian reform as well as other social initiatives such as health care and education, which were also key goals for Castro’s administration.159

There are other references to resistance that are specific to Brazil. For example, the song “500 anos de resistência india, negra, popular” mentions the Palmares quilombo, located in what is today the Brazilian state of Alagoas. Pedro Paulo A. Funari, a Brazilian

158 Branford and Rocha explain that recently the MST has turned their attention to more contemporary issues concerning “ecologically friendly and technologically advanced form[s] of peasant farming based around the community” (284).

159 The Landless must fight together because “[n]ão haverá o amanhã se não lutarmos hoje / nem haverá novas Cubas se a gente parar” (28-29). There will not be similar situations to what happened in Cuba in Brazil if they do not continue to work together.
historical archaeologist who has researched the conflicts and social structure at Palmares, describes these settlements:

At the beginning of the 17th century, runaway slaves settled in the hilly forest area. The scattered hideouts, consisting of several villages developed in the foothills from 45 to 75 mi. inland from the coastal plantations, stretching more than 100 mi., running roughly parallel to the coast. (83)

Palmares was an example of one of these communities of fugitive slaves during the seventeenth century that sought refuge in this remote area to avoid the oppressive conditions of slavery. A verse in the song invokes the iconic figure of Zumbi dos Palmares who symbolizes the resistance of marginalized subjects in response to colonial structures of power in Brazil when it says “O grito negro de Zumbi vem dos Palmares” (19). As Robert Nelson Anderson acknowledges, Zumbi was the last leader of the maroon state—or quilombo—of Palmares in Northeastern Brazil. […] For many Brazilians, especially those of African descent, Zumbi embodies the strongest resistance to the slave-based colonial regime, and consequently, the struggle for economic and political justice today. (545)

The presence of Zumbi and Palmares in this song invokes the spirit of resistance that has been present in Brazil for centuries, connecting the MST to other struggles against the Brazilian status quo.

There is a constant movement and negotiation of domestic and global cultural influences in MST music. Frances R. Aparicio and Cándida F. Jáquez describe these
transactions as “musical migrations” to highlight “the processes of dislocation, transformation, and mediation that characterize musical structures, productions, and performances as they cross national and cultural borders and transform their meanings from one historical period to another” (3). When the music “migrates” from one place to another, it adapts to the new context, taking on new shapes and meanings. In these global exchanges, MST songwriters are both importers and exporters. They incorporate foreign references into their music, which may be consumed by both domestic and international audiences, as we have seen, and potentially increase the international solidarity with their social movement. In this way, they use their music to contribute to a multi-layered collective alliance, with other marginalized subjects in Brazil, Latin America, and other countries.

**Pan-Latin American (Post)Colonial Resistance**

The MST singers also evoke another shared Latin American historical event: the arrival of foreign invaders and the conquest of their lands and peoples. The initial verses of the song “Bioretróspetiva” explicitly establish this as a central idea in the song:

O índio ao ver o homem branco invadindo o seu habitat.

Sabia de longe que a fome do homem é riqueza e poder (1-4)

The first verse juxtaposes the white man and the indigenous, foregrounding the conflicts and abuses of power which began with colonization. Moreover, in the initial verses the reference applies to all of Latin America because it does not specify whether the white invader was from Portugal, Spain, or another part of Europe. In the fifteenth and
sixteenth centuries Europeans had more wealth and power, so they dominated and killed indigenous groups throughout the Americas:

E morrem os Incas, Astecas e Maias

Txucarramãe, Ianomâmi, Uaicá

Em casa açai-zeiros, palmeiras e jequitibás

Morreu Sete Quedas, Tupi Guarani

Tanta vida nas guerras (9-13)

The singer enumerates different indigenous groups that are located all over Latin America. He begins with the largest three, the Mayas, Aztecs, and Incas, spanning Mesoamerica and the Andean region. After foregrounding these three civilizations, the singer then names people native to Brazil: Txucarramãe, Ianomâmi, and Uaicá. The first two live in the Amazon. Uaicá refers to the myth of a hunter from the Juruna, an indigenous group that lives in Brazil’s Xungu River region (Cotterell, n. pag.). Indigenous groups suffered at the hands of European invaders, who sought to expand their physical and religious territory. As is well-known now, one of the consequences of the conquest of land and souls was the death of many indigenous people across the Americas, who died from acts of violence, exposure to European diseases (Cook 17; Diamond 17), and oppressive work conditions (Quijano 538).¹⁶⁰ In their expeditions to

¹⁶⁰ Historian Noble David Cook has argued that although the violence committed by the Europeans and their indigenous allies was a key factor in decimating indigenous populations, the critical factor was the deadly illnesses to which indigenous people had not previously been exposed and thus did not have any immunities (17). U.S. scientist
conquer land and evangelize its inhabitants, the singer explains that “[o] homem roubou, reprimiu Tudo em nome / da civilização” (19-20). Similar to the disasters in Chernobyl and Cubatão, the colonizing destruction took place under the guise of progress and development. In reality, one of the primary goals of the conquerors was to extract mineral wealth in the form of gold and silver and obtain glory and honor for himself and his family.  

Such “progress” benefitted a select few—the invaders—while leaving the original inhabitants of the Americas to negotiate the irreparable damage to their lands and ways of life. The repression of indigenous people in the name of civilization is something that all Latin America shares; this connects Brazil with other parts of the hemisphere, calling attention to a Pan-Latin American identity.

The violence and oppression of indigenous and African peoples during the colonization of Brazil has left a legacy that influenced the formation of the MST. Geographer Mançano Fernandes describes the colonization of Brazil:

A história da formação do Brasil é marcada pela invasão do território indígena, pela escravidão e pela produção do território capitalista. Nesse processo de formação de nosso País, a luta de resistência começou com a chegada do colonizador europeu, há 500 anos, desde quando os povos indígenas resistem ao genocídio histórico. (25)

Jared Diamond has also underscored the role of diseases and genocide in the Conquest (17). Also, for a more in-depth description of Quijano’s work, see the introduction.

161 Rolena Adorno (2007) has illustrated the prominence of these goals using the lens of the polemics of possession through examples such as Hernán Cortés’s, Bernal Díaz de Castillo’s, and Guaman Poma’s accounts.
The oppression of colonizing efforts began more than five centuries ago with the arrival of Europeans to the continent. However, these hierarchical structures of power have continued into the present, as Quijano has described. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Brazil struggles against domination by multinational companies with capitalistic interests which do not generally promote social initiatives like agrarian reform. “500 anos de resistência india, negra, popular” emphasizes the legacy of colonization by describing Latin American history as “três histórias neste grande continente” (7). The song signals the historical commonalities in Latin America directly related to colonization:

Uma [história] bem antes dos invasores chegarem

E a segunda cinco séculos de invasão

E a resistência india-negra popular

E a terceira é a que vamos construindo. (8-11)

Describing the three periods in Latin American history through an anaphora formed from the conjunction “e,” the singer emphasizes that the oppression has continued throughout the region’s past. The use of the present progressive form of the verb “construir” in the eleventh verse indicates that this third historical moment is still in process. As such, the song suggests that all Latin Americans have to participate in the creation of this third history.

The concluding verse of the first stanza of “500 anos de resistência india, negra, popular” returns to the idea of the need for collective unity in Latin America: “Quinhentos anos de Campanha Continental” (14). Throughout the history of the Americas there have been voices that presented “um grito de resistência” (17) against a
variety of injustices. In the second stanza the singer informs audiences that the dissident voices “dos verdadeiros heróis” (18) are examples to follow in the future. Highlighting the political strategy of constructing a collective identity based on the common history of Latin America, the song sustains that “[p]ra ter mais força é preciso unificar / Marchando firme contra toda escravidão” (22-23). By emphasizing the need for a collective identity and referencing events in history that all of Latin America shares, the song seeks to unify the Landless of the MST and their objectives with other social struggles in the hemisphere, as we have seen with the Zapatistas. Since the references to the colonization and history of the Americas do not center on Brazil specifically, there is the potential for solidarity with other Latin American movements because of these shared experiences.

In the song “América Livre” by Jacir Strapazzan-Milico, for example, the speaker reinforces the connection between the Landless and Latin America in general by ambivalently addressing America. The singer begins explicitly invoking Latin America: “América Latina de sangue e suor / Eu quero pra ti um dia melhor” (1-2, my emphasis). Later, the singer directly addresses America again: “América, América, sou teu filho” (7), while also identifying with America as its offspring, and consequently, the new direction for the region. Each of these invocations of America are coupled with generally optimistic overtones of a better future. These themes continue in the final concluding verses when the speaker again speaks directly to America, exclaiming

América minha quero te ver um dia

Teu povo nas ruas com a mesma alegria

Gritar a vitória no campo e cidade

e empunhar a bandeira da liberadade. (11-14)
As a result of their solidarity, America’s people will together celebrate and shout in the streets. All of America, both rural and urban, will rejoice and proclaim their happiness. It will no longer be that public policy will solely benefit a select few—often in metropolitan centers—as has typically been the case since the arrival of Europeans 500 years ago and more recently with multinational economic investments.

In “Luz da América,” Ademar Bogo also describes Latin America as if it were a unified entity, introducing the positive qualities of its land and people. This appears not only in the song’s title, but also in the first verse, which states that “América Latina tem uma beleza” (1). To substantiate this claim, the singer enumerates the characteristics that make Latin America beautiful:

[…] não foi a natureza só quem desenhou
Foi a força da guerrilha nos braços do povo
que no dia de ano novo enfim triunfou
Ela é muito pequena mas muito elegante
forte como um gigante se mantém por lá (2-6)

In addition to its nature, Latin America’s guerrillas and people are positive qualities. The region is physically beautiful due to its natural geography, yet part of its attraction is the political consciousness of its people. Latin Americans are not afraid to fight for a better future.

Latin Americans also share a common adversary in the latifúndio, or the large land-holding estates. The penultimate stanza of “Descobrimos lá na base” manifests the antagonistic relationship between Latin America and the oligarchy:

Pelo fim do latifúndio
Latin America has a long history of the concentration of its lands in the hands of a small sector of the population, which resulted in pushes for agrarian reform in many countries of the region in the twentieth century:

From 1950 to 1970, almost every Latin American country engaged in some sort of land redistribution program as part of its overall modernization strategy. In Peru and El Salvador, approximately 20 percent of farm households received land; in Bolivia (1952), 75 percent, and in Nicaragua (1963), 50 percent. […] Agrarian reforms announced in Guatemala (1954) and in Cuba (1959) were key elements of socially radical or progressive political revolutions. (Wolford 72-3)

Throughout the century, large estates’ monopoly on the land has been the common enemy in Latin America. Brazil is just another example of a country that protects the large land-holders’ interests; as Brazilian anthropologist Darcy Ribeiro explains, “[t]oda a máquina brasileira da Justiça, da Polícia, toda máquina oficial brasileira existe para garantir o latifúndio, o latifúndio que não produz, não emprega gente” (n. pag.). Brazil

162 In addition to the countries that Wolford has noted, we can also add Mexico to this list. Part of the driving impulses of the Mexican Revolution in 1910 was precisely this issue.
and the rest of the hemisphere has suffered the consequences of inequalities of land distribution, so calling attention to this commonality stresses the systemic nature of the issue—for the MST, land reform in Brazil is part of a larger problem.

In addition to the latifúndio, other factors influence Latin American land use. The economic market has largely determined how land is used and for what purposes. Often, foreign companies have more control than the State and other national entities to ensure that domestic policies are conducive to multinational corporations’ business interests. Perhaps one of the most iconic examples in Latin America is the United Fruit Company in Guatemala, which controlled the majority of this Central American country’s lands for the production of bananas during the first half of the twentieth century. More recently, in Brazil and other parts of Latin America, there has been significant investment from China. International affairs scholar Robert G. Sutter has observed that “cumulative Chinese investment in Latin America had reached $41.2 billion at the end of 2009[, and t]he upswing continued in 2010, with Brazil being a major target of investment” (330). This trend has continued into 2013; Forbes reporter Kenneth Rapoza has also noted China’s investment in Brazilian markets, noting that the majority of which are based in agricultural resources. In this way, Brazil has found itself in a similar situation to other Latin American countries also dependent on Chinese investors, such as Venezuela, Argentina, Peru, and Chile (Sutter 330). In the case of Brazil, that the Chinese have heavily invested in agricultural resources has direct impacts on the potential for land reform. To obtain their goals of agrarian reform, the MST’s Landless are not just fighting with their own government, but with other international agents who arguably may have a more pronounced voice in issues concerning land allocation.
Perhaps in response to such economic trends, the singer in the last stanza of “Descobrimos lá na base” calls the group to action against capitalism: “[c]ontra esse capitalismo / vamos firmes, decididos / não deixar pra outra hora” (38-40). Since any current possibility of land reform is largely dependent on multinational entities whose economic profits are their primary concern, the singers urge people to act immediately, to not languish in their efforts. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the exploitation of Latin America is intrinsically connected to transnational capitalistic interests, and many countries have been pillaged of their natural resources under economic policies promoting extractive commerce. For this reason, one of the MST’s primary objectives has been to combat the negative consequences of foreign investment in Brazil. In an interview, Cuban Aleida Guevara discusses these issues with MST leader João Pedro Stedile, who explains:

nosotros no lograremos resolver los problemas de los campesinos sin enfrentarnos al imperialismo, a las transnacionales, a los medios de comunicación. […] Ahora, luchar por la Reforma Agraria depende de derrotar el modelo económico neoliberal e imperialista. Y eso entonces va a exigir del Movimiento Sin Tierra que se califique más, que se desarrolle más ideológicamente […] para construir una unidad popular y alcanzar fuerzas suficientes para enfrentar a enemigos tan poderosos. (60)

That is, to realize their objectives of agrarian reform, they recognize that there are larger systemic structures in place that affect the redistribution of land in Brazil—these issues are the effects of economic imperialism. Land reform depends on changes in the way
Brazil approaches their role in global capitalistic markets and how they negotiate their
economic relations with other nations.

In Arte em Movimento, Ademar Bogo’s “Luz da América” and Jacir Strapazzan-Milico’s “América Livre” manifest the antagonistic relationship between Latin America
and imperialism. In “Luz da América,” the singer communicates his vision of a Latin
America that “desafia o imperialismo e não tem receio” (7). Even though
multinational companies are significantly powerful and influential in domestic policy,
along with the rest of Latin America the Landless of Brazil need to stand up against these
investors. Perhaps through their Pan-Latin American unity, they will have enough
supporters that they will be able to do so fearlessly. With enough international support
such subjects would not need to fear events like the massacre in Eldorado dos Carajás, or
more generally for their personal safety or well-being. One of the MST’s primary goals
for their international supporters is that they will enact change in their own countries
(Wright and Wolford 333), as we have already seen. In the context of multinational

163 In the song “América Livre,” Landless singer and leader Jacir Strapazzan-Milico also notes imperialism as a common enemy. For this singer, the struggle is “uma
guerra de força contra o Imperialismo / que dos povos da América é o grande inimigo”
(9-10). The force that Latin America needs to use to combat imperialism in the region is
ambiguous—it is not clear whether such activists should use verbal, physical or some
other form of force. What is explicit, however, is that for America in general, imperialism
and the control that foreign investors have historically had over Latin American interests
is the adversary. The lyrics explicitly identify the Landless with America in general—all
are destined to suffer as a result of capitalism and imperialism.
investors and economic policies, this form of activism may have a direct impact on the Landless situation in Brazil. Perhaps if foreigners are able to pressure their own government officials who enact public policy regulating economic relations, this could affect foreign initiatives in Brazil and their consequences for Landless people.

As we have seen, these MST songwriters suggest the need to negotiate another dimension of unity at the international level, a Pan-Latin American conscience, by relating the social injustices of the Landless to other oppressions in Brazil and Latin America in general. However, what is at stake with this collective identity? In the context of the Pan-Maya Movement in Guatemala in Chapter 2, there is a negotiation of a common ethnic, “Maya” identity that crosses national borders, which includes some subjects while excluding others. Although the MST’s alliance with Latin America is a more political, strategic move, what do the Landless of Brazil stand to gain by working through a Pan-Latin American alliance, and what is at risk? On the one hand, there are renewed opportunities for alliances with other like-minded Latin Americans. As a result, foreign sympathizers show their support not only in their countries of origin, but some have even relocated to the region. For example, according to Branford and Rocha, there are foreigners like “José Servat, a French priest who has been living in the region for 35 years” who have supported MST occupations in the area (85). In other encampments, there are people from other parts of Latin America, like “Chileno.” As his name suggests, he is from Chile and is also one of the leaders in the MST settlement near the city of Cachoeira, Bahia. On the other hand, however, the inclusion of non-Brazilian subjects in the MST struggle may detract from the brasilidade, or the Brazilian roots, of the movement. Perhaps ironically, the Landless, whose primary goals are to achieve agrarian
reform, may inadvertently destabilize the MST’s overall roots in Brazil. While the MST may augment the overall support for the movement through foreign leadership, they also may remove some of what makes the struggle particular to Brazilian Landlessness. Even though some foreigners get involved with the MST by physically relocating to their settlements, others support the MST in different ways, as with the case of Brazilian studies critic and anthropologist Else Vieira.

**Else Vieira’s Mediation in an Online Landless Archive**

The Landless have been advocating for agrarian reform for decades, yet the government has largely not listened to their demands; as such, their situation is marked by subalternity. Compounding their marginalization, the Landless of Brazil have not historically had access to venues to disseminate their materials to larger audiences. According to Vieira, “[t]he sem-terra’s cultural production lacks the symbolic dimension of recognition from publishers and critics in Brazil. It tends to circulate mostly within their milieu” (“Enhancing Cultural Studies” 118). Their audiences have typically consisted of people who live in the encampments and physical proximity of these areas. Generally, the Landless have not had the cultural, economic, or political capital to publish their poetry, art, songs, and other cultural materials so that their work could potentially reach a larger audience. Instead, they generally distribute these materials among those people already affiliated with the MST, predominantly in the interior of Brazil:

The conditions in which their work is utilized—during marches or in their encampments, scattered throughout the interior of Brazil—divorce them from the networks of circulation and consumption (museums, libraries, and so on). The few existing written records of their predominantly oral
poetry were on loose papers or in draft form in personal files. (Vieira, “Enhancing Cultural Studies” 118)

Although the MST has worked through different cultural media, including but not limited to poetry and songs, to promote their struggle, they have had limited opportunities to engage an audience outside of those already allied with the movement. MST artists, writers, and musicians’ disenfranchisement from publishers and other entities that could disseminate their work has left these subaltern subjects with limited access to outside audiences.

Else Vieira, however, has sought to change this situation. She has created an online digital archive of poetry, songs, essays, photography, and other information related to the MST, including the CDs Arte em Movimento and Um Canto Pela Paz. The title of this archive is As Imagens e as Vozes da Despossessão: A Luta pela Terra e a Cultura Emergente do MST (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra) / The Sights and Images of Dispossession: The Fight for the Land and the Emerging Culture of the MST (henceforth, As Imagens e as Vozes da Despossessão). In January 2003 As Imagens e as Vozes da Despossessão was born on the University of Nottingham’s webspaces under the direction of Vieira and the University’s School of Modern Languages. For her, 2003 is when most national and international audiences had access to the poems, songs, and other materials that the MST produced. By establishing this database, members of the MST have “a public space, nationally and internationally, […] to express their anguish, traumas, their hopes and their political platform” (Vieira and McGuirk, “Foreword” xxvi). On this digital archive the Landless have a venue to house art in which they speak for and represent themselves via their cultural production in various genres.
As an anthropologist trained in the Academy advocating for increased representation and visibility of the MST’s cultural productions, Else Vieira embodies characteristics of both Antonio Gramsci’s understandings of traditional and organic intellectuals. For the Italian political theorist, everyone is an intellectual in that each person must carry out some degree of intellectual activity. However, “not all men [and women] have in society the function of intellectuals” (1140). They do not realize the social role of an intellectual, who “contributes to sustain a conception of the world to purify it, that is, to bring into being new modes of thought” (1140-41). Because Vieira works within the framework of a formally recognized intellectual institution, the Academy, she is a traditional intellectual in the Gramscian sense. However, part of her social function as an intellectual is to take steps toward making examples of MST cultural production more accessible to larger audiences through *As Imagens e as Vozes da Despossessão*. Although Vieira is not necessarily a member of the social group or class that is at odds with institutions of power—in this case, the MST—as is typical of organic intellectuals, Vieira advocates for wider representation for Landless voices whose needs and desires have historically been ignored. She strategically draws from the power and resources associated with the Academy to create a space to house cultural products in which Landless voices have spoken for and represented their marginalized identities.

However, because Vieira collected the items that she later organized in this digital archive, she is also a mediator of *As Imagens e as Vozes da Despossessão*. Vieira’s role in the mediation of the archive is similar to the editorial processes that Elizabeth Burgos and Victor Montejo did when they compiled the information for Rigoberta Menchú Tum’s and the Mayan refugees’ testimonies that we saw in Chapter 1. The archive itself
is the result of Vieira’s two years of fieldwork in Brazil (2001-2002). Working with Bernard McGuirk, the primary project translator, Vieira describes the process of making the materials available online. The data collection involved:

- two Universities in Brazil and one in the US. The collection and transcription/scanning of the *sem-terra’s* poetry and photographs was carried out by myself with the support of the Federal University of Minas Gerais. My own task, in the capacity of main investigator of the Project, later included the collection of other resources (Music, Lyrics, Essays by the *sem-terra*, Children’s Drawings and Compositions; Films; Statements by Intellectuals and Artists; Essays by academics; the Photography of Sebastião Salgado). This task was greatly facilitated by the MST in São Paulo and Minas Gerais and by the Movement’s *cantadores/poet-singers* [...]. (“Enhancing Cultural Studies” 119)

During these initial stages of the creation of *As Imagens e as Vozes da Despossessão*, Vieira collected the materials directly from the MST, organized them, and chose what to include in the archive. Audiences do not hear directly from members of the MST—they gain access to these materials through Vieira, the mediating agent.\(^{164}\) Although MST

\(^{164}\) Even though members of the MST did not construct the archive and upload their own materials, they have used digital media in other ways without the influence of a mediating agent like Else Vieira. They have negotiated the means through which they disseminate their ideas to national and international audiences. For example, the MST has taken advantage of the Internet and its communicative power, specifically in their official website of the movement, mst.org.br. However, what distinguishes mst.org.br from *As
members have created many of the cultural products firsthand, Vieira has a more powerful role in this dynamic because she ultimately decides what, how, and if the materials become available via the online archive.

Nevertheless, there are fewer editorial interventions than perhaps one would expect because of the database’s digital format. As opposed to a book in traditional print format, the archive is housed on the Internet and does not have to comply with length and presentation standards. Because of budget constraints, publishing houses often regulate the amount of material that appears in books because there are limitations on the number of pages. There are also restrictions concerning the incorporation of photographs, artwork, or other images in print publications because they cause book prices to rise. Vieira acknowledges these issues in her assessment of the benefits of using a web-based database for *As Imagens e as Vozes da Despossessão:*

> The web’s open-ended accommodation of resources […] had overriding advantages over the page-bound format of books. […] Printed books would not do justice to the *sem-terra*’s range of cultural expressions and particularly to the oral and visual functionings of this specific culture.

*Imagens e as Vozes da Despossessão* is that mst.org.br is maintained entirely by members of the MST. Moreover, the official website is also updated regularly with new information whereas *As Imagens e as Vozes da Despossessão* has largely remained the same since its creation. The MST’s presence in the mass media, however, is not a recent phenomenon. For example, according to Brazilian sociologist Monica Dias Martins, the movement became the focus of news reports after the occupation in Encruzilhada Natalino, Rio Grande do Sul in 1979 (33).
Music, a foremost expression for them, would be silenced in books.
Photographs, a major source of information on the history of the culture, would make publication unaffordable. The web format would thus project this culture in a completeness unimaginable in a traditional print format. (“Enhancing Cultural Studies” 119)

Because this collection of materials is available online where space is not an issue, the limiting of quantity and types of resources that is common in the publication of print books did not affect As Imagens e as Vozes da Despossessão. For example, there are examples of visual and aural art forms in the digital archive that did not appear in the print anthology that Vieira created using materials from the archive: Landless Voices in Song and Poetry: The Movimento dos Sem Terra of Brazil (2007), which includes many of the songs from Arte em Movimento and Um Canto Pela Paz—in Vieira’s anthology, these texts are presented as poems. As a result, using the Internet as the medium for the archive gives more people affiliated with the MST a voice because there is not an “a priori limiting of number and types of resources” (Vieira, “Enhancing Cultural Studies” 119). Rather, it combats what influential Brazilian educator Paulo Freire has described as “o trágico dilema dos oprimidos”: “Entre dizerem a palavra ou não terem voz, castrados no seu poder de criar e recriar, no seu poder de transformar o mundo” (Freire 36).
Instead, the archive provides people who have previously been denied a voice a space to house their materials, regardless of media type. Nevertheless, while the archive serves as a medium through which to present MST cultural products and representations, it is not exclusively Landless voices who contribute to it.
In *As Imagens e as Vozes da Despossessão*, Else Vieira organizes the materials in the archive into two groups: “Expressões dos sem-terra” and “Sobre os sem-terra.” Of the “Expressões dos sem-terra,” there are two subcategories: “Imagens” and “Vozes,” which Vieira further divides by media type. For each text, the corresponding webpage also informs audiences of another way Vieira has thematically organized it. The materials are also in cultural categories such as “Cultura,” “História,” “A luta pela terra,” “Acampamentos e Resistência,” and “Assentamentos.” All materials in *As Imagens e as Vozes da Despossessão* can be accessed via media type or cultural category. Because each component of the archive has various hyperlinks, there is more than one way for

---

165 The “Imagens” are divided into children’s drawings, dance, murals, paintings, films, photography, sculpture, and theater; the genres comprising the “Vozes” section are children’s compositions, essays, music (CDs), lyrics, and poems.

166 Each of these five cultural categories has subdivisions—“Cultura” is separated into “Ícones, símbolos e monumentos,” “A Mística,” “A missão da arte,” O cânone da exclusão,” “A morte como horizonte de vida,” “A mulher sem-terra,” “O resgate das tradições e da cultura do campo,” “Esperanças e aspirações,” “Educação,” and “Consciência ambiental;” “História” into “Marchas, marcos, congressos” and “Massacres e mártires;” “A luta pela terra” has only one sub-category: “Desposessão, viagens, ocupação, despejo;” “Acampamentos e Resistência” into “As casas de lona preta,” “Papéis de gênero e os sem-terra e os sem-terrinha,” and “Escolas;” “Assentamentos” contains “Agrovilas,” O afago da terra,” “A terra produtiva,” “Partindo e dividindo o pão,” “Projetos ecológicos,” “Cooperativas e produção,” “A família ‘Sem-Terra,’” and “Educação.”
audiences to access these files. That said, Vieira maintains her initial overarching organization, clearly differentiating between cultural productions by Landless voices versus those about the Landless. In *As Imagens e as Vozes da Despossessão*, audiences are constantly aware of who is speaking for whom. Vieira clearly designates when Landless subjects speak for and represent their marginalized identities and situations versus when people who are not members of the MST speak for the Landless.

Many of the files available via *As Imagens e as Vozes da Despossessão* are recorded versions (“archival” memory) of embodied performances that would otherwise appear to be nonreproducible parts of the “repertoire,” to use Diana Taylor’s terms.167 In Vieira’s digital archive, there are CDs with links to play the individual songs; videos that can be played using Microsoft Windows Media Player v.7; children’s drawings, stories, and songs; paintings and murals; photos of theater performances; as well as song lyrics and poems. Drawing from Sarah Bay-Cheng’s analysis of the archive and the repertoire, *As Imagens e as Vozes da Despossessão* complicates the relationship between these two concepts precisely because it is digital.168 As Taylor herself has acknowledged, digital media obscure this binary opposition, but for her it still reinforces this dichotomy because

---

167 For a detailed explanation of Diana Taylor’s understanding of the relationship between the archive and the repertoire, see Chapter 3.

168 Sarah Bay-Cheng’s commentary is also applicable to Facebook. However, since Taller Leñateros does not include voice or performance records, their use of this digital archive does challenge the boundaries of the archive and the repertoire as much as *As Imagens e as Vozes da Despossessão*, which does feature videos and voice file recordings.
within this technological system of transmission “the written and archival constitutive hegemonic power and the repertoire provid[es] the anti-hegemonic challenge” (22). Moreover, as with traditional print materials, digital media may also privilege written, recorded documents at the expense of embodied memory: “on the brink of a digital revolution that both utilizes and threatens to displace writing, the body again seems poised to disappear in a virtual space that eludes embodiment” (16). However, since there are hyperlinks that connect the materials in Facebook, audience members may participate and in this way they are “present” in the performance.169 Dialoguing with these theorists, Bay-Cheng notes:

We need not separate digital archives from these forms of reembodied performance archives. Indeed, unlike the models provided by film, television, and video documentation, digital archives may ironically get us closer to the preservation of cultural performance and memory that historians such as Roach, Taylor, and Román articulate. If film and video are of the archive, then the digital is more closely related to the repertoire.

169 Performance Studies critic Peggy Phelan defines performance in terms of its ephemerality and non-reproducibility. For her, a “[p]erformance’s only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance” (146). In online performances, this is complicated because audiences are able to interact with and be “present” at the performance by commenting below videos on digital servers like YouTube, even though the file on the Internet is just a recording of a live performance that occurred at an earlier time.
Unlike these earlier forms of media that are fixed, didactic, and linear, digital technologies are fundamentally constructed as mobile, interconnected, and pervasive. (129)

Although the materials on Vieira’s digital archive appear to be recorded versions of nonreproducible, embodied performances (archival memory of the “repertoire”), the components of this archive are actually a fusion of the two concepts because of the interconnectivity between the files on this online server—there are multiple hyperlinks to access each component of the archive. It is possible to reproduce the performances through the digital media online, but part of what is sacrificed is its liveness, or immediacy of the original event.170

170 Performance Studies critic Philip Auslander has discussed the relationship between digital media and liveness; for him, “[l]ive performance has thus become the means by which mediatized representations are naturalized, according to a simple logic that appeals to our nostalgia for what we assumed was the im-mediate: if the mediatized image can be recreated in a live setting, it must have been ‘real’ to begin with” (43). In other words, part of the attraction to live performance for audiences is its realness that occurs precisely in the moment of the performance. Although in many cases audiences prefer to attend such events in person, the second-best option would be a digital recording because it at least satisfies some of this desire—at some point, the recording was the real thing.
As we have seen with Facebook, dynamics of power influence archives, and this is also true of *As Imagens e as Vozes da Despossessão*.\(^{171}\) As the mediator of these materials, Else Vieira has the authority to determine what to privilege in what González Espitia describes as the “open archive” and what to exile to what he terms the “carnero.”\(^{172}\) However, what distinguishes *As Imagens e as Vozes da Despossessão* from Taller Leñateros’s use of Facebook is that, within the open archive, all components of the digital archive are part of multiple organizing categories simultaneously. That is, a text may pertain to more than one compartment; these categories are not mutually exclusive. González Espitia explains this relationship in terms of the open archive and the carnero:

> The predominant conjunctions in this discourse would be the copulative “both” and “and,” or at least their possibility. From this perspective, there is a potential for documents and authors to be part of different, complementary, and even opposing discourses at the same time. [...] The fact that a document or an author is ambiguous or polyphonic does not result in condemnation or need for expiation. An archival perspective

\(^{171}\) Similar to the members of Taller Leñateros who maintain their Facebook page, Vieira makes certain files available to online audiences by uploading them to the open archive, but she does not permit them to view other files that are part of the carnero. As the creator and organizer of the archive, Vieira shapes the files to which online audiences have access. In this way, she has the power to determine what files merit inclusion in the open archive, rather than the Landless voices themselves.

\(^{172}\) For more information concerning Juan Carlos González Espitia’s theoretical approach to the open archive and the carnero, see Chapter 3.
allows for complexity and provides ground for leniency in the desire to subdue inevitably subjective thoughts into preconceived structures. (18)

Ambivalence imbues the process of determining where to categorize items. In most cases, there are multiple ways to organize the materials. Archival categories shape how audiences understand the archive’s components because they frame the materials and influence audiences’ interpretations.

As such, it is possible for “outsiders” like Vieira to shape the materials available on *As Imagens e as Vozes da Despossessão* given that these agents are part of the production, even though they may not necessarily be part of the communities from which these cultural products originated. *As Imagens e as Vozes da Despossessão* is similar to the online videos discussed in Chapter 2 and the Taller’s Facebook account in Chapter 3 because in each of these cases audiences frame their contents and shape how such materials are presented to subsequent audience members. In the performances of the onomatopoeic K’iche’ song “Xalolilo’ lelele’” and the video entitled “Mayan Children Singing,” there are similar organizing structures to *As Imagens e as Vozes da Despossessão* in that Internet users also create categories, through the title, brief description, and tags for the videos. These words and expressions situate video files on digital servers online; through this accompanying information, Internet users who upload videos culturally translate these videos. In the case of Facebook, Taller Leñateros’s “friends” culturally mediate the account’s contents—the records in the archive—by “liking” and commenting on Taller’s posts. Like Vieira, these online audiences may also be “outsiders” who influence understandings of these recordings available online.
Because of the politics of collaboration between representatives of the Academy, in particular anthropologists, and marginalized subjects who are often their objects of study, to what extent is the creation of this archive empowering? Who really benefits from this archive? On the one hand, the MST has the potential to increase the visibility of their cultural products on the Internet, and consequently their social and political initiatives. On the other hand, by disseminating these materials online, members of the intellectual community benefit. Because of such renegotiated networks of circulation, scholars like myself are able to appropriate these materials for research purposes. Unlike the online videos and the Taller’s Facebook account, we are not authorized to comment or informally post to As Imagens e as Vozes da Despossessão. Nevertheless, as we have seen in these previous examples, even though the MST may gain from the potential to engage larger audiences, their materials may also be exploited for other purposes which the artists, authors, and other MST members may not have authorized, or even foreseen.

Conclusion

The unique dynamic of local and international influences in Arte em Movimento and Um Canto Pela Paz is perhaps expected given the political goals of the MST. On a basic level, one of the fundamental objectives of the organization is to obtain land where they can live and cultivate crops. However, in order for their dreams to become reality, the government must enact agrarian reform, both regionally and nationally. To achieve their goals, in their CDs the Landless look to examples of social movements abroad as models. Like the Zapatistas in Mexico, the MST continues to fight for land, rights, and recognition from their government. Similar to the MST, the Zapatista struggle is not over. Consequently, the MST writers of the songs in Arte em Movimento and Um Canto Pela
Paz persevere with their push for agrarian reform. In the process, the Landless songwriters simultaneously engage local and international influences—although physically their goals are primarily local, they have ramifications across the nation and abroad, with backlash for the domestic land-holding elite and multinational corporations with investments in Brazil.

Landless identities are not confined to the rural countryside—they may identify with both local and international cultural influences. To return to the question at the beginning of this chapter from Alexander Sebastian Dent, “to be country, or to be city?” (18), as Dent himself explains, the two are not mutually exclusive. Instead, “Brazilian rurality is a form of social identification with particular entailments and presuppositions,” shaped by both locality and cosmopolitanism (239). In the case of Arte em Movimento and Um Canto Pela Paz, the Landless songwriters are no exception. They present their MST identities in dialogue with the complex networks of local and international influences that shape them. The Landless negotiate the two perhaps because they recognize the need for the MST to situate their local concerns in relation to global politics.

Since much of their cultural production is available in As Imagens e as Vozes da Despossessão, they have the capability to engage international audiences because anyone with an Internet connection has access to these materials. Yet, although in some ways the MST has grown as a result of their uses of technology, in other ways they continue to exclude potential supporters. Nevertheless, it is more strategic for the MST to not only attract foreigners’ attention, but to engage them in such a way that they become allies and supporters of the movement. Perhaps with increased international attention on the
movement and external pressures on the Brazilian status quo, the Landless will be able to enact change at the local level and prevent acts of violence like the massacre in Eldorado dos Carajás. Even though the MST may reach international audiences, as we have seen, the MST does not engage international communities to solicit their explicit participation in the movement, but rather to underscore the need to fight for social and political justice in their respective countries. In this sense, *Um Canto Pela Paz* is a song for peace not only in Brazil. Through their art, and more concretely their music, the Landless artists in this album condemn moments in history when government authorities inflicted violence, bloodshed, and death of their own people, such as the events in Chernobyl and Guernica. They advocate for a general peace for all nations, denouncing all of the Eldorado dos Carajás of the world.
Afterword: Other Mediations and Marginalities of the Twenty-First Century

Along with my reservations about the idea of literary transculturation of the colonial or postcolonial subaltern from above (as Said and Rama suggest), I think it is also important to admit the counterpossibility of transculturation from below: in this case, for example, to worry less about how we appropriate Menchú, and to understand and appreciate more how she appropriates us for her purposes.

—John Beverley

I first learned of the controversy surrounding Rigoberta Menchú Tum’s testimonio as an undergraduate Latin American Studies major in one of my required seminars at UNC-Chapel Hill. In that context, I studied the massacres and frequent acts of violence the Guatemalan Army committed against the Maya during the civil war. Class discussions centered on the K’iche’ activist’s accounts of the deaths of her family members, problematizing the veracity of her claims in a way that was similar to what anthropologist David Stoll has done. At twenty years of age, I remember sympathizing with Menchú Tum, thinking to myself that I could not imagine the suffering and oppression that she has experienced in life. Nearly a decade later as I finish my Ph.D., my relationship with Menchú Tum has become more complex. When completing my fieldwork during the summer of 2010, my Kaqchikel Maya language instructors and other Maya I met in town would criticize Menchú Tum for her fame and international successes, arguing that she is not as marginalized as they are. Following the Efraín Ríos Montt trial in May 2013, journalists’ reactions to Menchú Tum’s presence in the courtroom spoke to her continued public visibility and influence. As I conclude this project, my own academic journey with Menchú Tum reminds me what a complicated figure she is, and perhaps always will be.

173 This quotation is from “The Real Thing” (272-73).
As John Beverley has indicated in this afterword’s epigraph, Rigoberta Menchú Tum is not a passive agent. Although figures such as Elizabeth Burgos have mediated her account, Menchú Tum has used academics for her own purposes. As I mentioned in a note in Chapter 2, she is conscious of her visual presence and its effect on her potential audiences. When in the public limelight, Menchú Tum strategically wears her brightly colored huipiles and corte, whereas in the privacy of her own home, she admits that she often wears jeans and a T-shirt because it is more comfortable (Arias, “Constructing Ethnic Bodies and Identities” n. pag.). She strategically has one foot grounding her in traditional Maya dress and the other in Western fashions and cultural forms. In the twenty-first century, it is impossible to divorce the two. As with the Tzotzil Maya poets in Chapter 3 who incorporate Coca-Cola into their poetic incantations, more and more indigenous people innovate their traditions by appropriating non-indigenous cultures, as Beverley has signaled in the epigraph to this chapter.

This constant negotiation is not exclusive to famous marginalized voices like Rigoberta Menchú Tum—in many cases writers’ or artists’ potential audiences also confront this cultural hybridity. While completing my fieldwork I was acutely aware of my position as a cultural and literary critic when investigating the murals in San Juan Comalapa I discussed in Chapter 1. During my time in Guatemala, I traveled to Tz’olo Ya’ (Sololá) in the Lake Atitlán region for market day, and while looking at some of the huipiles and other traditional Mayan clothing, a female vendor, perhaps seeing a potential sale, passed her baby to a friend so that she could help me try on the garments. As a town nestled on the highway leaving Panajachel, a predominant tourist destination with a large open-air market on the coast of the lake, many visitors opt to remain in Panajachel rather
than traveling to the surrounding *aldeas* like Tz’olo Ya’. As such, having a *gringa* in the market that day was atypical. As the Kaqchikel vendor helped me step into the *corte*, I saw an array of cell phones focused on me to take a picture. In response, I yelled, “Xaxe wo’o’ maq’uq’!” (Only five quetzals). The implication being that I would charge for the photographs they were taking, as Maya often do when tourists snap their pictures. After a few awkward moments in which my photographers looked uneasily at one another, I laughed and said that it was, “xaxe jun q’olonïk,” or just a joke. At that point, everyone laughed, albeit uneasily, perhaps because of the recognition that I had appropriated one of their tricks, and I did so in the indigenous language. Here, instead of me, the North American visitor, taking a picture of Maya in their colorful *traje*, the lens was reversed. Although the power dynamics didn’t change, as I was still the *gringa* with money, this exchange speaks to the multidirectionality of cultural appropriations and strategic positionings of identities. Indigenous—and non-indigenous—subjects alike negotiate cultural norms that do not necessarily pertain to their traditions.

Throughout this project, I have explored some of the ways in which marginalized subjects in contemporary Latin America have presented their respective identities to their potential audiences through a variety of print and digital media, both within their countries of origin and abroad. From different situations, marginalized people often strategically collaborate with those who do not originally pertain to their communities to potentially disseminate their ideas, as in the case with Elizabeth Burgos and the authoring of Rigoberta Menchú Tum’s *testimonio*. Aside from this classic case, we have seen mediation in a variety of forms. In print media there are issues of transcription and translation, the presentation, and authorship royalties. With digital media and the
interactive nature of online interfaces like YouTube, Vimeo, and Facebook, people make their own sites and profiles but their audiences can also participate in the creation of these video files and materials by recording live performances and uploading files to the Internet, creating titles, tags, and descriptions to accompany them online. Audiences may also shape these performances by commenting on them, or in the case of Facebook, by “liking” them. As this study has illustrated, audiences may also directly influence and shape cultural products featuring marginalized voices and their representations of their identities. Since audience members do not always pertain to the distinct marginalized communities, such texts are then caught in a cultural exchange and hybridity. Consequently, these representations are no longer “pure” depictions of marginalized identities, but rather have become something new. There are residues of the original marginalized cultures, but the result is different—a negotiation of traditional cultural forms in relation to others from across the globe. A key part of this dynamic is the agency and power of all parties involved. As with the Kaqchikel and K’iche’ songs and poetry on YouTube, Taller Leñateros’s Facebook account, and the Landless digital archive, in some cases the original marginalized performers have lost some control over their texts, which have to a certain degree been “colonized.” In others, however, marginalized people have strategically allied with non-indigenous artists and authors, all the while maintaining much of the power in this cultural exchange, as we saw with the Tzotzil poets in Taller Leñateros.

While the focus of this project has been the effects of mediation on some marginalized groups in the contexts of the Guatemalan civil war and the more contemporary Pan-Mayan Movement, the Zapatista Movement in Mexico, and the
Landless Movement in Brazil, I propose these case studies as a point of departure. I titled the introduction to this dissertation, “Going Beyond Rigoberta Menchú Tum,” yet we must go even further. Some possible avenues to broaden the inquiries in this project are to turn our attention to the Andean region and examine countries like Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia, all of which have a significant indigenous demographic. In this region, indigenous leaders and activists have taken to the public stage in domestic and international forums. For example, Evo Morales, who was born to an Aymara family of humble socio-economic means, now occupies a position of political authority in his native Bolivia. As the first indigenous president in all of Latin America, he has largely overcome some of the marginalization that he experienced as a child, while simultaneously advocating for rights for Bolivia’s indigenous citizens. Given this distinct context in which marginalized people are no longer fighting for representation in national assemblies, but rather are the political leaders of the nation itself, how does this impact the way in which indigenous people in Bolivia represent their respective identities? Since they are working within the framework of a country with a democratically elected indigenous leader, how does this affect their needs or motivations to strategically collaborate with agents outside of their communities?

The example of Evo Morales also speaks more generally to the contemporary engagement of indigenous communities in Latin America to protect their natural resources from Neoliberal policies. Morales and his administration have debated how most efficiently to use the country’s natural lithium resources in the Salar de Uyuni, a mineral that could potentially place Bolivia in the forefront of international affairs concerning energy. Because lithium is a key component to produce rechargeable batteries
for small, hand-held electronic devices as well as electric cars, international sights may very well turn their attention from the oil reserves in the Middle East to Bolivia’s mineral wealth.

This phenomenon is not exclusive to Bolivia; there are examples of indigenous actors throughout Latin America, mobilizing to take a stand against imperial interests in their natural resources. For example, in recent years in countries such as Chile, Guatemala, and Brazil, indigenous activists have fought against the construction of hydroelectric dams. Similar to the Tzotzil Maya in Chapter 3, they are taking a stance to protect the environment. In South-Central Chile, Mapuche activists have united to protect their lands—and indigenous traditions connected with the Earth—against the dam in the Río-Río river. Mapuche leaders such as Nicolasa Quintremán Calpán have publicly denounced this project. For similar reasons, in the Department of Huehuetenango in Guatemala, Maya have also denounced hydroelectric projects in the region. In the

——

174 As journalist Sara Cuestas Ramírez has explained, Quintremán Calpán and her allies have argued that the “instalación [de la represa] afectaría el equilibrio ecológico de la zona y generaría un efecto social severo que significaba el desplazamiento forzado de las comunidades [mapuches] para poder construir la represa” (n. pag.).

175 According to Guatemalan journalist Camilo Salvadó, they do not oppose the overall rhetoric of “development,” but rather a lo que estas personas se oponen, es a casos concretos con nombres exactos: Hidro Santa Rita, Hidro Santa Cruz, Hidro Xacbal. A lo que se oponen es a la forma abusiva y prepotente en que los sucesivos gobiernos y las empresas privadas, armados de razón (“es energía verde”, “es buena
context of Brazil, much of the world has learned of the effects of the construction of the Belo Monte dam for indigenous communities along the Xingu River. In 2011 on social media forums, an image of Chief Raoni crying went viral, which many audiences believed was his reaction to the Brazilian government’s policies concerning this project (Salazar-Lopez). Considering these more contemporary forms of indigenous social mobilization and commitment to the Earth provokes questions of how cultural and literary production represents and dialogues with these issues. Moreover, given the high stakes in these conflicts in terms of international economic development policies, do

---

176 Blogger Leila Salazar-Lopez, an activist who supports Brazilian indigenous efforts, however, explains that Chief Raoni’s tears were not in response to the approval of the dam. She clears up this misunderstanding:

While many people have seen the photo of Chief Raoni crying, he was not crying in reaction to the Brazilian government’s announcement of the license to build the Belo Monte Dam. He was crying because he had reunited with a family member, a common practice among the Kayapo. “I was not crying because of the government’s decision,’ confirmed Raoni. ‘I’m going to keep fighting. I am alive and strong, and as long as I’m alive I will continue to fight for my people!” (n. pag.)
these indigenous speakers strategically collaborate with mediating agent(s), or is there a
power struggle—and perhaps neocoloniality—involved in such alliances?

To further investigate how marginalized groups represent themselves, we must also compare them to how such subjects represent themselves within their respective communities across Latin America. To do so, it is necessary to incorporate what Dennis Tedlock describes as an “ethnopaleographic” approach. According to Tedlock, print resources may fail to provide sufficient information for research. In order to overcome these limitations, it is necessary to consult with “those who continue to speak the language” (“Hearing a Voice” 143) and pertain to the cultural milieu of the oral traditions under investigation. While this dissertation has addressed both print and recorded texts, via the Internet, poetry collections, prose testimonios, and the murals in San Juan Comalapa, the present analysis is a point of departure for future research. Following Tedlock’s observations, it is critical to continue to establish contact with native speakers to find sources of oral culture beyond what print and digital media offer.

By analyzing the ways in which speakers currently identify in their communities, we will have a basis of comparison for the mediated texts and performances available via the poetry collections, prose, pictographic representations, and digital files and recordings discussed in this dissertation. On the one hand, we will see how “authentic” these recorded versions are relative to the performances that orally circulate within the communities. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the term “authentic” refers to that which is “reliable, trustworthy, of established credit” (“Authentic,” def. 3b). Understanding “authentic” in this way, we may see if these mediated performances are accurate representations of the representations in circulation at the communal level. On
the other hand, there may be other songs, poems, and texts available in the communities that have not been made accessible to foreign audiences through these different media. If this is the case, why have certain texts and performances been prioritized? Are there performances that speakers are willing to share with outside audiences whereas others must remain “secrets,” as Doris Sommer observed in the case of Rigoberta Menchú Tum? Investigating marginalized people’s self-representations within their respective communities will provide us with an understanding of the processes of negotiation that comprise mediation, many of which take place locally before such texts and performances are available to a larger public. Moreover, we may see how speakers who have not previously been listened to present their identities when there may not be as many foreigners present in their audiences. Comparing and contrasting these self-representations will demonstrate to what extent marginalized subjects alter how they represent themselves depending on the cultural identities of their audiences.

In many Mayan communities in Guatemala, for example, oral traditions have been dying out due to the linguistic influence of Spanish as well as the traumatic consequences of “ri violencia” during the civil war of the 1970s and 1980s. That the artists who created the murals in San Juan Comalapa needed to consult the elders in their community to learn about the traditional oral discourses concerning the town’s history speaks to the generational divide among Kaqchikel speakers. Generally, the way in which members of communities identify with their respective oral traditions speaks to how and/or if they keep these oral discourses alive. By returning to these marginalized communities in Guatemala, Mexico, and Brazil, we will see how performances have circulated at the local level. In this context, we might ask how performances within the
community may be at odds with renegotiated, recorded versions of such texts that have been released as a result of collaborations with local people and mediating agents? How do mediators influence these discourses, and what is altered in the recorded versions? Do the versions available via poetry, prose, digital media, and pictographic representations that we have seen differ from the performances within the various communities simply because they are directed to different audiences?

However, Doris Sommer reminds us to proceed with caution (Proceed with Caution, ix-xv). For Sommer, readers—and audiences—must learn to listen when engaging with “minority” texts like Latin American testimonios. Rather than expecting to learn about and own the Other, our goals should be to understand what we are unable to know (23-25). We should recognize that some of these cultural boundaries cannot be crossed. As Arturo Arias has noted, we need to “take their word”—accept what marginalized speakers say at face value and allow “these ‘othered’ subjects to be the rightful owners of their subjectivity” (Taking Their Word xv), instead of trying to dominate, or colonize, the Other. In short, scholars must respect these differences and understand that alterity affects their interpretations.

As Jerome McGann has warned, researchers must be careful because their interpretations also influence their objects of study. For McGann, when scholars create knowledge, this process constitutes a performative level of interpretation, so the interpreter must be aware of his/her “own critical purposes,” which “involves a critical reflection on acts of interpretation that remain in process of development” (142). As academic interpreters, we must be cognizant of our influence and critical agendas, recognizing that we mark the objects that we study. Academics are also often outsiders to
these communities and, as such, we seldom have complete access to marginalized discourses. For example, it may seem ridiculous to Maya scholars that YouTube viewers have described Ak’abal’s videos in terms of authenticity and exoticism and have connected them to representations of shamanism or rituals, or that journalist Dinitia Smith has described Kajval’s eyes on the cover of *Conjuros y ebriedades* as “eerie.” However, even experts have preconceived expectations that shape how they understand these texts. Informed, well-intentioned research can also have unintended consequences.

As a literary/cultural critic, there are advantages and limitations to my position. When I visited various communities in Kaqchikel-speaking regions in Guatemala I was an “outsider,” much like an anthropologist when conducting fieldwork. Because I was actively studying Kaqchikel and had a linguistic proficiency of a non-native speaker, many of the people in San Juan Comalapa, including Ixkaj, made extra efforts to explain the linguistic and cultural meaning behind the images and poems in the murals. I spent time in Kaqchikel-speaking communities, but I did not “experience” these cultural products as a native-speaker would. That said, if I had not physically gone to Comalapa, I would have been unable to study the murals in this project because they have not been photographically documented in their entirety by any other academics to date. Without an interdisciplinary approach, some of my research would have been impossible. For many reasons, then, I needed to go to Guatemala, yet my work on the ground looked different from what an anthropologist would do. As a cultural and literary scholar, I am primarily concerned with representation. I did not collect ethnographic data via interviews about residents of Comalapa’s opinions about the murals, as Carey and Little did. Rather, the collective authorship and depictions of the civil war called my attention. I listened to
Ixkaj as she explained the historical significance informing each of the murals’ panels, but my interest centered on how Maya have represented themselves and how they have worked through pictographic representation and poetry, incorporating poetic structures and references from the *Popol Wuj*.

The institutional effects of the marginalization of indigenous cultural and literary production can be seen in the organization of academic departments and their curriculum. Historically, indigenous literature and cultural production has been relegated to anthropology or ethnographic accounts. That is, they have been read/heard primarily in terms of their Otherness. By this, I do not mean that anthropologists have Othered their objects of study, nor do I wish to imply that the discipline as a whole is about “Othering.” Rather, what I am calling attention to is the traditional view that studies of indigenous literatures and cultures should be housed in anthropology departments, rather than “literature” departments where Latin American literary and cultural critics are primarily institutionally affiliated. In traditional literature departments, survey courses typically incorporate indigenous texts prior to the arrival of Europeans to the Americas. As Rolena Adorno has explained, in Latin American literary anthologies it is commonplace to see texts such as the *Popol Wuj* included in the beginning pages as a Pre-Colombian introduction to the literary traditions following the Encounter (*Guaman Poma* 3), which as Paul M. Worley has observed, are often written in the national language: Spanish (2).

Examining indigenous texts as a precursor to Latin American literary traditions has become commonplace; however, discussions of contemporary indigenous literature has raised eyebrows. In some departments the reconsideration of what constitutes Literature has been met with resistance. By presenting my analysis of representations of
marginalized people, principally indigenous, in a dissertation as part of a department of Spanish and Portuguese, like Adorno and Worley, I also advocate for a critical appreciation of these songs, poetry, *testimonios*, murals, and digital media that is not based on understanding them as inherently “different.”

More generally within the canon, Central American literary and cultural production has also been marginalized. It is perhaps for this reason that Arturo Arias has called attention to a Southern Cone professor at a Southern California university’s ironic question, “But is there even such a thing as Central American literature?” As Arias notes, this question may seem laughable because many Latin Americanists recognize the quality authors and artists from the region, such as Rubén Darío, Miguel Ángel Asturias, Roque Dalton, Claribel Alegría, and Ernesto Cardenal (*Taking Their Word* ix). More recently, authors such as Horacio Castellanos Moya have taken the Central American limelight with well-known works such as *El asco* (1997). Even though it may be that not all Latin Americanists are familiar with the Salvadorean author, for those who have become Central Americanists, Castellanos Moya has become a common name, almost always making an appearance in academic conference panels focusing on Central American literary and cultural studies. However, as Arias has observed, one of the particularities of Central America is the marked indigenous populations, predominately Maya, of the isthmus, and as such, “the bulk of Central American literature cannot escape the representational problems of indigenous subjectivity” (*Taking Their Word* ix). In addition to Menchú Tum, Maya authors such as Victor Montejo and Humberto Ak’abal have also become widely recognized. As I have demonstrated through the examples of poetry, murals, *testimonios*, and songs, there is still more to Central America. Although each of
the artists and authors I have examined are uniquely marginalized vis-à-vis Central American literary and cultural studies, we must continue to push for a consideration of a plurality of voices for a comprehensive understanding of the region’s cultural production.

There is still more to be done. Consequently, I would like to conclude by referring to Dell Hymes, when he used the expression “Now I Know Only So Far” as the title of a collection of essays on ethnopoetics. When justifying his choice for the book’s title, Hymes explains

Let me say again how much there is still to be learned. It is for that reason that I adopt as the title a line with which Victoria Howard sometimes ended what she told in Clackamas: Now I know only this far. I hope to have the privilege of continuing to learn more and of contributing more to this part of the interpretation of tongues. And that many others will join in this work. (xi)

While one of the merits of this project has been to expand understandings of mediation and its various manifestations, to listen to marginalized speakers in Guatemala, Mexico, and Brazil, and to see what they perhaps share and how they are different. Like Hymes, I too know only this far. There is still much to be done to continue to push these critical limits at the beginning of the twenty-first century, both beyond recognizing boundaries—and crossing some of these—and beyond means of expression such as the written page to further engage debates surrounding subaltern studies, orality, and the digital humanities.
Works Cited


Arias, Arturo. “Constructing Ethnic Bodies and Identities in Miguel Ángel Asturias and Rigoberta Menchú.” Postmodern Culture: An Electronic Journal of
“Después de la guerra centroamericana: identidades simuleadas, culturas reciclables.”


Bueno, Raúl. “Heterogeneidad migrante y crisis del modelo radial de cultura.”

*Indigenismo hacia el fin del milenio: Homenaje a Antonio Cornejo Polar.*

Print.


“*Caracol de Cinco Colores; Poesía de H. Ak’abal*”. *Arte indígena: Literatura y pintura.*


<http://www.cincopuntos.com/about.sstg>.


Gabriel Xiquín, Calixta. *Tejiendo los sucesos en el tiempo / Weaving Events in Time.*

Trans. Susan G. Rascón and Suzanne M. Strugalla. Rancho Palos Verdes, CA:


Ixkaj. Personal Interview. 3 July 2010.


Mançano Fernandes, Bernardo. “The MST, its Genealogy and the Struggle for Agrarian Reform in Brazil.” *As Imagens e as Vozes da Despossessão*. Web. 19 August


<http://mst.org.br/>.


<http://www.quintly.com/blog/2013/05/facebook-country-statistics-may-2013/>.


Pinto, Ze. *Uma Prosa sobre Nós.* Sonar Music, 2000. CD.


---. “Reading Subalterns Across Texts, Disciplines, and Theories: From Representation to Recognition.” Rodríguez 1-32.


“Soirée poésies nomades avec Humberto Ak’abal. 14 oct. 2010 à L’espal—Le Mans”.


<Ttps://www.facebook.com/taller.lenateros?fref=ts>


---. *Um Canto Pela Paz*. MST-Pará, n.d. CD.

---. *Plantando Cirandas*. MST, 2002. CD.

---. *1º Festival Nacional da Reforma Agrária: Canções Que Abraçam Sonhos*. Studio Master, 1999. CD.


---. “(Re)searching the (Sem) Terra: The Archive of the Poetry and Music of the MST.” Vieira and McGuirk xxv-xxvii. Print.


