

Telling and Being Told: Storytelling and Cultural Control in Contemporary Mexican and
Yukatek Maya Texts

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Abstract
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All across Latin America, from the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, Mexico to the presidential election of Evo Morales, an Aymara, in Bolivia, indigenous peoples are successfully rearticulating their roles as political actors within their respective states. The reconfiguration of these relationships involves massive social, cultural, and historical projects as well, as indigenous peoples seek to contest stereotypes that have been integral to the region's popular imagination for over five hundred years. This dissertation examines the image of the indigenous storyteller in contemporary Mexican and Yukatek Maya literatures. Within such a context, Yukatek Maya literature means and must be understood to encompass written and oral texts.

The opening chapter provides a theoretical framework for my discussion of the storyteller in Mexican and Yukatek Maya literatures. Chapter 2 undertakes a comparison between the Mexican feminist Laura Esquivel's novel Malinche and the Yukatek Maya Armando Dzul Ek's play "How it happened that the people of Maní paid for their sins in the year 1562" to see how each writer employs the figure of the storyteller to rewrite histories of Mexico's conquest. The following chapter addresses the storyteller's function in folklore, juxtaposing a number of works in order to show the full scope of oral literary traditions. The fourth chapter examines how traditional storytelling structures the narration of contemporary events as seen in two stories I recorded in Santa Elena, Yucatán, in 2007, as told by the

Yukatek Maya Mariano Bonilla Caamal. In the fifth chapter I analyze the use of the figure of the storyteller in one text each by female Yukatek Maya authors, María Luisa Góngora Pacheco and Ana Patricia Martínez Huchim, and show how these authors use this traditional figure to construct a Maya modernity. The appendices include transcriptions of oral stories and interview excerpts. The Maya have used oral literature and Maya language to maintain their culture since the conquest, and this dissertation focuses on the figure of the storyteller to demonstrate the complex relationship between oral and written texts in 21st-century Yukatek Maya literature.

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Chapter 1 Who Tells What to Whom and How: The Storyteller, Representation, and Agency within National Imaginaries

The truth about stories is that's all we are.
Thomas King, The Truth About Stories

There are few phrases more apt to end polite conversations in non-academic circles than the words, “I am studying for my doctorate in...” The claim to esoteric knowledge is powerful claim that implies unassailable expertise in an area about which most people know little if anything. Surprisingly, Maya cultures and indigenous cultures in general do not fall into this category. Despite the air of mystery with which outsiders approach Maya culture (a Google search for “Maya mystery” produces over eleven million results), popular and scholarly literatures have turned Maya culture into one of Native America’s most studied, most well-known entities even as these same literatures re-inscribe the very mysteries they supposedly unravel. As someone who studies Maya languages as cultures, I have been asked, in no certain order, questions such as whether or not I knew that the Maya were descended from aliens, why I studied dead Native American languages, why the Maya disappeared, and whether or not I knew that the Maya calendar prophecies the end of the world. Many of the Maya I know are amused by such questions, but these innocent, seemingly benign questions gloss over the fact that the popular discourse of the Maya, on a global scale, resides beyond the control of the Maya themselves. From movies like Apocalypto and The Ruins to books like the academic classic Maya Cosmos and the fictional La cruz maya, the story of the Maya is always already being told regardless of the participation of actual Maya people. There is or should be, then, a sense of accountability in the telling of these stories as such retelling

reproduces constellations of power that inscribe and reinscribe Maya culture in non-Maya settings. As damaging, if not even more so, is that some of these retellings, the most famous being Mel Gibson's Apocalypto, re-present a deformed picture of Maya culture both popularly and to Mayas themselves, telling the world about the Maya and telling the Maya who they "are."

This dissertation is about the stories for which, consciously or unconsciously, willingly or unwillingly, I have taken a degree of responsibility during my graduate work on Yucatek Maya and Mexican literatures. As I will develop throughout this introductory chapter, storytelling and the retelling of stories are ethical positions and ethical choices. One chooses to tell a story or not to tell it. One also chooses how to tell it. I am responsible for these stories insofar as I re-tell them and re-present them, for in doing so I place myself in the position of cultural broker between you, the reader, and the storytellers who first introduced me to the stories I discuss in the dissertation. For a variety of reasons many of these storytellers cannot reach, or I would like to think have not yet been afforded the opportunity to reach, the global, globalized audience of a Mel Gibson or a Linda Schele, and so these representations of their stories in the dissertation are an important venue for making them available. The issues surrounding the "speaking subaltern" will be dealt with later in this chapter, but for the moment it suffices to say that the re-telling of these stories constitutes a case in which, to borrow Gayatri Spivak's phrase, the subaltern "*has* spoken in some way" (309; *itals* in original). If I have done these stories justice, by reading these stories "spoken in some way" you, reader, are similarly responsible for their content. First Nations author Thomas King describes the reader's responsibility in such cases by explaining that each story he tells "[is] yours. Do with it what you will. Tell it to friends. Turn it into a television

movie. Forget it. But don't say in the years to come that you would have lived your life differently if you had only heard this story. You've heard it now" (29). The reader thus has an ethical responsibility to the story and to its culture. Having read these stories, you will do what you will. The next time someone making polite conversation mentions the violent Maya of Apocalypto or how the Maya came from spaceships, your decision to tell or not to tell, and how to tell, will be loaded with material and ethical consequences. Whatever your decision, you know otherwise, and the responsibility for these stories is yours.

Contemporary Maya Literatures

Given that literary criticism, for many academics, entails the explication of what are traditionally construed as literary texts, by which is meant texts written in national languages, the majority of indigenous literatures in the Americas remains largely unexamined by literary critics. By this I do not mean that indigenous literatures have been ignored by the academy but rather that these literatures, for a variety of reasons, have long been studied within the disciplines of Anthropology, Linguistics, Archeology, Art History, and History rather than Literature. Again, both in terms of how Literature Departments constitute their object of study and in terms of how these departments are housed within academic institutions, they tend to focus on written texts that are printed in national languages. The reasons for this state of affairs are as financial as they are ideological, but the consequences for indigenous literatures are clear insofar as these literatures are seldom composed in national languages and even more seldom widely available in printed form. As such, many of the most important works on indigenous literatures come out of disciplines other than literature. For example, one of the most indispensable works on Aztec and Mixtec codices, Stories in Red and Black (2000), was written by Elizabeth Hill Boone, an art historian. The equally important Maya

Cosmos (1993), a work of archaeoastronomy that is, in many ways, similar to what Harold Bloom might call a “strong rewriting” of the Popol Wuj, was authored by David Freidel, Linda Schele, and Joy Parker, the former of whom are an archaeologist and an art historian, respectively. Finally, I feel I should also mention Maya Conquistador (1998), a work by the historian Matthew Restall that examines Yucatek Maya accounts of the Conquest.

I do not deny the importance of works on indigenous literatures that have been produced by literary scholars. I argue, however, that these works are better thought of as comprising a subfield within Latin American literary studies as opposed to being central to the field itself. In other words, most anthologies of Latin American literature and works of Latin American literary criticism do not cite and/or do not include indigenous literatures within their field of study. This form of silencing makes the extant works on indigenous literatures all the more important, and here I will limit myself to examples that focus on indigenous literatures of Mesoamerica which are widely available in Latin America and/or the United States in the twenty-first century. We can begin with the works of Ángel María Garibay Kintana, whose two volume Historia de la literatura náhuatl (History of Náhuatl Literature) first appeared in 1953 and 1954. Garibay’s one-time student, Miguel León-Portilla, has published many anthologies over his long and distinguished career, among them Visión de los vencidos (The Broken Spears) (1959) and El reverso de la conquista (The Other Side of the Conquest) (1964), both of which focus on texts from the colonial period. A more recent effort of León-Portilla’s published in collaboration with the American Earl Shorris, In the Language of Kings (2001), provides a broader overview of these literatures as its texts span the pre-Colombian era to the present.

With regard to Maya literatures, the specific focus of this dissertation, Mercedes de la Garza has published an important collection of Maya texts, Literatura maya (Maya Literature) (1980). She has also published one of the few editions of the Chilam Balam of Chumayel, a Yucatek Maya text with pre-Hispanic and colonial origins, that includes the illustrations found in the original manuscript. Another very important edition of the Chilam Balam texts that assembles all the extant copies under the title El libro de los libros de Chilam Balam (The Book of the Books of Chilam Balam) (1948) was published by Alfredo Barrera Vázquez and Silvia Rendón. Carlos Montemayor has played a pivotal role in the fomentation of contemporary written Maya literary production as the editor of the series Letras mayas contemporáneas (Contemporary Maya Letters), as well as Words of the True Peoples (2005), an anthology of indigenous writing that he co-edited with Donald Frischman. In addition, he has also edited other works and published two works of literary criticism on indigenous literatures, Arte y plegaria en las lenguas indígenas de México (Art and Prayer in the Indigenous Languages of Mexico) (1999) and Arte y trama en el cuento indígena (The Art and Plot of the Indigenous Story) (1998).

Turning to criticism, one immediately thinks of Martín Lienhard's expansive study La voz y su huella (The Voice and Its Traces) (1991), a work that takes up the monumental task of treating Latin American indigenous and non-indigenous texts side by side and spans the colonial era to the present. Gordon Brotherston's Book of the Fourth World (1992) similarly examines indigenous texts as works of literature while focusing more so on the colonial period. In her book Rain Forrest Literatures (2004) Lucia Sá demonstrates the intertextuality between indigenous and non-indigenous texts through her probing examination of both indigenous and non-indigenous literary traditions. There is also the work by Amos Segala,

Literatura nahuátl: Fuentes, Identidades, Representaciones (Nahuátl Literature: Sources, Identities, Representations) (1989), an important piece of literary criticism on Nahuátl literary production. Finally, Emilio del Valle Escalante's Nacionalismos mayas y desafíos postcoloniales en Guatemala (Maya Nationalisms and Postcolonial Challenges in Guatemala) (2008) includes several important chapters dealing with the Pan-Maya movement and the literary works of Maya writers from Guatemala.

As invaluable as anthologies are, however, anthologies of indigenous literature do not so much incorporate these literatures into the canon of Latin American literature as they begin comprising a separate canon all together. The critical works I mentioned above are thus all the more important as each seeks, in its own way, to break with a traditional model of canon formation that marginalizes indigenous literatures. More often than not, the effect of this separate “canonicity” permits these literatures to go unstudied. Railing against this form of literary practice in the United States, the Native American scholar and critic Craig S. Womack reminds us that, “Tribal literatures are the *tree*, the oldest literatures in the Americas, the most American of American literatures. We *are* the canon [...] Without Native American literature, *there is no American canon*” (6-7; *itals in original*). Moreover, even while some indigenous works, such as the Popol Wuj (c. 1700), Guaman Poma's Nueva crónica y buen gobierno (1615), and Nobel laureate Rigoberta Menchú's Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia (I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala) (1985), have been lauded for their literary merits, academic interest in the literary production of indigenous peoples has tended to focus on the historical, anthropological, or ethnographic information found in these texts. Moreover, in limiting the field of literary study to written texts, critics often ignore Latin America's history of conquest

and colonization, a time during which Europeans consciously set out to destroy indigenous writing systems. As noted by Walter Mignolo, in this way, “Literacy became, in the second part of the sixteenth century, just one more component in the total process of Westernizing the Amerindians in the Jesuit missions [in the New World] (55). Further down I will address more specifically the ideological implications of a definition of “literacy” that seeks the imposition of Western norms as universal models. For the moment it suffices to say that this pattern of destruction made indigenous oral literary production a necessary strategy in the continuity of indigenous cultures. Rather than being a mark of backwardness or underdevelopment oral literature is, in this sense, an uncomfortable reminder of the vitality of indigenous cultures and ongoing of indigenous resistance to non-indigenous hegemony.

In this dissertation I focus on the indigenous oral storyteller as a recurring presence in Mexican and Yukatek Maya oral and written texts. By analyzing the image of the indigenous storyteller as a signifier for embodied indigenous knowledge and indigenous agency, this dissertation’s primary contribution to scholarship lies in highlighting how the storyteller as portrayed in oral and written Yukatek Maya literary texts plays a vital role in these text’s reimaginings of Maya culture and this culture’s relationship with dominant Mexican and global cultures. Through my treatment of how Yukatek Maya authors and storytellers situate the indigenous storyteller within national and international imaginaries, I show how storytellers and the act of storytelling represent important aspects of the struggle for indigenous identity and agency within the nation-state itself. Telling a story, whether the text is written, oral, or disseminated via mass media, also entails a “being told.” The emergence of a contemporary written Maya literature demonstrates that the Maya, instead of yielding the stereotypes perpetuated in hegemonic imaginaries, are now asserting their own identities in

contexts that have, historically, excluded their participation. As they have been told for over five hundred years, both in the sense that others have told their stories and have told them who they are, I will show how the Maya are those who are now doing the telling.

Before further delving into the impact of contemporary Maya literature, we must first ask the question: who are the “Maya” we are speaking of when we use the term “Maya literature”? This dissertation focuses specifically on Yucatek Maya literature, although in this introduction I will situate this literature within the broader context of Maya literatures in Mexico, Guatemala, and elsewhere, as well as indigenous literary movements throughout the Americas and the rest of the postcolonial world. As noted by Peter Hervik, Matthew Restall, and Quetzil Castañeda, the meaning usually attributed to the term “Maya” glosses over complex, historically determined interactions in at least two ways: internally among a diverse grouping of indigenous peoples and externally between this group and dominant Hispanic culture (Hervik 23-53; Restall, “Etnogénesis Maya”; Castañeda). Throughout Yucatán, for example, brochures and tour guides apply the term “Maya” to a group of people that, in most cases, uses “Maya” to refer to their ancestors and mestizo to refer to themselves (Hervik xix). In a very real sense, while one cannot deny the existence of a Pan-Maya identity, one must also recognize the inherent plurality manifested by a group to which Western academics casually apply the homogenizing term “Maya.” Anthropological and ethnographic studies such as those by Hervik, Walter E. Little, and Ellen R. Kintz attempt to overcome this problem by focusing on the experiences of a single town, or localized group(s). For the purposes of this dissertation, “Maya” will refer to those who define themselves as having descended from the ancient Maya and see themselves as being involved in the daily reproduction of Maya culture in whichever diverse forms this production may be manifest. I

believe that such a definition acknowledges multiple, even contradictory (for Western academics) local manifestations of Mayaness while accommodating all of them under the practice of Maya identity.

If we have determined what we mean by “Maya,” what, then, do I mean by “literature”? Given that part of this dissertation’s underlying argument is that “literature” must be understood as something more than written expression, we must first ask how the term has been defined by others, especially in relation to indigenous literature. As will be seen, the Western definition of literature tends to place orality in opposition to literacy. Consequently, this definition ends up reinforcing orality’s status as being fundamentally different from, if not also secondary to, literacy. This statement adequately sums up Walter J. Ong’s position when, in Orality and Literacy, he declares, “orality needs to produce and is destined to produce writing. Literacy [...] is absolutely necessary for the development not only of science but also of history, philosophy, explicative understanding of literature and of any art, and indeed for the explication of language (including oral speech) itself” (14-15). Moreover, it should be pointed out that in Ong’s definition of literacy script, “does not consist of mere pictures, of representations of things, but is a representation of an *utterance*, of words that someone says or is imagined to say” (83; italics in original). The example par excellence of a script is thus the phonetic alphabet, which Ong suggests has a singular Semitic origin, tends to be democratizing insofar as it is easy to use and, according to one study he cites, “favors left-hemisphere activity in the brain, and thus on neurophysiological grounds fosters abstract, analytic thought” (Ong 89). In Ong we therefore find that orality not only precedes literacy, but that literacy is also orality’s evolutionary destiny. Orality in and of itself is a state of underdevelopment. Although his definition of literacy encompasses a broad

variety of sign systems, alphabetic script represents the highest form of writing which, if we take Ong's reference to the study on brain activity seriously, implies that alphabetic literacy also produces the highest forms of literacy and knowledge.

Under the guise of science, Ong's conclusions reproduce one of the fundamental binaries through which disciplines in the humanities orders their objects of study: orality/literacy. Even one of the twentieth century's most radical thinkers, Michele Foucault, is not immune from making orality/literacy the fundamental precondition for the production of history itself (The Order of Things, 112). However, using writing, and specifically alphabetic writing, as a criteria for the development of "history, philosophy, explicative understanding of literature and of any art, and indeed for the explication of language (including oral speech) itself" imposes a Western norm as a universal paradigm in such a way that non-Western forms of history, philosophy, etc., become forms of non-knowledge or, at least, precursors to more developed Western ways of knowing. In many ways the distinction between orality/literacy is one of the most common sense distinctions of the contemporary world and yet, by recognizing the contingent nature of its construction and its very real material consequences, we find that it arises out of the Eurocentric worldview I have just described. In the words of Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, we must endeavor "[to] expose the unthinking, taken-for-granted quality of Eurocentrism as an unacknowledged current, a kind of bad epistemic habit, both in mass-mediated culture and in intellectual reflection on that culture" (10).

To demonstrate the prominence this binary continues to enjoy in both popular and academic circles, I will briefly provide two examples. First, the Fire Point Trail Guide (2006) to the Effigy Mounds National Monument in Harpers Ferry, Iowa claims, "The word

prehistoric refers to a time before the invention of writing in which history could be recorded. Anything prior to 1600 AD is generally considered prehistoric in this area [northeastern Iowa]. Prehistoric North America is not the same as prehistoric in Europe or Asia where written records have been kept for centuries (3; bold in original).” To paraphrase the title of Eric Wolf’s book, the trail guide stages Effigy Mounds National Monument as an encounter between Europe and the people without history. According to the trail guide, given that people in Europe and even Asia were keeping and had been keeping written records for hundreds of years, Native Americans were contemporaries with Europeans and Asians spatially but not temporally. That is, the trail guide asserts that Europeans and Asians were living in and, most importantly, recording history, while Native Americans inhabited an ahistorical prehistory. Discursively, the trail guide denies Native American what Johannes Fabian terms “coevalness” in time. He observes that “Neither Space nor Time are natural resources. They are ideologically constructed instruments of power” (Fabian 144). This conceptual framework tying the production of history to alphabetic literacy, however, is not a mere fantasy of the National Park Service. In many academic circles, this ordering of things remains unchanged if not also unchallenged. This brings me to my second example. The Wahpetunwan Dakota Angela Cavendar Wilson recounts how, at a conference in the mid-1990s, one of the leading scholars in the field of Native American Studies dismissed the use of “non-verifiable” oral accounts in the writing of Native histories (77-79). Such privileging of the written over the oral perpetuates the supremacy of Western academic knowledge in failing to recognize the legitimacy of oral tribal histories and means the dismissal, in Cavender Wilson’s words, of “millions of Indigenous oral historical accounts because they might not be verifiable using standard historical methods” (78). Once again, Western

discourse configures indigenes as “peoples without history” by using the binary orality/literacy in order to dismiss the very possibility of indigenous histories.

Here, then, we are confronted by the fundamental consequence of the orality/literacy binary: it authorizes the active, literate West’s articulation of the passive, illiterate non-Western Other. As the object of literate Western knowledge, this non-Western Other is not self-sufficiently oral, but rather pre-literate, illiterate, or non-literate, “destined to produce writing.” In his explication of Euripides’s The Bacchae, Edward Said frames the relationship between Europe and Asia in the play as one in which “Europe articulates the Orient; this articulation is the prerogative, not of a puppet master, but of a *genuine creator*, whose life-giving power represents, animates, constitutes an otherwise silent and dangerous space beyond familiar boundaries” (57; my itals). Similarly, we can say that literacy is the “genuine creator” of orality insofar as hegemonic literate cultures assume the right and obligation to represent subaltern oral cultures. As Said observes, these representations and discursive formations are not mere manipulations but original creations that render “an otherwise silent and dangerous space” known according to norms established by, within, and for hegemonic cultures. Underscoring the unidirectional flow of this discourse, Said later observes that “None of the Orientalists I write about seems ever to have intended an Oriental as a reader. The discourse of Orientalism, its internal consistency, and its rigorous procedures were all designed for readers and consumers in a metropolitan West” (336).

In The Darker Side of the Renaissance (1995) Walter Mignolo explicates this connection between colonization, literacy, and orality in a Latin American context. Again, literacy here is defined by the norms of Western alphabetic script, a definition which serves to negate the existence of Other literacies and their ways of knowing. Writing on early

Spanish attempts to reduce Native American languages to Latin script, Mignolo says, “beyond the colonization of native languages or the implementation of a linguistic politics for the expansion of the language of empire, the theory of the letter also gave rise to a program for the interpretation of culture” (65). In turn, the hierarchies this program of interpretation created played a fundamental role in the development of what Ángel Rama calls “the lettered city,” the *letrados*, the colonial administration that “elaboraron mensajes, y, sobre todo, su especificidad como diseñadores de modelos culturales, destinados a la conformación de ideologías públicas” (“elaborate[d] (rather than merely transmit[ted]) ideological messages, [they were] the designers of cultural models raised up for public conformity”; 30; Chasteen 22). Rama later notes that, “La capital razón de su supremacía se debió a la paradoja de que [...] fueron los únicos ejercitantes de la letra en un medio desgarnecido de letras, los dueños de la escritura en una sociedad analfabeta” (“The principal explanation for the ascendancy of the *letrados* [...] lay in their ability to manipulate writing in largely illiterate societies”; 33; Chasteen 24). Literacy and learning to write according to Western norms are thus part and parcel of the reproduction of broader cultural hierarchies that subordinate oral, non-literate cultures to literate Western cultures. One of the more famous examples of this logic and its consequences from the colonial period is the work of the Spanish Friar Diego de Landa (1524-1579). Describing the necessity of the now-infamous *auto de fé* in Maní (1542), in his Relación de las cosas de Yucatán (*Yucatán before and after the Conquest*) (1566) Landa recounts that, although the Maya possessed “ciertos caracteres o letras con las cuales escribían en sus libros sus cosas antiguas y sus ciencias” ‘certain characters or letters, with which they wrote in their books about their antiquities and their sciences,’ he and his cohorts, “porque no tenían cosa en que no hubiese superstición y

falsedades del Demonio, se los quemamos todos” (“since they contained nothing but superstitions and falsehoods of the devil we burned them all”; 185; Gates 82). As formulated by Mignolo and practiced by Landa, Western literacy entails far more than cultural imposition or negation. It produces “a program for the interpretation of culture” which justifies the eradication of material culture (the books), which in turn seeks to erase cultural memory (in effect rendering the ancient things and sciences of such cultures oral), and authorizes literate Western culture’s representations of these Other cultures (Landa’s own account). Western representations thus intend to replace subaltern cultures in-and-of themselves.

Mignolo’s observation that the theory of the letter “gave rise to a program for the interpretation of culture,” thus allowing Western ideas of writing and literacy to play pivotal role in the colonization of the New World, can be equally applied to the neo-colonial conditions of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In fact, nationalist literacy campaigns aimed at integrating indigenous peoples into the nation via their exposure to national language and culture can be seen as continuing what Mignolo refers to as the colony’s “massive operation in which the materiality and the ideology of Amerindian semiotic interactions were replaced by the materiality and ideology of Western reading and writing cultures” (76). Rather than being scientifically constituted objects of study, national literatures effectively propagate and contribute to the standardization of national languages, defining the linguistic terrain and political possibilities of the citizen-subject. We may state that the ties between national literature and a national consciousness occur in the context of what Benedict Anderson calls the “imagined community” insofar as print-languages “created unified fields of exchange and communication [...] and print-capitalism gave a new fixity to

language, [...] creat[ing] languages-of-power of a kind different from older administrative vernaculars” (44-45). The word “imagined” here refers to the fact that “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communication” (Anderson 6). However, as Rama suggests, these “imaginings” do not exist beyond ideology. Indeed, given the ideological ramifications of this process, the word “imagined” fails to account for the material consequences of such imaginings. However, Pierre Bourdieu makes several observations with regard to languages and power that can be used here. He states that “Because any language that can command attention is an ‘authorized language,’ invested with the authority of a group, the things it designates are not simply expressed but also authorized and legitimated” (Bourdieu 170). Earlier on the same page he argues that, “in class societies, everything takes place as if the struggle for the power to impose the legitimate mode of thought and expression that is unceasingly waged in the field of the production of symbolic goods tended to conceal [...] the contribution it makes to the delimitation of the universe of discourse, that is to say, the universe of the thinkable, and hence to the delimitation of the universe of the unthinkable” (Bourdieu 170).

Drawing on Anderson and Bourdieu, we can say that the representation and ordering of subjects within the national imaginary provides the national citizen-subject with a ready made discourse of nationality. With good reason, then, national language has often been identified as one of the defining characteristics of the nation insofar as this language, in Bourdieu’s words, literally sets the limits of what is/is not thinkable for a nation’s members. Membership in this national “imagined” community takes place in and through national language, excluding a priori those who cannot express themselves in that language. The

hegemony enjoyed by a national language within a national territory is thus self-authorizing and self-legitimizing in the sense expressed by Bourdieu, and both this self-authorization and self-legitimation are reinforced by the coercive power running beneath the surface of Anderson's print-capital. In other words, while Rama is correct in his theorization of the "lettered city," he takes for granted the fact that access to that "city" is predicated, before even one's mastery of learned Spanish and its genres, upon a more generalized mastery of the language. Spanish is the limit of the national self. Indigenous languages, these being unwritten and predominantly oral, are utterly excluded from the spheres of power and indigenous people have no power to express themselves unless that expression occurs in Spanish. As such, formation as a national-citizen subject and proficiency in Spanish are synonymous, an identification which has haunted Latin America from the colonial period to the present (Aguirre Beltrán; Brice Heath), and which enables a situation through which, to paraphrase Luis Villoro, the national imaginary orders and constitutes the indigene's world from outside of that world (Grandes momentos 293).

The dynamic of power implicit in the orality/literacy binary which I have briefly outlined above thus has important consequences for the study of literature in general and the study of indigenous literatures in particular. By separating what we may call "stories" into two categories, one which is oral, and hence ephemeral, and another which is written, and hence permanent, the field of literary study has participated in the ongoing subalternization of non-hegemonic cultures. As previously stated, Western knowledge renders subaltern orality dependent on hegemonic literacy, the former being an object of the latter. For the purposes of this dissertation, we can understand "folklore" as the name usually given to orality when constituted as the object of literary study. In the Introduction to his Latin

American Fokltales (2002), John Bierhorst writes that “Latin American folklore, or more precisely *the recording of oral tradition in Latin America*, has a *five-hundred-year history* marked by *assiduous and highly skilled endeavor*” (3; my italics). My intention here is not to dismiss Bierhorst, his work, or the field of folklore, but rather to point out the process through which literacy in this case is used to subalternize non-Western cultures. Once again, here we find traces of a Eurocentric ideology that reproduces orality/literacy as a form of common sense. Folklore thus defined is not a field in itself but “the recording of oral tradition” which has a “five-hundred-year history.” Coincidentally, this “history” coincides with the time elapsed since Columbus’s arrival in 1492. The West thus brings the non-West into history and literacy articulates orality, tasks “marked by assiduous and highly skilled endeavor” on the part of hegemonic culture. As we have already seen, within this paradigm orality needs literacy to be made known, and the only way it can be known is as folklore.

As such, I draw a distinction between folklore and what can be called oral literature. Folklore is oral literature in a state of subalternity. Oral literature is any culture’s unwritten literary expression. Given that subaltern cultures tend to have limited access to hegemonic means of representation such as the internet, mass media, and print for innumerable economic, educational, cultural, and linguistic reasons, they are often excluded a priori from representing themselves to hegemonic culture and to themselves through these means. Whereas “folklore” interpellates, in the sense expressed by Althusser, the subaltern as the domesticated object of hegemonic knowledge, the term “oral literature” seeks to recognize the existence of an Other, subaltern literature that exists independently of hegemonic literary discourses. This Other literature, oral literature, represents the diverse, often anti-hegemonic, manifestations of peoples in conditions of subalternity.

Having examined both the terms “Maya” and “literature,” we are now in a better position to define the dissertation’s primary object of study, “Maya literature.” Although my hope is that many scholars and critics will find my definition to be more common sense than not, my feelings about what constitutes a “Maya literature” differ considerably from how some previous scholars have used the term (see Davis Terry, Morris). As such, I feel that a definition is not only necessary but also crucial to my argument. First, oral, alphabetic, and glyphic Maya texts constitute forms of literature. As the dissertation focuses on Yucatek Maya literature during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, my focus is on oral and alphabetic texts. Second, Maya literature may include “folklore.” It is not, however, “folklore” as such but rather a written continuance of oral tradition. Many Maya authors publish texts easily recognizable as having been previously published in non-Maya recopiations of Maya myths, legends, and tales. As I will make clear in the next section on the storyteller and in more detail in chapters three and four, the difference between these two types of publications lays in what the Mexican anthropologist Guillermo Bonfil Batalla calls “cultural control.” Third, Maya literature is not a linguistic designation so much as it is a cultural one. That is, I recognize that Maya of late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries compose and recount Maya literature in Spanish and English in addition to Maya languages. Finally, Mayas tell and write Maya literature. As will be made clear in later chapters, indigenista writing that displays sympathy toward the Maya cannot be confused with speaking/writing from a Maya subaltern locus of enunciation, and it should be noted that indigenista representations of the Maya have often come to be confused with Maya cultures themselves. Maya literature originates from a Maya locus of enunciation and, as it emerges within traditionally hegemonic modes of representation in print, on television, and on the

internet, ultimately seeks the revindication of the Maya subject within the Mexican nation-state.

Storytellers, Storytelling, and Cultural Control: The Discourse of the Indio

For over five-hundred years the rigid distinction between orality and literacy has authorized Western representations of indigenous peoples and indigeneity as being the only possible representations of such people given that they, by definition, are incapable of representing or speaking for themselves. In this section I will expand on this complicated relationship between hegemonic and subaltern cultures in the context of what I will call the discourse of the Indio. As I will show, storytelling (the authority to tell stories) and the storyteller (the embodiment of this authority) are key elements in hegemonic cultures' interpellation of indigenous peoples as Indios. Through representations of indigenous peoples telling their own stories, hegemonic culture pre-empts indigenous self-representation, effectively assuming control of indigenous cultures. The passive, backward Indio is the subject position hegemonic cultures generally make available to indigenous peoples. By using the storyteller to restage indigenous cultures and knowledge, the discourse of the Indio literally tells dominant Others about Indios and tells indigenous people who they are within dominant culture.

Thus, the discourse of the Indio relates directly to Guillermo Bonfil Batalla's notion of cultural control. The Mexican anthropologist states that "Por *control cultural* se entiende la capacidad de decisión sobre los elements culturales" ("*cultural control* is understood as the capacity to makes decisions over cultural elements"; Bonfil Batalla 79; itals in original). He goes on to note that these elements encompass every aspect of human life, including material culture, forms of social organization, forms of knowledge, symbols, and emotions (Bonfil

Batalla 79-80). He then divides these elements into two categories “propio” ‘one’s own’ and “ajeno” ‘foreign,’ while subdividing the decisions made in regards to these elements into four categories. In terms of “cultura propia” over which a group exercises control, we find “cultura autónoma” ‘autonomous culture’ and “cultura apropiada” ‘appropriated external culture.’ In regards to “cultura ajena” we are presented with “cultura enajenada” ‘alienated culture’ and “cultura impuesta” ‘imposed culture’ (Bonfil Batalla 80). The importance of Bonfil Batalla’s distinctions lays in their recognition of subaltern agency, specifically the subaltern’s capacity to adapt to and appropriate foreign elements and exercise control over them. Despite the fact that the discourse of the Indio seeks to impose a unidirectional vision of indigenous cultures in the form of “cultura enajenada,” indigenous peoples are not mere passive consumers of such images. Indeed, much of the signifying power of contemporary Maya literature, and indigenous literatures in general, resides in their capacity to re-appropriate previously alienated cultural elements.

The storyteller and the knowledge this figure represents is one such element that is and can be resignified. For example, the Yukatek Maya author Vicente Canché Moo makes this clear through the very title of his book, Ma’ chéen tsikbalo’obi’ (They are not just Stories; 2004). In the introduction he goes on to note that “esas historias que son motivo de plática entre abuelos y nietos, padres y hijos” ‘these stories are reasons for discussion between grandparents and grandchildren, parents and children’ that “dejan una enseñanza que podemos utilizar en algún momento para ilustrar alguna situación” (“transmit a teaching we can use at some moment to illustrate a point”; Canché Moo n.p.).¹ As a printed collection these stories serve as a reminder that he and his audience are “parte de una gran cultura” (are part of a great culture; Canché Moo n.p.). In other words, the storytellers transmit knowledge

¹ Work is untranslated. From here on, unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

across generations, and that the stories themselves, the textualized expressions of this knowledge, are proof that they are “part of a great culture.”

Before continuing this discussion, however, we must define who or what the storyteller is and what, exactly, we mean by story. In a sense, the two are inseparable. Ong notes that “When an oft told story is not actually being told, all that exists of it is the potential in certain human beings to tell it” (11). In other words, stories represent a form of knowledge embodied by “certain human beings” who may or may not give voice to such knowledge through performance. His emphasis on “certain human beings,” however, would seem to place too much weight upon individuals as opposed to cultural traditions in general. After all, even though not all members of a culture are recognized as superlative storytellers or asked to tell stories, this does not mean that such non-storytellers have no knowledge of or ability to tell stories. Listeners are fully aware of “tradition” and its stories, and as such the stories are theirs as well. More broadly we can agree with Walter Benjamin’s observation that “storytelling is always the art of repeating stories, and this art is lost when the stories are no longer retained,” since his definition of storytelling implicates the listener and tradition as much as the storyteller him/herself (91). As put forth by Albert B. Lord in his groundbreaking The Singer of Tales, tradition here is best thought of as “an organic habit of recreating what has been received and is handed on” (xiii). Within the context of this understanding of tradition, Lord makes the important point that there is relatively little conflict between tradition and the oral storyteller insofar as the story’s oral performance is a matter “of the preservation of tradition by the constant re-creation of it. The ideal is a true story well and truly told” (29). The abstract story or poem itself is best considered as “a given text which changes from one singing to another” given that “[The storyteller’s] idea of

stability, to which he is deeply devoted, does not include the wording, which to him has never been fixed [...]” (Lord 99).

Drawing on these observations by Ong, Benjamin, and Lord, within the dissertation I will use “story” to refer to a particular example of literature-tradition which must be understood as one rendering of an abstract story. Whether written or oral, the story recreates this tradition and calls this tradition to mind in both the minds of the listener/reader and the storyteller him/herself. Benjamin notes that “*Memory* creates the chain of tradition which passes a happening on from generation to generation,” and in this sense we can assert that the story becomes a form of re-membering the past for both storyteller and audience (98; italics in original). The storyteller, by extension, performs from within a given tradition and, through performance of the text, embodies it, becoming the physical representation of this tradition, its memory, knowledge, wisdom, histories and experiences. By transmitting knowledge within the community itself and negotiating with the dominant culture, storytellers thus have long served a social function similar to that of Gramsci’s organic intellectuals, as the Italian thinker defines these as the group that “give the [community] homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields” (5). With the technological developments of the past thirty years, these men and women have risen further in prominence as cultural brokers between their communities and the outside world, straddling and negotiating indigenous identity in local, regional, national, and global contexts.

Whether considered symbolically or materially as the embodiment of indigenous cultures, the storyteller thus emerges as a flashpoint in the control over indigenous cultures and a central figure in what I will call the “discourse of the Indio.” Given the historical

realities of conquest and colonialism, Enrique Florescano argues “que uno de los rasgos más constantes de la memoria indígena es su oralidad [...]” ‘that one of ubiquitous characteristics of indigenous memory is its orality [...],’ such that the repetition of stories that fortify indigenous identity reflects the fact that indigenous groups “[...] cultivaron la obsesión de narrarse su propia historia y exaltar los valores que forjaron su identidad” (“[...] cultivated the obsession of narrating their own history and exalting the values that forged their identity”; 322). This “cultivated obsession” with one’s own history must be seen as derived, in part, from seeing oneself (mis)represented within hegemonic culture and having limited agency within that culture’s mechanisms of representation. For example, describing how the Maya are treated in popular literature, Peter Hervik suggests we consider these works as an “arena for the cultural production *of* the Maya” in which the portrayals of Maya peoples “do not build on or make sense in the world of the Maya themselves” (77; my italics). That is, these works tell Maya culture, staging it primarily for the consumption of non-Mayas. The Maya are not tellers of their own stories but are, literally, told by these representations and told who they are. Mayas themselves must seek self-representation by other means. Recalling Benedict Anderson’s definition of the nation as “an imagined political community,” we can say that such cases of alienated culture mark attempts to “imagine” Mayas and other indigenous peoples into the body politic (6).

Following Bierhorst’s observations cited earlier, such examples of cultural production go back over five-hundred years and are inextricably bound up, not merely with the ability to represent, but with power over cultural representation. In the American context in general, assumptions of cultural and linguistic superiority have often ridden just below the surface of hegemonic culture’s control over these representations from 1492 to the present. Inga

Clendinnen notes that, despite the importance of Doña Marina to Hernán Cortés's conquest of Cem-Anáhuac (1521), Francisco de Montejo, would-be conqueror of Yucatán and former member of Cortés's cohort, "provided himself with neither an interpreter, nor even with a basic Mayan vocabulary. It was an extraordinary omission, and suggests that Spanish confidence in their destiny to master Indians was so complete as to obviate the requirement to hold human converse with them along the way" (20). Thus one can represent and even conquer Indios without ever needing to communicate with them. Absurd as the assertion seems, whether we are discussing colonial accounts or films like The Ruins, it reflects the violence these representations perpetrate. Even well-meaning, sympathetic accounts of anthropologists and ethnographers are not immune. "The ventriloquism of the speaking subaltern," in Gayatri Spivak's damning formulation, "is the left intellectual's stock-in-trade" (255). At best we can identify such alienated representations of indigenous peoples as "indigenista" 'indigenist' as opposed to properly "indigenous," the principal distinction being that the latter originate from and are under the control of indigenous groups while the former are not. According to Henri Favre, Latin American indigenismo can be understood both as a current in Latin American social thought that has existed throughout the region's history and as an ideological movement that originated in the nineteenth century (7-8). In either case, Favre maintains that "El movimiento indigenista no es la manifestación de un pensamiento indígena, sino una reflexión criolla y mestiza sobre el indio" ("The indigenist movement is not a manifestation of indigenous thought, but rather a criollo and mestizo reflection upon the Indian"; 11).

However, rather than focusing on indigenismo as a Latin American phenomenon, I feel that we need to recognize that discursive representations of indigenous peoples in the

Americas are not, nor have they ever been, limited to a specific geographic region. In the twenty-first century these images circulate more freely than ever on a global scale. As such, in order to encompass a variety of representations of indigenous people from Apocalypso to comic books to the works of writers such as Rosario Castellanos, I will call this broader discourse the “discourse of the Indio” in hopes of articulating a more nuanced understanding of the relationships that indigenous peoples have to national and international cultures. As Robert F. Berkhofer Jr. claims in his book The White Man’s Indian, “the idea of the Indian has created a reality in its own image as a result of the power of the Whites and the response of Native Americans” (3). The discourse of the Indio is indigenismo’s discursive mode, but this discourse, as evidenced through scholarship like Berkhofer’s, is not so much Latin American as it is European, a creation of conquerors and colonialists engaged in the subjugation and definition of two continents and their peoples. To grasp the full scope of this discourse, especially in its current inter- and transnational manifestations, we must look at it as an international occurrence.

Given that, chronologically, the “discourse of the Indio” is preceded by what Edward Said calls “Orientalism,” we should not be surprised that this mode of discourse shares many of Orientalism’s defining characteristics. For Said, one of the ways we can think about Orientalism is as “the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient---dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views about it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (3). As we have already seen, the institution of Spanish as the language of authority in Latin America authorized a discourse about Latin America and its peoples that largely excluded indigenous voices. The same can be said of English in the

United States, and English and French in Canada. While not necessarily a “corporate institution” in the sense described by Said, the “discourse of the Indio” was a key weapon in the colonialist enterprises of Europeans who colonized the Americas as it, to borrow Said’s words, was, if also not remains, “a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over” indigenous peoples.

How, then, did the discourse of the Indio form the indigenous individual as its object? How has this discourse managed to be recycled for over five-hundred years? Most importantly for the dissertation, how has it appropriated, from the conquest to the present, authority over indigenous stories and storytellers while alienating these cultural elements from indigenous peoples themselves? The stakes of this discourse are laid out by the Nakota intellectual Vine Deloria, Jr., when he asks, “A warrior killed in battle could always go to the Happy Hunting Grounds. But where does an Indian laid low by an anthro[pologist] go? To the library?” (81). This discourse and its non-recognition of the Other as subject represents asymmetrical warfare of the highest order. In general terms, the discourse of the Indio imposes a category of human existence upon indigenous peoples that forgoes recognition of indigenous cultural particularities in order to reduce these cultures, in their totality, to a generalized, hence manageable, hence domesticated, hence colonizing term. Here I am following Spivak’s assertion that “[...] the project of Imperialism is violently to put together the episteme that will ‘mean’ (for others) and ‘know’ (for the self) the colonial subject as history’s nearly-served other [...]” (215). In other words, the discourse of the Indio not only makes him/her the subaltern Other, it also has the effect of “meaning for” indigenous peoples by telling their story for them and “knowing for” hegemonic culture through the same act of telling. As a category that has rendered indigenous peoples known to Western cultural

constructs for over five-hundred years, the Indio as a discursive object has been employed by multiple contradictory ideological projects. “Indio” itself, from 1492 onward, has been a Western category based on the negation of indigenes as independent subjects, centers of consciousness and activity. Indio has no positive content as it arises from a geographical error and builds upon that error. In the words of Eduardo Subirats, Western universal Christianity history “[privó] preventive y definitivamente [...del Indio la] voz. El indio era un nada. Su existencia, su comunidad y sus dioses fueron vaciados de sentido” (“[...] preemptively and definitively [alienated the indigenous] voice. The Indian was nothing. His existence, his community and his gods were stripped of meaning”; 112).

As a literary discourse, we can relate the discourse of the Indio and its ideological underpinnings to Fausto Reinaga’s comments on twentieth-century Latin American writers and intellectuals. Constructing a damning critique of indigenismo and its politics, he argues that, “Los escritores de Argentina, México, Perú, Ecuador y Bolivia [...] Quieren asimilar al indio; integrarlo al Occidente; no quieren liberarlo. No quieren la afirmación del indio; quieren su enajenación, su desaparición; no desean el ser del indio; quieren hacer del indio la nada, un nada” (“The writers of Argentina, Mexico, Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia [...] They want to assimilate the Indian; to integrate him into the West; they do not want to liberate him. They do not want the affirmation of the Indian; they want his alienation, his disappearance; they do not want the Indian in his being; they want to making him a nothing, reduce him to nothingness”; Reinaga 208).

In the Hegelian sense, the discourse of the Indio constitutes indigenous individuals in the context of a non-being for oneself and a being for the Other similar to the relationship between master and bondsman (Hegel 111-19). Despite the fact that this is a case in which a

self-consciousness exists for and is acknowledged by another, however, this existence and the conditions of its acknowledgment are exterior to the indigenous world. Unlike the bondsman, who “through work [...] becomes conscious of what he truly is,” we can extrapolate from Hegel’s words that the indigenous person’s labor merely forms him/her as an Indio, not as an indigene (Hegel 118). That is, “Indio” is not so much a term of recognition and acknowledgement but one of persistent and continual misrecognition that situates indigenous individuals as subaltern Indios. Once again we can recall the image of the conquistador Montejó heading into the Yucatecan interior without the need of a translator or a dictionary. Having, in Said’s sense, already created the Indios he expects to meet, he does not need to speak to them. He is already their conqueror.

Who, then, is the Indio? From 1492 to 2009, he is a negative being, everything the West is not. He is a lack, something we seek, in Reinaga’s words, to reduce to nothing. If the West is Christian, civilized, wealthy, clean, and developed, the Indio is pagan, barbarous, poor, dirty, and un- or underdeveloped. A few literary examples of this mechanism are in order. For Columbus, the man who invented them, they were pacific, beautiful, would be easily made Christians and, perhaps most importantly, “deben ser buenos servidores y de buen ingenio, que veo que muy puesto dicen todo lo que les decía...” (“They should be good servants and very intelligent, for I have observed that they soon repeat anything that is said to them”; Colón 91; Columbus 56). For the aforementioned Landa, in addition to many other sympathetic priests like Bernardino de Sahagún (1499-1590), Bartolomé de las Casas (1484-1566), and Toribio de Benavente “Motolinía” (?-1568), the Indio is at best a potential Christian and at worst the willing dupe of the devil himself. Later, for the heroes of Latin American independence he is a proto-national icon that justified rebellion in response to the

injustices of Spanish oppression. For example, Luis Villoro notes how, in 1821, the Mexican Carlos María Bustamante rhetorically goes so far as to posit that Agustín de Iturbide “[...] sucede al indígena [Netzahualcóyotl] ocupando su mismo trono” (“[...] comes to occupy the same throne as the indigenous king [Netzahualcóyotl]”; El proceso, 164). To the fathers of postcolonial nations he was a problematic non-national presence who must be assimilated and/or whitened to the point of extinction (Hale 223). Once a potential Christian, he is now a potential citizen who, in accordance with universalizing liberal norms, must literally stop being an Indio to pass into full citizenship. The title of Guatemalan Nobel Laureate Miguel Ángel Asturias’s (1899-1974) master’s thesis, Sociología guatemalteca: el problema social del indio (Guatemalan Sociology: The Social Problem of the Indian) (1923), is perhaps the most succinct framing of the discourse of the Indio in its flat recognition that the Indio’s very existence as an Indio is, in itself, viewed as a problem if not the central problem of Guatemalan identity, as well as also being an obstacle to national social, cultural, and economic progress. The pervasiveness of this formulation is demonstrated by the fact that the famous Mexican anthropologist and intellectual Manuel Gamio published a similarly titled work, Consideraciones sobre el problema indígena (Thoughts on the Indigenous Problem) (1948), only a few years later. Although in Asturias’s later works like Hombres de maíz (Men of Maize) (1949) the author sought the revindication of Maya cultures in Guatemala, the theses he put forward in El problema social del indio remain vivid in the cultural memory of the country’s Maya population. In 2003 the Maya K’iche’ poet Humberto Ak’abal, upon being awarded Guatemala’s Premio Nacional de Literatura “Miguel Ángel Asturias,” rejected the honor because he felt Asturias’s essay, “offends the indigenous peoples of Guatemala, of which I am a part” (“In Brief”).

The discourse of the Indio takes the Indio as its object in order to avoid acknowledging indigenous peoples as subjects. It casts the Indio as a “mystery,” a “problem” that non-Indios must solve. This is not to say, however, that indigenous voices are excluded in the shaping of this discourse. On the contrary, the image of indigenes, cast as Indios, telling their “own” stories in their “own” words has been and remains one of the most powerful tropes in the domestication of indigenous knowledges and cultures. Such subalterns can “speak,” but they speak through the mediating voice of a cultural broker whose responsibility lies in rendering this Other’s voice, its history, stories, and experiences intelligible to hegemonic culture and its readers. Although we must recognize that subalterns also encounter these mediated texts, they are not these texts’ intended audience and so, in the words of W.E.B Du Bois, indigenous peoples experience these readings in the context of a “double-consciousness, [a] sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity” (5). Here I will briefly provide two examples, one colonial and one modern, of this phenomenon and how it functions, calling indigenous peoples into being as Indios and using these Indios to tell indigenous stories.

There are innumerable examples one could draw on from the colonial period, the most monumental being Sahagún’s Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España (A History of Ancient Mexico; 1540-85), originally written in transliterated Náhuatl and translated into Spanish in the mid-sixteenth century. In keeping with the dissertation’s focus, however, I will turn to a text no less well known and a good deal more infamous, Diego de Landa’s aforementioned Relación de las cosas de Yucatán. In his thorough account of Yucatán Landa provides the reader with detailed accounts of Yucatán as it *is* and as it *was*, claiming, for

example, to have received such knowledge from “algunos viejos de Yucatán [que] dicen haber oído a sus [ante-] pasados [...]” (“Some old men of Yucatán say that they have heard from their ancestors [...]”; 92; Gates 8). That is, in this case Landa presents this knowledge as having come to him from indistinct Indios as opposed to indigenous individuals who, unthinkable as it may have been then or now, could have held him accountable for his representation of Yukatek Maya culture. There is no one “source,” and yet there is undeniable “authenticity,” a distinct cultural broker and yet indistinct informants whose very outlines produce the domestication of indigenous culture, the Indio as object, not subject. This silencing of indigenous voices through their telling is nowhere more apparent than in Landa’s failure to acknowledge any debt to Gaspar Antonio Chi. Inga Clendinnen notes that “There can be no doubt that Chi was a major informant on Indian ways [...]” and that, “On the whole question of informants Landa suffers from a curiously selective amnesia [...],” as, “He generously acknowledges his debt to Juan Nachi Cocom” but nowhere mentions that he eventually had Cocom’s corpse exhumed and burned (119). Thus, despite the fact that Landa consciously presents the information in his Relación as being first-hand knowledge from the mouths of indigenous informants, we find that Landa also consciously constructs and manipulates the voice (not voices) of these indigenous storytellers. He does not so much suffer from a “curiously selective amnesia” as he employs a rhetorical strategy that aims to represent Indios (generalized objects of knowledge) while negating indigenous agency (failure to mention Chi, the scope of his relationship with Cocom, etc.). As we shall soon see, however, this strategy cannot completely negate such agency even as it tries to generalize and domesticate the indigenous voice.

On the surface, the work of the Mexican indigenista writer Rosario Castellanos has little in common with that of Landa. Although both her activism and literary work are more sympathetic to indigenous peoples than projects like Landa's, however, both authors recycle the discourse of the Indio. Castellanos, like Landa, adopts the position of the cultural broker who ultimately assumes authority over the representation of the indigenous voice and its stories. Nowhere is this more apparent than in her short story from Ciudad Real (1960) "La Tregua" 'The Truce,' which textualizes a tragic, gruesome encounter between a lost tourist and the members of a small Maya community in Chiapas. I have selected this story from Castellanos's prolific historically-based work because it is the only one which, to my knowledge, has been presented to a Maya audience. According to Cynthia Steele, Castellanos's story is based on an event that occurred while Castellanos was living in San Cristóbal de las Casas in which "a red-bearded German painter had gotten lost in the forest near a Maya hamlet called Muken and the villagers, mistaking him for the devil and having no common language in which to communicate with the intruder, killed him" (89). Narrated from the point of view of a non-Maya, omniscient third person narrator, action in the story hinges on this inability to communicate. As for the discourse of the Indio, although we are given the name of the woman who first encounters the tourist, Rominka Pérez Taquibequet, and the town in which the action takes place, Mukenjá, these gestures towards individualization are undercut by repeated generalizations that emphasize Rominka's status as an India. Not only is Rominka described as a "Mujer como las otras de su tribu, piedra sin edad [...]" 'A woman like all the others of her tribe, an ageless stone [...],' but the text also refers to members of this "tribe" as "indios" (Castellanos 29; Rudder 29). Rominka thus emerges as a timeless, ahistorical, archetypal figure representative of Mayaness whose

story must be told for her. She is not a center of agency, much less a storyteller. The need for this telling becomes apparent in the narrator's description of the tourist. When the narrator controls the story she refers to him as a "caxlán," using a Maya word derived from "castellano," 'castilian,' that now connotes a light-skinned foreigner or outsider. When reporting Rominka's thoughts or speech, she refers to the man as a "pukuj," that is, a 'demon' or 'devil.' By juxtaposing the Maya words for "foreigner" and "devil," the narrator thus moves beyond the position of being a cultural broker and appropriates the Maya voice itself, effectively casting her voice as that of a storyteller who, unlike the story's protagonists, can distinguish between a devil and a tourist.

Although both of these texts appropriate the Maya storyteller's voice and recycle the discourse of the Indio in doing so, neither fully succeeds in oppressing the voice of Maya storytellers and the primary audience of such stories, other Mayas. In Landa, buried among his invaluable recordings of Maya glyphs, the Spaniard provides a sentence in glyphs to give his readers an example of how the writing system functions. It reads "ma in ka ti," or "I do not want to" (186). The irony of Landa's informant providing him with such an example passes without comment in the Relación but nonetheless subtly calls into question Landa's ability to be a broker between Maya storytellers and his own culture. "Ma in ka ti" suggests other things unsaid, intentional misspeakings, deferments, and inventions on the part of Landa's informants. "Ma in ka ti" signifies the agency of the Maya storyteller even within the heart of colonial hegemony, the refusal to be reduced to an Indio even when one is only interpellated as such. Approximately 400 years later, the Maya response to Castellanos's texts provides a similar if more violent and unsettling example. When Castellanos presented a dramatized version of the content of "La tregua" entitled "Petul y el diablo extranjero"

‘Petul and the Foreign Devil’ to the residents of San Juan Chamula, Chiapas, the Chamulas were so offended they began to throw rocks at Castellanos and her theater troupe, shouting, “We aren’t like the people from Mukem” (Steele 89). In other words, the Chamulas refused to recognize themselves as the audience interpellated by the play and refused to recognize Castellanos’s authority as cultural broker. In short, they refused to be reduced to Indios and asserted their right over their own stories and their representation.

We must first admit that indigenous response to hegemonic cultures is not new but rather something that hegemonic cultures have perpetually sought to deny, reconfigure, or obfuscate. In this sense, an ahistorical privileging of the term “contemporary” in the phrase “contemporary Maya literature” recycles the discourse of the Indio as it fails to recognize how indigenous peoples have always sought to maintain control over their cultures, even from within images controlled by hegemonic culture itself. Second, although Yukatek Maya literature is the specific focus of this project, it must also be recognized that this literature can be situated within a global anti-colonial, decolonial tradition found across the globe. Given the scope and sheer number of people involved in such work, my intent here is not to be exhaustive but merely to provide representative examples. In the United States Native American writers such as Leslie Marmon Silko, Craig Womack, Vine Deloria, Jr., and countless others have rewritten the history of the United States from diverse and even contradictory Native American perspectives, calling into question popular and academic knowledge about indigenous peoples, cultures, and histories. Martinican intellectual Franz Fanon and his monumental The Wretched of the Earth come to mind. We can also include New Zealand Maori Linda Tuhiwai Smith, whose book Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples directly questions the relationship between academic

knowledge, subaltern peoples, and the perpetuation of the hegemonic *status quo*. Nigerian author Chinua Achebe and one of his harshest critics, Kenyan Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong’o, are both representative of this tradition despite their ideological differences. Latin American examples from the colonial period include the aforementioned Gaspar Antonio Chi in Yucatán and the better known, better studied Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala in Perú. I will now turn to three contemporary Maya examples, focusing on how these authors and intellectuals construct their own relationships with Maya and dominant cultures through cultural control over the storyteller and storytelling.

In Kotz’ib: nuestra literatura maya (Our Writing: Our Maya Literature), the Q’anjob’al Maya author Gaspar Pedro González challenges the Western conception of literacy when he argues, “Se llama *literatura oral* porque es como una *biblioteca* en donde se encuentran guardados los conocimientos, experiencias y sabiduría de las generaciones que dejan sus legados a las generaciones futuras” (“It is called *oral literature* because it is like a *library* where the knowledge, experiences and wisdom that are left as a legacy to future generations are guarded”; 108; my emphasis). Rather than defining oral literature through its orality, González shifts emphasis to oral literature’s literariness, hence the permanence and equal standing with written literature that he attributes to it. In appropriating the archival permanence of the library through his use of the term literature (“Se llama literatura oral *porque* es como una biblioteca [...]”) González makes the implicit argument that there is no essential difference between orality and literacy and that both are capable of transmitting knowledge across multiple generations. The Yucatec Maya writer Feliciano Sánchez Chan, in an interview with Donald Frischman, observes that written literature does not portend the end of its oral counterpart. In Sánchez Chan’s words, “[...] publishing a book is not the end,

but just a way to place Maya knowledge on an equal footing with modern forms of knowledge” (qtd in. Frischmann, “Indigenous” 19-20). Thus, as Frischmann observes, here “[...] orality and writing enter into a dynamic relationship in which the latter serves to reinforce the former” (“Indigenous” 19). Maintaining a strict separation, then, between orality and literacy in this context imposes Western literary norms upon Maya culture and fails to recognize this culture’s existence in-and-for-itself according to its own internal norms. In regards to the use of Maya language to tell Maya stories, the K’iche’ Maya Nobel Laureate Rigoberta Menchú Tum says, “Nuestro idioma también es un patrimonio. Es nuestro universo. Hay que protegerlo, desarrollarlo. Nuestros idiomas son pedazos de cerebro de nuestras culturas” (“Our language is also a patrimony. It is our universe. One must protect it, develop it. Our languages are the brain matter of our cultures”; Rigoberta 215).² While González and Sánchez Chan are more concerned with literature per se, Menchú Tum goes so far as to assert the power of language itself to contain, shape, and transmit culture. Language is a “patrimony” and yet not passively received or held as it must be not only “protected” but also “developed.” Recalling Lord, we could even say that language is a story in and of itself.

The thread that unites these three indigenous authors is an emphasis on oral literature as a communal body of knowledge as opposed to the possession of “certain individuals.” Thus the storyteller, considered from this angle, cannot be seen as *a* person who tells *a* story but a position of agency from which one person performs a story and, in doing so, invokes the broad historical memory of an entire *community*. The storyteller in indigenous literature, whether written or oral, must be seen as drawing on this tradition and not, as will be seen, simply identified with a Western-style author or literary narrator. As such, the figure of the storyteller represents a counter-hegemonic continuity of indigenous cultures even as

² This passage does not appear in the Wright translation, it should be on page 155

indigenous intellectuals re-present this figure within hegemonic national imaginaries. Seizing the agency to tell their own stories and employing the “traditional” figure of the storyteller to do so, indigenous authors, intellectuals, and storytellers are literally inscribing themselves into national imaginaries as indigenous citizen-subjects as a means to contest their previous inscription as Indios.

An Overview of Chapters Two through Six

As can be seen from these statements, the Maya are not the passive, ahistorical figures found within hegemonic national imaginaries. On the contrary, they are agents who see themselves from outside of themselves (DuBois) and from within Maya culture itself. The remainder of the dissertation will expand on the themes of cultural control, the storyteller, and storytelling I have laid out here, describing how contemporary Maya oral storytellers and published authors use the storyteller’s authority to negotiate their relationship with non-Maya hegemonic cultures in Mexico and abroad. Chapter two investigates this relationship in the context of Mexican history by comparing feminist Mexican author Laura Esquivel’s Malinche (2006) with Yucatec Maya playwright Carlos Armando Dzul Ek’s “Bix Úuchik U Bo’ot Ku’si’ip’il ‘Manilo’ob’ Tu Ja’abil 1562” (“How it happened that the people of Maní paid for their sins in the year 1562”), showing how both use the indigenous woman’s capacity to tell her own story in order to rewrite the history of the conquest of Mexico to radically different effect, Esquivel’s text portraying the ascendance of the mestizo and descent of the Indio, and Dzul Ek’s text proclaiming the ongoing fact of indigenous existence. Following up on the nationalizing tendency of Esquivel’s text, in Chapter three I examine the work of several Yucatecan folklorists from Mexico, Cuba, and the United States, paying particular attention to their mediations of the storyteller’s voice and the rhetorical

strategies they use to erase or highlight the storyteller's presence. In addition, I develop the terminology describing the interactions between the outsider, the native informant, and the literary text, that will serve as a point of departure for the analysis of oral and written literature throughout the remainder of the dissertation. The fourth chapter draws on my own recordings of contemporary Yukatek Maya oral stories and storytellers, particularly the storyteller Mariano Bonilla Cáamal. The advantage of explicating these texts, recorded during fieldwork in spring 2007 in and around Santa Elena, Yucatán, is that these texts provide a window on how Yukatek Maya stories continue to survive and transmit knowledge in the twenty-first century. I also delve deeper into the formulae and structures that shape the oral literary text. The fifth chapter considers two works by female Maya authors, María Luisa Góngora Pacheco and Ana Patricia Martínez Huchim, honing in on their use of the "traditional" Maya storyteller as a frame for their respective narratives. By using the figure of the "traditional" storyteller to recount "modern" Maya stories in print, these stories seek the recognition of Maya agency within regional, national, and global contexts. In the sixth and final chapter I will offer thoughts and preliminary conclusions on the recent history of Yukatek Maya literature.

Through a comparison of oral and written Maya literatures with Mexican national literature, this project provides a deeper understanding of how national discourses represent indigenous peoples to the nation and how contemporary Maya literature contests this representation. I hope this project will point the way to the vast amount of work yet to be done on this topic. Given how the economics of literature in indigenous languages inevitably affects its distribution, it is important that the literary scholar invested in this field be ready and willing to carry out such non-archival work.

Chapter 2 My Mother Told Me a Story...: Indigenous Memory and Writing the Mexican Nation

The truth about stories is that's all we are.

Thomas King, The Truth About Stories

Towards the end of the first chapter of her seminal book Foundational Fictions, Doris Sommer wonders if what she terms “the pretty lies of national romance” are, like the institutionalization of Mexico’s Revolutions, “strategies to contain the racial, regional, economic, and gender conflicts that threatened the development of new Latin American nations” (29). Drawing upon Sommer’s idea of national romance as a literary strategy of containment for the nation’s irresolvable contradictions, this chapter will explore these conflicts as they apply to the construction of the indigenous woman as a storyteller capable of enunciating her own historical realities. The two examples I have chosen to illustrate this are Laura Esquivel’s novel Malinche (2006), and Armando Dzul Ek’s drama “Bix úuchik u bo’ot ku’si’ip’il ‘Manilo’ob’ tu ja’abil 1562” (“How it happened that the people of Maní paid for their sins in the year 1562”; 1998). Both published within the last ten years, these works reevaluate Mexican history by giving voice to histories and peoples traditionally defined by passivity, silence, and absence in established national narratives. As we saw in the previous chapter, despite their unquestionable reality as historical figures, indigenous peoples are often defined by a lack of historical consciousness and an inability to tell their own stories. Since the time of the conquest these perceived attributes placed the task of recording indigenous stories in European or Western hands.

Given that in these two texts Esquivel and Dzul Ek both re-present Mexican history and the birth of the Mexican nation, we must first characterize the relationship between these texts and prior textualizations of these events. This relationship is profoundly inter-textual insofar as the authors of these previous works cite, borrow from, appropriate from, and/or misquote previous works, creating a sweeping conquest narrative whose primary sources are often confused, self-interested, contradictory first-hand accounts. By the mid-sixteenth century the Spanish authors of historias, crónicas, cartas, and relaciones had managed to weave an impenetrable web of attributed and unattributed cross-references whose veneer of erudition lent credibility to the occasional omission, exaggeration, or outright invention. While valuable documents, few of these would pass as strictly “historical” in the twenty-first century, and yet much of what these men recorded has passed unquestioned into many history books and is now enshrined as national history.

Recognizing the constructed nature of such histories, we can recall Fredric Jameson’s assertion that, “history is *not* a text, not a narrative, master or otherwise, but that, an absent cause, it is inaccessible to us except in textual form, and that our approach to it and to the Real itself necessarily passes through its prior textualization, its narrativization in the political unconscious” (35). All history, then, possesses certain fictional aspects insofar as we only know history through historical texts which are imperfect, incomplete textualizations of events. Moreover, as Rolena Adorno points out with regard to texts from the colonial period in Latin America, the ideological underpinnings of texts mean that such works “do not describe events; they *are* events, and they transcend self-reference to refer to the world outside themselves. This referentiality, however, is not historical, as in the historical truth whose referent is a past event. It is instead rhetorical and polemical, with the objective of

influencing readers' perceptions, royal policies, and social practices" (Polemics 4). Although the authors of works like Bernal Díaz del Castillo's Historia verdadera (The Conquest of New Spain; 1632), Sahagún's Historia general (1540-85), Francisco López de Gómara's Historia general de las Indias (Cortés: The Life of the Conqueror by his Secretary; 1552), and Toribio de Benavente's (Motolinía) Historia de los Indios de la Nueva España (A History of the Indians of New Spain; 1885), would assert their texts are history, the very repetition of the word "history" across these titles seems to undercut any historical truth-value these authors would claim for their individual works. Rather, in Adorno's terms, each individual text is an event in the construction of a broader Latin American historical tradition geared towards "influencing readers' perceptions, royal policies, and social practices."

Written from within this contentious tradition, Esquivel's novel and Dzul Ek's play dialogue with these prior textualizations, reassembling them according each author's ideological agenda, what Jameson refers to as the "political unconscious." Passing through the political unconscious, these texts must "be grasped as the imaginary resolution of a real contradiction" (Jameson 77). Given the nature of the intertextual dialogue in which these works participate, we can also affirm that the credibility of these works, as Adorno observes with regard to the work of El Inca Garcilaso, "does not belong to the world of the referent, that is, the deeds narrated, but rather to the narrative tradition that shapes them" (Polemics 282). The real contradiction, in both texts, is the continued presence of indigenous cultures within the contemporary mestizo Mexican nation, a presence that has become more problematic symbolically if not materially with the Zapatista rebellion in 1994. The resolution noted by Sommer, accepted by Esquivel and rejected by Dzul Ek, lies in retextualizing the conquest of Mexico, drawing upon and dialoguing with the country's

narrative tradition in order to reimagine the genesis of the mestizo family. As such, the figure of the indigenous woman as the storyteller of her own history and mother of the nation emerges as a central axis through which this contradiction can potentially be resolved. We may ask, then, how do Esquivel and Dzul Ek, in their respective retextualizations of the history of the conquest of Mexico, use and/or appropriate prior textualizations of Mexican history to construct their storytellers?

For Esquivel, the critically acclaimed Mexican feminist author of other works such as Como agua para chocolate (Like Water for Chocolate; 1989) and La ley del Amor (The Law of Love; 1995), this process involves recapitulating traditional structures of the Western conquest narrative in order to give agency to her protagonist, Cortes's translator and concubine, Malintzin. Although Malinche does evidence some of the characteristics of the New Latin American historical novel outlined by Seymour Menton, the novel is much more in the vein of a romantic historical novel in both its plot and its textualization of the conquest as a stable master narrative (22-25). It should be stated that this narrative also reimagines the history of Aztec central Mexico as Mexican history, a symbolic tendency that can be found everywhere from the Mexican flag to Mexican currency. The individual conquest histories of the country's other indigenous peoples are thus subsumed under this centralizing narrative. While contesting the role many prior texts assign the novel's protagonist, Malinalli, Esquivel's text eschews questioning the broader historical implications of this role as it writes Malintzin into hegemonic culture within this culture's terms. Thus, in Esquivel's novel, Malintzin is already more mestiza than she is indigenous. Providing Malintzin with a voice and a narrative space in which to act, the text rejects her prior negative characterizations and positions her, through her marriage to the Spaniard Juan Jaramillo, as

mother of the mestizo race, a positive, unifying figure from which Mexican history can take its earliest reference point. By giving birth to the first Mexican, Malintzin becomes the site at which indigenous peoples, knowledges, and histories are erased. Despite her emergence as a subject and center of agency, this emergence is predicated on her telling the story of the mestizo nation, passing on its history, knowledge, and values to future generations.

Dzul Ek, a bilingual Yukatek Maya school teacher and playwright from Oxkutzkab, Yucatán, decenters the very kind narrative present in a text like Esquivel's. His "Bix úuchik u bo'ot ku'si'ip'il 'Manilo'ob' tu ja'abil 1562" is the kind of literary work that answer's Ranajit Guha's "call to expropriate the expropriator," and it "is radical precisely in the sense of going to the root of the matter and asking what may be involved in a historiography that is clearly an act of expropriation" (2). Proposing an alternative narrative to the decidedly more heroic, better known one from central Mexico, in his play Dzul Ek inverts the racial, cultural, and political paradigms that ground Esquivel's text. As such he calls into question the very narrative tradition in which texts like Esquivel's are founded. The Maya leader Tutul Xiu betrays his people to the friar Diego de Landa, and Maya culture comes to reside in the figure of the nameless "xpul ya'a" ('hechicera' or 'sorceress,' though both are poor translations) at the play's end. Unlike the historical figure Malintzin, the xpul ya'a is an archetype that stands for Yukatek Maya historical memory and the transmission of this memory through storytelling. Her resistance to Landa and chastisement of Xiu are pointed commentaries on the construction of a Mexican history that glosses over particular indigenous narratives by framing these as part of inevitable national hybridity and mestizaje. Similar to the role that Malintzin plays for the mestizo nation, the xpul ya'a is an indigenous mother whose legacy can be seen in the twenty-first century. The nameless xpul ya'a, however, embodies an

anonymous, muted defiance to which the work itself ironically gives voice. She becomes a figure for the rearticulation of indigenous peoples, knowledges, and histories in the present.

Esquivel's Malinche: the Indian Mother of the Mestizo Nation

Rather than an exercise in historical fact checking, the more pertinent issues here are the ideological questions of “how” and “why” behind Esquivel's retextualization of this historical moment and the historical figure to which she intends to give voice. For the most part, the novel follows the well known contours of Malinche's story, beginning with her life as a young girl. Upon the death of her father, her mother remarries and consequently sells her into slavery. She is eventually given to Cortés and his men as they travel along the coast, and her ability to speak multiple indigenous languages makes her an invaluable asset to Spaniards. She has a sexual relationship with Cortés, who eventually marries her off to one of his soldiers, Juan Jaramillo. This union with Jaramillo hearkens back to the traditions of novelistic literary romance and sets the stage for Malinche to pass away as the legitimate matriarch of a “new” paradigmatic mestizo family.

As famously put forth by Sandra Messinger Cypess, “the sign ‘La Malinche’ functions as a culturally enlarging palimpsest of Mexican cultural identity whose layers of meaning have accrued through the years,” such that, “for each reader ‘La Malinche’ is a textual sign loaded with presuppositions that influence the reader's relationship with the sign and its text” (5). In relation to Esquivel's novel Malinche, we may pose the questions of how the novel's protagonist used to read Mesoamerican culture and, in doing so, read these cultures at present? To what extent does the narrative repeat well-established conquest myths and to what extent does the narrative deviate from them? Lastly, and most importantly, how

does this re-presentation replicate or reconfigure the twenty-first-century Mexican imaginary? First, however, given the work's intertextual dialogue with conquest-era sources, we should turn to these prior textualizations to provide a context for our discussion.

We can consider sixteenth-century accounts of La Malinche's early life accurate if only because there is little disagreement among them as to the fact of her existence, the arc of her childhood, and the circumstances which lead to her being given, along with nineteen other women, as a peace offering to Cortés and his men by a group of Chontal speakers on the coast of present-day Tabasco. Bernal Díaz del Castillo, one of Cortés's men, provides the following thumbnail biography:

Que su padre y madre eran señores y caciques de un pueblo que se dice Painala[...]; y murió el padre, quedando muy niña, y la madre se casó con otro cacique mancebo, y hubieron un hijo, y según pareció, queríanlo bien al hijo que habían habido; acordaron entre el padre y la madre de darle el cacicazgo después de sus días, y porque en ello no hubiese estorbo, dieron de noche a la niña Doña Marina a unos indios de Xicalango [...]. (Díaz del Castillo 61)
Her father and mother were lords and *Caciques* of a town called Paynala [...]. Her father died while she was still very young, and her mother married another *Cacique*, a young man, to whom she bore a son. The mother and father seemed to have been very fond of this son, for they agreed that he should succeed to the *Caciqueship* when they were dead. To avoid any impediment, they gave Doña Marina to some Indians from Xicalango [...]. (Cohen 85)

Camilla Townsend notes that Malinche's early childhood reflects the social realities of her time, with Malinche herself being "a typical product of the Mesoamerican world as it then was" (6). Her historically representative status, at least until 1519, enables us to use Malintzín, á la Cypess, as a means to read Esquivel's novel in terms of how it reinterprets the history of and myths about Mesoamerica prior to Cortés' arrival. Given that the textualization and presentation of indigenous history has largely been denied to indigenous peoples from 1519 to the present, Esquivel's novel cannot help but be implicated in the ongoing silencing

of indigenous voices as it portrays her as the mother of the mestizo Mexican nation. In aligning Mexican national identity with mestizaje, the narrative forecloses the possibility of an indigenous Mexican identity. By implication, Malinche resolves the contemporary presence of indigenous peoples by imagining them as the mestizo's ancestors, but not his fellow citizens.

Malinalli and Mesoamerican Myth

If, as claimed by Cypess, Malintzín is a palimpsest for the reading of Mexican national culture, how does the novel Malinche use Malinalli (Esquivel's name for Malintzín, which is Nahuatl as opposed to the Náhuatl Malintzín) to read generalized Mesoamerican culture at the time of the conquest? More importantly, how does Malinalli as a storyteller represent Mesoamerica within the world of the text?

The very use of the name Malinalli suggests a distinct interpretation of Mesoamerican culture and the events about to unfold as the historical woman's actual birth name remains a mystery. Camilla Townsend notes, "In the indigenous world, people's names changed continuously as their circumstances altered" (12). She goes on to say that although "Some historians have loved to surmise that the Spaniards named the girl 'Marina' because her name had been the tragic 'Malinalli,' [...] this would have never been the case" (Townsend 12). Townsend tells us that, as a day sign, "Malinalli" (Grass) is unlucky and that "almost no one was ever really given an ill-omened name," as "Instead, a day sign name could be chosen from among the more auspicious signs close to the moment of birth" (12). The name Malinalli, then, is in all likelihood historically and culturally inaccurate. Whether or not she was born on the day "Malinalli," as she is in the novel, is irrelevant (Esquivel, Malinche 6). More importantly, within the novel the name's association with grass and bad luck implies an

important connection with the year the Spanish arrive, 1519, in the Aztec calendar Ce-Acatl “One Reed.” As we shall see, in drawing attention to the connection between the protagonist’s name, the coming of the Spanish, and the prophesied return of a Mesoamerican deity, the novel dramatizes the conquest according to contemporary non-indigenous interpretations of Mesoamerica rather than from within Mesoamerica itself. In other words, although the novel seeks to give us Malinalli’s vision of the conquest, allowing us to see the conquest from “within” a Mesoamerican worldview, this worldview is nonetheless structured by narratives of the conquest that reflect ideologies that originate in the non-indigenous world.

As implied by her day name, Esquivel’s Malinalli possess a profound spirituality which winds its way through the myth of Qutzalcóatl and ultimately translates into a political justification for the overthrow of the Aztec empire. Informally educated by her grandmother, as a young girl she learns to identify the divine in Nature as well as to read and paint codices. Leaving aside the issue of whether or not young women were commonly educated in the Aztec empire, we can say that Malinalli’s literacy configures her as a storyteller insofar as it portrays her as having an active role in the reception, production, and reproduction of central Mexican literary traditions. She is not an oral storyteller but a literate author capable of producing written texts. Esquivel even goes so far as to include a “codex” on the interior of the book jacket and, in the author’s note, she says that this “codex” represents, “El código que la Malinche habría pintado” (“The codex that Malinche might have painted”; Malinche viii; Mestre-Reed viii). By making her protagonist literate, Esquivel transfigures Malinche across space and time into a speaking, writing subject, one capable of representing sixteenth-century Mesoamerican history and spirituality from a “Mesoamerican perspective.”

Ironically, Malinalli as a historical figure has traditionally been defined by silence and sixteenth-century Mesoamerican glyphic texts remain a notoriously challenging read. The portrayal of Malinalli as a literate Mesoamerican woman mutes the distances of time, culture, and space between protagonist and reader as the story being told in Latin script corresponds to the “codex that Malinche might have painted.” As a result, the cultural, spiritual, and historical differences between the novel’s protagonist and the reader become secondary to what the reader and protagonist have in common. Both are literate, educated, and, as we will see, share a certain fatalism with regard to the coming of the Spanish. Moreover, by underscoring these assumed commonalities, the novel also distances the reader and Malinalli from those values held within the broader field of Mesoamerican culture.

We can most effectively examine the interplay of these differences and commonalities through Malinalli’s relationship with the Mesoamerican god Quetzalcóatl, literally “Feathered Serpent.” In short, Malinalli’s adoration of the god borders on dogmatic and bestows credibility on one of the most fundamental myths of European colonization the world over. Malinalli is born with her umbilical cord around her neck, something which her grandmother interprets as a sign from Quetzalcóatl (Esquivel, Malinche 2). This scene connects the newborn with the inevitable historical appearance of the god and parallels a later scene in which the young Cortés, having been stung by a scorpion on the island of Hispaniola in 1504, becomes so ill that he hallucinates that he tells the Virgen de Guadalupe he was bitten by a large flying serpent (Esquivel, Malinche 8). The twofold cultural assumption operating beneath this connection is that the arriving Europeans will be perceived as gods and that their leader will be seen as Quetzalcóatl. By situating the protagonist Malinalli at the center of Mesoamerican prophecy the text lends credence to this historical interpretation as

fact as opposed to an example of European myth making. Matthew Restall traces the genesis of European apotheosis in the Americas to an ambiguous passage of Columbus's, stating that in fact the apotheosis myth "is more a part of the Western understanding of the Conquest today than it was in the sixteenth century," arguing, "there was no apotheosis, no 'belief that the Spanish are gods'" (Seven Myths 108). Indeed, the apotheosis of the Western explorer/discoverer/conqueror unfolds in other Western historical narratives, from Columbus in the Caribbean to Cortés in Anáhuac to Cook in Hawai'i. The prevalence of this myth today thus tells us more about ourselves and how we desire to perceive these Others past and present than it informs us about actual historical events.

The second part of this assumption is no less telling. The identification of Cortés with Quetzalcóatl fifteen years before the Aztecs themselves receive him as such naturalizes the myth of Cortés's reception and subsequent apotheosis. As Michel-Rolph Trouillot remarks on contemporary popular assertions of Columbus's "discovery" of the Americas, here we are confronted with "an exercise in Eurocentric power that already frames future narratives of the event so described" (114). Nowhere in his letters to Carlos V does Cortés say that he was received as or that the "natives" thought him to be a god. Of particular interest is the famous passage where Cortés recounts his first meeting with Moctezuma and the latter's recounting of the story of Quetzalcóatl. In Cortés's recounting of this story, Moctezuma refers to Quetzalcóatl as a "señor" (chieftain), and asserts that the, "creemos y tenemos por cierto, [el rey español] sea nuestro señor natural" ("we believe and are certain that he is our natural lord"; 64; Pagden 86). Although Moctezuma situates the Spaniard's arrival within this prophetic tradition, he does not state that Cortés or any other European is a god. Referring to himself, the Aztec emperor says, "A mí véisme aquí que soy de carne y hueso como vos y

como cada uno” ‘See that I am of flesh and blood like you and all other men,’ drawing a comparison between himself and the Spaniard that leaves no doubt as to whether one is more immortal than the other (64; Pagden 86). Restall observes that neither Cortés’s chaplain and biographer Francisco López de Gómara, author of the Historia general de las Indias, nor the conquistador Bernal Díaz de Castillo, author of the Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España, mention the Aztec apotheosis of Cortés. Both writers say that Cortés and the Spanish were sometimes perceived as gods but, as Restall points out, “This is not the same as natives believing Spaniards actually to be gods” (Seven Myths 112). Tellingly, no one makes the explicit written statement that the Aztecs held Cortés to be the returning Quetzalcóatl until the Franciscan Toribio Benavente, also known as Motolinía, does so in his Historia de los indios de la Nueva España a work finished by 1565, a full forty years after Cortés’s original reception by the Aztecs (Townsend 48). Rather than innocent conjecture or cultural confusion, the tale of Cortés’s apotheosis was part of the Franciscan ideological project that sought to interpret indigenous histories and prophecies so that the Conquest would appear as though sanctioned according to both the divine plans of the Christian God they were importing and indigenous traditions themselves (Restall, Seven Myths 113).

Constructing Malinalli as a product of this tradition, the text situates her and her story within European interpretations of the Mesoamerican world before the conquest. As we will see, Malinalli’s own belief in the story of Quetzalcóatl translates into a distaste for Aztec rule that justifies the Spanish conquest. For the moment, it suffices to say that the story she tells, “the codex she would have painted,” in repeating the foundational assumptions of this European interpretive tradition, brings us no closer to the historical Malintzín. Rather, the text configures Malinalli as a storyteller in order to bring credibility to this non-

Mesoamerican, Western interpretive tradition by articulating these assumptions from within a Mesoamerican woman. The ultimate ideological consequences of this historical re-imagining are the focus of the next two sections.

Malinalli and Conquest

Malinalli's interpretation of the Quetzalcóatl myth exceeds its spiritual bounds and serves as a basis from which to delegitimize Aztec rule. On the one hand, the fact that Cortés capably exploited the latent political tensions within the Aztec empire, winning allies and thereby facilitating the fall of the Aztec capital, is well-known and indisputable. On the other, Esquivel's Malinalli possesses faith in a messianic vision of the god's return, and her reading of the Mesoamerican social milieu is based primarily on a generalized list of grievances as opposed to early-sixteenth-century cultural norms. Not only is she, "en total desacuerdo con la manera en que ellos [los Aztecas] gobernaban" 'completely opposed to the way in which they [the Aztecs] governed,' but she also "se oponía a un sistema que determinaba lo que una mujer valía, lo que los dioses querían y la cantidad de sangre que reclamaban para subsistir" ("could not agree with a system that determined what a woman was worth, what the gods wanted, and the amount of blood that they demanded for their subsistence"; Esquivel, Malinche 16; Mestre-Reed 20). She supposes, "si el señor Quetzalcóatl no se hubiera ido, su pueblo no habría quedado a expensas de los mexicas, su padre no habría muerto, a ella nunca la habrían regalado y los sacrificios humanos no existirían" ("if Lord Quetzalcóatl had never left, her people would not have been at the mercy of the Mexica. Her father would not have died and she would have never been given away. Human sacrifices would not exist"; Esquivel 16; Mestre-Reed 20). Malinalli even feels, "urgía un cambio social, político, y

spiritual” (“a political, social, and spiritual change was urgently needed”; Esquivel, Malinche 16; Mestre-Reed 20).

The structure of Malinalli’s political consciousness and its ties to the Quetzalcóatl myth blend the Franciscans’ ideological project, twentieth-century feminism, and the Western distaste for human sacrifice into a potent political ideology. In passages cited above, both women’s precarious position in society and human sacrifice are attributed to the Aztec’s ascendance, the undoing of these ills being promised in Quetzalcóatl’s return. Not only are the Aztecs usurpers, but they also stand-in for everything about pre-Hispanic cultures which cannot be reconciled according to twenty-first century norms and values. Malinalli, by contrast, becomes the positive figure through which the reader can redeem and understand these cultures. Unlike the Aztec Others, Malinalli believes in the equality of the sexes and abhors human sacrifice, beliefs that make her a sympathetic, visionary character to early-twenty-first-century readers. Given the spiritual aspect of Malinalli’s political convictions, the narrator tells us that she “estaba dispuesta a creer que su dios titular había elegido el cuerpo de los recién llegados a estas tierras para que ellos le dieran forma a su espíritu” (“was willing to believe that her tutelar god had chosen the bodies of the newly arrived men in her region to give shape to his spirit”; Esquivel, Malinche 16; Mestre-Reed 20). Her belief in the myth, which also implies a rejection of the political legitimacy of the Aztecs, thus reflects her preparedness to accept the re-ordering of the Mesoamerican reality that the Spanish represent. Moreover, her interpretation of the Spanish as Quetzalcóatl’s vessels contrasts sharply with Moctezuma’s belief that they are gods, a contrast that deserves thorough explication.

Malinalli's position is similar to the early conquest documents already cited insofar as both she and they propose similarities between the Spanish and gods, but never make such a connection explicit. As previously stated, she hopes that they are Quetzalcóatl's messengers or his avatars, but swiftly concludes that, "esos hombres extranjeros y ellos, los indígenas, eran lo mismo" ("those strangers and they, the natives, were alike"; Esquivel, Malinche 18; Mestre-Reed 22). Within the context of the apotheosis myth, Malinalli's recognition of the Spaniards as non-gods, as foreign men, reflects twenty-first-century popular knowledge and interpretation of the Conquest, not that of sixteenth-century Mesoamericans. Once again, the novel constructs Malinalli as sharing the twenty-first-century reader's knowledge and worldview, strengthening her appeal as a sympathetic, visionary character who is far ahead of her time. Textually this construction liberates Malinalli from being the superstitious, savage Other, configuring her as capable of gaining knowledge through Western-style empirical evidence, and paving the way for her later rebirth as the first woman of the New World. Unsurprisingly, this cannot happen without re-inscribing the present into the past as the passage opposes the category "foreigner" to that of "indigenous." At the time of the Conquest, there was no specific word through which Mesoamericans could identify the Spanish. Here, the use of "indigenous" to oppose the category "stranger" homogenizes peoples living in the Americas under a single term, recalling the oft-repeated interpretation of the Conquest as having been "the collision of two worlds." As she can see herself as "indigenous," we know that Malinalli is not and cannot be interpreted as such.

Malinalli's interpretation of these events contrasts sharply with that of the Aztec monarch Moctezuma. If Malinalli stands for those aspects of indigenous cultures which can be understood, assimilated, and reconciled within the Western discourses of progressive

history, Moctezuma embodies the already mentioned negative qualities of Aztec and Mesoamerican cultures, the very forces from which Malinalli hopes Quetzalcóatl will save her. Moctezuma is the Indio, the type of being that Tzvetan Todorov describes as being possessed by a “paralyzing belief that the Spanish are gods” (The Conquest 75). A “liquid fear” stemming from a number of successive, poor auguries that predict the Empire’s fall flows from his palace (Esquivel, Malinche 20; Mestre-Reed 24). “Moctezuma estaba seguro que la llegada de los españoles se debía a que Quetzalcóatl estaba de regreso y venía a pedirle cuentas” (“Moctezuma was sure that the arrival of the Spanish was due to the fact that Quetzalcóatl had returned and was coming to get his due”; Esquivel, Malinche 34-35; Mestre-Reed 38). Whereas before we found the Franciscan’s project in Malinalli’s interpretation of the myth, here we find such the same interpretation attributed to Moctezuma himself. Not only is he terrified by the auguries, but he is also “sure” the arrival of the Spanish heralds the return of Quetzalcóatl, a god who is “coming to get his due.” Esquivel’s Moctezuma is thus little more than an awestruck monarch. Undoubtedly, many post-conquest documents offer a similar interpretation of the Aztec ruler’s character (León-Portilla Visión). Given the state of relations between the Aztecs and other ethnic groups and the Franciscan’s desire to indoctrinate these new Christians, however, we must admit that the opportunity to disparage the Aztec monarch and blame him for the Conquest and its effects found a willing public in the Valley of Mexico.

More pertinent here is how this interpretation of the Aztec ruler’s role in the conquest, having been written by friars after the fact as a means to understand the conquest in terms of a universal Christian history, finds itself repeated in Esquivel’s text with Malinalli as its storyteller. As we have seen, Malinalli represents a vision of events accessible to

twenty-first-century readers, Moctezuma a vision of these same events seen by the Indio. There is no indigenous perspective. The novelistic repetition of these visions as a sort of common sense history reinforces the conquest as a historical inevitability and seeks to attribute this sense of inevitability to the actors themselves. It therefore also bestows historical legitimacy upon these same events and their outcome. Not only does Moctezuma reflect on the illegitimacy of Aztec rule, but he stands accountable for Aztec culture before the figure of the returning god. As if there were any doubt as to the ultimate meaning of such a scene, we are told that, “La enorme culpa que Moctezuma cargaba sobre sus espaldas lo hacía no sólo creer que había llegado la hora de pagar sus deudas sino que la llegada de los españoles marcaba el fin de su imperio. Malinalli podía impedir que esto sucediera, podía proclamar que los españoles no eran enviados de Quetzalcóatl” (“The great guilt that Moctezuma bore on his shoulders made him certain that not only was it time to pay old debts but that the arrival of the Spaniards signaled the end of his empire. Malinalli could prevent this from happening. She could proclaim that the Spaniards had not been sent by Quetzalcóatl”; Esquivel, Malinche 65-66; Mestre-Reed 68).

This passage, with its shift in narrative focus from inside the mind of Moctezuma to inside the mind of Malinalli, demonstrates that, in Esquivel’s rewriting of the conquest, Malinalli’s agency as storyteller comes at the cost of indigenous agency itself. As will be seen in the next section, Malinalli’s ideological construction enables Esquivel’s reimagining her as the mother of the mestizo Mexican nation. For the moment, it bears noting that through Moctezuma the text installs Aztec culture as a criminal abnormality. Moctezuma is “guilty” and, as previously stated, an illegitimate ruler. Moreover, as Moctezuma himself feels the guilt of his actions, we find that even he, on some level, represents Western values,

as his figure represents a self-conscious, guilt-ridden deviation from them. In the text we find that there is no alternative legitimate set of indigenous values that could produce an indigenous perspective upon these events. As suggested by Malinalli at various points in the text, the return of Quetzalcóatl implies the reinstatement of legitimate values and legitimate rule. Quetzalcóatl thus becomes a metaphor for what the West can redeem from the Mesoamerican milieu.

Malinalli, Malinche, and the Mexican Imaginary

Standing between Cortés and Moctezuma, Malinalli is more than the axis upon which the Conquest hinges. She is an agent capable of changing the course of history rather than the woman infamous for the betrayal of her ‘people’ and for being the passive instrument of Cortés’s conquests and desires. Given Malinalli’s new status, Esquivel’s text reinvents Malinalli as the mother of the mestizo Mexican nation through her marriage to Juan Jaramillo, inverting the misogynist paradigm put forth by the Mexican intellectual Octavio Paz. In his Laberinto de la soledad (The Labyrinth of Solitude; 1950) Paz asserts that for Mexicans dishonor comes from “ser fruto de una violación” (“being the fruit of a violation”; 88; Kemp 80). He goes on to say that Malinche, or Doña Marina, is “el símbolo de la entrega [...]” ‘the symbol of this violation [...],’ and that, “se ha convertido en una figura que representa a las indias, fascinadas, violadas o seducidas por los españoles” (“[she] becomes a figure representing the Indian women who were fascinated, violated, or seduced by the Spaniards”; Paz 94; Kemp 86). Esquivel’s Malinalli, by comparison, is largely the master of her own destiny.

As we saw in the previous section, in Equivel’s texts Malinalli’s agency rests on the criminalization of the indigenous world and the legitimation of the Conquest through the

figure of Moctezuma. What, then, is Malinalli's relationship with indigenous cultures after the events of the Conquest? Where do her marriage to Jaramillo and the establishment of the mestizo family situate indigenous memory and its stories within the emerging mestizo imaginary? Finally, given that the text configures Malinalli as an indigenous woman capable of telling her own story, as a storyteller, in order to give the mestizo a legitimate family history, where does the renarration of this story situate indigenous memory within the Mexican national imaginary?

The profound consequence of Malinalli's choice to help the Spaniards and punish Moctezuma resonates with her rejection of the indigenous world when she later comes face to face with the mother who abandoned her and her half-brother. Confronted with the mother who sent her into slavery as a child, Malinalli states:

Soy mujer del hombre principal, soy mujer del hombre del nuevo mundo. Tú te quedaste en lo viejo, en el polvo, en lo que ya no existe. Yo, en cambio, soy la nueva ciudad, la nueva creencia, la nueva cultura; yo inventé el mundo en el que ahora estás parada. No te preocupes. Tú no existes en mis códices, hace mucho te borré. (Esquivel, Malinche 150)

I am the woman of the foremost man, the woman of the man who is the new world. You remained here in the old world, in the dust, in what no longer exists. I, on the other hand, am the new city, the new beliefs, the new culture. I invented the world in which you are now standing. Don't worry, in my codices you don't exist. I erased you long ago. (Mestre-Reed 152)

With increasing fury, she goes on to tell her mother that

Sobreviví la muerte que decidiste para mí. Yo quiero decirte que no me abandonaste, fuiste tú la que se abandonó a sí misma. Fuiste tú la que se inventó todos los castigos que ahora sufres. Fuiste tú la que hizo la cárcel en la que ahora vives [...] No tengo deseo de dañarte. Puedes estar en paz. (Esquivel, Malinche 150)

I survived the death that you had decided for me. (I want to tell you that you did not abandon me, for it was you who abandoned yourself.) It was you who invented all the punishments that you now suffer from. It was you who made the prison where you now live [...] I have no wish to harm you. Be at peace (Mestre-Reed 152; *parens my translation*)

It bears mentioning that the source for this scene is Díaz del Castillo's Historia verdadera, and while we can agree with Townsend that we cannot know from his version, "Whether Díaz was fabricating the story in its entirety, or only embellishing," we should note that Esquivel's version of the story differs from Díaz del Castillo's account (149). Indeed, beyond the consolation Malinalli gives to her frightened mother and half-brother, Díaz del Castillo claims she also gave them jewels, gold, and clothes. He even goes so far as to compare her story favorably to the Biblical narrative of Joseph receiving his brothers in Egypt (Díaz del Castillo 62). This scene also occurs after her marriage to Jaramillo, whereas in Esquivel's text it takes place before.

These differences reflect the larger structures of Malinalli's ideological position already explored through her belief in Quetzalcóatl. Here, however, we find an explicit rejection of the indigenous world. Not only does her mother inhabit the "old world," but this world is an anachronism, a "jail" to which her mother has condemned herself. Malinalli, by contrast, has moved on, and is "the woman of the man who is the new world." As with Moctezuma, Malinalli's mother represents an aberration insofar as she "abandoned herself," an abandonment that implies the presence of a set of values from which she has knowingly strayed. The consequence of, and punishment for, this abandonment is the conquest. Malinalli does not threaten to punish her, asserting that the woman's current existence, a thing of her own creation, is punishment enough. Chastising her mother in this way, Malinalli echoes those discourses of national development which, originating in the nineteenth century, characterize the Indio as a recalcitrant savage who prefers to live in a hellish, backward world and thus represents an impediment to national unity and economic progress if not also a threat to civilization itself. One can recall, for example, that this sort of

discourse appears in the Argentinian Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's famous Facundo: civilización y barbarie (Facundo: Civilization and Barbarity) (1845). Faced with the horrors of Yucatán's Caste War (1847-1855) during that same time, Justo Sierra O'Reilly writes, "¡Bárbaros! Los maldigo hoy por su ferocidad salvaje, por su odio fanático y por su innoble afán de exterminio" 'Barbarians! Today I condemn them for their savage ferocity, their fanatical hatred and for their ignoble love of slaughter,' later claiming, "Obras que la civilización de trescientos años y los esfuerzos de nuestros abuelos levantaron, han desaparecido donde quiera que ha posado su sacrílego pie la raza maldita, que hoy paga con fuego y sangre los inmensos beneficios que ha recibido del pueblo de Yucatán" ("Works of civilization raised through the forces of our grandparents over three-hundred years ago have disappeared wherever that damned race has tread with its sacrilegious feet, as today it repays with blood and fire the benefits it has received from the Yucatecan people"; Sierra O'Reilly 56, 120-21; qtd. in Florescano, Étnia 345-46). My contention is not that Esquivel the author actively condemns indigenous peoples or would politically espouse the sort of viewpoint taken by intellectuals like Sarmiento and Sierra O'Reilly. Rather, as with these to nineteenth-century intellectuals, her text ultimately recycles a discourse that leaves no room for the Indio in the national order, meaning that he must consequently be erased.

The erasure of the Indio as a threat, however, involves a displacement of the Indio into the national past as opposed to the national present. For Malinalli, this happens as, having met with her mother, she realizes that "Lejos de [su madre] fue que pudo amarla y verla con un rostro diferente" ("When she was far from [her mother] she could love her and look upon her with different eyes"; Esquivel, Malinche 151; Mestre-Reed 152). Although this realization enables Malinalli to look upon her mother with tenderness, it does not

reconcile her previous rejection of her mother and the “old world” with Malinalli’s status in the emerging order of the “new world.” There is no second reunion in which mother and daughter symbolically enact the folding of the “old world” into the “new.” Instead, Malinalli’s passage from the “old world” of her mother to the “new world” she inhabits involves a literal and figurative journey that constructs indigenous memory as a vestige of this “old world.” Literally, her journey with Cortés to put down Olíd’s rebellion solidifies Cortés’s place as master of the colonial order as well as Malinalli’s role within that order. Figuratively this “new world” thus represents the end of indigenous autonomy, the “old world” of her mother and half-brother. Reflecting the discourse of the Indio, the distance between Malinalli, her mother and half-brother is spatial as well as temporal. Malinalli is the present and future, whereas they are the past stuck in the present. She continues traveling while they remain behind. Indigenous memory, by implication, ends with these figures. Malinalli and her story install a new order.

The erasure of indigenous memory as an independent entity nears completion through Malinalli’s marriage to the Spaniard Juan Jaramillo, as their union promises to reestablish Mexican national identity through the fictionalized, stable, bourgeois, mestizo family unit. Portraying this union as, on some level, a marriage between willing equals displaces Cortés’s role in the conquest narrative and renders the search for paternal legitimacy outlined in Paz’s Laberinto de la soledad redundant (72-97). Not only does Malinalli cease to be the image of the Indian woman violated by the Spanish, la Malinche, but her offspring, the avatars of the cosmic race, also cease being, to follow Paz, the fruits of such a rape (88). Returning to Sommer’s observations from the beginning of the chapter, we can say that the marriage and prosperity of this new mestizo family resolves the racial, gender, political, and economic

conflicts produced by the conquest. Already present within the Mexican national imaginary, the all-encompassing myth of a common mestizo ancestry, as pointed out by Natividad Gutiérrez Chong, facilitates the notion that “Mexicans form part of a ‘single family’” and, as such, it occupies a privileged place in the textbooks of Mexican schoolchildren (76). Instead of being taken to Spain by his famous father, in Malinche Martín Cortés remains in México with his mother, her husband, and his half-sister. Malinalli teaches the children to read and write, in both Spanish and Náhuatl, and likes that they eat bread as well as tortillas (Esquivel, Malinche 171). Upon her death the family gathers, possibly every year as the passage is narrated in the imperfect tense, and each member reads a poem in Náhuatl dedicated to Malinalli (Esquivel, Malinche 183). The fictionalized ending enables the mestizo to successfully assume the mantle of homogenizing hybridity proposed by Vasconcelos in his ruminations of the Mexican as the “raza cósmica” ‘cosmic race.’ The conflicts of racial and cultural mixing, of asymmetrical gender relations from the conquest to the present, are presented settled in the form of the idyllic, original mestizo family.

Where, however, does the text situate indigenous memory? If Malinalli can now tell her own story, to whom does she tell that story? If she is a storyteller, how does she transmit the knowledge she embodies? Having given birth to two mestizo children, in a prayer to the Aztec goddess Tonantzin, Malinalli ponders the future of this emerging mixed race in Vasconcelian terms, stating that “Ellos [...] no pertenecen a mi mundo ni al de los españoles” ‘they [...] do not belong to my world or to the Spaniards’ going on to say that “son el nuevo recipiente para que el verdadero pensamiento de Cristo-Quetzalcóatl se instale nuevamente en los corazones y proyecte al mundo su luz” (“they, who along with those now being born are the new vessel whereby the true thought of Christ-Quetzalcóatl is installed again in

the hearts of men hearts and casts its light on the world”; Esquivel, Malinche 179; Mestre-Reed 181). As the “woman of the man of the new world” who has rejected the “old world,” Malinalli constructs a cultural legacy based on hybridity and mestizaje. Her children, “along with those now being born” are the inheritors of a new cultural and racial paradigm that, as we have already seen, leaves no room for a contemporary indigeneity.

My intention here is not to deny the existence of mestizaje as a historical fact, nor to contest its importance in the course of the history of the Americas since 1492. Rather, it should be noted that within this discourse of mestizaje indigenous cultures constitute the passive the raw material with which active Western culture articulates cultural mixing. As we have already seen, Malinalli’s understanding of the Mesoamerican myth of Quetzalcóatl and her interpretation of the Conquest have more in common with European perceptions than those indigenous to the Americas. Her understanding of the emerging cultural order is no different.

This asymmetry is underscored by Malinalli’s use of language as, upon her return from Cortés’s expedition against Cristóbal de Olíd, she must rely on Spanish to regain her young son’s trust. Speaking the European language to her son she:

descubrió la belleza del idioma de Cortés y agradeció que dios le hubiera regalado esa nueva forma de expresarse, en un lenguaje que abría nuevos lugares en su mente y gracias al cual su hijo podía comprender su amor e madre.
La relación entre Martín y Malinalli poco a poco fue mejorando y el cordón de plata que alimentaba su unión logró establecerse por completo. (Esquivel, Malinche 165)
discovered the beauty of Cortés’s language and appreciated that god had given her that new method with which to express herself, in a language which opened new spaces in her mind. Thanks to it, her son could understand his mother’s love.
The relationship between Martín and Malinalli improved little by little, and the silver cord that nourished their union was reestablished completely. (Mestre-Reed 167)

Spanish thus takes primacy as the intimate language of communication between mother and son, metaphorically reconnecting the umbilical cord through which the relationship between

them is sustained. We can juxtapose this image of Spanish reestablishing the “silver cord nourishing their union” with a scene on the previous page in which Malinalli sings a song in Náhuatl to her sleeping son. Despite the presence of a blue light that envelopes their bodies, the text describes this “canción con la que cientos de veces lo durmió en sus brazos cuando era bebé” ‘song with which hundreds of times she had put him to sleep in her arms when he was an infant’ as being sung “en náhuatl, la lengua de sus antepasados” (“in Náhuatl, the language of his ancestors”; Esquivel, Malinche 164; Mestre-Reed 166). Whereas Spanish is the active mode of communication between mother and son, Náhuatl connects them both to the past and its status as a language has been reduced to this symbolic quality. Náhuatl belongs to the “old world,” Spanish to the “new.” Certainly, Martín and his half-sister María grow up speaking both languages, but given this state of affairs Spanish takes precedence. Even Malinalli’s own descriptions of Spanish construct this language as somehow completing her subjectivity, opening areas inaccessible to her in Náhuatl.

Given this configuration of the mestizo family as one in which Spanish, and by extension European culture, takes precedence, how does this re-presentation reverberate within the Mexican national imaginary? On the one hand, it resolves the conundrum of mestizaje formulated by Paz when he claims, “Al repudiar la Malinche [...] el mexicano rompe sus ligas con el pasado, reniega de su origen y se adentra solo en la vida histórica” ‘When he repudiates La Malinche [...] the Mexican breaks his ties with the past, renounces his origins, and lives in isolation and solitude,’ an act that Paz feels denies the hybridity of Mexican culture (95; Kemp 87). In using Malinalli to embody indigenous culture and its stories, the text successfully recasts la Malinche as the legitimate mother of the Mexican

nation and indigenous cultures and memory as the mestizo's legitimate heritage. Again, this is indeed a powerful reivindication of the historical Malinche.

On the other hand, however, the text's celebration of Mexican hybridity reduces indigenous cultures to a secondary role. If these cultures are the mestizo's heritage, they are only a heritage and not an active, living part of mestizo identity. We can recall the image of the mother Malinalli leaves behind, frozen in time as an indigenous woman who represents the "old world." We may also return to the novel's use of Náhuatl and Spanish. Malinalli's bilingual condition reflects the actual bilingual condition of indigenous cultures today insofar as dialogue with the national must be carried out in the dominant language, Spanish. From this perspective the Spanish language determines the discursive field through which indigenous peoples are interpolated as national citizen-subjects. In this sense, the acquisition of Spanish would seem to complete the nationalized indigenous subject. This linguistic power is unidirectional, as Malinalli's husband Jaramillo is the only character at the novel's end who may have acquired Náhuatl as a second language, and even he would seem to have done so in the symbolic context of remembering Malinalli privately within the home. To reiterate, Náhuatl becomes a language stripped of its primary communicative value. As such, the narrative ultimately transposes indigenous language and memory, like the book jacket's codex, as symbolic capital, a shared heritage invested securely within the country's national imaginary.

Even as Esquivel's text provides this powerful feminist rereading of the Malinche narrative, it thus relates Mexico's indigenous heritage to the country's common past. Malinalli, the Mexican Eve of the painter José Clemente Orozco, interprets the indigenous world through European eyes in order to render this world intelligible to a non-indigenous

readership and to justify the Spanish Conquest as a historical necessity. With the coming of the Spanish the indigenous world is irrevocably changed, and Malinalli, as the legitimate wife of Jaramillo, leaves this world behind as the legacy of her mestizo children. Indigenous people find themselves excluded a priori from Mexico's mestizo family. Like Náhuatl at the end of the novel, indigenous peoples pertain to the past and can be redeployed in the present to commemorate that past, but have little actual value to the contemporary nation. If Esquivel's novel imagines the birth of the national, mestizo Mexican subject in this way, how do indigenous authors remember these same events? How do these authors deal with a history that relegates the articulation of indigenous identities to an "old world"? These questions will be the focus of the next section.

Our Mother, Our Memory, Our Land: Dzul Ek and what happened at Maní

As I stated in the Introduction, in his Relación de las cosas de Yucatán (1566) Franciscan Diego de Landa provides us with a first-hand account how Europeans interpreted indigenous writing systems and the histories they represented. He states, "Hallámosles gran número de estos libros de estas sus letras, y porque no tenían cosa en que no hubiese superstición y falsedades del Demonio, se los quemamos todos, lo cual sentían a maravilla y les daba pena" ("We found a great number of books in these letters, and since they contained nothing but superstitions and falsehoods of the devil we burned them all, which they took most grievously, and which gave them great pain"; Landa 185; Gates 82). These oft-cited lines are one of two commentaries the friar penned on one of the most famous, tragic, and important events of Maya colonial history: the burning of Maya codices at the *auto de fé* carried out under Landa's orders in the town of Maní in 1562. As to the reasons for the event, in an earlier mention of the *auto de fé* Landa states that, after having been given instruction

on Christian living, the young people “fueron pervertidos por los sacerdotes que en su idolatría tenían por los señores, y tornaron a idolatrar y hacer sacrificios no sólo de sahumerios sino de sangre humana, sobre lo cual los frailes hicieron inquisición [...]; y se celebró un auto [de fe]” (“were perverted by their priests and chiefs to return to their idolatry; this they did, making sacrifices not only by incense, but also of human blood. Upon this the friars held an Inquisition [...] they held trial and celebrated an Auto [de fé]; Landa 112; Gates 30). Landa’s full description, even though he does mention that a few people died during the subsequent proceedings, pales in comparison to Inga Clendinnen’s estimation of the human losses during the three months of terror that followed. More than 4500 Maya were tortured, 158 died, 13 or more of those by suicide, and a countless number were crippled under the instructions of the Spanish priest (Clendinnen 76).

Despite the fact that we condemn him now and that some of his contemporaries even condemned him within his own time, we must view Landa as the ultimate embodiment of early Spanish colonialism’s paradoxical evangelical impulse. After all, the man directly responsible for destroying most of Maya culture’s written history at the time of the conquest relates these events to us in a book on sixteenth-century Maya culture. Similarly, a few years after the events described by Landa, Bernardino de Sahagún, a Franciscan doing the Lord’s work in central Mexico, justified the production of his monumental work on Aztec customs by comparing himself to a doctor who must first be familiar with his patient’s illness before he can eradicate it (17). Sahagún, whose historical figure scholars hold in higher esteem than Landa’s, also mentions the burning of sacred books and, like Landa, does so not within a description of the actual event but in a section on indigenous writing systems (583). For both men native writing operated as a kind of infernal alphabet which opened the door to more

threatening idolatrous practices of idol worship and sacrifice. Latin script thus became a way to domesticate the indigenous Other's cultural knowledge and practices, rendering them transparent and recognizable to the concerned eyes of watchful friars. While writing his own text, the Relación de las cosas de Yucatán, Landa perhaps had these ends in mind. Exiled to Spain in the *auto de fé*'s aftermath, Landa composed his work during a war of attrition with the man who replaced him as Bishop of Yucatán, Francisco de Toral. Upon Toral's death in 1573, Landa returned to Yucatán and assumed the deceased Toral's bishopric. Clendinnen speculates that the book was a powerful recruiting tool, as thirty men were ready to join Landa on his voyage to a place which was by then considered an unglamorous colonial outpost (108-09). More than a recruitment manual, the book would have also enabled these men to recognize the presence of paganism from the moment they landed.

In some respects no less a recruitment tool, Carlos Armando Dzul Ek's "Bix úuchik u bo'ot ku'si'ip'il 'Manilo'ob' tu ja'abil 1562" offers a revision of this well-known story from the point of view of indigenous Yukatek Maya memory of colonial history. Seeking to provide a Yukatek Maya audience with an alternative to national narratives of conquest and colonization, Dzul Ek's play inverts the paradigm of Malinche as found in Esquivel's text through the figure of its nameless xpul ya'a.³ The play begins with a chorus invoking the great Maya cities of the peninsula to "wake up." In the following scene the ruler Tutul Xiu tells the assembled people that he has had bad dreams, and he calls on the xpul ya'a to interpret them. She interprets his dreams as representing the coming of strange people, and as her character exits Friar Diego de Landa and the rest of the Spaniards arrive and begin the violent imposition of European culture upon Xiu and his people. As the Europeans begin

³ "Xpul ya'a" is usually translated as "witch" in English. Given the charged connotation of witch in English, I will not translate the word.

burning books and idols, the defiant xpul ya'a is taken captive and punished for being an idolater. The play ends with everyone heading off stage, the Maya going to their houses and the Spaniards setting out for other parts of the peninsula.

Called upon to interpret the dreams of the Maya ruler Tutul Xiu, the xpul ya'a recasts indigenous prophecy as knowledge in such a way that Xiu partially recasts the role of Mocteczuma. Unlike his Aztec counterpart, he embodies the indigenous ruler who, although failing to stop the Spanish invaders, nonetheless remains the legitimate ruler of his land and people. The fact that the xpul ya'a, and not Xiu, assumes the mantle of what becomes, with the burning of the codices, an oral Maya culture, powerfully textualizes over five-hundred years of indigenous resistance while doing so from a feminine locus. Whereas Malinche symbolizes the birth of a new race and the erasure of indigenous memory the xpul ya'a represents the rejection of such erasure, the viability of indigenous culture, the continuity of contemporary Maya with their past.

The Xpul ya'a and Myth as Prophetic History

In order to discuss a character whose role revises hegemonic version of history, one must begin by outlining the larger structural contours of that history itself. In this section I examine the construction of the Indio's history within the Mexican national imaginary and the Dzul Ek's use of the xpul ya'a as the embodiment of an independent Maya memory. She tells the story of the conquest before it happens, thereby bringing this narrative under Maya cultural control. As Dzul Ek aligns the dramatic representation of the xpul ya'a with the historical figure of the Chilam Balam, or Jaguar Prophet, the xpul ya'a articulates a present day, decolonized Maya history that reinterprets pre-colonial prophecies as history as opposed to myth or legend.

As implied by the title, Dzul Ek's play decenters larger, national conquest narratives such as the one found in Esquivel's Malinche by relocating the geography and time of conquest events. The extent to which Aztec history and the conquest of Tenochtitlán are identified with Mexican national culture and history cannot be understated. As I noted earlier, the image of the eagle devouring a serpent while perched on top of a cactus, the sign that ended the Aztec migration from Aztlán and showed them where to found their city, appears on everything from Mexican currency to the Mexican flag. There are perhaps few symbols in the modern world to which we could attribute the subtle nationalizing implications of the eagle and the serpent. Using Benedict Anderson's terminology, we can say that the image of eagle and the serpent "imagines" twenty-first-century Mexico as the continuation of the Aztec empire, a move which in turn situates the capital, Mexico's Federal District, as the geographic locale of the country's foundation. On the surface, this is an ideological move with roots dating back to Mexican independence and the need to configure a national history capable of transcending Spanish colonization (Taylor 96). More profoundly, the genealogy this symbol traces homogenizes the country's indigenous past while glossing over the indigenous present. Ironically, then, a gesture which appropriates an indigenous culture for the nation marginalizes the histories, languages, and knowledges of the country's other ethnic groups. Asserting differences of geography and time different from those of the Spanish conquest of the Aztecs, the title of Dzul Ek's play draws our attention to the contingent nature of such national imaginings.

The action takes place in Maní in 1562, more than forty years after the fall of Tenochtitlán. Referencing this date, Dzul Ek's text enters into broader historical debates about the nature of the conquest of the Maya area. As opposed to central Mexico, where the

Spanish conquered an imperial city and so swiftly established domain over an expansive territory, the Maya area had no hegemonic, unifying political entity at the time of the conquest. Here the conquest lacks the mythical quality of inevitable European triumph associated with the taking of the Aztec capital in 1521. Twentieth-century historian Robert Chamberlain, for example, associates the conquest of central Yucatán with the foundation of Mérida at the site of the Maya city Jo' in 1541 (202-19). Matthew Restall observes that Chamberlain, however, bases this historical interpretation on the writings of Landa and another Franciscan, Diego López de Cogolludo. In their respective works, 1541 does not so much mark the date of the conquest's completion as it describes an ideological boundary beyond which all Maya conflicts are no longer acts of resistance but acts of rebellion (Restall, Maya Conquistador 14). Restall asserts that, at least in Yucatán, the "conquest" lasted the length of the colonial period (Maya Conquistador 15). Lest Restall's assertion should seem the theoretical exaggeration of a U.S.-based historian, one should remember that the last independent Maya political entities, the Itzá city of Tayasal and the Ko'woj city of Zacpeten both endured until 1697. Far from being ancient, these cities were contemporaries of modern New York, London, and Paris. Simply by shifting the geography and date of the conquest narrative, Dzul Ek's play brings the entire discourse of conquest into question.

Within this context the xpul ya'a bridges the gap between pre-colonial literate Maya culture and post-conquest oral Maya culture. She embodies the viability and continuity of Maya historical memory and cultural knowledge. Unlike Esquivel's Malinalli, whose belief in the God Quetzalcóatl serves to undercut indigenous political autonomy represented by Moctezuma, the xpul ya'a works in concert with Tutul Xiu. Moreover, in further contrast to Malinalli, Moctezuma, or Xiu himself, the xpul ya'a is less an historical personage turned

into an archetype than she is an archetype reconfigured as a historical personage. When she is summoned to interpret Xiu's dream, the Maya ruler tells her "tene' in wojlile' jach ma'alobech..." ("I know you are very good"; Dzul Ek 7). Even though nameless and, as a consequence, standing in for Maya memory itself, this particular xpul ya'a comes onto the scene as being a superlative representation of such knowledge. Through her dramatic representation in plazas throughout the Yucatecan peninsula, she literally tells the audience about the power of Maya ways of interpreting the world.

We can interpret the xpul ya'a the embodiment of Maya historical memory and knowledge because of her associations with the mysterious historical figure of the Chilam Balam or Jaguar Prophet. As we will see, this personage appears in colonial documents and as the "author" of several Maya manuscripts, the books of the Chilam Balam, which circulated throughout the Yucatan peninsula. The xpul ya'a is the embodiment of the historical memory and knowledge the Chilam Balam represents as she stages the Chilam Balam in the play and speaks his prophecies at the moment of the conquest, in turn representing a profound reinterpretation of Maya prophecies and Maya historical agency. Landa himself refers to Chilam Balam, his presence in the lands around Maní, and his foretelling of the Spanish conquest in his Relación, stating that:

[...] un indio llamado Ah Cambal, de oficio *chilan*, que es el que tiene a su cargo dar las respuestas del Demonio, les dijo públicamente que presto serían señoreados por una gente extranjera, y les predicarían un dios y la virtud de un palo que en su lengua llamó *vahomche*, que quiere decir palo enhiesto de gran virtud contra demonios. (Landa 101; italics in original)

[...] an Indian named **Ah-cambal**, filling the office of **Chilán**, that is one who has the charges of giving out the responses of the demon, told pulbically that they would soon be ruled by a foreign race who would preach a God and the virtue of a wood which in their tongue he called **vahom-ché**, meaning a tree lifted up, of great power against the demons. (Gates 19; bold in original)

Landa's representation of the Chilam Balam reflects the aforementioned broader Franciscan project to use Mesoamerican prophetic traditions against themselves, essentially using them to delegitimize these ways of knowing. Although Landa lends credence to the existence of this personage, he carefully asserts that the Chilam Balam is an intermediary between the Maya and the devil. As such, the Chilam Balam comfortably responds to both Christian and Maya worldviews. Although we cannot determine Landa's source with exact certainty, his one-time assistant and ethnographic informant, the Maya Gaspar Antonio Chi, records a similar story in his Relación de la ciudad de Mérida (Record of the City of Merida), written in 1579. Chi records the Chilam Balam's presence in Maní, but also adds that this city did not resist the invading Spanish because of his prophecies. Possibly repeating Landa's written account of a story he had first related to Landa, Chi states that:

un yndio principal, que era secerdote, llamado Chilam-balam, que le tenían por gran profeta y adivino, y este les dixo que dentro de breve tiempo vernía de haza donde sale el sol una jente blanca y barbada, y que traerían levantada una señal como esta † ala qual no podían llegar sus Dioses, y huyan della, y que esta jente avia de señorear la tierra, y que los que los rrecibiesen de paz no les harían may nynguno [...]. (Xiu 47)
 there was an important Indian, who was a priest, called Chilam-Balam, whom was taken to be a great prophet and diviner, and he told that that within a short time from where the sun rises there would come white bearded people, and that they would bring raised a sign like this one † to which their gods could not come, and hide from it, and that these people would govern the land, and to those who received them in peace would come no harm [...]. (my translation)

The citation from Chi is strikingly similar to that of Landa, down to the syntax it employs in telling this story. Indeed, Chi's text seems to revise Landa's account, adding information ignored by the Friar. Chi, however, uses this account to represent, on its own terms, Maya foreknowledge of the coming of the Spanish and the ultimate power of the Jaguar Prophet.

On the one hand, and as explored in relation to the myth of Quetzalcóatl in the first half of this chapter, accounts of prophecies foretelling the Spaniards' arrival and the

inevitability of their conquest and rule held obvious appeal for Spanish priests. In effect these prophecies, foretelling of the Spaniards' arrival and the Indios' defeat, could serve to delegitimize the continuity of indigenous cultural autonomy by portraying these cultures as self-consciously doomed from within, thereby legitimating Spanish hegemony. Implemented as part of Spanish colonial ideology, however, this use of indigenous prophecies against themselves had to be filtered through localized structures of indigenous knowledge. In central México, where the Spanish had the advantage of pre-existing Aztec social institutions which unified the empire, it would seem that this ideology had its intended effect. Indeed, the image of Cortés being received as the god Quetzalcóatl persists until the present day. However, in Yucatán internal Maya political rivalries dating to a time well before the conquest would have determined the reception of any similar project as Maya actors jockeyed for position within the emerging colonial order.

On the other hand, prophecy also offered indigenous groups a path to reconcile indigenous ways of knowing with unforeseen and previously unthinkable events. Dzul Ek's xpul ya'a corresponds to this historical-prophetic tradition and recasts it for a late-twentieth-century Yukatek Maya audience. Under indigenous, as opposed to Spanish, control, the dissemination of stories concerning the "original" coming of Christianity to the Americas or of prophecies concerning indigenous foreknowledge of the Conquest restored historical continuity to worldviews that contained no prior referents for these things. For example, in her seminal work on Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala's illustrated letter to the Phillip III of Spain, Nueva crónica y buen gobierno (1615), Rolena Adorno notes how the epistle's author bases his claim that "there was no conquest in Perú" on the fact that the kingdom was given over in peace to the Spaniard Francisco Pizarro and on the intervention of the Virgin Mary

and Saint James, who blinded the eyes of the Andean warriors and thus prevented any armed resistance. These events happen as a result of the region's prior conversion to Christianity by Saint Bartholomew during apostolic times, well before the Spaniards' arrival (Adorno, Writing 27-29). Constructing an alternative history of the Conquest, Guaman Poma uses colonial discourse against itself to create a platform legitimated in the Spaniards' own terms, and from which he can rail against Spanish abuses, proposing a new form of cooperative rule in which Andean and Spaniard are as equal before the crown as they are before God.

Given the singular importance attributed to Guaman Poma by critics like Adorno and Mignolo, it is interesting to note that the same mechanisms of decolonization are at work in Yucatán in Gaspar Antonio Chi's text almost seventy years earlier. With regard to Dzul Ek's play, it is equally important that the figure Chi uses as a protagonist in this decolonial move is the Chliam Balam. Dzul Ek's play thus self-consciously participates in a Yukatek Maya decolonial tradition that is over four-hundred years old. Interestingly enough, these mechanisms of decolonization are also present more generally in the Yukatek Maya books of the Chilam Balam. As of 2008 we know of eight copies of these works and of another which has been lost. Each copy, however, is not an exact copy of a previous manuscript as each bears the hand of the original copyist and subsequent authors, something readily observable in the Chilam Balam of Chumayel, the most famous and perhaps complete of the texts attributed to the Jaguar Priest. As with the Popol Wuj, scholars commonly assume that at least part of the original text contains information transposed from glyphic sources (Thompson 38-39; 197). The Chilam Balam itself foretells of a time when "Perdido será el signo jeroglífico y perdida será la enseñanza que está detrás de él" ("The hieroglyphic sign will be lost along with the teaching behind it"; Barrera Vázquez 106; my translation). This

text, written in Latin script, foretells Maya history in order to reconcile the cultural consequences of the conquest with Maya history before and after these events, thereby restoring a sense of continuity to the narration of Maya history. In Restall's words, "the trick of turning calamity into continuity effectively weakens the impact of the Conquest by denying its uniqueness and its inexplicability; more than this, it also serves to deny that the Conquest, as the Spaniards saw it, ever occurred" (Maya Conquistador 43).

Maya control over the books of the Chilam Balam and its prophecies differentiates the ultimate meaning of Jaguar Prophet, and hence the xpul ya'a of Dzul Ek's play, from the Quetzalcóatl myth and its various interpretations. Whereas the latter was used in the colonial period to portray indigenous cultures as self-consciously doomed to destruction, the former, despite being mentioned in the texts of both the Yucatek Maya Gaspar Antonio Chi and the Franciscan Diego de Landa, resists incorporation into any such colonizing project. Although the Chilam Balam appears in the works of these two sixteenth-century authors, the actual books of the Chilam Balam came to the attention of Western academia only in the nineteenth century. For over four-hundred years the Chilam Balam represented a decolonial Maya history, unseen and largely unknown to outsiders, which emphasized cultural continuity and viability in the face of hegemonic regional and national cultures.

Adopting the Chilam Balam's prophetic tone, the xpul ya'a in Dzul Ek's play tells Tutul Xiu, "Mnnnn táan in wilik te'el' ya'ab ba'alo'ob jela'antak...Jach ma'a tu xáantal káan k'uchuk sak oot' winko'ob weye.' Leti'ob kun taasik nukuck ba'alche'ob k'aastak" ("Hmmmm. I see many strange things here...Before too long people with white skin will arrive here. They will bring many ugly animals with them"; Dzul Ek 7). She goes on to repeat the Jaguar Priest's vision of the coming of Christianity, calling it a calamity for the

people. Through the xpul ya'a's ability to foretell the future, the text assumes a decolonial stance in relation to the historical events about to unfold. Tellingly, she does not repeat the Chilam Balam's warning that the people should become Christian in anticipation of the Spaniards' arrival. The Christian religion, which Landa violently introduces later in the play, arrives as a cultural imposition and not as naturalized part of Maya culture. The irony of the work's title, of which Dzul Ek is well-aware, comes out of this historical interpretation (Dzul Ek Interview). Without Christianity there is no sin, so how can the people of Maní pay for their sins if they are not Christians?

This historical foreknowledge is not, however, limited to the known past. The interplay between the past, present, and future uses the fulfillment of past prophecy to legitimate prophesied future events as the xpul ya'a's final prophecy deals with things yet to come in both the theatrical-literary and actual presents. Drawing on yet another prophecy from the Chilam Balam, the xpul ya'a recounts how there will come a time when the cenote or sinkhole in Maní will be the last place on earth where there is water, and people will have to sacrifice a child to an old woman there in order to obtain water to drink (Dzul Ek 7). As with the Chilam Balam, which records dates and prophecies well-beyond its dates of composition, the play situates the xpul ya'a's knowledge, and thus Maya knowledge in general, as pertaining to an intellectual tradition that remains relevant down to the present.

The Xpul ya'a and the Ambivalent Conquest

Given the nature of this prophetic tradition and its contemporary embodiment in Dzul Ek's xpul ya'a, to paraphrase the title of Inga Clendinnen's book, we can say that the conquest of the Yucatan peninsula was ambivalent at best. This section focuses on the representation of its ambivalence within the play and the xpul ya'a's role in Maya resistance

to the Spanish. As will be seen, in its portrayal of Tutul Xiu, and not the xpul ya'a, as a protagonist in these events, the play again situates the xpul ya'a as the embodiment of a generalized Maya tradition as opposed to the individualized, historical Xiu. Thus, the story of Tutul Xiu is one of loss, conquest, and the end of his rule, while the story of the xpul ya'a is one of struggle, on-going resistance, and the permanence of Maya memory, knowledge, and culture.

The structure of the play itself decenters the conquest and Landa's *auto de fé* by associating one with the other and situating them both within this broader scope of an independent Maya history. In not mentioning the military subjugation of the peninsula and the foundation of Mérida in 1541, the play argues for the *auto de fé*'s being interpreted as the defining moment of an attempted conquest. The play rewrites history to have Diego de Landa and Tutul Xiu meet for the first time in the context of a series of misunderstandings that rapidly spiral into the horror of the *auto*. The very portrayal of Tutul Xiu constitutes one such revision that strategically privileges oral Maya accounts over written accounts. Donald Frischmann notes that Kukum Xiu, not Tutul Xiu, was the Maya ruler of Maní at the time of the *auto de fé*. The latter was the onetime ruler of Uxmal who moved the seat of government to Maní in 1420, well before the events recounted in the play. Frischmann reasons that, in the play's portrayal of Tutul Xiu as opposed to the more historically accurate Kukum Xiu, "an archetype---which we might call the Cultural Hero/Defender---therefore leaps forward in time by four generations in the popular mind, thus eliminating an unworthy ancestor from collective historical memory" ("Contemporary" 75).

Given Tutul Xiu's symbolic importance in Maní, the weight of which can still be felt today, the encounter between Landa and Xiu takes on the air of an epic conflict.

This conflict centers around a lack of linguistic intelligibility which produces, in turn, a lack of cultural intelligibility. Ironically, as the Spanish characters speak Spanish and the Maya characters speak Yukatek, only a bilingual audience can fully understand the play. In its interpellation of a bilingual audience, Dzul Ek's play once again decenters Spanish-language linguistic and cultural hegemony and reasserts the importance of indigenous languages and culture in the present. From this mutual unintelligibility, the play's characters are reduced to a series of aggressive actions, with Landa and the Spanish eventually imposing Spanish language, culture, and religion on the Maya. Frustrated over the Maya ruler's inability to pronounce his name, Landa screams, "¡Yo me llamo Diego de Landa, vengo de España y les hablo en nombre de Jesús Cristo, nuestro Dios único, y nuestra religión es católica! ("I am Diego de Landa, I come from Spain, and I speak to you in the name of Jesus Christ, our only God, and our religion is Catholic!"; Dzul Ek 9). Equally frustrated, Xiu replies "Ma'a tin na'atik ba'ax ka wa'ak, to'one ich maya k-T'aan, ich maya k-wenel, ich maya k-waya'al. Mina'an ba'ax o'olal k-kanik u la'ak ba'alo'ob beya'" ("I don't understand what you're saying, we speak in Maya, dream in Maya, think in Maya. There's no reason for us to learn any of these other things"; Dzul Ek 9). Hearing without understanding Xiu's retort, Landa orders his people to begin indoctrinating the local population and burning their idols, raising the twin signs of military and spiritual conquest: a rifle and the cross.

As Xiu watches these events unfold the Maya people divest him of his cultural authority as Landa divests him of his political authority. The stage directions state that the people "Cuestionando la actitud entreguista de Tutul Xiu" 'Questioning Tutul Xiu's defeatist attitude' say, "Chéen ta wo'olale' la'a ba'ax k-yúuchul to'on. W ka'a wa'ato'on ka'ach ka'a ba'ate'enako'one' tso'ok k'e'esik ti'o'ob ka'ach bi u beeta'ale'" ("only because of you these

things are happening to us. Why are these things happening to us if we can stand on our feet, fight, and stop them?"; Dzul Ek 13). In doing so, they transfer cultural authority and historical continuity from prominent social figures like Tutul Xiu to the nameless xpul ya'a. In accordance with the idea first put forth by Nancy Farris, we can state that Maya ethnogenesis, from the conquest to the present, has been a collective enterprise, and we find this collective ideology reflected in the transference of power from Xiu to the xpul ya'a. Having an anonymous archetype, as opposed to an historical figure, bear the burdens of Maya cultural, social, and historical continuity, accurately reflects the larger ideology of collective indigenous cultural and material survival in the face of the conquest of the Americas. Already the source of pre-Hispanic Maya knowledge in her role as prophet, the xpul ya'a takes center stage as the embodiment of Maya cultural autonomy and continuity under colonial conditions. Within the play, she will be the storyteller through whom the Maya survive as a people.

The Xpul ya'a: Mother of the Maya and the Decolonial Mexican Imaginary

Brought before the Friars for sentencing at the *auto de fé*, the xpul ya'a proclaims, "Lelo' kensa bixi, kensa ba'ax ka wa'ake'ex, to'one' je'ex suki to'one bey ken beeti. U máan u piktani ja'abo'obe mixmáak u k'exko'one'" ("Dressed like this, dressed like you say, we will never change how we do things. A thousand years will pass, and our answer will be the same"; Dzul Ek 14). These words of defiance, spoken in Maya not by the Maya hero Tutul Xiu but by the xpul ya'a, the archetype of all Maya women, generates the very resistance of which it speaks as it takes things denigrated in the Mexican national imaginary, indigenous language and dress, and resignifies them through their repetition here. Following Judith Butler, we can say it is a type of "insurrectionary speech [that] becomes the necessary

response to injurious language, a risk in response to being put at risk, a repetition in language that forces change” (163). This condition arises because these lines, spoken in Maya to a bilingual audience, implicate the audience in the xpul ya’a’s resistance, making its individual members her ultimate heirs as they are all living representations of this project’s success. That is, despite the presence of outward changes and new patterns of living from 1562 to 2009, there remains something “distinctively and indentifiably Maya” about Maya culture (Farris 9).

Following Sommer’s terminology, while Malinalli’s marriage to Jaramillo represents a re-imagining of the mestizo family and Mexican national identity that resolves the nation’s internal racial, economic, regional, and gender conflicts, the xpul ya’a’s conviction before the *auto de fé* rejects any such resolution. A single Maya woman, she stands in for both the extreme violence visited upon Maya women by Spanish men and the limited agency that those women successfully exercised, across the centuries, in transmitting Maya language, culture, and knowledge to their children through oral storytelling.

Commenting on this play and Dzul Ek’s cultural activism in general, Peter Hervik writes that we must see culture here “as the reinvention of historical knowledge embracing the discontinuities of old customs, accepting and incorporating new ideas. The past is constituted in the present, and the present does not reflect history” (124-25). As can be found in passages of the Chilam Balam, this moment in the play compresses time itself as the xpul ya’a, speaking both in the present and from the past, delivers a meta-commentary on the value of Maya historical knowledge. She does so in Maya and, in performances of the work, in the town squares of Yucatecan pueblos, or small towns. Operating on its theatrical pretext, the play infiltrates hegemonic culture with an image of Maya historical knowledge not

otherwise sanctioned within regional and national imaginaries. The Maya are not ahistorical, they are not part of a national heritage, nor are displaced relics of the national past. The story xpul ya'a tells and the knowledge she represents are not myths but history. Representing Maya language in the symbolic heart of the town where national identity is perhaps most visible and most visibly articulated throughout the year, the xpul ya'a presents a defiant image of the viability of Maya culture to the Maya themselves and the nation at large.

If Malinche represents the conquest in order to reimagine the genesis of the mestizo family, Dzul Ek's play ironically restages an Other story of the conquest in order to contest the myth of Mexican national unity through a homogenizing vision of hybridity and mestizaje. This contention, however, does not deny the unity of the Mexican national subject or seek to dismember Mexican national identity. Instead, the play reimagines the Mexican citizen-subject as one which is bilingual and multicultural, the Mexican national imaginary as based on interculturality as opposed to an asymmetrical mestizaje. The bilingual audience that the play interpellates embodies a vision of mestizaje and hybridity that privileges plurality and diversity over homogeneity. If Náhuatl, glyphic writing, and Aztec ways of knowing are reduced to playing symbolic functions in Malinche, here Yucatek Maya and the knowledge of the xpul ya'a assume an active role in the play's reception. As a full understanding of the play and the stories embodied by the xpul ya'a can only be achieved through an intimate knowledge of Maya culture as a living entity, the play invites non-Maya Mexicans to adopt Maya language, knowledge, and ways of being as integral parts of their daily lives. In this way, the play's ideological positioning echoes the commentary of the Náhuatl poet and intellectual Natalio Hernández when he argues that "La sociedad hispanohablante tiene que aprender los idiomas de su región. En nuestro futuro de sociedad

multiétnica y plurilingüe ya no podrá admitir, por ejemplo, a un michoacano que no incorpore la cultura purhépecha a su vida individual y de grupo” (“Spanish-speaking society has to learn the languages of the country’s regions. In our society’s multiethnic and plurilingual future we can not permit, for example, that a person from Michoacán fails to integrate Purhepecha culture into his individual and communal life”; in tlahtoli 67).

Hernández’s goes on to say that this kind of “diálogo intercultural puede ser uno de los caminos para romper las relaciones de asimetría entre pueblos indígenas y sociedad nacional” (“intercultural dialogue can be one of the paths toward breaking the asymmetrical relationship between indigenous peoples and national society”; in tlahtoli 60; my translation).

Conclusion

Both Esquivel’s Malinche and Dzul Ek’s “Bix úuchik u bo’ot ku’si’ip’il ‘Manilo’ob’ tu ja’abil 1562” are powerful representations of the Spanish conquest of Mexico. As we have seen, both works focus on the role of the woman as storyteller capable of transmitting cultural knowledge to future generations, beginning with how these women interpret pre-Hispanic “myths” and the conquest itself. Finally, we have examined how each re-telling seeks to reinterpret the Mexican cultural imaginary. As the embodiment of Maya culture, the xpul ya’a reprises Malinalli’s role as mother of a race, and the female’s role as cultural avatar remains strong, though not without difficulty and complication, down to the present day. The xpul ya’a, moreover, represents Maya cultural continuity and this culture’s ongoing relevance in the lives of its people. Malinalli represents the passage from an indigenous culture to a mestizo culture that, in many ways, is no less autochthonous and yet reduces the indigenous cultures to symbols of a national past.

The image of the female storyteller as the embodiment of indigenous knowledge, however, is not a mere literary trope. For example, one of contemporary Maya literature's founding figures, Doming Dzul Poot, traces his genealogy as a storyteller through his mother, to whom he attributes his most famous story "El adivino, o el enano de Uxmal" ("The Sorcerer, or the Little Man of Uxmal"; Barrera Rubio 20). The transmission of oral literature in text is the focus of the next chapter. If Malinalli and the xpul ya'a are used to stage the ongoing tensions between mestizo and indigenous cultures, how have the stories they represent been recast in folklore by non-indigenous peoples? How do the cultural brokers who collect, copy, edit, and represent these stories as texts shape the voice of the storyteller? And finally, how do the differences in their representations point to attempts by the storyteller to exercise various degrees of agency within these very representations? These are some of the questions I will address in the following chapter.

Chapter 3 Writing THE Word: Storytellers, Cultural Brokers, and the Shape of Indigenous Memory

The truth about stories is that's all we are.
Thomas King, The Truth About Stories

The situation possesses the ring of an archetypal romance. Upon being confronted by the ruins of a mysterious, ancient city, a white explorer turns to one of the natives for a bit of local knowledge. Setting the scene, the narrator informs us:

The Indians regard these ruins with superstitious reverence. They will not go near the place at night, and they have the old story that immense treasure is hidden among them. Each of the buildings has its name given to it by the Indians. This is called the Casa del Anano [sic], or House of the Dwarf, and it is consecrated by a wild legend, which, as I sat in the doorway, I received from the lips of an Indian, as follows: [...]. (Stephens, Central 423)⁴

Given the structure of the passage and its appeal to an authority based on the author-narrator's first-hand account of things, these words are representative of the attitudes and postures found in numerous works of ethnography, anthropology, travel literature, and folklore. The author-narrator immediately establishes a safe distance between an "us," the author-narrator and his implied reader, and a "them," the Indians, by saying they, the Indians, have a "superstitious reverence" for the ruined buildings. Together with the narrator we the readers, assumed to be beyond all such superstitious belief, are told that we should not take the story too seriously, and certainly not as seriously as the Indians take it. The Indians, simply by virtue of their being Indians, are incapable of knowing in the ways that both reader and narrator know. They call the building the Casa del Anano, but this name comes from a

⁴ I will address Stephens's misspelling of the word "enano" later in the chapter.

“wild legend.” As with the famous protagonist of Melville’s Moby Dick, we can hardly assume this name to be the place’s actual name, and must assume this name is lost to the Indians themselves. Despite these apparent shortcomings, the authoritative voice of the author-narrator reasserts the truth value of the following story by stating that that this story, in all its superstition, that is, in all its Otherness, was told to him from the very lips of an Indian as they were among those very ruins. At this point, rather than risk having any part of the text’s potentially contaminating superstition attributed to him, the narrator effectively steps back from his text and cedes narration to the anonymous Indian storyteller. Represented as an Indian, this storyteller, more talking object than speaking subject, more type than individual, comes into being only through this layered act of metanarration. The author-narrator, and through him the reader, are silent listeners to the story of the Dwarf of Uxmal, a story “hardly [...] more strange than the structure to which it referred” (Stephens, Central 425).

This chapter focuses on the variegated relationship between storyteller and the author-narrator as cultural broker in twentieth century Yucatán, tracing the evolution of this relationship as reflected across several different volumes of broker-edited Yukatek Maya literature: Antonio Mediz Bolio’s La tierra del faisán y del venado (Land of the Pheasant and the Deer; 1922); *Yikal Maya Than* (1935-1955), Luis Rosado Vega’s El alma misteriosa del mayab (Mysterious Soul of the Mayab; 1934), and Ermilo Abreu Gómez’s Leyendas y consejas del antiguo Yucatán (Legends and Tales of Ancient Yucatán; 1961); Manuel J. Andrade’s and Hilaria Maas Collí’s two volume Cuentos Mayas Yucatecos (Yukatek Maya Stories; 1984, 2000); and Allan F. Burns’s An Epoch of Miracles (1983). To fully understand the fragmented nature of such representations in a national context I will privilege the

Mayaness of these texts in order to gain a deeper insight into how cultural brokers constitute, shape, situate, and mediate the figure of the Maya storyteller both synchronically within a given text and diachronically over time according to changes in the national and global discourse of the Indio. Far from being neutral aesthetic decisions, changes in how cultural brokers treat the storyteller reflect changes in national, nationalist, and global ideologies that seek to domesticate the indigenous Other rather than to convey objectively that Other's knowledge and/or culture. Instead of interpreting these changes as simply reflecting changes in storytellers and storytelling, however, we must also recognize that they also point to ways in which previous storytellers exercised agency in the act of storytelling or were silenced by the author-narrators of previous collections. By reading these collections across time and with one another, we can gain a more nuanced understanding of the multifaceted relationship between cultural broker and storyteller, and how the latter, despite the intentions of the former, is often capable of appropriating the broker's voice in an attempt to make sure his own is heard.

Trading in Culture: Folklore, the Cultural Broker, and the Native Object

As we saw in the previous chapter, the stakes of narrating indigenous memory are quite high, both within the nation, around the world, and within indigenous communities themselves. In this section I will outline the criteria for the texts under consideration, define the terms that will be used in their analysis, and finally provide a brief reflection on their significance in the context of national and international imaginaries.

First, how are the texts under examination here different from those in the second chapter? While the previous chapter dealt with the textualization of indigenous memory via historical fiction, this chapter deals with folkloric texts that use the image of the storyteller to

facilitate the direct integration of indigenous memory into national and global imaginaries.

The key difference between these two modes is that, while the former admits fictionality in at least some aspects, the latter derives its signifying power from its purported authenticity. The stories are written representations of oral tellings, and these original tellings were done by “authentic” Indios. In a sense, these written texts share a good deal in common with the testimonio. Although I will provide a more extended meditation on the testimonio in the following chapter, at present I would like to assert that these texts are not testimonio as such for two reasons. Firstly, and most importantly, while we can say that folklore shares the air of legal witness Margaret Randall finds in the testimonio (33), and it while its author-narrator may even hold the values Randall suggests are necessary attributes for one who writes testimonio (38), the ideology under which folklore is written will always mean that folkloric texts reduce subaltern cultures to the terms of hegemonic cultures. As such, even though they purport to represent a kind of “speaking subaltern,” this subaltern’s voice is deployed in a context that reproduces this voice’s subalternity, normalizing the asymmetrical relationship between hegemonic author-narrator and native informant.

For example, in the work by Randall cited above, she cites an article by Salvador Bueno in which the author asks, perhaps rhetorically, if “Los tlacuilos aztecas informants de Bernardino de Sahagún que le recitaban los poemas nahuatl conservados por transmisión oral o le narraban sus terribles experiencias de la conquista, ¿no eran, a fin de cuentas, *testimoniales*?” (“Bernardino de Sahagún’s Aztec tlacuilo informants that recited poems for him or narrated for him their terrible experiences of the conquest, were their [works] not, in the end, *testimonial*?”) (qtd. in Randall: 34). On the surface Sahagún’s work meets all the criteria, but we must not forget why Sahagún was interested in this material in the first place,

nor how he intended other Spaniards to use it. As I have noted before, in the prologue to his Historia general de las cosas de la Nueva España Sahagún compares himself to a doctor who, in needing to care for sick patients, must first familiarize himself with the broad spectrum of possible diseases in order to make his diagnoses. He does not collect information from native informants to facilitate the continuity of indigenous memory under colonial rule but rather “Para predicar contra estas cosas” (“To preach against these things”; Sahagún 17).⁵ He thus envisions that his work on indigenous cultures will enable his fellow priests to notice when “en nuestra presencia hacen muchas cosas idolátricas sin que lo entendamos” (“in our presence they do many idolatrous things without our understanding”; Sahagún 17). None of this diminishes Sahagún’s work or the legacy of the Colegio de Santa Cruz that he established as a center of indigenous learning. Rather, in Sahagún we can see the violent colonial ideology under which folklore operates (know in order to domesticate, or in this case eradicate), and how the recording of folklore, while having some of testimonio’s characteristics, cannot be considered a form of testimonio.

Secondly, I must also point out that folklore, unlike testimonio, ultimately makes no pretense of solidarity with the subaltern. As Sahagún, for example, makes clear, his work is intended for a readership, whether indigenous or Spanish, that paradoxically seeks to extinguish indigenous cultural memory in the Americas by disseminating the very thing it seeks to extinguish. This is not to say that, then or now, this text and others like it cannot be resignified, but we must keep in mind what these texts meant within their proper historical context. After all, if works like Sahagún’s Historia general de las cosas de la Nueva España had not established the discursive parameters of the discourse of the Indio, which pre-empt

⁵ This prologue does not appear to be in the Bandelier translation.

indigenous self-representation and co-opts indigenous memory, such resignification would be unnecessary. Whatever the merits or limitations of testimonio, a topic to which we will return in the following chapter, we must maintain that, at least on some level, the genre seeks to provide subaltern witness to events in such a way that this witness effects social, political, and/or cultural change. Testimonio, unlike folklore, does not seek, explicitly or implicitly, the erasure of the subaltern voice.

Having described the texts I will be addressing, I will now turn to the people involved in the production of these texts: the cultural broker, the broker in his role as author-narrator, and the native informant, in this case the Indio storyteller. We can assert that if modern methods of collecting stories from Others differ greatly from those of Bernardino de Sahagún or the American traveler, adventurer, and author John L. Stephens, whose Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatán (1841) I cited at the beginning of this chapter, the constellations of power in which these texts are interpreted, ordered, translated, and published has changed very little from the conquest to the present. Traditionally, the people charged with the interpretation, ordering, translation, and publication of these texts are what I will refer to as “cultural brokers.” Historically, they have been the mediators between subaltern indigenous cultures and hegemonic cultures and, although the cultural broker transcribes, documents, translates, and illuminates he also glosses, excises, misreads, and obscures. Cultural brokers are not exclusively indigenous or non-indigenous, but rather individuals whose attributes enable them to represent indigenous cultures within non-indigenous contexts.

Two examples are in order. First, Peter Hervik notes that Armando Dzul Ek, the Yukatek playwright and activist from the preceding chapter, is a cultural broker, and that,

“his primary resources are his fluency in speaking Maya, his knowledge of local culture, his familiarity with the broker’s role, and his ability to operate within the national domain”

(147). Surprisingly, in this passage Hervik does not specifically mention Dzul Ek’s ability to speak Spanish, and this omission underscores the asymmetrical relationship of power within the cultural field in which cultural brokers operate. Although Yukatek Maya is one of the resources that enable Dzul Ek to perform the role of a cultural broker, Spanish is always the language of cultural mediation and representation. Therefore, indigenous cultural brokers are almost always bilingual while this may not be true of their non-indigenous counterparts. In addition, the cultural broker mediates the representation of subaltern cultures but, as the name implies, is also subject to what we might go so far as to call market forces. In the case of Dzul Ek, these forces mean that his cultural production, intended for the consumption of Mayas and non-Mayas alike, is dialogic in its reception. Hervik notes that:

although the performance of the Sac Nicté [Dzul Ek’s theater troupe] is considered “folklore” within a national context, the formation of the group, its function of improving political and cultural awareness within the Maya community, and the voicing of political claims on behalf of the ethnic group, manifest an inherent element in contemporary ethnic identity. (128)

Thus, in addition to being a culture broker with the outside world, Dzul Ek is also, in the Gramscian sense, an organic intellectual who plays an important part in the reproduction of Maya culture.

The nature of Dzul Ek’s role as Maya cultural broker and the organic intellectual comes into sharp relief when we contrast Dzul Ek with how non-indigenous cultural brokers have traditionally represented themselves in their own works. To recall a contemporary example, we can remember the passage from John Bierhorst I cited in the Introduction. He says that, “Latin American folklore, or more precisely the recording of oral tradition in Latin

America, has a five-hundred-year history marked by assiduous and highly skilled endeavor” (Bierhorst 3). Here Bierhorst recycles an entire discourse, found in both Sahagún and Stephens, in which the work and aims of the cultural broker eclipse the culture that the broker seeks to mediate for his audience. Whereas Sahagún sought to eradicate, Stephens and Bierhorst seek to domesticate and this process, as we shall see, is no less violent. If Dzul Ek’s work also serves the “function of improving political and cultural awareness within the Maya community, and the voicing of political claims on behalf of the ethnic group, manifest[ing] an inherent element in contemporary ethnic identity” (Hervik 128), we may ask whose political and cultural awareness is raised by the texts of Bierhorst and Stephens? What political claims do they voice? How does they configure contemporary ethnic identity?

In answering these questions, we can begin by agreeing with Luis Villoro’s assertion that the indigenous world described by such indigenist intermediaries is an affect of the historical consciousness of individual writers and the moment in time from which they write (Los grandes 15). As evidenced in Bierhorst and elsewhere, and despite the broker’s claims as to unmediated authenticity of his representation of indigenous culture, in most cases the non-indigenous broker never simply “tells it like it is” but always crafts his representations according to prevailing hegemonic ideology so that these representations will be easily recognized and consumed by the public. Given that Bierhort’s book Latin American Folktales is subtitled “Stories from Hispanic and Indian Traditions,” we find that Bierhorst assumes the unity of a mestizo, Pan-Latin American, and in his words “Latino” subject. He says in the Preface that “The stories in this book represent the folktale tradition of Spanish-speaking America set within a frame of American Indian lore. As the scheme suggests, Latino folklore is two things at once” (Bierhorst xi). Here I take Bierhorst’s use of the term

“Latino” to mean something along the lines of Pan-Latin American as opposed to how the term is commonly used. In this construction, native “lore” frames Hispanic “tradition,” providing it with roots that make it something other than a mere repetition of folklore from the Old World. As a cultural broker, intentionally or not, Bierhorst recycles the prevailing ideologies of mestizaje and cultural assimilation common in most of “Latin America,” irrespective of the wishes of indigenous peoples, for over five hundred years. Indigenous peoples are interpellated as “Latinos,” and the inclusion of indigenous peoples under this term enables “Latino” identity itself to be “two things at once.” Moreover, and as can be noted in Bierhorst’s metaphor, although the “Indian element” is the key component in this assemblage, the “Western, European element” is privileged. That is, the “Western, European element” is the picture, the active point of analysis that indigenous cultures frame.

Beyond the information that a given cultural broker may/may not include as an accompaniment to a text in the form of prefaces, introductions, or conclusions, we must inquire about the role the broker plays in the narration or authoring of a given text(s). That is, if the cultural broker is the flesh-and-blood person who claims authorship of the work, the author-narrator is that person as a function of the folkloric text. Gérard Genette’s terminology and descriptions of author-narrators is quite useful in understanding this function. The cultural broker as author-narrator is extradiegetic insofar as he narrates, in the first-person, the story of the story and, in a certain sense, homodiegetic as he is himself present in the story he narrates (Genette 212-62). By comparison, the storyteller is an intradiegetic narrator whose story is embedded in the larger narrative, and we will return to this topic in a moment. At present, we must note how the distancing between reader and story this function produces marks the point at which the reduction of indigenous cultures to Western norms begins. In his

“What is an Author?,” Michel Foucault identifies four features of the “author” as a function of discourse: it gives the text a legal status as a form of property; it cannot be thought of as a constant across cultures nor across time; it seeks to construct the text as originating from a rational individual; there is no one-to-one correspondence between the author and a historical individual, but rather the author and a series of differentiated egos (124-131). Of particular relevance here is the overriding emphasis on a single individual that is a function of the text. That is, although the works treated in this chapter are collections of “authorless” folklore, each collection has *an* author to whom Western society has given representational, legal authority over indigenous texts. Moreover, and as will be seen, cultural brokers as author-narrators self-consciously construct these texts in an effort to clarify their power over them.

More so than in the figure of the cultural broker, it is in the author-narrator where we find hegemonic ideology to be most prevalent. As the text’s primary narrator (the extradiegetic narrator, in Genette’s terms) he literally controls the text, structuring our own perceptions of the texts he embeds in his narration. For example, we may ask if the author-narrator, as in the passage from Stephens cited at the beginning, cedes the page to the “verbatim” words of a native storyteller or if he self-consciously re-narrates the story himself? Does he go so far as to assume the very mantle of the native storyteller and erase the informant all together? How does the broker in the function as author-narrator order the work? To whom does he attribute the texts in question? To himself? To an indistinct Indio (as in Stephens) or to specific informant (something which Bierhorst does at times)? Apart from any material that attempts to guide our reading, does the author-narrator situate these as part of a larger indigenous, mestizo, national, or global tradition? Rather than being mere aesthetic choices, the author-narrator determines the representation of oral literature, a priori,

as subaltern folklore that would not be intelligible or able to represent itself were it not for his intervention.

Given the complicated role of the cultural broker and his function as author-narrator of the texts under consideration, we must recognize that the storytellers constructed in these texts are multi-layered representations. As stated above, they are intradiegetic narrators, either hetero- or homodiegetic depending on whether or not they narrate their own story, whose stories are enclosed by the larger narrative of the author-narrator. Tzvetan Todorov refers to this technique as embedding, and he claims, “the embedding narrative is the *narrative of a narrative*. By telling the story of another narrative, the first narrative achieves its fundamental theme and at the same time is reflected in this image of itself” (The Poetics 72). We are confronted with an image of hegemonic culture articulating subaltern culture, the Indio as object of dominant discourse. We cannot deny, however, that there are in fact actual storytellers behind these representations, in the same way that there are cultural brokers behind the author-narrators. First, we may begin by saying that they are indigenous people who, at some point, were interpellated as storytellers by cultural brokers. They were asked by someone to tell a story. In most cases, we do not or cannot know what role these people play within indigenous communities themselves. We can say, however, at the very least, that the individuals so interpellated successfully reproduce indigenous culture, knowledge, and memory insofar as, even in the most culturally alienated settings, these stories can be and are reclaimed by indigenous peoples. Second, if the author-narrator is a function of discourse, the storyteller is even more so, as the author-narrator imposes himself between the reading public and the storyteller. The storyteller of the text is a construct created by the author-narrator. Everything the storyteller says is mediated through this Other figure, a textual situation

which has the effect of reproducing the relations of power and dependency that have haunted alienated representations of indigenous peoples for over five-hundred years. What is at issue is not so much the “authenticity” of these storytellers or their representations, but the ideological and material consequences of how they are represented. As we shall see, these are multifold. Third, we must realize that most tellings in which these storytellers participate are a consequence of their being interpellated as storytellers and not of an organic situation in which the storyteller decides to tell a story. Again, this is not a matter of authenticity, but of searching for how the storyteller becomes a site of manipulation, on the part of the cultural broker, and agency, for the indigenous person interpellated as a storyteller.

Finally, it also bears mentioning that the cultural broker cannot fully impose his will upon the person whom he interpellates as a storyteller. The storyteller can actively reinterpret the ground upon which the storyteller and the broker meet, opening up a space in which he can exercise a measured degree of agency against the broker’s hegemonic intentions. This power is embedded within the performative aspects of speech itself, aspects of which storytelling takes full advantage (Butler 161). In regards to the actual written texts available to the reader, the broker may deem it unsavory to record moments where the informant exercises this agency. For example, if an “Indian” asks for money in exchange for telling a story, the illusion of the broker’s insider status is broken, and he is reduced to being a simple consumer. The storyteller may also tell an unsolicited or canonically incorrect story which the cultural broker edits from his work. The “Indian” could hurry through a story in such a way that the broker would not know the difference. Finally, he may invent a new story for consumption by the broker, passing it off in the way that today there exists an international trade in fake Maya antiquities.

If only to provide a more substantial context for the discussion of folkloric Maya texts in this chapter, let us briefly return to the example from J.L. Stephens from the beginning and consider the ideological ramifications of his “Anano de Uxmal.” Stephens as cultural broker and in his role as the author-narrator transcribes and translates the story for his public, in this case an English-speaking public, and this opens up a Pandora’s Box of issues ranging from omission to mistranslation. The very fact that he makes the authoritative claim of having received the story from an Indian’s lips should give us pause. In what language does the Indian tell the story, Spanish, Maya, perhaps English? We do not know, nor does he tell us. Would Stephens’s understanding of either Maya or Spanish have been sufficient to translate this kind of narrative? After all, although he correctly translates the Spanish enano as dwarf, he misspells it as anano. Moreover, anyone familiar with the story of the “Enano of Uxmal” would notice considerable gaps in its narration as it appears in Stephens’s text. Are these due to errors on Stephens’s part or the part of his informant? What do these omissions mean? Are they intentional, signs of Stephens’s or his counterpart’s laziness, a mark of resistance on the part of the Indian storyteller? Perhaps all or none of these?

Given that such narratives both shape and are shaped by our perceptions of this Indian Other, these questions are far from rhetorical. Indeed, they point to a key moment in the indigenous struggle for self-representation in the modern world, a moment in which the indigenous storyteller cedes or is coerced into ceding knowledge to a cultural broker whose serves as an intermediary between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. Who is the storyteller with whom the author-narrator presents us? He is a nameless, anonymous Indio. His people, that is, the Indians, “regard these ruins with superstitious reverence,” and the building in question “the Casa del Anano, or House of the Dwarf, [...] is consecrated by a

wild legend” (Stephens, Central 423). These are not so much empirical observations as words that activate an entire representative schema with which readers of alienated representations of Indios from 1492 to the present are already familiar. The Indians Stephens meets must, naturally, roughly correspond to the Indians we would expect to meet were we there, on top of Uxmal’s Pyramid of the Magician, listening to tales from the region’s lore.

As can be inferred from Stephens’s own juxtaposition of the ruins with the story, we are to interpret the story itself as a ruin, something the significance of which time and cultural distance render strange, impenetrable, and incomplete. The story has no organic life, is for all intents and purposes dead, and comes to us as the debased fragment of a culture and civilization whose moment has long since passed. Unsurprisingly, Stephens refers to those who bear such stories as being a “great *race* which, changed, miserable, and degraded, still clings around their ruins” (Stephens, Yucatán 168; *itals in original*). As if there were any doubt to the ideological influence such texts can have on national and international imaginaries, thus pre-empting indigenous self-representation and limiting indigenous self-expression, it bears mentioning that his first book on travel to the Maya area, the aforementioned Incidents of Travel in Central America, enjoyed spectacular sales and sold over 20,000 copies in three months (Von Hagen 197). The book was reviewed by no less a literary luminary than Edgar Allan Poe, who said, “The work is a magnificent one---perhaps the most interesting book of travel ever published” (qtd. in Von Hagen 198). The work remains widely in print and the images drawn by Frederick Catherwood to accompany Stephens’ works on Yucatán and the rest of the Maya area can be found for sale in tourist shops in towns throughout Yucatán today.

The Revolution will be Archeological: La tierra de faisán y del venado

Having defined the terms of the discussion, we now turn to “folkloric” Maya literature as written, recorded, transcribed, edited, and translated by cultural brokers in the 21st century. Again, in order to achieve a broader perspective on the cultural broker and this sort of work, the Mayaness of these texts will be privileged and my treatment of them will include collections by non-Mexican cultural brokers whose work, constructed within a different set of ideological circumstances, throws the ideological inner-workings of their Mexican counterparts into sharper relief. My goal is not to merely point out that these Mexican texts operate under the ideological sign of mestizaje and cultural assimilation, but to demonstrate how they stage this process of assimilation by subtly manipulating the voice of the indigenous storyteller they purport to represent. Ultimately, their representation of living indigenous memory as folklore grounds the contemporary Mexican nation-state and Mexican national identity firmly within the historical “frame” of an indigenous ancestry.

First, a few words on mestizaje and Mexican history are in order. With the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) the mestizo, the mixed race descendant of Spanish Conquistadors and Indian women, assumes the role of Mexico’s national protagonist. Long derided as impure, tainted, or lazy in texts like Andrés Molina Enríquez’s Los grandes problemas nacionales (Our Great National Problems; 1909), in post-revolutionary Mexico the mestizo sheds the negative connotations that had defined his place in Mexican society and culture since the beginning of the colonial period to embody the nation’s present and glorious future. Whatever the merits of this ideological shift, its proponents recognized that its success or failure depended on the integration or forced assimilation of the country’s indigenous population, a population ethnically, historically, and linguistically separated from the rest of

the country. With regard as to how the “Indian problem” was to be overcome, Manuel Gamio’s Forjando patria (Forging the Nation; 1916) and José Vasconcelos’s La raza cósmica (The Cosmic Race; 1925) are of particular importance for their ideological and material influence upon the emerging mestizo Mexican national imaginary and its positioning of indigenous peoples and cultures. While the works we will be discussing seek to forge a mestizo cultural identity, they do so under the influence of these two works.

Writing during the fervor of the Revolution itself, Gamio laments that in Mexico, as in most Latin American countries, “se desconocieron y se desconocen, oficial y particularmente, la naturaleza y las necesidades de la respectivas poblaciones, por lo que su evolución ha sido siempre anormal” (“officially and particularly, the nature and necessities of [the population] have been unknown and remain unknown, meaning their evolution has always been abnormal”; Forjando 15). The solution to this “abnormality” is not merely ideological, but lies in a material, physical reencounter of the national self with its indigenous “past,” and Gamio proposes that anthropological practice become an official part of government policy. The goal of the social sciences is to domesticate the nation, to make it known, and it is no coincidence that the excavation of Teotihuacán (1921) and an in-depth anthropological study of the indigenous peoples living in the Valley of Mexico are among the Gamio’s foremost material contributions to the re-imaging of the Mexican self. Through these activities indigenous memory and indigenous peoples are integrated (symbolically if not actually) into the nation. As such, the notion of indigenous populations as distinct, independent entities is a problem insofar as they would be obstacles to national unity and Western progress. For example, Gamio maintains, “Es lógico afirmar que la literatura nacional aparecerá automáticamente cuando la población alcance a unificarse racial, cultural,

y lingüísticamente [...] La literatura nacional presentará diversos orígenes pero un solo cuerpo de exposición” (“It is logical to affirm that a national literature will appear automatically when the population manages to unify itself racially, culturally, and linguistically... National literature will represent diverse origins exhibited in a single body”; Forjando 117). From “diverse origins” there emerges a “national literature” that reflects a population which is “racially, culturally, and linguistically” unified. Through mestizaje as a homogenizing process, Gamio’s reencounter with indigeneity thus paradoxically erases the indigenous voice it seeks.

In his La raza cósmica, José Vasconcelos puts forth the claims that the mestizo and racial mixing promise the redemption of the country’s inferior races and can serve as a bulwark against U.S. imperialist projects. Moreover this new race, which Vasconcelos identifies as a final race, the cosmic race, emerging in Latin America, “tiene todavía por delante esta misión de descubrir nuevas zonas en el espíritu, ahora que todas las tierra están exploradas” (“still has ahead of it this mission of discovering new regions of the spirit, now that all lands have already been explored”; The Cosmic 79; 38). As with Gamio’s marriage of anthropology and governance, Vasconcelos’s assertion of the universal equality of Mexican citizens through racial mixing sought to resolve lingering issues of class, ethnicity, and culture held over from the country’s colonial past. If the Mexican citizen-subject was, by definition, a celebration of hybridity and therefore a superior being in the Darwinian sense, one can return to and embrace the country’s Spanish colonial history. Vasconcelos himself justifies such a return by juxtaposing English and Spanish colonization, claiming that Mexicans who are “Spanish by blood or by culture” erred in “denying our tradition” at the moment of independence (The Cosmic 54). The full restoration of Spanish tradition and its

place in Mexico's national imaginary requires Vasconcelos to recast the historical roles of Hispanic and Anglo-Saxon colonization in the Americas.

The former Vasconcelos most eloquently describes in his Breve Historia de México (A Brief History of Mexico; 1956) when, as if to sweep away the so-called Leyenda Negra, or "Black Legend," in a single phrase, he argues, "Nada destruyó España, porque nada existía digno de conservarse cuando ella llegó a estos territorios [...]" ("Spain destroyed nothing, because there was nothing worth preserving when she arrived in these lands [...]"; Vasconcelos, Breve 17). Similarly, in La raza cósmica he notes that the Aztec and Incan empires were unworthy of the originary, superior cultures from which they were descended (Vasconcelos, La raza 49). The triumph of Spain's colonial mission lies in the fusion, via mestizaje, of Old and New Worlds, a fusion which has the effect of redeeming them both. Turning the Black Legend on its ear, Vasconcelos goes on to say that, by comparison, "El inglés siguió cruzándose sólo con el blanco y exterminó al indígena; lo sigue exterminando en la sorda lucha económica, más eficaz que la conquista armada" ("The English kept on mixing only with whites and annihilated the natives. Even today, they continue to annihilate them in a sordid and economic fight, more efficient yet than armed conquest"; La raza 58; 18).

Thus Vasconcelos lays the groundwork for making Mexican citizenship synonymous with membership in the Mexican race, the Mexican nation being interpreted as a national family. Resorting to a celebration of mestizaje to resolve the repercussions of the country's colonial legacy, however, Vasconcelos privileges this family's Spanish roots. As he states several times, the Indian, as a race, has already accomplished its historical mission and is doomed to disappear. The redemption of the country's inferior elements falls to the country's

white citizens while “El Indio no tiene otra puerta hacia el porvenir que la puerta de la cultura moderna, ni otro camino que el camino ya desbrozado de la civilización latina” (“The Indian has no other door to the future but the door of modern culture, nor any other road but the road already cleared by Latin civilization”; Vasconcelos, La raza 56; 16). Within this family the Indian is little more than genetic stock awaiting assimilation through Hispanization. Lauding the Indian’s positive qualities, Vasconcelos claims, “El Indio es buen puente de mestizaje” (“The Indian is a good bridge for racial mixing”; La raza 66; 26).

Published in the years between these two works by Gamio and Vasconcelos, Antonio Mediz Bolio’s La tierra del faisán y del venado is situated in an epoch when Mexican identity seeks a reencounter with itself, a reencounter in which the ideological conflicts produced by the country’s indigenous present are reconciled materially. For example, we can recall Gamio’s comments on the development of a Mexican national literature. How does Mediz Bolio, who claimed to have written the work in Spanish while thinking it in Maya, assume the role of cultural broker to exercise authority over the retelling of these stories? How does Mediz Bolio as cultural broker stage the kind of reencounter prescribed by Gamio? How does the text’s author-narrator translate, transcribe, interpret, and edit these stories? Where does the text situate the voice of the indigenous storyteller and how is this storyteller constructed? What are the ideological assumptions of these positions and how do they contribute to the silencing or liberation of subaltern indigenous voices?

As a cultural broker, Mediz Bolio seeks to incorporate indigenous memory into the Mexican national imaginary, and so his project is historical as much as it is literary. The ultimate goal here, as Arturo Arias observes in the work of Mediz Bolio’s contemporary, Miguel Ángel Asturias, is to use indigenous cultures as symbolic icons for national identity

(Taking 55). What, however, is the specific role of the cultural broker in La tierra del faisán y del venado? How does the cultural broker construct these symbolic icons? In his prologue to Mediz Bolio's text, Alfonso Reyes makes a telling comparison between the work in question to his own "Visión de Anáhuac [1519]" (1915) ("Prólogo" ii). On the last page of this other essay, Reyes refers to Mexico's indigenous heritage by saying that, "Si esa tradición nos fuere ajena, está como quiera en nuestras manos, y sólo nosotros disponemos de ella" (Even if this tradition were foreign to us, it is yet in our hands, at our exclusive disposal; Visión 30). The cultural broker thus assumes sole and exclusive responsibility for the representation of indigenous cultures, rendering "indigenous" tradition "our" tradition by constructing the former as part of the unspoken cultural common sense of the latter.

One finds this movement concretized in how Mediz Bolio's text collapses the distance between the categories of cultural broker and author-narrator in order to place these traditions "at his exclusive disposal." That is, the author-narrator of his text is extradiegetic-heterodiegetic insofar as he tells these stories in the first person while not necessarily situating himself as a protagonist in them. As I said earlier, Mediz Bolio, in a letter to the aforementioned Reyes, claims to have "thought this book in Maya and written it in Spanish. I have felt and written as might an Indian poet of today, who would express these ideas in his own special manner" (Mediz Bolio, The Land, 13). Mediz Bolio is fully conscious of his role as cultural broker as he "thinks the book in Maya" while "writing it in Spanish," but also sees himself, in his role as author-narrator, as "feeling and writing as might an Indian poet of today." As cultural broker, he is not merely an outsider who, in his separate function of author-narrator, narrates the reencounter with the Mexican national self. He is a cultural broker who narrates from within Maya culture itself, meaning that there is no mediation

between the functions of cultural broker and of author-narrator. Hence the stories he includes are not embedded texts but texts that he tells himself. As a “cultural insider,” Mediz Bolio has Maya culture legitimately at his “exclusive disposal.”

This self-identification with an “Indian” voice attempts to legitimate the text’s authenticity and Mediz Bolio’s conversion of indigenous traditions into Mexican symbolic capital. The act of narration, that of telling these stories, claims the Indio, his knowledge, and his history for the nation. But how does Mediz Bolio the cultural broker/author-narrator place these “at his disposal” within the narrative? It is certainly no coincidence that the publication of Mediz Bolio’s text in 1922 coincides with a surge in interest in pre-Columbian Mesoamerican history, as evidenced by the beginning of Gamio’s excavation of Teotihuacán in 1921 and Sylvanus Moreley’s excavation of Chichén Itzá in 1923. In keeping with this time’s material interest in Mesoamerican cultures, we can say that Mediz Bolio’s narrative technique is primarily archeological in its structuring of indigenous memory. In fact, the narrative use of archeology in Latin America has a long history. Writing on works of two historiographers, the Mexican Javier Francisco Clavijero (1731-1787) and the Peruvian Eduardo Mariano Rivero (1799-1857), Sara Castro-Klarén argues that, for both men, “the study of archeology stretches the timeline of the nation and creates immemorial ‘ancestors’ for the post-colonial nation,” such that, “archeology allows a mapping of the nation that reconfigures territory by privileging forgotten or even forbidden sites of memory” (164). Coincidentally, five of the seven books in Mediz Bolio’s text bear the names of cities/archeological sites: Itzamal, Chichén Itzá, Zací (Valladolid), Uxmal, and Maní. The use of physical cities/archeological sites to structure the narrative arc of the stories in La tierra del faisán y del venado situates indigenous memory as part of the national timeline, its

protagonists as “immemorial ancestors.” As a work of narrative archeology, the work “restores” the mysterious ruins of Maya history by relating them to the physical ruins and cities. Moreover, properly speaking, there is no Maya present outside of Mediz Bolio’s text. The mute Indio, like the stones of the ancient cities themselves, thus becomes the object of national history without ever being its subject.

Given Mediz Bolio’s status as an insider who has Maya culture at his “exclusive disposal,” we must ask whom, exactly, does Mediz Bolio construct as being an “Indio”? In a sense, the “Indio” is not so much ahistorical as he is a relic from the past to be unearthed. The cultural broker/author-narrator founds his ordering of the text on the Indio’s contemporary silence, a silence which only he can break. This silence intensifies the cultural broker/author-narrator’s control over the text and we find that this figure, having “exclusive control” over Maya culture, actively mutes the Indio’s voice. First, there are no “Indio storytellers” insofar as the cultural broker/author-narrator tells everything in his own voice. Instead of presenting us with a layered narration á la Stephens, the cultural broker/author-narrator makes no pretense of including indigenous voices but rather presents himself as speaking from within Maya culture. The power of this narrative style comes through in the first lines of the first chapter when he states that “Nadie pudiera saber ni repetir lo que fue antes de que hubiera ojos para verlo y orejas para oirlo, si los que en su tiempo lo supieron no lo hubieron enseñado, y así, del padre al hijo, vino bajando la sabiduría” (“No one now would be able to know or to repeat what happened before there were eyes to see and ears to hear, if those who in their own day knew it had not taught it to their children. Thus, from father to son, has come down wisdom”; Mediz Bolio 29; Perkins 31). The cultural broker/author-narrator who now “knows” and “repeats” what follows derives his authority

from within this tradition itself. As a “repetition,” the text assumes a kind of cultural transparency that configures the Mexican national subject as the sole and legitimate heir to these stories and indigenous memory.

Second, if the text does, at moments, acknowledge an Indio Other, this Other’s passive muteness merely authorizes the cultural broker/author-narrator’s active voice. We are told that “Nadie le ha enseñado a ver ni a oír ni a entender éstas cosas misteriosas y grandes, pero él sabe. Sabe, y no dice nada. El indio habla solamente con las sombras [...] está hablando con aquellos que le escuchan y está escuchando a aquellos que lo hablan. Cuando despierta, sabe más que antes y calla más que antes” (“No one has taught him to see or hear or understand these mighty and mysterious things, but he knows. He knows and he says nothing. The Indio speaks only with the shadows [...] he is speaking with those who are listening, and listening to those who speak. When he awakes, he knows more than before, and more than before he is silent”; Mediz Bolio 16; Perkins 21). This muteness is due, in part, to the fact that the codices have been lost. “Lost” is not a mere euphemism for Landa’s *auto de fé*, however, which would mean articulating the Indio as a historical actor in linear time. The Indio himself is to blame for the loss of the codices, as they disappeared “Cuando los hombres ya no merecieron poseer los Libros de sus padres [...]” (“When men were no longer worthy of owning the Books of their fathers [...]”; Mediz Bolio 22; Perkins 24). That is, they are no longer worthy possessors of their own history. Before men were “pure and sweet to Him that is lovingly omnipresent,” but in the present only the old and the young are uncontaminated and so capable of knowing the Truth, “the spirit of our fathers” living in them (Mediz Bolio 22-23).

Third, and reflecting the awesome violence of this silencing, the stories he tells narrate the history of the Indios of the “Mayab” without locating them within a historical context. That is, in Mediz Bolio’s text the history of the Indio is pre-colonial. There are no narratives of the conquest, no narratives of Colonial Yucatán, no narratives of the social upheaval during the region’s epic henequén boom, and no narratives of the Caste War. Historically speaking, the “Indio,” like the region’s Maya ruins, is temporally out of place, an archeological object to be uncovered, examined, studied, and interpreted, the storyteller thus being dependent on the broker’s written word for self-expression. To affect this domestication, the text falls back on a generalizable Indio whose knowledge, rather than being particular and historical, is transcendent, woven into the landscape itself. “Sin que nadie se las haya dicho, el indio sabe muchas cosas” (“Many things the Indian knows, that no one has ever told him”; Mediz Bolio 15; Perkins 21). The condition of being an Indio implies a pre-existing kind of genetic knowledge divorced from historical processes and unbound by the contingencies of time, place, or history.

Fourth and finally, we can conclude that Mediz Bolio’s text does not so much describe the living Maya as it recycles the discourse of the Indio as a means to activate a discreet set of schema common to both the reader and the cultural broker/author-narrator. The implied readership here is not indigenous, but one that seeks to realize Gamio’s ambition of a reencounter with the national self. Moreover, although the text is set in Yucatán, the text’s Indio is not entirely unlike the Indios found in the rest of the Americas. As with Aztec history within the Mexican nation, the particular history of the Mayab is a synecdoche for indigenous history in general. Representative of two distinct worlds, the Indian and the

European meet, once again, as an ahistorical object and a historical reader through the medium of the text itself.

Ultimately, then, the cultural broker/author-narrator subtly casts himself as a cultural insider, though one who is by his very nature paradoxically non-Indian. After all, the Indio the text constructs is a stereotype that, by definition, is a non-speaking object defined by this lack of voice. The author-narrator's designation parallels a similar rhetorical shift on the same page when he bids the outsider/reader in search of the reencounter he offers to listen to the words of "old men" and "children." Given the Indio's inherent muteness, the transmission of knowledge only takes place within non-threatening, almost de-racialized contexts. As such, there remains a clear division between an "us" (reader) and a "them" (Indio) that only the cultural broker/author-narrator is capable of crossing.

As the cultural broker/author-narrator is both "us" and "them," ideologically speaking, he opens up the possibility of appropriating the Indio's great historic past without having to acknowledge the Indio's present. The book itself thus textualizes the encounter sought by Gamio. The cultural broker/author-narrator narrates the work and presents himself as the storyteller, but more importantly he orders the texts as a quasi-historical narrative that displaces the independent Maya historical memory and re-imagines it as Mexican history. The first of these books, "The Book of Itzamal and of the most ancient things," deals with the origins of Maya history, and the last, "The Book of Maní, which means 'it is passed,'" deals with the moment when the great cities are abandoned. Rather than basing the latter on archeological or historical knowledge, the author-narrator says that the Maya abandoned the cities after the appearance of a hand stamped in blood on the cities' walls. Certainly, one can

still see such a handprint in the entranceway to the Nunnery in Uxmal, though the origins of the handprint remain as uncertain now as they were in the time of Mediz Bolio. He tells us:

Los indios viejos a quienes interrogas, se callan, y bajan la cabeza y no te dicen nada. Quizás ellos lo saben, pero no lo dicen.

Si alguno hablara de ello, él diría que esa mano de hombre no fue puesta allí por ningún hombre. Y tal vez quien esto diga, diga algo de la verdad. (Mediz Bolio 227)

The old men whom thou dost question shake their heads and remain silent, and tell thee nothing.

Perchance they know, but do not speak.

If one of them should talk of it, he would tell thee that the hand of blood was placed there by no mortal man. And perhaps he who says this, says something of the truth. (Perkins 140)

Again, we are confronted by an Indio who may or may not know the details of his own history, a human enigma, and an author-narrator who feels capable of piercing the mysteries of this history. This Indio is no less a ruin than Stephen's storyteller, his entrance into Western history requiring the cultural broker/author-narrator's archeological intervention if not outright invention. The author-narrator thus assumes the mantle of the Gamio's archeologist, charged with excavating the Indio's ancient past glories so as to better grasp his mute present.

Fairytales for the Mestizo Nation: Yucatec storytelling after the Raza Cósmica

I have hesitated in saying that Mediz Bolio's La tierra del faisán y del venado articulates a mestizo national citizen-subject because his text precedes Vasconcelos's Raza cósmica by several years. Although Mediz Bolio's text celebrates a certain type of mestizo subjectivity, it does so much more in the sense of Gamio's reencounter with the Mexican national self than in the sense of Vasconcelos's cosmic race. The texts to which we will now turn, however, bear the mark of a Mexican national imaginary configured under Vasconcelos's ideology of racial mixing. Interestingly enough, while the functions of cultural

broker and author-narrator are collapsed into one another in Mediz Bolio, in these texts we find that they reemerge as separate entities. The literary magazine Yikal Maya Than, Luis Rosado Vega's El alma misteriosa del Mayab, and Ermilo Abreu Gómez's Leyendas y consejos del antiguo Yucatán reflect a Vasconcelian approach to narrating indigeneity that explicitly states its desire to appropriate the Indio's knowledge through the voice of the indigenous storyteller. Although these brokers still mediate the storyteller's voice in terms of the text and its material production, in their function as author-narrators they recount stories that often take place within a defined context. The story and its words are not "theirs" per se, but originate with the Maya storyteller. They present us with, in some sense, the storyteller as Other. How does the cultural broker interpellate this Other? How is this change in ideology (from Gamio to Vasconcelos) reflected in the reassertion of the cultural broker and author-narrator as separate entities? Who are the Indio storytellers and how are they used to resituate indigenous cultural memory within the mestizo nation?

Yikal Maya Than is of particular note in this regard as, chronologically and ideologically, it spans the period between Mediz Bolio, and Rosado Vega and Abreu Gómez. It is a uniquely Yucatecan project, a response to centralizing narratives of Mexican national identity which privilege Aztec history as well as, in the words of Hilaria Maas Collí, a contestation of "la política gubernamental sobre el proyecto de la desindianización de los pueblos mesoamericanos" ("government policies concerning the de-Indianization of Mesoamerican peoples"; 9). Similar to other non-indigenous representations of indigenous peoples since the conquest, these stories are rife with contradictions. As cultural brokers, people collected these stories "[para] demostrar que la lengua maya y la cultura en general de los mayas de Yucatán no es un idioma ni una cultura muerta; sino viva y por tanto es

necesario que las nuevas generaciones conozcan, amen y conserven su propia cultura” (“to demonstrate that Yukatek Maya language and Yukatek Maya culture in general are not dead but alive, and therefore necessary knowledge for future generations”; Maas Collí 9). Yet, at the same time, “la mayoría de las leyendas fueron publicadas en español, aunque los autores incluyeron frases y en algunos casos párrafos en maya y algunos fueron publicados en forma bilingüe y escritos con el sistema de escritura colonial” (“the majority of the legends were published in Spanish, although the authors included phrases and in some cases paragraphs in Maya, and some were published bilingually following colonial orthography”; Maas Collí 10). Later on I will discuss Maas Collí, who is herself Yukatek Maya, and the role she plays in the re-signification of what we might call alienated Maya texts. For now, I should state that I agree with Cristina Leirana Alcocer’s overall assessment of the project insofar as she says that it, despite the ideals cited by Maas Collí, sought to project a romanticized Mayanist (as opposed to Maya) vision of Maya culture for a non-indigenous readership (26-28). Indeed, far from seeking to construct a bicultural vision of the peninsula, “Las leyendas [...] fueron escritas por profesionales y dirigidas a un público que trabaja en las escuelas y a investigadores de Estados Unidos interesados en el estudio de la cultura maya” (“The legends [...] were written by professionals and directed at an audience made up of teachers and researchers from the United States interested in the study of Maya culture”; Maas Collí 14).

Throughout these stories, then, power still rests with the broker who reports the storyteller to his audience. While the overarching relationship between broker and storyteller would seem to flatten out in terms of the former’s power over the latter, such is not the case. Within the pages of Yikal Maya Than there are author-narrators, including the aforementioned Mediz Bolio, who gloss over the origins of the stories they tell, presenting

themselves as storytellers in order to weave a seamless tapestry of Yucatecan culture.

However, there are several author-narrators who, in the narration of their stories, borrow structures from actual oral Maya literature. Zouza Novelo Narciso's "Xyich K'iin" begins with the evocation "Se cuenta a través de las generaciones aborígenes del Mayab [...]" 'Down through the native generations of the Mayab it is said that [...]' and begins bringing the story to a close with "Dice la leyenda que [...]" ("The legend says that [...]" ; Maas Collí 30; 37). Similarly, in Homero Lizama Escoffie's "The Cenote of Samahil" we are told that "Cuentan que en las inmediaciones de Samahil existe un cenote [...]" 'They say that in the area around Samahil there is a cenote [...],' and the story ends in much the same way as Narciso's text (Maas Collí 122-26). Marcos Chimay's "The Crypts at Kaua" begins with the author-narrator's asking the chords of his guitar if they remember the musical accompaniment of the tale he's going to tell (Maas Collí 45). The important difference between this narrative style and that of Mediz Bolio is that, while Mediz Bolio evokes the tradition of a specific tale, intending to put it into writing, these texts evoke both the tradition of the tale and the tradition of performance that has taken shape around tale itself. The resultant intertextuality between written and oral texts breaks the framework of the written text, the written self-consciously citing oral precedents. Thus one can agree with Maas Collí that these texts, at least in some sense, can be interpreted or reclaimed as examples of Maya literature (Maas Collí Interview).

One must also admit that, as most of the texts were written in Spanish, the position of their author-narrators intends the assimilation of indigenous memory via mestizaje, and thus they harbor a Vasconcelian ideology that seeks the erasure of the indigenous being. Although these texts intend to portray a living Maya culture, they do so in order to mobilize that culture

as symbolic capital in the service of a project that establishes regional difference between the Yucatán and the rest of México. I must reiterate that I do not deny the real existence of a symbolic network shared by non-indigenous and Maya cultures in the peninsula. Mestizaje as a racial, social and cultural phenomenon is undeniable. The ground upon which these cultures share this network, however, does not reside outside the ideologies of power which structure Yucatán's racial and social relations.

We must then ask, who are the Indio storytellers whose cultural memory is represented in these stories? The most striking answer to this question can be found towards the end of Eusebio Falón's story "The Aak'ab ts'iib," when the author-narrator asks, "¿Habrá algo de cierto en esta historia que me contaba mi nodriza y que había llegado hasta ella por cuentos de sus antepasados?" ("Is there any truth to this story that my wet nurse told me and that came down to her through her ancestors' stories?"; Maas Collí 44). With this phrase we recognize that, in some sense, the story has been embedded, told by the heretofore silenced wet nurse as an intradiegetic-heterodiegetic narrator. While speaking to the existence of the symbolic network shared by Maya and non-Maya alike, this passage lays bare the ideology flowing through this network. The author-narrator gives casual credit to the storyteller, whose existence we learn of only in passing and only at the end of the story. This genealogy between them, which the author-narrator relates with some ambivalence, is not that of storyteller to author but of wet nurse in-the-role-of-storyteller to author. The author-narrator puts the story to paper but the stories come from *her* ancestors. This is thus the literal and figurative image of dominant culture nursed by subaltern culture and placing this culture at its service. What is important about the wet nurse is her ancestors and not her progeny. As she nurses dominant culture's child, he, the author, becomes her progeny and ultimate

cultural heir. Yucatán has a distinctly Yucatecan culture because its children grew up, literally, imbibing Maya as opposed to Aztec culture. More so than racial mestizaje, we have an image of cultural mestizaje that circumvents any hint of racial mixing, making the argument that the peninsula's current residents are the heirs of Maya culture regardless of race or ethnicity. It is at their "exclusive disposal" as the wet nurse, as far as we know, has no children of her own.

Published a year before the first issue of Yikal Maya Than, Luis Rosado Vega's El alma misteriosa del Mayab displays a unique marriage of the ideologies expressed by Gamio and Vasconcelos. As a cultural broker, Rosado Vega was a renowned anthropologist who organized and directed the Museum of History and Archeology in Mérida, the Yucatecan capital. He was also an accomplished poet and, in his role as a folklorist, an indigenista intellectual. Portraying this confluence of interests, in the work's "Motivos" Rosado Vega notes that the boom in Maya archeology during the first half of the twentieth-century has made the production of a work like El alma misteriosa "timely" and "necessary" (10). He explicitly notes that his position with the then-burgeoning Museum meant that he had to travel frequently to the state's interior, trips which enabled him "ir recogiendo de boca en boca, especialmente de aquellas gentes ancianas a quienes exprofesamente buscaba para el caso, las narraciones que aquí transcribo ("to go about collecting the narratives that I transcribe here from the very mouths of people, especially those ancient ones whom I professedly sought out for the purpose"; Rosado Vega 9). Following the turn away from a generalized storyteller found in Mediz Bolio and many stories in Yikal Maya Than, Rosado Vega in his function as cultural broker claims to bring us the very words of storytellers to whom he listened beside old wells, at archeological sites, in Maya kitchens, while walking

down jungle paths, at town festivals, and even in the capital of Mérida itself (9-10). Despite the good will and open admiration for the Maya and the Mayab he shares with them, however, he is quick to establish a suitable distance between himself and the Maya Other. Coupled with his Gamian quest to render the Maya knowable to the Mexican are his Vasconcelian ruminations on the contemporary Maya. Here we are dealing with a people who “si no fenecidos sí de los que parecen haber cumplido su misión histórica, entonces puede decirse que esas narraciones son el punto de partida desde el cual solamente puede llegarse a entender al grupo humano cuyos restos sigue la ciencia a través de todos los caminos posibles” (“if they are not already deceased, then they pertain to those [races] who seem to have completed their historical mission, so one can say that those narratives are the only point of departure from which one can come to an understanding of the human group whose remnants science seeks down all possible roads”; Rosado Vega 6). In essence, these stories provide the human back story to the otherwise now-silent ruins of Maya civilization, a vehicle through which “science” can shed light upon an otherwise “mysterious” culture. One finds this claim reflected in the very title of the work as it states that the contents are “the mysterious Maya soul.”

We gain a more nuanced understanding of Rosado Vega’s indigenismo and his role as cultural broker by recalling that in Mediz Bolio’s La tierra del faisán y del venado the author-narrator makes no mention of direct communication with the Indio. Although he refers to Indios, and even invites the reader to speak with them, the stories themselves are narrated as if originating from the perspective of the author-narrator. At best, the stories and the indigenous memory they represent thus appear to be “shared” equally between the cultural broker and the Indio. By comparison, Rosado Vega embeds the texts of his storytellers and

derives his authority over these texts from his own first-hand experience among the peninsula's Maya populations. He goes so far as to make repeated condemnations of the material conditions in which Yucatán's indigenous population finds itself. The Indio bears these things silently, smiling because "Piensa entonces en que fue dominado, pero nunca conquistado...Dió su cuerpo, pero su alma permanece intacta oculta en los pliegues del Tiempo y en la naturaleza que lo rodea" ("He thinks [to himself] that he was dominated but never conquered...He gave his body, but his soul remains intact, hidden in the folds of Time and Nature which surrounds him"; Rosado Vega 30). Buttressed by Rosado Vega's personal experience, and hence his expert knowledge of the Maya, the author-narrator in Rosado Vega continues with an explication of the Indio's psyche based on this hidden smile, placing the indigenista's own reading of Maya relations with the Mexican nation in the very mind of the Indio himself. An expert in reading the Indio's secrets, the cultural broker in his role as author-narrator presents the popular mystery of the Maya with the expressed intention of wiping away this very mystery, domesticating the Maya by rendering up the psychological history of a race abandoned by History. As such, the text makes him and his memory intelligible to the mestizo reader.

The image of the Indio storyteller, then, is as much a figure through which the author-narrator can project his psychologizing as it is a trope for the authenticity of the stories themselves, a kind of narrative proof the broker has brought back from the field. Moreover, despite the marked differences in ideological orientation between Mediz Bolio and Rosado Vega, both texts recycle the same discourse of the Indio: as an object, he is unknown, mysterious, and dark. As such, while the text itself may speak to a sharing of the peninsula's symbolic network, there remains something Other about that network's Maya articulations.

As opposed to Mediz Bolio's text, in which the author-narrator assumes the position of a storyteller speaking from within a unified vision of Yucatán's symbolic network, here the narrative distance established by the author-narrator's articulation of the storyteller breaks the frame of the text itself to signal the contemporary existence of a Maya culture independent of this textualization. In the story "El Indio y los animales" 'The Indio and the Animals,' for example, the author-narrator cedes the page to an "anciano indígena que hubo de narrármela aquella tarde, frente a la plaza de un humilde pueblo del Oriente Yucateco. Y sus ojos parecían velados de tristeza, y su voz temblaba como si dejó amargo la saturase" ("ancient indigene who told [the story] to me that afternoon, before the plaza of a humble town of Eastern Yucatán. And his eyes seemed veiled with sadness, and his voice trembled as if saturated with bitterness"; Rosado Vega 33). The narration that follows belongs to the "anciano indígena," and not to the author-narrator. Although he maintains control over the text on most levels, ordering, editing, writing, and publishing the work, the narratives do not originate with the cultural broker and he bases the authorial privilege of his locus of enunciation on his ability to fulfill this role. That is, the author-narrator the broker constructs does not so much speak from within the symbolic network (Mediz Bolio) as he consciously engages in its production, creating a binary opposition with the illiterate, mysterious, predominantly rural, Maya storyteller at one pole and the his literate, open, predominantly urban, mestizo/criollo readership at the other. Without this binary, that is, without the open recognition of a Maya cultural production beyond its articulations in dominant popular culture, the Maya remains a threatening, mysterious Other. Ideologically, for the reader the Other's textualization via the storyteller realizes the production of the mestizo's symbolic network by repositioning the reader and the storyteller as contemporaries occupying different

positions within the same cultural landscape. The Maya remains Other, but not radically so as both reader and storyteller meet each other within the textualized present of their shared culture. Moreover, and as stated by Rosado Vega himself, this Other and his race have already completed their historical mission, a way of knowing Maya culture that, once again, leaves that culture and its historical memory at the mestizo's "exclusive disposal."

The Indio storyteller thus becomes a trope for the translation of Maya knowledge and memory into non-Maya settings as the use of this figure bridges the distances of culture, time, and geography. As previously stated, Rosado Vega's representation of Maya knowledge through the storyteller constructs the symbolic network the mestizo peninsula supposedly shares. Material and practical cultural differences are thus deemphasized in favor of difference based upon the spaces of where culture is produced, age, race, education, and economic class. To return to the example cited above, the cultural broker meets the "ancient indigene" in a "humble" plaza in Eastern Yucatán, a region that until the 1970s remained exceedingly marginalized from the rest of Mexico. The Indio storyteller's eyes are "veiled with sadness," and his voice is "bitter." None of these descriptions, one would think, could be used to describe the cultural broker or his implied mestizo readership.

The Indio storyteller also explains away the Indio's recalcitrant contemporaneity with that of his mestizo counterpart. As already noted, Rosado Vega refers to the Maya as belonging to a race that has completed its historical mission. His storytellers' texts would seem to confirm this as the stories themselves are largely ahistorical narratives which treat the time before the conquest or contemporary Maya relationships with nature. The nameless storytellers speak in the present but only of the past or of their timeless relationship with the peninsula's flora and fauna. They are, almost literally, a part of the landscape. The storyteller

is a contemporary but not contemporaneous, and certainly not a legitimate rival for cultural hegemony within the peninsula. Given the storyteller's preference for rural environs, the text also paints a vivid picture of the Yucatecan countryside itself, illuminating and claiming its traditions, people, and places for the lettered city. By bringing the storyteller into the city in this way, the broker uses the storyteller to reaffirm the privileging of urban space and its articulations of cultural knowledge. Textually configured as a rural, ahistorical actor, the storyteller, and by extension the Maya he represents, is incapable of articulating a counter-hegemonic response. Ideologically speaking, we are presented with a subaltern voice that, while it may "bitter" about its marginalized condition, is nonetheless resigned to it. Indigenous self-representation as anything other than this voice is thus pre-empted within regional and national imaginaries.

Published in 1961, almost thirty years after the appearance of Rosado Vega's El alma misteriosa del Mayab, Ermilo Abreu Gómez's Leyendas y consejos del antiguo Yucatán would seem to mark, in retrospect, a final indigenista attempt to contain the Maya Other, in its re-position of the cultural broker, author-narrator, and Indio storyteller, before the burgeoning of Maya literary activism in the 1970s. The text owes a great deal to those that came before it, repeating stories from other literary sources, while seeking to place Maya culture in Yucatán within the larger context of Maya history and society as a whole. There is a chapter on the pre-Hispanic Zamná as well as a chapters dealing with the burning of Maya codices at Maní, and the mixed race Maya rebel leader Jacinto Canek. In addition to unmistakably Yucatecan tales which the text shares with the volumes by Mediz Bolio and Rosado Vega, Leyendas y consejos also includes excerpts from the K'iche' Maya Popol Wuj.

Abreu Gómez's work derives a narrative urgency from the sense of indigenista historical revisionism found in his Leyendas y consejos del antiguo Yucatán. His most well known works include a long narrative poem entitled Canek (1940), the same story upon which the chapter in Leyendas y consejos is based, Héroes Mayas (Maya Heroes; 1942), and La conjura de Xinum (The Xinum Conspiracy; 1958). Each of these works revises the literature on events in the peninsula's history while denouncing the exploitation and abuse visited on the Maya from the Conquest down through the twentieth century. His position as cultural broker is no less prevalent in his attempts, quite literally, to represent the subaltern voice of the Indio storyteller. For example, in the dedicatory passage he explains the origins of the stories in Leyendas y consejos by saying that "Unas me las contaron indios de mi tierra y otras leí en crónicas de diferente época [...] me he limitado a reunir las que me parecieron más bellas y más significativas y a reescribirlas como Dios me dio a entender, es decir, con sencillez, decoro, y un poquitín de inocencia" ("Some were told to me by the Indians of my land and I read others in chronicles from another time [...] I have limited myself to collecting those stories which seemed to me to be the most beautiful and meaningful, and to rewrite them as God has shown me: that is, with simplicity, elegance, and a little innocence"; Abreu Gómez, Leyendas np; Shrimpton, np).

In analyzing this passage, we should remember that Abreu Gómez, like Rosado Vega, derives his authority as cultural broker more from a sense that "Indios told me some of these stories" than from his position as a lettered intellectual. Indeed, his most famous work, Canek, represents a narrative working out of the stories he heard from Mayas while traveling with his father with versions of these same stories he read in school (Terry 283). As a cultural broker, he sees himself bridging the gap between oral Maya tradition and the lettered archive,

and he claims that both are represented in Leyendas y consejos. As opposed to his counterparts from earlier in the chapter who focused exclusively on reducing the oral to writing, Abreu Gómez consciously sets out to pit lettered knowledge (chronicles I read) against oral stories (stories Indios told me), constructing himself and his work as the axis on which the contradictions between these two are resolved. After all, the cultural broker “reads,” Indios “tell” him stories, and he is the agent who selects texts based on which ones he finds to be the most beautiful and the most significant.

Although the last two-thirds of the book, “Leyendas y consejos” and “Las leyendas del Popol Vuh,” are concerned with the folklorization found in other works, the work’s most significant discursive contribution lies in the first section, “Heroes Mayas,” and its fictional appropriation of the Maya storyteller’s voice. That is, it collapses the function of the author-narrator into that of the Indio storyteller and mobilizes this voice in the service of historical fiction. Here we have an extradiegetic-homodiegetic Maya narrator who narrates the story “from inside” the action. Given the prevalence of Landa and the *auto de fé* of Maní in this dissertation, I will focus on the story “Nachí Cocom,” which provides a fictionalized Maya account of the *auto* and its aftermath. As opposed to Laura Esquivel’s novel in the previous chapter, here events are narrated in the first person from a “Maya” perspective. “Me llamo Pedro Che y soy indio natural del pueblo de Maní” (“My name is Pedro Che and I am an Indian from the village of Maní”; Abreu Gómez, Leyendas 20; Shrimpton 17). Unlike Mediz Bolio, who assumes the storyteller’s mantle without becoming indigenous, or Rosado Vega, who makes the reader privy to the very conversations in which he heard these tales recounted, here Abreu Gómez bypasses prior literary constructions to fictionalize the Maya voice itself. The author-narrator is the Indio storyteller.

The other two stories in this section, “Zamná” and “Canek,” are narrated in the third person, and the stories found in the “Leyendas y consejas” section are listed by title and then recounted as folklore. “Nachi Cocóm” thus marks a significant moment in how Yucatecan and Mexican literatures treat the figure of the Indio storyteller. The Indio storyteller appears to enter literature for the first time as an actor capable of narrating his own story, and the story of Maya historical memory, from a Maya perspective. Moreover, he does so in such a way that he ruptures the frame of the written story and its prior textualizations in historical sources like Landa’s Relación de las cosas de Yucatán in order to assert a continuity and resistance of Maya peoples and cultures.

Writing years after Landa’s infamous *auto de fé*, Che admits that his memory may fail him in some details but that “mas no creo que por eso sufra la razón y el orden de los eventos principales” (“I do not believe that this will affect the sense and order of the principle events of those days”; Abreu Gómez, Leyendas 20; Shrimpton 17). The account of events that follows places Che at the center of the well-known happenings surrounding the origin of the *auto* in Maní, events recounted in the previous chapter. In this version, Che is the person whom the two Maya youths first told about the idols in the cave and he witnesses the ensuing the horrors of the *auto* itself. As a narrator/author of his own story, he recounts the crucial, albeit apocryphal, moment when Nachi Cocóm arrives in Mani’s town square at the height of the *auto*. As with members the historical Xiu lineage, the historical Nachi Cocóm of Sotuta was a familiar of Diego de Landa’s. He was also, ironically, directly responsible for the Maya reception of Christianity in his native territory, meaning that one could surmise that his methods of non-violent cultural resistance, which sought to integrate Christian knowledge into a Maya worldview, indirectly lead to the *auto* itself (Clendinnen 185-9). In Abreu

Gómez/Pedro Che's account, however, he arrives in Maní in order to halt the *auto*. This event contrasts sharply with the actual prolonged battle in colonial courts which succeeded in stopping the *auto* only after the passage of several months (Clendinnen 72-111).

At this moment Che steps back from the texts and asserts his narrative authority as cultural broker by claiming that Nachi Cocóm “dijo lo que aquí pongo en lengua de los blancos” (“said what I will translate here in the language of the white men”; Abreu Gómez, Leyendas 40). Although Mediz Bolio commented that he thought the text in Maya, the brokers of other texts and the storytellers they construct never present language as an issue and they endeavor to make communication between Maya and non-Maya uncomplicatedly transparent. Here, Cocóm's very words prefigure those of many contemporary Maya activists. Turning to Landa, Cocóm reduces the Spaniard to his equal through the use of the informal “tú” and exclaims:

Oyeme, tú. Estas palabras no podrás quemar nunca. Esta voz que es mi voz y la voz de los indios, traspasará tus orejas y no podrás olvidarla nunca. Esto que está en mi lengua no podrá repetirlo tu lengua sin caer cernada. Esto que vuela sobre la tortura y el fuego y la muerte es la verdad y la razón de la vida de los hombres de esta tierra que tú pisas. Esto que ahora digo quedará alzado delante de tus ojos y tus ojos morirán contemplando el espanto del dolor que causaste. (Abreu Gómez, Leyendas 40)

Listen to me, you. You will not be able to burn these words. This voice is mine and that of the Indians. It will go beyond your ears and you will never be able to forget it. What is spoken in my language you will not ever repeat in your own without being felled to the ground. Truth and the way of life of the men of this land that you trample on soar above the torture, fire and death that you inflict. What I say now will be held up before your eyes forever and you will die contemplating the horror and pain you have caused. (Shrimpton 32)

Che informs the reader that the rest of Cocóm's words, the words which are to be unforgettable and fly above the carnage, are lost in a whirlwind of ash which causes everyone else to flee and leaves the plaza “se llenó con el nombre y la presencia de Nachi Cocóm”

‘filled with the name and presence of Nachi Cocóm,’ and these are the story’s final words (Abreu Gómez, Leyendas 40; Shrimpton 32).

The reader is left, then, with a series of questions like those that haunt later testimonial literature. Did Che really not hear? Did he (un)intentionally omit something through a failure of memory? What is important is the fact that the text seeks to reintroduce the Maya into the national imaginary as historical agents capable of narrating their own history. Unlike previously examined texts, here we have the illusion of the Indio storyteller providing us with an unmediated version of his story. This “unmediated” representation is not, however, free from the ideological consequences discussed in relation to other texts. Although this perspective seems to endow the usually ahistorical Indio with a historical consciousness, we must recognize that this consciousness speaks to us from the past and not the present. This temporal distance places the mestizo reader at a safe distance from a Maya voice capable of articulating counter-hegemonic demands based on historical injustices in the present as these demands, if they are to be articulated, are still done so by the lettered voice of Abreu Gómez the cultural broker. To provide another example from Leyendas y consejos, in his translations of the Popol Wuj Abreu Gómez omits the authors’ own historical references to the fact that they write “amid the preaching of God, in Christendom, now” (Tedlock 63; see Abreu Gómez, Leyendas 121-271). As he tells us in a footnote, his interpretation of the Popol Wuj appeals to a kind of universal truth in these stories as “[lo que] he realizado es la expresión sencilla y coherente de [las] leyendas básicas o fundamentales [del Popol Wuhj]. He querido tan sólo facilitar la convivencia del espíritu humano y poético de tan maravilloso libro” (“[what] I have produced is the simple and coherent expression of the basic or fundamental legends [of the Popol Vuh]. I have only

wanted to facilitate a coexistence of the human and poetic spirit of this marvelous book”; Abreu Gómez, Leyendas 271; Not included in the Shrimpton translation). Like the historical situation of Pedro Che, this transcendental appeal avoids any confrontation with actual Mayas and ultimately recycles the discourse of the Indio by situating indigenous peoples as ahistorical non-agents. Although Che *was* a historical agent, his story is at the “exclusive disposal” of the mestizo nation as the reader finds no comparable contemporary voice.

Having seen how cultural brokers discursively silence the indigenous storyteller in order to make him a speaking Indio, we now turn to other representations of this figure in order to catch a glimpse of how, in other folkloric texts, the storyteller sets about actively reinterpreting his relationship with the cultural broker.

Archive of Silence: The Oral Recordings of Manuel J. Andrade and Allan F. Burns

If only to underscore how the ideology of mestizaje functions in these works, as well as how it appropriated, via the Indio storyteller, indigenous historical memory for the mestizo nation, it should also be mentioned that a collection of works by Mediz Bolio, Abreu Gómez, and Andrés Henestrosa appeared in 1942 under the title Literatura indígena moderna (Modern indigenous literature; Martínez). As we have seen, these works may indeed be alienated representations of an “indigenous literature,” but they are not indigenous literature as such. Moreover, and given that they are marshaled under a sign, mestizaje, that ultimately portends the disappearance of the indigenous peoples themselves, these works do little to inform us as to how indigenous peoples, in this case Mayas in Yucatán, interpreted their relationship with hegemonic regional and national cultures. My own look at this subject with regard to contemporary oral Yukatek Maya literature is the focus of the next chapter. The final section of this chapter focuses on two compilations of oral literature, by Manuel J.

Andrade and Allan F. Burns, respectively, in order to read them against the folkloric canon and the cultural broker/native informant relationship established in my reading of Mediz Bolio, Rosado Vega, the magazine Yikal Maya Than, and Abreu Gómez. By reading other compilations of folklore recorded during the same period, what sorts of silence can we find in these other texts? How does the establishment of a folkloric canon silence Other Maya historical memories? How do/did the people interpellated as storytellers seek to appropriate the voice of the cultural broker even as this personage seeks to appropriate and reduce the indigenous voice? These questions will guide the rest of our discussion.

Mediz Bolio, Rosado Vega, Abreu Gómez, and the contributors to Yikal Maya Than were not the only people traversing the Yucatán collecting stories during the first half of the twentieth century. As has been discussed, their respective approaches to recording Yukatek Maya oral literature draw upon the ideas that the peninsula's literate mestizo population shares a symbolic network with the peninsula's Maya populace, and that the re-textualization of Maya culture in shared stories domesticates the latter by rendering it intelligible to the former. The extent to which they co-opt and shape this voice in the name of a homogenizing ideology of mestizaje becomes apparent if we examine the practice of Maya literature during theses same years, from 1922-1961. To this end I will use two texts from the latter half of the twentieth century, the two volumes of Cuentos mayas yucatecos, edited by Hilaria Máss Collí and recorded, for the most part, by Manuel J. Andrade in the 1930s; and Allan F. Burns's An Epoch of Miracles: Oral Literature of the Yucatec Maya (1983), which contains several stories that concern the very time period during which these other indigenistas were writing and publishing their work.

By reading these works against each other, we find that two distinct patterns emerge, both of which point directly back to the ideological project of mestizaje which seeks to incorporate the Maya into regional and national cultures. The first pattern, upon which I have already commented, is one of significant overlap between the written texts themselves. While some stories, certainly, have remained popular across time and space even among the Maya, one cannot discount the fact that multiple printed iterations of the same stories point to the formation of a canonical Maya oral literature among regional and national reading publics. Thus, although the symbolic network and its iconography may be shared, the popular representation of this network is not. As if responding to this sense of inequality, while the works studied to this point were written almost entirely in Spanish, the volumes edited by Maas Collí are fully bilingual, and Burns's book contains several stories in Maya/English.

Related to this first pattern, the second pattern one finds outlines the existence of stories which are told but not represented. That is, how these cultural brokers (Mediz Bolio, etc.), in taking on the role of author-narrator, select, edit, alter, and order the stories they include while at the same time excluding other stories. As I have mentioned previously, the individual works of these cultural brokers assemble an ahistorical picture of Maya oral literature by presenting storytellers who perform pre-Hispanic texts, colonial texts, and mythic or legendary texts with roots in the Maya past. This emphasis on the past in the present serves to underscore the paradoxical existence of the outdated Maya in the modern twentieth century. Their living culture thus enters the symbolic network as reified folklore. Moreover, the canon which forms as a consequence of such repetition comes to stand in for oral literary tradition itself.

The ahistoricity of these texts, their storytellers, and the extent to which these reflect popular Yucatecan and Mexican ideologies become all the more apparent when one compares them to the recordings of the Cuban-born, U.S.-based anthropologist Manuel J. Andrade. Working in the eastern part of the peninsula in 1930, Andrade recorded twenty-seven stories in Chichén Itzá, Chan Kom, and Pisté. As is the fate of many indigenous texts which challenge popular and academic conceptions of indigenous being, almost fifty years passed before Andrade's recordings were taken seriously as an object of study. In 1984 Hilaria Maas Collí and Miguel Güémez Pineda, both of whom are Yukatek Maya, began transcribing and translating the stories for publication (Andrade 15). Today, the two volumes of Cuentos Mayas Yucatecos which contain Andrade's stories as well as a handful of stories recorded by Maas Collí in the 1980's are among the best selling books published by the Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán ("Nuestros Egresados" 12). On the one hand, the mere fact of these stories' publication in the 1990s reflects a shift in how the Maya relate to dominant Yucatecan and Mexican cultures insofar as two Maya were in charge of the project and the books are published in bilingual editions. The two volumes themselves are thus products of a far different political and ideological climate.

On the other hand, given that these texts were recorded during the same period in which Mediz Bolio, Rosado Vega, and Abreu Gómez compiled their own collections of Maya stories, these texts represent a version of Maya culture which had been silenced by popular textualizations. I do not mean to suggest that Andrade's texts, taken collectively, can be seen as representing a totalizing set of oral Maya literature, nor do I wish to assert that these texts are somehow more authentic, nor that Andrade's project somehow transcends the asymmetrical relationship of power between researcher and informant. Rather, as we have

access to the full range of texts Andrade was able to acquire, these volumes contextualize the pre-Hispanic texts, colonial texts, and mythic or legendary texts treated in other works by presenting them within the much larger repertoire of oral Maya literature as a whole. In addition, indices at the beginning of the two volumes also attribute individual texts to individual storytellers, underscoring the particularity inherent in each story's retelling.

In her introduction to volume one, Maas Collí points out that storytelling's generic conventions determine any given story's social function. "El cuento, la leyenda, el mito, la poesía, el relato histórico, la fábula, las adivinanzas y los proverbios son distintos modos de expresión y manifestación de la tradición oral" ("The story, the legend, the myth, poetry, the historical tale, the fable, riddles, and proverbs are distinct modes of expression and manifestations of oral tradition"; Maas Collí, "Introducción" 19). Each genre serves its purpose as "un agente del proceso de educación y socialización. Como tal, es preciso pensar en su papel pedagógico, moral, e ideologizador" ("an agent of educational and socializing processes. As such, one must consider its pedagogical, moralizing, and ideologizing role"; Maas Collí, "Introducción" 19). Maas Collí as a cultural broker radically shifts the ground upon which one reads, studies, and interprets these texts by rearticulating their social function in a Yukatek Maya context. Whereas in previously examined works Maya stories became the ahistorical foundation from which one could articulate contemporary regional and national mestizo identities, in these passages Maas Collí presents these same stories within the context of the ongoing transmission of Maya knowledge. They are not relics. They are more like the school books through which one learns the sociocultural logic of being Maya.

At this point I would like to focus on two stories, “Huntuul Paal K’aaba’ta’ab H ees” ‘A Boy Called Héés’ and “Hbaatab Kaaswelah” ‘The Batab Cazuela,’ both of which were told to Andrade by Lázaro Poot in Chichén Itzá and are found in the second volume of Cuentos Mayas. I have chosen them because they, out of all the stories in the two volumes, best illustrate the dangers inherent in the subtle exercises in canon formation engaged in by Mediz Bolio, the authors found in Yikal Maya Than, Rosado Vega, and Abreu Gómez. As these two texts demonstrate, these brokers use the figure of a generalized Indio to write a story which intends to be *the* story, both in the sense that subsequent iterations of the story must adhere to this prior version and insofar as their versions seek to be representative of individual stories in Maya oral tradition as a whole. The intertext between their individual works produces a popular canon of Maya oral literature in print which, by its very nature, stifles oral tradition as later re-tellings become inaccurate vis-a-vis the written word of dominant culture. The power of the cultural broker, through this literary articulation of the author-narrator, thus ultimately eclipses Mayas’ ability to represent themselves as it has always already re-presented the Maya story and his historical memory in the mestizo imaginary.

Students of Yukatek Maya literature will immediately recognize “Huntuul Paal K’aaba’ta’ab H ees” as being related to “The Dwarf of Uxmal” cited at the beginning of this chapter and also found in Abreu Gómez. Neither of the brokers mentioned previously (Stephens or Abreu Gómez) gives the dwarf a proper name. Beyond the structural similarities to which I will return, it should first be noted that the Maya storyteller Domingo Dzul Poot makes the connection between these versions of the story explicit in his own version of the Dwarf of Uxmal, “El adivino,” in which he states that “La abuela le puso por nombre H-Es

al niño” ‘his grandmother gave him the name H-es,’ noting that the name is a complicated play on the Yukatek words for “egg” and “open,” “je” (27). In every telling of the story of which I am aware the dwarf is born out of an egg, the name “Hées” succinctly expressing both his origin in the egg and the act of springing from it. As an aside, and as I alluded to at the end of the previous chapter, it is worth mentioning that Dzul Poot traces the genealogy of his version to his mother, Carmela Poot May, who told it to him in 1938 in the town of Becal. She, in turn, had heard it from a ninety-five-year-old man who told stories in the caves where people gathered to make palapa hats (Barrera Rubio 20). Becal, in Campeche, is situated near Uxmál, where Stephens heard his version, and several hours away from the geographic location of our present storyteller, Lázaro Poot, who resided in Chichén Itzá.

These differences in physical location are of prime importance. As canonized in Yucatecan literature the action occurs in Uxmál, but Lázaro Poot begins his version by stating that “Yanhil tu káahil chi’e’en íitsahe’ ka’atúul ko’olel hach uts bisukaba’o’ob” (“There lived in the town of Chichén Itzá two women who were very good friends”; Andrade 2: 203). Although one would expect to find differences of plot, narration, characterization, and description among different versions of the same story, one seldom encounters conflicting accounts of where a story takes place. More significantly, Andrade’s recording of Lázaro Póot’s version, for the most part, corresponds to the versions of Stephens and Abreu Gómez. Rather than engage in an exercise which privileges one or the other version as *the* story or seek the creation of an *Ur* text, I feel that the ideological reasons why one might find such a difference to be far more important than the differences themselves. Within this chapter we have already seen that the story of the Dwarf is over one-hundred-fifty years old, thus having more than enough time to establish itself, so this radical change in location, from

Uxmál to Chichén Itzá, if it is a change at all, must mean something within the contextualized performance of the story. Indeed, indigenous perspectives on identity formation have so far been absent from this discussion, and we must consider the fact that the story of the Dwarf, even as first told to Stephens in the mid-nineteenth century, is itself an iteration of a story limited by time and space. Returning to Mass Collí's observation of oral tradition's role in the formation of Maya subjectivity, we must recognize that, although the story of the Dwarf has its mythical aspects, the story is also historical in the sense that it transmits the history of the ruins for the local population, in effect claiming them for oral Maya historiography.

"Huntuul Paal K'aaba'ta'ab H ees" repeats many of the aspects of plot and character found in the Dwarf stories but, in locating the story in Chichén Itzá, the story also reflects traditions local to that part of the peninsula. At the end of the story, instead of building the pyramid found at Uxmál, Héés goes on an ill-fated search for his grandfather, his predecessor, who outlined a road by planting ceiba trees. Héés follows him by turning the path into a "sak beh," or "white road." During pre-Columbian times, "sak beh," many of which can still be seen today in parts of the Yucatán, were vital avenues of communication and commerce that connected Maya cities throughout the peninsula. By using the material world as a reference point, Lázaro Poot's performance of the text explains the origin of the "sak beh" between Chichén Itzá and Cobá in the same way that the Uxmál Dwarf stories explain the building of the great pyramid. No less interesting, in March 2007 I recorded a version of the "Dwarf of Uxmal," which also contains references to the building of the road. For the time being, suffice it to say that whereas the written Dwarf stories recounted by non-

Maya cultural brokers are presented as reified legends, here the storyteller plays a formative role in the creation, interpretation, and transmission of Maya historical knowledge.

Lázaro Poot's performance of "Hbaatab Kaaswelah" demonstrates similar processes. More interestingly, there is nothing else like it in the canon of brokered Yukatek Maya folklore. At first glance, the plot line itself could be a twentieth-century reinterpretation of the Quetzalcóatl/Kukulcán narrative. The protagonist, the leader Cazuela who holds the Maya position of Batab in Chichén Itzá, endures a series of trials in which his daughters marry foreigners who try to steal from the Maya. Defeated but not conquered, the batab retires to another town where he will not have to witness the atrocities visited upon his people. He promises to return one day, at the end of then world, "kéen suunahkene' ts'o'ok u seen ya'abtal in koh" ("when the number of his teeth has increased"; Andrade 2: 286). As if there were any doubt as to the meaning of this metaphor and the consequences of the batab's return, the storyteller ends the story by explaining that "Ba'ale' tu ya'alah yuum báatabe' *bíin* u xu'ul ti' le ts'uulo'ob hóok'es tu kahil chi'ch'e'eno'" ("The Batab said he would exterminate the white people who had caused him to leave the town of Chichén"; Andrade 2: 288; my italics). In Yukatek Maya the storyteller performs this last part using the prophetic tense marker "*bíin*," turning the story itself into a tale of things to come and linking this performance with the larger tradition of Maya prophecy as seen in texts like the books of the Chilam Balam that we discussed in the last chapter.

Thus the storyteller Lázaro Poot actively engages in the interpretation of the Maya past, present, and future in ways unconsidered in other texts. The recorded story "Hbaatab Kaaswelah" breaks with the conventions of the popular canonization of Maya oral traditions even more than "Huntuul Paal K'aaba'ta'ab H ees" as its Maya storyteller is an agent with a

historical consciousness. The prophetic statement that the batab will return to “b’ín u xu’uls ti’ le ts’uulo’ob” ‘exterminate the white people’ conjures images of Yucatán’s disastrous Caste War (1848-1900s), at the beginning of which an army of Maya literally almost succeeded in driving all the white people from the peninsula. One can see why such a story would be silenced in processes of the popular canonization of Maya oral traditions.

Regardless of whether or not Mediz Bolio, Rosado Vega, Abreu Gómez, or anyone else ever witnessed the performance of this particular story or a story like it, the fact that none of these brokers includes a single narrative relating to the Caste War or a Maya commentary that interprets social, cultural, and economic conditions in the peninsula is telling. Resonating with dominant culture’s terrifying historical memories, “Hbaatab Kaaswelah” and similar narratives cut directly against the grain of how these cultural brokers, and hegemonic culture in general, imagine their relationship to the Maya and Maya culture. Ideologically speaking, the Indio is no longer underdeveloped and ahistorical but a social agent capable of subversive, anti-hegemonic speech. Here the peninsula’s shared symbolic network is reinterpreted as theft as Cazuela’s sons-in-law come to demand things, specifically a magic ring, that do not pertain to non-Maya. Moreover, the Maya element of this ideological construction emerges as independent of mestizaje which, by its very definition, is always in some form dependent on indigenous cultures. In the stories this is represented by the inheritance sought but not given, the ring.

As such, the story itself enacts the form of cultural control it narrates. In telling the story of the Batab Cazuela, who struggles against foreigners and foreign domination, the storyteller himself reproduces the Batab’s struggle. Ending with the prophecy of the Batab’s return, the storyteller frames the literary present as an interlude separating two periods of

Maya cultural, economic, and political independence. Moreover, as with “Huntuul Paal K’aaba’ta’ab H ees,” the story reinterprets the Mayas’ relationship to the area of Chichén Itzá. By situating the narrative in the town, the storyteller narrates the history of the ruins within a Maya context, in effect claiming them for a decolonized Maya history. His foretelling of the Batab’s return similarly claims them for the future via the prophecy. The tacit argument here thus undercuts the legitimacy of non-Maya ownership of the ruins and the Maya cultural artifacts found there as the story asserts that Mayas were once and will be again owners of the land. Again, we cannot ignore the fact that this story was recorded during the golden age of archeology in the region, when many priceless artifacts were excavated and taken abroad for further study. The alienation from and need to reconnect with these monuments is real, and one only needs to think of the recent controversy surrounding the presence of walking vendors in the archeological site to find a current example of these processes. During the campaign in which Chichén Itzá’s Castillo was voted one of the Seven Wonders of the World, the Yucatecan press lamented the presence of these vendors, claiming that they had no right to be there, annoyed tourists, and sullied the country’s good name with their sales tactics. It was seldom mentioned that these vendors are Yucatek Maya from surrounding towns, descendants of the very people who built this international symbol of Mexican pride on the first place (see Rodríguez Galaz’s recent article, which is a notable exception). Among them, we can perhaps speculate, were the descendents of Lázaro Póot.

As Andrade’s recordings can be used to illuminate the vast differences between canonized folklore and the practice of oral literature, Allan F. Burns’s An Epoch of Miracles: Oral Literature of the Yucatec Maya stages the problematic relationship between the broker and the informant, providing us with a more nuanced understanding of how the Maya

interpret this asymmetrical relationship within oral literature itself. Although the title of the work repeats the canonizing gesture of previous authors by projecting stories collected in two towns, Ticul in Yucatán and Señor in Quintana Roo, as representative of Yukatek Maya oral literature as a whole, Burns the cultural broker revels in the irreducible particularity of the stories in the collection. Stories are often preceded by paragraphs explaining the context in which a story is told, a few stories are published bilingually in Maya/English, and in his transcriptions Burns makes an effort to have the printed words mimic the spoken through a complicated combination of punctuation, capital letters, and line breaks. On the one hand, I acknowledge Robert Dale Parker's reservations about what he calls "the social ideology of genre" insofar as we run the risk of turning oral literature into a Western genre, in this case verse (84). On the other hand, we can recognize that through these efforts Burns as cultural broker or author-narrator never recedes into the background. Instead of just framing the texts he is also framed by them as the storytellers he records contest the very nature of the broker/informant relationship.

In this regard there are two stories in the collection of singular importance, both narrated by Paulino Yamá in the town of Señor. The first of these stories, "The First Thing I Said to Dr. Morley," describes an encounter between the narrator, Yamá, and the North American archeologist Sylvanus Morley that actually took place in 1934. Again, we find ourselves in Yucatán at the height of its archeological boom. In the textual present, Burns informs the reader that this story was told during a conversation in which Yamá asked the anthropologist if he knew Morely (79). The performance of the story itself thus involves the active contestation of the broker/informant relationship and the interpretation of Maya history on several levels. Of all the texts treated to this point, this is the first time we find that

the storyteller solicits information from the broker instead of vice versa. The storyteller, Paulino Yamá, is not only named, but in Burns's text he is also a social agent capable of making demands of the cultural broker. By asking Burns if he knew Morley, Yamá creates a pretext from which he can perform the story he wants to perform, independent of the anthropologist's wishes or intentions. The assertion of the storyteller as social agent is further underscored in the first lines of the story.

HELLO, DR. SYLVANUS MORLEY,
we came to talk to you in person here
at 'Chhe'en Kuha'
so you can give us some ADVICE, some SATISFACTION.
We've already talked with you, MISTER, with satisfaction. (Burns 79)

Again, instead of the broker, in this case Morley, interpellating the Maya as informants, the Maya interpellate Morley as an archeologist who has ceded to their demands in the past and is expected to do so once again. That is to say, they configure the field of power in which they interact with the North American by defining his role within it, discursively inverting the relationship between the cultural broker and the native storyteller.

This act of interpellating the cultural broker is neither casual nor arbitrary, and once again demonstrates the vast silences which mark previously treated texts. If the Yukatek Maya in 1934 are capable of fixing the North American Morley's role within their sphere of social interaction, they would have been no less capable of similarly situating Mediz Bolio, Rosado Vega, or Abreu Gómez. Indeed, Paul Sullivan's Unfinished Conversations: Mayas and Foreigners between Two Wars documents how Mayas in the eastern part of the peninsula openly negotiated with foreigners, including Morley, in their ongoing struggles against the Mexican government. Morley's position as a foreign broker differentiates him from these others but nonetheless, given what the Maya of Quintana Roo requested of Morley, this

deafening silence opens up the tantalizing, presently unanswerable question of what, exactly, these “Indios” sought in return for their stories. In Morley’s case, both historically and within the present story, the Maya seek to use him as a means to continue their war with the Mexican government and obtain political, social, and cultural independence. As Paul Sullivan notes in his book, the Maya of the area are descended from the last hold-outs of Yucatán’s Caste War, and although in places like X-cacal they maintain a militia to this day, the function of the contemporary Maya military is more symbolic than not (181-99). The attempt to use Morley to obtain supplies and political alliances, however, has roots in the Caste War itself. For years during the nineteenth century, Maya in the eastern portion of the peninsula sustained their war efforts via trade with the British in then British Honduras. Their interpellation of Morley, then, reflects historical precedence and continues a tradition in which Mayas make use of foreigners’ resources.

The current story is all the more interesting as, in this discussion with Morley, Yamá claims the Maya leader Concepción Cituk has misrepresented Maya interests to the North American and Yamá now seeks to reassert the needs of the people. Burns notes that Morley and his people misinterpreted Cituk’s role in the overall social hierarchy by seeing him as a ‘chief’ (79). Yamá’s calling directly on Morley displaces Cituk’s role in these encounters and indirectly acknowledges that Morley has not met Mayas’ expectations of him. Displeasure with Cituk mitigates Morley’s shortcomings by attributing these faults to Cituk instead of to Morley himself.

Every time we come, every time we come, every time we come here,
well, you don’t say anything to us.
We don’t say anything either.
Well, NOW then, Señor,
I’m taking account, Señor. (Burns 80)

We should note again that, in this address, the storyteller Yamá is making demands of the cultural broker, Morley. The storyteller thus fixes Morley and himself in the discussion, going on to restate the problems of the people which, following Sullivan's account of events, would have by then been well known to the archeologist. Yama states:

The land, our nation, what is
the reason it is called 'Mexico'?
It is SO FAR AWAY.
They say it's the same land
but I don't believe it's TRUE:
because this land
is separate.
This land of the Territory is separate:
Nohoch Cah Santa Cruz Balam Nah Kampocolce nation. (Burns 80)

In re-performing this prior speech act, however, the intended audience goes beyond being the historical figure of Sylvanus Morley and becomes both the reader and the anthropologist Allan F. Burns. Via Yamá's initial interpellation of Burns, what, on the surface, is a historical narrative turns into renewed assertion of Maya independence and a justification of Maya's place in world history.

In the words of Allan F. Burns, the second story, "The Story of Venancio Puc," "shows some of the conflict and factionalism of Mayan political history---Venancio Puc led the Maya in the 1850s at the time when the Speaking Cross came into being," and "examine[s] present day interpretations of the Caste War" (82). Despite this story's historical grounding, what is far more interesting is how Paulino Yamá chooses to tell it. A narrative about Maya political history becomes a meta-commentary on the political present as Yamá begins the story by asking Burns who is president of the United States. Upon being told Richard Nixon is president, Yamá says:

Nixon, ahah.
MR. PRESIDENT NIXON, you are the United States.

You have the power within you.
Your town was marked by the Beautiful True God.
Not in time will you come apart;
Not in time will you lose. (Burns 82)

Strange as this greeting would seem, within the context of the previous story it makes sense as part of the story's larger frame. Yamá usurps the voice of Burns, the anthropologist, to address Richard Nixon in much the same way he had previously created the pretext to narrate his encounter with Morley and, in doing so, assert Maya independence. Moreover, by presuming to call on the President of the United States, Yamá asserts his role as a Maya leader and Nixon's political equal.

Yamá goes on to narrate the fall of the leader Puc in the way described by Burns but closes the story by once again inserting contemporary politics into his narration of the past. Mixing the language of the declarations of the famous talking cross with new prophecy, Yamá exclaims:

There you will get whatever the things you need, there with those who are called
English,
with those who are called Americans, red-red men.
They are my servants;
they are my sacred people.
I am Juan de la Cruz,
I am the Noh Cah Santa Cruz Balam Nah.
There isn't anyone else! (Burns 85)

Given that the addressee of this story is Richard Nixon, the appearance of Americans at the end of the story as the Maya's prophesied allies and sacred servants of the talking cross is a subtle attempt to establish an actual political alliance. By drawing the United States into Maya historiography and its prophetic traditions, the storyteller seeks to make the story a self-fulfilling prophecy. He succeeds, at least in part, as Burns returns to the United States and publishes his collection, a collection in which one finds that Yamá the storyteller

effectively appropriates the anthropologist's voice and presents his political agenda to the wider world. Although Nixon is long out of office by the year the book is published, 1983, in some sense Yamá successfully crosses linguistic, cultural, political, and ethnic borders to deliver his message.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen how the representation of the relationship between the cultural broker and the Maya storyteller, a relationship shaped by the broker's function as author-narrator, has changed over the course of the twentieth century. We have also seen how, given these changes, we can read contemporary oral texts against earlier ones in order to gain at least some perspective on the silences created by oral literature's transposition as folklore. My intention is not to diminish the importance of Antonio Mediz Bolio, the writers involved in Yikal Maya Than, Luis Rosado Vega, or Ermilo Abreu Gómez or their work, but rather to show how these cultural brokers participate in the ideological re-imagining of the mestizo nation through their respective treatments of the indigenous storyteller and his voice. Each recycles the discourse of the Indio and consequently maintains the Maya in a position of subalternity. By considering the stories told by Maya storytellers during the same time period (Andrade) and those they tell about that time (Burns), we have found that storytellers have always sought to contest the terrain upon which they tell their stories. Any evidence of this agency has been excised in the texts treated in the first two sections of this chapter, as they operate under an ideology, *mestizaje*, that seeks to assimilate the Indio as the mestizo's ancestor and not his counter-hegemonic contemporary.

This silence, however, does not mean that such texts are wholly non-Maya. Hilaria Maas Collí, for example, in her publication of Cuentos Mayas and the anthology of stories

from Yikal Maya Than, Leyendas Yucatecas, actively resignifies these stories for both twenty-first-century Maya and the twenty-first-century Mexican nation state, effectively reclaiming alienated cultural texts. We are left, however, with nagging questions about these Maya storytellers and about how they, themselves, saw and continue to see their relationships with outsiders. How do contemporary storytellers use stories to interpret their role in the world? What do these interpretations tell us about what we might call the larger oral Maya “critical literary tradition”? These questions will be the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 4 “I’ll tell you what...”: Mariano Bonilla Caamal and Storytelling as Cultural Control

The truth about stories is that’s all we are.
Thomas King, The Truth About Stories

As we have seen in the preceding chapter, non-indigenous cultural brokers use the figure of the storyteller to legitimate their own versions of indigenous cultures by imbuing them with an unassailable air of cultural authenticity. By constructing the Indio as an illiterate oral storyteller, one who is inherently mute with regard to the lettered world, these cultural brokers employ the discourse of the Indio to legitimate their own authority over indigenous cultures by claiming that, at the very least, their texts represent the only form in which these cultures are rendered knowable. In the absence of indigenous voices, cultural brokers are thus authorized to speak for indigenous peoples, their “speaking for” standing in place of and silencing indigenous utterance itself. In effect, by reproducing the discourse of the Indio and its relationships of power, these cultural brokers reinforce the notion that indigenous people are ultimately incapable of speaking for themselves. They are objects to be spoken for, not subjects capable of speech.

Indigenous peoples themselves are well aware of the material effects of this discursive phenomenon. For example, the K’iche’ Maya Nobel Laureate and human rights activist Rigoberta Menchú Tum notes that “Hemos tenido la experiencia en Guatemala, que siempre nos han dicho, pobres los Indios, no pueden hablar. Entonces, muchos dicen, yo hablo por ellos” (Me llamo 253; “Our experience in Guatemala has always been to be told:

‘Ah, poor Indians, they can’t speak. And many people have said, ‘I’ll speak for them’”; Wright 228). Despite what we might call the best intentions of indigenistas from the colonial era to the present, and as we have seen thus far, we cannot overlook the fact that, more often than not, this act of speaking for has been to the detriment of indigenous peoples, seldom attempted to take into account indigenous historical perspectives and world views, and perhaps never represented indigenous peoples as historical actors with an existence outside of universal Western history. Therefore, as Rigoberta Menchú Tum concludes, “Eso nos duele mucho. Es parte de la discriminación” (Me llamo 253; “This hurts us very much. This is a kind of discrimination”; Wright 228).

This chapter focuses on oral literature I recorded during the spring and fall of 2006 in the bilingual Yukatek Maya town of Santa Elena. These recordings were made as part of an ongoing trilingual project on oral storytelling entitled “U tsikbaalil yuukatan/Cuentos de Yucatán/Stories from Yucatan” that I developed in collaboration with the Yukatek Maya storyteller Mariano Bonilla Caamal. In order to demonstrate how Yukatek Mayas use the structures, techniques, and tropes of oral storytelling to exercise a kind of discursive agency and to contest asymmetrical relations of power inherent in their interactions with non-Mayas, I will center on two stories in particular, both of which were told to me by Mariano. Although I have more than fifteen hours’ worth of video I selected these two stories because I believe that, when juxtaposed, they best illustrate the discursive agency represented by the storyteller. As such, these two texts in particular contrast with the texts manipulated by non-Maya cultural brokers in the previous chapter where the storyteller’s voice was altered, obscured, and blunted in order to exercise their own agency.

The first story I will discuss is one of the most canonical of all Yukatek Maya stories, “The story of Juan Rabbit.” As a literary text this story in particular demonstrates the extreme difficulty one encounters when working with oral literature as, unlike the published works of non-Maya authors, the story of Juan Rabbit can be regarded as a kind of intellectual property common to the Americas, Africa, and Europe. Allowing for a variety of modifications in the order, structure, and moral of Juan Rabbit’s adventures, we can confidently assert that his various appearances are aliases rather than cases of genealogical relation. Among both African-American and Caucasian cultures in the Southern United States Juan goes by the name Brer Rabbit, in many Native American cultures he is Uncle Coyote, throughout contemporary Latin America he is often referred to as Tío Conejo, and in West Africa he has endured as Anansi the Spider. I will deal with the implications and significance of this story’s globalization later on. For the moment I offer the intercontinental scope of the Rabbit’s travels as proof of the story’s antiquity and cross-cultural appeal. That is, without necessarily referring to published works of folklore, we can confidently assert that the story of Juan Rabbit in the abstract is, in any sense one wishes to define the word, “traditional.”

By comparison, the second story I will be dealing with is radically non-traditional by the standards usually associated with folklore as it deals with an actual event that occurred a few years ago at a hotel near Santa Elena. I will name this story “Eligio and the Gringo.” As we shall see, however, this story is not simply a tale about something that happened to one of Mariano’s friends. Through his performance of the text Mariano makes the story a work of oral literature that draws directly upon the discursive traditions of Yukatek Maya storytelling. Given its contemporary setting and non-canonical status, this story draws our attention to how Western notions of tradition/modernity are frustrated in much of Yukatek storytelling.

On the one hand, we can observe how traditional stories provide a framework from which the storyteller can structure his narrative of contemporary events. On the other, it calls attention to the fact that even “traditional” stories are not, in the moment of their telling, told into or from an ahistorical past but are rather retold within a specific present. That is, as “traditional” stories are retold, they can accrue a new significance that has nothing to do with “tradition” per se. They are, in the fullest sense of the word, also “modern.”

Noting this relationship between past and present, the “traditional” and the “modern,” we find that storytelling is an active interpretive principle in the daily life of Maya communities, the storyteller being the person charged with narrating and interpreting events in accordance with local values and customs. Rather than simply retelling stories drawn out of an “oral tradition,” Yukatek storytellers give new meanings to older tales by retelling them in novel settings and use the literary structures of “traditional” storytelling to exercise discursive agency over current events. I argue that the act of storytelling pertains to a tradition of literary interpretation, or to the tradition of a generalized interpretive mode, rather than to the “tradition” often referred to by cultural brokers and folklorists within the academy. For example, in his book Memoria indígena the Mexican historian Enrique Florescano states that a number of indigenous groups in Mexico “cultivaron la obsesión de narrarse su propia historia y exaltar los valores de su identidad” (“cultivated the obsession of narrating their own history and exalting the values that forged their identity”; 322). We can relate Florescano’s comments back to a more specifically Yukatek context by reading them in the light of what Nancy Farris, in her seminal work Maya Society under Colonial Rule, terms the “collective enterprise of survival.” Describing how Yukatek Maya society has managed to endure from the conquest to the present, Farris defines this concept as a process

through which the Maya preserved “a central core of concepts and principles” that enabled Spanish influences to be interpreted and shaped “along Maya lines and in accordance with Maya principles” (9). As a collective tradition, storytelling---the obsession with narrating one’s own history in accordance with one’s own values--- transmits the “central core of concepts and principles” that guide the reproduction of Maya culture over time, shaping Maya culture’s relationship with and interpretation of the hegemonic cultures of Yucatán, Mexico, and the United States.

What do I mean, however, when I refer to the structures or formulae of oral Yukatek Maya literature? First, these formulae function as linguistic markers that distinguish literary speech from everyday speech. Second, we can speak of these as being Yukatek Maya (as opposed to universal) if only because, within the current context, repetition has sustained their use across time and space in the Yucatán peninsula. Their continual use and reuse across different stories and genres makes them an integral part of storytelling for both the storyteller and his audience. These formulae are not so much a part of the abstract story per se, but constitute a vital part of an individual storyteller’s artistic representation of that story. I will not attempt to reproduce an exhaustive list of these formulae, but rather defer to two important works on the subject by the Yukatek Maya Ana Patricia Martínez Huchim and Francesc Ligorred Perramon, respectively. In her thesis K-maya tsikbal (1996), Martínez Huchim draws on the categories and work of William Labov in her examination of how storytellers use formulae to structure the stories she recorded in the town of Xocén (94-106). These categories she uses are: the compendium which summarizes the story at its beginning; orientation, which places the story and its protagonists in a certain time and space; the evaluation of the events told; the action itself; the consequences of the action; and the coda,

which ends the story. While these categories are not exclusively Maya, in her analysis Martínez Huchim explores the different formulae that storytellers use in textualizing these structures. For example, she notes both the common occurrence of the phrase “ka máanene” ‘When I went by’ at the end of stories and nineteen different ways of ending a story with variations of a phrase best translated as “That’s it.” Ligorred Perramon’s focus is more on the poetic structures (alliteration, etc.) present in these stories (Consideraciones 129-48). Of relevance here is his observation that storytellers themselves will often refer to Yukatek Maya oral traditions in their stories, positing their story as the telling of a story (Ligorred Perramon, Consideraciones 134). Considered as an oral formula in itself, this type of self-reflexive storyteller consciously breaks the frame of the present narrative to refer back to previous narratives, which we can imagine as part of an infinite number of prior tellings. Considered as a whole, these sorts of oral formulae structure Yukatek narratives internally with regard to a specific telling and externally with regard to the corpus of oral literature. As the raw material used to tell a story, they both serve to move the narrative along in the present and to situate that narrative within the broader tradition of Yukatek Maya storytelling.

Storytelling and Testimonio

Before moving on to exploring the role of the storyteller and Maya discursive agency in these stories, I would first like to say a few words about these recordings with regard to contemporary debates about the representation of subaltern voices and the Latin American testimonio. I share Gayatri Spivak’s ambivalence towards such projects when she notes, “The ventriloquism of the speaking subaltern is the left intellectual’s stock-in-trade,” and yet goes on to admit that, as we are at times able to recognize the presence of and read subaltern

voices, these people “[*have*] spoken in some way” (255; 309). As we saw in chapter three, we can indeed read works of folklore against each other and find that the subaltern *does* speak in some way. Similarly, the stories I recorded in Santa Elena also constitute a “speaking in some way” that should not be confused with “speaking” directly. Like written literature or film, Yukatek Maya oral literature constitutes its own form of expression that cannot be reduced to other forms. While I feel that filming the performance of oral texts has certain advantages over recording these performances in Latin script, neither of these modes captures the oral text in itself. I agree with Robert Dale Parker’s assessment of contemporary and traditional fieldwork techniques when he says, “oral story in the age of mechanical and electronic reproduction multiplies into more than any method of reproduction can discover or contain. Rather than not advocating any one medium or form for oral stories, I am advocating all the forms without privileging any of them” (99). Insistence upon the primacy of video, or poetry, or prose, as *the* medium for an academic approach to oral literature reproduces the conditions of subalternity in which generally define this literature. While I will distribute these stories on DVDs, most non-Maya audiences will experience these stories in a hybridized format. That is, even though the texts were recorded in Yukatek, most people’s linguistic access to these stories will come through the Spanish and English subtitles.

Although a call to “solidarity” with subaltern peoples might be one of the testimonio’s defining characteristics, these peoples themselves refer to the limits of such solidarity in their testimonios. I am thinking specifically of the famous scene in Let Me Speak! when Domitila Barrios de Chungara, the wife of a Bolivian miner, experiences and confronts the limits of her solidarity with the transnational feminist movement. At the International Women’s Year Tribunal in Mexico City in 1975 Barrios de Chungara ran afoul

of the American feminist Betty Friedan, who claimed that Barrios de Chungara and her Latin American counterparts “were being ‘manipulated by men,’ that ‘[they] only thought about politics,’ and that [they had] completely ignored women’s problems” (Barrios de Chungara 201-02). We can observe that solidarity, in this sense and in this case, might be construed as based on the preconditions that those in a position of power, be they academics, leftists, or feminists, place upon it. By insisting that Barrios de Chungara’s participation at the Tribunal correspond to Friedan’s ideological agenda, specifically the agenda of Western feminism, Friedan attempts to re-place Barrios de Chungara in a position of subalternity. Rejecting that the Bolivian might have her own legitimate agenda, she states, “Let’s talk about us...about you and me...well, about women” (Barrios de Chungara 202).

Comparing the glaring inequality of their respective economic situations, Barrios Chungara concludes her response to Friedan by asking, “Now señora, tell me: is your situation at all similar to mine? Is my situation at all similar to yours? So what equality are we going to speak of between the two of us? If you and I aren’t alike, if you and I are so different? We can’t, at this moment, be equal, even as women, don’t you think?” (202-03). What does solidarity mean when, ultimately, it remains a relationship between people who are undeniably unequal? At its core, in this passage Barrios de Chungara questions the very premise of the international feminist movement. If we take her criticism seriously, and I feel that we must, those in positions of power and privilege must be aware of how these positions determine their own lived experience, even at the level of biological attributes like gender. Her statement that “We can’t, at this moment, be equal, even as women” highlights the limits of our solidarity with subaltern subjects even as it points to the reasons for these limits and the possibility of eventually overcoming them. That is, Friedan’s lived experience of what it

means to be a woman and that of Barrios de Chungara are so different as to be almost unintelligible. I say almost unintelligible because, on the one hand, before Friedan has a chance to issue a rejoinder another woman steps to chastise the miner's wife and silence her. On the other, Barrios de Chungara's collaboration with Moema Viezzer, the product of which is the testimonio Let Me Speak!, is the end result of her participation in the conference.

How does one show solidarity with the oppressed? I would argue that giving them platforms like the testimonio is certainly a start. However, as Beverly notes, the voice present in testimonio is "Reassuring because it has been produced *for us*, like a movie, by people like us" despite the fact that in the genre itself, "we are in effect interpellated *from* the subaltern" (1-2, *itals in original*). That is, whatever the unsettling aspects of a given testimonio may be, the formal familiarity of the genre itself, be it literary or cinematic, nonetheless provides us with the comfort, no matter how illusory, that the subaltern can/does speak in some way which we can understand him or her. In translating the subaltern's voice into terms that we can understand, the cultural broker would seemingly provide us with some measure of power over that voice. We are not asked, for example, to speak the subaltern's language, to go to the subaltern's home, to break bread with the subaltern's family, or to share the subaltern's material suffering, in short to acknowledge the full meaning of that suffering within its lived and historical contexts. In his article on the English-language publication of the testimonio Andean Lives, Juan Zevallos Aguilar points out that the radical solidarity between researcher-informant found in this testimonio arises from the fact that the editors of the text, Ricardo Valderrama Fernández and Carmen Escalante Gutiérrez, lived in the same neighborhood and spoke the same languages (Spanish and Quechua) as the people they

interviewed, Gregorio Condori Mamani and his wife Asunta Quispe Huamán (245). The 100 peso payments are an acknowledgement of the vast economic inequalities between myself the Yukatek storytellers I interviewed, as well as acknowledgement of my present inability to overcome those inequalities. Solidarity must not be reduced to symbolic gestures, however, and at some point must be translated into action.

The recordings that Mariano and I made move in this direction. First, and unlike the testimonio, the DVDs are not, strictly speaking, *for* a non-Maya audience. In their raw, untranslated form they are intelligible only to an audience that speaks and is culturally fluent in Yukatek Maya. With notable exceptions like Bert Womack's Video Turix, and other video projects that are gaining traction on Youtube, there is a relative paucity of video in Yukatek, and I imagine that most Maya in Yucatán are more familiar with how their language and culture are represented in Mel Gibson's Apocalypto than in Womack's Sáastal. The recordings that Mariano and I have made are an attempt to use video technology to reproduce Yukatek Maya culture among the Maya themselves, and one day I hope to gain funding to support the dissemination of this technology like the Chiapas Media Project has done among Zapatista communities in Southern Mexico. Second, and given that in these recordings I foreground these linguistic and cultural barriers, the English and Spanish subtitles constitute the aspects of the video that are *for* us. That is, Yukatek Maya is presented as a living mode of communication that exists alongside hegemonic European languages. Thus third and finally, the viewer is invited to approach Yukatek Maya language and culture in terms of difference rather than through their reducibility to Western norms via translation. In other words, rather than being in the presence of a testimonio produced *by* us *about* them *for* us,

the non-Maya viewer experiences the stories in the video as the collaborative effort of two people trying to work from the borders between Maya and non-Maya worldviews.

Storytelling and Tradition in Time: the Old is New the New is Old

For a non-Maya audience, the most important aspect of these recordings is that they force non-Maya to engage Maya culture as something that is the independent subject of its own history. This may or may not necessarily be the case with testimonio insofar as, given that testimonio is produced *for* non-Maya, testimonio is, in some way, dependent on non-Maya for its existence. Recalling Beverly, we can assert that testimonio is a formal genre through which the subaltern interpellates those in power. By comparison, regardless of whether or not Mariano and I made recordings of these stories, the men and women who participated in the project would continue to tell these stories in their communities. Although the videos make these stories accessible *to* us, they are nonetheless not *for* us. Moreover, given this difference in orientation, we are forced to confront our own inadequacies with regard to our reception of these stories. Unlike in folklore or in testimonio, non-Mayas are *not* the intended or ideal audience of these stories. Given that these stories are told in Yukatek Maya from a Maya locus of enunciation how, then, can we as outsiders approach these stories? Moreover, it is also pertinent to ask if we, as beings who are accustomed to experiencing literature from within the norms of our own forms of literary practice, can even interpret and analyze these texts without also subjecting them to a form of epistemic violence that reduces them to our ways of knowing and experiencing literature? I feel that these

questions must be explored, if not answered, before moving on to my own analysis of the two texts I have selected.

I center my approach to oral Yukatek Maya literature by situating individual storytellers within a specific place and time. As argued by Johannes Fabian, the fundamental contradiction in our knowledge of the Other is that, “on the one hand we dogmatically insist that anthropology rests on ethnographic research involving personal, prolonged interaction with the other. But then we pronounce upon the knowledge gained from such research a discourse which construes the Other in terms of distance, spatial and temporal” (xi). We should remember, as Fabian says later, that, “there is no knowledge of the Other which is not also a temporal, historical, a political act” (1). As we saw in the previous chapter, for cultural brokers the journey from the center to the periphery, from the city to the countryside, also entailed a passage from civilized, lettered, developed, and authoritative culture to a space occupied by a lesser if not savage, oral, undeveloped, and hence lesser culture. In a sense, the folklorists in chapter three were engaged in voyages similar to that undertaken by the protagonist of Alejo Carpentier’s Los pasos perdidos (The Lost Steps; 1953) as they, too, conceived of their respective trips into the Yucatecan countryside as journeys back in time. “They,” the Yukatek Maya, inhabit the undeveloped space of tradition, the past, while “we,” whoever we are, inhabit the developed space of modernity, the present. However, the Yukatek Maya do not tell stories within or originating from a context of spatial and temporal difference. On the contrary, they inhabit the same modernity we do, albeit in a state of subalternity. The storytellers Mariano and I recorded are not parrots of a dying tradition in a dying language but rather men and women who produce and reproduce, in our shared present, the fullness of Maya culture.

We are confronted, then, by an Other literary practice. Beyond possessing its own genres, gestures, tropes, and themes, this literary practice also possesses its own mode of literary analysis and interpretation insofar as storytellers, in the re-telling of their stories, are also re-interpreting the Maya past in terms of the Maya present, the Maya present in terms of the Maya past. If the storyteller, in the act of storytelling, occupies a specific time and place, then we must also recognize that, through the act of telling a story, the storyteller offers us a specific interpretation of the day's events. Whether a story is told in the home, the milpa 'traditional farming plot,' or on the street, the story does not necessarily have the same meaning twice. Given this context, there are three particular points I would like to make with regard to Yukatek Maya storytelling. First, that the Maya storyteller is the living embodiment of someone who transmits "the central core of concepts and principals" described above by Nancy Farris. Second, as the embodiment of this knowledge and the person charged with its transmission, the storyteller uses these "core concepts and principals" to structure his/her narratives. Finally, we can therefore say that the storyteller exercises a particular kind of discursive agency through the act of storytelling. Through the act of telling a story, the storyteller literally structures the past in terms of the present and the present in terms of the past, meaning that storytelling represents an act of discursive agency through which Yukatek Mayas understand, interpret, and exercise control over the world in their own terms.

In order to provide a historical context for how indigenous peoples, and more specifically the Yukatek Maya, have exercised this form of agency through the telling of their stories, I would like to provide two brief examples. Although scholars and academics often prize the K'iche' Maya Popol Wuj for the insight it gives us into pre-Colombian Maya culture, the Popol Wuj is, in many ways, an act of cultural appropriation and resistance par

excellence, one in which anonymous Mayas use the tools of oppression in order to ensure the continuity of Maya culture. As the authors of the K'iche' book of council transcribe the oral performance of a glyphic text in Latin letters they say they do so “now amid the preaching of God, in Christendom now. We shall bring it about because there is no longer a place to see it [...]” (Tedlock 63). That is, the people performing the text situate this performance within a specific time and place, “in Christendom now,” meaning that the Popol Wuj must be read as a colonial work as much as a pre-Colombian one. In doing so, they place “Christendom now” as a continuance of previous epochs in K'iche' history and the work ends, interestingly enough, with a genealogy of K'iche' rulers. They therefore realign “Christendom” as part of K'iche' history while realigning the K'iche' Christian present with the immemorial past. Similarly, in Yucatán, the Yukatek noble Ah Nakuk Pech asserts the legitimacy of his social position based in the fact that he is “descendiente de los antiguos hidalgos conquistadores de esta tierra, en la región de *Maxtunil*” (a descendent of the first noble conquistadors of this land, in the region of Maxtunil; 19).⁶ In the space of a few words written in Latin script, he appropriates the Spanish words and categories of “hidalgo” and “conquistador” to strip the Spanish Conquest of its primacy and claim the historical precedence of other, non-Spanish nobles. That is, “hidalgo” ‘noble’ becomes a term that refers equally to pre-conquest Maya nobility as it does to the Spanish, and “conquistador” points to an entire Maya history of military conquest that pre-dates the arrival of the Europeans.

Here we can recall Frederic Jameson's statement, “that history is *not* a text, not a narrative, master or otherwise, but that, as an absent cause, it is inaccessible to us except in textual form, and that our approach to it and to the Real itself necessarily passes through its

⁶See Restall, Maya Conquistador, pages 104-28 for more on the text. According to Restall, the text was originally composed in Yukatek Maya and the important words I cite in this passage in the original document read :yax hidalgo concixtador (Maya Conquistador 109).

prior textualization, its narrativization in the political unconsciousness” (35). Explaining the relationship between ideology and texts with regard to interpretation, he goes on to say that “the aesthetic act itself is ideological, and the production of aesthetic or narrative form is to be seen as an ideological act in its own right, with the function of inventing imaginary or formal ‘solutions’ to unresolvable social contradictions” (Jameson 79). As seen in these above cites examples from the colonial period, efforts to find solutions for “unresolvable social contradictions” lay at the very heart of a great deal of Maya literature. Rather than interpreting these texts as examples of hybridity or cultural mestizaje that ultimately point us in the direction of a decline in or the loss of Maya culture, we should ask ourselves why these authors appropriate these foreign cultural elements (the decision to write “in Christendom” or as a descendent of the “first noble conquerors”)? Although these phrases represent cases of mixing, these authors do not construct themselves as mixed or hybridized subjects but as Maya subjects. The ideology with these texts is eminently pro-Maya. In a sense the passages cited above can be seen as what Bonfil Batalla refers to as “cultura apropiada” ‘appropriated culture’ as these non-Maya cultural elements are mobilized in the reproduction of Maya culture, as opposed to a culture that is thought of as hybrid or mestizo. To recall Farris’ terms, these elements of appropriated culture are placed at the service of “a central core of concepts and principals” which remain undeniably Maya and determine the reception of these non-Maya elements.

However, I feel that we can delve deeper into the ideological ramifications of the production of Maya texts in the light of Jameson’s comments. The Pech text, for example, is more than a hybridized flight of fancy composed by an educated Maya nobleman. If we agree with Ángel Rama’s assertion that the power of Latin American letrados derives from a

tradition in which “[la escritura] consolidaba el orden por su capacidad para expresarlo rigurosamente en la nivel cultural” ‘writing consolidated the political order by giving it rigorously elaborated cultural expression,’ then we must view Pech’s text, written in imitation of the colonial genre of the “probanza” ‘proof of merit,’ as directly addressing colonial power in Maya terms (9; Chasteen 7). As Peter Hervik commented on the historical work of Armando Dzul Ek in the first chapter, the argument underlying Pech’s text is, “The past is constituted in the present, and the present does not reflect history” (124-125). As opposed to dwelling on this apparent contradiction, Pech draws attention to it in the form of his proposed solution, that he is a descendent of the land’s “first noble conquerors.” His text thus situates Mayas as subjects of their own, Other history even as he writes this history in the terms of a non-Maya “rigorously elaborated cultural expression.” As I have stated, however, the Pech document is intended for imperial or colonial eyes, and therefore differs significantly from the Popol Wuj and the oral texts that will be the focus of the remainder of this chapter. While the Pech document may have been read by colonial functionaries and literate Mayas, and so composed for a diverse audience, we can firmly assert that the Popol Wuj and oral literature are texts composed *for* Maya communities.

In a sense, the Popol Wuj can be used as paradigm for our interpretation of texts by contemporary Yukatek Maya storytellers. The claim that its performers make about writing the text down “in Christendom, now” pre-empts the obvious contradiction that arises between the covert maintenance of Maya beliefs and the outward expression of being a good Christian. More so than just appropriating another way of counting time and reconciling Maya history with current events, it normalizes this sense of duality. It is a form of what W.E.B. DuBois calls “double consciousness.” The Popol Wuj resolves the apparent

contradictions between Christian versus Maya histories, cultures, and worldviews by framing them as a matter of both-and as opposed to a binary either-or. Again, given that this document is *for* the Maya, we are mere interlocutors to the performance of this text. We are not invited to interpret, to understand, or even to acknowledge it. To approach it we must attempt to do so in Maya terms that, even they appropriate non-Maya cultural elements, nonetheless reject the notion that such appropriation constitutes hybridity or *metsizaje*.

The other side of recording indigenous knowledge in Latin letters was and has remained the memory and re-production of that knowledge in its oral form. We must remember that the Maya, for example, like the Aztecs and the Inca, had developed their own systems of writing prior to having their lands invaded by Europeans. In addition to transposing these texts into Latin script, Micaela Morales López reminds us that, “La creación literaria india se refugió en la oralidad, hecho positivo que contribuyó a preservar relatos, mitos y costumbres prehispánicos” (“Indigenous literary creation took refuge in orality, a positive act that contributed to the preservation of prehispanic stories, myths, and customs”; 20). The development and maintenance of oral literature therefore constitutes a conscious act of ethnogenesis whose precedents stretch back to the beginning of European hegemony in the Americas. By continuing this tradition in the present, the oral storyteller points to the ongoing existence of this Other tradition. Ideologically, oral literature is therefore no less counter-hegemonic than texts like the Historia y crónica de Chac Xulub Chen or the Popol Wuj as the storyteller, in his retextualization of stories, resolves current social contradictions *in* Maya terms and *for* Maya people. Given this context, my treatment of the two oral texts I have selected will answer the following questions. First, what is the relationship between a traditional story retold in the present and its contemporary context?

Second, how do the ideologies found in the retellings of these stories structure, with regards to form and content, more “contemporary” stories? What social contradictions do these stories seek to resolve? And finally, how do storytellers themselves experience and make sense of these contradictions?

Sound and Fury Signifyin(g) Everything: The Story of Juan Rabbit

I should begin by saying that, if we were to try to imagine Yukatek Maya culture in a vacuum, the conceit of an outsider interpellating a Maya to tell a story might strike us as inauthentic or contrived. However, and as I made clear in the previous chapter, our imaginings of an authentic Maya culture are themselves contrivances which reflect our desire to maintain the Maya as a domesticated Other. Moreover, given that the Maya have been in contact with the “West” since Columbus hijacked a Maya trading vessel in the Caribbean, we must recognize that moments of cultural exchange and mutual (mis)understanding between the Maya and foreigners have been ongoing for over five-hundred years. We can once again recall the iconic image of John Lloyd Stephens resting atop Uxmal, asking his guide for a local history lesson, as proof that such moments have been part of a process of mutual observation and interpretation. Although a text like Stephens’ would turn such dialogues into monologues in which the superiority of Western culture is taken for granted, looking past this position we see that the Yukatek Maya are the subjects of their own history, and that they have their own thoughts and opinions with regard to these interactions. Drawing upon the title of Paul Sullivan’s book on Yukatek Maya and foreign relations in the early twentieth century, we can say that these contacts, across time and space, resemble a series of “unfinished conversations.”

The story of Juan Rabbit marks the crossroads of several such “conversations,” and the geographical dissemination of this story adds to its cultural and socio-political significance. Culturally speaking, it has deep, unknown origins interwoven with slavery, conquest, and the earliest days of the European colonies in the Americas. In his book El protagonista en la narrativa popular (El origen africano del Tío Conejo) (The Protagonist in Popular Narrative [The African Origin of Uncle Rabbit]), referring to Colombia’s cultural milieu, Javier Tafur González notes that, “el conejo no era un animal representativo para los aborígenes de la región antes de la llegada de los negros y españoles” (“before the arrival of Africans and Spaniards the rabbit was not a representative animal for the region’s indigenous peoples”; 64). This connection between the story and the colonial period tells us a great deal about the persistence of culture and the conditions of cultural exchange across time and space. I feel that we should emphasize the fact of the story’s transmission under colonial conditions as opposed to trying to attribute the story to a single cultural group. For example, from indigenous sources like Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala’s Nueva crónica y buen gobierno (1619) (New Chronicle and Good Government) we know that the Spanish consciously set Africans and indigenous peoples against each other, as in the Guaman Poma’s illustration in which an African slave whips an Andean subordinate (810). The transmission of this historical memory persists down to the present in places like Chiapas, the southernmost state in Mexico. There, the story of the Negro Cimmarrón (Escaped Slave), a murderous abductor of Maya women, continues to be told and speaks to the racial fears cultivated by the Spanish during the colonial period. Reproducing these fears today, in the introduction to his El Negro Cimarrón: Ya’ Yejal J-Ik’al the Tzotzil Maya Antonio Gómez Gómez invites us to imagine, “a un negro al que nada más se le ven los ojos y los dientes

blancos en la oscuridad, haciendo gestos espantosos, berrinches, utilizando un lenguaje extraño, saltando y aventando piedras a la única vereda transitable, la cual está cubierta de árboles” (“a black man of whom we see nothing more than his eyes and white teeth in the darkness making frightful, wild gestures, speaking in a strange language, jumping and throwing rocks along the only open path, which is covered by trees”; 2).

Peoples of African descent and examples of African cultural influence can be found throughout Latin America, and the occurrence of the story of Juan Rabbit throughout the Americas demonstrates the profound roots of the African diaspora in the Western hemisphere. Moreover, it highlights how two culturally, racially, and linguistically distinct subaltern groups, enslaved Africans and indigenous peoples, subverted colonial hierarchies and forged common values despite prevailing colonial ideologies that set them against each other. At a conference in spring 2008 at Norfolk State University, the Afro-Costarican intellectual and writer Quince Duncan told me that the rabbit stories in the Americas come from the African stories of Anansi the Spider, a trickster with whom the rabbit shares many exploits in common. Most notably, he said, both the Rabbit and Anansi confront a trap in the form of a sticky man. In addition, several essays in the edited volume When Brer Rabbit Meets Coyote focus on the convergence of these indigenous and African tales in oral literature. Rather than seeing this idea as a rejection of González Tafur’s statement about the origin of the rabbit tale, however, Duncan’s and González Tafur’s observations tie in easily with my larger thesis. If any given story must reflect the environment in which it is told, then the progression from spider to rabbit would coincide with a change in physical and cultural environment. The change in protagonist reflects a desire to preserve one’s culture as well as to explain that culture to an Other, in effect continuing that culture’s development under

some of the most oppressive conditions imaginable. As such, rather than separating out different parts of the Rabbit story in search of the story's origin, we should think of the story as having been shaped within the crucible of colonialism itself.

Before moving on to the story of Juan Rabbit as told to me by Mariano Bonilla Cáamal, I would also like to point out the story's contemporary socio-political relevance among non-Maya. Here I am not so much concerned with theorizations on or about the story as I am with how the story can be and has been used as a starting point for contemporary Latin American identities. As we discussed in the previous chapter, rewritten as folklore oral literature normalizes social, political, and cultural hierarchies, domesticates a threatening Other, and extends the timeline of the nation. In short, folklore textualizes the "immemorial past" of what Benedict Anderson calls the "imagined community," the contemporary nation. Quince Duncan, for example, mentioned to me at the aforementioned conference how works of "folklore" like the story of Juan Rabbit can be used to construct an argument for the existence of a Pan-Hemispheric African-American consciousness and experience. I also know of two books, Los cuentos de Tío Coyote y Tío Conejo (1957) (The Stories of Uncle Coyote and Uncle Rabbit) by Pablo Antonio Cuadra and Simpáticas aventuras de Tío Conejo y Tío Coyote (1995) (The Delightful Adventures of Uncle Rabbit and Uncle Coyote) by Alejandro Barahona Romero, that deal explicitly with this type of construction. The authors of both of these works claim the rabbit story as foundational to and the exclusive property of their authors' countries of origin. Cuadra, writing in 1957, states that "Los cuentos de tío Coyote y tío Conejo son nicaragüenses, o traídos aquí por las antiguas tribus que poblaron la región del Pacífico de Nicaragua" ("The stories of Uncle Coyote and Uncle Rabbit are Nicaraguan, or brought here by the ancient tribes that populated Nicaragua's Pacific Regio"),

and entitles one subchapter “No son de origen español ni origen negro” (“They are neither of Spanish nor African origin”; Cuadra 12;15). Similarly, writing in 1995, Barahona Romero claims Tío Conejo as a symbol of the Honduran national character (76). He even ends his book by drawing a connection between the obstacles facing contemporary Hondurans and the Rabbit, saying, “sin temor al futuro que los conejos hombres buenos de hoy y de mañana, labran solidarios, convencidos de las urgencias de conformar, juntos, un gran país, en HONDURAS” (“without fear of the future the good rabbit/men of today and tomorrow work together, convinced of the urgency of making HONDURAS a great country”; Barahona Romero 80, caps in original).

At present I do not know of a Yucatek Maya author or oral storyteller who has constructed a similar project of Maya national identity based on the figure of Juan T’u’ul ‘Juan Rabbit.’ Rather, I would assert that, consciously or not, the Rabbit is a trickster figure that serves as a hermeneutic principle upon which a good deal of contemporary Maya Yucatek oral literature is constructed. As such, my reading of this figure is similar to Henry Louis Gates, Jr.’s interpretation of the Signifying Monkey in the tradition of African American literature in the United States. Given that the story has a marked African influence if not also an African origin, and that it speaks to the trials and tribulations endured by Africans and Mayas in positions of subalternity, I feel that Gates’s concept of Signifyin(g) can be brought to bear upon the story without perpetrating a type of colonizing, colonial violence. In other words, I take the position that Gates’s theory and the story of Juan Rabbit are at the very least distant relatives, if not outright first cousins. Although Gates’s concern is more the use of black vernacular rhetorical strategies in written literature, his theorization of these strategies as having originated from African American vernacular demonstrates how

“the vernacular informs and becomes the foundation for formal black literature” (xxii). The importance of such an analysis lies in the fact that “each literary tradition, at least implicitly, contains within it an argument for how it can be read” (Gates xix-xx).

According to Gates, the Signifying Monkey is, “The ironic reversal of a received racist image of the black as simianlike [...] he who dwells at the margins of discourse, ever punning, ever troping, ever embodying the ambiguities of language, [...] our trope for repetition and revision, indeed our trope of chiasmus, repeating and reversing simultaneously as he does in one deft discursive act” (52). What, then, are the similarities we can draw between this figure, the Signifying Monkey, and the rabbit? While the observation that the rabbit “speaks to” or “subverts” power is a commonplace, to what extent does the rabbit embody the beyond good and evil ethos found in the Signifying Money and his African counterparts? What discursive strategies of ambiguity, revision, and repetition does the rabbit employ in his adventures such that we can claim that the Rabbit, like the Signifying Monkey, is a trope for Maya agency under colonial rule? These questions will guide my interpretation of the text.

In his El cuento maya popular: Una introducción (The Popular Maya Story: An Introduction), Fernando Peñalosa recounts thirty-eight different versions of the rabbit story among nineteen different Maya language groups. He also includes a chart that indexes these versions according to nine different possible episodes that a storyteller may or may not include, and these in their totality comprise the story cycle. He labels these the episode of the watermelon, the doll, the iron, the stone, the fruit, the cocoyoles, the cheese, the pot, and the hay (Peñalosa 39). Although Peñalosa’s Yucatek version only includes three of these episodes (the stone, the iron, and the hay, in that order), the version Mariano told me has

elements of at least five (the doll, the iron, the stone, the pot, the hay), with at least one episode that is not included in Peñalosa's chart.

When I ask Mariano to tell me the story, he complies with the generic opening, "Ma'alob, nikaje tsikbatech u tsikbalil Juan T'u'ul yéetel XMa' Chiich" ("OK, I'll tell you the story of Juan Rabbit and Ma' Chiich"; Bonilla Caamal "U tsikbalil"). As noted above, the first of the episodes that Mariano recounts is the story of Juan T'u'ul and Ma' Chiich 'Old Grandmother,' a story which Peñalosa labels the story of the doll and which exists in the southern United States as the story of Brer Rabbit and the Tar Baby. In Mariano's retelling, Ma' Chiich plants some beans only to find them eaten by Juan Rabbit after they have begun to sprout. She consults the local elders as to what she should do, and they tell her, in Mariano's words, "ku béetik juntúul máak' pero de lok'ok'. Juntúul máak de lok'ok wa de ki'" ("to make a man, a man but one made out of wax. A man out of wax and henequen"; Bonilla Caamal "U tsikbalil"). Juan Rabbit, of course, falls into the trap by attacking the man for not getting out of his way, and ends up in a cage waiting for Ma' Chiich to cook and eat him. He escapes by asking her to grant him his last wish of one more opportunity to dance, running around in ever wider circles until he fails to return. He, however, is not finished with Ma' Chiich. He initiates the next episode in the cycle when he runs into his friend, the puma, and convinces him that opening and closing the cage door is a fun game. Juan runs off and the puma becomes so absorbed in opening and closing the cage door that he eventually locks himself in. Ma' Chiich's grandchildren see him and, since their grandmother tells them the thing in the cage is a demon, they throw a pot of boiling water on him. The scalded puma breaks the cage and goes in search of Juan to get his revenge. His scars make this episode the equivalent of Peñalosa's "iron" episode.

The puma finds Juan engaged in another game, holding up the roof of a cave. Once again, Juan tricks him into participating and runs off. Combining elements of the story of the pot and the stone from Peñalosa, the puma agrees to hold up the roof of the cave while Juan, on his way out, tells him about another game: the “bells” hanging in the mouth of the cave. Having become bored, the puma strikes the “bells” only to find that they are wasps’ nests, and as he is stung by the angry wasps the roof of the cave collapses on him. In the next episode he finds Juan gathering hay for his house and defers exacting his revenge in order to help the rabbit. Having put the hay on the puma’s back, Juan goes behind the puma and lights the hay on fire, escaping once again. The final episode, which is not included by Peñalosa, involves Juan showing the puma how to go up and down a tree. This time, however, Juan meets with the inevitable. Having had enough of tree climbing, the puma goes in search of Juan and finally manages to eat him. In closing, Mariano’s says, “Ti’ik letune’ ta ts’oko’ij le ma’ Chiich yéetel Juano’” (“That’s the end of things for Ma’ Chiich and Juan”; Bonilla Caamal “U tsikbalil”).

First, I would like to point out that the Yukatek version as told by Mariano begins by deviating from the pattern constructed by Peñalosa. In Peñalosa’s chart he places the episodes of the watermelon, doll, and iron as generally opening the cycle and as occurring in this order. Rather than being a simple variation, the difference between the cycle as constructed in Peñalosa’s chart and Mariano’s telling is quite significant. The watermelon episode, which corresponds to Juan’s eating the beans in Mariano’s version, “Empieza con el conejo comiendo unas sandías por dentro, les mete su excremento, y luego las tapa. El dueño del sandial le regala una sandía a un cura o un amigo. Se enoja éste, y el dueño pone un muñeco de cera [...] en el camino para atrapar al ladrón” (“Begins with the rabbit eating

some watermelons until they are hollow, filling them with his excrement, and resealing them. The owner of the watermelon patch gives a watermelon to a priest or a friend. The latter gets mad, and the owner puts a wax doll in the path to catch the thief”; Peñalosa 38). In Peñalosa, then, the action is set into motion by the rabbit’s prank of refilling the hollow watermelons with excrement, which results in the owner of the patch building the man of wax. In Mariano’s telling, the rabbit, in his own words and as he explains to the wax man, “in kaxtik in kuxtal” (“has come to make his living”; Bonilla Caamal “U tsikbalil”). Thus, whereas the situation in Peñalosa’s formulation corresponds roughly to our notions of crime and punishment, Mariano’s version erases any question of the rabbit’s original crime. As with Ma’ Chiich, who comments that the beans in the ravaged bean patch “ma in tia’al in kuxtal” ‘aren’t enough to sustain me,’ Juan eats the beans to sustain himself. They are not his, strictly speaking, but one cannot fault him for, in his words, “making his living.” We are thus confronted by a non-Western sense of morality, a concept of right and wrong tied more to natural processes of life than to constructed moral hierarchies of authority.

We find this sense of right and wrong reflected in Juan Rabbit’s confrontation with the wax man. In Juan’s words the wax man is neither a physical threat nor a competitor for food. Rather, the wax man represents an obstacle in the road that the rabbit must circumvent in order to continue his pattern of daily life. As Juan tells him, “Tséel a bah in bey, tumen tene tan in kaxtik in kuxtal. Weya’ mul in tae’, waya’ mul in wixe’” (“Get out of my way, because I’ve come to make my living. This is where I take a dump, this is where I take a leak”; Bonilla Caamal “U tsikbalil”). Again, rather than basing his argument on right and wrong, Juan textualizes his presence in the bean patch in terms of physical, biological processes. The other side of Juan’s assertion that “*This* is where I take a dump, *this* is where I

take a leak,” would be to ask where the wax man takes a dump, where he takes a leak. Juan belongs in the bean patch because he is biologically tied to it while the wax man, by comparison, does not belong there because he has no such ties.

However, if Juan ultimately represents the subaltern’s ability to Signify, as we shall see in the episodes that follow, the wax man suggests the limits of this ability. On the one hand, Ma’ Chiich and the puma represent power’s capacity to interpellate the subaltern and, in doing so, establish a stable semantic field that locks the individual into a position of subalternity. In Signifyin(g) the terms of their power, the rabbit subverts the hierarchies those in power seek to establish. On the other hand, the type of power represented by the wax man cannot be overcome because it operates as a response to subalternity itself, doubling subaltern resistance back onto itself. A mute object incapable of speech, the wax man cannot be subverted through ambiguity, revision, or repetition because he can neither initiate a discourse that can be subverted nor give a response that can be undercut. The wax man is an absence, a silence, a mirror that turns the Rabbit’s power of subversion inside out. Instead of the Rabbit repeating Others’ speech, in this episode he must repeat his own, a repetition which leads to his undoing. The wax man’s muteness even gives way to Juan’s only outburst of violence in the entire story. In Mariano’s words, “Le máako’ ma’ tu nukik, [Juane’] ka’aj tu hokatchaj” (“The man didn’t answer, so Juan hit him”; Bonilla Caamal “U tsikbalil”). Limb by limb Juan becomes stuck until he hits the wax man with his belly. Unable to overcome the man through language, the rabbit finds himself trapped by his own attempt to subvert the wax man through physical violence.

Coincidentally, and as I just stated, this episode is the only one in which Juan Rabbit is himself the author of physical violence. The rest of the story centers on his capacity to use

hegemonic speech against itself and, in doing so, escape the limits of the meanings it establishes. As I stated previously, after the episode with the wax man Ma' Chiich locks Juan up and plans to eat him. He asks for a last wish, however, telling her that he's a great dancer and that she will love his performance. She asks him several times whether or not he will escape and he finally responds, "Ma'a tin pustul chiich, ma'a taan" ("I won't run away, grandmother, never"; Bonilla Caamal "U tsikbalil"). As part of his dance, however, "Ku bin paachna beya', ku na' suut, ku bin paachna beya', ku na' suut, tu siit Juan" ("He goes over there, then he comes back, he runs over there, then he comes back, Juan's jumping around"; Bonilla Caamal "U tsikbalil"). That is, as part of the dance Juan repeatedly disappears and reappears, escapes and returns, establishing a pattern that sets the stage for the next episode with the puma. As we will see, the dance of Juan T'u'ul reflects the repetition and ambiguity of language upon which Juan preys throughout the rest of the story. For the time being, the dance enables him to escape Ma' Chiich and run off into the woods. True to his word, however, Juan eventually "returns."

Having escaped, Juan runs into his friend, a puma, whom he tells, "Yaan jumpel chan baaxal tin' kaxma" ("I have a game to show you"; Bonilla Caamal "U tsikbalil"). As the remainder of the story centers on the relationship between Juan and the puma and how the former uses language to overcome the latter, a few words about Juan and the puma are in order. The series of baaxalo'ob 'games'" referenced by Juan both are and are not games. They are games in the sense that Juan "plays" upon the puma's willingness to believe that the rabbit possesses a knowledge of games that he wants to reveal. Thus, the activities Juan shows the puma are taken, at face value, to be games. However, they are also not games in the sense that Juan proposes these activities as a way to escape the puma and, in doing so,

inflict pain on him. In other words, they are subterfuges through which the rabbit exercises control over those who could literally devour him. The first of these games leads us back to the cage at the house of Ma' Chiich and, like Juan's dance, centers on repetition. Entering the cage, Juan turns to the puma and tells him, "bix tun, es que la in a wak ti' le so'oya' kalabasoy, je'abasoy, kalabasoy, je'abasoy bix a wilik" ("All right, so then, you have to take to cage door, you close the door, you open the door, you close the door you, open the door. What do you think?"; Bonilla Caamal "U tsikbalil"). The puma, of course, locks himself in and Ma' Chiich's grandchildren, initially mistaking him for Juan, ironically proclaim the rabbit's forthrightness, "Jach bey Juane'" "(Juan's an honest one"; Bonilla Caamal "U tsikbalil"). Coming out to see the rabbit, Ma' Chiich screams, "Paalele'ex ma' Juani', juntuu ba'ab ba'al, jutntuul ba'abaal yaani.' Ma' Juani'" 'Children, that's not Juan, that's a demon! A demon is in there, it's not Juan!, and tells them to throw hot water on the helpless puma (Bonilla Caamal "U tsikbalil"). Scalded, the puma breaks the cage and runs into the forest. Through his "promise" to return and his subsequent "game" with the puma, Juan successfully uses two potentially deadly forces against one another. Not only does he use Ma' Chiich to wound the puma, but he also uses the puma to break the cage, ending any possibility that he could be recaptured, held, and later cooked.

Seeking revenge the puma goes in search of Juan, saying "Yaan in chuuk tech'a', Juana', in jaantik, tumen tu tuusen, tu tuusen" ("I am going to get you, Juan, I'll eat you, because you lied to me, you lied to me"; Bonilla Caamal "U tsikbalil"). He finds Juan, who denies that he is the rabbit in question and tells the puma, "Jach ma'alob ket a tsikbal. Ma u a jaantkeni'" ("We need to talk. You aren't going to eat me"; Bonilla Caamal "U tsikbalil"). He repeats the puma's stated intention, "I am going to eat you," in order to negate it, "You

aren't going to eat me." This repetition mirrors the original game in which the puma opened and closed the cage, constituting a similar game with similar consequences. Without acknowledging that he *is* the Juan Rabbit the puma wants, Juan strategically begins shifting the control over the dialogue from the puma and to himself. He contrasts eating with talking, substituting discourse for physical violence and moving the puma onto his terrain. After the puma restates his intentions of taking his revenge on the rabbit, Juan says, "hmmm...wak a wa'alij jumpel chan baaxal in kaxke, jats uts" 'Hmmm...or I could show you a great game I found,' thereby marking the moment in which he assumes control over the puma (Bonilla Caamal "U tsikbalil"). Again, the "game" Juan proposes saves Juan's life. He leads the puma to a cave where Juan shows the puma how to hold up the roof and how to play music with the cave's little "bells." Juan runs off and the puma, growing restless, rings the "bells" only to find that they are wasps' nests. As the puma is stung by the wasps the cave collapses him, and he once again sets out to take his revenge on Juan.

When he finds Juan, they engage in the same dance-game of repetition that we have already seen. This time, Juan says he is gathering hay to build a house. After the puma reiterates his intentions to eat Juan, Juan responds, "Ma', ma'jani', kuchesu'ukah." 'No, you aren't going to eat me, help me,' and he places a bundle of hay on the puma's back (Bonilla Caamal "U tsikbalil"). Once they are on their way Juan manages to get behind the puma and set fire to the hay, burning the puma and giving Juan another opportunity to escape into the woods. In the final episode the puma finds Juan and Juan manages to convince the puma not to eat him one final time. The game hinges on going up and down a tree. The puma starts playing and Juan runs off. However, when the puma gets down he goes in search of the rabbit, and Juan, "ta jantah men koh. Beytrun ts'o'okihj le koho', ma chiich, yeetel Juan.,

jantaj men koh” (“Juan gets eaten by the puma. And so it ends for the puma, Ma Chiich, and Juan, who’s eaten by the puma”; Bonilla Caamal “U tsikbalil”). The abrupt ending conforms to Yukatek literary tradition, and the simplest if not also the most common way of ending a story is to state, “Ts’o’oki” “It’s over.”

So, what evidence can we draw from this story to support the claim that Juan Rabbit, like the Signifying Monkey, is a trope for subaltern agency and, ultimately, a hermeneutic principle that we can use to interpret Yukatek Maya literature in general? Much like the 1001 Arabian Nights, the story of Juan Rabbit is a story about telling “stories” that enable the protagonist to stave off death. Unlike Scheherazade, however, Juan’s ruse cannot be sustained indefinitely. Juan delays his inevitable demise at the hands of Ma’ Chiich and the puma by convincing them he knows something worth revealing to them, and the process of revelation constitutes his escape. “If you’ll let me dance” and “let me show you a game” are pretexts to buy time and stay the hand of power. As repeated throughout the story, the main charge against Juan is that he has lied to Ma’ Chiich and the puma, not that he has harmed them. And yet many of the “lies” he tells are not strictly lies. As Slovenian Žižek notes with regard to what he calls “Two Hegelian Jokes,” here Juan, “through his deception [...] has kept his word” (65). He *does* return to Ma’ Chiich, but it is in order to put the puma in his place. He *does* show the puma a series of “games,” but Juan views these as opportunities to escape. By dancing back and forth, replacing “I am going to eat you” with “you don’t want to eat me” and perpetrating other similar substitutions like the puma for the rabbit and the “game” for the game, Juan uses doublings and repetitions to place the struggle over signification at the center of the struggle for his life. Another game for the puma means another escape for Juan, as does the granting of one last dance. Hence, Juan’s story points to

how hegemonic discourses can be turned back upon themselves and the terms of subjugation re-signified by those in states of subalternity. Juan thus represents the possibility of Yukatek discursive agency.

This reading is reinforced when we return to Juan Rabbit's encounter with the wax man at the very beginning of the story. As I have already suggested, the wax man represents the limits of subaltern agency as his very muteness precludes any sort of subversion. The rabbit falls into the trap because the wax man will not respond. That is, in the absence of a signifier there can be nothing to Signify, and the rabbit's only option is brute force, which results in his capture. Put another way, the lesson of Juan T'u'ul is that one cannot confront power with power, but must instead look to shift the terms through which power establishes the subaltern's subjectivity through repetition. We will now turn to another trickster story, the story of Eligio and the Gringo, to illustrate how the storyteller uses the trickster as an interpretive principle in the structuring of stories based in contemporary Yukatek Maya reality.

The Global Goes Local: Eligio and the Gringo

As I cited in the first chapter, both Peter Hervik and Quetzil Castañeda argue for the existence of a "Maya modernity" that confounds non-Maya preconceptions about what constitutes cultural, economic, political, and social development in the early twenty-first century. The notion of a "Maya modernity" brings us back to Nancy Farris's "central core of concepts and principles" insofar as the evolution of what we can call an Other modernity reflects a drive to privilege one's own cultural values in the reception and interpretation of hegemonic culture. A "Maya modernity" therefore enables us to better understand the nuanced agency in contemporary Yukatek Maya cultural practices, of which storytelling is an

integral part. Indeed, storytellers use the “central core of concepts and principles” to structure their textualizations of contemporary reality, thereby demonstrating a pro-Maya ideology that, as I said in the introduction to this chapter, has characterized Maya texts from the colonial era to the present. The “Story of Juan T’u’ul” partakes of this ideology on two distinct levels, first in its Yukatek Maya re-narrativization of a shared Maya and African historical memory, and second in its underlying message of discursive resistance to hegemonic forms of power. Given that the rabbit’s antics textualize Maya discursive agency, we can say that the storyteller, through the performance of the text, becomes the embodiment of this agency itself. If Juan T’u’ul represents the tradition of such agency in oral literary texts, then how can we use this figure to interpret cases of Yukatek Maya agency in the present? As a hermeneutic principle, how does such a “tradition” not only speak to the existence of but also contribute to the production of a “Maya modernity”? These questions will be my focus in my examination of “The Story of Eligio and the Gringo.”

Before entering into a discussion and analysis of the story, however, there are a few points I should make with regard to this story and its material context. The town of Santa Elena, where I recorded this story, is located at a key position in the Yucatán between the ruins of Uxmal and other, slightly less famous ruins on the circuit of the Puuc Route. As such, residents living in the town have more access to jobs in the tourist trade and at archeological excavations than do Maya living on the rest of the peninsula. This access does not mean, however, that they are free from intense economic pressures, as these jobs seldom pay more than the minimum wage in Mexico, 53 pesos or just under 4 dollars a day. However, rooms in the Hotel Hacienda Uxmal, the setting for this story, range from \$83 to \$579 U.S. dollars a night in the off season, with those prices being doubled during the high

season from November to January. Thus, the men and women who work in these settings have daily experiences in which they come into contact with Mexican and non-Mexican Others under conditions of extreme economic, cultural, and racial inequality. This story offers a reflection on and an interpretation of how one can manage such situations. In addition, rather than being simply “true,” this story is one which, in Lord’s word, is certainly “told well and thus truly told” (29). Eligio Lozano, the story’s protagonist, is a friend of Mariano’s who lives in Santa Elena. Due to the events of this story he is something of a local legend. In conversation he has told me that the story’s plot, as retold here, is for the most part true. However, and I must reiterate, factual information such as whether or not we believe that Eligio experience what is told in the story is secondary to the telling of the tale. As Mariano suggests, this is not simply an entertaining story in which Eligio takes up the mantle of a trickster such as Juan Rabbit. Rather, the story textualizes the struggle for and actualization of Yukatek Maya agency in a world rife with asymmetrical relations of power. As the author of this textualization, Mariano, the storyteller, actualizes the power of this agency for his audience.

Interestingly enough, Mariano asserts this agency at the very beginning of the recording by staging a bit of impromptu theater. When I told him that I wanted to do a recording of the story in Spanish to use in my classes in the United States, he told me that we had to record at least part of it in Maya. According to Mariano, otherwise no one would believe that he was Maya and that this would reinforce the belief that contemporary Mayas are not “real” in the sense that they lack a language, culture, etc. So, I begin the recording in Maya by asking him to tell the story, and he agrees to switch over into Spanish.

As with the longer story of Juan Rabbit, “Eligio and the Gringo” also has characteristics of meta-narrative, though in this case these are a bit more self-conscious. Instead of beginning the story in medias res, Mariano begins the story by saying, “quiero comentarle lo que pasó en el centro de trabajo” ‘I want to tell you what happened in our workplace,’ giving us the story’s geographical and social background and saying that the story he’s about to tell comes out of the stories the workers at the Hotel Hacienda Uxmal exchange after work (Bonilla Caamal “Eligio”). Thus, although the story may not be traditional in the same sense as the story of Juan Rabbit, Mariano takes pains to relate the story back to a tradition of Maya storytelling. As to the origin of the story itself, Mariano claims that Eligio “estuvo allí trabajando y al día siguiente me platicó lo que le pasó porque a veces ‘Oye, como le fue, qué, qué tal ayer? Qué pasó? Hubo problema?’ y ‘No, hubo tranquilo, nada más me pasó eso...’” (“was working there and the next day told me what happened because sometimes “Hey, how did it go? How, how was yesterday? What happened? Were there any problems?” and “No, everything was fine, just this happened...”; Bonilla Caamal “Eligio”). Mariano thus embeds the story within the story of how he first heard it, positioning himself as an extradiegetic-homodiegetic narrator. Eligio, the storyteller within the story (intradiegetic-homodiegetic narrator), supplies a moment of back-and-forth suspense, and finally states, “pues, te lo voy a relatar, voy a comentar lo que me pasó ayer en el centro de trabajo” (“Well, I am going to explain it to you, tell you what happened yesterday here at work”; Bonilla Caamal “Eligio”). In doing so, Mariano the storyteller quite literally assumes Eligio’s voice by having Eligio the protagonist repeat a version of the same opening formula that he, Mariano, used to open the story. That is, Mariano is once again quite self-consciously referring to this story as a story within a story, part of a pattern and

tradition of tellings and retellings. For the sake of readability and given this intersection of voices, I will refer to Mariano as the storyteller throughout, even as he is telling the story of Eligio's telling of the story.

The metatext deals with the interactions that Eligio has with “un grupo de treinta personas, treinta gringos, vinieron de EEUU” (“a group of thirty people, thirty gringos, who had come from the United States”; Bonilla Caamal “Eligio”). They eat and after the meal Eligio, a waiter at the Hotel Hacienda Uxmal, serves one of them coffee. Mariano's physical gestures at this point in the recording emphasize the efficient formality with which people working in the international tourist trade are expected to execute such tasks. Having worked at the Hotel Hacienda Uxmal himself, Mariano is well-schooled in this sort of role playing. The problems begin when this same man calls Eligio aside and requests another coffee, explaining that, “‘pues te pedí café. Lo que me trajiste está helado. No,’ empezó a decir hasta inglés, ‘It's not hot, not hot,’ dice, ‘No caliente’ dice, ‘No caliente’” (“I ordered coffee. What you brought me is cold. No,’ he started speaking English even, ‘It's not hot, not hot,’ he says, ‘Not hot,’ he says, ‘Not hot.’”; Bonilla Caamal “Eligio”). As retold by Mariano, this exchange between Eligio and the gringo is particularly telling given that many indigenous peoples in the Americas must out of necessity be able to communicate effectively in and across multiple languages. Eligio, the Yukatek Maya hailing from a small town in Yucatán, Mexico, must speak Spanish and a little English just to hold down a job as a waiter.

However, we are not remiss in asking what, exactly, the repetition of this multilinguality does in the current context. Mariano says, in Spanish, that the gringo complains that the coffee is “not hot,” then switches to English to emphasize the gringo's frustration, and then translates the gringo's complaint back into Spanish. On the one hand,

his virtuoso re-enactment of this scene places him in the same language community as the protagonist, Eligio. That is, he demonstrates that he, too, possesses at least a working knowledge of rudimentary English. We must, however, also see this in terms of the performance at the beginning of the video, in which Mariano self-consciously uses Yukatek Maya as a way to signify his Mayaness. This back and forth thus subtly recognizes a multilingual audience while also translating these phrases, in real time, for monolingual listeners. Without prompting, through the act of storytelling Mariano thus steps into the role of cultural broker. On the other hand, this dance back and forth between languages recalls Juan T'u'ul's original gambit to get out of his cage, suggesting a confusion of not just tongues but also signs. In turn, this confusion thus opens up a space for exercise of Maya agency.

Before looking at how Eligio the protagonist, as well as the here and now storyteller Mariano, exercise this form of agency, however, we should first make an explicit outline of the power dynamic at work in the story. Rather than interpreting this situation as merely dealing with receiving good service or not, we need to examine this dynamic within the following context. Altogether Eligio will bring three different cups of coffee to the table, the initial cup and two others, each being hotter than the last. In short, the tourist requests another cup of coffee, one that is “hotter” to some degree than the previous ones and the waiter, Eligio, *must* comply. Eligio the protagonist makes the stakes of these requests clear when, as he ponders what to do next, he says, “Ah, chispa, qué hago? [...] pues si está caliente esa cosa y qué hago, y qué hago? Si no, se va a quejar el turista. Pues me van a sacar del trabajo. Y qué hago?” (“Oh, man, what am I going to do [...] if the coffee is already hot? What do I do, what do I do? If I don’t get it right the tourist will complain. Then, they’ll fire

me. What do I do?"; Bonilla Caamal "Eligio"). In other words, his employment is not so much based upon pleasing the tourists who are guests at the hotel, in this case the gringo. Despite the fact that the coffee, in Eligio's estimation, is already hot, he *must* find a way to comply with the gringo's request. Otherwise he, quite literally, stands to lose his job.

Returning to the scene at hand, Eligio retrieves the first cup of coffee and takes it back to the kitchen where "Lo calentó más el doble de lo normal, lo volvió a poner en la taza, y lo volvió a servir al turista" ("He heated up to twice of what he normally did, he put it back in the cup, and served it again to the tourist"; Bonilla Caamal "Eligio"). The tourist, having tasted the new cup, responds "'Oh, not hot not hot not hot, no caliente,' dice. 'Sr., no caliente' dice" ("Oh, not hot not hot not hot not hot," he says. "It's not hot" he says"; Bonilla Caamal "Eligio"). Again, we have the same back and forth language game as before, but with a marked difference. Whereas before Mariano cited the gringo's speech as prefaced with niceties ("Sr., disculpe") and a request for "hotter" coffee, here his performance of the gringo's speech appropriates the gringo's language, reproducing it and ridiculing the request. We, the audience, already know that the coffee is twice as hot as it should be, but Mariano's vigorously comic disapproval of the coffee and the inflections in his speech lend force to his emphatic claim, stated in English, that the coffee is "not hot not hot not hot not hot." This repetition, in effect, claims the speech for Maya discourse by ironizing the gringo's speech. Mariano the storyteller, I the listener in the video, and in addition whoever might be watching the DVD, all know the coffee to be hot, far hotter than normal, in fact. Thus Mariano's use of irony here is, in Wayne Booth's words, "inherently shareable" (17). As such, it places all of us in an ethical position from which we recognize the absurdity and outright injustice of the request itself.

For Eligio the protagonist in the story, however, future employment depends upon his compliance. Like Juan Rabbit in his verbal combat with Ma' Chiich and the puma, he must think on his feet and “fool” the tourist. Having already heated up the second cup to twice what it should normally be, he repeatedly asks himself “What do I do? What do I do?” The solution, of course, is to make the coffee very, very hot. Eligio “quitó el café de la taza, y la taza así, lo embrocó en la lumbre de la estufa, entonces ya calentó la taza. Como cinco minutos lo calentó, quedó hasta rojo alrededor de la taza. Y luego el café, lo puso a calentar también, ya pues el café hirviendo” (“takes it again, and the cup, he pours the coffee out of the cup, he turns it upside down on the burner on the stove, and heats it up. He heats it for like five minutes, until the rim of the cup turned red. And then the coffee, he heated that up, too, yeah, he put it on to boil”; Bonilla Caamal “Eligio”). Again, regardless of their actuality, Eligio’s actions fit the dramatic arc of the story as if corresponding in a sense to Newton’s Third Law of Motion. The gringo’s claim that a cup of coffee that has been heated up to twice its normal temperature is not hot can only be balanced out with a solution that is equally ridiculous and yet, at the same time, fits the story’s larger logic. In turning the cup into a glowing crucible, Eligio appropriates the gringo’s words “hot” and “caliente” and resignifies them with an entirely new meaning. Whereas the previous two cups were deemed insufficiently “hot,” the third will leave no room for doubt.

Given that Mariano the storyteller has situated us as members in an ironic interpretive community, he pauses the story at the very moment the tourist is bringing the heated cup to his lips. He states that, “‘ya no es juego eso,’ dirá el turista” “‘this isn’t a game anymore,’ is what the tourist will say’ to underscore the seriousness of the situation and then turns to me, asking, “¿Qué crees que pasó? (“So, what do you think happened?”; Bonilla Caamal

“Eligio”). At this moment we in the audience have no idea whether Mariano the storyteller or Eligio, the storyteller within the tale, is speaking. On the video Mariano makes this dramatic pause in the action to once again poke fun at the tourist and put an ironic spin on his words. Having already shown us the tourist’s displeasure, he now reminds us of that displeasure and its potentially serious consequences by stating that, in the same pause, the tourist would be thinking “this isn’t a game anymore.” However, as members of an ironic community, we know just the opposite to be true. That is, in heating the cup up to the point that it was glowing red, Eligio is giving the tourist exactly what he has demanded but not what he has been expecting. We can recall, for example, Juan T’u’ul’s promise to return and the fact that he returns only to put the puma in his place. Thus at the moment before the gringo gets his due, Mariano pauses as if to laugh one more time at the inevitable consequences of the tourist’s demands even before these have played out. As members of this ironic community we already get the joke and we are, in a certain sense, in league with Eligio. The question “Qué crees que pasó?” ‘So, what do you think happened?’ is more rhetorical than actual, as we have followed the action all along. Moreover, as I had personally heard the story several times prior to this particular performance, I had no doubt what was to happen next.

Inevitably, “pues lo que pasó, al poner eso a sus labios, toda la carne de los labios de aquí se quedó en la borde de la taza” (“well, what happened is, on putting the cup to his lips, from here to here all the flesh of his lips burned onto the rim of the cup”; Bonilla Caamal “Eligio”). In textualizing the gringo’s immediate reaction, Mariano quickly resituates his apparent surprise within the conquest of the gringo’s ongoing demand and the slippage in the meanings of the words “hot” and “caliente.” “Y al decir el gringo así ‘Oh, hot, hot, hot, hot’ pues ‘caliente, caliente,’ pues no va a calentar hasta toda la carne se quemó el Sr. Pero dijo,

‘Hot, hot, hot.’ Quiere decir que está caliente, calientísimo (“And then the gringo says “Oh, hot, hot, hot, hot,” that is “hot, hot,” well it shouldn’t be heated to the point that he burns himself like that. But he said, “Hot, hot, hot.” That is to say hot, extremely hot”; Bonilla Caamal “Eligio”). The cup should not be heated up like it was, and Mariano states this explicitly. However, the nature of the gringo’s demand and its potentially dire consequences for Eligio mean that this demand must be met unquestioningly and as quickly as possible. Mariano reiterates that “he said ‘hot, hot, hot,’” translating this demand back into Spanish as “caliente, calientísimo” or “hot, extremely hot.” In other words, the gringo asked for exactly what he received, an exceedingly hot cup of coffee.

Looking at Literature Looking at the World

Bringing the story to an end, Mariano claims that, “no se quejó el turista porque a él vino la culpa. Porque dos veces a recalentar y dice que, ‘not hot, not hot,’ y luego a recalentar hasta la taza y se le quemó todos sus labios” (“Well, he didn’t complain because he was the only one to blame. Because the coffee was reheated two times and he kept saying “not hot, not hot,” and then even the cup was reheated and his lips got burned”; Bonilla Caamal “Eligio”). As Mariano begins to shift from the “story itself” as told by Eligio to his storyteller’s interpretation of it, he deftly asserts that even the gringo acknowledges, through his silence, that he was in the wrong. In doing so, Mariano once again ironizes the position of power that the gringo tourist enjoys over the waiter Eligio. Indeed, the threat of the tourist’s complaining is the very thing that drives Eligio to reheat the coffee and ultimately burn the tourist. However, burning the lips off of the hotel’s guest is certainly more of an offense than bringing him cold coffee, and yet the tourist is literally silenced and does not complain. Rather, “he didn’t complain because he was the only one to blame.” This bit of narrative

speculation on the reason for the tourist's lack of complaint marks the key moment in the text and represents a moment of mutual recognition if not also a reversal of roles between hegemonic and subaltern, oppressor and oppressed.

Thus, in Mariano's voice the story becomes one about how power can spring back upon itself. The gringo's repeated request for hot coffee is less a demand for service than it is a demand for Eligio's unquestioning complicity and subjugation to the relationship of power that exists between those who participate in the international tourist trade. That is, the gringo seeks to fix Eligio in an utter state of subalternity in which Eligio, without conscious thought and certainly without questioning, executes the gringo's demands. Again, the performance of these actions opens up a space for the exercise of agency on the part of Eligio. Although "hot," "caliente," are the tourist's words, Eligio's repetition of them co-opts their signification and makes the terms of his subalternity his own. We could perhaps reframe his response by using an oft employed formula, saying, "If he wants hot coffee, I will give him *hot* coffee." As I have argued with regard to the language games used by Juan Rabbit, here Eligio uses the space between signifier and signified in order to both comply with the gringo's demands and to exercise his own agency. In other words, by complying with the letter of the demands literally, Eligio ultimately overcomes his subalternity.

When Mariano asks me what I think of the story and I respond that Eligio had no other choice, Mariano reinserts himself into the story, saying "El Sr., pues, tiene que hacer así. ¿No queda otra, no? Es lo que está pasando en los centros de trabajo. En los hoteles, es lo que pasa en los restaurantes. Todas las cosas pues, a nosotros nos pasó, o al compañero, me platicó y "¿qué tal de ayer, cómo le fue?" Pues me platicó su chiste, lo que pasó al americano. Pues, eso pasa. Mejor es no exigir, ¿no?" ("The waiter, well, he had to do that.

There was no other choice, right? That's what happens where we work. In the hotels, it's what happens in the restaurants. All these things, well, they happened to us, or to my friend who told me "what happened yesterday, how did it go?" Well he told me this funny story, about what happened to the American. Well, this happens. It's better not to demand, right?"; Bonilla Caamal "Eligio"). These words bring us back to the posture from the beginning of the story as Mariano claims personal knowledge of the events and situates the story as having originated from within a tradition of tellings and retellings among workers in the tourist trade. He turns my previous comment that Eligio "had no other choice" into the rhetorical question "There was no other choice, right?" and then proceeds to turn this apparent lack of choice into a lesson on the exercise of power.

In other words, having just re-signified and ironized the words of his interlocutor, in this case me, he then theorizes a role reversal among those who demand and those who serve. He says, "un día de esos nos puede pasar también a nosotros" ("Well, one of these days the same thing could happen to us"; Bonilla Caamal "Eligio"). This statement is not so much a value judgment condemning the gringo and exalting the Maya as it represents the recognition of the consequences of a demand for absolute obedience. In saying that we should remember that "the same thing could happen to us," Mariano imagines us into the hegemonic position of the gringo. Tied in with the story's emphasis on repetition and the conditioned parroting of subaltern subjects that hegemony demands, we are reminded that *we* should not repeat the error that the gringo commits. "Pues si no sirve algo bien, pues 'está bien, gracias' y es todo. Pues tranquilo para que no pase como a aquel, al turista" ("If something isn't served right, just "That's fine, thank you" and that's all. Keep cool so that what happened to that one, the tourist, doesn't happen to us"; Bonilla Caamal "Eligio"). In other words, given the pressures

already exerted by the system upon subaltern subjects, in this case the possibility that Eligio could lose his job over a cold cup of coffee, we, that is people in positions of hegemony, should let things slide and opt instead for understanding and mutual respect. We should be thankful. Otherwise our demands can double back on us both because of their absurdity and because of the illusory comfort we get from imagining other people in an utter state of subalternity. That is, a repeated demand for a cup of hot coffee will eventually be fulfilled with a *hot* cup of *hot* coffee.

Closing the story Mariano says, “Entonces es lo que aprendimos en un día de esos trabajos en Hotel Hacienda Uxmal, Pablo” (“Well, that’s what we learned one of the days we were working at the Hotel Hacienda Uxmal, Pablo”; Bonilla Caamal “Eligio”). I then respond “OK” and end the recording. Contained within this ending are several points that bear directly on arguments about oral literature from previous chapters. Most importantly, through this closing Mariano asserts oral literature’s function as a carrier of knowledge, and he situates this function as being pertinent to contemporary reality in two ways. First, as Mariano has self-consciously tied the story to a living Yucatek Maya literary tradition, the act of recounting the story recasts that tradition in the present. As the storyteller embodies oral tradition and continues the transmission of its knowledge, he brings that tradition in its entirety to bear upon the present. The renarration of Eligio’s experience at the hotel becomes something from which we can learn. Second, as the textualization of events from a Maya perspective, oral literature also textualizes the possibility of Maya interpretive agency in the face of hegemonic culture. Although it represents a subaltern perspective, the knowledge it conveys is dialogic in nature and contains lessons for those who exercise power and those who lack it. That is, rather than casting Eligio as the trickster who burns the gringo and

simply laughs at his expense, Mariano textualizes these events as an ironic, almost zen-like lesson on how all people must deal with situations of extreme inequality.

As I have maintained throughout this section, Mariano's textualization of Eligio and the Gringo self-consciously refers back to Yukatek oral tradition in general. I have also stated that a subtext of this referentiality is the understated relationship between Eligio, the protagonist, and other Yukatek Maya tricksters like Juan Rabbit. There is nothing "natural" about this relationship insofar as we must consider it to be an effect of Mariano's literary textualization of the story. In other words, in his retelling of the story Mariano makes use of the figure of the trickster from previous stories in order to provide himself with a template for Eligio's actions. As Juan Rabbit's tricks and deviance arise from a need to escape the grasp of power, so do Eligio's. We are not confronted by an amoral world devoid of ethical boundaries but rather a world in which right and wrong are openly acknowledged as an effect of relationships between people. Given that both Ma' Chiich and the puma want to eat Juan, we can hardly stand in judgment of Juan's actions. His goal is self-preservation. Similarly, since Eligio confronts the loss of his livelihood over a cup of coffee, we cannot condemn him for giving the gringo *exactly* what the gringo wants. The character of Eligio in the story must be read in relation to and as constituting the continuance of this Yukatek tradition. It is the type of story that reconstitutes that tradition in the present and, in doing so, constitutes one way that Yukatek Mayas produce their own kind of Maya modernity.

Mariano's telling of "Eligio and the Gringo" highlights the production of this modernity as well as how Yukatek Mayas, in textualizing a discourse about their material reality, use the "core principles and values" of their literary tradition in order to exercise cultural control over their relations with non-Mayas. In using the figure of the trickster as a

hermeneutic rubric to interpret contemporary social inequalities, Mariano's telling of "Eligio and the Gringo" makes sense of these inequalities and Eligio's attempt to deal with them in Maya terms. One can imagine, for example, that the tourist has a far different version of events, but in Mariano's story the fact that the tourist does not complain implies a tacit acknowledgement of his own guilt. That, the story tells us, is what the tourist thinks. This acknowledgement necessarily entails a buttressing of the Maya worldview expressed in the story, an ideological position that Mariano discursively inserts into the thoughts of the tourist himself. The repeated use of porque 'because' in the statement "Pues, no se quejó el turista. Porque a él vino la culpa. Porque dos veces a recalentar [...]" 'Well, he didn't complain because he was the only one to blame. Because the coffee was reheated two times [...]' signals the presence of what Bakhtin calls pseudo-objective motivation, "one of the manifold ways of concealing another's speech in hybrid constructions" (305). In other words, the logic of the sentence is that if the tourist did not complain it was *because* he felt guilty about his repeated demand and came to realize its absurdity.

Ultimately, the story thus reasserts the value of a Maya worldview and Mayaness in the context of the contemporary world. As we have seen, it not only reflects a Maya modernity through its use of a traditional literary figure to interpret contemporary relationships, but it ends with a gringo foreigner, the global representative of hegemonic culture par excellence, silently acknowledging his abuse of power. The story reassesses any justification that power may have while implying the existence of a Maya alternative to such hierarchies. The story itself is not Mariano's but, as he states more than once, a story told to him by Eligio, and stories just like this one are told and retold among the men and women who work at the Hotel Hacienda Uxmal. Tellingly, although the gringo arrives with a group,

he is the only member of that group in the story. We thus have the many juxtaposed against the one, a communal voice and a representative communal story set against a singular voice and a singular demand. The key to undoing such a situation, as suggested by Mariano, lies in the acknowledgement of the subaltern and his/her humanity, recognizing the pressures such people are under to comply with every whim and demand of their superiors, and finally having a kind of solidarity them. If things are not properly served those of us in a position of power should yet be grateful for the service we receive and let things go. After all, the decentering of such hierarchies is in our own best interests as rigid insistence upon their maintenance means that we run the risk of our power doubling back on us. In Mariano's words, what happened to the gringo is a lesson and we should not forget that "pues, un día de esos nos puede pasar también a nosotros" ("Well, one of these days the same thing could happen to us"; Bonilla Caamal "Eligio").

Conclusion

In this chapter I have demonstrated how two stories told to me by my friend Mariano Bonilla Caamal, a Yukatek Maya storyteller living in Santa Elena, contribute to what Nancy Ferris calls a "collective enterprise of survival." Through my comparative analysis of the "Story of Juan Rabbit" and "Eligio and the Gringo," we have seen how Maya storytellers have used storytelling as a mode of cultural control and thus a form of subaltern interpretive agency, something that has been seen from the colonial period to the present. First, by using Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s theory of African American literature to analyze and explicate the African influence present in the story of Juan Rabbit, I have shown how these two distinct subaltern cultural groups, enslaved Africans and conquered Yukatek Mayas, used storytelling as a way of establishing a transcultural dialogue. The results of this dialogue and its

subversive message resound with every retelling of the story now in the twenty-first century. We then saw how storytellers employ the tradition of tricksters like Juan Rabbit in their textualizations of contemporary Maya literature like “Eligio and the Gringo.” The storyteller brings Yukatek Maya traditions to bear on the present in such a way that, even in extreme situations like the hotel in “Eligio and the Gringo,” Mayas are able to successfully interpret their relationships with the non-Maya world on equal terms. In other words, storytellers can use their stories to contest their relationship with hegemonic culture and exercise a degree of agency over how their interactions with that culture are interpreted within Yukatek Maya communities.

Storytellers and storytelling, as we have seen, are living presences in Yukatek Maya communities. Moreover, they continue a tradition of Yukatek Maya discursive agency through which Mayas interpret their relationships with the non-Maya words according to Maya values. We can state unequivocally that when contemporary Yukatek Maya authors frame their texts as being told, that is, spoken by a storyteller, they are not representing a residual orality or contemporary folklore. Rather, they are appealing to an ongoing tradition of interpretation and agency through which Yukatek Mayas have sustained their culture for over five hundred years. Having already examined the storyteller in folkloric and contemporary oral texts, we are now prepared to explore how these authors use the storyteller in their own works. How do the storytellers in their written works participate in this oral tradition? How do they deviate from it? Most importantly, to what extent do these written texts participate in the same counter-hegemonic mode of Yukatek Maya interpretation found in the performance of oral texts? These questions will guide our discussion of two texts by contemporary female Yukatek Maya authors in the next chapter.

Chapter 5 Telling Maya Modernity: The Works of María Luisa Góngora Pacheco and Ana Patricia Martínez Huchim

The truth about stories is that's all we are.
Thomas King, The Truth About Stories

Thus far we have examined constructions of the storyteller in historical, folkloric, and contemporary Yukatek Maya oral texts. We have seen how, unlike the traditional Western literary narrator, the storyteller in our texts is a trope that signifies the corpus of indigenous memory across time, space, and cultural context. As we discussed in chapter one, the woman's capacity to embody such knowledge literally and figuratively has played an important role in (re)interpretations of the conquest by indigenous and non-indigenous cultures since the time of the conquest. Recalling, for a moment, the figures of Malinche and the anonymous xpul ya'a, we found that these female storytellers signify broader representations of indigenous cultures and divergent ways of integrating these cultures' pasts into the history of the modern Mexican mestizo nation. We now turn to consider how contemporary Maya literature imagines Yukatek Maya into the national present through an examination of the figure of the storyteller in texts by two female Maya authors, María Luisa Góngora Pacheco (1955) and Ana Patricia Martínez Huchim (1964).

Given that this chapter focuses on short stories by two female Maya writers, I will begin by asking, more generally, how do national and international popular imaginaries interpellate the indigenous woman and, in doing so, how do these imaginaries seek to domesticate the knowledge she represents? To what extent do these imaginaries recycle the

discourse of the Indio, and to what extent do these imaginings contribute to new forms of domination? Ideologically, and given that indigenous access to mechanisms of representation that produce these imaginaries is limited, what do these imaginaries tell us about how we want to see and interpellate indigenous women? And finally, how do these preempt indigenous self-representation?

These images and ideologies at work within these imaginaries comprise a form of cultural common sense knowledge both nationally and internationally. My principal thesis is that the works of Góngora Pacheco and Martínez Huchim, since they incorporate constructions of the “traditional” Maya storyteller, constitute direct responses to national and international imaginings of Maya womanhood and indigenous peoples in general. If By juxtaposing popular, alienated images of indigenous femininity with the female characters in these stories, we will see how Góngora Pacheco and Martínez Huchim use the female Maya storyteller to contradict the popular imaginings and to represent Maya agency back to the Mexican national imaginary. Both of the stories I will analyze in this chapter, “Chan moson” (“Little Whirlwind”; 1998) by Góngora Pacheco and “Chen konel” (“Uselessness”; 2006) by Martínez Huchim, articulate a form of Maya modernity that neither breaks with nor rejects “tradition” as each story reinserts the Maya woman into Mexican and international imaginaries as a subject capable of telling her own story. Each text invokes elements of “traditional culture” alienated within national and international imaginaries, resignifying them and, in doing so, reinserting Maya knowledge, historical memory, and, more specifically, the Maya woman as a center of agency with the modern Mexican nation.

I have selected these stories from among the many works published by contemporary Yukatek authors because of they represent a challenge to Western expectations of Maya

literature and Mayaness, yet celebrate Maya traditions and traditional oral literature in written form. These texts portray a seamless coexistence between the “modern” and the “traditional” in the Maya cultural milieu, contesting the notion that there is a tension or contradiction between the two. Both stories, to paraphrase Parth Chatterjee’s, portray contemporary Maya as producers of modernity as opposed to its passive consumers (14). As will be seen in both of these works, Góngora Pacheco and Martínez Huchim espouse a form of linguistic-literary activism that neither shies away from problems within Maya communities nor places artificial limitations on Maya culture. Both self-consciously invoke the authoritative voice of a “traditional” Maya storyteller in the creation of their respective works while simultaneously challenging Western expectations of what, exactly, constitutes traditional Maya identity. In short, they defy the discourse of the Indio’s power to circumscribe Maya political, social, and cultural roles within the Mexican nation-state and around the globe. However, they use a traditional framework to present the reader with Maya texts that are fully Maya and fully modern, inserting the voice of the Maya storyteller as an agent within the Mexican national imaginary and the world in general. Through a comparison of these texts we gain a deeper understanding of how Maya are, quite literally, writing oral storytellers, using traditionally oral techniques to re-present the storyteller and his/her world in national and international literary arenas.

Imagining the Maya Woman

Before we turn to the stories we must first examine how the popular imagination represents indigeneity, the Maya, Mayaness, and more specifically, the Maya woman. Similar to the way Malinche and the anonymous xpul ya’a function in the literary works by Esquivel and Dzul Ek, the body of the indigenous woman bears the symbolic weight of

indigenous cultures in popular culture. As opposed to men, women are more likely to correspond to outsiders' imagined preconceptions of what constitutes indigeneity. In Yucatán, Mexico, and the rest of Latin America, indigenous women are poorer, more likely to be monolingual, have higher rates of illiteracy, and are more likely to wear traditional dress than their male counterparts. Given the expansive penetration of global tourism over the past fifty years, the last of these attributes is perhaps most significant as dress constitutes the most readily noticeable aspect of any culture and is therefore the most easily re-represented to a mass audience. For example, Walter E. Little notes that non-Maya employees of Guatemala's tourism bureau will wear Maya clothing while interacting with tourists and that on guided tours, "Maya women were acknowledged as 'Indian' or Maya, but their spouses, children, and brothers were often not considered 'Indian' because they dressed similarly to the tourists" (239; 60). Coincidentally, less "authentic" male vendors "were frequently asked if they were real Mayas or 'Indians,' and they were questioned about the authenticity of the items they sold" (Little 60). As Little proves throughout his book, in the marketplace, "Ultimately what sold became what was considered Maya material culture," and yet the subjects he interviews manage to retain at least some strategic control over this interaction (61). Paradoxically, for the tourist the authentic actions of women who participate in the global textile trade through keen attention to market pressures are eclipsed by the very phenomenon the women observe and seek to imitate. That is, their staging of Maya culture is based on an alienated imagining of Maya culture they must constantly reclaim to be competitive in the streets of Antigua and elsewhere in Guatemala.

Moreover, Little observes, "What they [the Mayas he works with] find frustrating is being represented in touristic contexts where they have no control or access to potential

economic benefits from [such] representations. They feel that it is their right to present themselves and represent themselves in ways that are economically advantageous to them” (225-26). In other words, Mayas not only negotiate identity within the marketplace, but they are also aware of the asymmetrical relationship of power that exists with regard to how they themselves are portrayed in national and international imaginaries. They also realize that members of the hegemonic cultures that exercise control over these images are also using them to make vast sums of money and thus also have a vested interest in maintaining Mayas in a position of economic and representational subalternity.

Thus, as folklore is to field of literature, commercialized representations are to the field of tourism insofar as Maya culture is constructed as another commodity to be consumed. The market itself assumes the role of the storyteller as it tells the story of Maya culture and tells Maya where their culture fits in the broader field of national and international cultural production. Such representations are no less strategic in their selective reproductions of popular signs of Maya culture, and yet the signifiers used to imagine indigeneity are popularly mistaken for the identity they are supposed to signify. As Virginia Q. Tilley points out, this process effectively works in reverse as well, with “The absence of the *symbol* [being] treated as evidence of the absence of *what is symbolized*” thereby reducing indigenous cultures to their symbols and permitting the absence of symbols to signify the disappearance of indigenous communities (76; *itals. in original*). Here we can remember Little’s comments about male Mayas who, unlike their female counterparts, are not “dressed” according to tourists’ expectations and so receive questions about the cultural “authenticity” of their products and their own identities.

nwa WorldVacations.

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WHY THE MAYANS
CELEBRATED SO
MANY GODS.

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Figure 5.1 (NWA WorldVacations)

This confusion of signifier and signified can be discerned in the advertisement for NWA WorldVacations, figure 1. Portraying a kind of Mayanized version of the birth of Venus, the ad tells us that “It’s easy to see why the Mayans celebrated so many gods.” The key to my reading of this advertisement lies in the very first word, “it’s,” as this contraction rhetorically activates an entire realm of values implicitly shared between the viewer/reader and the storyteller/adman that in turn assumes a specific relationship to Maya culture. In short, the assumptions “it’s” implies recycle the discourse of the Indio while interpellating a non-indigenous, non-Maya reader. Despite the supposedly common-sense nature of the

question, we can imagine the utter ridiculousness of the situation if we were to present a Maya with the same picture and ask him/her the same question. Moreover, the bold text constructs Maya identity in the past tense, saying that the Maya “celebrated” many gods, foreclosing any contemporary articulation of Maya identity.

“It’s” is also the lens through which one is called upon to view the sexualized image of the woman coming out of the waves. As the “Maya” woman is dressed in a tan, two-piece bathing suit, the viewer is invited to make a connection between the beach-going practices of international tourists, the Maya who have understood Cancun’s beaches to be gifts from the gods, and Maya spirituality. Moreover, the “it’s” disavows the notion that the viewer should take such spirituality seriously. “It’s easy to see why [...]” implies the presence of some sort of prior misunderstanding or something which the half-naked, stereotypically Native American woman on the beach explains away through her mere sexuality. The NWA advertisement thus constructs the Maya woman as the passive signifier of the viewers’ sexualized Western expectations of the entire scope of a “3000 year” Maya history. In short, the ad not only recycles the discourse of the Indio, exercises an extreme form of violence over indigenous memory, and alienates this memory from the Maya themselves, but it also mobilizes Mayaness as a sexual commodity in the global market. The ideological consequences of these representations have already discussed in relation to the work of Walter E. Little, but it should be restated that such representations have material economic, political, and social consequences for Maya communities.



Figures 5.2 and 5.3 (Herdez)

Though the work of aid organizations may be far removed from the beaches of Cancun and the overdetermined Spring Break sexuality for which they are famous, the strategies of representation they employ are no different than those of the NWA ad campaign. These organizations simply shift the terrain on which such images are constructed, recycling the discourse of the Indio and re-presenting its ideological implications. Figure 2, figure 3, figure 4, and figure 5 all make use of elements readily visible in the NWA ad in order to draw attention to the “plight” of the indigenous woman who, as can be read between the lines of the words and photographs, needs to be empowered by the viewer, i.e. non-indigenous dominant cultures in the Western hemisphere. What, ideologically, is the



Figures 4 and 5 (Whole Planet Foundation)

implication of these imaginings? Who is the indigenous woman? The call for “aid” donations in and of itself presents these women as the passive victims of economic marginalization. We must clearly and unequivocally state, however, that the images these ads spread contribute to and reinforce this marginalization. Materially they represent advertisements that entice the shopper to purchase Herdez products or frequent Whole Foods, providing these banal economic decisions with an air of social responsibility. Hegemonic culture thus commodifies the indigenous woman’s economic marginality and we can safely assert that, no matter how much these programs may do to “empower” the women in their brochures, the economic

benefits these companies receive far outweigh the economic opportunities they bring to indigenous communities.

As for the images themselves we can begin by saying that they are no less sexualized than the NWA advertisement. On the one hand, all of these women are presented as mothers. On the other hand, as none of these images portrays the indigenous family unit, these portrayals are mysteriously asexual in their representation of female indigenous sexuality. Where are the men? Are they not indigenous enough to be included? Have they abandoned their families? In a certain sense, the conspicuous absence of males reinforces the identification of the indigenous female, her mode of dress, and her economic marginalization, as being *the* standard bearer of indigenous identity. By empowering her we are invited to empower all indigenous females who seem to be victimized by these absent indigenous males. These representations are thus part of a discourse in which we are literally invited, to quote Gayatri Spivak, “to save brown women from brown men” (303).

Finally, and most importantly, these aid solicitations make no reference to the historical conditions which may have resulted in such situations of “disempowerment,” thereby narrating an ahistorical vision of indigenous existence. Why are such people disempowered? Why are they incapable of self-empowerment? Considered in the context of their ahistoricity, these images offer disempowerment and an utter lack of historical agency and consciousness as being part and parcel of indigeniety itself as they recycle the discourse of the Indio. This disempowerment, like the “it’s” of the NWA add, tacitly lies in an agreement between viewer and adman to recognize the indigene as a radical other, a position which implies there is no indigenous viewer, not even potentially. This radical indigenous other is inherently female, unquestionably authentic as symbolized by her clothing, and no

less sexualized than her NWA counterpart insofar as she is a mother. She needs us and she cannot exist without us. We are the key to her social being and the continued existence of indigenous culture itself. Moreover, and given the indigenous female's formation as an ahistorical being, we are cleansed of any responsibility that we may bear for her marginalization. Charity thus becomes a guiltless, selfless act.

These images thus have the double effect of telling the world about indigenous women and telling indigenous women who they are. As subjects, indigenous women are not interpellated as centers of agency but as non-viewers to their own representation, subjugated subalterns dependent on handouts from dominant culture. Interpellated as such, the question of whether or not the subaltern can speak or, in the terms of my dissertation, occupy the subject position of the storyteller, is moot. From this perspective, being an indigenous woman implies a voiceless silence that can only be broken by outsiders. If the cultural brokers examined in the third chapter constructed their speaking Indios as men, twenty-first-century capitalism constructs its Indios as helpless, passive women.

Having discussed the consequences of these stereotypes, we can now turn to examine how two contemporary Yukatek Maya authors, María Luis Góngora Pacheco and Ana Patricia Martínez Huchim, use the trope of the Maya storyteller to reconfigure the image of the voiceless Maya woman. How is this traditional storyteller captured in a written text? How is she non-traditional? How does she seek to respond to images of Maya women such as those constructed in the advertisements above? These questions will guide our discussion as we explore how these authors reinsert the Maya woman back into popular culture and reposition her as a center of agency capable of telling her own tales.

Little Whirlwind, Modern Earthquake: Góngora Pacheco's "Chan moson"

We must first situate Góngora Pacheco's short story within the larger context of her socio-political commitment to the Yukatek Maya language. She pertains to a group of Maya intellectuals who, having been trained by the Dirección de Culturas Populares in the early 1980s, published a series of monographs, many of them bilingual, on everything from the ethnography of small Maya towns to traditional medicine. Her own contributions to this project are Monografía de Oxkutzkab (Monograph of Oxkutzkab)⁷ and Jop'el baxalo'ob (Five Games; 1984). Later she participated in the workshops for indigenous writers ran by Carlos Montemayor, and she produced several works that appeared in the Montemayor-edited series Letras Mayas Contemporáneas 'Contemporary Maya Letters.' Her works in the original Letras Mayas series are a book on the tradition of the Santísima Cruz Tun in the town of Xocén and compilations of stories she constructs as being told in conversations with other storytellers.

At first gloss Góngora Pacheco's "Chan moson," the title story of volume 11 in the third series of Letras Mayas Contemporáneas, shares a good deal in common with the texts examined in chapters three and four. Like the texts produced by the cultural brokers examined in chapter three, "Chan moson" and the other six stories in this volume can easily pass as folklore, resembling transcriptions of oral tales as Góngora Pacheco's author/narrator directly assumes the position and authority of the "traditional" storyteller. However, what "Chan moson" and the other stories in the text have in common with the stories discussed in chapter four is the fact that they are, in many senses, modern stories. They are not told from the perspective of an immutable, ahistorical Mayaness but from that of a contemporary Maya

⁷ I know of this text but, to date, have not been able to locate a copy. Although I do not know its date of publication, the Diccionario de escritores de Yucatán lists it as having been published before Jop'el baxalo'ob.

who, like other modern subjects, is actively engaged with the larger world. In this section I will focus on Góngora Pacheco's "Chan moson" because in accepting the established literary convention of the "traditional" storyteller as the embodiment of Maya culture, the narrative deviates from the norms established by the folkloric texts in chapter three. I would like to address how her storyteller editorializes upon the state of Maya knowledge in national and international contexts and, most importantly, how the use of this figure contests the images in the first section through its portrait of a modern Maya storyteller.

Before broaching these topics, however, it will be useful to acknowledge the serious criticism that Francesc Ligorred Perramon levels at the Letras Mayas project, of which "Chan moson" is an example. As his criticisms are well-founded and bear directly on the problems of interethnic relations in Mexico, I will include them in their entirety. This is how he puts it:

[el proyecto Letras Mayas demuestra] un espíritu controlado de rescate y de preservación lingüística y literaria de lo *indígena* como fundamento para la integración de una sola *Nación Mexicana*; una impresión-presentación populista; un indigenismo apegado al ámbito rural y alejado de la modernidad; una transcripción de la oralidad; un bilingüismo dudoso, ya que en unas ocasiones, el texto originario pareciera estar escrito en castellano o, al menos, recreado a partir de esta lengua ¿reaparece el fantasma de la traducción, lingüística y/o cultural?; un cierto mensaje-indirecto-mexicanista integrador; unos autores, más o menos, preseleccionados; un uso del maya y del castellano que llega a ser simultáneo en los llamados talleres literarios; etc...En fin, como decíamos en la *Introducción*, se trata de presentar una 'literatura mexicana escrita en lengua maya.' (Ligorred Perramon Mayas y coloniales 126)

[the Letras Mayas project betrays] a controlled spirit of rescue, of literary and linguistic preservation of what is *indigenous* as the basis for integration into a unified *Mexican Nation*; a populist impression-presentation; an indigenism stuck to rural environs and distanced from modernity; a transcription of orality; a dubious bilingualism where on some occasions the originary text appears to have been written in Castillian or, at least, recreated from that language, does there not appear the phantom of linguistic and/or cultural translation?; a certain-indirect-integrationist, Mexicanist message; some authors, more or less, who were preselected; a use of Maya and Castillian that comes to be simultaneous in so-called literary workshops; etc...In conclusion, as we said in the "Introduction," this deals with the presentation of a "Mexican literature written in the Maya language. (Ligorred Perramon, Mayas y coloniales 126)

I do not deny the importance of Ligorred Perramon's work, and recognize his place as one of the foremost scholars of contemporary Yukatek Maya oral and written literature. As my reading of "Chan moson" conflicts with much of his criticism, however, a short response to some of these accusations is in order, as it will provide a broader foundation for the subsequent discussion of Góngora Pacheco's text.

First, it would seem that Ligorred Perramon's criticism draws much of its weight from the assumption that peoples in positions of subalternity who are interpellated as storytellers are incapable of turning the tables on hegemonic culture. As I hope I have proven in chapters three and four, this is certainly not the case. Second, we must ask Ligorred Perramon why in his analysis the categories "Mexican literature" and "Maya language" remain mutually exclusive? Moreover, what of Maya literature written in English or Spanish? After all, if my contention that Maya literary discourse is capable of enacting a new form of Maya-Mexican citizenship is correct, what Maya writers are doing is precisely, to borrow the Catalán critic's own words, writing "Mexican literature in a Maya language." That is, by making use of the literary field and resignifying elements within it, such as the image of the Maya storyteller, Maya writers are literally inscribing Maya agency within the Mexican national imaginary. Third, Ligorred Perramon seems to assume that such texts are monologic in their reception. That is, in book form they will only represent folklore and are incapable of being anything else. The dialogic reception of Dzul Ek's plays demonstrates that this is not the case (Hervik 128). Finally, in the reading of "Chan moson" that follows, I will challenge his criticism that these texts, as a whole, present a vision of Mayaness that is "distanced from modernity," as he bases this conclusion on his perception that "Los asistentes (mayahablantes) de los talleres literarios [...] se convirtieron en recopiladores--casi

en etnógrafos--en sus propios pueblos de origen,... y en cronistas, eso sí, en lengua maya; pero, por ese camino, difícilmente pueden realizar sus sueños de poetas o novelistas, ni en su vida ni en su obra” (“The attendees (being Maya speakers) of these literary workshops [...] became compilers-almost ethnographers-in their hometowns,...and certainly Maya language reporters; but this road hardly allow them to fulfill their dreams of being poets or novelists, either in their personal lives or in their work”; Ligorred Perramon, Mayas y coloniales 131).

While I have not interviewed any of the authors involved in this project about their disappointment on not becoming supposedly “modern” poets and novelists, the interpretation of language and its use presented in Ligorred Perramon’s comments would seem to be monologic and, moreover, removed from the historical realities of indigenous historical memory. The repetition of such stories always been, in Florescano’s words, “a cultivated obsession” (Memoria 322), and indigenous intellectuals throughout the Americas always consciously appropriated Western knowledge and, specifically, alphabetic script in order to facilitate the transmission of indigenous knowledge, culture, and historical memory. Even if we were to say that the official objectives of the Letras Mayas project were the unilateral integration of Yukatek Mayas into national culture and the disappearance of an independent Maya culture, we cannot overlook the fact that Mayas themselves were in charge of the compilation and authorship of these texts. Armando Dzul Ek’s play on the *auto de fé* appears, like “Chan moson,” in the third series of the Letras Mayas project and as we have seen it is certainly not folklore. As we shall see, Góngora Pacheco’s storyteller is not “distanced from modernity” but rather draws on both late-twentieth-century Western knowledge and Maya traditions to produce a uniquely “Maya modernity” built to suite the needs of the Yukatek Maya people.

“Chan moson,” or “Little Whirlwind,” tells the story of a family of whirlwinds who live in a cave on the Yucatán peninsula. One by one the whirlwinds leave their cave and inadvertently wreak havoc on the peninsula’s inhabitants, first the father, then the mother, and finally the little baby. The last two are identified as being hurricanes Gilda and Gilberto, which struck the peninsula in 1955 and 1988, respectively. Gilberto, being young and mischievous, manages to steal a piece of the Lord of the Wind as well as the Lord of the Rain’s gourd for bringing the rains, thereby becoming the strongest of the three whirlwinds and so the one that poses the greatest risk to the Maya. Having known the chan moson as a trickster who played tricks on hunters when they entered his cave, the Maya seek the counsel of a h-men, or Maya priest. On the h-men’s advice they offer prayers and food to the chan moson, hurricane Gilberto, convincing him to return to his home in the cave and enabling the Lords of the Wind and of the Rain to recover their stolen articles.

The story invokes the voice of a “traditional” Maya storyteller by employing familiar literary and formal aspects of oral tales, in doing so adapting the printed Western literary narrative voice to a Maya context. As we have seen in stories like the stories of Juan Rabbit, for instance, in “Chan moson” elements of the natural world are personified. The three whirlwinds live in a cave and comprise a family unit. The father whirlwind’s initial departure is partially responsible for the eventual departures of the mother and the baby hurricanes, who need to find him. This chain of events links these elements of “Chan moson” to longer quest narratives dealing with parental or cultural identity. All three whirlwinds are more forces of nature than figures that correspond to Western categories of good and evil. Although the father simply blows over a few trees, the mother’s winds “u kínsik máako’obe” (“kill a lot of people”; Góngora Pacheco, Chan moson, 13). The little

whirlwind, in addition to the aforementioned thefts, also playfully steals a woman's slip, her huipil, and her husband's pants. Taken together these actions, some stark and some scandalous, recall the figures and narratives of trickster-like characters from Juan Rabbit to the Popol Wuj's Hero Twins, Hunahpu and Xbalanque. I make this connection for two reasons. First, because these pranks add a bit of comic relief to a story which otherwise deals with natural phenomena usually associated with death and destruction, we as readers are invited to see the "lighter side" of such phenomena. And second, because these pranks enable the little whirlwind, the most powerful of the three storms, to remain the "little" whirlwind in both size and temperament. If Juan's theft is cast as part of natural processes, the little whirlwind's growth and the ensuing destruction he brings about are an unintended result of his playful thefts from the Lords of the Wind and the Rain. Despite the disastrous consequences, he remains the playful chan moson.

Formally, the story self-consciously invokes the storyteller's voice without interposing layers of narration between the author/narrator, and the figure of the storyteller. That is, as in "traditional" storytelling, the author writing the text also has the function of being the storyteller found therein. For example, in two earlier bilingual companion volumes of the Letras Mayas series, U tzikbalilo'ob Oxkutzkab yéetel Maní and Cuentos de Oxkutzkab and Maní, Góngora Pacheco presents stories collected from these two towns. As she notes in the prologue, her job as a cultural promoter "paachaj in tzikbaal yéetel ya'abkack nukuch wíiniko'ob ti' u kaajilo'ob Yucataan, máaxo'ob beeto'ob u páajtal u jóok'ol dzíibta'anil le tzikbalo'oba'" ("allowed me to speak with a lot of elderly people in Yukatekan towns and these people have enabled the written publication of these stories"; Góngora Pacheco, U tsikbalilo'ob 11-12). Despite Góngora Pacheco's official authority as cultural

promoter and her authority as author/narrator of the written texts of the stories in these volumes, she bestows ultimate authority on the storytellers themselves. As she herself states it is they, and not she, who “have enabled the publication of these stories.” The stories then parallel the authorial stance taken in the prologue, as Góngora Pacheco begins each one by attributing her written texts to individual storytellers. For example, the volume’s first story, “X-ootzilil” (“The Poor Old Lady”), begins “Yum Aureliano Zumarragae’ ku tzikbaltike’ [...]” (“Mr. Aurelio Zumárraga says [...]”; Góngora Pacheco, U tsikbalilo’ob 15). Thus, here we have a clear separation between the cultural broker and the storyteller. Góngora Pacheco, in her function as author/narrator, claims to be reporting the speech of a different storyteller in each story, in this instance Aurelio Zumárraga. From chapter three, we can recall the use I made of Genette’s terminology in outlining this textual relationship. We are in the presence of an extradiegetic-homodiegetic author-narrator insofar as the author-narrator who addresses us both narrates in the first degree (extradiegetic) and is herself present in the story she narrates (homodiegetic), which is the story of hearing Aurelio Zumárraga tell this other story. Zumárraga the storyteller can be classified as intradiegetic-heterodiegetic, as he is a narrator in the second degree (intradiegetic) who is not a protagonist in the story he tells (heterodiegetic) (Genette 227-52). The author-narrator positions her act of writing the stories, made possible not by her but by these “elderly people,” as a continuance of oral tradition in written form given that these stories themselves reflect “le úuchben tzikbalo’ob ku beeta’alo’ob yo’olal k-úuchben ch’ilakabilo’obo” (“the old stories that were made by our ancient ancestors”; Góngora Pacheco, U tsikbalilo’ob 11).

The text “Chan moson” blurs the distinction between author/narrator and storyteller, beginning “Anchaj tun teenake’ ooxtúul mosono’ob” (“Once upon a time there were three

whirlwinds”; Góngora Pacheco, Chan moson 49). As seen in several of the texts examined in chapter three, here Góngora Pacheco assumes the cultural authority of the storyteller as opposed to merely configuring herself as the author/narrator who yield her voice to a storyteller. That is, whereas her earlier narrative mode was a hybrid of the extradiegetic-homodiegetic and intradiegetic-heterodiegetic, here the narrator exists solely at the level of the extradiegetic-homodiegetic. In other words, instead of hearing a story that has been mediated, we are now directly in the presence of the storyteller herself. She is not, however, an outside cultural broker seeking to appropriate the storyteller’s authority to “tell” and translate Maya stories to a non-Maya audience. Rather, this storyteller turns the site of the written Western author/narrator into a space from which one can enunciate as a Maya for both Mayas and non-Mayas alike. Unlike folktales edited, ordered, and arranged by cultural brokers in their role as author-narrators, the story here is not reported speech but the unmediated words of the storyteller. This position becomes even clearer at the end of the story when the story ends with the formula “Je ka’aj máanen tu jool le áaktun tu’ux yaano’ ti ku joros nóok’i’” (“When I passed by the mouth of the cave where he is, he was in there snoring loudly”; Góngora Pacheco, Chan moson 52). Beyond knowledge of the historical facts of the story itself the storyteller, here in written form, claims to have heard the chan moson herself in the real time of the reader to whom the story is told. This gesture, one that is common in Yukatek Maya oral and written literature, has ideological implications that deserve further analysis.

First, and as we found in chapter one, we cannot simply attribute the presence of this and other formulae to a kind of residual orality that is destined to fade away. While such an interpretation may have its merits, it fails to account for the historical meaning of these

formulae, whether oral or written, and it ignores the ideological significance of these formulae. For example, in the folkloric tales from the first two sections of chapter three the formulae are conspicuously absent, and we can confidently state that the omission of such phrases fortifies the Indio's construction as an ahistorical object of Western knowledge. Second, and as noted by Allan F. Burns, opening and closing formulae separate oral stories from everyday conversation, and "When a story is completed, a common way to end it is to claim personal knowledge of the last scene" (17). In "Chan moson," the storyteller's "personal knowledge" of the cave does not so much mimic or transpose the voice of the "traditional" storyteller as it asserts the authority of this voice in a written context by reconfiguring the book and its contents as breaks in an ongoing, broader intercultural conversation. As these formulae mark oral stories as different from everyday speech, so to do they mark the text as distinct from everyday writing. Moreover, they remind us that this story is not a "short story," but a Maya story that draws upon its own non-Western conventions of genre, style, and narration. Third and finally, we must also acknowledge that Yukatek Maya have engaged in such definitions of "person, place, and time," orally and in writing, since at least the Colonial era. William F. Hanks observes that "Sixteenth-century official Maya genres embody a specific kind of public address by a collective speaker before witnesses, located in a carefully constructed 'here' and 'now'" (151). The story, whether written or oral, is a type of "public address," and the storyteller, we should recall, is the embodiment of indigenous memory, in a sense a "collective speaker." These formulae complete the last part of the equation, situating the reader and the storyteller in both the "here" and "now" of the performance and the "here" and "now" of the late twentieth-century.

In “Chan moson” we thus observe a redeployment of “traditional” storytelling formulae to narrate a “non-traditional” story. As we found with regard to the story “Eligio and the Gringo” in chapter four, the events of the story are true insofar as the last two whirlwinds, the mother and the baby, represent hurricanes that struck the Yucatan in 1955 and 1988, respectively. On the one hand, the historical fact of the hurricanes’ devastation is well-known to the peninsula’s residents. On the other, the particular fictionalized account of these hurricanes “Chan moson” would not be as well-known as it is a recent written account, published in 1998, of the hurricanes themselves. The authority of any given story resides in the fact that the story is well-known within a Maya context, in a sense a kind of communal property. Commenting on the structure of nineteenth-century Maya knowledge, Terry Rugeley refers to these stories as comprising “a kind of oral compendium, a hodgepodge of wisdoms, techniques, and tidbits that everyone should learn and repeat” (Rugeley 1). The storyteller in “Chan moson” references the formulae of oral storytelling which give shape and meaning to the Maya “oral compendium” in order to interpret contemporary historical events and Mayas’ role in them. Although this particular story is not, perhaps, well-known communal property, its underlying formulae and their use are. By re-presenting these in written form, “Chan moson” thus constitutes the praxis of a Maya modernity that exists beyond Western-imposed interpretations of stories that focus on a dichotomy between tradition and modernity.

Recalling for a moment the images of the “Maya” “goddess” in Cancun or the poor indigenous women of the undeveloped Third World whose self-realization depends solely on our empowering them, we can better appreciate how “Chan moson” and the agency represented by its storyteller are far removed from such re-presentations. In our analysis of

Góngora Pacheco's story we cannot pit the terms "traditional" and "modern" against each other but rather must recognize that these terms are not mutually exclusive. My argument is that this story demonstrates the production of a Maya literary modernity well within the confines of Maya literary tradition and that this writing restores agency to the passive image of the indigenous woman treated in the first section of this chapter. Using the interpretive agency associated with storytellers and the act of storytelling, Góngora Pacheco's storyteller forges a narrative that is not "distanced from modernity" but constitutive of modernity itself. She does not need us to empower her and put her on the path to development, but emerges as a figure who, coeval with us in time, is and always was a modern being. An exploration of this Maya literary modernism and its ideological consequences for the Mexican and international imaginaries are the focus of the final part of this section.

In his work on popular belief in rural southeastern Mexico, Rugeley suggests that the construction of the aforementioned "compendium" of popular oral knowledge, "reflected certain important social values, certain common historical experiences, as well as a shared vision of supernatural forces as undergirding human experience" (5). "Chan moson" reflects such a "common historical experience" and does so while upholding this "vision of supernatural forces" which, in turn, implies a very specific relationship to two distinct sets of "social values." Although, for a Westernized reader, the presence of the h-men and the ceremonies which he recommends to restore natural order are the stuff of fairy tales and legends, the fact of the story's historical reality means that we can no more dismiss the figure of the h-men or the actions of the Maya than we could deny that these hurricanes took place. We can say, then, the story interprets the hurricanes in light of Maya historical knowledge and Maya agency. By portraying such keepers of "traditional" Maya knowledge and

positioning them as active protagonists in twentieth century history, the story asserts Maya agency in the modern era in such a way that the “traditional” and the “modern” are complementary aspects of the Maya imaginary.

Nowhere is this fusion more apparent than in the use of the word “moson,” or whirlwind, to describe the two hurricanes. In fact, “moson” represents a kind of “appropriated culture.” According to the Diccionario Maya Popular, which focuses on contemporary Yukatek usage, “moson” means “torbellino, remolino de viento” (twister, whirlwind; 166). The more authoritative Cordomex Dictionary, recently re-published by Editorial Porrúa as Diccionario Maya, lists six Maya words for the Spanish “huracán”: chak ik’, keh ik’, ma’lay ik’, moson, xawal ik’, and xaway (197). As suggested in the Diccionario Maya Popular, however, the Diccionario Maya defines “moson” as being more related to whirlwinds and tornados than to hurricanes (79). Both dictionaries draw a stronger relationship between “chak ik’” and “hurricane” than between “moson” and “hurricane.” What, then, is the significance of the storyteller’s referring to “hurricanes” Gilda and Gilberto, names which she points out are their names “Ichil le kastlan t’aano” ‘In Spanish’, as being “moson” in Maya as opposed to “chak ik’,” and her maintaining this distinction by calling them “remolino” in Spanish (Góngora Pacheco Chan moson, 51)? In fact, as opposed to the more popular “chak ik’” or “red wind,” “moson” or “whirlwind” now better reflects how people experience such phenomena, since twentieth-century satellite technology projects pictures of hurricanes in which they resemble large whirlwinds. This is readily apparent in figure 6, a satellite photo of Hurricane Gilbert, the chan moson, approaching the Yucatán peninsula. By referring to the family of storms as “moson” instead of “chak ik’,” Góngora Pacheco’s storyteller reconfigures the popular imaginary by applying the Maya term

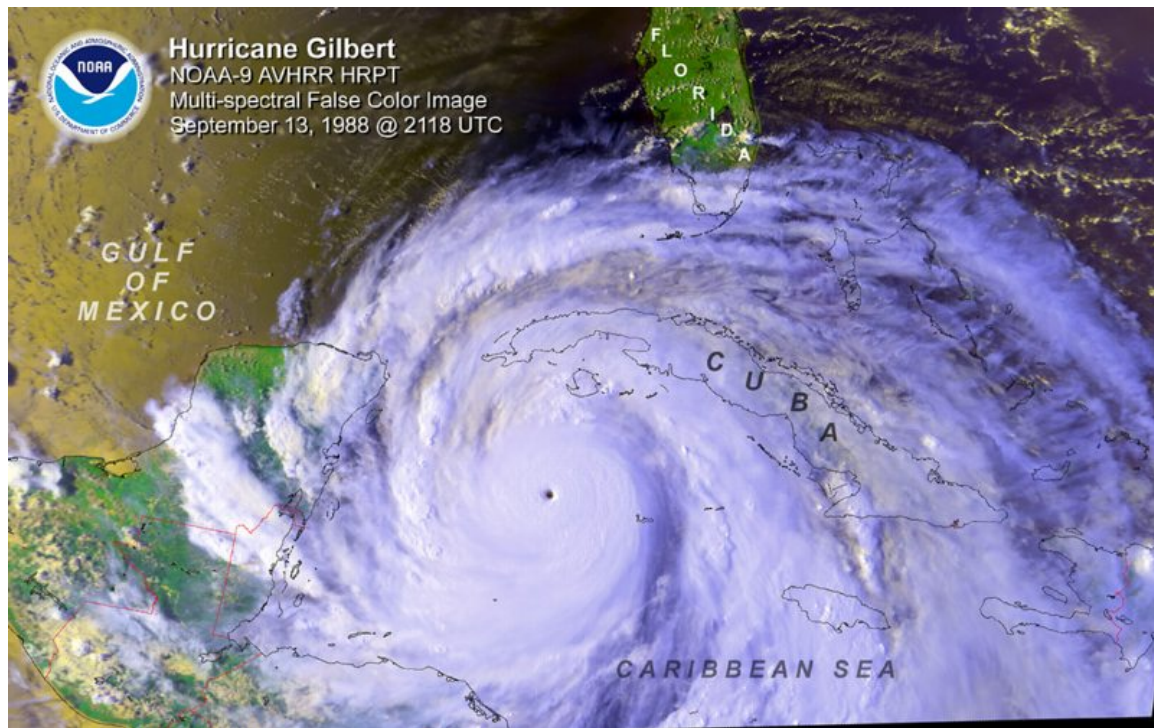


Figure 5.6 (Hurricane Gilbert)

for “whirlwind” to twentieth-century satellite pictures of hurricanes.

Only with great risk, then, can we dismiss “officialist” literature like that of Góngora Pacheco. “Chan moson,” as we have seen, demonstrates the efficacy of Maya knowledge within the modern world. The story constructs the voice of its storyteller through the use of traditional techniques and formulae that recall an entire written and oral Maya literary tradition. In addition, its storyteller reconfigures elements within the Mexican, Maya, and international imaginaries to show the importance of Maya culture, memory, and historical knowledge to the rest of the world. Only the Maya h-men has the knowledge necessary to convince the chan moson to go back to his cave. Moreover, the use of the word “moson” discursively claims this popular image for the Maya imaginary. Ideologically, Góngora Pacheco’s storyteller inscribes the Maya subject as a protagonist within the Mexican nation and the rest of the world without this reinscription being an act of assimilation or integration

as these terms are commonly understood. The use of “traditional” structures of Maya storytelling provides a historical foundation for Mayas’ interpretation of and relationship with the supposedly more “modern” world, producing a re-presentation of Mayaness that asserts the viability and legitimacy of Maya identity in the late twentieth century.

Storytelling as Testimonio: Martínez Huchim’s “Chen konel”

As we have seen in chapter two and the first section of this chapter, hegemonic Mexican, Maya, and international cultures invest a significant amount of symbolic capital in the image of the indigenous woman. She is the mother of the mestizo Mexican nation, the bearer of indigenous knowledge, and the site of an unquestionable cultural authenticity. On the one hand, what Others see as their symbolic role within these spheres means that, as June Nash observes, “women, as caretakers for the young and old, are central actors in the emergent social movements of indigenous peoples in the hemisphere precisely because of their connectedness to the issues of the survival of past traditions and future generations in their own lives” (25). For example, Rigoberta Menchú Tum and Domitila Barrios de Chungara have played an important role in the voicing of indigenous rights and the rights of indigenous women in their home countries and around the world. Menchú Tum even won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992.

On the other hand, in positing a certain representation of the indigenous woman as the embodiment of cultural symbolic capital, this role has severe limitations. Several of the images of indigenous women at the beginning of this chapter represented globalized images of what Susan Kellogg refers to as “the feminization of poverty” (168). These images thus reify the indigenous woman’s state as being triply marginal in the sense outlined by Xóchitl Gálvez, an Hñahñu (Otomí) speaker from Mexico, who describes the discrimination she

faces in the following way: “This is really triple discrimination: being poor, being a woman, and being indigenous” (qtd. in Kellogg 174). Moreover, we must also recognize that representations from within indigenous movements occasionally repeat these same images, although investing them with more dignity. For example, the writing of male indigenous writers tends to idealize the indigenous woman in her role as bearer of indigenous culture. Examples from oral literature even show how physical abuse against women is ideologically normalized at the local level.⁸ How, then, does writing by contemporary Maya female writers respond to these representations in mass media and within Maya communities themselves, especially representations made by male Maya writers?

The remainder of this chapter focuses on Ana Patricia Martínez Huchim and her award-winning work “Chen konel” ‘Uselessness’ in order to show how the “modern” storyteller we observed in Góngora Pacheco can also critique the gender inequalities within Maya communities. This story, which won the Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán’s award for Yukatek Maya narrative in 2005, employs many of the structures and formulae of “traditional” storytelling we found in “Chan moson” while, at the same time, painting a radically different picture of Maya reality. How is this vision of a woman’s life in a Maya community empowering? How does it contest other representations of Mayaness? To what extent does it resemble the testimonio insofar as it bears witness to gender inequalities that are often reinforced and perpetuated by hegemonic culture? What is the storyteller’s role in this critique? These questions will guide our discussion of this text.

⁸ I am thinking, specifically, of a story I recorded in which a farmer finds himself alone after his wife has left him. His dog tells him to go ask the rooster for advice on how to deal with women, noting how many chickens or “wives” the rooster has. The rooster explains that he “teaches them,” and the storyteller accompanies this statement with a forceful clap as if to suggest that physical violence plays a part in this “education.”

Before beginning our discussion of “Chen konel,” however, I must first state that storytellers and the act of storytelling are primary concerns in Martínez Huchim’s work. Her licenciatura thesis entitled K-maaya tsikbal. Jaajil T’aan (Our Maya Literature. True Words; 1996) deals with contemporary oral storytelling in Xocén, Yucatán. In addition to Cuentos enraizados (Rooted Stories; 1999), a bilingual book of stories she transcribed from her parents, she has also published U tsikbalo’ob mejen paalal/Cuentos de niños (Children’s Stories; 1997), a bilingual book of stories by Maya children from Xocén. As evidenced by these publications and her current project, an internet magazine on Maya literature entitled K’aaylay (Song of Memory) Martínez Huchim’s body of work situates the storyteller as the axis around which past and future take shape in the present.

The five sections of “Chen Konel” contain the story of Esperanza Batum Ku’s elopement. The first and last sections, “Ku tsikbata’al” ‘They say’ and “Ka’aj máanen” ‘When I passed by’ present the reader the figure of the storyteller, who provides the implied reader-listener the background for the tale in first section and editorializes on the events of the story in the last. The middle three sections recount the moment Esperanza deceives her parents and runs off with her boyfriend from the perspectives of her father, mother, and that of Esperanza herself. Thus, the formal structure of the story plays with the structure of a traditional Maya story and the construction of the traditional storyteller, as these sections bracket the body of the story proper, repeating formulae found in Maya oral literature and serving as a commentary on the fate of the story’s protagonist. Placing the story within the context of common knowledge and everyday experience, the storyteller appeals to the presence of a living Maya culture. This storyteller, both didactic and distanced, intimately Maya and yet

providing detached observations on Maya culture, refuses to be reduced to Western conceptions of literature and the printed page.

The story begins with the storyteller appealing to a sort of common-sense knowledge of which the story that follows will be a representative case. She states that “Ku tsikbata’al [...]” (“They say [...]’ that girls who elope come to a bad end, and the story we read affirms this”; Martínez Huchim, “Chen konel” 53). Esperanza Batum Ku, despite her father’s sacrifices for her education and his hopes that she will become an engineer, and despite her mother’s narratives on her own marriage, elopes with her boyfriend, Herculano Och. At the ends the storyteller is in a group of women gossiping about Esperanza’s fate, and she explains to us that the cruel words of each woman is as reflective of their individual lives as it is Esperanza’s. We are thus introduced to a rural Maya community in which girls who elope are subjected to the abuse by their spouses and new families.

As was discussed in relation to Góngora Pacheco, Martínez Huchim’s story bridges the distance between the author-narrator and the storyteller. She is an extradiegetic-heterodiegetic narrator insofar as she narrates a story in which she, herself, is not a protagonist. The opening line’s statement that “Ku tsikbata’al ya’abkach x-ch’úupalalo’ob mantats’ tun k’a’asaj yiliko’obe’ ba’ax ku yúuchul ti’ x-ch’úupal ku tsáayal tu paach jun túul xiib...” ‘They say that young women are always told to watch what happens to a girl who runs away with a boy’ introduces us to a field of assumed knowledge and everyday assumptions through the common opening statement “Ku tsikbata’al” (“They say”; Martínez Huchim, “Chen konel” 53). The storyteller thus appeals to a universal aspect of Maya culture contained in the text about to be recounted. Conversely, the story ends with the no less common “Ka’an máanen míin balak’ k’iine’ t’u’ux yaan u naj u taata X-Lansa,” (The

other day when I passed by Esperanza's parents' house) which presents the storyteller, as in "Chan moson," as having personal knowledge of the story, its events, and its consequences as though the storyteller were a flesh and blood person and the story an actual occurrence (Martínez Huchim, "Chen konel" 67). These two appeals to the universal commonality of the story's plot and the personalized particularity of this one instance recall the tradition of the Latin American testimonio. As I have already commented extensively on this genre in chapter four, it suffices to observe that the author Martínez Huchim considers "Chen Konel" to be a work in this vein, as opposed to fiction or non-fiction, and she claims that it draws on the testimonies and stories of countless Maya women in villages throughout the peninsula (Martínez Huchim Personal Interview). I should also note that, in my interview with her, she rebuffed my attempts to label the work a "story," "short story," or "novel" and referred to these as Western literary constructions one must get past in order to approach Maya literature. In synthesizing the voices of multiple Maya women into a single work into a single work of written Maya literature, the storyteller once again represents a "collective speaker before witnesses."

This collective speaker, however, does not speak for Maya culture as a whole but for Maya women, and we must include Maya men in the audience of witnesses being addressed. The storyteller thus constructs the text as a testimonio in a double sense. First, in its recounting of the economic and social difficulties found in Maya communities from the storyteller's first-person account, the story bears witness to these very things and implicates the reader in the reproduction of national and international relations of power which frame the impoverishment of indigenous peoples in general. As expressed in Floreano's accented voicing of the word "engineer," we are lead to question whether or not Floreano's dream for

his daughter is credible or, better, a mispronunciation of the possibilities offered to indigenous peoples by national systems of education. We must also ask what, exactly, do aid programs like those offered by Herdez and Whole Foods, which are built on the feminization of poverty, offer indigenous women? Bags of rice? Micro-loans for the establishment of weaving co-operatives? How do such these contribute to anyone's becoming an engineer?

Second, and perhaps more importantly, the story does not give the kind of nostalgic, folkloric account of life in Maya communities to which many tourists, anthropologists, and ethnographers are accustomed and does not represent the idyllic gender relations found in a good deal of male-authored Maya literature. The text therefore resists, a priori, any interpretive attempt to be read in a facile, essentializing manner. Although framed by a "traditional" storyteller, the story confronts the reader with an unromanticized vision of Maya gender relations in which women are frequently the victims of abuse, abandoned by unfaithful husbands, and left destitute in bad marriages. The sexual relations between the eloping couple are even described using animals and violence as a point of comparison. When Esperanza and her lover Herculano Och consummate their relationship, the storyteller pulls back, saying that at that moment an opossum "tu t'uu'aj la chan kaaxe', ts'o'okole ka tu u beejil u k'u' tu'ux yaan u láaj ch'i'ibal Och" ("plucked the little chicken's feathers, and then took it to its nest where the rest of the Oches lived"; Martínez Huchim, "Chen konel" 65). The very name Herculano Och seems to anticipate violence, masculine strength, and the impending doom of Esperanza's fate. "Herculano" is a clear reference to the mythological Greek hero known for his strength and prowess, and "Och" is both a Maya last name and a veiled reference to the Maya words for "boa" 'och kaan' and "womanizer" 'och keep.' He is,

figuratively, a snake who has crept into the Ku household, wounded one of the household's chickens, and taken it back to the nest where the rest of the snakes live.

The story's final section consists of women's gossip the storyteller hears while passing by Esperanza's parents' house. Not only are the women's various cruel remarks on Maya gender relations graphically recounted, but the storyteller also adds ironic commentary each woman's remarks. The most damning of these, perhaps, is that of the last interlocutor, who says, "Yaan u ts'áik le ba'al ti'o...wa ma'e'; ku p'aatal, bey le xiibo'ob---tu ya'alaj jun túul ko'olel púust'ul xaan" ("She had to give it to him...if not, he would have gone after another, that's how men are---said a woman who had also eloped"; Martínez Huchim, "Chen konel" 53). Rather than cruel, these comments seem to be a double-voiced commentary on the state of these women's own lives.

Moreover, these wry comments underscore the story's central problem: the figure of the Maya woman caught between "modernity" and "tradition." My argument is that the image of the female storyteller emerges as an attempt to resolve these seeming opposites in much the same way that the storyteller in "Chan moson" resolves this tension more generally. As such, the particularities of Esperanza's story as recounted by the storyteller must be treated in some detail. Although her father is disappointed when he comes home to find his wife has given birth to a girl, he comes to call the baby girl his tuunich keeje, or "deer stone," which in Yukatek oral literary tradition brings its bearer good luck in hunting deer (Martínez Huchim, "Chen konel" 57). Completing this transformation is Floreano Batum's act of selling his rifle, the firearm being the symbol of masculine prowess par excellence, for money to buy what the young Esperanza needs to attend school. Given his identification of her as his tuunich keeje, this act marks the moment when Floreano, via his

daughter's education, attempts to pass from a more "traditional" world of Maya subsistence to a "modern" one in which his daughter could one day be a "X Ts'aj Xook, X-Liik, wa Íjiniiera" ("a teacher, a lawyer, or an engineer [sic]"; Martínez Huchim, "Chen konel" 57). The traditional Maya amulet of good luck thus passes, in Floreano's mind, seamlessly between one world and another.

Esperanza, however, has other plans and runs off with her boyfriend despite her father's plans for her and the warnings against doing so given to her by her mother. The latter, Refugio Ku, had told her her own story of the circumstances of her marriage to Floreano. Not only did Floreano never buy Refugio anything or provide her with money for household expenses, but the morning after they ran away together Floreano also, "Maache waajo' ka xi'ik ch'iinta'abi yóok'ol lu'um" 'Took the tortillas she had made and threw them on the floor' because she, a new wife, did not know how to make tortillas and so had burned them (Martínez Huchim, "Chen konel" 60). As readers we find that Floreano, the proud father whose prowess as a hunter is willingly sacrificed for the promise of his daughter's education, is paradoxically incapable of recognizing any similar sort of promise in the figure of his wife, whom he abuses. Moreover, although we can assume that his wife shares his hopes for Esperanza's future, her story is narrated through the recounting of her courtship with Floreano. We know of the abuse despite the beautiful words of seduction Floreano plied her with in the days leading up to their elopement.

This technique has the effect of exposing how the two parents' worldviews and concerns for their daughter are shaped by gendered relations of power. Floreano, the father, sees education as a viable path for his daughter's "modern" future, but his personal values remain "traditional" in the sense that he abuses his wife for burning her first tortillas, and we

may expect that his treatment of her does not improve over time. Refugio, by comparison, fears the emotional and physical consequences of her daughter's possible elopement without necessarily subjugating these to her concerns about her future employment. Although her perspective contrasts sharply with that of her husband, I do not see Refugio's position as being the mere privileging of essentialized "traditional" values of family and community over "modern" values of individuality and competition. Rather, she reinterprets the Maya woman's role within Maya society as well as that society's relation to "modern" values. Through the voice of the storyteller she enters the narrative as a being who, although she cannot prevent her daughter from repeating her own story, is a self-reflexive agent. That is, she does not correspond to the passive Maya woman fatalistically trapped in poverty. She reinterprets this role by being a storyteller, telling her own daughter not to elope and by using her own marriage as an example.

We know from the women at the end of the story, however, that Esperanza runs a fate similar to that of her mother as one of gossipers overhead by the storyteller comments, "Jo'olje'ake' tin wilaj éek'yube'en u yich" ("Yesterday I saw her with a black eye"; Martínez Huchim, "Chen konel' 67). This sense of repetition, however, reaches back linearly through time and horizontally through the rest of the community as we learn that "Tu ch'i'ibalo'obe' tuláakal ko'olel láaj púuts' ku beetko'ob: u chiich, u na'e' ¡beooráa' leti'!-tu ya'alaj tun jun túul ko'olel p'aata'an tumen u yíicham" ("So in that family all of the women have eloped: the grandmother, the mother, and now her!-said a woman who had been abandoned by her husband"; Martínez Huchim, "Chen Konel" 67). At the story's conclusion we find that the story, as with the structure of the storyteller herself, thus oscillates between the particularity

of the Esperanza's story, the story at hand, and a repetitious, universal commonality found across the particular cases of the individual gossips.

Thus, the story being told seeks the demystification of Yukatek Maya culture on two fronts, externally and internally, and mobilizes the signifying power of the testimonio on both. Rather than explicitly identifying Martínez Huchim, in her functions as cultural broker and author/narrator, directly with the voice of the storyteller, it is more fruitful to see the storyteller of "Chen konel" as engaging in the radical reinterpretation of Maya culture at large. One can identify, historically and literarily, the Maya storyteller as masculine. I do not mean to assert that Maya women not storytellers. They are. Rather, the tradition of storytelling by Maya women exists beyond the reaches of the archive. Historically there are very few instances in which cultural brokers, whether they are indigenous or non-indigenous, portray women as telling stories. In the field of literature, the number of female Maya writers, as well as female indigenous writers or female writers in Latin America in general, is far exceeded by the number of male writers. There are numerous social, economic, and gender issues which have determined this situation for over five hundred years, but what I am most concerned with is how the storyteller in Martínez Huchim's story violates the gendered norms of this literary tradition even while positioning herself as a "traditional" storyteller. Thus, externally, Martínez Hunchim's text challenges popular imaginings of the indigenous female from Malinche to the women presented in the advertisements examined in the first part of the chapter. Even in her narration of one young woman's failure to overcome poverty, the storyteller's utterance, oral and written, enacts the agency of the indigenous woman within the national imaginary. While this may not represent the direct voice of the subaltern

subject, I do feel that it represents a case in which, to paraphrase Spivak, the subaltern has spoken “in some way” (309).

Moreover, we can consider this to be a form of Maya testimonio that bears witness to and for other Mayas. Those of us in the North American academy are not its primary audience. Internally within the contemporary Maya imaginary itself the text, as much as it bears witness to the outside world, also bears witness to oft silenced aspects of contemporary Maya culture. If we agree with Foucault that behind every utterance is the silence of what has been chosen to remain unsaid, we must recognize that Maya literary discourse has tended, since the conquest, to marginalize the voice of the Maya woman. There are, undoubtedly, numerous stories which have Maya women as their protagonists, but these tend to be humorous, deal with sexual relations, etc., and seldom if ever comprise a direct critique of the woman’s role in Maya, regional, national, and global societies. Moreover, if we were to survey contemporary Maya literary production, we find that much contemporary Maya literature constructs a strategically essentialized vision of Maya culture in order to revindicate elements of Maya culture that are frequently denigrated. In a sense, cultural criticism could be counter-productive. Yet the silencing of such criticism has the broader effect of not only essentializing, but also idealizing Maya culture, an idealization which in turn silences the voices of Maya who find themselves marginalized within a marginalized community.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen how non-indigenous, alienated representations of indigenous women limit these women’s social, political, and cultural possibilities. We have also seen how, in the works of María Luisa Góngora Pacheco and Ana Patricia Martínez Huchim, female Maya writers are conscious of these alienated imaginings and respond to

them in their own works by constituting the figure of the storyteller as a place for the exercise of Maya agency. In doing so, they retake control over Yucatek Maya symbolic capital and its representation. These authors do not limit their critiques to external images of Mayaness, however, and they echo statements made by the Zapatista movement that state: “The practice of local customs should never validate violations of women’s rights” (qtd. in Nash 148). Again, they represent a continuity of Maya culture and memory that transcends our simple juxtapositions of “tradition” and “modernity.” Instead of either-or, they represent a type of both-and that challenges how we think of, represent, and interpret contemporary Maya culture.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

---¿Crees en esos cuentos?
---Por Dios, cositia, si es verdad [...]
Rosario Castellanos, Balún Canán

---Do you believe those stories?
---Jesus, antie, if they are true [...]
Rosario Castellanos, The Nine Guardians

In Rosario Castellanos's masterwork Balún Canán (The Nine Guardians; 1957), the novel's young protagonist stumbles upon an old manuscript hidden away in her father's desk. This book within a book, without a title and told by an unnamed narrator, contains the story of the history of the Tzeltal Mayas in Chactajal, an area owned and administered by the protagonist's father. In many ways the text's content and style mimic Mesoamerican books with which the reader is no doubt already familiar. For example, the intradiegetic narrator tells us there were signs that foretold the coming of the white men, and he uses the words "He aquí" 'Here I have,' which scholars commonly assume, in the case of the Popol Wuj, denote the presence of another, glyphic manuscript from which the author is reading (Castellanos, Balún Canán 56-60). This interlude ends when the young girl's mother enters the room and, seeing her reading the manuscript, chastises her by saying, "No juegues con estas cosas [...] Son la herencia de Mario. Del varón" 'You mustn't play with these things [...] They are Mario's inheritance. The male child's' (Castellanos, Balún Canán 60; Nicholson 59). The immediate meaning of her mother's words is clear: the girl's brother is the legitimate heir to Chactajal, its environs, and the history contained within the manuscript.

The girl herself has no such inheritance as she, like the anonymous narrator of the manuscript, has literally been disposed of her family history.

Although the novel would seem to call into question this negation of the girl's inheritance, the initial act of dispossession---the act of obtaining the manuscript from the indigenous community itself---seems to go unchallenged. Indeed, the novel's action centers on indigenous demands that Chactajal's owner, Cesar Argüello, comply with recently passed laws on indigenous rights, the right to an education in particular. In favoring the contemporary over the historical, the novel thus normalizes a national narrative that incorporates indigenous histories into national history, largely ignoring the historical conditions that lead to the need for laws protecting indigenous peoples in the first place. The argument shifts from how the nation should recognize and rectify long-standing historical inequalities to how it should go about incorporating such subaltern populations unilaterally into the nation.

As we have seen through this dissertation, the figure of the indigenous storyteller occupies a central role in representations of indigenous memory with regard to the Mexican nation and to Yukatek Maya communities. Castellanos's embedded manuscript makes this connection powerfully clear, as its storyteller begins by stating "Yo soy el hermano mayor de mi tribu. Su memoria" 'I am my tribe's elder brother: I am its memory' (Balún Canán 57; Nicholson 56). The intradiegetic narrator tells the story of his people as *the* representative of this people's embodied knowledge. As we have seen, these native storytellers have been a staple of colonialist texts such as those of the Friars Diego de Landa and Bernardino de Sahagún in the colonial period and those of Rosario Castellanos and Laura Esquivel in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Given the proliferation of non-indigenous images of the

native storyteller over the past five hundred years, it is not surprising to find that, at least in the case of Yukatek Maya literature, contemporary indigenous authors employ this same figure. The first chapter framed the dissertation's subsequent analyses by discussing relevant historical examples from indigenous and non-indigenous literatures, showing how the latter have constituted indigenous peoples as their passive object through what I have called the discourse of the Indio. In the second chapter we saw how Dzul Ek's play on the *auto da fe* inverts national narratives of racial mixing found in works of national literature such as Esquivel's Malinche. The figure that Dzul Ek's play employs to embody indigenous memory after the events of 1562, the anonymous x-pil ya'a, represents an ideology that reflects what Nancy Farris has called the Yukatek Maya's "collective enterprise of survival."

Through an examination of how "oral" literature is recast as folklore in chapter three, I hope to have provided a more nuanced understanding of the ideologies behind the process of folklorization and shed light on the many silences created by folkloric texts. In the following chapter, chapter four, we saw how contemporary Yukatek Maya storytellers, far from narrating tales drawn from an ahistorical tradition, use that tradition to structure new narratives that interpret and contest contemporary relations of power in the Yucatán peninsula. In the fifth and final chapter, we then turned to how two Maya female authors, Maria Luisa Góngora Pacheco and Ana Patricia Martínez Huchim, use the interpretive tradition that the storyteller represents in their own fictional works. Again, far from being works of contemporary folklore, the storytellers these works textualize a Maya modernity that both challenges popular representations of indigenous femininity and explores the role of Yukatek Maya culture in the Mexican nation and localized Maya communities.

Finally, a few words on the video project are in order. In a very real certain sense, I am responsible for the translation and dissemination of these texts in much the same way that Mediz Bolio, Rosado Vega, and Abreu Gómez translated and disseminated written versions of their texts. I am, inescapably, a cultural broker, self-consciously an outsider who, with the help of Mariano Bonilla Caamal, interpellates men and women as storytellers. People who chose to participate in the video project were paid the sum of 100 pesos, about 10 dollars, in exchange for their participation. One can certainly view this payment as a form of economic coercion or exploitation given that these 100 peso investments reinforce the security of my financial situation within the university system. I have had conversations with colleagues who believe that such payments spoil the field for their own endeavors insofar as they, viewing their work as a contribution towards universal human knowledge, do not engage in the practice of paying their informants. A stronger and related argument, perhaps, is that by recompensing people for their participation I commodify my object of study, directly subjecting Mayaness and Yukatek Maya oral literature to market forces.

In his introduction to a collection of essays on the testimonio, John Beverly asks the question, “When we say that the testimonio involves us in a relation of solidarity with the other, what exactly does that mean in terms of real or possible political consequences?” (7). I would argue that these payments were made as a gesture of solidarity, a gesture which nonetheless acknowledges the limits of this solidarity and any “real political consequences” it may have in the short term. These stories are something of great value within Yukatek Maya communities and my academic work, in which I have a vested financial interest, attempts to make this value known to the non-Maya world. Perhaps my work will eventually contribute to the development of a wider understanding and acknowledgement of Maya cultures by non-

Maya peoples. To claim that my work does so immediately in any sort of material way overestimates both my own ability as well as the importance ascribed to academic endeavors by popular culture. In the interim, the best I can do is to pay participants for their time, given them copies of their own interviews on DVD, and promise to give them a full set of the final run of DVDs when the project is completed.

However, many of the participants themselves saw the project as an opportunity to exercise agency over the representation of Maya culture in the national and international arenas. They knew that these videos would be taken back to the United States and shown to diverse audiences and so they, in telling their stories, would be seen as representing their culture. We can recall, for instance, Mariano's insistence that we begin the recording of "Eligio and the Gringo" in Yukatek Maya so that the audience will have undeniable proof of his Mayanness. That is, he is keenly, self-consciously aware that the video project gives him the opportunity to represent Maya culture to an international audience, and he exercises control over how his culture is to be represented to that audience.

The recognition of indigenous cultural agency does not necessarily ensure that non-indigenous peoples will be willing or even able to listen to what indigenous peoples have to say. Whether in Mexico or in the academy in the United States, the recognition of such rights is a mere pleasantry so long as we continue to limit our ways of narrating and telling stories to Western literary norms and Western literary languages. As we have seen, Yukatek Maya literature openly dialogues with national and international imaginaries on its own terms, and in the study of Latin American literatures we must be prepared and willing to engage such voices as contemporary critiques of the world we share, not as the vestiges of a dead or dying oral tradition. If these storytellers and the memory they represent challenge our own

perceptions of the territory we call the Americas, it is not because some stories are wrong and other stories are correct, but because we, ourselves, have preferred to create our own stories than to listen to the stories of others. If we wish to move past a history that contains the story of our own complicity in the subjugation of indigenous peoples, we must learn to listen to their stories about this very same process of subjugation and endurance. The Yukatek Maya and other indigenous groups throughout the Americas began their stories long before the arrival of Europeans and have continued to tell them in the five hundred plus years since. Instead of telling their stories for them or teaching them how to tell their stories, we must learn to listen to their voices and allow them to speak for themselves, and this is in part the path that I have tried to undertake with this dissertation. I trust others might want to follow in this direction.

Appendix One: The Story of Juan Rabbit

Me: I want you to tell me the story of Juan Rabbit.

Mariano: OK, I'll tell you the story of Juan Rabbit and Ma' Chiich. So, the story I am going to tell you about Ma' chiich is that once she went out to plant some beans, she planted the beans and began watering them with water from a cistern. She watered the beans.

So then one day she went out back to where she's planted the beans. She walks around where the beans are planted, and she sees they have begun sprouting but were eaten by Juan rabbit.

The beans were eaten by Juan.

Then Ma' Chiich thinks, "That good for nothing! What am I going to do? The beans I planted aren't enough for me to live on. So, Ma Chiich told some other people about the beans that had been eaten and asked them for help or advice. So then she was told by the elders what she should do.

She was told to make a man, a man but one made out of wax. A man out of wax and henequen. So then she takes the henequen and the wax and she mixes it like this, she molds, she molds a man. She made his arms, she made his head, his face, his legs, everything, a man.

Then she went again and put the man like this in the path Juan Tu'ul had come down. She put the man there like this.

So then Juan, Juan Tu'ul comes.

He's running along, he's come to eat, that is to eat the beans. ?? Lela' kuchi'?? Juan sees a man, a man he doesn't know, because it's the wax man.

So he starts to say to the man "Get out of my way, I'm here to make my living. This is where I take a dump, right here is where I take a leak." That's what Juan Tu'ul said.

So then the man doesn't answer him because he made out of wax. He says to the man "Get out of my way, or I will kick you," that's what Juan rabbit says.

The man doesn't answer, so then he kicks him, kicks him like this, until Juan rabbit's foot is stuck.

Having gotten his foot stuck like this, he says "let go of my foot, if you don't I'll kick you with my other foot." He kicks him with his other foot until it gets stuck.

"Let go of my foot. If you don't I'll slap you," then he slaps him until his hand is stuck because the man is made out of wax.

"Let go of me, I'm here to eat, I'm here to make a living" that's all he said. "If you don't let go of me I'll slap you, I'll slap you again," then he hit him until Juan rabbit was stuck like this.

Then Juan Tu'ul, "Let go of me, if you don't I'll belly hit you," and so he belly hit him like this until his belly was stuck in the wax.

He can't go anywhere, he's stuck in the wax. At dawn here comes Ma chiich, she comes walking around where she planted the beans. She gets to the part of the bean patch where Juan had come in.

"He fell for it." Juan is caught in the wax. You, Juan, you fell for it, you didn't escape, you fell for it!"

"OK, then, Ma Chiich, you've caught me. Alright."

She grabs Juan out of the wax and carries him away. "But Ma chiich, now that I'm caught are you going to eat me?"

“I’m going to eat you, with Pipian sauce, Juan, that’s what I’m going to do. I’m going to make Pipian Rabbit. Pipian Juan, it will be great to eat!”

“OK, Ma Chiich, OK.”

So then she open the door to the cage and puts him in there like this, so all her grandchildren come out to watch him. Juan’s in there getting used to being locked up.

So she says “Now I’m going to eat you Juan. With pipian sauce, like I said.”

“OK, Ma Chiich, OK, you are going to eat me. But, give me a last wish before you eat me.”

“OK, Juan, but why should I give you one?”

“Well, it’s that my dancing is really great. You’ll love it when you see me dance, Ma Chiich. Afterwards you can eat me.”

“Well, OK then, Juan.”

So she walks over there to open the cage and lets him out.

“You won’t run away Juan.”

“I won’t run away, I won’t run away, and after you can eat me . I’ll jump and dance right here.”

“You won’t run away, Juan?”

“I won’t run away grandmother, never.”

Then she opens the cage, the children come over, and Juan starts to dance. Juan dances, he dances like this, he dances, he really shakes his butt. Ma Chiich starts laughing, “ha ha ha,” she laughs so much she pees herself. Ma Chiich actually pees herself over Juan’s little dance. He goes over there this, then he comes back, he runs over there, then he comes back, Juan’s jumping around. Ma Chiich claps her hands, she’s really enjoying Juan Rabbit’s dance.

So then he goes over there like this, but he doesn't come back. He's escaped! He's escaped!

He's gone, no more to be seen, he's not there, he's gone. Ma Chiich starts to cry.

"He lied to me, that Juan. He lied to me. He said he wouldn't escape! So what can we do, children?"

"Well, he's gone, he's not coming back."

Ma chich starts crying again, and she cries.

So then Juan goes far off. But Juan he has a friend, a puma, his friend is a puma.

He says to the puma, "I have a game to show you."

"What game?"

"Come on, I'll show you."

So then Juan goes with his friend the puma. Juan and the puma go into the cage where Juan had been locked up. Juan go into the cage and he says to him "You don't know the great game I've found."

"How does it go?"

"All right, so then, you have to take to cage door, you close the door, you open the door, you close the door you, open the door. What do you think?"

"Can I do it? I've got it!"

"Come on in."

So there had been a pot of water put on to boil, a pot to put Juan in but then he escaped, well, the water had stayed boiling.

So then, the puma was saying, "Close door, open door."

"How do you like the game?"

"It's great, Juan."

“All right. Well, I’ll be right back.”

The puma stayed there, and Juan ran off.

“I’ll be right back.”

“OK.”

Then he’s gone. The puma is going crazy, “Close door, open door!” The puma’s not thinking, “Close door, close door, close door,” until the door sticks like this.

Then Ma Chiich’s grandchildren come by. “Grandma, that Juan, he’s come back! He’s in the cage! Come see! Juan’s an honest one.”

Ma Chiich comes over. “Children, that’s not Juan, that’s a demon! A demon is in there, it’s not Juan! Get some hot water to throw on him.”

So they get a bucket of hot water, from the pot that was heated for Juan, and they throw it on the puma, and the puma breaks the cage, he escapes. His legs are burned, he’s running off.

“I am going to get you, Juan, I’ll eat you, because you lied to me, you lied to me. I had a bucket of hot water thrown on me.”

Then he goes off, but he doesn’t find him, he doesn’t find Juan. Juan can’t be found. But then he sees, he sees him, Juan, over there.

He says to him, “I’m going to eat you.”

“Eat me, why? I’m not your friend, you don’t even know me. We need to talk. You aren’t going to eat me.”

“I am going to eat you because you lied to me. About the cage, you told me “Open door, close door,” I did it over and over until Ma Chiich threw hot water on me. That’s how I got burned, so I am going to eat you.”

“Hmmm...or I could tell you a game I found, it’s really great. You’ll love it. You’ll love to see it. Right here’s a beautiful cave, come see.”

Juan puts his hands on the roof like this. “Come in and see.”

“That, that’s the roof. See, I’m holding up the roof. If I stop, the roof will fall in. What do you think?”

“All right.”

So this here, this is the game. Another little game. There, in the mouth of the cave, there is, there is a wasps’ nests. There, hanging in the cave. In the cave there are wasps like that, but a little wind.

“There is another little game.”

“What’s that Juan?”

He says, “If you hold this, I’ll be back, I know another game with those little bells.”

“All right.”

“But I won’t be long, I’ll be right back.”

So he’s there like this, the puma stays there holding up the cave. Juan takes off. He goes.

He’s gone again, the puma, he’s getting bored of holding up the roof of the cave. So then he hits the little bell. But its not a bell, it’s a wasp nest. He hits the waspnest like this, they come out and sting the puma. He runs out, the roof falls in, he goes.

“I am going to eat Juan, he lied, he’s lied to me that Juan.”

He sees him again. “What are you doing, Juan?”

“I am gathering hay. Gathering hay.”

“What for?”

“To make my house. Help me.”

“No, I am going to eat you.”

“No, no help me with the hay.”

So he puts the bale of hay on the puma’s back. They start to go, he’s put the hay on his back and there they go.

So as they go, Juan lights a fire, he sets fire to the hay on the puma’s back, and the puma gets burned again.

Juan runs off, he doesn’t get eaten. The puma walks through the forest for a long time, until he finds Juan.

He says to him, “Today I am going to eat you, Juan.”

“Don’t eat me.”

“I am going to eat you, you have lied to me a lot.”

“No, I have a little game to show you.”

“What game?”

“Not here, come see.”

There is a tree trunk, one like this. “Come see. Come see how I do it. I play right here every day. I’ll tell you how. Come see.”

He goes up up like this, goes up real far, then comes down. He goes up, then he comes down.

“What do you think of the game?”

“Hmmm...it’s a good one. “

“Now you’ll see.”

“OK.”

He goes up like this, he says “Up tree, up tree,” and the tree grows up like this, the tree grows up. “Up tree, up tree, down tree.” and the tree starts to go down.

“Up tree,” and it goes up, “down tree,” he goes down the tree like that.

“How does it look?”

“Great!”

“So now you go up.”

“I’m going up”

“I taught you how. Like this.”

“I’m going up.”

So then Juan begins to go up. Going up Juan says to the tree, I mean the puma says, “Up tree, down tree,” while he says that, the tree goes up, it goes up, and so now then the puma, now he tells the tree to go down.

“Tree, I want you to, to go down,” it goes down, a little bit and then it goes down, it goes down. When it goes all the way down, the puma jumps off.

“I am going to eat you Juan, I’m going to find you.” So then he finds Juan, and Juan gets eaten by the puma. And so it ends for the puma, Ma Chiich, and Juan, who’s eaten by the puma. He’s eaten by the puma.

That, that’s the end of things for Ma Chiich and Juan.

Appendix Two: Eligio and the Gringo

Me: I want you to tell me the story about the man working at Uxmal.

Mariano: All right. In Maya? In Spanish?

Me: First in Spanish.

Mariano: In Spanish. OK, I want to tell you what happened in our workplace. Because I worked at the Hotel Hacienda Uxmal. It's the hotel located right at the entrance of the ruins of Uxmal, the archeological site, I don't know if you've been there.

So, at the time I was working there as a waiter. When I was there I learned carpentry, painting, waiting in the restaurant, and so I was working with a waiter named Eligio Lozano. So I was working with that friend of mine, well, he told me what happened the day before because I had had the day off.

So, he was working there and the next day told me what happened because sometimes "Hey, how did it go? How, how was yesterday? What happened? Where there any problems?" and "No, everything was fine, just this happened?"

"And what happened?" and we started talking about what had happened at work.

Well, "I had this disaster" he tells me. "This one disaster..." "So what was it?"

"Well, I am going to explain it to you, tell you what happened yesterday here at work."

A group of thirty people arrived, thirty gringos, from the U.S., and they want to eat, there food was served, we gave them everything, and one of them asked for some coffee. So, one of the gringos asked for a coffee.

"So I," the guy tells me, that is my friend from work, he tells me, "well, what I did is I made the coffee, like always. So, I served the entire group, but this guy, I took him his coffee, I served it to him, "Sir, here is your coffee."

So, I went back to take away the plates. But this guy takes his cup and drinks. But, when he drinks it, he tells the waiter “Excuse me, Mr. waiter, I ordered coffee. What you brought me is cold. No,” he started speaking English even, “It’s not hot, not hot,” he says, “Not hot,” he says, “Not hot.”

“Hotter” he says to the waiter.

Well, so the waiter says “OK, sorry sir, I’ll heat it up right away.”

So that’s what he did, my friend, he took it, he heated it up some more. He heated up to twice of what he normally did, he put it back in the cup, and served it again to the tourist.

So, this guy tries the coffee again, he tries it again. He says “Oh, not hot not hot not hot, not hot,” he says. “It’s not hot” he says.

“Oh, man, what am I going to do” says the waiter, “if the coffee is already hot? What do I do, what do I do? If I don’t get it right the tourist will complain. Then, they’ll fire me. What do I do? Ah, I’ve got it! I’ll do this...”

And he takes it again, and the cup, he pours the coffee out of the cup, he turn it upside down on the burner on the stove, and heats it up. He heats it for like five minutes, until the lip of the cup turned red. And then the coffee, he heated that up, too, yeah, he put it on to boil. And the cup was even red. And he poured the coffee into the cup and took it to the tourist.

“Sorry, sir, here is your coffee.”

“Oh, thank you” says the tourist, says the gringo.

He puts it up to his mouth to see if it is actually hot, see, this is already the third time, “this isn’t a game anymore” is what the tourist would say.

So, what do you think happened?

Me: I don’t know. Tell me.

Mariano: Well, what happened is, on putting the cup to his lips, from here to here all the flesh of his lips burned onto the rim of the cup.

And then the gringo says “Oh, hot, hot, hot, hot,” that is “hot, hot,” well it should be heated to the point that he burns himself like that. But he said, “Hot, hot, hot.” That is to say hot, really hot.

Well, he didn’t complain because he was the only one to blame. Because the coffee was reheated two times and he kept saying “not hot, not hot,” and then even the cup was reheated and he lips got burned.

What do you think?

Me: Well, the waiter had no other choice.

Mariano: The waiter, well, he had to do that. There was no other choice, right? That’s what happens where we work. In the hotels, it’s what happens in the restaurants. All these things, well, they happened to us, or to my friend who told me “what happened yesterday, how did it go?”

Well he told me this funny story, about what happened to the American. Well, this happens.

It’s better not to demand, right?

Me: That’s right.

Mariano: It’s the truth.

Me: to demand too much.

Mariano: Yeah, too much, oh, so what is going to happen?

Me: Exactly.

Mariano: Well, one of the days the same thing could happen to us. Well, we shouldn't be so demanding, yeah? If something isn't served right, just "It's OK" and that's it. Keep cool so that what happened to that one, the tourist, doesn't happen to us. That's it.

Well, that's what we learned one of the days we were working at the Hotel Hacienda Uxmal, Pablo.

Me: Ma'alob.

Appendix Three: Selected Interview Quotations

A) Carlos Armando Dzul Ek

Me: The title of this work (El auto de fe de Maní) is different in Spanish and Maya. Why didn't you translate the title directly from Maya into Spanish?

Dzul Ek: Because this (the title in Maya) reflects what actually happened. This other part should be in quotation marks. That's it, because it's the name that these events should have, according to me. That's not what others would have wanted. According to me, that's the name it should have. Because "Bix úchik u bo'ot ku'si'ip'il" would literally mean "How the people of Maní paid for their sins in 1562." That's what it means. And see there, "The auto de fe de Maní," but why was there an *auto da fe*? The reason, the reason is the title I gave the work.

Me: So how they paid for their sins...

Dzul Ek: And there were no sins! On the contrary, these (the priest's in the play) are the ones who are guilty of sinning.

B) Hilaria Maas Collí

Me: I had the chance to see Mel Gibson's movie (Apocalypto), and I was surprised by your opinion, because for you the use of the language was more important to you than the movie itself.

Maas Collí: Exactly. The movie itself, well, it deals with its theme, survival. In that sense, it reflects survival through a series of struggles, and that's why I was saying, "Well, it represents what the theme called for." It was about war, about surviving, culture, conflict with other groups, continuous fighting, so the whole movie, it can show the whole world smiling but people suffering. (...) So I paid more attention to the use of language, not to the

content because analyzing and criticizing the content, that's not really my field. (...) It shows that Maya language can be used for anything, for a film, for other works, for anything. It is a complete language in every sense.

C) Ana Patricia Martínez Huchim

Me: Where did your inspiration for your work that won the UADY Prize for Maya Literature, “Chen konel,” come from?

Martínez Huchim: Well, a lot of it came from testimonios. When I go out to collect stories from oral tradition in the pueblos, I almost always hear, “so-and-so ran away.” Moreover, I grew up in the town of Tizimín, and the people would always be saying “so-and-so ran away,” so-and-so eloped.” And later people would start to gossip about what was happening to the girl who'd eloped, the suffering she was enduring. And like in my family, people'd say, “You're not going to elope, because it will go bad.”

So, at home, we always said, “When so-and-so eloped, this is what happened...,” “When so-and-so eloped, this is what happened to her...” And everything in Maya, like in the case of “Chen konel,” however one wants to pronounce it, was actually one of the phrases used by one of the women who had eloped. So it seemed to me to be the perfect title. Many, a lot of the phrases that I put in the story, I only had to use them, because people would tell me a testimonio and I was taking notes, and the last thing was to put the text together. There were a lot of testimonios. And even later on I received even more, like the punishments that befall the girls who elope.

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