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Guatemaltequidad: Indians and Ladinos in the Guatemalan National Imaginary

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

in

Literature

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2011

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2011

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my family in the U.S. and Guatemala, especially my mother, Aura Marina Ovares Mendizabal, whose support throughout the years has made my writing possible.

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Race Theory and Ethnic Studies

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Guatemaltequidad: Indians and Ladinos in the Guatemalan National Imaginary

by

Axel O. Montepeque

Doctor of Philosophy in Literature

University of California, San Diego, 2011

Professor Rosaura Sánchez, Chair

This dissertation examines representations of *Guatemaltequidad* (Guatemalan national identity) in Guatemalan and U.S.-Guatemalan literature. It proposes that the dominant construction of Guatemala as a Ladino nation has functioned to silence, marginalize, and exploit the Mayan population and that Guatemalan authors have at critical historical moments used literature to reimagine the nation in order to rearticulate the place of the indigenous majority. The first chapter argues that 19<sup>th</sup>



century Ladinos rejected the Creole national identity of Guatemala, as articulated by Francisco Antonio de Fuentes y Guzmán, and deployed an anti-indigenous discourse to reconfigure Guatemala as a Ladino nation. The following two chapters analyze how Guatemalan authors during critical moments in the 20<sup>th</sup> century produce transculturated literature to reformulate the national identity. The second chapter focuses on the democratic aperture that lasted from 1944 to 1954. Specifically, I compare and contrast Mario Monteforte Toledo's novel, *Entre la piedra y la cruz*, and Miguel Ángel Asturias's, *Hombres de maíz*. While both novels are critical of the marginalization of the indigenous population, I argue that the transculturated form of *Hombres de maíz* reconfigures the positionality of the indigenous majority within the nation. The third chapter focuses on the first period of armed conflict in the 1960s. I argue that while critical of the dictatorship and U.S. imperialism, Marco Antonio Flores's *Los compañeros* reproduces the dominant indofobia. Luis de Lión's transculturated novel, *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá*, on the other hand, suggests that a revolutionary ideology particular to Guatemala must be founded in part upon a Mayan cosmology. In the fourth chapter, I turn to analyze U.S.-Guatemalan literature produced in the 1990s. By analyzing Francisco Goldman's, *The Long Night of White Chickens*, and Héctor Tobar's, *The Tattooed Soldier*, I argue that these novels reproduce the dominant construction of Guatemala as a Ladino nation, a representation that contributes to the minimization or erasure of the U.S. role in the Guatemalan armed conflict.

## I Formation of the Ladino Imagined Community

In this dissertation, *Guatemaltequidad: Indians and Ladinos in the Guatemalan National Imaginary*, I draw attention to the Ladino imagined community that was formed during the period of wars fought between Creoles, Ladinos, and Indians<sup>1</sup> in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. By the late 19<sup>th</sup>, elite Liberal Ladinos emerged victorious from the wars and they established a national project in which *Ladino* signified a modern Westernized Castilian speaking subject and Indian a “pre-modern” “relic” of Spanish colonialism. Having established Indians as an obstacle to modernization, the Ladinos now embarked on a campaign to enclose the Indian commons and to convert Indians into servile laborers on coffee plantations. The Ladino imagined community, then, was critical in legitimizing a division of labor that remained in place well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Historians, sociologists, and ethnographers have analyzed the 1944 Revolution, the ten years of democratic rule (1944-1954), and the successive armed insurrections, all important challenges to the dictatorship and the Ladino controlled state. My aim, however, is to analyze how Guatemalan authors have utilized literature during these critical historical moments to not only criticize the exploitative conditions in Guatemala but also the Ladino national project. While many authors have produced texts critical of the exploitative social conditions in Guatemala, I propose that certain authors have drawn on the Quiché-Mayan cosmology to produce transculturated

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<sup>1</sup> I use the term Indian to refer to an indigenous person post-Conquest. If I refer to an indigenous person before the Conquest, I will specify whether that person is Quiché, Cakchiquel, Zutuhil, Mexica, and so on.

novels that in their very form demonstrate that a more inclusive national project is not only possible but also a necessity. In short, I will argue that some Guatemalan authors have utilized literature, an elite form of cultural production, not only to criticize the dictatorship but also to suggest alternative nationalisms.

In this chapter, I will first explain why Guatemalan and U.S. scholars have not provided an adequate analysis of the formation of the Ladino imagined community. Continuing with this explanation, I will demonstrate that scholars who use the “theory of coloniality” and “world system analysis” in their study of the economic and political conditions in Latin America overemphasize the Spanish Conquest, minimize U.S. imperialism, negate the existence of non-capitalist modes of production, and reject the nation-state as a unit of analysis. While recognizing the importance of the Spanish Conquest and ensuing three hundred years of colonialism, I will argue that in the case of Guatemala the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century struggles between Creoles, Ladinos, and Indians were critical in the formation of the Ladino national project, the Liberal dictatorship, and the division of labor, one based on an intensified feudal mode of production. After demonstrating the validity of the nation-state as a unit of analysis, I will analyze the transition from the Creole imagined community of the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the Ladino one of the late 19<sup>th</sup>. I will then provide a brief overview of the individual chapters to follow. By doing the foregoing, I will demonstrate that the Ladino imagined community merits analysis as does the literature that has been used to contest it.

### **Scholarly Works on the Ladino Imagined Community**

I attribute the lack of Guatemalan scholarship on the formation of the Ladino imagined community during the late colonial and post-colonial periods to the dominance of the official State narrative that equates Ladinoness with modernity and democracy, one which a majority of Ladino-Guatemalan scholars do not question. Another reason is that for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Guatemalan scholars were unable to produce scholarly works that were critical of the dominant power structures. When the production of critical works accelerated in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, scholars focused on individual historical events such as the 1944 Revolution, the 1954 coup, or the armed conflict that began in the 1960s. It is understandable that they would do so given the enormous political, economic, and social cost that these events have had on Ladinos and Indians; but, unfortunately, they have not seen those critical historical moments as challenges to the construction of the Ladino imagined community. However, Guatemalan scholars are not alone in failing to understand this foundational period or linking key 20<sup>th</sup> century historical events to it. U.S. scholars, albeit for different reasons, have done the same.

Many U.S. scholars have argued that violence, since the Conquest, has been endemic in Guatemala; thus, they have failed to appreciate the importance of the formation of the Ladino imagined community. In fact, these U.S. scholars have resorted to a sophisticated version of what has come to be popularly known as the “Black Legend” of Spanish colonial cruelty. In the early modern period, European powers such as, England, claimed that the Catholic Spaniards were an exceptionally “brutish,” “cruel,” and “sordid” people who resorted to vile crimes against their “innocent” opponents. For England, of course, the “Black Legend,” one based upon

the chronicles of the Spanish Conquest, provided a useful ideological tool to justify their own imperial ambitions because they represented themselves as “enlightened” Protestants in opposition to the “savage” Catholic Spaniards. To be clear, I do not here imply that U.S. academics in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries have the same motives as English writers of the early modern period, but I do argue that their claim that the origin of the political, racial, and social struggles of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are to be explained by focusing exclusively on the wars of conquest in the 16<sup>th</sup> century is reductive and incorrect. In order to better explain why many U.S. academics are so enamored of the “Black Legend,” I turn to analyze the claims made by Greg Grandin.

As a U.S. historian specializing on 20<sup>th</sup> century Guatemalan Cold War history, Greg Grandin has complained that “Too many observers, including many scholars from across the disciplines do “not historiciz[e] Cold War repression,” a “naturalization” he paradoxically attributes to literary representations (2004, 172). Drawing on Hannah Arendt’s text *On Revolution* (1963), he argues that, “Since violence is always present in the founding and preservation of political societies, the trick of nationalism ... is to turn that violence into ‘cogent metaphors or universally applicable tales’” (*ibid*). “Usually,” he continues, “the ‘violence of foundation’—be it conquest, war of liberation, or revolution—is highlighted, while the ‘violence of conservation,’ which maintains that new order, is concealed” (*ibid*). Based on the foregoing, Grandin argues that novelists such as, Gabriel García Márquez, in *Cien años de soledad* (1967), “sought to construct competing myth-epic national or continental histories that reveal the continuous, enforcing violence of the state in order to both discredit that state and create the possibility of a new, more genuinely popular,

revolutionary identity” (*ibid*). Grandin, however, laments that even Márquez’s novel, which ends with the destruction of Macondo, has been interpreted as “portraying Latin Americans as children of Cain, unable to erase their father’s mark and unable to escape a land where brutality is bred in the primal bone” (*ibid*). The novel, he argues, has incorrectly been interpreted “as fate” (*ibid*). Grandin’s claims prompt a question: Do U.S. academics interpret Latin America as doomed to cycles of brutal violence because of literary representations of the “violence of conservation”?

U.S. academics, I propose, interpret violence in Latin America as cyclical not on account of the literature produced by Márquez and others, but because they are incapable of coming to terms with the role that the U.S. government and its military apparatus have played not only in placing in power military dictatorships but also in financing and training paramilitary death squads, particularly during the Cold War. In Guatemala the U.S. has played a particularly egregious role in supporting the mass murder of indigenous peoples in the 1980s, a process that may only be defined as genocide. It is this history that most U.S. scholars are unable to analyze and evaluate in a critical fashion, because it places in doubt the core Liberal principals such as, legal equality, procedural guarantees, and individual freedoms that the U.S. claims to defend. Consequently, they resort to the aforementioned “Black Legend” and promote the idea that violence in Latin America is simply endemic, a natural characteristic of the region.

### **Theory of Coloniality**

Aníbal Quijano, a Peruvian sociologist, has argued that his theory, “coloniality of power,” helps explain the global division of labor. In the words of Ramón

Grosfoguel, “‘coloniality’ ... accounts for the entangled, heterogenous, and mutually constitutive relations between the international division of labor, global racial/ethnic hierarchy, and hegemonic Eurocentric epistemologies in the modern/colonial/capitalist world-system” (2003, 4). In other words, “Although ‘colonial administrations’ have been almost entirely eradicated and the majority of the periphery is politically organized into nation-states, non-European people still live under crude metropolitan European-Euro-American exploitation/domination” (*ibid*). In sum, “‘Coloniality’ refers to the continuity of colonial forms of domination after the end of colonial administrations” (*ibid*). As I will demonstrate in the following, the application of the “coloniality of power” theory leads to the aforementioned overemphasis of the Spanish Conquest, minimization of U.S. imperialism, negation of non-capitalist modes of production, and rejection of the nation-state as a unit of analysis. I will first, however, point out the usefulness of the theory.

Anibal Quijano has argued that an analysis of global coloniality requires an analysis of its epistemic foundation: “that colonial power cannot be reduced to economic, political, and military domination of the world by Europe, but that it involves also and primarily the epistemic foundations that supported the hegemony of European models of production of knowledge in modernity” (280). As such, Quijano claims that a “critique of colonial power must necessarily entail the critique of its epistemic nucleus (Eurocentrism), that is, a critique of the type of knowledge that contributed to the legitimization of European colonial domination and its pretenses of universal validation” (*ibid*). In other words, Quijano is interested in moving beyond the exclusive analysis of “economic, political, and military domination of the world by

Europe” to an analysis of the way Europe (Spain in the case of Guatemala) legitimized its colonization of indigenous peoples in the Americas through an epistemic imposition. While I do not agree with the global coloniality framework, I recognize the need to analyze how subaltern peoples use non-Western epistememes to criticize Western forms of thinking.

The coloniality of power, according to Quijano, helps explain how the Spanish “repression was imposed on the ways of knowing, producing knowledge, producing perspectives, images, and systems of images, symbols, modes of signification” (281). Furthermore, he claims that the “colonizers also imposed a mystified image of their own models of production of knowledge and meaning” (*ibid*). All of this leads Quijano to point out that attention should be paid to how the Spanish forced the indigenous populations to “naturalize the European cultural imaginary as the only way of relating to nature, the social world, and their own subjectivity” (*ibid*). On account of this naturalization, “European culture became a seduction; it gave access to power. After all, besides repression, seduction is the main instrument of power” (282). Given the exclusively economic analyses at times produced on Latin America, Quijano’s call to criticize the “European models of production of knowledge” is a useful imperative, one with a long history in Peru. In his foundational work titled, *Siete ensayos de interpretación de la realidad peruana* (1928), José Carlos Mariátegui, for example, analyzed how Spanish colonialism was an “empresa esencialmente militar y religiosa” (153, emphasis mine) that imposed what Quijano would describe as a “system of images, symbols, [and] modes of signification” that privilege a Spanish/European



form of comprehending and thinking about the world (2008, 281). Unfortunately, while Quijano's project is similar to Mariátegui's, it is not as historically specific.

For example, in "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America" Quijano argues that, "What is termed globalization is the culmination of a process that began with the constitution of America and colonial/modern Eurocentered capitalism as a new global power" (533). While it is not possible to deny his claim, it is also difficult to use his theory in a productive manner, because he represents the Conquest as somehow inextricably leading to the current moment.<sup>2</sup> It is as if Quijano forgot that any historical moment limits the possibility of human actions but does not completely determine them. To put it differently, Spanish colonialism has undoubtedly affected countries such as, Guatemala, in a profound manner, but Guatemala's economic, political, and social development cannot be reduced to the social rot brought on by Spanish colonialism. Though for different reasons than the U.S. academics who are incapable of coming to terms with U.S. imperialism in Latin America, Quijano's emphasis on the Spanish Conquest in order to explain the current historical moment also overlooks the negative effects of U.S. imperialism in Latin America, one not based on the Spanish model of colonialism. Equally important, it leads to an erasure of non-capitalist modes of production and a rejection of the nation-state as a unit of analysis. Notwithstanding these limits, Quijano's theory has found many followers in U.S. academic circles, the most interesting being Ramón Grosfoguel, the aforementioned U.S.-Puerto Rican scholar of Ethnic Studies.

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<sup>2</sup> I recognize the importance of the Spanish colonization of the Americas, but I also recognize the need to be historically specific.

## Theory of Coloniality Applied

In *Colonial Subjects: Puerto Ricans in a Global Perspective* (2003)

Grosfoguel applies coloniality theory to explain the racial, political, and economic positionality of Puerto Ricans on the island and in the U.S. Drawing on coloniality and World System theories, Grosfoguel argues that “colonial situations” or “the cultural, political, and economic oppression of subordinate racialized/ethnic groups by dominant racial/ethnic groups with or without the existence of colonial administrations” (146) persists today. In other words, he is interested in emphasizing “the continuities between the colonial past and the present racial/ethnic hierarchies” (148), because all non-European countries in the world are either “modern colonies” or “neocolonies” of Europe and the U.S. He concludes that, “This phenomenon cannot be understood ... from an approach that takes the nation-state as the unit of analysis” (5).

According to Grosfoguel, Puerto Rico is a “modern colony” (2), “one that has access to metropolitan citizenship and welfare transfers” (*ibid*); thus, it should not be confused with the “neocolonies” (6), ones “that experience the crude exploitation of the capitalist world-system without the metropolitan transfers that Puerto Rico receives” (*ibid*). Following this reasoning, he argues that Puerto Rico is in a privileged economic position in comparison to the “neocolonies” of the Caribbean, because those “massive annual metropolitan transfers ... never reach the shores of Caribbean nation-states” (5). Puerto Rico’s “modern coloniality” status and its colonial administration, then, is advantageous: “The prosperity of the Puerto Rican modern colony relative to Caribbean nation-states that struggled for independence

constitutes a tragic historical irony” (5). Puerto Ricans on the island and mainland are also politically privileged: They “enjoy democratic and civil rights under modern colonial arrangements” (68) that the citizens of the “neighboring neocolonial republics” (67) do not. Independence, then, is dangerous because of “the clientelistic/*caudillista* political traditions ... of small Caribbean islands” (68). Grosfoguel concludes that, “The possibilities of a dictatorship under these conditions [independence] are relatively high, as exhibited by the long-term dictatorships of Cuba, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic during the twentieth century” (*ibid*). For Puerto Ricans, then, U.S. colonialism, what Grosfoguel calls “modern coloniality,” has been quite beneficial.

Grosfoguel’s claim that Puerto Ricans are “privileged” economically and politically is motivated by his desire to criticize, “Puerto Rican nationalist discourses [that] portray the ‘Puerto Rican masses’ as ‘colonized,’ ‘docile,’ and ‘ignorant’ because of their consistent rejection of ‘independence’ for the island and the ‘ambiguity’ of their political and identification strategies” (9). For him, Puerto Ricans on the island are aware that they are economically and politically “privileged” as a “modern colony” and that, “‘Independence and ‘sovereignty’ in the Caribbean periphery are a fictional narrative” (8). As such, Puerto Ricans have resorted to political action by “deploying” a “‘subversive complicity’ or ‘ambiguous’ identification strategies ... to struggle against the ‘coloniality of power’ of both American elites and local ‘*blanquito*’ elites” (*ibid*, emphasis his). By “subversive complicity,” Grosfoguel is referring to Puerto Ricans “go[ing] to the federal court to overrule the decision[s]” taken in domestic courts and when “federal decisions are

challenged in local courts” (*ibid*). By arguing the foregoing, Grosfoguel is able to accept that the U.S. invaded Puerto Rico, occupied it, made it a colonial territory after defeating Spain in the war of 1898, and governs it through a colonial administration without negating the political agency of Puerto Ricans.<sup>3</sup>

Grosfoguel’s project—the defense of Puerto Ricans as political agents—is valid, but it requires that he erase the historical specificity of the nation-states he labels as “neocolonial.” As previously mentioned, Grosfoguel’s desire to defend Puerto Rican acquiescence to U.S. colonial rule leads him to claim that all of the independent republics in the Caribbean are ruled by clientelistic or *caudillista* governments, thereby, rendering the current and previous governments of the Caribbean nation-states as interchangeable. According to his logic, it is possible to equate the Castrista government with the Trujillo dictatorship in the Dominican Republic and Duvalier’s in Haiti. I argue that such a claim is misleading because it erases the considerable political agency that Cubans have exercised in the governing of their state; and, equally important, it erases the role that the revolutionary Cuban government has played in regional and world politics since 1959 to the present, one that has directly challenged U.S. imperial policies. In fact, no other country in the Caribbean or Latin America has had such an impact on the development of revolutionary social movements in the hemisphere or the liberation of colonized peoples from their

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<sup>3</sup> Grosfoguel’s attempt to demonstrate that Puerto Ricans “resist” what he labels the “modern coloniality” by employing a “subversive complicity” is unconvincing. If Puerto Ricans are “subversive” because they appeal court decisions, then all U.S. citizens are also subversive when they appeal court decisions that harm their interests. While Grosfoguel’s defense of Puerto Ricans is laudable, it only amounts to the following: Puerto Ricans are rational.

European colonial masters in countries such as, Angola.<sup>4</sup> Grosfoguel's claim that Cuba simply follows the "*caudillista* political traditions ... of small Caribbean islands" (68) is, at best, reductive, at worst, misleading. In order to better explain why Grosfoguel renders such diverse governments and histories as interchangeable, it is necessary to analyze how coloniality theory's dependence on world system level analysis leads to such erasures.

### **World System Theory or Modes of Production**

In this section, I will demonstrate that Grosfoguel's "modern/colonial/capitalist world-system" conceptual apparatus does not recognize non-capitalist modes of production such as, feudalism. For example, aiming to criticize the racism that underlay the claims made by U.S., European, and Latin American Creole elites at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Grosfoguel states that, "Several centuries ago, European elites established a discursive opposition between their status as 'advanced, civilized and modern' and the periphery's 'backwardness, obscurantism and feudalism'" (2003, 12). He concludes that, "The subsequent nineteenth-century characterization of the periphery as 'feudal' or in a backward 'stage' by Western elites and Latin American Creole elites of European descent served to justify the periphery's subordination to the masters from the North and is what I call 'feudalmania'" (*ibid*). Though he is correct in claiming that such a discourse was utilized to justify the subordination of the periphery, it does not mean that quasi-feudal relations of production did not exist in parts of Latin America. Grosfoguel's position, as well intentioned as it may be, leads

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<sup>4</sup> To be clear, I am not idealizing the revolutionary Cuban government as somehow incapable of committing political abuses.

further to an erasure of the multiple modes of production and thus to an incomplete understanding of the world we live in. In order to demonstrate that Grosfoguel's world system analysis leads to an erasure of the feudal mode of production, I will analyze the 1960s debate<sup>5</sup> between André Gunder Frank and Rodolfo Puiggrós regarding whether to classify the Latin American countries feudal or capitalist.<sup>6</sup>

André Gunder Frank interpreted the Spanish Conquest as the simultaneous creation of a capitalist world system and the incorporation of Latin America into that system while Rodolfo Puiggrós interpreted it as the imposition of a feudal system upon the existent social structures in the Americas. These scholars, as is to be expected, also differed in their approach to analyzing the Latin American economies. As he makes clear in his article creatively titled, “¿Con qué modos de producción convierte la gallina maíz en huevos de oro?” (1973), Frank believes that, “El enfoque preciso para solucionar la problemática latinoamericana *tiene que partir del sistema mundial que la crea y salir de la auto-impuesta ilusión óptica y mental del marco iberoamericano o nacional*” (68, emphasis mine). In refuting Frank, Puiggrós asserts that, “Pero lo que se discute es el modo de producción de Iberoamérica y no el ‘sistema mundial’ que se aprovechaba de ese modo de producción” (90). It is safe to say that between these two conceptualizations of the Latin American economy,

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<sup>5</sup> At the time, the debate was particularly important, because many political parties on the Left formulated their political agenda according to their understanding of their respective country's economic system. As such, these parties were invested in knowing whether their economies were feudal, in which case they would support bourgeois-democratic revolutions, or capitalist, in which case they would promote socialist revolutions.

<sup>6</sup> The critical essays written by the authors are compiled in the book titled, *América Latina: ¿feudalismo o capitalismo?* (1973), and published by Editorial la Oveja Negra.

capitalist or feudal, and how to study them, as a world-system or as modes of production, the former has been the most dominant and the one that Grosfoguel bases his claims on.

The strength of Frank's arguments lies in part on his valid critique of the dualist thesis promoted by many of the Latin American communist parties in the 1960s. In this theory, it was argued that Latin America had a dual society: one in which a "capitalismo desarrollado" predominated in one region, and a "feudal o semifeudal" in another (1973, 12). According to many of the proponents of this theory, the two economic regions could be analyzed in isolation from the rest of the world and many times in isolation from each other. Frank, on the contrary, argued that, "Las sociedades latinoamericanas resultaron de la expansión mundial del mercantilismo 'occidental', del capitalismo y del imperialismo" (14). As such, he concludes that, "Es característico que tal expansión haya tomado en todas partes la forma de un desarrollo dialéctico simultáneo e interrelacionado cuyas manifestaciones, cada una de ellas causa y a la vez es efecto de la otra, se conocen hoy bajo los nombres de desarrollo económico y subdesarrollo económico" (*ibid*). In Frank's conception of Latin American societies, it makes no sense to speak of dual economic sectors, because such a claim fails to take into consideration their dialectical interrelationship, one crucial to the development of a "sistema capitalista único" (15). The Latin American Communist Parties were not alone in promoting a dualist thesis; supranational institutions also promoted a version of said theory, which Frank also criticizes.

In the post-WWII period, the U.S. and the European powers officially adopted the discourse of development and proclaimed that they would promote the economic “development” of countries in the Third World. The formation of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB), and the United Nations (UN), it was argued, would create avenues of “development” for these countries. Frank criticized this position by convincingly arguing that the, “subdesarrollo contemporáneo es en gran medida el producto de las relaciones económicas entre otras, pasadas y actuales, entre los países subdesarrollados satélites y los países metropolitanos ahora desarrollados” (1973, 33). By showing that the general underdevelopment of Third World countries and acute underdevelopment of regions within those countries was dialectically related to the development of the metropolitan areas, Frank proved that the development of a periphery Third World country, as promoted by the ideologues of Europe and the U.S., was nonsense.

As Ernesto Laclau argued in, “Feudalism and Capitalism in Latin America” (1971), Frank was correct in criticizing the dualist theories espoused by the Latin American communist parties and the U.S. and European controlled supranational institutions. The “dualist theory,” Laclau points out, “was initially formulated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by liberal elites which integrated their countries into the world market as primary producers” (21). It was they that “use[d] every means to discredit the reaction of those interior regions whose relatively diversified economies disintegrated under the impact of competition from European commodities” (*ibid*). As such, leading “liberal spokesman created a mythology according to which everything colonial was identified with stagnation and all things European with progress” (*ibid*). The most



famous of these spokesmen was of course, Domingo F. Sarmiento,<sup>7</sup> whose “civilización y barbarie” dichotomy was instrumental in legitimizing not only Julio Argentino Roca’s military eradication of the indigenous communities of the Patagonia but also the similar policies of other Liberal governments of the period. Seeking to legitimize the economic and political control of peoples in the interior of their respective countries, Liberal elites like Sarmiento had strong economic and political reasons to identify everything colonial with “backwardness,” “stagnation,” and “immutability.” Notwithstanding the validity of Frank’s criticism of the dualist discourse, the “feudalmania” Grosfoguel refers to, it does not mean that feudal relations of production were non-existent in Latin America at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As Laclau demonstrates, Frank and Immanuel Wallerstein, perhaps the most important World-System theorists, define capitalism so broadly that it is rendered interchangeable with other modes of production.

In his celebrated article, “The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System: Concepts for Comparative Analysis” (1972), Wallerstein unequivocally states that, “the only kind of social system is a world-system, which we define quite simply as a unit with a single division of labor and multiple cultural systems” (*ibid*).

According to Frank, this world-system is characterized by a metropole-satellite structure (1971, 41) in which the satellites, “sirven como un instrumento para chupar capital o superávit económico de sus propios satélites y canalizar parte de este superávit para la metrópoli mundial de la cual todos son satélites” (36). The role of

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<sup>7</sup> The anti-Castro scholar, Roberto González Echevarría, makes an interesting and perhaps factual claim when he states, “To criticize Sarmiento is easy, even facile, but it is impossible to ignore him” (2003, 1).

the national metropolis within this system is to, “imponer y mantener la estructura monopolística y la relación explotadora de este sistema” (37). As claimed by Frank and Wallerstein, this “modern world-economy” emerged “in sixteenth-century Europe” when “the full development and economic predominance of market trade” took place (75). Such a framework leads them to conclude that Latin America has always been a capitalist region.

As the foregoing citations from Frank and Wallerstein make clear, they privilege “market trade” at a global level as one of the defining characteristics of capitalism. In fact, Frank clearly states that the, “latifundio ... nació típicamente como una empresa commercial que creó para sí misma las instituciones que le permitieron responder a la crecida demanda en el mercado nacional o mundial aumentando la cantidad de sus tierras, capital y trabajo” (1971, 48). Because Frank is only interested in the “latifundio” as an “empresa commercial,” he does not take into consideration, “si ahora aparece como una plantación o una hacienda” (*ibid*). Wallerstein is even more emphatic in declaring that, “the so-called persistence of feudal forms” is a “pseudo-problem ... created by the trap of not analyzing totalities” (1972, 76). Feudal relations of production, then, do not exist on the “latifundio,” because the commodities produced on it are taken to market. It is precisely this erasure of modes of production that Laclau criticizes in the aforementioned article, “Feudalism and Capitalism in Latin America.”

Laclau’s intervention in the feudalism or capitalism debate is important, because he demonstrates that Frank and Wallerstein’s definition of capitalism renders it interchangeable with other modes of production. Frank, for example, states that,

“Capitalism’s essential internal contradiction between the exploiting and the exploited appears within nations no less than between them” (qtd in “Feudalism and Capitalism in Latin America,” 22). As Laclau points out, Frank’s characterization “does not take us very far”: “every class society has been characterized by the contradiction between exploiters and exploited” (*ibid*). Such a contradiction is not unique to capitalism. Moreover, it simply erases “the specificity of the exploitative relationship in question” (*ibid*). If capitalism is defined in this way, it is necessary to “include the slave on a Roman *latifundium* or the gleb serf of the European middle ages” (23) as living in a capitalist society, since they were definitely in an exploitative relationship.

Laclau, however, provides a definition of capitalism that distinguishes it as a mode of production: “The fundamental economic relationship of capitalism is constituted by the free labourer’s sale of his labour-power, whose necessary precondition is the loss by the direct producer of ownership of the means of production” (*ibid*). Feudalism, on the other hand, he defines as, “a general ensemble of extra-economic coercions weighing on the peasantry, absorbing a good part of its economic surplus, and thereby retarding the process of internal differentiation within the rural classes, and therefore the expansion of agrarian capitalism” (28). Parting from the foregoing, it is clear that the contradiction between exploited and exploited, plus production for market exchange, as claimed by Frank, Wallerstein, and their adherents, cannot be the defining characteristics of capitalism. To begin with, market exchange can take place without the existence of a capitalist mode of production: “For Marx, the accumulation of commercial capital is perfectly compatible with the most

varied modes of production and does not by any means presuppose the existence of a capitalist mode of production” (23-24); and, secondly, the exploitative relationship has to involve free-labor. Based on these definitions of capitalism and feudalism, it is clear that feudal relations of production and capitalist relations of production can exist within a single country without entailing dualism.

Laclau demonstrates that capitalist relations of production are compatible with feudal relations of production, and that the intensification of the former leads to an intensification of the latter, such as was the case in Guatemala at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Latin American communist parties were correct to claim that feudal relations of production existed in Latin America. They erred, however, in their claim that those feudal relations of production were unrelated to the capitalist ones existent in the national and European metropolises. While correct in criticizing this dualism, Frank, Wallerstein, and their followers such as, Grosfoguel, go to the other extreme and claim that feudal relations of production are simply non-existent, because throughout the world there is a general conflict between exploiters and exploited and all satellite areas participate in market exchange. In criticizing both extremes, Laclau claims that, “The feudal regime of the haciendas tended to increase its servile exactions on the peasantry as the growing demands of the world market stimulated maximization of their surplus” (30). It is the dialectical relationship between the two modes of production that leads to this intensification; thus he concludes that, “far from expansion of the external market acting as a disintegrating force of feudalism, its effect was rather to accentuate and consolidate it” (*ibid*). However, “There is no need whatever to draw dualist perspectives from this position, because we have already

seen that the basis of the modern, expanding sector was provided by increased servile exploitation in the backward sector” (32). As Grosfoguel’s scholarship demonstrates, Laclau’s analysis is not widely utilized; to the contrary, it is the Fank/Wallerstein model that has become dominant, one that leads to an erasure of a feudal mode of production and negation of the nation-state as a unit of analysis.

It is now possible to understand Grosfoguel’s claim that all non-European countries are either “modern colonies” (Puerto Rico) or “colonies” (Cuba, Guatemala, and the other countries): if there is only one mode of production in the entire world, the “modern colonies” and the “colonies” experience that same mode of production, a capitalist one. As it will be remembered, for Grosfoguel, the differences between the two colonial formations are the following: the citizens of a “modern colony” have “access to metropolitan citizenship and welfare transfers” while those of a “colony” “experience the crude exploitation of the capitalist world-system” without receiving those benefits (*ibid*). To reiterate, as modern-colonized-subjects, Puerto Ricans have political agency and receive welfare transfers; as non-modern-colonial subjects, Cubans, Guatemalans, and others exercise no political agency and receive no transfers. Grosfoguel’s claims leave no option for political agency by citizens in countries he labels “colonies” or for their governments in regional and world politics. It is no surprise then that Grosfoguel specifically rejects “the nation-state as the unit of analysis” (5), because “Global problems of exploitation and domination cannot have a colonial or a nation-state-level solution” (11). If no nation-state or regional solution is possible, what does Grosfoguel propose as a solution to “global coloniality”? The solution, he claims, is “for us ... to create global mechanisms to redistribute wealth

from the North to the South” (*ibid*). While it is tempting to interpret such a claim as a joke, Grosfoguel is making a serious claim.

Grosfoguel’s claim that the solution to “global coloniality” is to “create global mechanisms to redistribute wealth from the North to the South” is not only not convincing but also irrational. To put it differently, “global mechanisms to redistribute wealth”—and it is here difficult to understand how Grosfoguel could not comprehend this—are not possible within the parameters of the “global coloniality” he has described. Why would the U.S. and Europe create supranational organizations to redistribute wealth to their “colonies”? What, then, would be the role of the IMF and WB? Do not these institutions function specifically to exploit those “colonies”? The U.S. and European countries would have no interest in creating such “global mechanisms,” because they would contradict the role of the IMF and WB as “disciplinary agencies of peripheral countries in the capitalist world-economy” (5). Good intentions aside, Grosfoguel erases the possibility that countries such as Cuba, Guatemala, and others may make progressive changes in their political institutions and economical spheres.<sup>8</sup> Instead, he invests academics, such as himself, with the power to create “global mechanisms to redistribute wealth.” Contrary to Grosfoguel, I argue that the national imagined community, the state, and the modes of production are not obsolete objects of analysis, either in the 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, or 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. In order to demonstrate the validity in analyzing these objects, I now turn to analyzing the formation of the Creole imagined community and the Ladino imagined one.

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<sup>8</sup> It is difficult to understand how Grosfoguel is able to discount the geo-political changes currently taking place in countries such as, Brazil.

## The Formation of the Guatemalan Creole Imaginary

In *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origen and Spread of Nationalism* (2006) Benedict Anderson defines a nation as follows: “it is an imagined political community – and imagined as inherently limited and sovereign” (6). They are “imagined as *limited* because even the largest of them ... has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations” (7) and “as *sovereign* because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realms” (*ibid*). Anderson constructs the foregoing definition in part through his analysis of the independence movements in North and South America that took place from the 1770s to the 1830s. While he acknowledges that “Liberalism and the Enlightenment clearly had a powerful impact [on the desire for independence on the part of the Creoles], above all in providing an arsenal of ideological criticisms of imperial and *anciens régimes*,” he concludes that “pilgrim Creole functionaries and provincial printmen played the decisive historic role” in “provid[ing] the framework of a new consciousness” (65). Numerous scholars have limited, expanded, or in other ways rearticulated the definition provided by Anderson; but, for the purposes of an analysis of the Ladino imagined community, his definition and claims regarding the Spanish American Creole elites provides an excellent starting point.

Anderson, as already mentioned, argues that “pilgrim creole functionaries and provincial printmen” played a fundamental role in the development of a Spanish American Creole national consciousness. Though the Creoles shared with the Spaniards a common language, religion, ancestry, and disdain for the indigenous,

African, and mestizo masses, they nonetheless “developed ... conceptions of their nation-ness” (50) in opposition to Spain before such consciousness developed in Europe. In order to explain the “riddle,” the term he uses to denote the early formation of national consciousness in Spanish America, Anderson turns to an analysis of the Spanish monarchy’s sharp distinction between the Creoles, men and women born in the American colonies but of Spanish stock, and Peninsulars, Spaniards born in the Iberian Peninsula, and their respective roles in the governing of the colonies.

The Spanish monarchy, argues Anderson, created a parallel governing body in the American colonies, one in which the Peninsular “absolutist functionaries” (55) managed the powerful *audiencia* administration, one concerned with the macro-economy and macro-politics affecting the viceroyalties, while the Creole functionaries were relegated to the *ayuntamiento*, an administration with limited functions and subservient to the *audiencia*.<sup>9</sup> Such a system created an efficient governing body for the Spanish monarchy, because the “absolutist functionaries” were extremely loyal. They were so because unlike the feudal functionary who only rose in rank upon “his father’s death,” they depended upon their “talent” and administrative capability. Moreover, regardless of whether he “was a grandee in his Andalusian home,” the Peninsular functionary “was effectively a *homo novis* fully dependent on his metropolitan masters” in the American colonies (59). The Creole functionaries, on the other hand, found their “vertical ascent” and “lateral movement” (57) barred, because

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<sup>9</sup> Anderson does not use the terms *audiencia* or *ayuntamiento*, but it is those two institutions to which he refers.



they were specifically excluded from the *audiencia* administration, from attaining any political post in Spain, and from serving in an *ayuntamiento* other than their own.<sup>10</sup>

These limits, argues Anderson, created in the Creoles a sense of “the shared fatality of trans-Atlantic birth” (*ibid*). Regardless of his talent or administrative capability, the Creole was “consigned ... to subordination” because of “the accident of birth in the Americas” (58). The reason was that, “From the sovereign’s angle of vision, the American creoles, with their ever-growing numbers and increasing local rootedness with each succeeding generation, presented a historically unique problem” (*ibid*) in that they were “crucial to the sovereign’s power but also a menace to it” (59). Though Anderson is not a Latin American specialist, he correctly identifies the conflict between the Creoles and Spanish monarchy as a critical factor in the formation of Creole imagined community. His analysis, however, is quite general. In order to explain how the Creoles imagined their political community upon independence and thereafter, I will analyze the Creole-peninsular conflict as it developed in Guatemala.

Severo Martínez Peláez’s foundational text, *La patria del criollo: ensayo de interpretación de la realidad colonial guatemalteca* (1970), as the title suggests, is an in depth analysis of the formation of the *patria del criollo* in Guatemala.<sup>11</sup> Besides utilizing documents from the Archivo General de las Indias, Peláez also utilizes

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<sup>10</sup> For example, a Creole administrator in the Viceroyalty of New Spain could not transfer to the Viceroyalty of New Granada.

<sup>11</sup> Peláez is at times reductive in his analysis. For example, he states that, “Eso [conocimientos y habilidades] determinaba, naturalmente, que el labriego conquistador tuviera un desarrollo intelectual superior al del sacerdote o sabio indígena americano” (28). However, Carlos Guzmán Böckler, the Guatemalan sociologist, and other academics have already criticized many of those mistakes. I will therefore not comment on those errors.

Francisco Antonio de Fuentes y Guzmán's, *Recordación Florida, discurso historial, natural, material, militar y político del Reino de Goathemala* (1691), one of the most important chronicles written during the colonial period. On the basis of his analysis of these texts, Peláez argues that the Creole-peninsular conflict was rooted in the Conquest itself, because, "El sistema de colonizar concediendo privilegios ... creó inmediatamente ... una contradicción fundamental entre los intereses de los colonizadores y los de la corona" (1970, 36-37). In return for their services to the Spanish crown, the *conquistadores* received "la concesión de tierras y al dominio sobre los indios para obligarlos a trabajarlas" (36). It is these concessions that allowed the monarchy to promote conquest and colonization; but, at the same time, they allowed the Creoles to establish exclusive control over the subjugated indigenous peoples and become politically powerful and economically wealthy. In order to curb their political power and appropriate their source of wealth, the monarchy emitted the *Leyes Nuevas* in 1542, which legally outlawed indigenous slavery and radically altered the *repartimiento* and *encomienda*, institutions that suffered minor change thereafter. In order to better understand the Creole/monarchy conflict, it is necessary to analyze the restructuring of these two institutions.

As Peláez argues, the *repartimiento/encomienda* established by Cristóbal Colón and the Conquistadors effectively reduced the newly subjugated indigenous peoples into slaves, either through extra-legal or legal means.<sup>12</sup> The *repartimiento*,

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<sup>12</sup> Legal slavery was sanctioned by the Spanish monarchy. The infamous *Requerimiento*, written by Palacio Rubios, functioned precisely to legally enslave all those indigenous peoples who did not accept Christianity, declare themselves vassals

during this early conquest period, meant that the Conquistadors received both land and the Indians to work on that land as recompense for their actions on the monarchy's behalf; but, because it was argued that, "los indígenas eran entregados para que el favorecido velase por su cristianización" (62), the Indians were said to be *encomendados*. Based on the foregoing, Peláez comes to the conclusion that, "de allí que repartir indios y encomendarlos fuese, en esa primera etapa, una y la misma cosa" (*ibid*). "La encomienda primitiva era en realidad un pretexto para repartirse los indios y explotarlos, y como ninguna instancia superior controlaba lo que se hacía con ellos, vinieron a estar, de hecho, esclavizados" (62-63). Its extra-legality notwithstanding, "esclavitud virtual" became the dominant social condition the majority of indigenous people were reduced to during this period. While such an arrangement had functioned to promote the Conquest, the Spanish monarchy realized early on that, "Al darle a los colonos un excesivo dominio sobre las fuentes de riqueza los hacía demasiado poderosos también en lo político" (68). To wit, "La total dependencia en que caían los indios bajo sus amos implacables, privaba a la corona de toda posibilidad de explotarlos a su vez (*ibid*). It is in response to this situation that the Spanish Monarchy emitted the *Leyes Nuevas*.

In emitting the *Leyes Nuevas*, the Spanish monarchy effectively reformulated the *repartimiento/encomienda* into institutions that served its economic and political interests. Emitted in 1542, the *Leyes Nuevas* established that all Indians "eran vasallos

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of the Spanish monarchy, turn over their land, and do the bidding of the monarchy and/or papacy (63-64).

libres, tributarios del rey” (73).<sup>13</sup> Because they outlawed slavery on pain of death (*ibid*), the Creoles were to be compensated by an *encomienda* now rearticulated as, “una concesión, librada por el rey a favor de un español con méritos de conquista y colonización, consistente en percibir los tributos de un conglomerado indígena, tasados por la Audiencia y recaudados por los Corregidores o sus dependientes” (93). The Creoles, then, no longer enjoyed, “un dominio directo sobre los indios, sino solamente el derecho a recibir de ellos una tributación tasada por la autoridad real” (73). Given that they no longer were slaves, the Indians were now *repartidos* to “trabajar por temporadas en las haciendas” (95) of the Creoles but allowed to return with “estricta regularidad a sus pueblos para trabajar en su propio sustento y en la producción de tributos” (*ibid*). Though the Creoles were still to be compensated by indigenous tribute and labor-power, their protests and rebellions make it clear that the rearticulation of the *encomienda* and *repartimiento* was a blow to their economic and

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<sup>13</sup> Peláez provides an analysis that complicates the dominant academic representation of Bartolomé de las Casas as “la conciencia de España,” one based on his defense of the Indians (69). As he aptly points out, “Hombres sensibles, benévolos y humanitarios [as Las Casas], los ha habido siempre y en todas partes” (70). However, “la benevolencia, en ciertas circunstancias históricas, puede hacer del individuo un peligroso agitador a quien los reyes mandan a callar; en otras circunstancias puede ser oportuna y útil a una determinada clase o fuerza social poderosa, y entonces es camino de triunfo” (*ibid*). Given that the religious Order of Santo Domingo was “la que se hallaba más vinculada al trono de España y más identificada con los intereses de la corona” (69), Peláez concludes that, “La defensa que los dominicos hacían de los indios era, en el fondo, la defensa de los intereses de la monarquía enfrentada a la voracidad de conquistadores y colonos” (*ibid*). While I do not think it possible to reduce Las Casas’s defense of the Indians to the economic interests of the Spanish monarchy, Peláez is correct in arguing that the monarchy’s acceptance of his arguments was in great part motivated by its economic and political interests in the colonies.

political power.<sup>14</sup> For Peláez, the *Leyes Nuevas* represented “un arreglo conciliatorio que ponía a los indios como tributarios bajo el control del rey, y que satisfacía, al mismo tiempo, la tendencia parasitaria del núcleo más conspicuo de conquistadores y primeros pobladores” (94). I now turn to an analysis of how the Creoles managed to circumscribe the *Leyes Nuevas*, because it will allow me to not only delineate their economic interests, but also, how in justifying those interests, they came to form an idea of their *particularity* as a political community.

In direct response and violation of the *Leyes Nuevas*, the Creoles constructed themselves as a social class entitled to receive the economic privileges of their forebears, the Conquistadors. As such, the Conquest became the most salient event in their history, one they deployed to promote their economic and political interests. An excellent example of their mobilization as a class by specifically drawing on their lineage is their circumvention of an important stipulation of the *Leyes Nuevas*: it was illegal to inherit the *encomienda*. As Peláez demonstrates, “las Leyes ofrecían el goce de algunos tributos a los conquistadores y colonos, y a sus viudas e hijos existentes en aquel momento,” but they clearly stated “que dicho privilegio no sería hereditario” (88). In fact, the laws stipulated that, “conforme fuesen muriendo los beneficiados, la tributación volvería a destinarse a las cajas reales, tal como ocurría con el resto de los pueblos” (88). The Creoles, however, argued that in subjugating the indigenous peoples the Conquistadors had provided the Spanish monarchy a *perpetual* economic benefit. As such, they reasoned that as direct descendents of the Conquistadors they

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<sup>14</sup> It should be remembered that Pedro de Gasca had to put down the rebellions of the Pizarros in Perú and Contreras in Nicaragua.

*too* were entitled to receive the economic benefits in *perpetuity*. The Creoles, then, began to imagine their *particularity* as a benefit and not, as argued by the Spanish monarchy and its functionaries, a liability. Such an *imagining* was reinforced in the mind of the Creole, because the Spanish monarchy did grudgingly acquiesce and allow the Creoles to inherit the *encomiendas*.<sup>15</sup> In order to analyze how the Guatemalan Creoles represented their particularity as a benefit, I now turn to an analysis of Fuente y Guzmán's *Recordación Florida*.<sup>16</sup>

In writing the *Recordación Florida* Fuentes y Guzmán creates for the Guatemalan Creole a particular patrimony, one composed of the pre-Hispanic indigenous kingdoms of Guatemala and of the Conquistadors that conquered them. For Fuentes y Guzmán, the indigenous kingdoms (Quiché, Cakchiquel, and Zutuhil) and the Conquistadors of those kingdoms (Pedro de Alvarado and his men-at-arms) are his particular legacy as a Guatemalan Creole. It is therefore not surprising that he should dedicate a whole Book to narrating the history of the pre-Hispanic indigenous kingdoms, because in the process he is appropriating their history as his *own*. By aggrandizing those kingdoms, he aggrandizes his own particularity. In the same fashion that he insists on the particularity of the Quiché, Cakchiquel, and Zutuhil Kingdoms, he will insist in distinguishing and aggrandizing their conquerors. Pedro de Alvarado and his men-at-arms will become in his narration equal to the greatest

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<sup>15</sup> The Creoles had to petition the *audiencia* for a “dismimulación” or “composición” in which in exchange for a lump sum of money the *encomienda* was extended to the descendent of a Creole Conquistador. See Section II of Chapter III in *La patria del criollo*.

<sup>16</sup> Peláez draws on the *Recordación Florida* make his economic claims, but he does not dedicate a lot of pages to an analysis of the representations in the text.

Spanish soldiers who had fought either in the Indies or in Europe. The pre-Hispanic indigenous kingdoms and their conquerors are in the *Recordación Florida* the two elements that Fuentes y Guzmán will utilize to advance his economic and political goals, ones not in sync with those of the Spanish monarchy.

In order to situate Fuentes y Guzmán and the *Recordación Florida*, it is important to note that his great-great-grandfather, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, wrote the *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España* (2000) in order to correct those authors who did not participate in the Conquest, observe it first-hand, nor received a truthful and accurate account of it, but nonetheless wrote on it and thus distorted it. In fact, Díaz del Castillo explicitly states that his account is based on, “lo que vi y me hallé en ello peleando, como buen testigo de vista lo escribiré ... sin torcer a una parte ni a otra” (Díaz del Castillo, 2000, xxxv). The *Historia verdadera*, then, is his “respuesta de lo que han dicho, y escrito, personas que no lo alcanzaron a saber, ni lo vieron” (1). As Fuentes y Guzmán will later accuse his own contemporaries, Díaz del Castillo accuses his contemporary Peninsular writers, such as Francisco López de Gómara, of not having “noticia verdadera de lo que sobre esta material [la Conquista] propusieron” (*ibid*). For him, these authors “oscurece[n] ... nuestros muchos y notables servicios” (*ibid*); and, as if the foregoing were not enough, these “malos detractores” “no querrían ... que fuésemos antepuestos y recompensados como Su Majestad lo ha mandado a sus virreyes, presidentes y gobernadores” (*ibid*). By writing the *Historia verdadera*, Díaz del Castillo aimed to, “sublimar los heroicos hechos y hazañas que hicimos cuando ganamos la Nueva España y sus provincias” (*ibid*). His project, then, is best captured by the Spanish verb, *esclarecer*, because he

aims to not only set the record straight on the Conquest but to ennoble and bring fame to the Conquistadors who participated in that endeavor. Over a hundred years later, Fuentes y Guzmán will be motivated to write the *Recordación Florida* in order to correct Friar Alonso Remón's edited version of Díaz del Castillo's *Historia verdadera*. However, as the following will demonstrate, he is equally motivated by the desire to represent the "grandeur" of the pre-Hispanic indigenous kingdoms of Guatemala and their "glorious" Conquest.

Fuentes y Guzmán is motivated to write the *Recordación Florida* in part by the resentment he feels at the lack of chronicles dedicated to the "admirable ... Reino de Goathemala" (11). The chroniclers, he argues, "han pasado como por la posta en las cosas de este admirable Reino, gastando muy poco tiempo y muy pocos renglones en describirlo" (13). As proof he cites and comments on his great-great-grandfather's manuscript: "«Y la gran misericordia de Dios Nuestro Señor, ... que fué servido que ganásemos la Nueva España, y la muy nombrada y gran ciudad de Tenuztitlan Mexico, que así se nombra, y otras muchas ciudades y *provincias que por ser tantas aquí no declaro sus nombres,*» etc." (14, emphasis his). As the great-great-grandson of Díaz del Castillo, Fuentes y Guzmán must have interpreted the reduction of Gumaarkaj or Xelajú, two important cities of the Quiché, to mere "provincias" as a terrible slight. He makes this explicit when he states, "como parece, que se dejó de decir mucho y lo más maravilloso del aspecto material de las poblaciones de los indios" (*ibid*), and concludes that, "habrá mucho que escribir de este y otros asuntos, en lo que hoy vemos, de lo antiguo y lo moderno de este ilustre Reino de Goathemala; que no fué menos admirable y grande, que fueron excelentes los de Mexico y Lima, de



quienes con tanta razón hay tanto y tan notable maravilloso escrito” (*ibid*). In other words, for Fuentes y Guzmán, the “antigua” and “moderna” Guatemala of the Quiché, Cakchiquel, and Zutuhil deserve the most extensive chronicles. The *Recordación Florida*, as a whole, is meant to be precisely that grand chronicle of the *Reino de Goathemala*; and, because his intended reader is a Peninsular, he establishes an authorial credibility based on his Creoleness.

In the *Recordación Florida*, Fuentes y Guzmán establishes a Creole authoritative voice based in part on his direct lineage to Bernal Díaz del Castillo, his possession of the original manuscript of the *Historia verdadera*, and his diligent study of that manuscript. In the introduction, he writes:

Habiéndome aplicado en mi juvenil edad á leer, no sólo con curiosidad sino con afición, veneración y cariño, el original borrador de el heroico y valeroso capitán Bernal Díaz de el Castillo, mi rebisabuelo, cuya ancianidad manuscrita conservamos sus descendientes con aprecio de memoria estimable, y llegado á esta ciudad de Goathemala, por el año de 1675, el libro impreso que sacó á luz el reverendo padre maestro Fr. Alonso Remón ... hallo que lo impreso no conviene en muchas partes con el venerable amanuense suyo, porque en unas partes tiene de más, y en otras de menos de lo que escribió el autor mi bisabuelo, como lo reconozco adulterado en los capítulos 164 y 171, y así en otras partes del progreso de la historia.... (12)

As this passage demonstrates, Fuentes y Guzmán takes every opportunity to remind the reader that he is the direct descendent of Díaz del Castillo. That he should do so is no surprise. Not only did Díaz del Castillo participate in the Conquest of New Spain, but his *Historia verdadera*, notwithstanding the alterations made by Friar Remón, had by the late 17<sup>th</sup> century become a popular and well-read chronicle of the Conquest. For Fuentes y Guzmán, the book’s popularity, it may be surmised, made the alterations even more egregious because it meant that an incomplete account was

being popularized. Moreover, the author of the *Recordación Florida* is clear to point out that his family is in possession of “el original borrador.” Given the foregoing, coupled with his laborious study of the manuscript, Fuentes y Guzmán is sure that any reader will acknowledge him as an authority on the *Historia verdadera*. However, he does not rely solely on his Conquistador lineage, as prestigious as it may be, or his possession and intimate knowledge of the *Historia verdadera*: he also draws on Creole knowledge of the Conquest, one that has been accumulated in the nearly two hundred years of colonial rule. To be clear, Fuentes y Guzmán is not simply repeating what Díaz del Castillo already wrote: he is providing a late 17<sup>th</sup> century Creole critical perspective, one specific to Guatemala.

Fuentes y Guzmán, in constructing his Creole authoritative voice, also draws on his specialized knowledge of the documents pertaining to the Reino de Goathemala. As the “magistrado pretorio” and with “muchísima aplicación á papeles antigüedades” (12), he decides to “pedir los papeles de el archivo para concertarlos” (*ibid*). Not only does he discover “tres libros más, de venerables y preciosos privilegios” (*ibid*), but he creates “con los demás papeles, un abecedario curioso y fácil para hallar por él lo que se necesita de el archivo: y después ... escribí el Norte Político, que señala la forma de todos los actos públicos y privados de mi cabildo” (*ibid*). As a “pilgrim creole functionary,” to borrow Anderson’s term, Fuentes y Guzmán utilizes his position to not only analyze government records but to order them in a particular meaningful fashion, one specific to him as a Creole: “y con este continuado manejo de papeles, hallé en ellos cosas muy dignas de la memoria y de la fama, que escondieron á los autores antiguos” (13). The particular meaning created by

Fuentes y Guzmán can be best understood by analyzing his representation of the pre-Hispanic kingdoms and their conquest by the Spanish.

In Chapter II of Book III, titled “En que se prueba que este reino de Goathemala no estuvo jamás sujeto al imperio Mexicano, y que siempre fué reino aparte y separado del de Mexico,” Fuentes y Guzmán distinguishes the Guatemalan kingdoms from the Mexica Empire in order to construct an indigenous patrimony specific to Guatemalan Creoles. While dedicating a complete chapter to prove the independence of the kingdoms of Guatemala seems excessive, it is motivated by the erasure the Guatemalan kingdoms suffer in Díaz del Castillo’s *Historia verdadera*. It is for this reason that he painstakingly proves that the Mexica did not conquer the Guatemalan kingdoms either through a land invasion (73), an oceanic invasion (74), as evidenced by the fact that Nahuatl is a foreign language in Guatemala (71). In doing so, Fuentes y Guzmán is arguing for the specificity of the Guatemalan kingdoms, ones completely different to the Mexica, as his *own* patrimony.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Fuentes y Guzmán, in an effort to add to the particularity of his Indian patrimony, argues that 17<sup>th</sup> century Guatemalan Indians disparage the Mexican Indians. How else could one interpret the following quote:

á aquellos Mexicanos; que son tan aborrecidos, y repugnan á los indios de Goathemala, que jamás se mezclan con los pocos que de allí vienen á este Reino, porque los tienen por alevos y de fácil palabra, y teniéndolos por femeniles y delicados, y por muy dados al ocio y descanso, rehusan darles sus hijas en casamiento. (73)

The foregoing makes it clear that Fuentes y Guzmán’s emphasis on the particularity of the Guatemalan kingdoms is not simply an interest in the plurality of the pre-Hispanic indigenous kingdoms. His objective is to aggrandize the Guatemalan Indians by disparaging the Mexican ones. Aware that his reader, the Peninsular or Creole, will be more familiar with the Mexica Empire, Fuentes y Guzmán aims to represent indigenous Guatemalans not only as distinct but in opposition to the Mexica. It is for this reason that Fuentes y Guzmán dedicates the whole of Book I, comprised of five chapters, to a historical account of the pre-Hispanic Guatemalan indigenous kingdoms.

Invested in aggrandizing his own patrimony, Fuentes y Guzmán argues in Chapter IV of Book I that the kings of the pre-Hispanic Quiché, Cakchiquel, and Zutuhil Kingdoms ruled by establishing rational Laws.<sup>18</sup> Once again, it is not surprising that he should do so. For him, a sovereign king ruling through set laws was an example of the civilized life. The “leyes,” he argues, “son las murallas de los reinos” (39). Moreover, he states that, “No podemos dudar ... que los Tultecas, que les dieron principio [to the Quiché, Cakchiquel, and Zutuhil], eran de buena inteligencia ... y que pasando con la imaginativa á las cosas que tocan al entendimiento, ayudado éste de la experiencia, los haría muy cultos en materias de policía” (29). The long enumeration he provides of the many laws governing adultery, theft, rape, arson, and other crimes (30-32), then, are examples of their “policía.” Fuentes y Guzmán, then, represents the pre-Hispanic indigenous kingdoms of Guatemala as civilized in order to distinguish and aggrandize his *own* patrimony; and, while acknowledging the presence of *some* uncivilized indigenous peoples in Guatemala, he argues that their presence does not impinge the greatness of the civilized kingdoms.

In a startling passage, Fuentes y Guzmán argues that the presence of “savage” Indians outside the frontiers of the pre-Hispanic kingdoms does not diminish the civilization of the Quiché, Cakchiquel, and Zutuhil kingdoms, because “savagery” may not only exist on the frontiers but in the midst of great civilizations. As evidence, he cites the discovery of the “savage” Batuecos in contemporary 17<sup>th</sup> century Spain.

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<sup>18</sup> For the sake of brevity, I will not discuss Fuentes y Guzmán’s description of the founding of the kingdoms, nor the grandeur of their buildings and cities. If interested, see Book I, Chapters II and III.

That he should do so is astonishing. While it is possible to dismiss Fuentes y Guzmán's admission that "savage" Indians did exist in Guatemala as a rhetorical technique, one aimed at making his claim that civilized Indian kings ruled over civilized kingdoms more palatable to the Peninsular reader, who was probably convinced that Indians could not live in a civilized state, the explicit reference to the *Batuecos*, plus the tone he utilizes makes such an interpretation untenable. Given the importance of the quote, I cite at length:

Y aun es verdad, que hubo entre los de esta nación algunas generaciones muy incultas y de especie de salvajes, que habitaban en los lagos, montañas y partes cavernosas de las selvas y páramos incultos; siendo estos, por naturalz propensión suya á la caza y pesquerías, de que sin duda se sustentaban, y teniendo también ranchos aunque pequeños y pobres en sus *milpas*: de cuyo género de gentes no podrá decir España que no ha tenido algunos, pues los *Batuecos*, descubiertos en nuestros tiempos, no eran menos agrestes que estos de quienes hablamos. Pero aunque eran así algunos, especialmente en la costa, en las cabeceras, cortes, y pueblos no se hallaban ... (33)

For Fuentes y Guzman, living in nature, outside the legal jurisdiction of a kingdom, and consuming the animals and plants at hand characterizes "savagery." Yet he directly attributes those characteristics to the *Batuecos*, a people, as he claims, discovered in Spain during his own time. In doing so, he clearly implies that just as Spaniards are surely civilized, some of them still exist in a state of "savagery." As if that comparison were not radical enough, Fuentes y Guzmán's tone, I argue, is not only resolute but also confrontational. He directly states that Spain cannot deny that "savage" Spaniards inhabit the peninsula, thereby, affirming his Creole knowledge of Spain. To go further, in directly challenging the Peninsular claim that Spain was completely bereft of "savagery," Fuentes y Guzmán places the kingdoms of Guatemala on a par with Spain. It is clear that in writing the *Recordación Florida*, he

aimed to construct a history specific to the Reino de Goathemala, one not only distinguishable from the other administrative units but also equally “glorious.” Moreover, by representing the Guatemalan indigenous kingdoms as independent and civilized, Fuentes y Guzmán makes sure that their Conquistadors will be rendered as great conquerors.

In the *Recordación Florida*, Fuentes y Guzmán recounts the military victories of Pedro de Alvarado and his men-at-arms during the Conquest of Guatemala in order to rectify the erasure those battles suffer in Díaz del Castillo’s *Historia verdadera* and glorify his Conquistador patrimony, one in his mind equal to that of Creoles in Peru and Mexico where famous Conquistadors such as, Cortés and Pizarro, fought. In narrating the actions of Alvarado and his men, Fuentes y Guzmán takes pains to render the scope of the Spanish military victory at the battle of Xelajú/Quetzaltenango comprehensible to his Peninsular reader by comparing it to a battle the Spanish armies fought against the Ottoman Empire to retake the Holy Land. Aware that a late 17<sup>th</sup> century Peninsular reader would be familiar with that battle, he writes the following:

porque así como en la Santa Liga, en que estuvieron unidos para la conquista de la Tierra Santa los reyes de España, Francia y Inglaterra, se les propuso aquella gran dificultad de la entrada de un puerto, embarazado con un navío ocupado de sabandijas y bestias ponzoñosas, cogidas con encantos de nigrománticos en la isla de Chipre, y en que se mostró bien el valor inmortal de nuestros católicos; no debe ser menos memorable, en lo acaecido en nuestras Indias occidentales, lo que pasó sobre la toma de *Quetzaltenango* ... (49-50)

The comparison is clear: in the same manner that the powerful Kingdoms of Spain, France, and England had to work together to fight against such a formidable opponent,

so too did the Spaniards have to work with the Tlaxcalans, Cholulans, and Mexicans<sup>19</sup> to fight against the formidable Quiché Kingdom (45). If the courage the Catholic Spaniards demonstrated in the former is immortal, so too is the courage of Pedro de Alvarado and his men-at-arms in the latter. For Fuentes y Guzmán, the conquest of Xelajú/Quetzaltenango is on a par with the greatest battles to take the Holy Land and deserves to be recognized as such. Equally important, the reference to the supernatural obstacles faced by Alvarado and his men-at-arms also functions to aggrandize his military victory.

For Fuentes y Guzmán, Alvarado's victory at Xelajú/Quetzaltenango was, as the Spanish victory against the Ottomans, glorious, because he not only had to defeat a ferocious army but their monsters as well. Although the reader may be tempted to interpret Fuentes y Guzmán's claim that the Spaniards in their battle against the Ottomans faced a "navío ocupado de sabandijas y bestias ponzoñosas, cogidas de nigrománticos en la isla de Chipre" (50) as a flight of fancy or naïve rhetorical strategy, he is in actuality making a serious claim. As Alejo Carpentier argues in the "Prólogo" to *El reino de este mundo* (1949), "Prodigiosamente fidedignas resultan ciertas frases de Rutilio en *Los trabajos de Persiles y Segismunda*, acerca de hombres transformados en lobos, porque en tiempos de Cervantes se creía en gentes aquejadas de manía lupina" (4). It is safe to argue, then, that Creoles and Peninsulars did not distinguish between an objective reality and the supernatural at the time Fuentes y Guzmán composed the *Recordación Florida* in the late 1680s. In the same manner

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<sup>19</sup> By "Mexican" I here refer to the early 16<sup>th</sup> century "Mexica" people and not the post-independence "Mexicans."

that Fuentes y Guzmán believes in the “navío ... de sabandijas y bestias ponzoñosas,” it is safe to argue that the Peninsular reader would believe in the monstrous *nahuales* and *ahaus* of the Quiché.

Pedro de Alvarado’s defeat of the Quiché warriors and their monstrous *nahuales* and *ahaus* places him and his men-at-arms at the highest echelons of Spanish military successes. Recognizing the “constancia, valor y inflexibilidad de nuestros españoles,” the Quiché, argues Fuentes y Guzmán, “trataron de valerse del arte de los encantos y *Naguales*; tomando en esta ocasión el demonio, por el rey de el *Quiché*, la forma de águila, sumamente crecida, y por otros de aquellos *Ahaus*, varias formas de serpientes y otras sabandijas” (50). As the Spaniards facing the “navío ... de sabandijas y bestias,” Alvarado and his men-at-arms faced equally terrifying Quiché monsters. However, though he is threatened by the “águila” that “volaba con extraño y singular estruendo sobre el ejército” (*ibid*), Alvarado “tomando una lanza en la mano, sin desmontarse, la hirió con ella tan diestro, que vino muerta á la campaña, donde la acometieron dos perros que eran del general D. Pedro de Alvarado” (*ibid*). Alvarado, then, declares that “«No ví en lo de Mexico más extraño *Quetzal*:»” (*ibid*), thereby, establishing the ferocity of the monster. Moreover, Alvarado’s military audacity and prowess is later confirmed when the Spanish “hallaron ... muerto al rey *Tecúm*, con el mismo golpe y herida de lanza que recibió el pájaro” (51). As this scene demonstrates, for the author of the *Recordación Florida*, Alvarado and his men-at-arms did not simply take on the armies of the “diez gobernadores” (*ibid*), but they defeated the monstrosities conjured by the Quiché, ones even more monstrous than the ones they faced in the conquest of the Mexica. As the Spaniards in the Near East,



Alvarado and his men, suggests Fuentes y Guzmán, are deserving of the greatest accolades.

Fuentes y Guzmán established a Guatemalan authoritative Creole voice in the *Recordación Florida* in order to construct a history particular to Guatemalan Creoles, one he believes is equally “glorious” to the history of the Mexican or Peruvian Creole. Fuentes y Guzmán, then, represents a radical break with Díaz del Castillo and other chroniclers, because they wrote on the Conquest as Spaniards, while he writes as a late 17<sup>th</sup> century Creole conscious of his American positionality. If the *Recordación Florida* marks the emergence of a Guatemalan Creole voice, one aware of its historical particularity, it follows that it also marks the emergence of a Creole class consciousness. Granted, it is difficult to assess how many Guatemalan Creoles read the *Recordación Florida*, but the fact that the text was written at all indicates that a *sentiment* of their particularity had formed among the Guatemalan Creoles during the close to two hundred years of colonialism. Based on the foregoing, it is necessary to ask: How does the contemporary Guatemalan Indian and Ladino figure in the Creole imagined community?; What is the relationship between the Creole imagining in the *Recordación Florida* and the Ladino imagining that takes shape by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century?

Fuentes y Guzmán, as my analysis in the foregoing pages demonstrated, represents the Guatemalan Indian as a *legado de la Conquista*, as part of his Conquistador inheritance. In fact, Fuentes y Guzmán constructs his authorial narrative voice precisely by appropriating indigenous history and civilization as his own. For him, Guatemalan indigenous history and civilization becomes integral to the formation

of his identity as a Guatemalan Creole, because it allows him to differentiate himself not only from the Peninsulars but also from the other Creoles in the other administrative units, ones with their own distinct Indians. Crudely put, Fuentes y Guzmán exploits indigenous Guatemalans not only by forcing them to pay tribute or work on his plantation but also by appropriating their history and civilization. It is thus no surprise the Guatemalan Indian in the *Recordación Florida* is rendered voiceless and without political agency.

In the next section titled, “Ladino Significations: From the Conquest to the Liberal Reform,” I explain how the Ladino term changed in signification from the colonial to the post-colonial period; and, for the sake of coherence, I will also explain how Fuentes y Guzmán constructed Ladinos in that section. In doing so, I aim to contextualize the transition from the Creole imagined community to the Ladino imagined community, which I will analyze in the sections titled, “The Emergence of the Ladino Rural Planter Class in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century” and “The Ladino Imagined Community: Creoles and Indians.” As I will demonstrate, the transition occurred during the period of violent struggle fought among Creoles, Ladinos, and Indians. Put simply, Liberal elites and aspiring elites found it necessary to include a greater percentage of the population into the dominant imagined community, a process that eventually led to the foresaid transition.

### **Ladino Significations: From the Conquest to the Liberal Reform**

In this brief section, I intend to trace the different meanings of the Ladino social category from the Conquest to the Liberal Reform of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Such a feat presents particular problems, because the Ladino category has at times been

utilized to denote social groups that did not identify themselves as Ladino.<sup>20</sup> To make matters more confusing, the term, one in use throughout the Indies in the early colonial period, took significations particular to the *Reino de Goathemala* during the colonial period, ones that continued to change in the post-Independence period. Moreover, it fell out of use during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, except, of course, in Guatemala. As if those changes were not difficult to trace, Guatemalan and U.S. scholars have provided contradictory definitions of the Ladino social category. In an effort to avoid confusion, **I define Ladino in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as follows:** A Guatemalan whose cultural practices were considered European<sup>21</sup> and whose primary language, one in which he or she was fluent, was Castilian. It could denote people who in previous centuries were categorized as mestizos, mulatos, and Indian, because they identified themselves as Ladino, spoke Castilian, and practiced European culture. It could also denote people previously categorized as Creoles, because they met the foregoing characteristics. I will now demonstrate how this signification became dominant.

The Ladino social category in the early colonial period has been well documented as denoting an indigenous person who was fluent in Castilian. As Arturo Taracena has demonstrated in his article, “Contribución al estudio del vocablo «ladino» en Guatemala (S. XVI-XIX)” (1982), the origins of the term “ladino” are Peninsular. Citing Covarrubias, he writes:

La gente bárbara de España deprendió la pureza de la lengua romana, y a los que trabajaban y eran elegantes en ella los llamaban *ladinos*... al morisco y al

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<sup>20</sup> For example, wealthy Creoles in the 17<sup>th</sup> century labeled impoverished Creoles “Ladinos,” but the impoverished Creoles continued to identify themselves as Creoles.

<sup>21</sup> I write “considered” because many of those practices were in fact a synthesis of Indigenous, Spanish, and African cultural practices.

extranjero que aprendió nuestra lengua con tanto cuidado que apenas la diferenciamos de nosotros, también llamamos ladino. (Cited in Taracena, 90)

In the Peninsular context, the term Ladino, a variation of the word Latino, referred, as Covarrubias clearly states, to either a Peninsular who was fluent in Latin or a non-Peninsular who was fluent in Castilian. It is this second meaning—a non-Spaniard who is a fluent Castilian speaker—that was implemented in the Indies. An indigenous person, then, who was fluent in Castilian was categorized as an “indio muy ladino.”<sup>22</sup>

Ladino, as a category defining an indigenous person who was fluent in Castilian, was still in use during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but it was also being used to define a person who pertained to one of the mestizo castes who was, of course, a fluent Castilian speaker. The caste system, it should be remembered, was designed to categorize the growing number of mestizos according to their admixture, whether Spanish-Indian, Indian-African, Spanish-African or any combination thereof. Yet by the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, it had become quite unwieldy. Because “los mestizos presentan, desde el momento de su aparición, los rasgos propios de un sector social dislocado ... en una sociedad cuyas grandes piezas estructurales, preexistentes ... van a ofrecerle un campo de desarrollo muy estrecho” (265), they came to be defined primarily by their freedom (exempted from the *encomienda* and *repartimiento*) and their use of the

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<sup>22</sup> As Taracena points out, a Castilian speaking Indian could use his or her linguistic skill to exempt themselves from the penurious exactions imposed upon the indigenous population: “Es preciso advertir que desde el principio de la colonia ... el castellano va a significar, para el indio que lo domina, un instrumento de privilegio,” because “todo aquel que lo habla encuentra en la estructura colonial una ubicación que le permitirá escapar a la encomienda y al trabajo forzado” (91). I only add that an indigenous person would also have been able to escape slavery, prior to the *Leyes Nuevas* of 1542, by speaking Castilian.

Castillian language. Given that Ladino originally referred to Castilian speaking Indians, it makes sense that the term would over time expand to include Castilian speaking mestizos. What *is* surprising is that the term came to include impoverished Creoles.

Whether the Ladino category was indeed applied to 17<sup>th</sup> century impoverished Creoles has been a matter of controversy, one worth analyzing in detail. For example, in Footnote 59 of Section IV in Chapter 6 of *La patria del criollo*, Peláez accuses Fuentes y Guzmán of “usa[r] el término “ladinos” todavía con cierta imprecisión” because “Ocasionalmente usa el término para indicar a todos los que no son indios, incluidos allí también los españoles: “los españoles y demás ladinos”” (701). The location of Footnote 59 is important, because Peláez places it directly after acknowledging that Fuentes y Guzmán, “ya no hace distinción de matices: emplea la denominación “mestizos y mulatos” para referirse a todos los mestizos sin discernir, y comienza a emplear el término “ladinos” para designar a los grupos de gente mestiza en distintas partes del reino” (281, emphasis mine).<sup>23</sup> He does not, then, criticize Fuentes y Guzmán for using the term Ladino to denote mestizos, only his application of the term to Creoles in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The problem is that Peláez does not provide a convincing argument as to why the term Ladino could not be applied to Creoles in this period. By analyzing his explanation, I will demonstrate that a new signification of Ladino does in fact begin to emerge in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, one that over the next two hundred years went on to become dominant.

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<sup>23</sup> Previous chroniclers, such as Thomas Gage in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, distinguished among the different castes (280).

Fuentes y Guzmán's use of Ladino to denote the mestizos and Creoles, all who are not Indian, is not a mistake: it is evidence that Ladino had taken on a new signification. Peláez's refusal to acknowledge this emergent signification forms part of a wider Guatemalan scholarship that renders the modern signification of Ladino as a simple ideological mystification, a claim that I will analyze in greater detail at a later point in this introduction. Given the importance of Peláez's quote, I cite at length:

Ocasionalmente usa el término para indicar a todos los que no son indios, incluidos allí también los españoles: "los españoles y demás ladinos" (I. 302). Esta última acepción —ladino es todo aquel que no es indio— es la que se usa vulgarmente en Guatemala (incluso la emplean algunos científicos extranjeros para dividir al conglomerado en dos grandes sectores y ocultar la estructura de clases) y resulta sorprendente encontrarla en el cronista, si bien es excepcional. La acepción predominante en la obra es la que designa como ladinos a todos los mestizos, excluyendo a indios, negros y españoles o criollos. (701)

To begin with, it is important to note that Peláez is correct in arguing that the dominant signification of Ladino in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century was the mestizo castes. Its signification of "indios muy ladinos," the one dominant in the early colonial period, was now a residual one. Based on the foregoing, Fuentes y Guzmán's application of the term Ladino to Creoles in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century is indeed exceptional. Unable to explain this exceptionality, Peláez claims that Fuentes y Guzmán applied the term incorrectly in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, because the usage he gave it is similar to the usage the term received in Guatemala of the 1970s. Peláez's inability to understand that Fuentes y Guzmán's usage of Ladino to denote all those who are not Indian is an emergent signification in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century is due to the following: 1) According to him, the "patria del criollo," an emergent Guatemalan Creole political imagining in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, is the dominant political imagining in Guatemala of the 1970s; 2) Based on

the first premise, he argues that the common use of the Ladino social category to denote a non-Indian in the contemporary 1970s is a simple ideological mystification: an “oculta[miento] [de] la estructura de clases.” Because of these two reasons, Peláez is unable to connect the emergent signification of “Ladino as non-Indian” in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century with the dominant, vulgar as he labels it, usage it receives in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Notwithstanding Peláez’s inability to explain the exceptional ways Ladino is being used in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, it is clear that the term was being used in multiple forms, one of which would become dominant in the late 19<sup>th</sup>.

The Ladino social category comes to denote a Westernized Castilian speaking Guatemalan in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As Taracena argues, Ladino was in the early post-independence period still utilized to refer to the mestizo castes (1982, 99). For example, the Dutch traveler Haefkens in 1827 divided up Guatemala into Creoles, Indians, and Ladinos, characterizing the latter as, “descendientes de españoles e indios, con el castellano como lengua, vestidos a la europea” (*ibid*). Yet as Taracena argues in his history of the Los Altos department titled, *Invención criolla, sueño Ladino, pesadilla indígena Los Altos de Guatemala: de región a Estado, 1740-1871* (1997), “En Los Altos, hacia la mitad del siglo pasado, la población se la veía ya conformada por sólo dos sectores: el ladino y el indígena” (346). Friar Antonio Dávila, for example, characterizes Quetzaltenango (Los Altos) in 1846 as one “dividido[...] en *indios* y *ladinos*” (Taracena, 1982, 99). Of the Ladinos Friar Dávila wrote, “procedentes de españoles y de sus derivaciones” (qtd in Taracena, 1982, 99), clearly marking Ladinos as those who are not Indian. In the foregoing, I have demonstrated that the signification of Ladino as non-Indian that emerges in the 17<sup>th</sup>

century becomes dominant by the late 19<sup>th</sup>. It is now possible to explain how Fuentes y Guzmán constructed Ladinos, ones he considered to be predominantly Castilian speaking castes.

In the *Recordación Florida*, Fuentes y Guzmán represents Ladinos as troublesome outsiders, an anomaly in his colonial world, because they occupied a third positionality, neither Lord nor Serf. Regardless of their power struggles with the Peninsulars, the Creoles were Lords in the Indies. However, because the Spanish monarchy exempted Ladinos from the servitude of the Indians, the Creoles could not legally exploit them. To make matters more discomfoting for the Creole, “La capa media alta rural, de ladinos en pueblos de indios, apenas comenzaba a formarse en tiempos de Fuentes y Guzmán. No sería inexacto decir que se hallaba en la fase de instalación, y que no había pasado a la de penetración con motivo de la tierra” (Peláez, 1973: 429-430). Though the Ladinos had not begun to dispossess the Indians, Fuentes y Guzmán would surely be troubled by their presence in the *pueblos de indios*. In summation, for the Guatemalan Creoles of the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Ladino was an anomalous outsider. Yet how did Ladinos in the 19<sup>th</sup> century come to lead the Liberal Revolution, overthrow the Conservatives, and take control of the State in 1871? In the pages that follow, I will explain how Ladinos came to play such an important role in these historical processes.

### **The Emergence of the Ladino Rural Planter Class in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

Providing a thorough history of Ladinos in 19<sup>th</sup> century Guatemala is beyond the scope of this introduction. As such, in the paragraphs that follow, I intend to briefly establish that Ladinos, a group composed mainly of mestizos but including



people who were biologically Creoles or Indians, played an important role in the consolidation of the coffee planter class, overthrowing the Conservatives in 1871, and establishing the first Liberal dictatorship in that same year. In doing so, I aim to emphasize that Ladino and Indian class differences had already emerged by the late colonial period. Consequently, I challenge Carol Smith's argument in, "Origins of the National Question in Guatemala: A Hypothesis" (1990), that Ladinos and Indians emerged as different and antagonistic classes exclusively in the "*postcolonial* period" (72) and her erasure of the Ladino imagined community. After doing so, I will explain the differences between the Creole imagined community and the Ladino one.

In the aforementioned article, Smith misinterprets Rafael Carrera's overthrow of the first Liberal state in 1838 with the support of the indigenous and Ladino masses of the Eastern provinces as evidence that no class differences existed between the two groups in the whole country. She writes that, "As far as the white Creole elite was concerned, there was little difference between the two [Indians and Ladinos]" (82) and that, "Both Indians and ladinos belonged to the lower orders; both groups were distinguished from Creoles by non-European culture, nonwhite blood, and position in the national division of labor (*ibid*). Based on the foregoing, she concludes that, "Guatemala's first constitution, written in 1824 ... put Indian and ladinos ... in the same legal as well as class position" (77). Smith's claims are surprising, because class differences did exist between the two groups. In fact, she admits in Footnote 1 of her article that, "historians ... all asked for more evidence, clarification of detail, and ... strongly suggested that I present this essay as a hypothesis rather than proven

historical fact, given my dependence on rather weak secondary materials” (92).<sup>24</sup>

Notwithstanding her own admission, her argument is worth refuting, because it will allow me to demonstrate that the formation of a Ladino planter class was critical in the class differentiation of the two groups, one that became more pronounced during the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>25</sup>

In the *Patria del criollo*, Peláez provides ample evidence that Ladinos and Indians did occupy different class positions in the late colonial period.<sup>26</sup> As previously demonstrated, the Spanish monarchy exempted the Ladinos from paying tribute, having to participate in the *repartimiento*, and also legally entitled them to petition for and receive the Monarch’s land (Peláez, 1970, 369). Notwithstanding their legal right to receive land, the Creoles blocked their attempts to do so (Sections VII).<sup>27</sup> The effects of this “bloqueo agrario ... dio resultados muy diversos .... En los pueblos [de indios] determinó que la supervivencia y el éxito económico de los ladinos dependiera, fatalmente, de que consiguieran *usurpar, alquilar, o comprar tierra de los indígenas* y se convirtieran, a la larga en explotadores de indios ellos también” (408, emphasis mine).<sup>28</sup> Ladinos, then, dispossessed the Indians of their commons by

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<sup>24</sup> For the sake of brevity, I will not analyze her sources, mainly U.S. ones, in this introduction.

<sup>25</sup> To be clear, even before the formation of the Ladino planter class, Ladinos and Indians occupied different class positions: Ladinos were exempt from the *encomienda* and the *repartimiento*; Indians were not.

<sup>26</sup> The evidence is extensive. See Sections II-X in Chapter 6.

<sup>27</sup> As Peláez points out on page 396, the Monarchy tolerated the Creoles doing so, because it placated their increasing demands for Indian labor. (As such, the landless Ladinos were forced to work on the haciendas in exchange for a plot of land to cultivate, which they did not own.)

<sup>28</sup> Though I will not analyze the “*capas medias urbanas*” because of a lack of space, Peláez does an excellent job explaining how, “En las ciudades [se formaron] las plebes

usurping, renting, or buying the land. The last two forms—renting and buying—often involved some form of coercion that placed the Indians at a disadvantage.<sup>29</sup> The net effect of these processes was that, “Hacia el último tercio del siglo XVIII la capa media alta rural había echado sus bases, y aunque legalmente eran bases inseguras ... la penetración en los pueblos había avanzado bastante” (409). Regardless of the fact that both were the targets of Creole hatred, Ladinos and Indians did not occupy the same class position as claimed by Smith.<sup>30</sup> I will now explain the role Ladinos played in the post-Independence period.

Upon Independence, the Liberal Creoles set about privatizing the Indian commons, the effect of which also benefitted the Ladinos, particularly in the mainly indigenous highlands. As Peláez points out, “en las condiciones que quedó el país después de la Independencia ... la única medida efectiva que podía tomarse

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menesterosas, en sorda lucha con la capa media artesanal proveedora” (408). See Sections V, VI, and VII of Chapter 6.

<sup>29</sup> See page 405 of *La patria del criollo* for a typical example that took place in 1663.

<sup>30</sup> Smith’s disregard of the class differences between Indians and Ladinos in Guatemala may be the result of her applying a U.S. racial lens onto Guatemalan race relations. For example, she writes that:

The working population of Guatemala today divides about equally into two culturally distinct groups. One group, termed *Indians* in both popular and scholarly discourse, are people who retain a considerable amount of Mayan tradition, including the use of Mayan languages. The others, known as *ladinos*, are popularly assumed to be descendants of Spanish/Indian liaisons (i.e., to be mestizos) but are in fact mostly Mayans in biological heritage who have assimilated to national language and culture. 72

It is possible that Smith, as a U.S.-European woman, does not recognize mestizaje because for her there are only Europeans and non-Europeans. In the U.S., of course, the white-black binary renders any person with African ancestry an African-American, the so-called “one drop rule.” It is possible that Smith is applying this rule to mestizos: If you have indigenous ancestry, you are indigenous. The foregoing, of course, is only a hypothesis. Whatever the case may be, Smith does not recognize mestizaje in Guatemala.

inmediatamente con miras a un aumento de producción y del movimiento de valores, era liberalizar la adquisición de tierras” (410). If Ladinos had been able to accumulate land during the late colonial period, one in which they were specifically blocked from doing so, they now accelerated the enclosures because it was now *legal* to do so. The Indian communities now had not only to defend themselves against the traditional large landowners (Creoles) but also the emergent small and medium ones (Ladinos).<sup>31</sup> It is no surprise, then, that when Mariano Gálvez attempted to completely privatize the commons, as decreed in the Constitution of 1824, an uprising should take place that eventually led to the overthrow of the first Liberal state, the disintegration of the Central American Federal Republic, and the establishment of the first dictatorship of the post-colonial period. That Ladinos and Indians fought against the Creole Liberal State together should not be interpreted, as does Smith, as evidence that no class differences existed between the two groups as a whole: it only means that not all Ladinos became small and medium landowners. Moreover, as she herself points out, Ladino, as a social category, was still in flux.

Notwithstanding the conservative policies of Rafael Carrera’s government, Ladinos continued to accumulate land through enclosures during his thirty-year dictatorship, eventually incorporating themselves into the Creole landowning elites of the department of Los Altos. The critical element that strengthened these small and medium sized farmers was coffee production introduced in the 1850s. Peláez writes: “El cultivo del café los hará fuertes ... y llegará el momento en que finalmente

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<sup>31</sup> Though much land lay fallow, Creoles and Ladinos were particularly interested in the Indian commons, because they also aimed to forcibly use Indian labor.

tomarán el poder —1871” (412). Taracena, on the other hand, demonstrates that the Creole elites in the Los Altos department formed “un movimiento político segregacionista, con apoyo armado y alianzas nuevas a nivel del sector ladino” (15) to declare themselves the sixth state of the Federal Republic upon the fall of the Liberal Gálvez government in 1838. Though Carrera defeated them, they continued to accumulate land; and, eventually in 1871, they took over the State. Los Altos, as Taracena succinctly demonstrates, is critical in the implementation of the Ladino imagined political community, because it was in that department where the coffee producing landowners first imagined themselves as Ladinos.

In summation, small and medium sized Ladino planters played a critical role in the formation of the Liberal opposition to the Carrera dictatorship, the formation of the Liberal dictatorship in 1871, and the formation of a Ladino imagined community. After asking, “was it natural that the equally despised ladinos became the agents of Indian oppression in the coffee region rather than equal targets for plantation labor needs?” (85), Smith states the obvious, “It was, I would argue, not” (*ibid*). But what she missed was the fact that it was not that Creoles, “created a special social existence and class position for ladinos in the coffee region, thus dividing popular masses” (*ibid*), it is that the Ladino landowners managed to introduce themselves as economic and, consequently, political partners of the rural Creole elites. Before moving on, it should be noted that, as Peláez reminds us, the emergent Liberal planter class also exploited the landless Ladinos (413). I have provided a terse explanation of the emergence of Ladinos as a Liberal coffee planter class, one that introduced itself into

the inner circles of the rural Creole elites. I will now specify in more detail the differences between the Creole and Ladino imagined communities.

### **The Ladino Imagined Community: Creoles and Indians**

Many Guatemalan and U.S. scholars have argued that the Creole imagined community, one formed in opposition to Spain and deployed to legitimize independence, continued to be dominant in the post-colonial period, thus erasing the existence of a Ladino imagined community. In the aptly titled, “El ladino: un ser ficticio” (1970), the Guatemalan sociologist, Carlos Guzmán Böckler, argues that, “El ladino no existe como ser colectivo dotado de un proyecto propio, no es aún *historiable*” (120, emphasis his). Without denying their existence, Peláez claims that, “En el siglo que cursa desde la caída del imperio español hasta la irrupción violenta del imperialismo norteamericano en Guatemala ... la clase criolla creó la Nación y la nacionalidad guatemalteca” (589), and warns that, “Es un error creer que nuestra nacionalidad, obra perfeccionada hasta el nivel de sus símbolos por los gobiernos de la Reforma, es por eso obra de mestizos” (589-590).<sup>32</sup> For her part, Smith argues that Creoles during the *Reforma*, “created a special social existence and class position for ladinos in the coffee region, thus dividing popular interests” (85). Rendered either fictitious, a spectator, or agent of Creole power, the Ladino is not analyzed as participating in the construction of the Guatemalan national identity at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>32</sup> The “reforma” Peláez is referring to is the economic and labor policies implemented by the Liberal dictatorship of 1871.

Liberal Ladinos, I argue, played a historical role, indeed the most important one, in the formation of the Ladino national identity, one that remained dominant well into the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover, Liberal Ladinos created a historical narrative in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century that radically broke with the Creole imagined community of Fuentes y Guzmán. In this 19<sup>th</sup> century narrative, the Spanish monarchy, its functionaries, the Conquistadors, and the Catholic Church were represented as iniquitous, vile, and pre-modern. The Indians, on the other hand, are represented as poltroons in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and, because they preserved their “archaic” and “pre-modern” languages and culture, as an obstacle to modernization in the 19<sup>th</sup>. In opposition to this “barbarism,” the Liberal Ladinos represented themselves as the bearers of civilization, as the only ones capable of instituting a Liberal republic and modernizing the country. That they should echo the main ideas proposed by Domingo F. Sarmiento in *Facundo: civilización y barbarie, vida de Juan Facundo Quiroga* (1845), is not surprising. As David Viñas reminds us, those ideas were dominant throughout the Americas in this period (1983). It is safe to say that Ladinos saw themselves engaged in a struggle against the “barbaric” “relics” of Spanish colonialism: the Conservatives, the Catholic Church, and the Indians, ones they now swore to destroy. In order to prove the foregoing, I will analyze a speech delivered in 1876 by Martín Barrundia, a prominent member in Justo Rufino Barrios’s government, the first of the many Liberal dictatorships to come.

### **Martín Barrundia 1876**

On the 15 of September of 1876, Martín Barrundia delivered an impressive speech in the National Palace of Guatemala to commemorate the fifty-fifth

anniversary of the independence of the Central American republics and the Liberal victory over the Conservatives in Guatemala in 1871. By then, Barrundia had played a critical role in the expropriation of Church property in 1873, the expulsion of the religious orders in 1874, and was preparing to legalize the expropriation of the indigenous communal lands the following year. As the sub-secretary of the War Department, he was also involved in preparing to unify Central America through military force. Because of his central role in the social transformations during the tumultuous 1870s, Barrundia is an excellent representative of the political and economic interests of the Guatemalan Liberal Ladinos. Moreover, he provides a most significant representation of the Spanish monarchy, its functionaries, the Conquistadors, the Catholic Church, and the Indians in his speech. By analyzing these representations, I will be able to demonstrate that the *fin de siècle* Ladino Liberals constructed an imagined political community that was radically different from the Creole imagined community.

Barrundia represents the Spanish monarchy and its monarchical functionaries as iniquitous. While Fuentes y Guzmán declares that he is motivated to write the *Recordación Florida* because of his love for the *Reino de Goathemala*, he does it as a, “demostración reverente y postrada del fervor de mi lealtad al Real servicio y obsequio de vuestra Real persona” (3). Regardless of his emergent Creole nationalism, the chronicler understood himself as a vassal of Carlos II, the last of the Hapsburg monarchs.<sup>33</sup> In stark contrast, Barrundia accuses “los Monarcas

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<sup>33</sup> The Liberal Ladinos must have surely interpreted Fuentes y Guzmán’s homage to King Carlos II, a man so mentally and physically debilitated, a product of the



corrompidos de Castilla” of reproducing “en sus mas odiosas formas el sistema monárquico de Europa” (3); and, while the chronicler resented the monarchical functionaries of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Ladino, as his description of them as “intrigantes aduladores y serviles cortesanos” (*ibid*) makes clear, abhors them. Moreover, Barrundia accuses the Crown and its functionaries of ruling, “por medio de los crímenes, la crueldad y la opresión” (*ibid*), and concludes that it was, “tanta iniquidad” (*ibid*), that led to the Independence movement. Clearly, in Barrundia’s speech, the Spanish monarchy and its functionaries are vile and iniquitous. But, what of the Conquistadors?

Barrundia, in obvious opposition to Fuentes y Guzmán, represents the Conquistadors as barbaric. Fuentes y Guzmán, it should be remembered, refers to the Conquistadors, particularly Díaz del Castillo and Alvarado, throughout the *Recordación Florida* with reverence and nostalgia. The chronicler does not tire of the accolades: “mi Castillo,” “heroico caudillo D. Pedro de Alvarado,” “El Adelantado,” and so on. In Barrundia’s “Discurso,” the accolades have turned into invective: “Entregado el inmenso y rico territorio americano á la brutal codicia de los conquistadores, ejercieron vandálicos despojos y la mas horripilante barbarie” (1876, 2). A few lines down, he continues: “Extraordinarias iniquidades, barbaries innumerables, traiciones, asesinatos en masa, violaciones, perfidas..... en fin, cuanto de mas espantoso puede la imaginación concebir, realizóse entonces en la virgen americana” (*ibid*). The “heroism” of an Alvarado has turned into the “brutal codicia,”

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inbreeding of the Hapsburg line, that he was unable to produce an heir, the lack of which upon his death led to the Guerra de Sucesión (1701-1714), as evidence of the subservient position he and, by extension, the Creoles occupied.

“vandálicos despojos,” and “horripilante barbarie.” Instead of bringing the Indians into “civilization,” the Conquistadors are themselves barbaric.

For Barrundia, Catholicism, long the fulcrum of all justificatory arguments legitimizing the Conquest, is itself a source of superstition and savagery. Fuentes y Guzmán dedicates the whole of Chapter V of Book I titled, “Del principio que tuvo la idolatria entre los indios de este reino de Goathemala, y los sacrificios y ritos de que usaban” (35) in order to demonstrate the need to convert the Indians and, of course, legitimize the Conquest. In the “Discurso,” on the other hand, Barrundia makes only one reference to the “idolatry” of the Indians, but it hardly places Catholicism in a revered position: “Porque eran idólatras las víctimas, se las inmolaba en nombre de Jesus y en su nombre tambien eran despojadas de sus bienes” (2). The “idolatry” of the Indians is not used here to legitimize Catholicism as the only true faith. To the contrary, Catholicism is a source of obscurantism and savagery: “Este fué el origen del cristianismo en América, origen vicioso y terrible, que nunca podrá justificarse y que esplica el motivo porque la religion sirve todavia, para apoyar el mal, para combatir la libertad, para esquilmar al pueblo” (3, *sic*). For Barrundia, Catholicism was and continues to be a source of savagery, because it had functioned to strengthen evil, destroy liberty, and legitimize the pillaging of the many by the few. Barrundia’s representation of the Spanish monarchy and its functionaries, Conquistadors, and Catholicism represents a break with the Creole imagined community: Spain was not a model to be imitated but rejected. I now turn to an analysis of his representation of Indians.

For Barrundia, to put it bluntly, the indigenous people of the 16<sup>th</sup> century were poltroons and contemporary ones an obstacle to modernization. Fuentes y Guzmán, it should be remembered, recounted the fierce battles the Quiché armies fought against Alvarado and his men-at-arms, ones in which they even deployed “encantos de *Nahuales*” (51). In Barrundia’s “Discurso,” the Quiché, Cakchiquel, and Zutuhil kingdoms and their armies are erased and in their place are “victimas” and “turbas desnudas,” ones easily put down by the Conquistadors. As the descendents of pre-Hispanic “savage” indigenous people, ones conquered by a “backward” Spain, contemporary Indians are also “savage.” Indigenous languages and customs were now interpreted as evidence of that “savagery.” For these reasons, the Ladinos, regardless of whether they are biologically mestizo, Creole, or indigenous, will regard the Indian not only as a “savage” but also as one who must either be Ladinoized or repressed. In other words, the Ladino will now see indigenous language and customs as obstacles to the fulfillment of a “modern” Guatemala, one based on Western models of civilization.

In the foregoing, I have demonstrated that imagined communities are not fixed: they are historically determined. To wit, the *nation* is a valid unit of analysis, because it undergoes modifications, reorganizations, and metamorphoses over time. To discard the nation as a unit of analysis, as Grosfoguel and other World System theorists suggest, is unreasonable, because it would prevent an examination of those rearticulations. By tracing the major transition from the Creole imagined community, emergent in the late 17<sup>th</sup> but residual by the mid 19<sup>th</sup>, to the Ladino one that becomes dominant in the late 19<sup>th</sup>, I have proved that the Ladino imagined community is not

reducible to the Creole one. To reiterate, I have demonstrated that in Guatemala the transition from the Creole to Ladino imagined community is not only a major transition but also one worthy of study.

## **Literature, Transculturation, and Challenges to the Ladino Imagined**

### **Community**

Once dominant, Ladinos institutionalized the racialization of Mayan languages, customs, and cosmologies as “pre-modern.” Indians, for them, became a “relic” of Spanish colonialism, and, consequently, an obstruction to the modernization of Guatemala. Representing Indians as “primitive,” the Ladinos utilized the repressive apparatus of the state<sup>34</sup> to enclose the indigenous commons and to reintroduce forced labor requirements for the indigenous population.<sup>35</sup> Guatemala, then, followed the dominant pattern I analyzed in the foregoing section titled, “World System Theory or Modes of Production”: its insertion into the capitalist world market led to an intensification of the feudal relations of production in the interior of the country. Ladinidad, to be clear, was critical in legitimizing this intensification of the quasi-feudal relations of production in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, ones well in place until the 1944 Revolution. As I will demonstrate in the following chapter, it was only during the

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<sup>34</sup> The most important of these are the following: General Justo Rufino Barrios (1873-1885); Manuel Estrada Cabrera (1898-1920); and General Jorge Ubico Castañeda (1931-1944).

<sup>35</sup> Numerous studies have written on the subject. The most meticulous account of these processes is Julio Castellanos Cambranes’s, *Café y campesinos en Guatemala, 1853-1897* (1985). The aforementioned, *Invencción criolla, sueño ladino, pesadilla indígena: Los Altos de Guatemala: de región a Estado, 1740-1871* (1997) is a must read, because it provides the critical history of the Los Altos separatist movement, the critical event that most propelled the Liberal Revolution of 1871.

democratic period of 1944-54 that the state attempted to restructure those relations of production.

The dominant groups in Guatemala, as my analysis of Fuentes y Guzmán's *Recordación Florida* and Barrundia's "Discurso" demonstrates, have utilized writing to legitimize their economic and political privileges; and, in doing so, they have naturalized the exploitation of the majority of Guatemalans. That Guatemalan elites should utilize writing in such a manner is not surprising. In *La ciudad letrada* (1984), Ángel Rama has argued that in Latin America, since the Conquest to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, elites have utilized writing to legitimize their exploitation of the masses. Beginning in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, progressive Guatemalan intellectuals began to utilize writing to challenge, criticize, or denounce the elites' control of the country's economy and state. From then on, writing was no longer only an exclusive tool of the elites: it also became a tool for those who contested elite power.

Literature, whether it is a poem, short story, play, or novel, is an elite cultural form that requires a literate reader. Mario Monteforte Toledo once sarcastically quipped that surrealism in Guatemala was best defined by the fact that though an illiterate country it had produced a Nobel Literature laureate. Yet the fact that only a minority of Guatemalans have been able to read and write should be placed alongside the fact that the readership for those literary works was not limited to Guatemala: it extended far beyond the national borders. Mario Monteforte Toledo's own novel, for example, *Anaité*, reached a wide readership after being awarded the "Premio Ibero-Americano Farrar y Rinehart" in 1940. Regardless of the limited Guatemalan readership, Guatemalan novels are nonetheless fertile ground for an analysis of the

ideological contestations of elite power, because they provide a textual space for non-dominant voices to be heard.

In this dissertation I will argue that Guatemalan authors, Ladinos and Ladinoized-Indians, have utilized literature to contest, undermine, and rearticulate the social relations between Ladinos and Indians, elites and the exploited masses, and the state and anti-state actors. Moreover, I will demonstrate that they have also challenged the dominant construction of Guatemala as a Ladino nation by transculturating the novel, a Western literary form. In *Transculturación narrativa en América Latina* (1982), Ángel Rama redefined Fernando Ortiz's term *transculturación*.<sup>36</sup> As Rama points out, Ortiz's use of the term transculturation, "Revela resistencia a considerar la cultura propia, tradicional, que recibe el impacto externo que habrá de modificarla, como una entidad meramente pasiva o incluso inferior, destinada a las mayores pérdidas, sin ninguna clase de respuesta creadora" (33). In other words, Ortiz demonstrated that cultures, such as that of the African slaves brought to Cuba, were not simply eradicated by their Spanish slave owners. To the contrary, the African slaves were able to maintain some of their cultural practices, modify them to meet their specific needs, and deploy them in various ways, sometimes even in ways that challenged their slave owners. It was in this productive sense that Rama used the term and applied it to literature.

Analyzing the Latin American novel, Rama drew attention to the manner in which Latin American authors utilized the language, oral narratives, or non-Western

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<sup>36</sup> For a thorough review of the Ortiz's original use of the term and Rama's rearticulation see, Misha Kokotovic's *The Colonial Divide in Peruvian Narrative* (2005).

cosmologies of marginalized groups to write their novels, ones that were now not only permeated by non-dominant voices but were formally transculturated. While Rama did not locate the process in Guatemala, I argue that Guatemalan authors have indeed transculturated the form of the Western novel by incorporating Mayan cosmologies. As I will demonstrate further on, these authors produced novels that not only denounce the Ladino controlled dictatorships, critique the Ladino imagined community, but also in their formal structure point toward a more inclusive national project. Having established how transcultural literature has functioned in Guatemala, I now turn to an explication of the following chapters.

In the second chapter, I analyze Mario Monteforte Toledo's *Entre la piedra y la cruz* (1949) and Miguel Ángel Asturias's *Hombres de maíz* (1949), two novels produced during the democratic period of 1944-1954. The administrations of Juan José Arévalo and Jacobo Arbenz attempted to not only restructure the country's economy, particularly the quasi-feudal relations dominant in the countryside, but they also endorsed debates that put in question the country's national identity, signaling the possibility that a more inclusive national identity was possible. The novels of Monteforte and Asturias participate in that discussion, but they differ in the national identities they affirm. While critical of the Liberal dictatorship, *Entre la piedra y la cruz* rearticulates the Ladino imagined community as inclusive of Ladinoized Indians. In other words, it is through acculturation and mestizaje that indigenous Guatemalans will be able to become modern subjects. In *Hombres de maíz*, however, acculturation is represented as an obstacle to indigenous liberation. In fact, the Quiché-Mayan cosmology is represented as vital to the preservation of an indigenous identity and the

construction of a more inclusive national community, one not based solely on Western models of civilization. Equally important, *Hombres de maíz* is formally a transculturated novel, one whose form has been modified by the incorporation of the Mayan cosmology, a striking difference to the social realist form of *Entre la piedra y la cruz*. In the following chapter, I turn my attention to first period of armed conflict, the 1960s, which followed the U.S. orchestrated coup of 1954.

In the third chapter, I analyze Marco Antonio Flores's *Los compañeros* (1976) and Luis de Lión's *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá* (1984), two novels written during the late 1960s and early 1970s. The longest 20<sup>th</sup> century armed conflict in Central America began in 1963: it would leave over 200,000 dead, 1,000,000 displaced, and the population demoralized. Written after the first armed struggle between the U.S. supported Guatemalan state and the Marxist insurgents, these novels, as the ones analyzed in the previous chapter, are also critical of the dominant structures of power: *Los compañeros* is an uncompromising denunciation of the dictatorship's implementation of a state of exception and its reduction of those who oppose it to bare life; *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá* is a rigorous critique of Ladino exploitation of indigenous communities. The protagonists in *Los compañeros*, however, reify the racialization of indigenous Guatemalans as "pre-modern" "relics" of Spanish colonialism. Indeed, the novel highlights one of the key factors that led to the defeat of the first armed movement: the Ladinos in charge of those movements racialized the indigenous Guatemalans in the same manner that the Ladino elites did; and, consequently, they failed to form alliances with indigenous organizations. By destroying the Ladino structures of power, the indigenous characters in *El tiempo*



*principia en Xibalbá*, on the other hand, create the possibility that a revolutionary ideology, one particular to their social conditions, may be forged. Moreover, while *Los compañeros* is a novel written solely on modernist narrative techniques, *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá* incorporates narrative techniques found in the *Popol Vuh*. Li3n's novel, then, suggests that indigenous liberation is only possible by opposing Ladino power structures. Given the vast displacement of Guatemalans to the U.S. during the armed conflict, I turn in the final chapter to analyze literature produced by U.S.-Guatemalans.

In the fourth chapter, I analyze Francisco Goldman's novel, *The Long Night of White Chickens*, and H3ctor Tobar's, *The Tattooed Soldier*. As second generation U.S.-Guatemalans, I argue that Goldman and Tobar produce novels that participate in what Marita Sturken labels an *active forgetting* of past traumatic events. In these novels, it is the U.S. role in the Guatemalan armed conflict that is either erased, as in *The Long Night of White Chickens*, or minimized, as in *The Tattooed Soldier*. Roger Graetz, the biracial protagonist in Goldman's novel who is half-Guatemalan, responds to white Americans discriminating him in the U.S. by affirming the dominant U.S. racialization that renders Latin Americans unfit for democratic rule. By representing Ladinos as acquiescing to the dictatorship and Indians as "savages," Graetz attempts to affirm his identity as a white American. Antonio Bernal, the politically conservative elite Ladino protagonist of *The Tattooed Soldier*, is on the other hand racially privileged in Guatemala. Though conservative, he is forced to marry a radical Ladina university student—Elena Sosa—later murdered by a paramilitary death squad. In order to affirm his masculinity, Bernal murders the ex-paramilitary soldier responsible

for his wife's murder. Bernal, then, interprets the Guatemalan armed conflict as an affront to his masculinity.

## II Guatemala 1940s: Revolutionary Nationalisms

*HE AQUÍ, pues, el principio de cuando se dispuso hacer al hombre, y cuando se buscó lo que debía entrar en la carne del hombre.*

*Y dijeron los Progenitores, los Creadores y Formadores, que se llaman Tepeu y Gucumatz: “Ha llegado el tiempo del amanecer, de que se termine la obra y que aparezca el hombre, la humanidad, sobre la superficie de la tierra.” Así dijeron. Se juntaron, llegaron y celebraron consejo en la oscuridad y en la noche; luego buscaron y discutieron, y aquí reflexionaron y pensaron. De esta manera salieron a luz claramente sus decisiones y encontraron y descubrieron lo que debía entrar en la carne del hombre. ...*

*De Paxil, de Cayalá, así llamados, vinieron las mazorcas amarillas y las mazorcas blancas.*

*Éstos son los nombres de los animales que trajeron la comida: Yac [el gato de monte], Utiú [el coyote], Quel [una cotorra] y Hoh [el cuervo]. Estos cuatro animales y las mazorcas blancas, les dijeron que fueran a Paxil y les enseñaron el camino de Paxil.*

*Y así encontraron la comida y ésta fue la que entró en la carne del hombre creado, del hombre formado; ésta fue su sangre, de ésta se hizo la sangre del hombre. Así entró el maíz [en la formación del hombre] por obra de los Progenitores. ...*

*Los animales enseñaron el camino. Y moliendo entonces las mazorcas amarillas y las mazorcas blancas, hizo Ixmucané nueve bebidas, y de este alimento provinieron la fuerza y la gordura y con él crearon los músculos y el vigor del hombre. Esto hicieron los Progenitores, Tepeu y Gucumatz, así llamados.*

*A continuación entraron en pláticas acerca de la creación y la formación de nuestra primera madre y padre. De maíz amarillo y de maíz blanco se hizo su carne; de masa de maíz se hicieron los brazos y las piernas del hombre. Únicamente masa de maíz entró en la carne de nuestros padres, los cuatro hombres que fueron creados.*

### *Popol Vuh*

*Los habitantes de la ciudad capital se vieron recientemente amenazados en sus bienes y en sus vidas por la presencia de masas de indígenas, reclutados por la fuerza, provistos de armas, mantenidos constantemente en estado de ebriedad en los campos de la finca nacional “La Aurora”.*

Juan José Arévalo (“Manifiesto del frente unido de partidos políticos y asociaciones cívicas,” October 15, 1944)

The overthrow of Jorge Ubico in 1944 marked the end of the Liberal dictatorship after nearly three quarters of a century in power, years marked by the brutal repression of the indigenous population, poor and working class Ladinos, and those who opposed the State. As Greg Grandin has argued, it is during the ensuing ten years of democratic rule from 1944 to 1954, the so called “ten years of spring,” that the presidencies of Juan José Arévalo (1944-1950) and Jacobo Arbenz (1950-1954) attempted to institute various economic and political reforms, ushering in “The more democratic elements of liberalism” (Grandin 2004, 5-6). During these same years, Mario Monteforte Toledo and Miguel Ángel Asturias published the most important Guatemalan novels of the late 1940s, works that directly critique the recently overthrown Liberal dictatorship and the Liberal *guatemaltequidad* that constructed Ladinos as Westerners and indigenous Guatemalans as “pre-modern.” In this chapter I will focus primarily on two novels: Toledo’s *Entre la Piedra y la Cruz* and Asturias’s *Hombres de Maíz*. Both were written during the 1940s, published in 1949, and though they rigorously critique the Liberal dictatorship, they differ in their form, in the way they are written and structured, and in their construction of the *national*.

*Entre la piedra y la cruz* and *Hombres de maíz* are formally markedly different. *Entre la Piedra y la Cruz* is a social realist text, one in which an effort is made to represent social reality as the poor and disenfranchised experience it. *Hombres de Maíz*, on the other hand, incorporates Quiché-Mayan mythology and is written using surrealist techniques, to produce a transculturated text. The novels do not only differ formally but also in how national identity is constructed. In Monteforte Toledo’s *Entre la Piedra y la Cruz*, for example, the indigenous protagonist

acculturates to the dominant Ladino culture, and it is suggested that in so doing he will be able to form part of a *now* more inclusive civil society. Assimilation, then, is represented as crucial to the creation of a new Western *guatemaltequidad* that is more inclusive than the Liberal-positivist national identity. In Asturias's *Hombres de Maíz*, on the contrary, assimilation is not a path to a more inclusive civil society; here, it is an obstacle to indigenous liberation. Moreover, Mayan-Quiché cosmology is rearticulated as crucial in the construction of what constitutes the national.

### **A Note on the October Revolution and the National Debate**

Ladinos led the 1944 Revolution and it was they who formed the new government. Though indigenous labor organizers and activists such as, José Ángel Ico, played a critical role in destabilizing the dictatorship, they did not gain prominent roles in the revolutionary government (Grandin, 2004). In fact, the Asamblea Constituyente of 1944-45, charged with defining Guatemala's national identity and the task of "incorporating" the Indian, was composed only of Ladinos (Taracena, 2004, 35). As Arturo Taracena points out, "A ninguno de ellos se le ocurrió la posibilidad de que los propios indígenas definieran su destino o participaran en su propia 'redención'" (40). Given the exclusion of indigenous Guatemalans in the "national" debates, the Ladino representatives decided that the President should "create and maintain the institutions" appropriate to solving "los problemas indígenas" (40-41). Notwithstanding the problematic exclusion of indigenous Guatemalans, Arturo Arias's claim that the late 1940s, "Es, históricamente, un período de búsqueda de nuevos rumbos, de redefinición del ser social, de búsqueda de transformaciones y

cuestionamiento de viejas certitudes” is correct (1998, 80). The only qualification I add is that at the State level, as well as in literature, Ladinos controlled the discussion.

### **A Note on the Authors and Ideology**

Largely forgotten now, Miguel Ángel Asturias (1899-1974) and Mario Monteforte Toledo (1911-2003) were the most important Guatemalan authors in the 1940s. Although only Asturias would achieve extensive international fame with the publication of *El Señor Presidente* in 1946, Monteforte Toledo’s first novel *Anaité* won the “Premio Ibero-Americano Farrar y Rinehart” in 1940, one year before Ciro Alegría, the Peruvian author, would win it with *El mundo es ancho y ajeno*, but given that the Ubico regime found it “offensive,” it was only published in Guatemala in 1948. The publication of *Entre la piedra y la cruz* in 1949 and *Donde acaban los caminos* in 1952 established Monteforte Toledo as one of the leading men of letters in Guatemala and one of the best exponents of the *indigenista* social realist novel. Both authors belonged to professional Ladino families, received elite educations, and did not have extensive contact with indigenous Guatemalans during their formative years. As is well known, Asturias only came into contact with classical Mayan thought and art while studying with the French anthropologist Georges Raynaud in Paris. Monteforte Toledo, on the other hand, lived from 1938 to 1941 in an indigenous community in Sololá where he represented the indigenous community as a lawyer in local disputes against Ladinos.

### **Social Realism, Realismo Mágico, and Lo Real Maravilloso**

An explanation of social realism, *realismo mágico*, and *lo real maravilloso* is necessary, because form is constitutive and directly related to *how* the national is

represented in these texts. A definition is also warranted because of the rich and at times confusing debate with regard to *realismo mágico* and *lo real maravilloso*.

After clearly demarcating how the terms will be used in this chapter, I will explain how Ángel Rama's term, *transculturación*, is a useful analytical tool that helps explain how *Hombres de maíz* is structured.

As in other Latin American countries, social realism became in the 1930s a form of writing that sought to criticize the exploitation of the working poor and indigenous population. The effort lay in “documenting,” as it were, the social reality of a specific social class. Mestizo writers such as Jorge Icaza, César Vallejo, and Monteforte Toledo utilized it to represent the “lived reality” of the indigenous population. Monteforte, for example, distinguished between his works and those of Asturias by stating that, “la Guatemala mía es vivida mientras que la de Asturias es inventada” (qtd. in Arias 1998, 88). As the quote makes clear, Monteforte did not consider the works of Asturias as representative of a “real” Guatemala but an imagined one. In privileging his own literary production, Monteforte Toledo draws attention to the fact that many Latin American authors also privileged the social realist form as the best suited to represent the exploitation of the indigenous population.

The terms *realismo mágico* and *lo real maravilloso* are many times taken to denote the same form of writing, sometimes they are vaguely distinguished, and yet other times they are conflated with *literatura fantástica*. Although the history of these two terms is rich and varied, I will limit my analysis to an explanation as to how *realismo mágico* and *lo real maravilloso* are structurally different in how they construct the magical or marvelous reality. For this purpose, I will utilize the

distinction made by Alicia Llarena in her text titled, *Realismo Mágico y Lo Real Maravilloso: Una cuestión de verosimilitud* (1997).<sup>37</sup> According to Llarena, a crucial difference between literature that is *realista mágica* and literature that is *realista maravillosa* involves how the “‘*punto de vista*’, ‘*compromiso*’ y ‘*actitud*’” creates a “*modo de ver*” that reality that is magical or marvelous (75). In my classification and analysis of *Hombres de maíz*, I draw on Llarena’s work and ask the critical question: how does the narrative point of view construct that magical reality? Does it render it “real” or “not real,” as believable or not?

Llarena’s intervention is important because it sheds light on the differences that exist between novels like *Hombres de maíz* and novels such as, Alejo Carpentier’s *El reino de este mundo* (1949). As is well known, in his famous “Prologue” to *El reino de este mundo* Carpentier makes a clear distinction between European artists and Latin American artists, between Europe and America. For Carpentier, the European artists construct, “lo maravilloso ... con trucos de prestidigitación,” “formulas consabidas,” and “códigos de lo fantástico” (2). The Latin American artist, to the contrary, has no need to participate in such artificiality or to make use of the “códigos de lo fantástico,” because the real is already marvelous (5). In placing Latin America

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<sup>37</sup> Llarena provides an excellent review beginning with the origins of the term in Europe and its subsequent development in Latin America. The first part of *Realismo Mágico y Lo Real Maravilloso: Una cuestión de verosimilitud* titled, “La polémica: genesis y desarrollo de la ambigüedad,” begins with Franz Roh’s *Nach Expressionismus: Magischer Realismus. Probleme der Neuesten Europäischen Maleri* (1925), continues with Arturo Usler Pietri’s application of those terms to a Latin American context in 1948 and Alejo Carpentier’s famous “Prólogo” of 1949, to the XVI International Congress of Iberoamerican Literature in 1975, to the use of those terms in the 1980s.



in opposition to Europe, “Mackandal el Americano” to Maldoror, and the Latin American artist to the European artist, Carpentier places Latin America, its historical figures, and its artists in a privileged position over their European counterparts. He sums up his reasoning in the following oft quoted sentence: “Y es que, por la virginidad del paisaje, por la formación, por la ontología, por la presencia fáustica del indio y del negro, por la Revolución que constituyó su reciente descubrimiento, por los fecundos mestizajes que propició, América está muy lejos de haber agotado su caudal de mitologías” (7). According to the foregoing, it is the particularities of Latin America, the ways it is different from Europe, that have filled its “caudal de mitologías.”

As many critics have pointed out, Carpentier is reacting to the vanguard artistic movements of Europe, particularly the French surrealists, who after the atrocities of WWI came to “question” their own civilization and sought to find a more “direct” and “primitive” form of expression in Africa and other colonial territories. The Latin American artist, for Carpentier, does not have to look to Africa or Asia, nor create a fantastical world, because in America the Indians and Africans, the *mestizajes* that have taken place, and the land itself, form an ontology that is itself marvelous. The Latin American artist only need represent that American reality to represent its marvelousness. Needless to say, the claims made by the French surrealists are clearly racist and while Carpentier wants to affirm the narratives that slaves used to make sense of their enslavement and their forms of resistance and rebellion, he reproduces the racialized discourse of the Europeans: it is the presence of Indians and Africans that is the fundamental explanation of the marvelous.

It is now possible to appreciate the importance of Llarena's intervention. By analyzing how the narrative voice relates to the magical or marvelous reality, the type of attitude it creates towards it, and whether it renders it believable or not, we are able to judge whether the magical or marvelous reality is being represented as having its own rationality, as a valid form of conceptualizing and understanding the world. Following Llarena, I will distinguish between *Hombres de maíz*, a *realismo mágico* text, and *El reino de este mundo*, a *real maravilloso* text. In *Hombres de maíz* the indigenous narrative voice makes no effort to explain the magical reality to the Western reader. The magical reality is simply represented as real. In *El reino de este mundo*, on the other hand, the Western narrator attempts to represent the slaves' *real maravilloso* perspective without judging it as real or not. I argue that the narrator's non-committed positionality undermines the slaves' perspective: it renders it not believable. In order to make complete sense of this difference one needs to understand how *Hombres de maíz* is a transculturated text.

In *The Colonial Divide in Peruvian Narrative: Social Conflict and Transculturation* (2007) Misha Kokotovic draws on Ángel Rama's theory of transculturated literature to distinguish within indigenist Peruvian literature that relies solely on Western narrative forms and that indigenist literature that incorporates an indigenous narrative form.<sup>38</sup> According to Rama, the critical difference between these two literatures is that the latter works "were intended as a means of contesting elite definitions and dominations of the Latin American nation-state," one constructed on a

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<sup>38</sup> Kokotovic provides a review of the term "transculturation" beginning with the Cuban Fernando Ortiz in the 1930s, to Ángel Rama's rearticulation of the term in the 1970s, and its relationship to Cornejo Polar's theory of "heterogeneous literature."

Western modernity (9). Given that the construction of the modern Latin American nation-states according to European models during the 19<sup>th</sup> century has depended directly upon the ruthless exploitation of the indigenous population—as I have demonstrated in the introduction—, Kokotovic proposes that, “By drawing in part on autochthonous sources for their formal innovations, transcultural narratives challenge such subordination and dependence, and pose the possibility of an alternative modernity rooted in Latin America’s subordinated popular cultures” (15). Rama’s “narrative transculturation,” then is a useful tool for explaining the critical difference between *Hombres de maíz*, on the one hand, and the indigenist texts such as, *Entre la piedra y la cruz*, and even Carpentier’s *El reino de este mundo*.

*Hombres de maíz* is different than the indigenist texts of Monteforte Toledo and the *real maravilloso* texts of Carpentier, because it rearticulates Quiché-Mayan myths found in the *Popol Vuh* and represents the magical events as real and having their own rationality. Indigenous cultural practices and beliefs are not represented as incompatible with modernity, as in *Entre la piedra y la cruz*, nor is the magical reality represented as an irrational “pre-modern” folklore. I will demonstrate that the narrative perspective that constructs the magical as real, as Larena argues, is dependent upon the text’s transculturality. In other words, the indigenous narrative voice in *Hombres de maíz* is made possible, because the novel is written by utilizing the Quiché-Mayan mythology. It is only by analyzing the indigenous narrative forms that one may understand how the novel rearticulates indigenous Guatemalan culture as central to the *national*.

### **A Brief Summary of the Texts**

Both published in 1949, *Entre la piedra y la cruz* and *Hombres de maíz* are both concerned with how the Liberal dictatorships affected the indigenous communities economically, politically, and culturally. *Entre la piedra y la cruz* is set during a twenty-four year period, beginning with the fall of the Liberal dictator Manuel José Estrada Cabrera in 1920 and ending with the overthrow of Jorge Ubico in 1944, the last Liberal dictator. The conflict in the novel is the following: after failing to pay off a usurious loan, Tol Matzar, a Tzutuhil Indian, along with his family, is forced to work off the debt on a coffee plantation owned by Don Herman, a Ladino of German stock. Once on the plantation, Don Herman's son, Franz, rapes Matzar's daughter, Andrea, in the presence of her younger brother and protagonist of the novel, Lu/Pedro. José Escobar, a Ladino cattle rancher, provides Matzar money to pay off his debt so he may leave the plantation, pay a lawyer to charge Franz with rape, and send Lu to live with a Ladino family, the Castellanos. It is in the home of the Castellanos, located in the capital city, that Lu begins the process of acculturation, a transition symbolized by his taking on a Ladino name, Pedro. In an effort to help his community, he becomes a rural school-teacher in an indigenous community. The poverty and state bureaucracy prove too great and he becomes disillusioned. After joining the military, he rises in the ranks and becomes the commander of the province where Don Herman's coffee plantation is located, abuses his authority, and takes to drinking. Though he loses desire for change, he frees two revolutionaries after having captured them and is imprisoned and sentenced to death because of it. It is this action, however, that saves his life as these same men free him from prison, and he participates in the overthrow of Ubico's successor generals in 1944. Wounded in

battle, he is tended to by Margarita Castellanos, the Ladina daughter of Don Castellanos. In the final scene the narrator suggests that they are in love and will marry.

*Hombres de maíz* takes place during a longer period of time, beginning in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, roughly around the 1890s, and ending in the 1940s. In the first pages of the novel, the central conflict is made clear: Gaspar Ilóm, an indigenous *cacique*, goes to war against Ladinos who are enclosing his land, burning off the flora, and commodifying corn, sacred to Ilóm and his people. After successfully battling against the Ladinos, Ilóm is poisoned and though he cleanses himself by drinking a river, his men-at-arms are surprised and murdered. Finding himself without his men and his wife, La Piojosa Grande, who has fled with his son, Ilóm commits suicide. It is the destruction of the equilibrium that existed between Gaspar Ilóm, his people, and the land of Ilóm, that in the following sections will be rearticulated as the cultural loss suffered by indigenous men whose wives have abandoned them. In this symbolic field, María Tecún, an indigenous woman, abandons Goyo Yic, her blind husband, because he is unable to provide economically for her and their children. In an effort to find her, Yic regains his eyesight, sets out in search of her while supporting himself as a street vendor, but after becoming a habitual drunk, he is eventually arrested for selling alcohol illegally and sent to prison, a fortress built by the Spanish during colonial times. The novel moves on to Dionosio Nicho Aquino, a *Ladinoized* indigenous postman, whose wife has fallen into a well and died. Believing that she has run away, Aquino gets drunk in a tavern, imprisoned, beaten by soldiers, and told by Ladino authorities to forget about his wife and do his job. As he is on his way to

deliver the mail to the capital, Aquino follows an old man who tells him that he knows how to find his wife. Once he follows the old man, Aquino finds himself in the underworld, transformed into a coyote, his *nahual*, and the old man is now revealed to be the Curandero-Venado de las siete rozas. After forcing him to burn the mail, the Venado de las siete rozas shows him where Gaspar Ilóm lays and explains to him who La Piojosa Grande and María Tecún are. During this same period, Aquino has fled the Ladino authorities, taken to working in a hotel, and ferries people to visit the inmates in the prison where Goyo Yic is held. On one of these trips, he takes María Tecún who is going to visit her son, named Goyo Yic like his father, who is also imprisoned in the same fortress as his father for rebelling against a plantation owner. María Tecún is now reunited with her son and with Goyo Yic. After released from prison, Goyo Yic, María Tecún, and Yic, return with their whole family to Pisigüilito.

***Guatemaltequidad in Entre la piedra y la cruz and Hombres de maíz***

*Entre la piedra y la cruz*, as Vallejo's *El Tungsteno* and Icaza's *Huasipungo*, is a rigorous critique of the displacement and economic exploitation of indigenous communities. The novel demonstrates that the "modern" nation-state established by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Guatemalan Liberals is in *actuality* a dictatorship based on feudal non-capitalistic relations of production: the Ladino feudal lords forcibly hold the majority indigenous population in a state of servitude. Unlike the aforementioned Andean novels, in *Entre la piedra y la cruz* the indigenous characters are not one-dimensional but individualized and psychologically complex (Arias 1998, 87). Notwithstanding the complexity of the indigenous characters, the novel constructs indigenous languages, religion, and cultural practices as *incompatible* with the

formation of a democratic nation-state. Indigenous Guatemalans, as represented by the main character Lu/Pedro Matzar, must reject their own languages and religion and adopt Spanish and a Western rationality as their own. In other words, the formation of a truly democratic nation-state—a Liberal democracy not just in name but in practice—is only possible by the establishment of capitalist relations of production and the Ladinización of the indigenous population.

In a similar fashion, *Hombres de maíz* is also a rigorous critique of the exploitation of the indigenous communities of Guatemala. Indeed, the novel's opening chapters directly criticize and denounce the enclosures of indigenous communal lands by the Liberal dictatorship at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. That the novel begins during this period of extreme conflict is not superfluous. As David Viñas has argued, the Latin American Liberal dictatorships were founded upon the enclosure and privatization of indigenous land and the forced transformation of the indigenous population into peons on newly established plantations.<sup>39</sup> In directly criticizing the foundation of the Liberal dictatorships, *Hombres de maíz* criticizes not only the enclosures, war, and subsequent indigenous servitude, but also questions the validity of a Liberal Western modernity, one founded precisely on racial inequality and class exploitation. Indigenous languages, religion, and cultural practices are therefore not constructed as incompatible with modernity as in *Entre la piedra y la cruz*. To the

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<sup>39</sup> Particularities arose in each country. For example, Julio Argentino Roca's Patagonian campaign in Argentina was more akin to the U.S. wars of indigenous extermination, the so called "Indian Wars." In Guatemala extermination was not an option given the large indigenous population and their strenuous defense of their lands.

contrary, indigenous Guatemalans and their languages and religion are constructed as indispensable in the construction of a truly national *guatemaltequidad*.

It is possible to interpret the opposing representations of the national—Ladino-Western in *Entre la piedra y la cruz*; Indigenous-Mayan in *Hombres de maíz*—as evidence of an irreconcilable historical moment. However, I propose that these contradictory propositions demonstrate that the 1944 revolution ushered in a period of nominal freedoms, one in which a more inclusive *guatemaltequidad* was not only being imagined but was also possible. Stated differently, the novels demonstrate that progressive, albeit problematic, constructions of *guatemaltequidad* were circulating during this period of democratic rule, a period that was only brought to an end by the U.S. imperialist intervention in 1954.

### **Wars, Enclosures, Servitude and Resistance in *Entre la piedra y la cruz* and *Hombres de maíz***

José Carlos Mariátegui declared that Peru's feudal socio-economic system was expressed in two forms: "latifundio y servidumbre" (47). The same analysis may be applied to the Guatemalan socio-economic system that existed during the 1920s to the 1940s and that is so aptly represented in *Entre la piedra y la cruz*, particularly in the section titled, "Costa." It is in this section that the reader is introduced to the workings of a coffee plantation, brutal working conditions, and physical violence inflicted upon the indigenous peons, all legalized by the Liberal State. The reader is also introduced to the lifestyle of the Ladino planter class who spend their time eating, hunting, and socializing among themselves when on the plantation. For the majority of the year, however, they live and study in Europe, some in the U.S. The coffee plantation and



forced indigenous labor, Mariátegui's "latifundio y servidumbre," are the foundation of the Ladino wealth and political power as represented in the novel.

In *Entre la piedra y la cruz* the planters consider themselves "capitalists," as the developers of the Guatemalan infrastructure, and as elites equipped to lead the state; yet, a close examination of the novel reveals that they are what Eric Hobsbawm labeled "feudal businessmen" (1954, 41). They are feudal because the relations of production on the plantation constitute "a general ensemble of extra-economic coercions [that] weigh ... on the peasantry, absorbing a good part of its economic surplus" (Laclau, 1977, 28).<sup>40</sup> Though a feudal lord on the Guatemalan plantation, the planter is also a businessman because he participates in the world capitalist market: he sells agricultural commodities to capitalists in industrial countries. Ideologically, the planters interpret their own role not as what they are—feudal oppressors—but, as already mentioned, capitalist elites "modernizing" the Guatemalan economy.

Don Federico Magaña and don Herman, owners of the plantations Las Conchas and Las Dalias respectively, exemplify the planter class ideology: they represent themselves as enlightened capitalists leading an economic miracle that benefits not only them but the indigenous peons on their plantations. Don Magaña, for example, argues that the planter class is the engine of modernization: "Los hijos ya serán agricultores evolucionados y los nietos formarán una generación de verdaderos técnicos" (78). Although Magaña does not bother to specify how his children will be "modern" planters, it is clear that he believes that the acquisition of farming

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<sup>40</sup> In the Guatemalan case, as in other Latin American countries with large indigenous populations, the economic surplus absorbed during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century amounted to more than a "good part."

“techniques” will undoubtedly lead to a “modern” economy. Don Herman goes a step further and makes it clear that his model is the German planter: “En Alemania el finquero es un verdadero señor” (68). Based on their declarations, it is apparent that either they take it for granted that they are “modernizing” the economy, or they are attempting to imitate models from industrial countries. Notwithstanding the proclamations of Magaña and Herman, in my analysis I will demonstrate that the coffee producing landowners, as a class, are incapable of modernizing the Guatemalan economy.

To be clear, the planters’ economic wealth is based on coercive feudal relations of production; consequently, they are incapable of modernizing the economic infrastructure. As already mentioned, the planters are feudal businessmen who only participate in capitalist relations at the level of exchange but not at the level of production. According to them, the critical role in running a profitable plantation lies in the market, because it is in the sphere of exchange that they compete in selling their commodity—coffee—with other planters. It is for this reason that don Herman declares that, “Si usted se viene a enterrar aquí [las fincas], pierde la vision commercial que necesita para vender bien su café” (67). The plantation, as he makes clear, is a place that clouds his business acumen, because it prevents him from obtaining a good price for his coffee. In fact, living in the plantation, as he so describes it, is akin to being “buried,” completely cut off from the market. To be sure, don Herman is correct in claiming that he must keep a sharp eye on the market, after all he is competing with other planters at the level of exchange. However, in positioning the market as the foundational source of his wealth and the plantation at a

secondary level, don Herman is misinterpreting reality: it is by forcing the indigenous peons to work without monetary compensation that he is able to extract such extraordinary amounts of profit; the market is of secondary importance.

Notwithstanding don Herman's privileging of the market, the novel demonstrates that the plantation and accompanying coercive apparatus is the source of his wealth. As such, I now turn to an analysis of the plantation.

The plantation owners, even when on the plantations, are not interested in managing them, preferring instead to leave in charge the administrators, resulting in a system that is ineffective and corrupt. For example, don Magaña, the aforementioned Ladino planter, pretends to examine the accounting books, because, "si no ... hago como que los examino, el año entrante no me robará cuarenta sino ochenta quintales" (*ibid*). Magaña, undoubtedly, takes it as a given that his administrators will steal from him or, as he nonchalantly declares, "Es un asunto de matemáticas" (*ibid*). In reducing the systemic corruption to a simple matter of business mathematics, Magaña demonstrates that the planter class is not qualified to run the production of coffee, the country's most important industry.

For their part, the administrators not only steal from their employers like Magaña, but they also replicate their behavior: they do the minimum amount of "administrating," leaving the day-to-day operations in the hands of the overseers. For example, don Perucho, the administrator of Las Dalías, conspires with his overseer to steal coffee so that, "al fin de la cosecha lo vendemos por separado y puede ser que nos paguen hasta veinte dólares" (62). Not to be outdone himself and knowing that don Perucho "iba cada vez menos a la plantación," the overseer prepares "la manera

de que algunos quintales de café se extraviasen” (*ibid*). Based on the foregoing, it is clear that corruption and inefficiency are the norm in the management of the plantation: it is not a modern management system. Besides being a corrupt and inefficient system, it is also based on the servitude that Mariátegui so well described and analyzed in Peru.

The “Reglamento de Jornaleros” of 1877 legalized the “recruitment” of temporary “workers” for work on coffee plantations, specifically during the harvest period, and though wages were “guaranteed,” they were not paid. In *Entre la piedra y la cruz* the repercussions of the “Reglamento” are clearly represented: indigenous Guatemalans are forced to work on the plantations without pay or legal recourse. Chindo, an indigenous “worker” on the plantation Las Dalias, clearly explains the situation: “La cosa es tenerte de los huevos para que sigás trabajando aquí” (63). Given that the “Reglamento” stipulates that wages should be paid, the planters “hold them by the balls,” as Chindo so aptly declares, by forcing them to buy overpriced foodstuffs in order to keep them in “debt.” Besides forcing them to labor on the plantations, the indigenous “workers” endure terrible conditions on the fields and in the plantation “housing.”

It is made clear in the novel that the malaria, parasites, snake bites, inhospitable sleeping quarters, lack of restrooms or sewage system, long hours and arduous work translate into a short lifespan for the indigenous peons forced to labor under such conditions. The plantation owners and administrators treat the indigenous peons as *instrumentum vocale*—a tool that talks—and, consequently, as expendable objects that are easily replaceable. The most poignant example of this logic involves

Anastasio Xitamul, a peon on Las Dalias, who after suffering a snakebite “cae exámine, echando espuma por la boca” (64) and promptly dies. Don Perucho, the aforementioned administrator, registers Xitamul’s death in his ledger as a “normal” occurrence and declares, “No hay novedad” (*ibid*). Don Perucho is, in fact, correct: nothing out of the ordinary has happened. Xitamul will simply be replaced by one of the “nuevos peones lozanos y sonrientes, que contrastaban con los colonos de la costa, derrotados por la desidia y consumidos por la malaria y los parásitos” (73). Knowing what awaits them, many peons decide to take matters into their own hands by fleeing the plantation.

Antonio Xiquín’s capture and torture after fleeing Las Dalias for a second time demonstrates two things: first, fleeing is not a useful form of resistance; secondly, indigenous men are kept in servitude through the deployment of coercive strategies, the most extreme being torture. Chindo, once again, explains why many men decide to flee: “Si te dan algo te apuntan lo que debés, y si abonás algo a tu deuda, también te apuntan lo que debés” (63). While being interrogated by Franz, the son of don Herman, Xiquín echoes Chindo’s words: “Señor, yo he trabajado aquí cuatro años y ni por más que pago se acaba mi deuda” (86). Given that Franz is not one to listen to what an “indio” has to say, Xiquín unequivocally states: “Vos no sabés bien de la finca, señor” (86). In telling Franz that he does not understand how the plantation works, Xiquín is affirming his *own* knowledge of the plantation. Moreover, in switching from the “señor” of his first statement to the “vos” of the second statement, Xiquín effectively places himself at the same social level as Franz. Needless to say, Xiquín pays dearly for his courage and is beaten badly by Franz, the administrator,

and the overseer, but he remains resolute “para volver a huir” (87). Xiquín’s case demonstrates that the “Reglamento” of 1877 gave the planter class the legal authority to use any coercive method they saw fit to maintain the indigenous peons in servitude. In doing so, the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Liberal State effectively negated an indigenous person’s right to legal recourse and, consequently, left them vulnerable to the most obscene abuses.

Franz’s rape of Andrea Matzar, Tol Matzar’s teenage daughter, and escape to Germany proves that indigenous peons have no legal recourse against the planter class even in the most egregious of crimes, such as rape. As the episode involving Antonio Xiquín demonstrates, Franz understands that his power and wealth depend on the brutal repression of the peons. In fact, when Conchita, don Federico Magaña’s daughter, rebukes him for beating Xiquín, an untroubled Franz explains that, “Estas empresas no se han formado sin violencia” (88). Clearly, Franz understands that the plantation system requires violence, and that legally he is empowered to deploy that violence. Based on this logic, Franz also understands that he will not be legally prosecuted for sexual crimes against indigenous women. For example, upon seeing Andrea during a public celebration, Franz “extend[i]o la mano con voracidad [y] le apretó un pecho hasta hacerla gemir” (71). Knowing of the dangers involved in arguing or fighting with the owner of the plantation, the other indigenous women “inicia[n] la fuga hacia la cocina” (*ibid*). Andrea is only able to run away because they are in a public space, but she is unable to do so when Franz tracks her down in a secluded area and rapes her. Once the news of her rape spreads among the men,

Matzar “se dejaba conducir, empujado por los demás, *sin fe en los jueces ladinos*” (95, emphasis mine). Matzar is proved correct: the authorities do not prosecute Franz.

As the foregoing has demonstrated, the planter class claim that as “capitalists” they are “modernizing” Guatemala’s economy is contradicted by their mismanagement of the plantations, the repressive tactics utilized to force the indigenous peons to labor without monetary compensation, and the egregious crimes they commit against the indigenous men and women, such as rape. In the same manner that I applied Mariátegui’s analysis of Peru’s economy to Guatemala from the 1920s to the 1940s, the Guatemala represented in the novel, I also apply his claim that, “en el Perú no hemos tenido, en cien años de república, una verdadera clase burguesa, una verdadera clase capitalista” (47) to Guatemala. In fact, Mariátegui aptly describes don Magaña, don Herman, and the other planters when he writes: “La antigua clase feudal –camuflada o disfrazada de burguesía republicana—ha conservado sus posiciones” (*ibid*). The power of *Entre la piedra y la cruz*, then, lies in its power to remove the ideological “camouflage” deployed by the Guatemalan planters and represent their real source of economic and political power: the “latifundio y servidumbre.”

As I demonstrated in the introduction, the plantation system represented in *Entre la piedra y la cruz*—the foundation of coffee production—was established during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Liberals of this period, the precursors of don Magaña and don Herman, proposed that in “modernizing” the economy they would bring Guatemala into the community of “modern” nations. As positivists they argued that, “La paz [era] la armonía necesaria para la convivencia de los hombres en sociedad, un

principio unificador ... sin el cual no podría existir el bienestar, el progreso, la seguridad, la libertad y el orden” (Torres Valenzuela 2000, 53). Ever sure of themselves, the Liberals considered themselves the guarantors of that “harmonious peace,” the foundation of the “liberty” they enthusiastically clamored for. This optimism is evident in the writings of none other than the author of “Nuestra América,” José Martí.

After arriving in Guatemala in April of 1877, Martí was given a professorship at the Escuela Normal where he taught among other disciplines, literature (*ibid*, 163). Though his stay in Guatemala was brief, Martí offers an enthusiastic endorsement of the Liberal regime: “se exploran los ríos, se tienden los carriles, levántanse institutos, *leen los indios, acuden los extranjeros, improvisan su fortuna*” (qtd in Torres Valenzuela, 167, emphasis mine). The Liberals, if we believe Martí, have established a “harmonious peace”: the Indians are being educated, the expertise of foreigners is being put to use, the natural resources are being explored, and the modern infrastructure is being built. Yet, it is possible to ask: did Martí “observe” all of these wondrous events? Surely he observed the foreigners in the capital where he was based; for example, German and English engineers working on the railroads. However, *did he observe Indians being educated?* As pointed out in the introduction, Justo Rufino Barrios and Miguel García Granados, the two most important Liberal *cafetaleros*, began a period of wars and enclosures that were critical in forming the plantation system represented in *Entre la piedra y la cruz*. I now turn to an analysis of *Hombres de maíz*, a novel that is concerned precisely with the foundation of the Liberal dictatorship.



In the opening pages of *Hombres de maíz* the reader is thrust into the turbulent late 19<sup>th</sup> century, a historical moment marked not by harmony, as Martí suggests, but by discord and war. *Hombres de maíz*, perhaps better than any other Guatemalan novel, contests the landowners “peculiar capacidad silenciadora para negar la violencia que subyace a la *instauración del estado liberal*, y ... su ejercicio de la censura ante *los problemas vinculados a sus propios orígenes*” (Viñas 1983, 17 emphasis mine). *Hombres de maíz*, I propose, challenges the Liberal regime’s erasure of its origins. In bringing to the foreground the Liberal regime’s foundational violence, the novel effectively questions the Liberal’s espoused modernity. To wit, the novel proposes a fundamental question: Is it possible for indigenous Guatemalans to participate in the Liberal State? In my analysis I will demonstrate that the novel rejects that possibility because the State is founded precisely upon the exclusion, repression, and murder of indigenous Guatemalans.

Before entering into a detailed analysis of the text, I will demonstrate that the novel begins in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Gerald Martin in the *Edición crítica de las obras completas: Hombres de maíz* (1981) demonstrates that, “La primera parte de la novela [Gaspar Ilóm] relata la incursión de los ladinos en tierras comunales entre 1871 y el comienzo del siglo actual” (clxix). Martin bases his declaration on the text itself: “las fechas del comienzo de la novela son bastante precisas, pues Benito Ramos, ya viejo, informa a Hilario: «Yo vide arder los montes de Ilóm, a comienzo de siglo» (pág. 185)” (clxx).

Not satisfied with the text itself, Martin took the time to research Guatemalan newspapers to corroborate the historical accuracy of the events that take place in

*Hombres de maíz*. As it turns out, Martin did find a historical event that not only took place at the turn of the century but that involved a Gaspar Hijom. The article, which he found in *El Imparcial*, is worth quoting at length:

Queremos referirnos a las tierras de Ilóm, a donde el año 1900 se presentó un grupo de jóvenes, armados de herramientas, para tomar posesión de los lotes con que el Ministerio de Fomento les había agraciado. Tras largos días de abrirse paso a la lucha ruda con las asperezas del suelo y las malezas de las montañas .... Pronto vino el segundo obstáculo, la oposición hostil de los naturales. Cuando se percataron de que la planta del ladino arraigaría en su territorio, *profanando su sagrado atraso*, el cacique Gaspar Hijom levantó la protesta, apoyado por todos los habitantes allí diseminados. Este cacique también oficiaba de brujo y la temeridad de su doble poder impulsó a suprimirlo del mundo, al secretario municipal, Ricardo Estrada, que le propinó estricnina, según de autos seguidos por la autoridad correspondiente. cited in Martin, 1981 (clxxi-clxxii)

Gaspar Hijom and Ricardo Estrada, the historical figures, were involved in a struggle over property rights and sovereignty, one that was critical in the formation of the economic and political system of Guatemala. In representing this historical conflict *Hombres de maíz* allows us to analyze the long historical process of enclosures that began in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and rapidly accelerated with the formation of the Liberal dictatorship in 1871. While Martin may be correct in claiming that “la mayoría de los lectores de *Hombres de maíz*” would be surprised to learn “que su punto de partida es un hecho concreto sacada de la realidad histórica” (*ibid*), it would only be so to a reader unversed in Guatemalan history.

Gaspar Ilóm’s men, as represented in the first four sections of the novel, for example, link their current war against the maiceros, Ladinos enclosing indigenous communal lands, to a larger struggle over land and sovereignty. For example, the narrator tells us that, “Así decían los indios más viejos ... O: El Avilantaro arrancó los

aretes de oro de las orejas de los señores” (26). The old men clearly link the current war to the earliest wars against the Iberian and Nahuatl invaders. Gerald Martin, the aforementioned critic, interprets the old men’s reference to Alvarado to mean that “cada vez que se verifica una nueva incursión económica o cultural en territorios indígenas, la conquista se inicia de nuevo” (1981, clxx). Martin’s claim, unfortunately, erases the vast differences between the wars of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and those of late 19<sup>th</sup> century; moreover, it implies that the men interpret the current struggle in identical terms. Though the reader may accuse me of making unnecessary distinctions, I wish to emphasize that no proof exists to suggest that the old men fail to distinguish between their current historical moment and the wars of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>41</sup> Surely, the old men apply their description of Alvarado and his men to Coronel Chalo Godoy and his mounted men, but they do so to draw upon their collective historical memory as a source of inspiration to continue fighting.

The importance of *Entre la piedra y la cruz* and *Hombres de maíz* is not limited to their critique of the Liberal economic and political system. The novels, in fact, do not only criticize the Liberal dictatorship; they are also concerned with the role that indigenous Guatemalans play in Guatemalan society. I now turn to an analysis of how the indigenous Guatemalans and their cosmology are represented in the two novels.

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<sup>41</sup> As my reader has surely noticed, I previously cited Martin’s *Edición crítica de las obras completas de Miguel Ángel Asturias: Hombres de maíz* (1981) as evidence that the novel’s first sections are set in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, I feel it necessary to correct Martin as he too often conflates the early 16<sup>th</sup> century and the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**Indigenous Cosmologies, Western Rationality, and Assimilation in *Entre la piedra y la cruz* and *Hombres de maíz***

In my analysis of how *Entre la piedra y la cruz* and *Hombres de maíz* represent indigenous Guatemalans and their cosmology I intend to ask: *To what extent do the novels break with or affirm the positivist representations of indigenous Guatemalans? Do the novels affirm indigenous practices or their world-view as part of the new national identity being formed?* In the following pages I will demonstrate that the Ladino narrator in *Entre la piedra y la cruz* represents indigenous Guatemalans as able to reason and make sense of their world. Though they are represented as rational human beings, they are also represented as small farmers whose productive capacity is limited by their outdated farming techniques and “superstitious” religious beliefs. Put differently, indigenous Guatemalans are capable of reason, but their cosmology hinders their capacity to participate in the modern democratic state established in 1944, the year the novel ends. Indigenous cosmology, then, must be supplanted by a Western-Ladino cosmology in the same way that a true democratic state and capitalist relations of production must supplant the Liberal dictatorship and semi-feudal relations of production. Because indigenous cosmology is represented as non-modern, indigenous Guatemalans must reject it and assimilate to the dominant Western-Ladino cosmology. *Hombres de maíz* is different. In it indigenous cosmology is not an obstacle to the “modernization” of indigenous Guatemalans, but a form of resisting Ladino exploitation. Moreover, *Hombres de maíz* incorporates and re-articulates important concepts of Mayan-Quiché cosmology found in the *Popol Vuh*.

In its totality, *Entre la piedra y la cruz* represents a literary intervention in the Ladino debate regarding national identity and the “assimilation” of the Indian that took place after the 1944 Revolution. As Arias argues, “Monteforte ... busca entender cómo piensa, cómo se define frente a los ladinos, frente a su espacio ecológico-social, cómo opera su identidad” (87). Given that the novel is in great part an analysis of indigenous communities and how to assimilate them into Ladino society, the narrator plays an important role in representing the indigenous characters and *presenting* them to the implied Ladino reader. Because the novel promotes assimilation, the Ladino narrator *must* represent the indigenous characters as rational. In doing so the novel breaks with Guatemalan literature of the 1930s that represented indigenous Guatemalans as “primitive,” “barbarous,” and “irrational.” Moreover, the novel also breaks with *indigenista* novels such as, *El tungsteno* (1931) and *Huasipungo* (1934), which directly denounced the exploitation of indigenous communities. In order to better demonstrate how the representation of indigenous Guatemalans as rational beings is a radical innovation in the 1940s, I will briefly analyze the representation of indigenous Peruvians in César Vallejo’s classic social realist novel that denounces the oppression of the Peruvian Indian, *El tungsteno* (1931).<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> I have chosen to utilize *El tungsteno*, because it is a progressive social realist novel that specifically denounces the exploitation of indigenous Peruvians. No such novel had been written in Guatemala during the 1930s. To the contrary, during the 1930s, Guatemalan authors such as, Flavio Herrera, wrote *indianista* novels in which Sarmiento’s Manichean opposition between “Civilization vs. Barbarism” was utilized to represent indigenous Guatemalans as “savage barbarians.” These *indianista* novels supported the Liberal oligarchic dictatorship. In fact, it is only in 1938 that Monteforte’s own novel, the aforementioned *Anaité*, provides a different representation of indigenous Guatemalans than the one found in *indianista* novels.

The Western narrator in *El tungsteno* represents the fictional indigenous community—Soras—as too “childlike” to understand the concept of private property. Upon the arrival of the Mining Society, a U.S. corporation, and their non-indigenous representatives to their small village, the Soras admire them “con cierta curiosidad infantil” (1958, 32). Because of their “childish curiosity,” “Los soras se sentían atraídos al bazar, como ciertos insectos a la luz” (36). The narrator renders the Soras as simple-minded children that such common objects as cigarette matches inspire them with awe. It is not surprising then that José Marino, the Mining Society’s labor recruiter and bazar owner, is able to trick the Soras into selling him their land in exchange for simple trinkets. The narrator states that after exchanging his land for a simple bottle, “El sora no se había dado cuenta de si esa operación ... era justa o injusta” (37). The Sora only knew “que Marino quería su terreno y se lo cedió” (*ibid*). In order to make it clear that the Sora does not understand the concepts of private property and exchange, the narrator adds: “La otra parte de la operación –el recibo de garrafa—la imaginaba el sora como separada e independiente de la primera” (*ibid*). As the foregoing has made abundantly clear, the Soras with their “mentes burdas y salvajes” (36) are incapable of understanding the concepts of private property and exchange. As the next example will demonstrate, they are also incapable of understanding the concept of waged-labor.

Representing them as incapable of understanding waged-labor, the narrator racializes the Soras as “pre-modern.” Waged-labor, the selling of one’s labor power in

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However, the novel still subscribes to racialized representations of indigenous Guatemalans as “morally superior.”

exchange for a wage, does not exist in the Sora community. The narrator claims that, “La conciencia económica de los soras era muy simple: mientras pudiesen trabajar y tuviesen cómo y dónde trabajar, para obtener lo justo y necesario para vivir, el resto no les importaba” (38). To be clear, to “work” in this citation does not mean to work for a wage but to obtain food and other staples by producing them. In other words, the Soras plant crops and raise domesticated animals but only for their own consumption. Given that waged labor does not exist in their community, the Soras are incapable of understanding the concept even when they participate in it. A Sora, for example, works on the miners’ worksite, but only because “quería agitarse y obrar y entretenerse, y nada más” (34). In fact, the narrator explains that the Sora is incapable of understanding the concept of a job: “El sora no entendía este lenguaje de ‘socorro’ ni de ‘cuánto quieres’. . . . Carecían en absoluto del sentido de la utilidad” (34). As may be imagined, the Soras quickly find themselves without land and in abject servitude, when confronted with modern relations of production.

César Vallejo wrote *El tungsteno* to protest the exploitation of indigenous Peruvians. However, as I have made clear, the novel’s narrator depicts the indigenous characters as simple-minded children incapable of rational thought. Arturo Usler-Pietri once described the indigenous characters in *Huasipungo* as “simples y monótonos,” a description equally applicable to the indigenous characters in *El tungsteno* (Usler Pietri, 1979, 143). In fact, it is possible that just as a reader could be moved to denounce the exploiters, another could conclude that the Soras are to blame for their exploitation. After all, it is the Soras who give away their land and work without accepting a wage. In the same way that one of the miners states, “Pero si los

mismos soras tienen la culpa. Son unos zonzos,” so too could a reader (38). Indeed, the narrator’s claims invoke the writings of Bartolomé de las Casas, the friar who claimed that his God had created Indians as, “las más simples, sin maldades ni dobleces, obedientísimas, fidelísimas a sus señores naturales y a los cristianos a quien sirven; más humildes, más pacientes, más pacíficas y quietas ... que hay en el mundo” (2005, 75-76). As the quote from Las Casas makes clear, there is a long tradition in Latin America in which non-indigenous writers denounce the exploitation of indigenous peoples but only by resorting to base representations of the indigenous communities they claim to defend. I now turn to an analysis of the narrator and his representation of the indigenous characters in *Entre la piedra y la cruz*.

The narrator in *Entre la piedra y la cruz* is one whose knowledge of Guatemalan society is not limited to Ladinos but extends to indigenous Guatemalans, specifically the Tzutuhil community. As in *El tungsteno*, he is not indigenous, but his knowledge of Tzutuhil customs, rituals, and social hierarchy means that he is able to represent the complexity of the community. As Arias points out, the narrator in *Entre la piedra y la cruz* strikes a didactic tone intending to “orientar al lector,” to educate him (1998, 78). The narrator’s characterization of the indigenous characters, then, is meant to “present” him to the implied reader, a Ladino. As the following pages will make clear, the narrator in *Entre la piedra y la cruz* represents a radical break with the narrator in *El tungsteno* and other indigenista novels of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Indigenous characters, such as Pop and Chavajay, provide accurate analyses of how Ladino government officials and their intermediaries conspire to force them into debt and servitude. Pop, for example, explains to his colleagues that the plantation



administrators hire Ladinos, such as Tacho Zeledón, to manipulate the exchange value of maize in their towns; first, by buying it from individual sellers at a higher price than the exchange value; secondly, by turning around and selling it only to those willing to pay for it by working on the coffee plantations. After learning that his friends have petitioned the local Ladino authority to stop this practice, Pop explains that, “Es de más ... El Tacho paga al señor jefe dos quetzales por cada quintal de maíz que vende. Y los mandamientos para conseguir peones también son pagados” (38). Pop is not the only one to provide an analysis of the illegal means the Ladinos employ to coerce them into debt and servitude. In fact, when a young townsman considers working on a coffee plantation, Chavajay warns him that, “Al llegar a las fincas te darán más pisto, y ropa y herramientas. Así te irás endeudando” (26). Without having worked on the plantation, Chavajay clearly understands the coercive methods utilized to hold indigenous men in servitude. In fact, he foreshadows Chindo’s analysis of the plantation when he warns, “Luego ya no te dejarán venir, y si te escapás te Mandan a capturar con los soldados y te regresan a pijazos” (*ibid*). The characters are presented as capable of analyzing the Ladino power structure and of making rational decisions in their private and public lives.

Tol Matzar demonstrates that he is a prudent and caring father, because he places his son’s well being ahead of his personal social standing. For example, in the Tzutuhil community married men may become a “Principal,” a leader in the community as the name implies, after having “prestado cuatro años de servicio a su pueblo” (30). After having completed his four years of service, Tol is offered the “cofradía” of San Agapito, “el pequeño santo con el cual se iniciaba como Principal”

(*ibid*). Tol Matzar, however, rejects the honor by flatly stating, “Yo soy pobre y tengo varios hijos. ... Yo respeto la palabra de ustedes mis padres; pero no puedo aceptar” (30). His reason for doing so is because he wants to provide his son, “lo que yo quiero que tenga” (27). Given that a married man’s social position in San Pedro is dependent on holding positions as a “cofrade,” Tol is sacrificing a position of honor and respect, not to mention the anger of the slighted Principales who “fruncieron los ceños” (30).

The narrator’s representation of Pop, Chavajal, and Tol as rational and complex characters represents a break with the overtly racialized representations found in *indigenista* novels such as, *El tungsteno*. As the foregoing has demonstrated, the Tzutuhils in *Entre la piedra y la cruz* are far from the characterization of the Soras as “las más simples, sin maldades ni dobleces.” Notwithstanding the radical representation of the indigenous characters, the narrator makes it clear that the indigenous characters—though they understand the oppression—are unable to mount a successful revolt against their oppressors. Xiquín, it should be remembered, plans to run away once he recovers from the beating and torture he is subjected to, but it is clear that his actions will not change the plantation system. Admirable though his courage and actions may be, they are simply not conducive to structural change. In order to understand how indigenous characters may effect structural change we must analyze the relationship between Lu/Pedro Matzar, the protagonist in the novel, and his father, Tol Matzar.

I interpret the conflict between Pedro, Lu now assimilated into the Ladino world-view, and Tol as an opposition meant to demonstrate to the Ladino reader two things; first, Tzutuhiles and other indigenous Guatemalans are as rational beings able

to assimilate to Ladino society; second, Pedro and other assimilated indigenous Guatemalans will be able to participate in civil society, one based on Western models, and effect structural change, while non-assimilated indigenous Guatemalans such as Tol will not. The novel, clearly, aims to educate the Ladino readership, such as Ladinos directly involved in state politics, by showing the necessity of assimilating the indigenous population. As it will be recalled, it is in the home of don Castellanos that Lu accepts to change his name to Pedro, a Ladino name, thereby symbolizing his incorporation into Ladino society and their Western world-view. I will now analyze how Pedro, once assimilated, interprets his father's economic livelihood and religious beliefs.

Once assimilated, Pedro is contemptuous of his father's small agricultural production methods, because they are not modern. After returning to his town for the first time after being interned in the Ladino school, Pedro makes it clear that he considers his father's fertilization method as obsolete and incompatible with modernity. Though his father's method—"Pero antes de arar metí unos chivos para que se cagaran entre la tierra cansada, y ahora el pedazo tiene mucha fuerza" (154)—clearly works, the narrator tells us that Pedro, "Sabía entrañablemente que en ninguna escuela del mundo enseñaban la ciencia que parecía la voz de la piedra" (*ibid*). True, the method of fertilization is not modern. Yet, Pedro's association of the method—"la ciencia"—to the "voice" of a "rock" is simplistic and quite troubling. The obvious implication is that indigenous communities are supposedly "immutable" in their traditions and livelihoods, a common trope in *indigenista* literature (Kokotovic, 2005, 40). Given his personal experience and education, it is striking that Pedro does not

take into consideration the role that the State has played in maintaining those methods of production. The Liberal dictatorship did not, as Pedro surely knows, invest in any modern agricultural techniques that would benefit the indigenous population. Because Pedro's analysis does not take into consideration his own personal experience and education, I can only interpret it as a sign to the Ladino reader that just as the oligarchic semi-feudal mode of production is incompatible with modernity, so too is the indigenous small agricultural production. In order to prove this, the narrator represents Tol as overtly hostile to science.

Tol's rejection of science signals to the Ladino reader that though capable of reasoning and assimilating to Ladino-Western culture, indigenous religious beliefs are incompatible with modernity. During the foregoing conversation, Tol asks Pedro if he knows where the grasshoppers that attack their crops come from, to which Pedro responds, "Sí, es un insecto migratorio cuyas larvas se incuban en forma de oruga," prompting the retort: "Así será el chapulín de otras partes. Pero yo hablo de nuestro chapulín" (154). Tol's angry response leaves Pedro no option but to declare, "¡Ah! No, tata, ese no sé de dónde viene" (*ibid*). The opposition between scientific and indigenous religious explanations (Tol utilizes a parable to explain the presence of the grasshoppers) of natural phenomena could not be starker. The implication is that if the State does not implement an assimilation program, indigenous Guatemalans will not only live in poverty, but they will obstruct the Revolutionary government's modernization project. According to this logic, Tol's rejection of science in favor of religious explanations of natural phenomena is an example of the problems that an

unassimilated indigenous population will cause. The assimilation of the indigenous population is therefore necessary.

The opposition between Pedro and Tol makes it clear that only an assimilated indigenous population may participate in effecting structural change. For example, in participating in the overthrow of General Juan Ponce (Jorge Ubico's designated successor), Pedro serves as a foil to the unassimilated indigenous Guatemalans who do not participate in the fighting. The narrator emphasizes Pedro's command of a group of Ladino revolutionaries: "Agáchense. Y dispáren en cuanto vean salir a cualquiera" (248). In fact, as one revolutionary puts it, he is wounded in battle, because "se ha portado como valiente" (255). Tol, as all unassimilated indigenous men, is completely absent from the fighting. Though the narrator does not let the reader know what the indigenous men such as, Tol, Chavajal, and Pop are doing during the 1944 Revolution, we may infer that they behave as they did during the overthrow of Estrada Cabrera in 1920. Upon learning that Estrada has been deposed, "Los indios pensaron en Tacho Zeledón, en los comandantes militares que les habían marcado las espaldas a palos y en los alcaldes aborígenes que enriquecieron vendiendo a sus hermanos" (41). Angry though they are, the narrator tells us that, "se emborracharon y repitieron en la lengua de los ladinos ... las palabras bellas que había sacado a flote la revolución: libertad para todos, unión, derechos del hombre" (*ibid*). Besides repeating these "beautiful" words "porque no había como decirlas en su propia lengua" (*ibid*), the indigenous men fail to take any other actions because, "No podían concebir que hubiese un sistema de vida distinto al que venían sufriendo en su carne ..." (41). The narrator makes it clear that unassimilated indigenous men are not able to participate in effecting structural

change, because they do not believe that the change will benefit them. Assimilated men, then, are the only ones able to participate in bringing about structural change.

Pedro's participation in the October Revolution of 1944 is represented as redemption for all indigenous Guatemalans including unassimilated ones, such as, his father. After having given up on being a school teacher to indigenous children, becoming a drunkard, and joining the military, Pedro's change is surely a personal redemption. Yet, the narrator insists that, "Pedro Matzar comprendió que para redimir a los suyos, abandonaba el dios de su padre y la casa de su padre" (254). Critics have not overlooked the importance of Pedro's representation as a redeemer. In an article titled, "Mario Monteforte Toledo y la problemática de identidad cultural en Guatemala" (2004), for example, Jorge Rogachevsky argues that the representation of Pedro functions to transform, "el paria guatemalteco ... en protagonista, y asume el papel redentor para salvar a una sociedad marcada por la violencia y la brutalización" (136). While Pedro is indeed represented as a redeemer, such a representation merits more analysis, because it is directly related to the *Guatemaltequidad* being proposed in the novel.

As Rogachevsky points out, Pedro is represented as a redeemer of his community, but his role as redeemer is specifically based on his rejection of the Tzutuhil language and cosmology. It is noteworthy that before redeeming himself, Pedro gives up on indigenous Guatemalans because, "se [le] desmoronaron los ideales indefensos, la fidelidad hacia su pueblo torpe, ignorante y feo, sin salvación mientras confiara en sus divinidades derrotadas, en su lengua arcaica, en su trabajo manual de siervo sin precio" (208). By intrinsically linking indigenous religion and language to

servitude, he is able to cast their language and cosmology as the cultural elements that prevent them from liberating themselves from their oppressors. Because indigenous languages and cosmologies, Tzutuhil and others, are an “impediment” to their liberation, they are also an “impediment” to the formation of the revolutionary nation-state. Without a doubt, *Entre la piedra y la cruz* privileges a nation built upon a Ladino-western cosmology and a European language, Spanish. Pedro’s claim that “para redimir a los suyos, abandonaba el dios de su padre y la casa de su padre” may only be interpreted to mean that he will work towards their assimilation to the Ladino-western cosmology and Spanish language.

*Entre la piedra y la cruz*, as the foregoing has shown, breaks with the Liberal-positivist racial logic that constructed indigenous Guatemalans as “primitive” people incapable of reasoning and unfit for democratic rule. The Tzutuhil characters in the novel are neither the “savages” found in Flavio Herrera’s *El tigre* (1934) nor the idealized “noble savages” found in *El tungsteno*. They are multifaceted and psychologically complex. In this way, the novel demonstrates that the so-called “el problema social del indio” functions to mystify the real problem: the Ladino dictatorship maintains the indigenous population in servitude. The novel, however, still upholds a racialized construction of indigenous language and cosmology, rendering them “deficient” and incompatible with a truly democratic nation-state. In this regard *Entre la piedra y la cruz* stands in stark contrast to *Hombres de maíz*.

*Hombres de maíz*, as *Entre la piedra y la cruz*, forms part of the Ladino discussion on national identity of the late 1940s. However, the novel does not promote the assimilation of the indigenous population to Ladino society. To the

contrary, it demonstrates how indigenous Guatemalans utilize not just their shotguns but also their cosmology to fight against the maiceros. Gaspar Ilóm and his men, as will be remembered, shoot down the maiceros, but they also depend on their *nahuales* to protect them during battle. Going further, the novel represents assimilation as not viable for indigenous liberation. Dionisio Aquino, the assimilated indigenous letter carrier, dies a miserable death, because he is completely cut off from his indigenous cosmology. Goyo Yic, on the other hand, is able to reunite with María Tecún, a symbol of indigenous culture and cosmology.

In *Entre la piedra y la cruz*, as I demonstrated above, the Ladino narrator plays an important role in explaining the customs of the Tzutuhil community, the exploitation they are subjected to, and the need for them to assimilate to Ladino society. In *Hombres de maíz* no such Ladino narrator exists. Instead, the narrative voice that organizes the text is not Western but indigenous. To be clear, the indigenous voice is not based on contemporary communities such as, the Tzutuhil, but on texts such as, the *Popol Vuh*. Nonetheless, it is equally valid as the Ladino narrator in *Entre la piedra y la cruz*. It is this indigenist narrative voice that sets *Hombres de maíz* apart from the racist indianista novels and from the indigenista novels that denounce the exploitation of indigenous peoples such as *El tungsteno*, *Huasipungo*, and *Entre la piedra y la cruz*.

As pointed out in the introduction, *Hombres de maíz* is often compared to *El reino de este mundo*, because it is assumed that *lo real maravilloso* and *el realismo mágico* are interchangeable. I will now briefly analyze Alejo Carpentier's *El reino de este mundo* to demonstrate that no such interchangeability exists. For example, in *El*



*reino de este mundo* a Western narrator represents two opposing perspectives; the slave owner's Cartesian perspective and the slave's marvelous perspective. In *Hombres de maíz* the indigenous narrative voice also represents two opposing perspectives: the indigenous world-view and the Ladino perspective. As the following will make clear, the Western narrator of *El reino de este mundo* fails to represent the marvelous reality as valid, as real, while the narrative voice in *Hombres de maíz* succeeds in rendering the magical reality as valid, as real.

The narrator in *El reino de este mundo* represents the slave-owner's world-view as well as the world-view of the slave. Alicia Llarena claims that, "es posible percibir los acontecimientos novelescos a través de esta doble perspectiva ... porque el narrador resuelve 'presentarnos' la historia sin complicidad, sin compromiso con ninguna de ellas" (155). In order to support her case, Llarena cites Juan Barroso, "el escritor esquiva ... equiparar la visión escéptica y racional del narrador omnisciente, con la de otros puntos de vista a los que se fluctúa para presentar el elemento mágico desde el ángulo crédulo" (cited in Llarena, *ibid*). According to this logic, the narrator does not privilege one or the other, preferring instead to hold his own rational judgment in abeyance. It is in this way that "el escritor evade la interpretación verosímil de las experiencias mágicas por el narrador omnisciente" (*ibid*). Though I agree with Llarena and Barroso that the narrator presents both world-views without claiming that one is *real* or *true* and the other *imagined* or *specious*, I argue that it is precisely this lack of privileging that renders *lo real maravilloso* in *El reino de este mundo* not believable. By examining the critical scene in which Mackandal is put to death, I will demonstrate that the narrator's lack of commitment to *lo real*

*marravilloso* effectively undermines that perspective. As an analysis of *Hombres de maíz* will show, the narrative voice must affirm the magical reality in order to render it believable, as valid.

An analysis of Mackandal's immolation proves that the Cartesian narrator fails to represent the cosmology of the slaves as valid. He narrates that though tied to a post, with the flames burning his legs, "Mackandal ... echando violentamente el torso hacia adelante. Sus ataduras cayeron, y el cuerpo del negro se espigó en el aire, volando por sobre las cabezas, antes de hundirse en las ondas negras de las masas de esclavos" (45). In a frenzied but joyful moment the slaves yell, "Mackandal sauvé!" because they believe that Mackandal has saved himself and "cumplido su promesa, permaneciendo en el reino de este mundo" (46). There is no room for doubt, Mackandal escapes from certain death, rejoins his followers, and continues to fight the slave-owners. The narrator does not doubt Mackandal's salvation, much less tell the reader directly, as would the narrator in *Entre la piedra y la cruz*, that the slaves are merely superstitious and irrational. The narrator, as Llarena and Barroso claim, simply narrates Mackandal's escape and transformation. Notwithstanding the narrator's rendering of the slave perspective, it is worth asking, *does the text place the slave's interpretation in doubt?* In order to answer this question, it is necessary to analyze the representation of the slave-owners perspective.

The narrator's rendition of how the slave-owners interpret the event, as should be expected, contradicts the slave's interpretation, but, more importantly, it places it in doubt: it renders it not believable. In fact, a close analysis of the text allows us to register a certain tension as the narrator attempts to present the slave-owner's

interpretation on an equal footing with that of the slave's without undermining either.

The narrator tells us that while the slaves celebrate Mackandal's freedom, the

following happens:

Y fue la confusión y el estruendo. Los guardias se lanzaron, a culatazos, sobre la negrada aullante .... *Y a tanto llegó el estrépito y la grito y la turbamulta, que muy pocos vieron que Mackandal, agarrado por diez soldados, era metido de cabeza en el fuego, y que una llama crecida por el pelo encendido ahogaba su último grito.* Cuando las dotaciones se aplacaron, la hoguera ardía normalmente .... Ya no había nada que ver. (45-46, emphasis mine)

In the "Prólogo" Carpentier claims that, "la sensación de lo maravilloso presupone una fe," because "Los que no creen en santos no pueden curarse con Milagros de santos"

(4). Though faithful, one is hard pressed to believe that Mackandal escapes. To begin with, the slaves do not witness Mackandal's immolation, because they are fighting the soldiers. Yet, the reason they are fighting the soldiers is because they are ecstatic that Mackandal flies away. One is forced to ask: *Does Mackandal free himself or is he burned alive? How is it possible that Mackandal frees himself if the soldiers burn him alive?* While Llarena and Barroso perhaps find such a question superfluous because the narrator "evade la interpretación verosímil de las experiencias mágicas," I propose that the novel effectively undermines the interpretation of the slaves.

I also propose that the representation of a marvelous reality as real requires a narrator from within that reality, one committed to validating it as real. As the analysis of *El reino de este mundo* has shown, a Cartesian narrator is not able to validate a different rationality, one alien to it and diametrically opposed to it.

Carpentier, it should be remembered, accused the French surrealists of creating their marvelous reality by resorting to "trucos de prestidigitación." Yet, does not the

rendering of both the slaves' and the slave-owners' interpretation of Mackandal's immolation rest on a sleight of hand? I believe I've proven that it does. I now turn to an analysis of *Hombres de maíz*, a novel in which the narrative voice is from within, one that validates the magical reality of the novel.

Upon first reading *Hombres de maíz*, a Cartesian reader finds herself in a fictive world that does not correspond to her reality. To make matters worse for the Cartesian reader, the narrative voice does not provide an interpretation of events that fits within a Western conception of rationality as does the narrator in *El reino de este mundo*. No effort is made to orient or educate the reader as the Ladino narrator in *Entre la piedra y la cruz*. For example, the text opens with the Land of Ilóm rebuking Gaspar Ilóm for his inaction: "El Gaspar Ilóm deja que a la tierra de Ilóm le roben el sueño ... le boten los párpados con hacha ... le chaumusquen la ramazón ..." (11). Because of this destruction, the Land of Ilóm declares that, "Empezará la guerra el Gaspar Ilóm arrastrado por su sangre, por su río, por su habla de ñudos ciegos" (12). The Land of Ilóm's rebuke of Gaspar and command that he go to war against the Ladino-maiceros immediately places the reader within a world in which an indigenous cosmology operates, one that requires the Cartesian reader to hold in abeyance her Western rationality.

The narrative voice plays a critical role in rendering the indigenous cosmology and world-view as real. As my analysis of *El reino de este mundo* demonstrated, the Cartesian narrator's attempt to represent the cosmologies of the slave and slave-owner on equal footing is ineffective: the slave's is rendered as not believable. In *Hombres de maíz*, to the contrary, the narrative voice validates the indigenous world-view and

perspective. For example, the narrative voice affirms the Land of Ilóm's claim that the maiceros are destroying the flora: "De entrada se llevaron los maiceros por delante con sus quemas y sus hachas en selvas abuelas de la sombra, doscientas mil jóvenes ceibas de mil años" (*ibid*). The destruction is so vast that the narrative voice declares: "El aire de Ilóm olía a tronco de árbol recién cortado con hacha, a ceniza de árbol recién quemado por la roza" (13). By verifying the claims made by the Land of Ilóm as true, the narrative voice validates the reality of the indigenous cosmology: the Land of Ilóm does indeed communicate with Gaspar Ilóm. In the text, however, it is not only the narrative voice that validates the indigenous characters and their extraordinary powers as real, but the Ladinos too.

The Ladino characters involved in the war confirm Gaspar's ability as a leader, tactician, and, more importantly, his ability to perform extraordinary actions. In describing his own abilities as a man-at-arms, Coronel Chalo Godoy explains to Subteniente Secundino Musús how difficult it is to fight against Gaspar and his men: "La guerrilla es igual al fuego de la roza. Se le ataja por un lado y asoma por otro" (93). Moreover, he makes it clear that what truly makes Gaspar such a difficult opponent are his extraordinary powers: "Y no es mentira. Una vez lo vi arrancar un árbol de jocote, con sólo quedársele mirando, obra de su pensamiento, de su fuerza, y agarrarlo como escoba de patio para barrer con todos mis hombres, basuritas parecían los soldados, los caballos, las municiones..." (94). As a high-ranking Ladino in the dictatorship's military charged with killing the Indians of Ilóm, Coronel Chalo Godoy has no reason to make up stories about Gaspar, especially ones which his commanders would find absurd. His testimony—lest we take him for a madman—proves that

Gaspar does have powers that give him an advantage over the Coronel. Lenormand de Mezy, it should here be remembered, does not believe in Voudoux. To reiterate, the narrative voice renders the magical reality as real, and the Coronel experiences that reality as real.

In *Hombres de maíz*, as the foregoing analysis has made clear, indigenous cosmology is central. In fact, I claim that it is not possible to analyze the text without analyzing how *Hombres de maíz* rearticulates central concepts found in pre-Colombian texts such as, the *Popol Vuh*. As the title itself suggests, maize is the most important of these central concepts. It is well-known that in the *Popol Vuh* maize is utilized to create humanity: “De maíz amarillo y de maíz blanco se hizo su carne; de masa de maíz se hicieron los brazos y las piernas del hombre. Únicamente masa de maíz entró en la carne de nuestros padres, los cuatro hombres que fueron creados” (Recinos, 1996, 104). Because maize is critical in the creation of humanity, Saúl Hurtado Heras declares that “el maíz es la esencia del hombre, según la cosmogonía maya-quiché” (1997, 99). Though numerous critics have provided interesting analyzes of how maize, as the essence of humanity in Mayan-Quiché cosmology, is rearticulated in *Hombres de maíz* (see Alegría, 1976; Nouhaud, 1977; Martin, 1981; Heras, 1997), I intend to analyze how the Indian and Ladino struggle over maize is significant to the Guatemaltequidad being proposed in the novel.

The significance of maize in *Hombres de maíz* may only be understood by situating the novel within the historical moment in which the action takes place. In my initial discussion of *Hombres de maíz* I demonstrated that the novel begins in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, specifically during the formation of the Liberal dictatorship, and ends

in the 1940s. I based my claims on the text itself and Gerald Martin's findings such as the *El Imparcial* article on Ricardo Estrada and Gaspar Hijom. Yet, given that the novel takes place during the period of the Liberal dictatorships, it is noteworthy that coffee does not play an important role as it does in *Entre la piedra y la cruz*. In fact, no one in the text, either for consumption or profit, engages in the production of coffee, much less go to war over it. Gaspar Ilóm and Coronel Chalo Godoy, on the other hand, do go to war over maize. I argue that the erasure of coffee is due to its lack of significance to the Mayan-Quiché cosmology. By placing maize in its place, Asturias is able to demonstrate that the wars at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were surely over land and sovereignty, but they were also over the symbolic organization of the world. Maize, imbued as it is with different meaning by Indians and Ladinos, represents that symbolic struggle.

For the people of Ilóm, as for the Quiché in the *Popol Vuh*, maize is central to their existence. As Heras points out, it represents “la amalgama genuina de los elementos naturales: maíz y hombre” (1997, 99). To go a step further, maize is not only intrinsically linked to humans but also to the Land. As the old man with the big hands points out to Nicho Aquino, “la tierra ... también es humana” (231). It is this maize/humanity/Land unit that is sacred to the people of Ilóm. Echoing the *Popol Vuh*, the old man with the big hands explains the dire consequences if this unity is infringed upon, “nosotros somos hechos de méiz, y si de lo que estamos hechos, de lo que es nuestra carne, hacemos negocio ... todo acabará pobre y quemado por el sol ... si se sigue sembrando méiz para negociar con él, como si no fuera sagrado, altamente sagrado” (232, *sic*). According to this logic, to profit off the selling of maize is in

actuality to profit from selling oneself or one's children: "tan carne es un hijo como una milpa" (*ibid*). The maize/humanity/Land unit—incomprehensible to the Cartesian reader—is the central axis upon which the society of Ilóm is centered.

Led by Coronel Chalo Godoy, the Ladinos effectively rupture the maize/humanity/Land unit by killing Gaspar's men-at-arms, enclosing the communal lands, and commodifying maize. Symbolically, the rupture of the unit is represented by the desintegration of Gaspar Ilóm's family: his wife La Piojosa Grande, with her son on her back, abandons Gaspar upon realizing that he is poisoned. As Martin argues in his study of *Hombres de maíz*, Gaspar is linked to the Sun, Piojosa Grande to the Rain, and Martin, their son, to Maize. In this respect, they symbolize the order of the indigenous cosmos. The rupture and disintegration of the maize/humanity/Land unit, symbolized by La Piojosa Grande abandoning Gaspar, is what allows the Ladinos to reduce the indigenous people of Ilóm to the periphery of Ladino society or the plantations represented in *Entre la piedra y la cruz*.<sup>43</sup> In *Hombres de maíz*, however, the reunification of Goyo Yic, María Tecún, and their children represents the reformulation of the maize/humanity/unit. Goyo, as his nahual the Tacuatzín symbolizes, is linked to the dawn of a new day, while María, as Piojosa Grande, is linked to the Rain. It is this reformulation of the indigenous cosmology that sets *Hombres de maíz* radically apart from *El tungsteno*, *Entre la piedra y la cruz*, and

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<sup>43</sup> To be sure, Indian and Ladino social relations in the novel are not reducible to a simple binary opposition. For example, Tomás Machojón "había sido de las indiadas del Gaspar Ilóm" (24), but he aligns himself with Coronel Chalo Godo for his own benefit. In fact, Machojón becomes such a large land owner that the Ladino maiceros are constantly stealing from him. However, Ladinoized indigenous characters like Machojón die miserable deaths.



other indigenista novels. I will now move to why this reformulation is necessary: Ladinos have excluded indigenous people to the margins of society or have differentially included them.

After the disruption of the maize/humanity/Land unit, the indigenous communities in *Hombres de maíz* are reduced to the periphery of society, a condition aptly represented by a visually “impaired” Goyo Yic begging by the side of the road. His visual impairment symbolizes how the indigenous communities in this Ladino society are marginalized and excluded. As Goyo points out, he does everything possible to survive: “el penco trabajó las siembritas .... El penco engordó cochecitos. El penco pidió limosna” (128-129). Upon reuniting with him in the prison El Castillo del Puerto, María makes it clear that she was motivated to leave him because of the economic hardships: “Dejá que te diga .... Te deje, no porque no te quisiera, sino porque si me quedo con vos a estas horas tendríamos diez hijos más, y no se podía: por vos, por ellos, por mí; qué hubieran hecho los patojos sin mí” (352). María, then, flees because Goyo is not able to sustain the family, because he was “empedido de la vista” (352). It is because María flees that Goyo is forced to “cure” his blindness so that he may participate in Ladino society. Goyo’s new eyesight, then, represents a different way of seeing the world, one that is now necessary because that the maize/humanity/Land unit has been disrupted. As Goyo’s case makes clear, the indigenous people are reduced to the periphery of Ladino society or, if assimilated, they are differentially included.

Unlike Goyo, Nicho Aquino is not only able to “see” how the Ladino society works, but he participates in this new society as a functionary of a State institution, the

postal system. As the Ladinoized indigenous mailman delivering mail between San Miguel de Acatán and Guatemala City, Nicho represents an analogous case to that of Pedro Matzar, both are differentially included, because they are “deemed integral to the nation’s economy ... but integral only or precisely because of their subordinate status” (Espiritu, 2003, 47). The discrimination Nicho is subjected to as a Ladinoized indigenous state bureaucrat is palpable. For example, the Ladino post office administrator yells at him: “¡Indio abusivo, mano larga, esperá que te lo cuente!” (192). The positionality of Ladinoized indigenous people is clear: they are assimilated but racially marked as different, inferior, and not belonging in Ladino society. The best example of this exclusion is also provided by the administrator: “Vos serás muy ladino ... pero echas tus pedradas, ¿qué es eso de *pese*?... Pesa; pero no le hace, para eso es carga” (224). In criticizing Nicho’s use of the Spanish Language the administrator makes it clear that regardless of how “good” his Spanish is or how well he does his job, Nicho is still marked by his racial difference. One is here reminded of how the Ladino townspeople feel about Pedro Matzar as the commanding officer of their town: “volvieron a despellejar al comandante Pedro Matzar, quien para ser puro indio tenía más pretensiones que un alemán rico y era malo como un alacrán” (Monteforte, 2007, 227). However, Nicho, as a postman, is not able to “hacer daño conforme una monstruosa justicia” (208) as Pedro Matzar does. As Nicho’s positionality makes evidente, Ladinoized indigenous Guatemalans are differentially included.

Goyo Yic and Nicho Aquino, as the foregoing has demonstrated, occupy a different positionality in Ladino society. Goyo’s “correction” of his visual

“impairment” symbolizes how indigenous people must now make sense of their world according to a Western cosmology. Yet, Goyo only gains his eyesight in order to find María and does not assimilate to Ladino society. Señor Chigüichón Culebro makes this clear when he tells Goyo, “Siempre ofrecí sanarte si tu ceguera era buena, pero nunca habías querido, por miedoso; preferías andar con esas dos bolsas de gusanos en lugar de ojos” (137). Moreover, after searching for María, he becomes a drunk, fails at making a profit reselling alcohol, and is imprisoned for failing to present the proper documentation authorizing him to sell alcohol. As the narrator tells us, “Perdieron la guía. ... Su valor estaba en lo que decía y en los sellos de la Administración de Rentas y del Depósito de Licores, y en las firmas. Sin la guía, contrabandistas; con la guía, personas honradas” (183). In the case of Nicho, on the other hand, he is always presented to the reader as a Ladinoized indigenous man. It is also significant that as a mailman Nicho facilitates Ladino communication through the Spanish written word, which, as Goyo’s imprisonment demonstrates, is utilized to oppress the indigenous population. To be clear, Goyo and Nicho occupy different positionalities within Ladino society: Goyo remains on the periphery, symbolically represented by his imprisonment; Nicho, as a postman, actively participates in the reproduction of Ladino power. Both characters, however, demonstrate that within Ladino society indigenous communities are either excluded and condemned to live in the periphery or differentially included. The resolution to this exclusion and differential inclusion is carried out by the Venado de las siete rozas.

The Curandero-Venado de las siete rozas, one of the Brujos de las luciérnagas, is instrumental in preparing the ground for the reformation of the

maize/humanity/Land unit by carrying out the damnation of those responsible for the death of Gaspar. As the narrative voice points out, the Brujos de las luciérnagas pronounce their curse on all those involved in poisoning Gaspar:

Después de la muerte de Gaspar Ilóm, los brujos de las luciérnagas subieron al cerro de los sordos y cinco días y cinco noches lloraron ... y el sexto, víspera del día de las maldiciones, guardaron silencio de sangre seca en la boca, y el séptimo día hicieron los augurios. (36)

The Curandero-Venado makes it clear to Nicho that the curse is carried out:

“Quemados murieron Tomás Machojón y la Vaca Manuela Machojón. ... Quemado ... murió ... el Jefe de la montada ... Machojón, el primogénito de Tomás Machojón ... fue convertido en luminario del cielo” while “los Tecunes decapitaron a los Zacatón ... descendientes todos ... del farmacéutico Zacatón que a sabiendas vendió el veneno” (333). The role played by the Curandero-Venado is comparable to the role played by Hunahpú and Ixbalanqué in the *Popol Vuh*. While the twin brothers are instrumental in preparing the world for the creation of humanity and the rising of the sun by defeating the Lords of Xibalbá, the Curandero-Venado is instrumental in the rearticulation of the maize/humanity/Land unit by killing those responsible for Gaspar’s defeat. It is only after killing all those who participate in the destabilization of the maize/humanity/Land unit that the Curandero-Venado is able to reunite the Yic-Tecún family.

In reuniting Goyo Yic, María Tecún, and their children the Curandero-Venado de las siete rozas reformulates the maize/humanity/Land unit, symbolized by Gaspar

Ilóm's family.<sup>44</sup> However, the Curandero-Venado's reformulation does not represent a return to the period of Gaspar.<sup>45</sup> Jorge Alcides Paredes has convincingly argued that while the *Popol Vuh* begins with the "caos cósmico," the non-spatial/non-temporal period inhabited only by the Gods, and ends with the "caos y destrucción," the fall of the Quiché Kingdom in the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the Peninsular invaders and their allies, those two spatial-temporal periods represent the beginning of two distinct epochs (27). The same logic applies to *Hombres de maíz*: the maize/humanity/Land unit "Gaspar Ilóm" is not the same maize/humanity/Land unit of the "Epílogo." To the contrary, *Hombres de maíz* moves forward in time through concentric circles, a spiral that though moving forward is intimately tied to the past. As the narrative voice points out, Goyo and María return to Pisigüilito in order to "Horconear de nuevo para construir un rancho más grande, porque sus hijos casados tenían muchos hijos y todos se fueron a vivir con ellos" (361). In *Hombres de maíz*, then, the Curandero-Venado overcomes Coronel Chalo Godoy's destabilization of the indigenous cosmology by killing all those who participated in defeating Gaspar and reuniting the Yic-Tecún family.

### **Conclusion: National**

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<sup>44</sup> Earlier on I demonstrated that the narrative voice and Ladino characters represented the extraordinary powers of Gaspar Ilóm as real. The same, of course, applies to the extraordinary powers of the Curandero-Venado de las siete rozas.

<sup>45</sup> Gerald Martin provides an analysis of Goyo Yic's nahaul and María Tecún's link to Alom in the sixth chapter of his *Edición crítica de las obras completas: Hombres de maíz* (1981) titled, "Femenino y masculino (El mito)." In that section he demonstrates that Gaspar Ilóm is linked to the Sun, La Piojosa Grande to Rain, and Martín Ilóm, their son, to Maize. On the other hand, Goyo Yic, as his nahual—Tacuatzín—makes clear, is linked to the Day, while María Tecún, as La Piojosa Grande before her, is linked to Rain (Martin, 1981, cc-cci).

*Entre la piedra y la cruz* and *Hombres de maíz* demystify the Liberal ideological apparatus that re-articulated the wars, enclosures, and subsequent indigenous servitude as the establishment of a modern, democratic, liberal state. As my analysis has shown, *Entre la piedra y la cruz* proves that the economic and political system that by the early 1920s had transformed Guatemala into a major producer and exporter of coffee was based on neither capitalist relations of production nor a liberal democratic state but on semi-feudal relations of production and an oligarchic dictatorship. *Hombres de maíz* demystifies the formation of the oligarchic dictatorship represented in *Entre la piedra y la cruz* by demonstrating that the Liberals dispossessed indigenous Guatemalans of their communal lands through war. On this point, *Entre la piedra y la cruz* and *Hombres de maíz* represent a radical break with Guatemalan literature of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In this *indianista* literature writers such as, Flavio Herrera, represented the Liberal oligarchy as a modernizing force.

As my analysis has shown, the novels differ drastically in their representation of the indigenous characters, their languages, and cosmologies. For example, the indigenous characters in *Entre la piedra y la cruz* are represented as rational but encumbered by their outdated production methods, language, and cosmology, while in *Hombres de maíz* they are represented as using these very instruments, as well as their weapons and extraordinary powers, for fighting against the Ladinos, eventually reformulating the maize/humanity/Land unit that is destabilized in the first section. Clearly, their representation of the indigenous characters and their cosmologies is not only different but diametrically opposed. For the purposes of this chapter, I have

placed these representations within the Ladino debate on how to construct a national identity during the democratic revolutionary period of the late 1940s.

In *Entre la piedra y la cruz* indigenous Guatemalans are only able to fight for their rights by assimilating to Ladino culture. As Taracena has argued, the Ladinos who participated in the Asamblea Constituyente of 1944-54 “busca[ban] soluciones para la incorporación de los indígenas al proyecto nacional guatemalteco” (Taracena, 2004, 33). To be clear, the Ladinos in the Asamblea Constituyente were correct in arguing that indigenous Guatemalans should, for example, learn the Spanish language in order to better fight for their own rights. The problem, however, is that the Ladino deputies, like the novel, *Entre la piedra y la cruz*, represent Guatemalan national identity as exclusively Western. Moreover, they constructed indigenous languages and culture as incompatible with modernity. In fact, as Juan José Arévalo makes clear in the epigraph that heads this chapter, many Ladino revolutionary leaders believed that indigenous Guatemalans were easily kept “en [un] estado de ebriedad” by their oppressors because of their culture. Assimilation, then, is not only necessary because indigenous Guatemalans need to fend for their rights but because indigenous culture is problematic. In a country where more than half of the population is indigenous such a national identity is, I argue, not viable.

In *Hombres de maíz* the Curandero-Venado de las siete rozas reorganizes the world according to a Mayan-Quiché cosmology. Just as Hunahpú and Ixbalanqué defeat the Lords of Xibalbá in the *Popol Vuh*, the Curandero-Venado de las siete rozas prepares the world for a new beginning by killing those responsible for Gaspar’s death. The reunification of Yic-Tecún-Yic/Son, as I have demonstrated, symbolizes a

reformulation of the indigenous maize/humanity/Land unit destroyed in the first section. The novel, then, provides a critical perspective on the assimilationist project outlined in *Entre la piedra y la cruz*, one exclusively based on the Western models of modernity. To go further, *Hombres de maíz* highlights the impossibility of creating a national identity based exclusively on Western models that excludes the indigenous population. Notwithstanding the novel's radical departure from the assimilationist discourse, it is necessary to interrogate how the indigenous community, represented by the Yic-Tecún family, is imagined.

I argue that the novel ends with the promise of a new beginning for the indigenous community; however, I recognize that a reader could interpret the Yic-Tecún family's going back to Pisigüilito as proof that they are outside modernity. Donald Shaw, for example, in analyzing the *Viento fuerte* (1950), *El papa verde* (1954), and *Los ojos de los enterrados* (1960), the so called "Banana Trilogy," laments "lo poco convincente que resulta la alternativa propuesta por Asturias, quien, frente a la industrialización de la producción bananera, aboga por un anacrónico sistema de cooperativas" (1988, 78). Without analyzing the veracity of Shaw's claim regarding those three novels, I argue that *Hombres de maíz* does not propose an anachronistic economic system. The novel ends with the family's potentiality: the possibility for the Yic-Tecún family to create non-exploitative social relations. For the purposes of this chapter, I propose that an analysis of the Yic-Tecún family in relation to the Ladino community outside of Pisigüilito is more relevant.

At the end of *Hombres de maíz* the reader is confronted with an antagonism between the indigenous community in Pisigüilito, represented by the Yic-Tecún



family, and the Ladino community, the Ladinos not killed by the Curandero-Venado de las siete rozas, in opposition to each other. Regardless of the potentiality represented by the Yic-Tecún family, the imagined indigenous and Ladino communities are in the novel irreconcilable. I interpret this irreconciliability as an indication of the failure of the Liberal national project. *Hombres de maíz* demonstrates that the 19<sup>th</sup> century Liberal attempt to create a national identity based on Western models has resulted in a multiple national communities. Moreover, it suggests that the assimilationist project proposed in *Entre la piedra y la cruz* is in part a continuation of that failed national project.

Overall, *Hombres de maíz* highlights how the failure to include the indigenous languages and cosmologies in the construction of a *Guatemaltequidad* has resulted in an irreconcilable opposition between Ladinos and Indians. Equally important, it affirms that for indigenous Guatemalans their languages and cosmologies are not dispensable. Unlike Pedro who “abandona ... el dios de su padre y la casa de su padre” (254), the Yic-Tecún family “se v[uelven hormigas ... para acarrear el maíz” (362) and begin anew. It is this potentiality with which this *Hombres de maíz* ends that sets it apart from *Entre la piedra y la cruz*.

### III Guatemala 1960s: Revolution, Counterrevolution, and Ideology

The presidencies of Juan José Arévalo (1944-1950) and Jacobo Arbenz (1950-1954) represent a period in Guatemalan history when a large percentage of the population believed that the democratic revolution was permanent. For the first time, the State and its representatives were working towards organizing social relations according to more equitable standards. It is no surprise that the majority of the Guatemalan population, Indian and Ladino, supported both presidencies. The 1954 U.S. led counter-revolution effectively ended these “ten years of spring,” the only period of democratic rule in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Given that the 1954 coup has been well documented,<sup>46</sup> I will only point out that the U.S. placed the reactionary military in control of the State apparatus, effectively creating a military dictatorship.<sup>47</sup> It is within this climate of counterrevolution and repression that the military officers, Luis Turcios Lima and Marco Antonio Yon Sosa, led a group of dissident officers in an uprising against the dictatorship on the 13<sup>th</sup> of November 1960. Though the rebellion was put down, the two leaders managed to escape and formed the first armed revolutionary organization, the *Movimiento Revolucionario 13 de Noviembre*. Afterwards, they aligned themselves with revolutionary Cuba and in 1963 formed the *Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes*. For the following five years (1963-1968), the Guatemalan Marxist

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<sup>46</sup> See Stephen Schelesinger and Stephen Kinzer’s *Bitter Fruit the Story of the U.S. Coup in Guatemala* (1982), or Piero Gleijeses’s *Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944-1954* (1991). The two chapters, “Introduction: The Last Colonial Massacre” and “Conclusion: Children of Abel: The Cold War as Revolution and Counterrevolution,” in Greg Grandin’s *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War* (2004) are also quite informative.

<sup>47</sup> It should be noted that during the Liberal dictatorships it was the coffee oligarchy that controlled the State and its institutions such as, the military.

organizations fought the U.S. backed Guatemalan military dictatorship. During those same years, Guatemalan soldiers trained in U.S. counterinsurgency tactics employed a scorched earth policy in the areas occupied by the insurgents. The tactics were brutally efficient: by 1968, the Marxist organizations were routed. It was during this period of armed conflict that Marco Antonio Flores wrote *Los compañeros* (1976), and Luis de Li3n wrote *El tiempo principia en Xibalb3* (1984).

*Los compañeros*, I argue, provides a rigorous denunciation of the Guatemalan counterinsurgent state of the 1960s, but it also demonstrates that the revolutionary movement failed because the Ladino insurgents did not create a revolutionary ideology particular to Guatemala. More so than any novel produced in the same period, *Los compañeros* suggests that the Guatemalan dictatorship of the 1960s functions through a state of exception. By representing the state's systematization and bureaucratization of torture, the novel reveals the brutal repression to which the state subjects those it suspects of opposing it. However, the failure of the Ladino revolutionary movement is not only due to the state's use of extra-judicial repressive tactics: in the novel we see that the Ladino revolutionaries interpret the armed struggle as an extension of their countercultural rebellion against their families, teachers, and other figures of authority. To make matters worst, they reproduce the dominant sexism by rendering Ladina women as either an obstacle to their individual fulfillment or as sexual objects as well as the dominant racism by representing indigenous Guatemalans as "pre-modern" and an "obstacle" to modernization. Not surprisingly, these *guerrilleros* reify Ladino oppression of indigenous Guatemalans by sexualizing Indian women as nameless, voiceless, and without agency. Overall, the Ladino

protagonists in the novel do not have a revolutionary ideology, one that would take into consideration the inequalities particular to Guatemala.

*El tiempo principia en Xibalbá*, a transculturated novel, is a strident criticism of Ladino oppression of indigenous Guatemalans in the late 1960s and early 1970s; and, equally important, it suggests that indigenous Guatemalans need to produce a revolutionary ideology based on their own concrete lived experiences, shared history of oppression, and Mayan cosmology. By destroying the Ladino-Christian symbols of power, the Christianized indigenous characters in the novel take the first step toward producing a revolutionary ideology. However, the political future of the now de-Christianized Indian community is left undefined. I interpret the text's problematic ending to suggest an ambiguity towards the political future of the indigenous Guatemalans. Overall, *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá* represents indigenous Guatemalans as political agents capable of forging their own political future; thus, it is also a critique of Ladino "revolutionary" protagonists like those in *Los compañeros*, who not only reproduce the dominant racism but also interpret the armed resistance as a struggle only amongst and for Ladinos.

As the foregoing suggests, *Los compañeros* and *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá* represent a closing off of the national projects articulated in *Entre la piedra y la cruz* and *Hombres de maíz*. Notwithstanding the divergent representations of Guatemalan national identity in the novels of Monteforte Toledo and Asturias, both ended with the notion that it was possible to create equitable social relations. Although Guatemalan national identity is represented as exclusively Ladino in *Entre la piedra y la cruz*, it is one in which assimilated indigenous Guatemalans are included, albeit differentially.

In *Hombres de maíz*, on the other hand, the indigenous and Ladino imagined communities are separate, but the novel does end with the potentiality that equitable racial relations are possible. In other words, the novels register an impulse to create equitable social relations. Written post-1954 and during a period of intense radicalization, Flores's novel offers no possibility of forging an imagined community inclusive of both Indians and Ladinos or the possibility that equitable racial relations between the two groups might be established. Lión's novel, on the other hand, does not foreclose the possibility that equitable social reconciliation among Indians and Ladinos may be established, but it does suggest that this establishment is unlikely. As these novels suggest, the 1954 coup and subsequent state repression of all opposition had a chilling effect on those intellectuals aiming to create equitable social relations between Indians and Ladinos.

#### **A Note on the Authors and the Legacy of Miguel Ángel Asturias**

Marco Antonio Flores (1937) and Luis de Lión (1940-1984) were active in Guatemala's Communist Party: the Partido Guatemalteco del Trabajo. Flores also participated in the first armed revolutionary movement of the 1960s and after surviving several assassination attempts was forced to flee to Mexico City in 1968. Unfortunately, Lión was unable to escape the dictatorship. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of May 1984, during the military's assault on the indigenous highlands, heavily armed plainclothes military men kidnapped him. Like so many other Guatemalans who were "disappeared" during this period, his body was never recovered. To reiterate, both authors were politically active in Marxist organizations and were committed to

overthrowing the U.S. imposed dictatorship. As may be expected, their literary production is particularly critical of the Guatemalan state.

It is also important to note that Flores and Lión were part of a group of writers that wanted to break with the influence of Miguel Ángel Asturias. Along with Mario Roberto Morales and José Mejía, both men formed part of a loosely organized group that read and criticized each other's works in the early 1970s. All four authors shared the conviction that Guatemalan writers were mimicking Asturias. In 1972 Morales wrote a small article titled, "Matemos a Miguel Ángel Asturias," that besides creating a lot of controversy became the manifesto of the group. As he points out in "Continuidad de rupturas (II)" (2007), he and the other authors had realized that "era demasiada la gente que trataba de escribir como Asturias, quedándose en la epidermis de sus malabarismos verbales" (2). Flores, in an interview given in 1972, was much more critical of the authors who attempted to write as Asturias: "En Guatemala, de Asturias para acá, no hubo otro escritor importante y los escritores que lo continúan son una especie de mudos o de discos rayados asturianos" (Alexander Sequén-Mónchez, 2004, 238). He goes on to state that "mi primera tarea era asesinar a Asturias [para] inventar otra habla tan guatemalteca como la de él, pero que no se pareciera en nada al 'mengalismo' asturiano" (238-239). These authors, then, were invested in ridding themselves of the influence of Asturias and creating their own particular form of writing.<sup>48</sup> As my analysis will demonstrate, the search for "otra

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<sup>48</sup> Although Morales writes in "Continuidad de rupturas (II)" that his article has been "interpretado de múltiples maneras erróneas que van desde la afirmación según la cual se trataba de una descalificación nuestra de Asturias y de un regateo de su premio Nóbel, hasta la acusación de que en efecto queríamos eliminarlo físicamente" (2007,

habla tan guatemalteca” led Flores and Li3n to produce texts that are quite different in content and form.

Jos3 Meji3a, Gloria Hern3ndez and other Guatemalan literary critics credit Flores with being the first Guatemalan author to break with the legacy of Asturias by representing the urban Ladino middle class. In the aforementioned interview of 1972, Flores explained his purpose in writing *Los compa3eros* as follows: “La realidad que nosotros –escritores peque3o burgueses ciudadanos- vivimos ya no es la realidad del campo. Para nuestra cultura mestiza y urbana, seguir hablando de “Juanpueblo”, ... Es como querer escribir en cakchiquel” (2004, 239). Because of this, he concludes that, “No podia hablar como ellos ni por ellos” (241). Flores, then, understood himself as writing for middle class Ladinos such as, Meji3a and Hern3ndez. To say that those Ladino critics appreciated Flores’s novel would be an understatement. Meji3a, for example, lauds *Los compa3eros* as “la contribuci3n m3s decisiva de la literatura ... guatemalteca desde *Hombres de ma3z para ac3*” (Hern3ndez, 2001, 50), because it is a “fiesta verbal que olvida felizmente toda esa etapa inaut3ntica, para entrar de lleno en un nuevo campo de expresi3n, incorporando por primera vez a la narrativa guatemalteca a ... todos los seres que componen la llamada clase media ladina urbana” (*ibid*). As a Ladinoized-Cakchiquel with strong relationships to the indigenous community, Li3n’s project was radically different than Flores’s and one not well received by Ladino critics.

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2), it is clear that these authors felt burdened by Asturias’s literary production. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, this resentment led many Central American authors to denounce Asturias not only on literary but political grounds.

Guatemalan literary critics did not laud *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá* either in 1972 or after its publication in 1984. While the novel did win first prize in the Juegos Florales de Quetzaltenango literary competition of 1972, Guatemalan literary critics have been silent on the text. I suggest the negative reception of the novel is due to its content and form. As already pointed out, Lión along with Flores, Mejía, and Morales aimed to break with the literary tradition of Asturias, one intimately linked to the representations of the indigenous communities. Given that *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá* is set in an unnamed Christianized indigenous town and deals almost exclusively with Christianized indigenous characters who at the end of the novel reject Ladino society and its religious practices and rearticulate the Quiché-Mayan creation myth, it must have seemed as a failure to Lión's contemporaries in the 1970s. In fact, as Morales points out, Flores rejected *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá* and his own *Los demonios salvajes* (1978) as formally flawed.

### **La Nueva Novela Guatemalteca and Transculturation**

As many critics have pointed out, Flores incorporated the modernist narrative techniques introduced by the famous authors of the 1960s such as, Mario Vargas Llosa, Carlos Fuentes, and Julio Cortázar, effectively inaugurating the “nueva novela guatemalteca”<sup>49</sup> in the early 1970s. *Los compañeros*, according to Hernández, is characterized by “la desintegración de las formas narrativas tradicionales, la simultaneidad del lenguaje y un rompimiento en la estructura temporal del relato”

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<sup>49</sup> Upon its publication in 1976, José Mejía, a Guatemalan literary critic, and Seymour Menton, a U.S. one, hailed *Los compañeros* as “la nueva novela guatemalteca,” because it incorporated these modernist techniques. Though it was written during the same period, *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá* was only published in 1985, thus, its use of those same narrative techniques has not received the same attention.



(2001, 8). It is a novel “que abar[ca] todos los niveles de la imaginación ... que narr[a] los sucesos en diferentes planos conscientes y subconsciente simultáneamente” (*ibid*). For Morales, one of the most salient characteristics of *Los compañeros* is that “se estructuraba desde las dinámicas de las hablas populares, haciendo la novela ... ‘de las hablas’ ... de sus personajes” (2007, 3). Besides employing the non-linear narration, multiple narrators, interior monologue, and the use of colloquial language, *Los compañeros* also captures “la expresión de la rebeldía juvenilista de la época” (*ibid*), a dominant characteristic of the Mexican literature “de la onda.”<sup>50</sup> *Los compañeros*, as the foregoing has shown, broke with the Guatemalan literary conventions of the late 1960s and early 1970s, ones already linked to the legacy of Miguel Ángel Asturias. With *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá*, Lión also broke with the literary conventions of the time.

*El tiempo principia en Xibalbá* is a transculturated novel that rearticulates the creation myth of the *Popol Vuh*. Instead of employing a linear narrative, the novel is structured according to the four parts of the *Popol Vuh*.<sup>51</sup> the sections “Primero fue el viento,” “La otra mita de la noche ya no durmieron,” “Y de verdad estaban vivos,” and “El día llegó” correspond sequentially to the first, second, third, and fourth part of the *Popol Vuh*. After these four parts, the novel ends with two brief parts titled, “Epi...tafio” and “Prólogo:” the former is a eulogy to the Christianized Indian community that has been destroyed and the latter suggests that the now de-Christianized Indians will create a new society, one no longer organized according to

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<sup>50</sup> I will later analyze the influence of this literature on Flores’s novel.

<sup>51</sup> Lión utilized Adrián Recinos’s 1947 edition of the *Popol Vuh*, which is divided into four parts.

Christianity. While the novel is structured according to the four sections of the *Popol Vuh*, it is only the first section of each part that is explicitly related to the creation myth in the *Popol Vuh*. The second part, on the other hand, deals with the main events of the novel, that is, the plot. As Flores with *Los compañeros*, Lión also makes wide use of multiple narrators, interior monologues, and colloquial language.

### **Summary of *Los compañeros* and *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá***

*Los compañeros* is set in various Latin American cities such as, Guatemala City, Mexico City, La Habana, and to a lesser extent in European ones such as, Paris and Prague. The *compañeros*, all middle class Ladinos that either join or are linked to the Marxist revolutionary organizations, are *El Patojo* (the Lad), *Chucha Flaca* (Skinny Dog), *El Bolo* (the Drunk), and *El Rata* (the Rat).<sup>52</sup> Of the four *compañeros*, *El Rata* is the only one that marries, gets a middle class career, and lives the life of a civilian in Guatemala City. The other three, *El Patojo*, *Chucha Flaca*, and *El Bolo*, join either the *Partido Guatemalteco del Trabajo* or the *Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes*, two important revolutionary Marxist organizations in the 1960s. The armed struggle, of course, fails, and the *guerrilleros* are routed. *El Patojo* is captured, tortured for four days, and finally murdered by a U.S. CIA operative during an interrogation. Unable to handle the psychological stress involved with the armed struggle, *Chucha Flaca* absconds with his cell's propaganda funds and flees to Mexico City where he begins a new life with a hippie Mexican crowd. After participating in a year long fellowship in Communist Cuba, *El Bolo*, the poet of the group, flees to Europe and never participates in the armed struggle. Overall, the novel recounts the horrifying torture

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<sup>52</sup> From now on, I will only refer to the *compañeros* by their Spanish *nom de guerre*.

and assassination of *El Patojo* and the miserable lives of *Chucha Flaca* and *El Bolo* in exile.

*El tiempo principia en Xibalbá*, on the other hand, is set in an unnamed rural Christianized indigenous town where the Catholic Church, set in the central plaza, is spatially and symbolically its center. The indigenous townspeople do not only accept the Catholic priest's authority in religious and doctrinal matters, but they also accept his authority on social issues. For example, the townspeople ostracize Concha, an indigenous woman, because she has sex out of wedlock with the town's men. Besides accepting the authority of the priest, the only Ladino in the town, the townspeople venerate the Virgen de Concepción, the town's patron saint, religiously. To make matters worst, the indigenous men are particularly obsessed with the Virgen, because they sexually desire her. In fact, their sexual obsession is so extreme that their relationships with their wives, sons, and daughters deteriorate. Overall, the indigenous townspeople organize their society according to the precepts established by the Catholic Church, represented by the Ladino priest.

Concha, the aforementioned indigenous woman, and Pascual Baeza, an indigenous townsman, are the two characters that challenge the authority of the Catholic Church and the Ladino priest. Besides refusing to only have sex within marriage, Concha is the only woman who defines herself as indigenous and not a Christian. Moreover, she is the only one who understands that the indigenous men are obsessed with the Virgen, because she is a symbol of Ladino sexuality. Baeza, on the other hand, attempts at first to Ladinoize. Though he is discriminated, he participates in Ladino society as a soldier, thief, and eventually a revolutionary. No longer

interested in Ladinoizing and full of hatred towards Ladinos, he returns to his hometown where he becomes disgusted with the subservient behavior of the Christianized townsmen. Eventually, he decides to act on his desire for the Virgen and attempts to “rape” the wooden statue. Though he fails to penetrate the statue, he is no longer attracted to her and sees her as a Ladina whore. Upon discovering that Baeza has “raped” the Virgen, the indigenous men heed Concha’s call to destroy the Catholic Church, the Virgen’s statue, and eventually their own families and themselves. The novel ends with a “Prólogo” that suggests that the indigenous community will now be rebuilt without the influence of the Catholic Church.

### **Dictatorship and Resistance in *Los compañeros***

*El Patojo*’s direct interior monologue, in the third chapter dedicated to him, contrasts Jorge Ubico’s repression of mass protests in 1944 to Miguel Ydigoras’s repression of students in 1961, thereby, highlighting the emergence of a counterinsurgency state in the early 1960s. In *Los compañeros*, as Leona Nickless astutely points out, “Los pensamientos [de los personajes] vagan ilimitados por las restricciones del tiempo lineal, de modo que la frontera entre el pasado y el presente se erosiona” (Hernández, 2001, 127).<sup>53</sup> While agonizing in the fetid cell, for example, *El Patojo* asks, “Cuándo empezó esto para mí” (85); and, as a response, he refers to 1944 when as a child on his way to “misa de once a San Francisco” (*ibid*) with his mother they encounter Jorge Ubico’s repressive forces. Several lines down, however, the direct interior monologue turns to the students facing the Ydigoran forces in 1961:

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<sup>53</sup> In 2008 the printing house Aflame Books published Leona Nickless’s English translation of *Los compañeros*. Her translation is the first time that the novel has been translated into the English language, British English in this case.

“del lado del Portal había media cuadra de gente, alguien comenzó a cantar ‘Cuba qué linda es Cuba y socialista me gusta más, mi Cuba bella’ y por todos lados empezaron a improvisar temas revolucionarios” (191). Two important transformations take place here: 1) At the state level, the Ydigoran regime marks the emergence of a counterinsurgent state; 2) At the individual level, *El Patojo* has become conscious of the political repression in Guatemala. While I will return to analyze the second transformation, I now turn to analyze the first one.

*Los compañeros* is a resounding critique of the Guatemalan counterinsurgent dictatorship’s state of exception in the 1960s. As Giorgio Agamben has demonstrated, a state of exception is “the voluntary creation of a permanent state of emergency” in which “a legal civil war that allows for the physical elimination not only of political adversaries but of entire categories of citizens” is implemented (2005, 2). Put differently, a state of exception is “the political point at which the juridical stops and a sovereign unaccountability begins; it is where the dam of individual liberties breaks and a society is flooded with the sovereign power of the state” (Durantaye, *Giorgio Agamben: A Critical Introduction*, 2009, 338). Though Agamben is referring to the fascist Nazi State, I argue that his thesis is applicable to the Guatemalan State of the 1960s. During these years, the Guatemalan State “transform[ed] ... a provisional and exceptional measure [the state of exception] into a technique of government” (Agamben, 2005, 2) and suspended the juridical protections Juan José Arévalo and Jacobo Arbenz had previously conferred upon private citizens and civic organizations. In *Los compañeros*, I argue, the torture and assassination of *El Patojo* is a particularly

harrowing condemnation of the state of exception. I will now analyze the emergence of the counterinsurgent state and how the state of exception functioned.

Jorge Ubico's repressive forces, as represented in *El Patojo's* monologue, do not distinguish between children and adults, women and men, or those that acquiesce and those that resist, but it is not a counterinsurgent state. For example, believing that "a nosotras no nos van a atropellar" (187), "un grupo de mujeres" (*ibid*) attempt to make their escape, but they are confronted with the following: "Unos hombres ... venían montados a caballo y con unos espadones inmensos en las manos comenz[aron] a repartir inmensos espadonozas sobre las mujeres, sobre los hombres, sobre los curas ... sobre los niños, sobre los árboles, sobre las flores" (187). As the quote makes clear, the women misjudge the situation: Ubico's cavalry beat the protestors, priests, children, and women.<sup>54</sup> It is an overwhelming and indiscriminate attack on protestors and civilians alike: "Los caballos avanzaban más rápido que los soldados" (187). The state's repressive apparatus, represented here by Ubico's cavalry, then, initiates a generalized assault on the Guatemalan masses, regardless of their acquiescence or resistance. Notwithstanding the brutality of Ubico's regime, the emergence of a counterinsurgent state in the 1960s marks a dramatic shift in the type and level of state violence.

Ydigoras's repression of university students in 1961, ones protesting the U.S. invasion of Cuba, marks the emergence of the Cold War counterinsurgency state. As

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<sup>54</sup> Cristina Peri Rossi's short story, "La estampida" (1981), is a comparable example, because, as the title suggests, the Uruguayan state's generalized violence is represented as a "stampede" that overwhelms civilians and eventually the main character.

Greg Grandin indicates, “The overthrow of Arbenz was a decisive step forward in the radicalization of continental politics, signaling as it did the destruction of one of the last, and arguably the most influential, democracies established in the 1944-46 reform cycle” (2001, 5). What’s more, the Ydigoran state had allowed the Cuban mercenaries, now invading Cuba, to train on Guatemalan soil. Refusing to allow a repeat of 1954 in Cuba, the radicalized Guatemalan students, now well-versed in Leftist Marxist ideologies, take to the streets: “todo mundo estaba indignado dispuesto a protestar, los gringos habían invadido Cuba por Playa Cochinos, había que protestar” (Flores: 1976, 190). Responding to the students, the Ydigoran regime does not replicate Ubico’s response: no cavalry comes out to beat the men, women, and children. In place of mounted men, it is “insurgent counterinsurgents—radical Catholics, socially aspiring middle-class soldiers, anti-communist students” (Grandin, 2001, 11) that lead the repression. *El Patojo* makes this explicit: “en ese momento los vi ... venía una fila adelante, con los brazos enlazados, atrás se miraba una pequeña multitud, no tan grande como la nuestra, en el centro de la primera fila traían una bandera y a los lados del grupo venía la policía con mascarillas antigás y rifles preparados” (193). While Ubico’s repression is an exclusive state affair, state and non-state actors lead the 1961 repression: the “pequeña multitud” is made up of “radical Catholics” and fervent “anti-communist students.” Once more, *El Patojo* is unambiguous: “agarré el micrófono de un tirón y grité / los Liberacionistas / ALLI SE INICIO EL TERROR Y LA VIOLENCIA” (*ibid*, emphasis his). The students in 1961 now face a toxic combination of state power and virulently reactionary civilian

organizations, which now take an important role promoting the counterinsurgency in the 1960s.

Operating through the state of exception, the counterinsurgent state of the 1960s is represented as having systematized torture by creating an extra-judicial bureaucracy, composed of several departments, to process dissidents. The bureaucratic treatment of *El Patojo* after being captured is an excellent example of this systemization. For example, although Napoleón captures *El Patojo*, he is forced to pass him on to the G-2, an extrajudicial paramilitary organization charged with the torture/interrogation of high value assets. He does so even though he is a member of the Policía Judicial and has a personal vendetta against *El Patojo*. As a G-2 operative tells his colleague, “Napoleon se la tenía jurada [pero] no pudo darse el gusto de quebrarlo él mismo” (126). Napoleon’s inability to “darse el gusto” is telling, because *El Patojo* had almost killed him with a grenade in a previous firefight: “Napoleón ... rodeó la casa ... los cercó y ya iba a entrar ... cuando en un yip apareció éste [El Patojo] y dos más y buuummm, que le destapó el granadazo a Napoleón ... Napo se quedó tirado en un charco de sangre ... . Desde ese día Napo juró que este pisado se las pagaba” (*sic*, 126). Regardless of the hatred he has for him, Napoleón is unable to fulfill the promise he made to *El Patojo*’s mother: “en cuanto agarre a ese hijo de puta de su hijo, me luecho, si puede mandárselo a decir” (*ibid, sic*). *El Patojo*, however, has valuable information on arms, propaganda printing presses, and safe houses, which the state needs in order to dismantle the FAR. The fact that, “Ninguna de las casas que él [El Patojo] conocía cayó” (78) is not due to a failure of the state, but *El Patojo*’s ability to withstand the torture. Overall, the fact



that Napoleón, “Se tuvo que quedar con las ganas” (127) is evidence that the state has bureaucratized torture, converting it into a conventional tool to combat dissidents.

As the desensitized G-2 and CIA agents demonstrate, torture is not an aberration: it is the *modus operandi* of the counterinsurgent state in the 1960s. After having to carry an unconscious *El Patojo* back to his cell, a G-2 agent declares, “pesa el pisadito, descansemos un rato, vos, para mientras dale unos vergazos, de repente se para, quién quita” (129, *sic*). Unable to wake him up, the other states: “Tengo hambre, esa pijaseada que le dimos y la arrastrada hasta la celda me dio hambre, ¿qué decís si nos vamos a hartar algo y de paso nos echamos un trago?” (143-144, *sic*). The response given by his colleague makes it clear that torture is routine: “Está bueno, dejemos este pisado para mañana, al cabo no se ha muerto y mañana podemos volver a empezar” (144). Clearly, the agents are unperturbed by their actions: the torture of *El Patojo* is a normal task of their professional routine.<sup>55</sup> The jokes made by the CIA agents also confirm that torture has become standard, “Oh coronel, lo hizo mierda/ malo, malo, no dejar nada para nosotros” (201). In fact, upon gaining consciousness, *El Patojo* sees that, “dos gringos estaban sentados frente a mí fumando y riéndose” (202). The nonchalant attitude of G-2 and CIA agents demonstrates that torture is employed on a regular basis.

The counterinsurgent state, as the torture of *El Patojo* demonstrates, reduces the insurgents to “bare life.” During a state of exception, Agamben argues that

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<sup>55</sup> An excellent example of the bureaucratization of torture in film is the movie, *Garage Olimpo* (1999), directed by Marco Bechis. In the movie, Félix, a member of Argentina’s many clandestine paramilitary organizations, systematically tortures María, an active member of a Leftist organization, even though he knows her personally.

modern states conflate what the ancient Greeks understood as *bios*, “which indicated the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group,” and *zoé*, “which expressed the simple fact of living common to all living beings” (1995, 1). In *Los compañeros*, the state does not limit itself to the regulation of *bios*, the concern of the *polis*, but aims to administer and control the act of living: torture is the technique utilized to regulate this *nuta vida*. As the supervisor in command of the G-2 agents, the *Coronel* is charged with managing the intensity of the torture so as to administer extreme pain and suffering without causing the failure of critical organs. In fact, as an experienced officer, the *Coronel* is able to tell that the intensity of the torture is causing *El Patojo*’s organs to fail at a faster rate than the norm: “El coronel comenzó a pasearse, no debía desmayarse tan luego, pensó, así no le voy a sacar nada” (138). The *Coronel*, however, decides to maintain the intensity level because of resentment: “Pero si no le saco nada hoy me van a relevar ... los de la CIA ... me cae en los huevos que los gringos vengan a hacer lo que les dé la gana aquí” (*ibid*). Not wanting to be outdone by the CIA agents, he continues even though, “el Ministro va a querer responsabilizar a mí” and *El Patojo* “es hijo de un cuate” (*ibid*). In other words, he only diverges from the prescribed intensity, the correct management of *El Patojo*’s body, because of the resentment he feels towards the CIA agents. The Guatemalan counterinsurgent state, as this example demonstrates, reduces the dissidents to “bare life.”

*El Patojo*’s decomposing body is an explicit condemnation of the Guatemalan state’s state of exception in the 1960s. The bureaucratized torture, procedural and routine for the G-2 and CIA agents, produces terrifying effects on *El Patojo*’s body.

Tortured for four days without receiving food or water, *El Patojo*'s organs are rotting: "las muñecas se me están ulcerando, ... me está saliendo un líquido viscoso de las muñecas y de la herida de la pierna, debe ser pus, hiede, es pus, hiede, están podridos, hiede, son meados, hiede, es mi propia mierda, al segundo día de apaleada me cagué (197-198). The ulcerated wrists, infected tissue, and pus are unambiguous signs that *El Patojo*'s organs are in a state of decomposition. In fact, the putrefaction has advanced to such a degree that *El Patojo* is unable to control his bowel movements; thus, he lies in his own urine and excrement. The fetor produced by the rotting tissue, pus, urine, and excrement is so foul that the G-2 agents are hardly able to support it: "Los esbirros ... se alejaron de él haciendo muecas" (201). The CIA agents are also unable to bear *El Patojo*'s fetid odor: "Uno de los hombres rubios se levantó ... cuando estuvo cerca de él, se tapó la nariz" (202). *El Patojo*'s body, then, is an explicit and strident denunciation of the Guatemalan state, one that by instrumentalizing and systematizing torture manages the bodies of dissidents as "bare life." *Los compañeros*, as the foregoing has demonstrated, is a rigorous critique of the state of exception established by the counterinsurgent state.

Enduring the most brutal torture, *El Patojo*, however, manages to preserve his dignity by not providing the G-2 or CIA agents any information regarding the workings of the FAR and by physically resisting them. Upon being shot in the leg and struck in the head with the butt of an assault rifle, *El Patojo* immediately promises to himself that, "Aguantaré. Aun cuando sigan pegando igual, con todo el ñeque, con todo el odio, con todas las ganas de sus manos, de sus pies, de sus culatas, aguantaré" (60, *sic*). By disregarding the countless imprecations, inducements, bribes, and pleas,

*El Patojo* is able to fulfill his promise. What's more, he physically resists his executioners: "No podía pararse, los cuijes tuvieron que arrastrarlo para sacarlo de la celda. Él puso las piernas a ambos lados de la celda y ellos comenzaron a pegar, dale duro vos, todavía está arrecho este hijueputa" (126, *sic*). Considering his condition, *El Patojo*'s behavior is valorous. His determination to demonstrate his abhorrence of the CIA is even more so: "¿Qué creerá este gringo pendejo, que todavía puedo leer? Aunque sea lo último que haga, voy a escupir a este hijo de noventa putas" (202-203). Upon doing so, the response is immediate: "El individuo rubio ... descolgó un garrote de goma con plomo adentro y ... comenzó a golpear, en la cabeza, en la cara, en las piernas, en el pecho, en la silla, en los lazos, en los huevos, en los pies. El prisionero solo inclinó la cabeza y parecía que pensaba" (203). *El Patojo*, as I have indicated, is able to maintain his dignity and resist his executioners until they murder him.

In this first section, I have demonstrated that *Los compañeros* stridently denounces the Guatemalan counterinsurgent state, one that in the 1960s established a state of exception, bureaucratized torture, and rendered its application routine. Unfortunately, critics have not paid attention to the novel's condemnation of the 1960s Guatemalan state. I attribute this lacuna in part to the controversy that surrounded the novel's publication. Because the Mexican Communist Party, the Guatemalan's Worker's Party, the FAR, and the Revolutionary Cuban government opposed its publication, denounced it after it was published, and maligned Flores as counterrevolutionary, the novel's criticism of the Guatemalan state has not been appreciated. I will return later to address whether this hostility was warranted or not;

but, for now, I will analyze the novel's other important contribution: it helps explain why the 1960s guerrilla movement failed.

### **Counterculture, Revolutionary Politics, Gender, and Race in *Los compañeros***

As the reader will recall, in the above section, "A Note on the Authors and the Texts," I indicated that Mario Roberto Morales in "Continuidad de las rupturas (II)" provides a brief gloss on how the Mexican literature of the "onda" affected the production of "la nueva novela guatemalteca": "los escritores de 'la onda' mexicana, como Parménides García Saldaña, José Agustín y Gustavo Sáinz," captured, "la expresión de la rebeldía juvenilista de la época, y la afirmación de la creciente capacidad del mercado de bienes simbólicos de domesticar éstas y otras formas culturales de contrahegemonía" (2007, 3). For Morales, the novels produced by Agustín, Parménides, and Sáinz in the 1960s are thematically the precursors of what he and Flores did in the early 1970s in Guatemala,<sup>56</sup> because *Los compañeros* and his own novel, *Los demonios salvajes*, represent middle class Ladinos "expressing their rebelliousness" by drinking, doing drugs, and having sex. What Morales, however, does not problematize is that the "rebellious" Ladinos in *Los compañeros* embark on a revolutionary project aimed at overthrowing the Guatemalan state as if it were an extension of their youthful countercultural behavior.

In *Los compañeros*, I argue, the Ladino Marxist insurgents are represented as not having analyzed the class, gender and racial exploitation in the country during the 1960s: to put it simply, they reproduce the sexism and the indofobia of the dominant

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<sup>56</sup> Though Morales applies his analysis specifically to Flores's *Los compañeros* and his own novel, *Los demonios salvajes* (1977), I will demonstrate that it is also applicable, though to a lesser degree, to Lión's *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá*.

classes and do not formulate a revolutionary ideology particular to Guatemala. It is this myopic and individualistic deformation of the armed struggle, then, that leads the Guatemalan Marxist insurgents to place their middle class interests before those of indigenous peasants, working poor Ladinos, and women of all classes and racial groups. Based on the foregoing, I argue that the Marxist Ladino insurgents close off the possibility of a successful revolutionary campaign: it is not conceivable for a Ladino revolutionary process that excludes women and indigenous peoples to be successful in Guatemala. In this section, I hope to demonstrate that the ideology of the Marxist Ladinos in the novel corresponds to a counterculture, one particular to middle class youth, and not a revolutionary ethos. In order to prove my claim, I will first analyze the novel that inaugurated the “onda mexicana,” *La tumba* (1964),<sup>57</sup> because it will allow me to place the Ladino Marxists within a transnational countercultural movement.

### ***La tumba* (1964)**

Published in 1964, José Agustín’s *La tumba* represents wealthy Mexican adolescents attempting to overcome their alienation by drinking, having sex, and participating in reckless behavior. On account of his unhealthy familial relationships and the sexual abuse he suffers at the hands of his aunt, Gabriel Guía, the protagonist

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<sup>57</sup> In response to Reinhard Teichmann’s question, “¿Qué es la Onda?” (Teichmann, 1987: 60), José Agustín declared: “No sé, mano. Yo no sabría qué diablos es la Onda. Yo no soy el que dice que yo soy de la Onda. ... Lo que sí te puedo afirmar es que todas las formulaciones en torno a la Onda han sido extraordinariamente vagas y de una irresponsabilidad y de una falta de rigor crítico alarmante” (*ibid*). While Agustín may be correct in claiming that critics have used the “Onda” term vaguely, the general consensus among scholars is that *La tumba* inaugurated a new current in Mexican letters, one in which countercultural youth were the central characters. It is in that sense that I analyze it.

in the novel, is particularly overcome with feelings of inadequacy. Lacking any ethical role models and refusing to question his economic privilege, he uses his wealth to indulge himself with drink and parties. Unable to rid himself of his feelings of inadequacy, he attempts to assert his masculinity by abusing his sexual partners. As is to be expected, he does not question his economic privilege or the political corruption prevalent in Mexico in the early 1960s. Overall, *La tumba* narrates the privileged apolitical rebellion of elite Mexican adolescents in the 1960s.

Guía's alienation results in part from his parents' consistent fighting with each other and their lack of interest in his development as a young adult. As Guía points out, his father's adulterous behavior leads to contentious quarrels at home: "Mamá, de pésimo humor, se decía muy mala de salud" (67). After his father asks her, "¿Qué te pasa, mujer? ... alégrate, no hay ningún funeral" (*ibid*), she responds: "No lo hay, pero lo habrá, el tuyo y el de tu amante si me sigues molestando, imbécil" (*ibid*). The foregoing leads Guía to dryly conclude that, "Acabarán divorciándose, todo mundo conoce sus sendas aventuras" (*ibid*). Besides consistently fighting among themselves, Guía's parents take no interest in his upbringing. For example, Guía's father tells him on his seventeenth birthday: "Mira, hijo, realmente no sé qué regalarte, creo que tú eres el único que puede comprar algo de tu gusto ... así es que toma este cheque y a ver qué te encuentras" (77). Guía makes his resentment evident: "Desperté de nuevo, a las diez, para ver el cheque: tres mil pesos, mexican currency. Me dio rabia. Hubiera preferido cualquier cosa, zapatos, un frijol o cualquier chuchería, menos dinero" (*ibid, sic*). Three thousand pesos is in 1961 a small fortune; but, as Guía correctly understands, it demonstrates his father's lack of interest in his personal life.

In fact, when his father asks him to take his place at a country club function, an astonished Guía states, “Salió, dejándome sorprendidísimo: mi padre jamás se había molestado en pedirme algo” (68). Even less inclined to speak to him, his mother plays no part in his upbringing. Overall, Guía’s parents are too self absorbed with their quarrels to take an interest in Guía’s emotional well being.

Given his parent’s absenteeism, Guía’s aunt, Berta Guía de Ruthermore, is able to sexually exploit him, an act that increases his sense of alienation. Upon meeting his aunt for the first time, Guía declares: “Mrs. Ruthermore tenía treinta y tres mesiánicos años y era la hermana menor de mi padre ... era realmente inteligente, con agilidad mental asombrosa. ... Conocedora de todo lo cosmopolita” (38). Taken by her, he decides to put on, “una fiesta en la noche para agasajar a doña Berta Ruthermore” (*ibid*). However, once his parents have left past two in the morning, an inebriated Ruthermore tells Guía that, “He bebido, bebido, y seguiré haciéndolo, mi querido Gabrielito, y tú lo harás conmigo ... Me caes muy bien, sobrino, me caes muy bien, me gustas, tengo ganas de besarte, no con un beso maternal, ni de tía, no, no, no ” (42). What’s more, once the last guests leave, she takes him by the hand and leads him to her bed where they have sexual intercourse (*ibid*). The experience clearly perturbs Guía: “En la mañana, ... al despertar viendo la espalda desnuda de mi tía, me odié terriblemente y salí de ese cuarto” (43). As he puts it, “No quise ... verla otra vez. Sentía que la vergüenza se desbocaba por mis sienes” (*ibid*). The feelings of self-hatred and embarrassment are made worst by the letter his aunt leaves him: “Forget that night of madness, excuse my heavy drinking and thanks for the memory” (44). Leaving aside his aunt’s complete disregard for her nephew, it is clear that Guía



is unable to cope with the abuse on his own: “Tras leerlo, reí a carcajadas, sin poderme controlar” (*ibid*). Laughter, for Guía, however, will not be enough to cope with the abuse; and, lacking any ethical standards to emulate, his already irresponsible behavior will turn abusive.

Guía’s instructors do not provide any ethical standards to emulate; instead, they are incompetent and abusive. For example, the literature instructor accuses Guía of plagiarizing a short story based on a false accusation: “Mira, Gabriel, cuando no se tiene talento artístico, en especial para escribir, es preferible no intentarlo” (13). Besides publicly insulting him, the instructor falsely claims that, “Después de meditar *profundamente*, llegué a la conclusión de que no escribiste el cuento que has entregado” (*ibid*, emphasis his). However, the instructor only came to suspect plagiarism after a student, Dora Castillo, accused Guía of it. Given that the instructor claims that the short story, “se parece mucho a Chéjov” (*ibid*), Guía produces the author’s complete works but to no avail: “Pero, como era natural, el maestro no quiso dar su brazo a torcer y afirmó que debía haberlo plagiado ... de otro escritor: no me consideraba capaz de escribir un cuento así” (14). Besides being incompetent, the instructors are also sexually abusive towards their students. Dora Castillo, for example, informs Guía that, “*Mira*, lo de la reprobátum es ya sentencia: el cochino Colbert [el rector de la escuela] dijo que me aprobaría si aceptaba ir a la cama con él” (31, *sic*). Fearing a harsher punishment, Castillo does not inform her parents, because “El Colbert es capaz de contarle bastantes chismes al anciano” (*ibid*). As these examples demonstrate, the instructors do not act according to ethical standards. To the

contrary, they provide ample evidence that corruption and abusive behavior is commonplace in the educational system.

Guía, an elite Mexican youth of the early 1960s, is surely exasperated with the hypocrisy of his parents and his instructors, but he is comfortable with his wealth; and, in a cynical fashion, he refuses to take note of the brutal social inequality prevalent in Mexico City. For example, after being approached by a beggar, Guía responds with complete indifference:

Abrí los ojos, para encontrarme con un anciano que pedía limosna. *Negué con fuerza, con los ojos cerrados.* Luego, volví a abrirlos y pude ver que el mendigo se retiraba, encorvado. Retiré al instante la mirada de él para encontrar mi[s] dedos sobre la llave, y en uno de esos largos dedos de pianista, un *anillo de brillantes minúsculos brillando profusamente.* (59, emphasis mine)

Guía refuses to acknowledge the poverty and misery that is in front of him: he simply closes his eyes and rejects the old man's request. Even more startling, he makes no connection between the "anillo de brillantes minúsculos" on his finger and his "coche, regalo paterno [de] quince años" (9) in which he then sits, and the poverty of the old man. Guía, as this example confirms, is not interested in analyzing his economic privilege in Mexican society. The Spanish participle, *ensimismado*, best captures his behavior, because he is not only self-absorbed, but he disregards the exploitative social conditions the majority of Mexico City's residents live in.

Guía, yearning to overcome his alienation but comfortable with his class privilege, resorts to crude antisocial behavior aimed at shocking the class sensibilities of Mexico City's elite. For example, Guía and his cousin, Laura, cause a scandal at a Mexican senator's party, "porque éramos los primeros en llegar y no vestíamos

adecuadamente: Laura, pantalones; yo, levis y chamarra de gamuza” (52-53).

Teenagers “scandalizing” adults with their dress is hardly noteworthy. Guía and his cousin, however, quickly move from a teenager’s commonplace nonconformity, to obnoxious pranks, and, finally, to simply the grotesque: “En el jardín, abrimos las jaulas de los pájaros para dejarlos escapar. También echamos tierra en la alberca. Rompimos dos floreros. En el baño tiramos la pasta de dientes en la tina, mojamos todos los jabones, limpiamos nuestros zapatos con las toallas,” and, as if that were not enough, “yo oriné en el lavado, tapándolo previamente” (55). What could possibly motivate Guía to urinate in a sink he has himself clogged? While his desire to break social conventions will undoubtedly “scandalize” the senator’s household, it is also doubtless that he will disgust the underpaid servants who will have to unclog and clean the sink. Guía, the reader will pardon the cliché expressions, is not only a “rebel without a cause,” one whose only aim is to shock the moral sensibilities of the Mexican elite, but also an *enfant terrible* who believes others must serve and clean up after him. Besides his apolitical rejection of the Mexican elite’s social mores, Guía attempts to assert himself by subjugating his sexual partners.

Guía, in an attempt to overcome his sense of worthlessness, asserts his masculinity by being abusive and controlling with his sexual partners. Upon its publication, many critics lambasted *La tumba* as “pornográfico ... y obsceno ...” (Gunia, 11, 1994), but they failed to criticize Guía’s misogyny. For example, as a sexually inexperienced teenager, he misinterprets his sexual encounter with Dora Castillo as one of possession: “Dora fue mía. *Yo no vi las circunstancias, sino el acto, que me produjo un considerable placer*” (19, emphasis mine). Believing he has taken

possession of Castillo, Guía feels he has the right “de pedir que dijera la verdad al maestro de literatura” (20) regarding her false accusation. Based on her response, Guía realizes that he has misinterpreted their sexual encounter: “Ella se negó con risas salvajes de triunfo. Entonces me supe derrotado, comprendí que ni siquiera la había seducido: todo se hizo por su iniciativa” (*ibid*). His self-pity quickly turns into violent rage: “Tenía verdaderos deseos de ir por ella para estrangularla. Incontenible. Lloraba. Lágrimas saladas. ... Vino el vértigo, volvieron los círculos, y furioso, lancé un golpe que rompió el espejo, dejándome la mano ensangrentada” (*ibid*). Guía’s uncontrollable anger is clearly motivated by what he believes is an affront to his masculinity: Dora Castillo seduced him and used him for sex. His rage, however, becomes worst when he attempts to exert sexual control over Elsa Galván.

Guía’s sexism, egocentrism, and disregard for Galván’s wellbeing is made evident by the sexual violence he inflicts on her. Upon first meeting Galván, Guía is taken with her because era muy “bonita .... Esbelta, alta [de] piel acariciable” (61) and “una perfecta connaisseur musical” (69). Believing he has “conquered” her, Guía “llora ... con escándalo, sin discreción” (71) once she admits “con sonrisas candorosas” (*ibid*) her sexual encounters with her philosophy professor. Though Galván states that it was, “Normal, era normal” (*ibid*), Guía could question the propriety of the professor’s actions, yet he immediately blames her, because he thought her to be “pura” (*ibid*) and that “con ella era distinto” (*ibid*). Notwithstanding his claim that he does not cry “porque [ella] hubiera tenido un amante” (*ibid*), Guía utilizes the dominant sexist standards of “purity” and “chasteness” to judge Galván’s actions and concludes that, “No merece el tratamiento que le estaba dando” (*ibid*).

Given such criteria, it is not surprising that he resorts to sexual violence: “Pero no, no caeré en el mismo error. Ahora mismo iré por ella y será mía. ... Ya aprenderá” (72). Motivated by his desire to “put her in her place,” Guía consciously and recklessly places Galván’s well being in danger: “Con grandes carcajadas ... recordaba las caras y gestos de Elsa, la noche anterior, cuando temerosa de embarazarse, me pedía toda clase de precauciones que por supuesto no tuve” (75). His reckless behavior results in a pregnancy, a botched abortion that places Galván’s life in danger, and her being rendered infertile. Guía, however, remains nonchalant and declares, “¡Cómo me reía del médico!” (95). Such violent behavior demonstrates his complete disregard for her health and well-being. Overall, his attempt to overcome his familial problems and alienation leads him to engage in antisocial behavior and to abuse his sexual partners.

I have demonstrated that the elite wealthy Mexican adolescents, such as Guía, satiate themselves with alcohol and sex in an effort to deal with their own alienation. While Guía experiences an abusive living environment, he makes no effort to cope with it in a positive way. To the contrary, he “rebels” against the Mexican bourgeoisie’s hypocritically staid morality by spending the majority of his time inebriated or engaging in sexual acts, neither of which provide him with any meaningful satisfaction. Moreover, he reproduces the dominant sexist behavior while enjoying his economic privilege, one dialectically related to the poverty of his servants and the beggar he so forcefully sends away. Having established the foregoing, I now turn to analyze how the *compañeros* also participate in a rebellious counterculture.

### ***Los compañeros***

In the above section, “Dictatorship and Resistance in *Los compañeros*,” I analyzed the Guatemalan state’s torture and assassination of *El Patojo*. In this section, I aim to analyze why he and other middle class Ladinos join the Marxist insurgency and why they fail in overthrowing the state. I argue that the middle class Ladinos in *Los compañeros*, as Guía in *La tumba*, represent their families, schools, and other social institutions as oppressive. Moreover, they represent Ladino women—in the role of mothers, girlfriends, and wives—as a pernicious social group, because they limit and restraint the individual agency of Ladino men. Consequently, they rebel by drinking, doing drugs, displaying an irreverent attitude towards authority figures, and by sexually commodifying and exploiting Ladina women.

The Ladino protagonists of *Los compañeros*, however, come of age during the late 1950s and early 1960s, a period marked by the political radicalization of progressive and Leftist parties, ones reeling from the 1954 U.S. sponsored coup but also inspired by the 1959 Cuban Revolution. In this contentious political environment, *El Bolo*, *Chucha Flaca*, and *El Patojo* join revolutionary organizations such as the PGT and the FAR. The trouble is that while they contextualize the call to overthrow the Guatemalan dictatorship within the history of revolution (1944), counter-revolution (1954), and state repression (post-1954), they do not place it within the larger history of dictatorship (1871-1944) and the Ladino repression and exploitation of the indigenous majority. The Ladino protagonists, thus, reproduce the dominant indofobia: Indians are “pre-modern” and an “obstacle” to modernization. It is no surprise, then, that they reify their domination of the indigenous majority through

the sexual exploitation of Indian women, ones represented in opposition to Ladinás as nameless, voiceless, and without agency.

The Ladino protagonists, as the foregoing suggests, do not form a revolutionary ideology particular to Guatemala. In fact, with the exception of *El Patojo*, they do not form a revolutionary ideology at all. While in exile, for example, the Ladino protagonists clearly demonstrate that they did not develop a sense of solidarity with the working poor: “*hay que comprender de una vez por todas que ésta no es nuestra Revolución sino la de los desharrapados, la de los miserables, ellos tienen que hacerla y ellos deben poseer el poder, nosotros poco podemos hacer para ayudarlos*” (103, emphasis his). Clearly, the unnamed character did not develop an ideological connection to the “desharrapados” and “miserables:” he is only interested in his own class positionality. The Ladino men, as I will demonstrate, participate in the armed struggle, because they see it as another way of rebelling against social institutions they claim are oppressive. For them, the armed struggle is a continuation of their rebellious youth culture, an act of defiance and self-realization.

*El Bolo*, more than any character in *Los compañeros*, is comparable to Guía, because he develops a strong resentment towards his family, particularly his mother and grandmother. As he departs to Cuba, he declares that he leaves his mother, “Abandonada, sola, solitaria, seca, reseca por dentro y por fuera, menopáusica, sin más hijos hombres a quienes amar” (34). Given that he makes that statement in the first chapter dedicated to him, “*El Bolo, 1962*,” the reader presumes that his mother has done him a great harm. Unlike Guía, however, his resentment is not due to distant, taciturn, or unapproachable parents, nor for that matter, sexual abuse. To the

contrary, his mother simply asks him to live a middle class life and stop participating in Leftist politics: “Siempre te he vivido cantando ... que seas un hombre decente y que hagás algo para el futuro. No siempre voy a vivir yo ... para mantenerte. Es necesario que busqués el camino del bien, esas juntas ... no te van a llevar a ninguna parte. ... Tenés que llegar a ser alguien ... para eso me he sacrificado yo toda la vida” (23). Other than pleading with him to live a middle class life, there is simply no evidence in all five chapters dedicated to *El Bolo*, the most of any *compañero*, that she or his family has abused him in any sense. What, then, could possibly cause such anger on his part?

*El Bolo*, I argue, represents social institutions, such as the family, as oppressive, because they limit his agency. Guía, it should be remembered, constantly asserts his desire to do as he pleases. For example, after his father exclaims, “¿Quién te crees que eres? Tan solo tienes diecisiete años y te das el lujo de faltar a casa cada vez que se te antoja ... ¡y no pido, exijo que no te vayas sin avisar! Ahora, explícate, ¿dónde estuviste?” (98), Guía yells back: “¿Qué te importa dónde estuve?” (*ibid*). *El Bolo*, in the first chapter of the novel, also represents his mother as domineering, incapable of allowing her son the freedom to choose his own path in life. For example, in an attempt to prohibit him from going to Cuba, she declares: “No te voy a dar permiso, no podés irte y dejarme después de tanto sacrificio. ... Yo no me sacrificué para que fueras comunista. ... Desalmado” (30). Seeing that he insists on departing, she then states: “No te vayas a atrever. ... Llamo la policía. ... Te maldigo” (31). *El Bolo*, as Guía, then, clamors for his personal freedom: “Madre, déjame ser, déjame vivir” (242). Moreover, given that he is not a teenager but a man in his early



twenties, it appears that the representation of his mother as domineering is surely valid. However, upon closer examination, it becomes clear that, one, his mother does in fact allow him to do as he wants, and, two, that he continues to depend on her financially.

*El Bolo's* continual and complete economic dependence on his mother demonstrates that he only desires the individual freedom to do as he pleases. For example, upon arriving in Cuba, he joyously claims that, “Al fin estaba solo, libre, lejos de mi madre ... lejos de todo lo que había sido antes y después y siempre, solo conmigo, con mis pensamientos” (*ibid*). In fact, he goes as far as to declare: “Aquí me voy a quedar o de aquí me voy a ir pronto ... a otro país donde haya una masa informe, riente o llorante ... pero que no se meta conmigo ... que me deje entrar a su casa sin sentirme, que me deje salir sin detenerme, que me deje ser libre sin imponerme sus ideas, su ideología, su moda, sus costumbres” (253). *El Bolo* clearly desires to be free of all familial restrictions. However, as Guía and his elite friends, he is comfortable with his class status: he only worries that his mother will tire of supporting his European vacation. While on his way to London after spending five years living in cities such as, Prague, Paris, and Madrid, for example, he declares: “Lo peor es que mi nana ya no se quiere poner clarinera con la rodaja. Ya son cinco años de vacilón y ya se cansó la vétera” (210, *sic*). *El Bolo's* rants against his mother, then, are in part motivated by his desire to exercise his individual agency sans familial restrictions. However, as the following analysis will demonstrate, he also represents the educational institution as oppressive.

*El Bolo*, parting from the abuse he suffers in school, constructs the educational system as oppressive. His first grade teacher, for example, abuses him, because he is unable to provide his father's name. After looking at him, "con ojos estrábicos y criminales" (243), and asking, "¿Cómo se llama su padre?" (243), *El Bolo* is unable to control his fear and urinates on himself: "comenzaron a salir los orines" (*ibid*). The angry and disgusted teacher responds by insulting him, "Salvaje, asqueroso, puerco, inmundo" (*ibid*), and, finally, with violence: "me jaló de una oreja ... me llevó a rastras ... en el excusado ... me dio un chipotazo ... después me tomó del pelo, por detrás y me levantó sobre el lavado, me puso contra el espejo y me aplastó contra él /mírese, no le da vergüenza, asqueroso" (244, *sic*). Not yet satisfied, the teacher proceeds to repeatedly place *El Bolo* "en el cuartito de debajo de las escaleras, descalzo, en la oscuridad" (249). Though he claims that, "me acostumbré al castigo" (*ibid*), *El Bolo* also admits that, "estaba tieso, inmóvil, atorado por dentro y por fuera, tullido, odiando, odiado, con odio para siempre" (*ibid*). Unlike his hatred of his mother and grandmother, *El Bolo*'s hatred of his teacher is understandable given the severity of the abuse. Like *Guía*, he will attempt to overcome his alienation from these institutions by engaging in reckless behavior.

*Chucha Flaca*, *El Patojo*, *El Rata*, as well as *El Bolo*, reject all familial or institutional authorities and engage in reckless behavior that places their lives and the lives of others in danger. As *Chucha Flaca* points out, "Una vez nos hicimos mierda por Iztapa. Dimos cinco vueltas en el carro" (42). The accident, however, is the result of their reckless drinking and driving: "Chupamos hasta las cinco de la mornin" (42, *sic*). After passing out and waking up on the beach, *Chucha Flaca* states that, "con

desesperación corrí a la tienda a comprar una friolentainmediatamentemeladieron. Después me fui a sentar a la playa a cachondear” (44, *sic*). Although “totalmente a tuna” (44, *sic*), *El Rata* “dio la orden de partida. ... Eran las doce de la tarde” (*ibid*). As *El Patojo* points out, once on their way, *El Rata*, “cerraba un ojo para poder ver bien la carretera, como que estaba jugando tiro al blanco” (128). Disregarding *El Patojo*’s exclamation, “andate más despacio vos” (*ibid*), *El Rata* responds, “¿vos creés que estoy bolo o qué?, ya sabés que yo manejo mejor cuando ando algo socado” (*ibid, sic*). As if that were not enough, he exclaims: “Vas a ver cómo manejo más diapelo yendo a pichinga” (*ibid, sic*). Finally, “El carro se fue haciendo eses por la carretera, [y] comenzó a dar vueltas, pucún, pucún, pucún, tras, chas, chas, pom, el vidrio delantero saltó” (44-45, *sic*).

The *compañeros*, as is to be expected, celebrate their reckless act as a sign of independence, a rejection of authority, and do not regret placing their lives or the lives of others in danger. Guía, it should be remembered, tries to outrun “Un coche sport” (15), because the driver passes him on the road. The race ends with “[u]n[a] estruend[a] ... llamarada” (*ibid*), because the “esport se había estrellado con un camion que transitaba en sentido contrario” (15-16). Guía’s reaction is celebratory: “Una ligera sonrisa se dibujó en mi cara al pensar: Eso mereces” (16). *Chucha Flaca* also celebrates their reckless behavior by ridiculing *El Rata*’s mother: “Después del accidente su vieja hizo una misa de acción de gracias. Si hubiera sabido que íbamos socados y con putas no hace ni droga” (42, *sic*). Not content with ridiculing her, he declares: “Nos hincaron a los cinco y el cura maje nos echó agua bendita. Mejor nos hubiera dado un trago, todavía estábamos de goma” (*ibid, sic*). As this makes clear,

*Chucha Flaca* derives pleasure not only from the reckless act, racing down a highway while drunk, but also in deliberately deceiving their parents and priest. The *compañeros*, then, interpret their temerarious behavior as a spurning of authority and a form of self-realization. Besides engaging in dangerous behavior, the *compañeros*, as Guía in *La tumba*, will assert their masculinity by sexually exploiting women.

The Ladino protagonists in *Los compañeros* attempt to overcome their alienation by sexually commodifying and exploiting women. As Ileana Rodríguez points out in *Women, Guerrillas, and Love: Understanding War in Central America* (1996), Central American male authors produced literature during the armed conflicts in which women were represented as the “repose of the warrior” or as “revolutionary pussy” (xvii).<sup>58</sup> However, in order to analyze the representation of women in the novel, it is necessary to distinguish between Ladina and Indian women. The protagonists, for example, render Ladina women as an impediment to their self-realization as individuals: as mothers, girlfriends, and wives, they represent a curtailment of their agency. For them, Ladina prostitutes are ideal women, because they sexually serve men without imposing any limits on their individual agency. Indigenous women, on the other hand, play a different role in the novel than do Ladina women, because they are represented as completely lacking agency: they are nameless, voiceless, and completely submissive. By sexually exploiting them, the Ladino men are affirming their domination over the indigenous population. In representing Ladino-Indian relations in this manner, the novel as a whole reifies the

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<sup>58</sup> Mario Roberto Morales’s *El esplendor de la pirámide* (1985) is an excellent of this type of literature.

dominant indofobia discourse that renders contemporary indigenous peoples as an “obstacle” to modernization.

The Ladino protagonists represent Ladinas as the negation of their agency. As I already analyzed in more detail above, *El Bolo* is angry because his mother does not provide him with his father’s identity: “era mi primer día de clases, [me di cuenta] que estaba tirado en el mundo sin padre, sin saber de dónde venía ni a dónde iba” (242-243). In explaining why he grew up without a father he declares that his grandmother is a, “Cacique maldito, machorra, doña bárbara del barrio de Matamoros, que domina en su tribu, en su familia, en mi madre y en todo lo que tiene cerca y que tuvo la culpa que mi padre no me conociera ni yo lo conociera a él” (30). In other words, his grandmother ran away his father: “Desde que la dejó mi padre a causa de su madre” (*ibid*). However, he does not provide any evidence to prove that his “maldita abuela” did in fact run his father away, that his mother kept his father’s identity a secret past first grade, or that he asked her for his identity, either as an adolescent or an adult. *El Bolo* simply does not consider the possibility that his father might have left him and his mother out of his own accord. As with *El Bolo*, *El Rata* claims that his mother, “le ha de haber dicho [a mi padre] cuándo podía chupar cuándo tenía que acostarse cuándo tenía que cogerla” (161, *sic*) because “ahí anda el viejo todo agachado todo avejentado con la cabeza gacha que nunca la pudo levantar” (*ibid, sic*). According to *El Bolo* and *El Rata*, Ladinas restrict and limit the agency of Ladino men.

In the novel, *El Rata*’s individual agency is represented as severely restricted by his wife, *La Chayo*. After dropping off *Chucha Flaca* at the Aeropuerto Aurora, *El Rata* laments that he did not do as *El Bolo*, who “también se hizo comunista ... se fue

a Cuba en el sesenta y dos con una beca ... y después se largó a Europa” (146-147). *El Rata*'s regrets are due to his antagonistic relationship with his wife. For example, he complains that, *La Chayo* is a “fiera” (145) and a “monstruo” (165) who “cada día [está] con más exigencias” (147) leaving him “más endeudado” (*ibid*). Not only does she spend his money on consumer goods (145), *El Rata* complains that she restricts his agency: “si me voy a tomar unas belias con los cuates ya está con trompas entonces” (160, *sic*). In fact, because he was out all night with *Chucha Flaca*, he worries that, “la Chayo va a pasar con trompas toda la semana” (*sic, ibid*) or that he may arrive home to find that, “ya armó el gran escándalo a esas horas ya llamó al hospital a mi mamá a la chingada madre que la parió y el clavel va a ser el padre y señor mío” (148, *sic*). Fearing her reaction, he tells himself, “tengo que parar despacio para que no oíga la Chayo el carro si no va a salir” (164). Exasperated that she is “siempre vigilándome siempre controlándome” (*ibid, sic*), he declares: “ya no puedo hacer yo lo que me dé la gana siempre nervioso esperando la puteada” (162, *sic*). Clearly, *El Rata* experiences his marriage to *La Chayo* as an extreme limitation on his agency, and, effectively, as a negation of his masculinity.

The representation of *El Rata* as an uxorious husband functions to render Ladina women as emasculatory. To begin with, *El Rata* represents himself as excessively caring for his wife: “le doy todo mi sueldo vengo temprano a la casa le compro lo que quiere ... la llevo al cine por lo menos una vez a la semana le compro su jamón me la cojo por lo menos una vez a la semana o cada quince días” (163-164, *sic*). Believing he has fulfilled his tasks as a dutiful husband, *El Rata* cannot understand why upon staying out late, *La Chayo* “llama por teléfono [a mi mamá] y le

dice que no he llegado que a saber qué me pasó que ya son las siete de la noche y que debo estar chupando” (160, *sic*). His explanation renders Ladinas as inscrutable: “con eso se venga yo no sé de qué se quiere vengar” (163, emphasis mine). Moreover, as *El Rata* represents them, Ladinas are not only inexplicable but also malicious: “se me queda viendo con odio” (*ibid*). *La Chayo*’s perniciousness is affirmed by the suggestion that she has cuckolded *El Rata*. Refusing his sexual advances, *La Chayo* claims, “es que estoy cansada que me duele que estoy enferma que mis días” (*ibid*, *sic*), yet she demands that *El Rata* invite “el jefe de la oficina ... todas las semanas a hartarse ... como si fuera obligación” (153, *sic*). If he does not do so, it is not only *La Chayo* who becomes unsettled but also his boss: “se pasa la semana trompudo” (*ibid*, *sic*). *La Chayo*’s demands, plus the *Jefe*’s anger, render *El Rata* an object of derision. To wit, the reader, unlike *El Rata*, is able to surmise why *La Chayo* “no qu[iere] tener hijos” (158).

In stark opposition to their wives, girlfriends, and mothers, the Ladinos represent Ladina prostitutes, ones they consider as lacking agency, as ideal women, because they sexually serve men without imposing any limitations on them. For example, when describing their teenage years, *El Rata* states that, “íbamos todos los días donde las putas” (224) and “toma[ba]mos posesión y posición de la casa, la cerramos a piedra y lodo” (225). What’s more, he claims that the women are always pleased to see them: “La Berta siempre tiene guardada una pacha de ron (polano): dadivosa: cochambrosa: babosa” (*ibid*). Besides rhyming, the words, “dadivosa,” “cochambrosa,” and “babosa” depict Berta and the other prostitutes as simpletons who are always delighted to sexually serve men. *El Rata*, for example, claims that, Alicia,

“la vieja que fue casera del Patojo” (52, *sic*), “Llegaba a coger con los muchachos todos los Viernes de Dolores; hasta cincuenta le pasaban fierros” (52-53, *sic*); and, according to him, “El gusto de ella era aparecer con el Honorable [El Patojo] en el balcón principal de Medicina” (53). Echoing *El Rata*, *Chucha Flaca* praises “las putas de verdad,” because, “Ésas sí son machas, puras hembras, ... te maman los huevos” (233). For the *compañeros*, Ladina prostitutes enjoy being treated as sexual objects. Besides treating Ladinas contemptuously or as sexual commodities, the *compañeros* reproduce the virulent Liberal indofobia by sexually exploiting/possessing indigenous women.

In *Los compañeros*, the representation of indigenous women as sexually available to non-indigenous men functions to render contemporary indigenous Guatemalans as lacking agency, as a political nonentity. In fact, the only indigenous characters that appear in the novel are female waitresses or maidservants. While at a diner, for example, *El Rata* “praises” the indigenous waitress, “la cholerita” (159), because, as he claims, “ésta está rebuena así son las inditas no engordan siempre macizas” (*ibid*, *sic*). In rendering indigenous women as sexually desirable, because they are “thin” and sexually “vigorous”, *El Rata* is racializing them as physically attractive. Unlike “las gachupinas” (*ibid*) who “nomás pasan de los treinta y se ponen como toneles” (*ibid*), it is biology that renders indigenous women sexually exploitable: “por eso éstos [inmigrantes españoles] cuando sus españoletas ya están paltigre empiezan a pisar inditas y ponen meseras para pasarles fierros” (*ibid*, *sic*). Indigenous women, then, are not only racially “fit” to be sexually exploited by men, but they exercise no agency. The waitress is not only nameless but also voiceless.



In the novel, indigenous women are not only sexually “available” to non-indigenous men, but they also do not resist the sexual exploitation. The *compañeros*, it should be recalled, represent the Ladina prostitutes as delighted to sexually serve them. However, a close examination of the novel reveals that the women do not only challenge the bawd who owns the brothel, but they also fight the roisterous adolescents. For example, when the bawd, Doña Meri, tells the teenagers that, “Si no se van a ocupar, se me van a la mierda. Sólo vienen a tentar a las muchachas, a sobijearlas y no tienen ni pisto” (225, *sic*), the prostitutes respond to her, “Ay, doña Meri, deje a los patojos. Ahorita ni clientes hay” (*ibid*). What’s more, when it appears that Doña Meri is going to kick them out, the women exclaim, “Además (salta la Rosita, la Negra, la Berta ...) éste es mi traido” (*ibid, sic*). While the *compañeros* interpret the women’s actions as evidence that they want to sexually please them, the Ladino prostitutes are effectively challenging the bawd’s authority. In fact, the prostitutes tell the adolescents to keep to themselves: “Sólo dancin, ya lo saben. No se vayan a calentar, porque después nácar” (225, *sic*). Moreover, *Chucha Flaca* admits that, “se daba por sabido, entendido. ... Nos erectamos, nos deserectamos, nos picamos, nos despizamos. *Dorminos un rato. Hasta leemos si la cosa se pone aburr. Platicamos*” (*ibid, emphasis mine, sic*). Given that the women do not sexually serve them, the *compañeros* sleep, read, or converse among themselves. Indigenous women, on the other hand, exercise no agency.

Indigenous people, as the representation of a Mexican maidservant demonstrates, are represented as nameless, voiceless, and without any agency: unlike the prostitutes, they do not resist. For example, after knocking on a boarding house,

*Chucha Flaca* claims that, “Unos pasitos *débiles, arrastrados*, me anunciaron a una india ... La puerta se abrió lenta, con *timidez*. Se *asomó* una indita” (85-86, emphasis mine). The words I have italicized function to render the maidservant as feeble and incapacitated: the woman even lacks the confidence to open the door. *Chucha Flaca*, moreover, immediately asserts his authority over her: “La bauticé: la Totoneca. Me la voy a coger” (*ibid*). Unlike the Ladina prostitute who after being harassed by one of the *compañeros* screams at him, “Hijo de la gran puta .... Qué te has creído, que vas a venir a chimar grolis con la que te dé la gana. Te voy a rayar la cara desgraciado” (230, *sic*), the maidservant only enunciates submissive statements: “güenas noches señor” (*ibid, sic*), “mandé usté” (*ibid, sic*), and “guallamar a la doña, señor” (*ibid, sic*). Her perspective is completely erased. Moreover, *Chucha Flaca*’s claim that, “La Totoneca está clarísima ... La cojo, me lava la ropa y me da café” (218), is an affirmation of the Ladino domination of contemporary indigenous peoples, one that is represented by Ladino men sexually exploiting indigenous women. As the foregoing examples have demonstrated, the Ladino protagonists in the novel reify the dominant indofobia.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> As is to be expected, they also reproduce the dominant representation of the pre-Hispanic Quiché, Cakchiquel, and Zutuhil as poltroons: the pre-Conquest indigenous peoples of the Americas were asinine cowards. On his way to the Aeropuerto Aurora in Guatemala City, *Chucha Flaca* states: “Bueno, allí está la última recta, la avenida Hincapié. Qué nombre más baboso: hincapié, el inca y el pie, puta Atahualpa, no, fue Moctezuma. Todos esos indios son lo mismo, a todos los pendejearon. Inca de pie, o pie de inca o que se hinque tu madre” (57). For *Chucha Flaca*, as for Martín Barrundia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the pre-Hispanic indigenous peoples were, “turbas desnudas de indisciplinados indios que antes venciera tan bizarramente [España]” (Barrundia, 1876: 4). When the taxi driver in Mexico City asks him if he wants to get dropped off, “Antes de [la calle] Bolívar o después” (85), *Chucha Flaca* reaffirms this discourse: “¿Qué pasó antes de Bolívar? Toda esta indiada jetona bien jodida y

In the preceding, I have established that the Ladino protagonists in *Los compañeros* form part of a rebellious counterculture, one aimed at rejecting authority figures such as, parents, educators and priests. The protagonists, then, form part of a wider counterculture movement taking place in other countries such as, Mexico. In fact, as indicated, the Ladino protagonists have much in common with Gabriel Guía, the protagonist in José Agustín's *La tumba*, and his rebellious elite Mexican friends. Caught up in the revolutionary fervor of the period, the Ladino protagonists join the Marxist insurgency without forming an analysis of the class, gender, and racial inequities in the country. Instead, they interpret the revolutionary struggle as an extension of their rebellious behavior. As the many examples I provided reveal, they reproduce the dominant sexism and indofobia. To wit, Ladina and Indian women play an important role in the novel, because Ladino men assert their masculinity by sexually exploiting their bodies. It is, therefore, not possible to characterize these men as revolutionaries. In fact, notwithstanding his general sense of revolutionary politics of the 1960s, it is not even possible to characterize *El Patojo* as a revolutionary, because he also fails to analyze the gender, class, and racial inequalities in Guatemala. Having proven the foregoing, I now turn to an analysis of Luis de Lión's *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá*.

### **Religion, Revolutionary Ideology and Race in *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá***

I argue that Lión's transculturated novel, *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá*, suggests that indigenous Guatemalans have to forge a revolutionary ideology

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después de Bolívar también" (*ibid*). For *Chucha Flaca*, as the other *compañeros*, indigenous peoples, not only Guatemalan ones but also those across the continent, were mindless poltroons easily duped and defeated by Spain.

particular to their needs. By destroying the Ladino-Christian symbols of power, the Christianized Indians become political agents and create the necessary space to forge a revolutionary ideology and rearticulate Indian-Ladino social relations. However, the future—in the political sense—is left undefined. While the indigenous townspeople destroying themselves is analogous to the symbolic self-destruction of Hunahpú and Xbalanqué in the *Popol Vuh*, the townspeople do not undergo a symbolic rebirth as do the mythological twins. The novel only suggests that such a rebirth is possible.

Notwithstanding its ambiguous and problematic ending, I argue that *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá* challenges the representation of indigenous Guatemalans in *Los compañeros* as nameless, voiceless, and without agency. In fact, the novel also functions to critique the Ladino sexualization of indigenous women as the objects of Ladino power in *Los compañeros*, because it is an indigenous woman that demystifies the Ladino exploitation of her community. Besides challenging the indofobia that permeates Flores's novel, *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá* calls attention to the limited way in which the Ladino protagonists in *Los compañeros* articulated revolutionary politics as a struggle between middle class Ladinos, such as themselves, and the state. To wit, the novel suggests that Leftist Ladinos would have to critique their own prejudicial racist ideologies in order to create alliances with the indigenous populations, ones of cooperation<sup>60</sup> and not direction.

Though a transculturated novel, *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá*, I argue, should not be understood as a continuation of Miguel Ángel Asturias's *el realismo*

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<sup>60</sup> I do not use the word “incorporation” as the Ladino revolutionary Julio César Macías, commonly known by his *nom de guerre*, César Montes, does in *La guerrilla fue mi camino* (1997), because it denotes a Ladino leadership.

*mágico*. In *Hombres de maíz*, Goyo Yic and María Tecún do not formulate an anti-Ladino discourse and while their son, Goyo Yic, denounces the he has been jailed, “Por alzado... Nos querían hacer trabajar sin paga” (343), he does not elaborate further besides stating that, “Es una ruina todo... No hay justicia cabal” (*ibid*). Moreover, while the Yic/Tecún family returns to Pisigüilito, a town then represented as outside the jurisdiction of the Ladino authorities, the indigenous characters in *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá* remain in their town, one still within the jurisdiction of the Ladinos. The equilibrium that is established in *Hombres de maíz* between the Ladino and Indian societies, each one within its respected spheres, simply does not exist in *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá*. To the contrary, the novel suggests that the newly politicized indigenous characters will continue to struggle against Ladino oppression in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

As already stated, I agree that *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá* is a transcultural novel: it is not, as argued by Keri Anderson Muños and Emilio del Valle Escalante, a Mayan novel. Because he incorrectly classifies it as a Mayan novel, Del Valle argues that it marks, “the emergence of a new discursivity that challenges the traditional discourse of Latin American *indigenismo* in order to reclaim and rewrite indigenous histories from an Indian perspective” (2006, 204). While the novel does in fact challenge representations found in *Entre la piedra y la cruz* and *Hombres de maíz*, it needs to be noted that a Ladinoized Indian wrote it in the Spanish language. As the previous chapter demonstrates, the use of the *Popol Vuh* is not groundbreaking. Simply put, *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá* is surely a critique of Ladino oppression and it promotes a politization of indigenous cultural practices, but it is specious to

classify it as an Indian novel when the author is a Ladinoized Indian and he wrote it in Guatemala's dominant language, Spanish. *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá* is a transcultural novel.

The indigenous characters in *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá*, as I already mentioned, produce their agency by destroying the Catholic Church and the statue of the Virgen de Concepción, the two most important symbols of Catholicism in the novel. Yet upon reading the novel, a reader could reasonably ask the following: why does Lión, a man so involved in Leftist politics and so committed to overthrowing the Guatemalan dictatorship that he was kidnapped, tortured, and assassinated in 1984, write a novel in the early 1970s about indigenous Guatemalans destroying Catholic symbols? To wit, why didn't Lión represent indigenous Guatemalans deploying a Marxist revolutionary discourse? I propose that the novel deals with indigenous Guatemalans physically destroying the material symbols of the Catholic Church, because the practicing of Christianity prohibits the formation of a revolutionary ideology. By rejecting Christianity and destroying the religious symbols, the indigenous characters take the first step in articulating a radical ideology particular to their needs in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The reader will surely recall that the Ladino protagonists in *Los compañeros* do not take the time or make the effort to analyze their own positionality in Guatemalan society. The indigenous Guatemalans in *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá*, on the other hand, do analyze their own positionality. In other words, the destruction of the Christian symbols and rejection of Christianity is a revolutionary act, one particular to their local needs.

In order to contextualize the destruction of the Catholic religious symbols in the novel, I will first analyze Francisco Antonio de Fuentes y Guzmán's representation of the pre-Hispanic indigenous religious practices in the *Historia de Goathemala ó Recordación Florida* (1691). I plan to demonstrate that Fuentes y Guzmán legitimized the Conquest of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and his own positionality in the late 17<sup>th</sup> by arguing that the pre-Hispanic indigenous kingdoms of the Quiché, Cakchiquel, and Zutuhil worshipped the devil. According to him, the Conquistadors saved their souls by cristianizing them, a task he sees himself as continuing. Fuentes y Guzmán's argument demonstrates that in rejecting Christianity the indigenous characters in *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá* are affirming the validity of the religious practices of their forebears in order to radically challenge Ladinos in the present historical moment.

### ***Recordación Florida***

In order to justify the Conquest, Francisco Antonio Fuentes y Guzmán argues in the *Recordación Florida* that the Quiché, Cakchiquel, and the Zutuhil were idolatrous worshippers of the devil. In Chapter V of Book I, "Del principio que tuvo la idolatría entre los indios de este reino de Goathemala, y los sacrificios y ritos de que usaban," he tells the story of an ancient indigenous King who becomes heartbroken, depressed, and "negado á todo humano consuelo" (1691: 36) after his sole male successor dies. Fearing the "pretensiones a la corona" (*ibid*) that would arise upon the King's death, his vassals consult the devil who "apareciéndoles ... en la forma acostumbrada, les mandó fábriar una estatua de madera, representando al príncipe difunto [con] tanto esmero el artífice, que salió a la misma semejanza" (*ibid, sic*). The devil, then, introduces himself into the statue making it "que pareciese estar animada"

(*ibid*). Bearing the exact likeness and behavior of the dead son, the King believes his son has resurrected, gives him “todo asenso” (37), and while on his deathbed “les dejo por heredera de sus estados á la misma estatua” (*ibid, sic*). Because the statue “hablaba y trataba con ellos como si estuviera viva” (*ibid*), the Indians “la tuvieran por cosa venida del cielo” (*ibid*) and proceed to worship it. In other words, the Indians worship the devil as their King: they are his vassals. According to Fuentes y Guzmán, it is their worshipping of the devil that leads them to practice “terrible” rituals, ones destructive to the social fabric of the kingdom.

According to Fuentes y Guzmán, the Conquest and Christianization of the Indians was necessary, because it saved them from the destruction they brought on their society by worshipping the devil. Under the influence of the devil, the Indians, he claims, committed “atrocious” and “savage” rituals: “Y pasaban á la cruel barbaridad de sacarse la propia sangre de las narices, orejas, brazos y piernas, para sacrificarla” (38). The “fúnebres ceremonias” (39) culminate when, “el más superior de aquellos infames *ahquies* sacrificaba las aves y ... hombres” (*ibid*). After performing the “ceremonias bárbaras” (40), the men return home, drink “la gran cantidad de la *chicha*” (*ibid*, emphasis his), and “con semejante bebida fuera de su acuerdo” (*ibid*) proceed to initiate the “horror entre ellos” (*ibid*): “siendo esta la ocasión para lograr sus pasiones, ninguno la despreciaba; hiriendo y matando á su salvo á los que les parecía, juntándose torpemente con sus hijas, madres y concubinas, y acometiendo carnalmente á las niñas tiernas de seis y siete años” (*ibid*). Fuentes y Guzmán’s conception of the religious practices of the Quiché, Cakchiquel, and Zutuhil, the three Guatemalan pre-Hispanic kingdoms, are, to say the least, fiendishly



macabre. Yet the descriptions provided by the author should not be interpreted as mere artifice, ones intended to merely grab the attention of the Peninsular readers. For Fuentes y Guzmán, non-Christian religious practices, imagined or real, *were* acts of the devil. What's more, he finds evidence that they are still being practiced in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Fuentes y Guzmán legitimizes his role as an *encomendero* in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century by claiming that the Christianization of the Indians is not complete: they are still practicing the ancient “devilish” rituals. For example, he claims that, “Mas no puedo, sin dolor grande, omitir en esta recordación, el que aun todavía están contagiados de este depravado abuso [adorar a sus ídolos], y que no lo digo como conjeturable, sino como caso experimental” (37). Based on his own experience, he claims that, “los indios de *San Juan Atitlán* ... adoraban en un indio mudo y sumamente asqueroso ... al cual le vestían de las vestiduras sagradas, y puestos en el altar, le sahumaban y ofrecían flores” (*ibid*). Equally egregious for the chronicler, “Sacrificios de gallinas y humos aromáticos, cada día lastimosamente los encontraba yo en aquellos montes” (37-38). The sanctimonious *encomendero*, however, does not idly stand by: he puts the, “indio mudo en poder del alcalde ordinario” (37) and then tells the “ministros y jueces [que] tengan más cuidado con ellos” (38). In other words, Fuentes y Guzmán, the *encomendero*, is carrying out the Christianization began by the first Conquistadors. Bernal Díaz del Castillo, it should be noted, penned a telling letter on February 20<sup>th</sup>, 1558 to none other than Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, the pious “protector” of the Indians, in which he tells him that, “si viese la buena manera e cristiandad é policia que ay aquellos pueblos [de indios], é por ello, é también ver las

glesias é ricos ornamentos é mucicos é cantores para el oficio divino ... que gozo ternía ... [y] me loaría” (*Historia verdadera de la Conquista de la Nueva España*: 2001, 642, *sic*). As Díaz del Castillo, Fuentes y Guzmán did not only justify his privileged position by claiming that he was Christianizing the Indians, but he also expected to be praised for it.

It is, of course, easy to point out that Fuentes y Guzmán’s representation of the *encomendero*’s role in the Christianization of the Indians, a mystification of the exploitative relationship between the Creoles and Indians, is self-serving. Reading Fuentes y Guzmán’s claims against the grain, I argue that they also suggest that indigenous peoples maintained some autochthonous, that is, non-Christian, religious practices. Moreover, the fact that the chronicler is invested in eradicating those religious-cultural practices suggests that he also acknowledged them as a form of resistance—devilishly or humanly inspired—to his own Creole authority. Without a doubt, the chronicler understood the imposition of Christianity as the imposition of his authority, as a way of establishing his own rule; thus, the autochthonous or, most likely, transculturated religious-cultural practices must have seemed to be a challenge to his authority. As I will now argue, *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá*, written over two-hundred years after the *Recordación Florida*, is a novel that rearticulates those “devilish,” “macabre,” and “barbaric” religious practices as a necessary component of the struggle against Ladino oppression.

### ***El tiempo principia en Xibalbá***

In *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá*, the Catholic Church, as an institution, functions to regulate the lives of the christianized indigenous townspeople. As the

narrator states, the Catholic Church occupies a central and privileged position as the symbolic center of the town: “fue emergiendo de sus cimientos hasta quedar pintada de blanco como paloma de Castilla y a su alrededor aparecieron ... los ranchos” (34-35). By making the Church and the “ranchos” analogous to a “paloma de Castilla ... y sus pichoncitos de paloma espumuy” (*ibid*), the narrator is highlighting the Catholic Church’s authoritative and paternalistic relationship to the christianized townspeople. Such authoritarianism and paternalism is made evident in the priest’s homilies: “el padre llegaba con prisa para terminar pronto y solo se detenía en el sermón por un rato para predicar en contra de los protestantes ... en contra de los liberales y los masones ... y de vez en cuando en contra de los comunistas” (24). While the priest denounces the Church’s past and contemporary enemies, he is not invested in developing a working relationship with the congregation. To put it differently, the priest does not treat the christianized indigenous townspeople as equals: he arrives simply to impose Church doctrine. As represented in the novel, however, the townspeople are active participants in the reproduction of their own subjugation.

The representation of the indigenous townspeople participating in the *cofradía*<sup>61</sup> calls attention to how Catholic religious practices are critical to the reproduction of the dominant ideology. As will be remembered, Fuentes y Guzmán argued that the ancient Indians of Guatemala brought destruction upon their kingdom, because they began worshipping the devil in the form of an animated wooden statue as their king. *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá* turns the chronicler’s narrative on its head:

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<sup>61</sup> The word “cofradía” refers to an association of Catholics that come together to worship Jesus Christ or a particular saint. The association is hierarchical and guidelines are observed to maintain that hierarchy.

it is because they worship Jesus Christ, a false god, and the Virgen Mary, a false saint, symbolized by wooden *idolillos*, that they bring destruction upon their community.

As the following examples will demonstrate, the indigenous townspeople are represented as destroying their community, because they have reorganized it according to a foreign religion.

The Christianized Indians, in stark contrast to the claims of Fuentes y Guzmán, sow discord within their society by practicing the Catholic rituals. As already mentioned, the townspeople are devout participants in the *cofradía* of the Virgen de Concepción, the town's patron saint. In fact, the townsmen become so obsessed with the statue of the Virgen de Concepción that the town's *principales* fight over the right to coordinate and manage the celebrations in her honour. As the narrator points out, "los dos principales ... se peleaban para que ella se quedara en sus respectivas casas" (62) by arguing that they had, "más dinero para comprarle siempre sus flores y sus candelas para hacerle un vestido nuevo ... para celebrarle mejor esa fiesta" (*ibid*). To wit, when unable to decide who should be charged with the maintenance of the Virgen's statue and the staging of the required festivities, the narrator states that, "hubo que sacar machetes e insultos" (*ibid*). As this example demonstrates, the townsmen become so enthralled with paying homage to the statue that they pay no attention to the social structure of their community: they are willing to die and kill each other over it. It is because they worship the Virgen's statue, then, that their society is thrown into disarray, and it is what allows the priest to assert his authority over them.

By practicing the Catholic rituals, the Christianized Indians place themselves under the authority of the Catholic Church, as represented by the priest. To continue with the example of the *cofradía*, the narrator tells us that a machete fight among the two *principales* is only averted when, “alguien propuso que fuera el padre el que decidiera a quien le tocaría ese año la Virgen” (*ibid*). In other words, it is the Christianized Indians themselves who call on the Church hierarchy to take on a position of authority in their community. Upon arriving at the town, the priest, “escuchó primero a todos, después *los regañó a todos* y votó a favor del que sabía que tenía más dinero” (*ibid*, emphasis mine); and, because the fighting continues in the following days, he finally declares that, “la Virgen se quedaría en la iglesia para siempre y que solo saldría el día del rezado grande” (63). As this example demonstrates, the Christianized Indians place themselves under the power of a man who admonishes them as if they were children. It is because the townspeople’s accept the Church’s authority and practice its rituals that the priest is able to interfere in the functioning of the society. As the foregoing has shown, the indigenous society represented in *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá* is wracked by discord, conflict, and hostility, because they worship the false wooden idols of Christianity. The men’s adoration of the Virgen de Concepción, however, merits particular attention, because it is particularly pernicious to the Christianized Indian community.

In a complete inversion of Fuentes y Guzmán’s argument, it is the Virgen de Concepción’s wooden statue that drive the Christianized Indians to disrupt their social relations. Valle Escalante, for example, is correct to claim that, “the image of the *Virgen de la Concepción* subjugates the community as the ‘only’ ladina in town,

which wields ideological authority as the ‘mother of all the men’” (2006, 206). The men, in fact, do not only worship the statue of the Virgen de Concepción, but they desire her sexually: “los hombres se dieron cuenta de que la querían con apetito, con deseo” (63). During the delivery of the Virgen to the new *cofrade*, the year’s previous one, “la tomó entre sus brazos y la besó fuertemente” (62), provoking, “Los partidarios del otro principal [que] sacar[a]n machetes” (63). Although tragedy is avoided, the women “empezar[on] a ver en sus maridos su amor por ella, a darse cuenta de que [ellas mismas] solo les servían para desahogarse, para tener hijos, para hacerles la comida” (*ibid*). The result is that, “los celos ocasionaban pleitos en *las casas de todo el pueblo*” (64, emphasis mine). As if that were not enough, the sons also begin to “amar a la Virgen y a desamar a sus novias, a odiar a sus padres por no amar a sus mujeres, por estarles robando a ellos el amor de la única ladina del pueblo” (*ibid*). In other words, even though they recognize that, “los cristos, a pesar de su morenez y su vida miserable, tenían facciones extrañas y ellos no” (*ibid*), they also are attracted to the Virgen de Concepción. Taken in its totality, the Virgen de Concepción brings discord to the community. It is only when Concha and Baeza transgress the Catholic Church’s authority that the indigenous townspeople begin to take notice of their subjugation to the Church and its *idolillos*.

In *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá*, Concha and Baeza, two indigenous characters, challenge the authority of the Catholic Church; and, in the process, they function as catalysts that move the Christianized Indians to assert their agency. The Catholic Church, as is well known, regulates female sexuality: a woman is either chaste and pure or promiscuous and amoral. Concha challenges this binary opposition

by having multiple sexual partners outside of marriage. Given her rejection of the gender roles prescribed by the Catholic Church, the priest declares that, “había que echarla del pueblo” (20) and “poco a poco, de rancho en rancho, de calle en calle, la fue empujando hasta el último rancho de la última calle” (*ibid*). Besides the execrations of the priest, the Christianized Indian women, “le hicieron la señal de la cruz, le quemar[o]n chile seco, la maltratar[o]n, le quisier[o]n pegar” (21).

Notwithstanding the priest’s and the women’s abuse, Concha continues to have sexual intercourse with the townsmen (25). Concha, then, rejects the Christian virgen/whore binary, because she enjoys having sex and is invested in asserting her agency. In fact, after having a stillbirth, she decides, “nunca volver a dar ni a luz ni a la muerte” (*ibid*), because she interprets it as a negation of her agency: “Babosa soy si vuelvo a tener otro hijo .... Yo sé que algunos me quieren joder, pero qué” (26). Concha’s opposition to the Catholic Church’s sexualization of women as either a virgen or a whore is an assertion of her agency.

In a different fashion, Baeza also challenges the Catholic Church’s ideological hold over the indigenous townspeople. Travelling and living extensively among Ladinos, he continuously experiences discrimination: “Sí, te abren las puertas pero en cuanto miran tu color, tu cara, tu pelo piensan que no sos hombre sino su remedo, que más te parecés a un animal, que tu condición es ser menos que ellos y te cierran la puerta y te abren la otra, la de la calle, la de la cárcel” (53). Based on Baeza’s words, it is clear that the avenues for indigenous advancement in Ladino society have been cut off in the post-1954 period. Besides the street or jail, Ladinos do not permit Indians to become socially mobile in their society. Notwithstanding the racism he

faced, he attempted to live, “con una prostituta que nunca le dio un hijo porque no quería que fuera indio igual a su padre pero a quien él amaba por su color” (50).

Finding that he is discriminated and rejected by Ladino society, Baeza turns to crime:

“había estado en la cárcel pero por robo ... jefeado a una pandilla de ladrones de almacenes, integrado otra de cuatrerros en la costa ... había estado en una revolución de shute pero había estado” (*sic*, 49). Despising Ladino society and no longer interested in Ladinoizing, he returns to his hometown, because as he says, “el calor de tu rancho no lo vas a encontrar en ningún lado” (53).

Baeza, a man who exercised his agency among Ladinos, is disgusted by the acquiescence of the indigenous townspeople to the Church and priest. Upon returning to his hometown, Baeza, “alcanzó a ver ... la iglesia con su *mismo* color blancosucio y ... adentro con los *mismos* santos que saldrían en procesión los días de fiesta acompañados de las *mismas* cofradías que rezarían las *mismas* oraciones” (49, emphasis mine). In the words of the narrator, the town is the, “*misma* babosada de siempre ... y nadie se atreve a hablar mal de Dios ni de su madre ni de su hijo” (34, emphasis mine). The repetition of the word “mismo/a” emphasizes the continuity of the Catholic Church’s power and the participation of the indigenous Guatemalans in its reproduction. As the one, “que regresó con los ojos llenos de ... mundo odiado, mundo ladino” (35), Baeza, “no cre[e] en lo que dice el padre, [es] el único que piensa, que se da cuenta de otro modo” (36). It is because he has experienced Ladino discrimination and asserted his agency as the leader of several outlaw organizations that he is disgusted by the acquiescence of the indigenous men who, “iban o venían del campo con el azadón al hombro ... el machete en la mano o con un tercio de leña



... a la espalda sostenida por el mecapal que les ceñía la frente, pujando, sudando, las canillas tiesas y negras de polvo” (*ibid*). Dutifully attending mass, participating in the *cofradía*, and working in the fields of an unnamed landowner, the Christianized Indians are incapable of challenging the Ladino power structure. Baeza, however, a man who participated in a revolutionary movement, decides to act.

Baeza, in attempting to “rape” the Virgen de Concepción, reduces the “mother of Jesus” to an *idolillo*, as Fuentes y Guzmán would say; and, in doing so, he breaks the ideological hold it casts on the Christianized townspeople. Baeza, it should be noted, had gone to stand outside the Church to, “distraer[s]e siquiera viendo mujeres” (36), but upon seeing the Virgen he realizes that, “Era a ella a la que esperaba con *amorodio*” (*ibid*, emphasis mine). Acting on this desire/hatred for the Virgen, Baeza steals the statue and spends all night, “en lucha constante contra la madera, puyándola, queriendo atravesarla a puro huevo, pero la madera se resistía” (61). Unable to penetrate the wooden statue, he falls asleep and wakes up, “ojeroso, desvelado, deshecho su miembro ... y con los ojos semiabiertos ... todavía la miró como quien mira a un enemigo que lo ha derrotado” (*ibid*). Yet he realizes that, “ella también parecía haber perdido, parecía triste, vieja también, también ojerosa, en sus mejillas ya no había ni sombra de color y sus labios necesitaban ahora de algún colorete para aparentar fresca. Parecía una cualquiera, parecía una puta” (*ibid*). In reducing the Virgen to an *idolillo*, a false god, Baeza no longer desires her. His actions, moreover, have a profound effect on the Christianized Indians.

The indigenous townspeople, recognizing the Virgen as an *idolillo*, reject the authority of the Ladino controlled Church by destroying the Catholic religious

symbols. As the narrator reports, upon finding Baeza and the Virgen de Concepción, “enlazados como perros que no quieren desprenderse” (70), the men destroy the physical structures, statues, and other symbols of Catholicism. The scene is worth quoting at length:

entraron a la iglesia y tiraron a un lado ... santos viejos e inútiles para los milagros, vírgenes frescas por fuera pero podridas por dentro, hicieron a un lado evangelios y apocalipsis, génesis y redenciones, bautizos, hostias, cálices, custodias, miedos de la tierra, promesas de cielo, cristos yacentes, cristos todavía crucificados y cristos todavía esperando el paredón del fusilamiento ... extremaunciones, confesiones, milagros, retablos, campanas, flores, velas, candelas, altares ... (74)

Fuentes y Guzmán, it should be remembered, bemoans in the *Recordación Florida* the, “idolillos ... que se encuentran á cada paso por todas las tierras cultivadas” (35). For him, they represent the “miserable ceguera” (36) of the Guatemalan Indians of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Yet in *El tiempo principio en Xibalbá*, the indigenous people have realized that the *idolillos*, “asquerosas estatuas” (35), are those of Jesus Christ, the Virgen Mary, and the other Catholic saints. The act of destroying these Ladino-Christian symbols, then, is of great import, because it demonstrates that they are false gods, an imposition dating from the Conquest, maintained through the colonial period, and continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As the narrator indicates, the saints do not perform miracles; the virgens are corrupt and no heavenly father exists. To put it differently, the indigenous townspeople demystify Catholicism as an ideological tool, one that prohibits them from establishing a critical ideology of their own. In order to understand the implications of the demystification of Catholicism in the novel, I turn to analyze the destruction of the Virgen de Concepción.

The destruction of the Virgen de Concepción and the coronation of Concha as the “Virgen of Death” represents the possibility that radically different ideologies and social relations may be forged. After destroying the Church, the indigenous men destroy the statue of the Virgen de Concepción: “la sacaron, la despojaron de su corona, ... de su vestido y luego la escupieron, la ultrajaron con palabras de puta aquí y puta allá, la machetearon” (74). The men then proceed to “ponerle el vestido, el manto, la corona” (*ibid*) on Concha as, “la nueva virgen” (*ibid*). Valle Escalante claims that the coronation of Concha, “symbolically represents a political struggle to ... destroy the hegemonic order” (2006, 207). However, it does not mean, as he claims, that, “Concha acquires a new epistemological significance, as her cultural, spiritual, and erotic authority as a prostitute nourishes and satisfies the necessities of the men of the Christianized community and promises ‘eternal happiness’ (p. 76)” (*ibid*). Such a claim, I argue, is incorrect, because Concha does not bring the men “eternal happiness”; instead, she brings death to the community. In order to interpret the destruction of the Christianized Indian community, it is necessary to analyze how *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá* rearticulates the creation myth of the *Popol Vuh*.

The fourth part of Li3n’s novel, “Y el d3a lleg3,” suggests an ambiguity towards the political future of the indigenous community. As already stated, it corresponds to the fourth part of the *Popol Vuh*<sup>62</sup> when humans embark on the formation of their societies: “muchos pueblos fueron formándose uno por uno, y las diferentes ramas de las tribus se iban reuniendo y agrupando junto a sus caminos, sus caminos que habían abierto” (Recinos: 1947, 127). In a similar fashion, the

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<sup>62</sup> See the section titled, “La Nueva Novela Guatemalteca and Transculturation.”

Christianized indigenous people at the beginning of “Y el día llegó,” “se dieron cuenta de que no estaban muertos” and “principiaron a reconstruir la aldea, a querer reinventarla exactamente igual a la imagen que tenían de ella en el cerebro desde hacía siglos” (73). The men, however, are interrupted: “Todos la supieron al mismo tiempo: no se había regresado al cementerio, andaba [Concha] suelta en el atrio de la iglesia y los estaba esperando” (*ibid*). Heeding Concha’s call, the men: “ya no pensaron en el pasado ni en el futuro ni en reconstruir la aldea ni en inventarla de nuevo” (*ibid*). Enthralled with Concha as the “Virgen of Death,” they kill their wives and children: “las tomaron de las trenzas, las arrastraron, les rasgaron los vestidos y con leños y machetes y bofetadas les dieron en el rostro” (75). Eventually they leave them, “bocarrriba o bocabajo echando sangre y luego, pasando sobre sus cuerpos, sobre los llantos de los niños ... prosiguieron la procesión por las calles del pueblo” (*ibid*), and then they kill each other (77). The scene ends with “la muerte, el silencio final” (*ibid*).

It is here that *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá* is at its most ambiguous: the men do not rebuild the town, because they heed Concha’s call to destroy not only the Catholic symbols of power but also the community as a whole. In other words, while they break with the false conviction that Jesus Christ is their Lord, the “miserable ceguedad” to appropriate the term used by Fuentes y Guzmán, they do not rebuild their community according to the “imagen que tenían de ella.” While the self-destruction of the town is analogous to the self-destruction of Hunahpú and Ixbalanqué, the novel does not represent a symbolic rebirth. By reducing that rebirth of the community to only a possibility, the novel demonstrates an inability to completely imagine an indigenous community constructed on an indigenous

cosmology. *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá*, then, only articulates the possibility of creating a radically different society: the destruction of the false *idolillos* is the first step in the formation of a new society, one that *may* be constructed in part on the “imagen que tenían de ella.”

### **Conclusion**

*Los compañeros* and *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá* provide a rigorous denunciation of the political oppression in Guatemala during the 1960s and early 1970s. As my analysis has shown, *Los compañeros* critiques the formation of the counterinsurgent state in the 1960s and the state of exception implemented by that state. *El Patojo*'s capture, torture, and assassination is strident denunciation of that state of exception. Besides denouncing the Guatemalan state's brutal repression of those it labels subversives, the novel also demonstrates why the Ladino led revolutionary movement of the 1960s failed: the Ladinos interpreted the revolutionary movement as an extension of their countercultural rebellious behavior against their families, teachers, and other authority figures. Moreover, the Ladino protagonists reified the dominant sexism and racism, thereby, excluding women and Indians from the revolutionary struggle.

*El tiempo principia en Xibalbá*, on the other hand, suggests that indigenous Guatemalans may only embark on the formation of a radical society by ridding themselves of the ideological barrier that is Christianity. In other words, by destroying the Ladino-Christian symbols, the indigenous community creates the possibility that a society based on their shared history and on some autochthonous indigenous practices may be formed in the immediate future. However, it is not possible to avoid

criticizing the novel, because it does not represent that radical society.

Notwithstanding its limited ending, *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá* provides a rigorous critique of *Los compañeros* and the Ladino led revolutionary movement of the 1960s, because it demonstrates that a revolutionary movement must include indigenous Guatemalans not only because they form the majority but also because they are political agents.

#### IV

### Rearticulating the Homeland: Memory, Forgetting, and Identity in U.S.- Guatemalan Literature

*But I should make absolutely clear that all of this, everything I was able to learn, find out, divine, about Lucas Caycam Quix, and even Celso Batres and the ñinera fafera, happened during the first three months after Moya left. And then I gave up, because it was all contradictory, mixed up, inconclusive, but I felt I understood it well enough now according to my own needs and design. (Roger Graetz, *The Long Night of White Chickens*)*

*For the next several hours Antonio rode the bus with his feet on the box underneath him. The box with the forgotten, worthless possessions. He vomited out the window, wept into his hands, pounded a fist into his thigh. I am a coward. I am a coward. He had failed to summon the courage to jump from the bus in the square in San Cristóbal and confront the man who had killed his wife and son. (Antonio Bernal, *The Tattooed Soldier*)*

The armed conflict in Guatemala during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century led to the forced displacement of Guatemalans to other countries, and, often, to the U.S. Like other immigrant communities, these Guatemalans have maintained strong familial ties to the homelands, and, while they, the first generation in the U.S., have not produced literature that deals with the Guatemalan armed conflict, their U.S. born children have. In this chapter, I will analyze Francisco Goldman's *The Long Night of White Chickens* (1992) and Héctor Tobar's *The Tattooed Soldier* (1998), two novels that deal directly with the Guatemalan armed conflict. I argue that these novels participate in the production of what Marita Sturken labels "collective memory" which, as she points out, "may often constitute opposition, but it is not automatically the scene of cultural resistance" (1997, 7). The "collective memory" produced in these two novels, I argue, involves a "'strategic' forgetting of painful events" (7), one that opens the way for the protagonists in the novels to either construct themselves as white Americans or as immigrants.

I argue that race is critical to the forgetting that the protagonists undertake. Roger Graetz, the protagonist of *The Long Night of White Chickens*, for example, argues that Guatemalan Ladinos are unfit for democracy, because they are *racially* incapable of governing themselves. Graetz is prompted to racialize Ladinos as unfit for democratic rule, I argue, based in part because on his desire to assimilate to the dominant U.S. culture. Reacting against the discrimination he suffers in the U.S. and in Guatemala, he responds by reproducing the dominant U.S. racism that renders Latin Americans as racially inferior and incapable of governing themselves. *The Tattooed Soldier*, on the other hand, privileges a Ladino understanding of race relations. As such, it is not surprising that the novel is about an elite Ladino's revenge murder of a Ladinoized-Indian ex-special forces officer, the main representative of the dictatorship in the novel. In both novels, however, the protagonists represent indigenous Guatemalans as "pre-modern."

In *The Long Night of White Chickens*, Graetz represents the Guatemalan armed conflict as a result of the innate incapacity of Guatemalans, Indians and Ladinos, to construct democratic institutions. It is because he interprets the armed conflict through the racialization of Guatemalans as unfit for democratic rule that he erases the U.S. military and political interventions in Guatemala. In *The Tattooed Soldier*, on the other hand, U.S. military personnel are represented training Guatemalan soldiers, the ones that later carry out extra-judicial killings of Indians and Ladinos. Notwithstanding the comparatively nuanced interpretation of the Guatemalan armed conflict represented in *The Tattooed Soldier*, the novel privileges the protagonist's interpretation of the armed conflict. Bernal, unlike the reader, is not aware of the U.S.



training, arming, and financing of the Guatemalan's military and death squads. On the contrary, he interprets the armed conflict in terms of his personal loss: he simply wants to avenge the murder of his wife and son. Either by erasing the role the U.S. played in Guatemala's armed conflict or interpreting it in terms of personal loss, the main characters in these novels strategically forget the overdeterminate role that the U.S. has played in training, arming, and financing the Guatemalan military and defending its use of terror in international organizations, such as the U.N. For the protagonists in these novels, the forgetting of the U.S. role is critical, because it allows them to either construct themselves as American or as immigrants.

#### **A Brief Note on the Authors**

Francisco Goldman and Hector Tobar worked as newspaper journalists reporting on the Central American civil wars during the 1980s and early 1990s and are the first U.S.-Guatemalans to have English language novels published in the U.S. After publishing *The Long Night of White Chickens*, Goldman published two novels, *The Ordinary Seaman* (1997) and *The Divine Husband* (2004), and a non-fiction account of the murder of Bishop Juan José Gerardi, *The Art of Political Murder: Who Killed the Bishop?* (2007). Héctor Tobar, on the other hand, has published a non-fiction account of Latin American immigrants in the U.S., *Translation Nation: Defining a New American Identity in the Spanish Speaking United States* (2004), and continues to work for the Los Angeles Times as a journalist.

#### **A Brief Summary of the Novels**

*The Long Night of White Chickens*, which won critical acclaim from numerous newspaper critics and the Sue Kaufman Prize for first fiction, is set mainly in the New

England region of the U.S. and Guatemala City. The novel revolves around Roger Graetz, the son of Mirabel Arrau, an elite Ladina immigrant to the U.S., and Ira Graetz, a U.S.-Jew, who decides to investigate the murder of Flor de Mayo Puac, his love interest since his childhood when she was his family's maid. Puac, an Americanized indigenous Guatemalan orphan who first works as a maid and graduates from Wellesley College in the U.S., will return to Guatemala to run an orphanage in Guatemala City. It is there that she is mysteriously murdered on June 17<sup>th</sup>, 1983. Once in Guatemala, Graetz spends more time cavorting with prostitutes than investigating the murder of Puac. Notwithstanding his poor investigative effort, he comes to the conclusion that several men may be responsible for Puac's murder, most of whom were romantically involved with her. Eventually, given his unfounded paranoia that his life is in danger, Graetz leaves to the U.S. via Mexico.

*The Tattooed Soldier*, which was a finalist for the Pen USA Award for fiction, is set during the 1992 Los Angeles uprising that followed the acquittal of the white police officers that abused Rodney King, an African-American motorist. The main conflict in the novel is between Antonio Bernal and Guillermo Longoria, two Guatemalan immigrants in Los Angeles. The protagonist, Antonio Bernal, is a middle class Ladino of Spanish stock who finds himself homeless in Los Angeles after a series of misfortunes. Bernal's antagonist and villain in the novel is Guillermo Longoria, a Ladinoized-indigenous paramilitary commander in a Guatemalan death squad who now works in *El Pulgarcito Express*, a Los Angeles based courier company specializing in shipping parcels to Central America. As the commander of the Lorenzo Amaya Anti-Communist Brigade in Guatemala, Longoria murders

Bernal's wife and child, Elena and Carlos. Elena's murder is precipitated by a letter she writes to the regional governor complaining about the unsanitary conditions in an indigenous slum on the outskirts of her small town, San Cristóbal Acatapán. It is only in Los Angeles, however, that Bernal is able to obtain revenge by hunting down and murdering Longoria during the Los Angeles uprising of 1992.

**Dominant Interpretations of *The Long Night of White Chickens* and *The Tattooed Soldier***

Susana S. Martínez has argued in her article titled, "Guatemala as a National Crime Scene: Femicide and Impunity in Contemporary U.S. Detective Novels" (2008), that Roger Graetz, the protagonist in *The Long Night of White Chickens*, "interrogate[s] [his] surroundings and the institutional powers that orchestrate the violence and injustice" in Guatemala. Following this analysis further, she concludes that he "expos[es] the culprits and their accomplices; and shed[s] light on these buried truths, an important first step in the search for justice" (19). In my analysis, I will demonstrate that Martínez is wrong on both points: Graetz does not interrogate any institutional powers, and he does not expose any culprits. Martínez, however, is correct in arguing that "the novel ... suffer[s] from some over-generalizations because the observer ... [is an] outsider ... and [demonstrates] a degree of paternalism towards locals" (13). While she does not analyze those "over-generalizations" or the protagonist's "paternalism towards the locals," I will analyze them in order to demonstrate that Graetz interprets the armed conflict in racial terms: Guatemalans are racially unfit for democracy.

In *Dividing the Isthmus: Central American Transnational Histories, Literatures, and Cultures* (2009), Ana Patricia Rodríguez claims that, “Héctor Tobar’s *The Tattooed Soldier* revisits and reconstructs the Guatemalan civil war from other diasporic locations while challenging the present condition of impunity in the isthmus” (119). Although she is correct in implying that the novel challenges the “condition of impunity,” her analysis, surprisingly, does not take into account race relations in Guatemala. In fact, she misinterprets the racial positionality of Guillermo Longoria and does not take into consideration the racial positionality of Antonio Bernal. For example, she incorrectly claims in her analysis of Longoria, the Ladinoized-Indian soldier, that he “connects ... to a greater cosmology, heritage, and identity embedded in him” through “the jaguar image” (123), a tattoo he obtains while being trained by U.S. soldiers at Fort Bragg. Furthermore, because Rodríguez erroneously associates Longoria with the “Maya Jaguar Sun God,” she interprets Longoria’s “great aggression, violence, and destruction” as “channel[ing] regenerative and life-giving Maya forces” (125). As my analysis will make clear, the interpretation provided by Rodríguez is without merit: Longoria identifies as a Ladino and despises indigenous Guatemalans.

Disregarding Guatemalan race relations, Rodríguez comes to the incorrect conclusion that Bernal “make[s] way for a new period, or *k’atun*, ... for himself and other war survivors in Los Angeles” by murdering Longoria (126). In fact, she attributes to Bernal and Longoria “mythic” roles: “Bernal and the jaguar man fulfill their mythic and historic roles, ending a cycle of violence and beginning a cycle of life” (127). Though Rodríguez does not specify what she means by “mythic,” she

does suggest that Longoria and Bernal are somehow the equivalent of Hunahpú and Ixbalanqué of the *Popol Vuh*. Such an interpretation, as I will also demonstrate, is also without merit. Rodríguez's interpretation is only possible by not recognizing Longoria as a Ladinoized-Indian and Bernal as a Ladino. To reiterate, the evidence in the novel does not support her interpretation.

### **Racial Positionality in *The Long Night of White Chickens* and *The Tattooed***

#### ***Soldier***

In *The Long Night of White Chickens*, Graetz claims that he is investigating the murder of Puac in Guatemala, but, as he points out in the epigraph that heads this chapter, what he discovers, “was all contradictory, mixed up, inconclusive,” yet he “felt” that he “understood it well enough ... according to [his] own needs and designs.” I interpret his “needs and designs” to involve his racial and cultural identity. In fact, the protagonist dedicates the majority of the novel's four hundred and fifty pages of small print to his endless agonizing over his biculturalism, racial “makeup,” overwhelming desire to be accepted as an American by whites in the U.S., and, of course, his endless claims that he *is* a white American. It is, as such, not surprising that U.S. newspapers book reviewers fawned over the novel: it reifies the dominant U.S. belief that assimilation to white American culture is not only necessary but also natural. Moreover, Graetz's inability to discover the culprit behind Puac's murder is not inconsequential: it functions to render Guatemala as indecipherable to a “rational” white American, as Graetz claims to be.

Bernal, in the other epigraph that heads this chapter, declares, amid his own tears and vomit, “I am coward. I am a coward.” In doing so, he draws attention to the

theme that will engross him throughout *The Tattooed Soldier*: his belief that his masculinity has been vitiated, because he was unable to protect his wife and son. Bernal, a man who in Guatemala shies away from student politics, preferring instead to read poetry and study anthropology, and requires his mother's constant guidance in his personal life, decides to murder Longoria in order to prove to himself that he is a *man*. Once in Los Angeles, as in Guatemala, he is not invested in learning what caused the armed conflict or why Longoria murdered his wife and child: he simply wants the satisfaction of having avenged his vitiated masculinity. Bernal, of course, has a drastically different racial positionality than Graetz does in *The Long Night of White Chickens*. However, like Graetz, he racializes indigenous Guatemalans as "pre-modern" peasants, ones incapable of exercising political agency. I will now analyze in a few brief paragraphs Graetz's and Bernal's racial positionality.

Graetz, in an effort to assimilate to the dominant U.S. culture, denies his racial and cultural difference. As a Guatemalan-Jewish child growing up in Namoset, Massachusetts, he is severely discriminated by the white American adolescents. Graetz, however, will attempt to downplay the pain that the discrimination caused him: "So what if my house was called the Copacabana because of the funny accents they heard there, the funny décor they saw, the funny affectation of Spanish wrought-iron grill under the windows of our one-story ranch house?" (346). In prefacing the discrimination that he is subjected to by a "So what," Graetz highlights the pain that such teasing caused him; but, as he will do in other instances, he does not challenge the discrimination that he is subjected to nor does he defend the way his mother and Flor speak. To the contrary, he affirms the racism that labels his mother's, Flor's, and

his own accent as “funny.” It is no surprise, then, that though he admits that, “all the neighborhood kids despised me, because I was always clinging to Flor, because I was brown, chattery, spoke more Spanish than English” (128), he rearticulates the racism he experiences as a personal fault of his own: “I had then, I have to admit, the brattily effeminate and bossy nature of a Guatemalan rich boy spoiled by maids” (*ibid, sic*). Besides rationalizing the discrimination, Graetz will explain his racial difference by resorting to irrational explanations.

Graetz, in negating his non-European ancestry, demonstrates his desire to assimilate to the dominant white American culture. For example, he claims that, “In my face the lightly mestizo features of the Arraus ... have been made even more pronounced, somehow, by the side of me that is Jewish. ... my father is actually much darker than my chestnut-haired mother, and from him I inherited this complexion and a slightly wavy mop of thin black hair” (26). According to Graetz, then, it is his Jewish father’s genes that inexplicably made the non-European, Indian to be exact, features more pronounced. Faced with contradicting evidence he is unable to rationally explain, Graetz will simply racialize himself white American: “I thought it didn’t matter when I was called spik since anyone could see that I wasn’t really a spik, I only sort of looked like one” (347). Without a doubt, Graetz is perturbed by his non-European phenotypic characteristics. Moreover, given his insistence that he is a white American, he will become irate when Ladinos racialize him as an Indian.

Graetz’s intense hatred of Guatemalans is prompted in part by the discrimination he suffers at the hands of elite Ladinos. Given that he negates his racial positionality as a person of color in the U.S., it is not surprising that he positions

himself racially as white in Guatemala: “I was American, wanted to be regarded as nothing other than Gringo American those summers at Aunt Hunt” (26). To his horror, however, the Ladino students at the Anne Hunt school, “thought themselves ... superior ... even racially superior!” (*ibid*) to him. For example, Vinicio Lange, a Ladino student at Anne Hunt, negates Graetz’s claim that he is white by stating, “My grandfather is British. ... That makes me more gringo than you” (*ibid*). To make matters worst for Graetz, the other Ladino students racialize him as Indian: “Hey Indio, you fuck that *puta muchacha* of yours yet? ... C’mon, Indio, so what if she is like your sister, since when do *indios* not fuck their sisters?” (*ibid*, emphasis his). To state that those comments bother Graetz would be an understatement. As he points out, “Comments like that, endlessly—they knew how to torment me” (*ibid*). Though he is obviously traumatized by the discrimination he suffers, Graetz does not become a politically conscious individual, one critical of the racial discrimination of Indians in Guatemala: to the contrary, he will respond by reifying the most vile anti-Indian racial discourse. Antonio Bernal, on the other hand, does not have any racial identity issues.

Bernal, the protagonist of *The Tattooed Soldier*, is a racially and economically privileged Ladino in Guatemala. The narrator, for example, emphasizes his racial privilege: “In this provincial mestizo society of squat men and women, Antonio was tall, European-complected, with an intellectual air he couldn’t seem to shake” (113, *sic*). Upon the birth of his son, he specifically notes his Spanish ancestry: “And then the moment when my baby opened his eyes for the first time and I realized that they were my own, my legacy, Spanish eyes of Zacapa passed down by our fathers and mothers for generations and generations” (17). Bernal, unlike Graetz, is a Ladino of



Spanish stock. Moreover, he is also a wealthy individual. Once Elena is pregnant and in trouble because of her political activism, Bernal's mother becomes "the provider of cash and shelter" (108). In fact, she pays for them, "to seek refuge ... in a small town where no one would know who they are" (107). Moreover, once his wife and son are killed, Bernal enters the U.S. on a "tourist visa" (52), one he lets expire (*ibid*). While he does end up homeless in Los Angeles, it is because he stopped corresponding with his mother (179), who supported him financially from Guatemala. In fact, as his mother points out in a letter written on February 11, 1990, "There is no reason for you not to come home" (180). It is Bernal, then, that chooses to stay in Los Angeles as an undocumented immigrant working menial jobs. If he wanted to, he could return to Guatemala and live a life of privilege. Given that a Ladino is the protagonist, *The Tattooed Soldier* will privilege a Ladino worldview, a stark contrast to *The Long Night of White Chickens*.

### **Ladinos in *The Long Night of White Chickens* and *The Tattooed Soldier***

Graetz responds to the discrimination he experiences in Guatemala by racializing all Guatemalans as irrational, foolish, and unfit for democratic rule. For example, he represents Ladinos as anti-democratic and pro-dictatorship. He explains that, "in 1954, Abuelita had personally helped overthrow," the government of the democratically elected Jacobo Arbenz, "by lighting charcoal in a pit in her patio and fanning it while she stared up at the sky" (201). Graetz attributes her actions to her firm belief that Guatemala "had everything to do with Order: ... and the indisputable degrees of respectfulness and deference across the gradations of that order which kept the whole wholesome, law abiding, stable, positive and right" (202). As he makes

clear, his grandmother supports a dictatorial form of government, one that affirms the racial and class divisions in Guatemalan society. For her, a democratic form of government is a negation of her most important beliefs on race and class. Graetz, however, does not challenge his grandmother's political views; instead, he assumes that all Ladinos, like his grandmother, support the dictatorship. The result is that he erases the support of working-class and middle-class Ladino organizations to the democratic presidency of Jacobo Arbenz. Unable or unwilling to see beyond his family, Graetz constructs all Ladinos as anti-democratic and pro-dictatorship.

According to the Graetzian logic, Ladinos, besides supporting the dictatorship, are "perverse," because they acquiesce to the dictatorship's brutal repression. Graetz goes as far as to claim that foreigners are "contaminated" with the Ladino "perversity" of acquiescing to the most brutal violence. For example, after a "young Scandinavian [was] raped [and] methodically mutilated ... because she'd become involved with one of the guerrilla organizations," he concludes that, "Foreigners ... perversely love to be let in on this kind of secret .... It's as if they eventually learn or at least sense that the country can only be truly experienced through this particular kind of weighted silence" (323). To experience Guatemala, then, is to acquiesce to the state's violence; thus, he concludes, "that this is an unbelievably sick and evil place" (323). As is to be expected, Graetz represents the Ladino *guerrilleros* as incompetent fools.

Graetz highlights the impossibility of establishing democratic rule in Guatemala by representing Luis Moya Martínez, his Ladino childhood acquaintance, as a bumbling, dim-witted *guerrillero*. According to Graetz, Moya's duties as an insurgent "required little more from him than that he be exactly as I'd always seen

him” (420). Not only are Moya’s guerilla activities limited to writing “oblique newspaper columns ... for a newspaper that hardly anyone reads” (213), but he does not even understand the Guatemalan armed conflict or, for that matter, politics in general. For example, Sylvia McCourt, a Liberal U.S. Harvard academic, utilizes Moya’s senseless “analysis” of the Guatemalan conflict “to argue for military aid to the contras in Nicaragua” (272). In fact, Moya’s “intellectual” exchange with McCourt is limited to foolish declarations such as the following: ““If you want us to accept what *you* call democracy ... which I admit would be an improvement, then you cannot ask us to accept for ourselves what you *never* would for yourselves” (274, emphasis his). Moya is so lacking in political acumen that he offers no rejoinder to McCourt’s claim that, “Saving you from Communism is *not* an inhumane policy” (275, emphasis his). As to Moya’s motivations in discussing politics with McCourt, Graetz states that, “imagining what it would be like to make love to Sylvia, Moya had pictured their synchronized orgasms combusting into a mutual vision of the isthmus in flames in 1999” (274). Not only is Moya politically inept, his primary motive in “debating” McCourt is to sleep with her. The representation of Moya as an imbecile Ladino insurgent makes it clear that Ladinos, of any political stripe, are incapable of establishing democratic rule.

In *The Tattooed Soldier*, in contrast to *The Long Night of White Chickens*, Ladinos are represented as political agents who actively resist the dictatorship. To begin with, the state is represented as carrying out its oppression against those that oppose it: for example, “soldiers dressed as civilians came to kidnap professors and students” (87). Moreover, as the example of Teodoro demonstrates, these professors

and students are disappeared: ““They just walked into his house and grabbed him.... They had machine guns. They put him in a jeep. We found his body on the road to Chimaltenango”” (96). As a politicized student at the *Universidad de San Carlos*, Elena forms part of the heterogeneous resistance to the dictatorship. However, given that the repression is so violent she is forced to change her tactics: “Elena became more discreet. She stopped distributing revolutionary leaflets at the markets, and when she went to a demonstration she always tied a blue bandanna over her face, leaving only her brown eyes to display her anger” (*ibid*). In Goldman’s novel, Moya claims he is a revolutionary, yet he is never represented participating in any type of resistance against the dictatorship; instead, he is represented as an imbecile. In *The Tattooed Soldier*, however, Ladinos actively resist the dictatorship.

Although only a student activist and not a *guerillera*, Elena demonstrates not only a political resolve but also a steely courage against the dictatorship, one that Bernal is completely lacking. Aware of the political crackdown that is going on, Elena is nonetheless unable to resist participating in a demonstration by Guatemala City’s garbage collectors: “They were the lowest caste of government workers, Guatemala’s untouchables” (93). Unafraid and in an unpatronizing tone, she declares: ““What courage these people have ... It’s against the law for them to strike. They want the right to strike”” (*ibid*). Once the soldiers “Plunge ... into the crowd of protestors” (94), Elena defiantly declares, ““I hate them ... Soldiers! *¡Animales!* They’re not embarrassed to be seen. In the middle of the city they take people. In the middle of the afternoon!” (95, emphasis his). However, because “she was standing in the middle of an illegal demonstration with her face uncovered” (*ibid*), “the military

agents ... record her presence” (*ibid*). Though a marked woman, Elena continues to take political stands. For example, after discovering that indigenous children are dying in a slum because there is no waste disposal, she writes “to the president of the department government in Totonicapan” (134) to demand that changes be made. Even more telling of her resolve, she maintains her composure when the Lorenzo Amaya Anti-Communist Brigade barges into her home to kill her: “*They want Antonio, but I will not give him to them. I will not. ... I am not a brave woman. But this man has come to kill me and I am not afraid*” (147, emphasis his). Whereas in *The Long Night of White Chickens* Ladinos perversely acquiesce to the dictatorship; in Tobar’s novel, Elena and other Ladinos challenge the dictatorship even while facing certain death. The exception, of course, is Bernal.

Bernal, in contrast to Elena, takes up the anthropological study of the ancient Mayan civilization as a way to evade participating in the Ladino resistance to the dictatorship. In order to justify his withdrawal from politics, he tells Elena the following:

‘Your friends might not think that reading the *Popol Vuh* is a revolutionary act, but I do,’ ... ‘People talk about honoring our Mayan past, but how many really do it, how many take the time to understand our roots. To feel the Indian in us. Hardly anyone. Even among all these revolutionary students, to call someone an *indio* is still an insult.’ (89, emphasis his)

To Bernal’s credit, he legitimately critiques the Ladino Marxist Left for participating in the racialization of Indians. As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, the Ladino Marxist organizations in the 1960s did not include race in their analysis of the structural problems afflicting Guatemala; moreover, they saw themselves as the sole guarantors of any indigenous “social development.” Notwithstanding his legitimate

critique of the Ladino Left, Bernal's assertion that to read, "the *Popol Vuh* is a revolutionary act" demonstrates his lack of understanding and interest in the Guatemalan social and political context in the early 1980s. As is well known, the military carried out a brutal campaign against the indigenous highland communities in the early 1980s, yet Bernal, without raising a hand to challenge the military, claims that reading the *Popol Vuh* makes him a revolutionary. In fact, he makes his rejection of Leftist revolutionary politics explicit when he demands that Elena stop advocating for a sewage system to be implemented in the aforementioned indigenous slum, because, as he claims, the Mayor "looked at me like I was some sort of *devil*. As if I were a *guerilla* or a *terrorist* or something" (134, emphasis mine). Without a doubt, Bernal opposes any Leftist politics: for him, revolutionaries are terrorists. As I will demonstrate later on, while he claims to take the "time to understand" his so called "roots," he racializes contemporary indigenous Guatemalans as "pre-modern."

**Representations of indigenous Guatemalans in *The Long Night of White Chickens* and *The Tattooed Soldier***

Graetz, in *The Long Night of White Chickens*, as I have already pointed out, frets about his biculturalism, racial positionality, and desire to be accepted as a white American in the U.S. In short, Graetz is invested in negating his partial indigenous background, cultural ties to Guatemala, and affirming his identity as a white American. I will now prove that his sojourn in Guatemala is not an "investigation" into Puac's murder. Quite the contrary, I argue that Graetz, a man who has spent most of his young life agonizing over his racial positionality in the U.S., goes to Guatemala to explore what the country, its people and history, mean to him. In the process, I

suggest, he comes to firmly establish himself as a white American. Indigenous Guatemalans, are for him, particularly important, because he affirms his whiteness by placing himself in contradistinction to indigenous Guatemalans or those he classifies as indigenous. For him, Puac, a woman he racializes as Indian even though she has assimilated to the dominant U.S. culture, plays the role of the Indian, because it is by placing himself in opposition to her that he affirms his whiteness: Puac, so he claims, is “wild,” “savage,” sexually “available,” and outside civilization; he, on other hand, is rational, civilized, or, simply put, a white American.

Graetz, to begin with, racializes indigenous Guatemalans as a people who are impossible to understand, because they practice “savage” religious practices and refuse to acknowledge white people. He makes this clear in his comments regarding his trip to “the highlands” (363): “there is something about Indian towns that provokes a mood of thinking that the truth lies somewhere outside what you actually see and hear anyway, though what you see and hear is certainly there” (*ibid*). Graetz attributes this duplicity to “the pagan-mystical atmosphere of their religious practices, an impression enforced by the famous Indian reticence regarding that and almost everything else” (*ibid*). Indians, suggests Graetz, take their reticence to extremes: “And there’s that widely repeated, and so often misproven, allegedly traditional Indian belief that ‘white’ people aren’t actually there, that we are part of the illusory world” (*ibid*). Indians, apparently, refuse to participate in the non-indigenous world. Graetz’s “logic,” of course, is circular: Indians are unforthcoming, because they are duplicitous; and, they are duplicitous, because they are unforthcoming. He, as is to be expected, attributes their duplicity/reticence to their idolatry. For Graetz, then, “the silent

solitude of Indian towns” (*ibid*) is symptomatic of their mysterious and, therefore, dangerous deceitfulness.

Indians, when not duplicitous, are “idiotic” and “comical” characters, according to Graetz. While Graetz makes endless comments on the “stupidity,” “idiocy,” and “comic” behaviour of indigenous Guatemalans, I will limit myself to one example: Chepito Choc Something. For example, Graetz makes fun of “an old peasant-looking man ... holding a dirty straw cowboy hat ... wearing an old buzzardlike black jacket with a frayed yellow shirt and thickly knotted tie” (113) whom he claims knocks on his door and begs him for money to bury his dead wife. This man, whom Graetz names Chepito Choc Something, makes a “floridly decorous” presentation: “With your pardon, *joven*, could you be so kind as to inform *mi patrón* Don Rogerio Arrau that Chepito Choc Something of San Antonio Suchitepéquez is asking for just a little minute of his time and humbly awaits him here . . .” (*ibid*). Graetz, then, states that, “as he went on with his speech a terrible pleading whine surged through what had so far been his demeanor of quietly desperate, befuddled dignity” (*ibid*). To begin with, Graetz imagines his reader to be a white American who, like himself, would interpret Chepito Choc Something as “comical,” because of his dress, supposed meekness, and, most importantly, his speech pattern. Yet if I discount the cheap trick of translating the Spanish speech directly into English, which assures that the syntax in the English version will be faulty, plus the interjection of Spanish words in odd places, one is left with a man who simply arrives to, “ask his [boss] for the money to pay for a coffin and a burial” (*ibid*). Money, which given his years as an employee of Graetz’s grandfather, he is probably owed. Given Graetz’s



representation of Ladinos and Indians, he is not someone who could carry out an impartial investigation into Puac's murder. Martínez, however, claims that he does; thus, I will briefly revisit her argument before proceeding to demonstrate her misreading of the novel.

Martínez, in the previously mentioned article titled, "Guatemala as a National Crime Scene: Femicide and Impunity in Contemporary U.S. Detective Novels," argues that Graetz plays the role of detective and uncovers the truth behind Puac's murder.<sup>63</sup> She claims the following:

Roger connects a series of loose clues like a seasoned detective: a clandestine affair between Flor and Celso Batres, the married newspaper owner of *El Minuto*, lax adoption rules, the rumors of baby stealing for an illicit organ trade – key pieces of a complex puzzle that remain unpunished at the end of the novel. (Martínez, 10)

To be absolutely clear, Graetz does not investigate Puac's murder. The only way that Martínez could conclude the foregoing is by taking Graetz's wild claims at face value. As I have already demonstrated, Graetz is not a credible protagonist. The supposed "series of loose clues" he connects are simply conjured up by him on rumors he creates or hears from dubious sources. In fact, as in the epigraph previously cited, which I already discussed, Graetz admits at various points in the novel that he *does not know* who murdered Puac. It is possible that Martínez mistakes Graetz's obsession with Puac as somehow an investigation, yet I will now prove that his interest in Puac is sexual and racial.

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<sup>63</sup> To be fair, Martínez analyzes not only Goldman's novel but also David Lindsey's *Body of Truth* (1992) and Kathy Reichs's *Grave Secrets* (2002). In my critique of her argument, I am only taking into consideration her analysis of Graetz in *The Long Night of White Chickens*.

Graetz represents Puac as a “wild” and sexually “available” Indian woman. For example, he claims that, “in the desert Flor had barely even understood the need for clothes until she was four or so, seven years with the nuns had left her self-conscious enough” (171). In order to highlight her “wildness,” he declares that, “wild empty space, that small desert world inside of her, was merely surrounded by her seven years in the convent orphanage” (*ibid*). Given that her inner core is “wild,” Graetz would have the reader believe she *is not* conscious of her sexuality. For example, he narrates his spying on her “chang[ing] out of her school clothes” (*ibid*) as if Puac is purposely undressing so for him:

she’d pull her dress off ... the sudden baring of smooth, cinnamon brown skin, ... the slender arch of her long back and sapling waist, her high, rounded rear in girl’s underpants, ... for those few seconds when she was almost naked, *I always thought Flor looked just like Pocahontas*. (172, emphasis mine)

For Graetz, Puac *is* “wild,” because she takes off her clothes and exposes her body. The problem is that Puac has no idea that she is being spied upon. As Graetz clearly states, he would, “follow Flor right down into the basement, where I’d camouflage myself with mundane idleness in the playroom” (171). For Graetz, however, Puac’s lack of awareness is irrelevant, because he racializes her as a “wild” Indian or, as he claims, a Pocahontas. Once Puac has been murdered, Graetz will repeatedly perform a similar trick: he will take Puac’s romantic relationship with a man and make it seem as if she was doing something illicit and dangerous. In this manner, Graetz will render Puac as responsible for her own death, because it is her own reckless behavior that leads to someone murdering her. It is by racializing Puac, then, as a “wild” Indian woman that Graetz explains her death.

According to Graetz, Puac, as a sexually “wild” Indian woman, puts her own life in danger, because she confuses her lovers. It is worth noting that Martínez correctly points out that, “the sexual lives of the victims are openly questioned – with the victims often being blamed for their deaths” (15) by the Guatemalan authorities. The only problem is that she does not go far enough in her condemnation: Graetz consistently questions Puac’s sexual life. Given his tendency to write overly verbose sentences, I am forced to quote at length:

She could be a little crazy .... It was as if hobgoblins, desert spirits, had stayed inside her. Once there was a storm and Flor slipped silently from the bed. Moya woke, ... and then found her standing naked with her arms out on the small balcony outside the window in a torrential rain ... all she said in English, was ‘I love it here, Marco. I’ve never been so happy. (405)

Apparently, Puac’s wild “desert” Indian upbringing means that she does not mind the natural elements. More importantly, however, Graetz here implies that Puac is irresponsible, because she mixes up her lovers. Besides correcting her with his name, Moya, according to the protagonist, becomes resentful with Puac prompting her in the morning to exclaim: “Moya you *can’t* be jealous of some guy I went out with *four* years ago!” (*ibid*, emphasis his). According to Graetz, Moya is not only “jealous” but also angry enough to place her life in danger. To reference Martínez once again, she states that Graetz discovers, “a clandestine affair between Flor and Celso Batres” (10). What she does not point out is that Graetz claims that Puac is simultaneously sleeping with Batres, “the married owner of *El Minuto*” (*ibid*), and Moya, his employee reporter, which leads him to suggest that it was a spiteful Moya that let Batres know of his sexual relationship with Puac so that Batres could then have her killed. The only problem is that he provides absolutely no proof that this is the case.

Graetz, I argue, invents and circulates rumors regarding many “possible” scenarios that could have led to Puac’s murder in order to create a sense that anyone could have had her murdered. Martínez, unfortunately, ingenuously interprets his unsubstantiated claims to mean that, “The keen eyes of the sleuths urge the reader to reflect on Guatemala’s political climate and determine which characters’ testimony is trustworthy in this atmosphere of deception, where nothing is really as it appears to be” (2). Alas, she should have taken her own acute observation that, “the novels suffer from some over-generalizations because the observers are outsiders” (13) into consideration when evaluating the unfounded claims made by the protagonist. Graetz, after all, is a man who claims that the Guatemalan City authorities randomly ordered that the driving direction of the city streets be reversed resulting in thirteen “fatalities” (21). In other words, by representing Guatemala and Guatemalans as irrational and chaotic, Graetz is able to declare that Puac’s murder is, “the kind of thing that could happen in any small, poor country” (*ibid*). Given that his claims are baseless, I now turn to analyze what he actually does while in Guatemala.

Instead of investigating Puac’s murder, Graetz spends his time drinking and having sex with prostitutes, which demonstrates that he is not interested in discovering who murdered her. Besides drinking at Lord Byron’s with other foreigners, Graetz spends his time with a prostitute named Zamora, a woman he consistently pines for or insults. He declares that he could not date her, because he is not a man who could “be happy to spend the rest of his (lobotomized) life in a hammock with her” (386). Again insulting her intelligence, he declares: “I gave her a García Márquez novel, the easiest to read and shortest, the one about the colonel and the rooster, and she loved it, she

took it everywhere with her and plowed right through it in about six weeks” (440). Besides insulting her, he will later claim that she is trying to have him killed because he refuses to “marry her or to bring her and her little son with me to the States to live” (*ibid*). In typical Graetzian fashion, many other characters must be involved. In this case, he claims that Zamara is simultaneously sleeping with “López Nub, the general’s, the defense minister’s son” (402); thus, he concludes that it is probably a jealous López Nub who wants him dead. Graetz, finally, flees Guatemala, because he believes that a disgruntled Zamara or López Nub are trying to kill him. He does not, of course, provide any evidence.

### **Indians in *The Tattooed Soldier***

Bernal, as is to be expected given his conservative politics, racializes indigenous Guatemalans as “pre-modern” peasants. While he tells Elena that, ““It seems to me that the Quiché language is indispensable to us, that every Guatemalteco should learn it” (85), because it “is in our blood, after all. We can’t deny it. It’s who we are, where we come from”” (*ibid*), he makes no effort to establish a political relationship with indigenous Guatemalans. In fact, upon encountering indigenous women in downtown Los Angeles, he is unable to understand how they could be separated from the soil, from their “natural” condition as peasants.

Even the Mayan Indians of his country, people who had lived in the same little *aldeas* in Guatemala since before the Spaniards came—even they were here. He remembered coming across a group of Indian women one day, not far from the vacant lots where he and José Juan now lived. ... He watched them, these ancient people of the corn, as they walked through a canyon of brick tenements, their leather sandals scraping along the oil-stained sidewalk on Bixel Street. What were they doing here, in this place where not a single stalk of corn could grow? It saddened him to find so many of his countrymen transported, as if by some dark magic, to this freeway-covered plain,

wandering about Los Angeles in an amnesiac daze, far from even the memory of the soil. (71)

According to Bernal, indigenous Guatemalans are resistant to “progress,” to change over time: they are immutable. Based on this characterization of the women, Bernal is unable to understand what they could possibly be doing in an inhospitable megalopolis such as, Los Angeles. According to his reasoning, the “pre-modern Indian” women must surely be “wandering ... in an amnesiac daze,” completely “disoriented” as they “attempt” to navigate the streets of Los Angeles. It is because Bernal constructs them as “pre-modern” that he is incapable of imagining them making rational decisions, being active in Guatemalan politics, or participating in the labor force of the U.S. Based on this logic, the presence of the indigenous women in Los Angeles is inexplicable. It does not fit within the realm of possibility that these women have made a *rational* decision to leave Guatemala because of economic or political factors, such as war and genocide. Faced with what he believes is *impossible*—indigenous Guatemalans making rational decisions—Bernal resorts to magical explanations, as if only “dark magic” could possibly place the “ancient Indians” of Guatemala in Los Angeles, California. As the foregoing suggests, Bernal is incapable of conceptualizing indigenous Guatemalans as critical thinkers or political agents.

Bernal’s racialization of Guatemalan Indians as “pre-modern” peasants “happily tied to the soil” makes it impossible for him to comprehend that Longoria, notwithstanding his “peasant” voice, is a Ladino. For example, upon hearing Longoria speak “like a peasant” (162), Bernal is startled, because he associates that voice, “with wooden shacks and men who carried heavy loads of firewood on their backs” (*ibid*).

Although Bernal uses the word “peasant,” his use of stock racist images of indigenous Guatemalans—“wooden shacks” and “men carrying heavy loads ... on their backs”—indicate that by “peasant” he means Indian. As the narrator points out, “In Guatemala’s capital, where Antonio was from, you were supposed to feel superior when you heard a peasant speak with his provincial lilt; you were supposed to feel a sort of paternalistic sympathy” (*ibid*). For Bernal, Indian-peasants, then, are supposed to be “submissive,” speak with a “provincial lilt,” live in “wooden shacks,” and “carry heavy loads.” If we add to this characterization the “resistance to change” that he attributes to the Mayan women, then indigenous Guatemalans are “submissive peasants” that stubbornly cling to their small villages where they grow corn. On the other hand, he is supposed to “feel pity,” and “paternalistic sympathy” towards them. What Bernal implies is that Longoria is an “abnormal” Indian-peasant, because he exercised political agency.

Given Bernal’s racialization of peasants, coupled with his withdrawal from Guatemalan politics, it is not surprising that he is unaware that the Guatemalan military recruited indigenous Guatemalans, forcibly acculturated them, and deployed them as counterinsurgent soldiers. Consequently, he is dumbfounded that Longoria is the counterinsurgent soldier who murdered his wife and child: “The discovery had thrown Antonio off course and derailed his impulse to revenge. ... Antonio was not sure what he expected, but not this. His rage had fled, and now there was only a vacuum in its place” (163). Because he is incapable of considering Indians as having political agency and does not recognize the Ladinoization of Indians, he declares that, “No simple peasant would paint himself in such a way,” because it “was [not] natural”

(*ibid*). Unable to place Longoria, a Ladinoized counter-insurgent soldier within his racialized logic, Bernal represents him as an anomaly:

If the soldier was a Jaguar then he was the negation of what Antonio had just imagined him to be. He was a professional killer of peasants. Whatever he had been before, he now wore a jaguar tattoo. The tattoo was the key to everything. Because the soldier had that animal on his skin, he had been sent to murder Elena. Because he had that tattoo, he could kill a two-year-old boy and sit down to eat an ice cream as if nothing had happened. (164)

As with his magical explanation for the presence of the Mayan women in Los Angeles, Bernal comes to a fantastic conclusion: “The tattoo was the key to everything” (*ibid*). Once again, Bernal is simply unable to process evidence he finds contradictory, so he opts for “explanations” that while irrational accord to his world-view. Bernal’s interpretation, regardless of how irrational it is, can be attributed to his racial and economic privilege and conservative politics. It does not make sense, however, that Ana Patricia Rodríguez would have a similar interpretation. Before proceeding to an analysis of Longoria’s racial positionality, I will here briefly return to Rodríguez’s claims regarding Longoria.

Rodríguez, as I pointed out earlier, incorrectly claims that, “the jaguar image, ... resignified in Maya terms, connects Longoria to a greater cosmology, heritage, and identity embedded in him” (2009, 123). For her, as for Bernal in the novel, “The tattoo was the key to everything.” For example, she claims that while the jaguar tattoo “represents his hyper-heteromasculine trappings—his military training, his violent and destructive behavior, his ‘matón’ look, and his performance of machismo” (121), Longoria “toward the end of the novel ... is revealed to be Maya” (*ibid*); and, though in a “death trance,” he “is finally and conclusively taken back to the cornfield of his



youth” (*ibid*). Based on the foregoing, she further claims that, “It is only near death that Longoria seems to remember and reclaim his Maya identity, *the culture of maize*, the land that gave him life, and his mother, who calls him back to his homeland and roots” (*ibid*, emphasis mine). As such, she concludes that, “*Hence in death and rebirth*, the jaguar image, now resignified in Maya terms, connects Longoria to a greater cosmology” (122-123, emphasis mine). In other words, *The Tattooed Soldier* affirms, “Maya traditions, practices, and cosmology” (119), because Longoria goes back “home.” I will now demonstrate that Rodríguez makes this argument, because she understands Guatemalan race relations in the same way that Bernal does: Indians are peasants intrinsically tied to the soil. In order to refute her claims, I turn to analyze Longoria’s understanding of Indians and the armed conflict.

Guillermo Longoria, after being forcibly recruited into the military, will identify not only as a Ladino, but he will also accept the Guatemalan military’s discourse that equates indigeneity with communism. To begin with, Longoria accepts the military’s claim, “that the peasants were to blame for everything” (221). “The country,” he believes, “was backward because of the peasants, ... their superstitions and their bad habits, like having too many children” (*ibid*). Not only does he accept such a claim, but he also “couldn’t help looking at the ground in shame, remembering his own family” and “his former self: stooped over the soil, fingernails black with dirt, frayed sandals on his feet” (*ibid*). Moreover, he believes that, “The army had saved him from desperate poverty, and now they were ... showing him things he never imagined, educating him, expanding his horizon” (*ibid*). Because he accepts that indigenous Guatemalans are backward, that is “pre-modern,” he also accepts that,

“The peasants would be with you only if you beat them, if you forced them to take your side. You have to make them fear you before they did what you told them” (222, *sic*). Although the military “made you do terrible, violent things” (63), he believes that, “they were things that had to be done” (*ibid*). In fact, he legitimizes the massacring of civilians, among them women and children, because “This thing they were fighting was a cancer” (63). “Guatemala,” for him, “was like a human body ... and if you didn’t kill these organisms the body would die” (64). To be clear, Longoria does not simply pay lip service to the Guatemalan state’s anti-Indian/Communist discourse: he not only participates in the massacres, but he is one of the best counterinsurgency soldiers carrying them out.

Longoria’s commitment to the Guatemalan military’s anti-Indian policies is best exemplified by his zealous participation in the massacre of the indigenous community of “Nueva Concepción.” Already having destroyed a whole town, the *Jaguares*, Longoria’s counterinsurgent battalion, arrive at the indigenous town of “Nueva Concepción,” “firing a steady barrage from their Galils”<sup>64</sup> (250). According to the narrator, Longoria, “aimed at the moving targets, and ... he got a few, hitting a man in the small of the back and a woman in the neck” (*ibid*). “He watched,” continues the narrator, “fascinated, as they fell like canvas tents collapsing when you took away the frame, the life of their bodies instantly transformed into dead weight, their muscles no longer able to keep them up” (*ibid*). His battalion, however, “spare” two women: “the last living representatives of the hundred or so people who had filled the town market” (*ibid*), so that they may “make tortillas” (*ibid*). Even though the

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<sup>64</sup> A Galil is an Israeli assault rifle.

women cause him to remember, “the market women he had known as a boy, the outstretched arms that gave him sweet tamales” (251), Longoria, following his commander’s order to kill one of them, “grabbed the older woman by the collar of her blouse and led her away” (*ibid*). Though she manages to slip away, Longoria “caught up with her in two long strides and slammed her against the cement” (*ibid*), and thinks, “*This woman has humiliated me*” (*ibid*, emphasis his). In a fit of rage, while “Standing over his own prisoner,” he pulls “the trigger” (*ibid*) and, “fired another round into her ... Another round and another ... until his machine gun wouldn’t fire anymore” (*ibid*). Longoria, and it is difficult to see how Rodríguez does not pick up on this, never changes his mind about the validity of his participation in the Guatemalan army’s counterinsurgent campaign against the indigenous communities.

In opposition to the claims of Rodríguez, Longoria does not, at any time in the novel, reject the Guatemalan military’s anti-Communist/Indian discourse; to the contrary, he remains resolutely anti-Communist and anti-Indian. Upon accidentally stumbling on a rally in support of the Salvadoran and Guatemalan Leftist movements in the home countries, Longoria cannot, “believe that these people were being allowed to gather in a park in Los Angeles and mouth their hateful ideas freely and openly. ... *¡Idiotas!* he wanted to shout. *You are like sheep. You’re being tricked by her pretty words*” (67-68, *sic*, emphasis his). Exasperated, he finally declares: “*In Guatemala we knew how to handle these people*” (68, emphasis his) and laments that, “*In Los Angeles they are allowed to operate freely*” (*ibid*). Moreover, while working in El Pulgarcito Express, he spots an indigenous woman and congratulates himself, because he is “*still [able to] tell a Cachiuel from a Mam from a Quiché*” (159, emphasis his),

which “was a useful skill in the army, on patrol, to be able to tell who didn’t belong, who might be the infiltrator” (159-160). Given that the woman recognizes the jaguar tattoo as a death squad insignia, she begins to scream, “‘You’re one of those, one of those soldiers, aren’t you?’ ... ‘What did you do to my son?’” (160). Although he drags her out the store, she manages to bite his arm, which, in turn, prompts him to scream, “‘You whore!’” (161). As if that were not enough, “He dropped her to the floor [and] swung his arm in a broad arc and slapped her across the face” (*ibid*). Longoria, of course, feels no remorse; he simply tells himself that, “*The rules are different here. I must learn to obey the rules, just like I did in the army*” (*ibid*, emphasis his). Longoria, in contrast to Rodríguez’s claim, continues to be a fervent anti-Communist and anti-Indian.

Longoria, to be clear, is not connected to a “greater Mayan cosmology” through a “resignified” Jaguar “image” at the end of the novel: he simply imagines his mother calling out to him as a *child*. The scene, which Rodríguez cites to prove that Longoria is now “connected” to a Mayan cosmology, is the following:

There is a burst of light. Glowing golden in the darkness of the tunnel is a cornfield. Stalks rise from the black mud and push against the cement walls, fleshy leaves shining, tiny husks bursting like green embryos. A dark woman stooped between the rows of plants. She cuts into the earth with a hoe, grunting in a quiet and familiar way, then turns to look at him. Stretching out her hand, she gestures for him to rise. Stand up, quickly, there is work to be done. ...

With invisible strings she pulls him up, and now he is walking toward her through rows of corn. Leaves brush his face, cool and moist. Rainbow-colored trousers hang loosely from the waist, fabric she wove at the loom. On his feet are sandals, strips of old leather held together with wire and twine. He smiles at his dirty toes, mud caked in the nails. So strange and happy, after all these years, to be wearing his peasant clothes again. (301)

Obviously, the scene is an idealized representation of Indians planting and harvesting corn. The “cornfield,” “stalks,” “fleshy leaves,” “tiny husks,” “rows of corn,” plus the “black mud,” creates an image of a rich, lush, and fertile land. What’s more, Longoria’s mother has the “hoe” and “loom” to make the land yield its abundant crop of corn and to dress him and herself in the “rainbow-colored trousers” and “sandals” of “wire and twine.” Longoria, of course, is “happy” to look at “his dirty toes” and “peasant clothes.” To say that this is an idyllic image would be an understatement. Longoria, as I have demonstrated, is a man who has acculturated to the dominant Ladino culture and forms of thinking, thus, he racializes indigenous Guatemalans as “pre-modern” peasants intrinsically tied to the soil. Consequently, the fact that he imagines joining his mother on a cornfield as he dies is completely in accord with such a racialization of Indians.

*The Tattooed Soldier*, to reiterate, reifies the Ladino racialization of indigenous Guatemalans: it does not affirm a Mayan cosmology. There is no evidence in the novel that, “Longoria—the jaguar man—is neither good or evil: he is Balam rising, returning, and regenerating the forces of life and death that have reigned in Yichkan-Guatemala with the Maya deities” (2009: 125). While I agree with Rodríguez’s claim that he “is capable of such great aggression, violence, and destruction,” I disagree, “that, in the end, *he also channels regenerative and life giving Maya forces*” (126, emphasis mine). To claim that a counterinsurgency soldier, steeped in the military’s anti-Indian/Communist discourse, “channels regenerative and life giving Maya forces” by massacring indigenous peoples is, one, irrational, and, two, a trivialization of the Guatemalan military’s genocide of indigenous Guatemalans in the late 1970s and early

1980s. Given that she also attributes special powers to Bernal, I will now analyze why he murders Longoria.

Bernal, in murdering Longoria, aims to rectify his vitiated masculinity. In fact, he decides to murder Longoria after receiving a letter from his mother, one that he believes belittles his masculinity. Given that his mother informs him that she gave a priest “300 quetzales” to place a “marker on the graves” (180) of Elena and Carlos, Bernal declares, “This responsibility of the father and husband had passed to someone else, to Van der Est, a stranger” (181). “The letter and the marble squares,” he claims, “were proof of his *impotence in the face of the tattooed soldier*, his mother, and so many things” (*ibid*, emphasis mine). Bernal, then, is tormented by his previous inability to act out of his own volition: “If he had resisted his mother all those years ago, they wouldn’t have ended up in San Cristóbal and Elena would still be alive instead of in a grave” (*ibid*). To wit, he lambasts his mother, because he imagines her saying, “Poor little Antonio, a small man lost in an alien city, so pathetic he should see a psychologist” (*ibid*). Bernal, then, does not kill Longoria, “to make way for a new period, or *k’atun*, ... and reinstate ... the ancient cosmological order in the Americas” (126), as argued by Rodríguez. He does it, because “A Zacapaneco took it seriously when you doubted his manhood” (294); thus, he must, “*seek vengeance*”, and, in the process, make up for not “*bury[ing] [his] wife and child*” (183, emphasis his). Bernal, in fact, does not even know what a Mayan cosmological order is or that it exists: he only wants revenge.

Bernal, in satisfying his urge for revenge by murdering Longoria, affirms his masculinity. After waiting for him in a dark alley, “Antonio stepped out of the

shadows ... and ... fired” (295). “Antonio,” then, “lowered the gun on the struggling body and aimed at the shaved skull ... [and] squeezed the trigger” (295-296). “After making sure that no one was watching,” he “had picked up the bleeding man and hidden him in the muddy crypt of the tunnel so that he would finally die” (302). “He,” then, “took the tainted clothes and buried them in the mud of the tunnel floor” (*ibid*). Finally, he cheerfully and thankfully thinks that, “There were no witnesses to the final act, no one who could step forward and enter the tunnel to save the soldier’s life” (302). While before shooting Longoria he claims that “It would be something like a public execution” (294), it is in fact a murder: a settling of a personal vendetta. Based on the foregoing, I find it unnecessary to refer back to Rodríguez, because it is obvious that Bernal is not thinking of anything that has to do with a Mayan cosmology.

### **Conclusion**

In the foregoing analysis of *The Long Night of White Chickens* and *The Tattooed Soldier*, I have demonstrated that it is necessary to take into consideration the racial positionality of the protagonists, Graetz and Bernal, in order to arrive at a correct interpretation of the novels. I have demonstrated that Graetz is concerned with negating his cultural ties to Guatemala, his partial indigenous background or *mestizness*, and affirming himself as a white American. For him, Puac is a “wild,” “savage,” and “reckless” Indian woman, one who most likely brought about her own demise because of her “promiscuous” sexuality. Bernal, on the other hand, is a character haunted by what he believes to be his failure as a husband and father. Overall, he is concerned with establishing his masculinity, and he interprets his murdering of Longoria as the ultimate act that demonstrates that he, once and for all,

lives up to the Zapaneco masculinity. His murder of Longoria, then, is not an act of justice that ushers in a new *k'atun*; on the contrary, it is an act of personal vengeance, a settling of scores. Given the limitations of both novels, the U.S. role in the Guatemalan armed conflict is either erased or minimized.

Graetz, as the foregoing has demonstrated, constructs Guatemalans, Ladinos and Indians, as “chaotic,” “crazy,” or, simply put, “savage.” As is to be expected, he erases U.S. imperialism in Guatemala. After all, if Puac’s murder is the, “kind of thing that could happen in any small, poor country” (21), then, U.S. imperialism is a non-issue. To go further, it is U.S. military personnel, he suggests, who should be afraid of “crazy” Guatemalans. For example, he claims that the, “U.S. Marine embassy guards ... most of them really nice guys anyway who just want to party” (399) feel threatened while frequenting a brothel, “because this is Guatemala and many of the polite young men, some of them junior military officers or ranchers or cocaine smugglers or even all three at the same time, carry pistols and are staring now at the backs of the wildly waving and uninhibitedly whooping gringo boys” (*ibid*). The Marines “settle down” (*ibid*) he claims, because they “don’t want to be shot at any more than any of us do” (*ibid*). Without a doubt, for Graetz, Guatemala is such “an unbelievably sick and evil place” (323) that even U.S. military personnel fear for their life.

*The Tattooed Soldier*, as I have demonstrated, provides a nuanced representation of the U.S. involvement in Guatemala’s counterinsurgency, yet the novel loses much of its critical value, because it privileges Bernal’s limited interpretation of the armed conflict as a personal loss. Bernal, as I previously



demonstrated, is not a man well versed in politics, and he resorts to simple, many times irrational, explanations to make sense of his personal loss and revenge killing. In fact, he goes so far as to claim that the Los Angeles uprising is, “An insurrection ... on these streets, a beautiful disorder. It was the window he stepped through to kill the tattooed soldier” (306). In typical fashion, Bernal is incapable of making sense of the particulars of the Guatemalan revolution and thus reduces it to the Los Angeles uprising of 1992. As if that were not enough, he places himself in the role of a revolutionary. His murder and disposal, all done in secrecy, of Longoria is, so he suggests, a revolutionary act. In its totality, then, *The Tattooed Soldier* presents a limited, albeit more nuanced representation than Goldman’s novel, of the Guatemalan armed conflict.

Overall, I interpret the roles played by Graetz and Bernal as critical to a “forgetting of the past” (Sturken: 1997, 7). For Graetz, a man solely invested in being accepted as a white American in the U.S., the U.S. participation in the Guatemalan armed conflict, and its support of the genocide of the indigenous population, are things that he must erase. The acknowledgement of U.S. imperial policies are incompatible with his assimilation project. Overall, *The Long Night of White Chickens* is about forgetting the U.S. financing, training, and arming of the Guatemalan military. In order to do so, however, Graetz has to resort to racist logic that renders Latin Americans as incapable of governing themselves. By reducing the armed conflict to his personal loss, on the other hand, Bernal is able move on once he has murdered Longoria. After all, if Bernal has killed the person who vitiated his masculinity, he

has proved that he is manly and, thus, his problem is solved. And Guatemala is out of the picture.

## V Conclusion

I became interested in the different forms that Guatemalans have imagined themselves as a political community after reading President Jacobo Arbenz's resignation speech, which he delivered on the 27<sup>th</sup> of June 1954. Addressing the country over radio, President Arbenz sought to assure Guatemalans that though resigning he was placing in power Coronel Carlos Enrique Díaz de León, a man he believed would be able to continue the democratic process in Guatemala and "garantizar ... que todas las conquistas sociales de *nuestro pueblo* serán mantenidas." Knowing that the "conquistas sociales" and the U.S. reaction to them had been well documented, I became interested in who President Arbenz imagined as the *pueblo de Guatemala*, the *nación*, and *mi patria*. Who did he imagine as his political audience? Did he imagine only Ladinos as his countrymen? What about Indians? In short, I wanted to investigate whether the "conquistas sociales" went beyond economic reforms and included a more inclusive *Guatemaltequidad*.

I realized early on that the ten years of democratic rule from 1944 to 1954 were ones of intense debate over how Guatemala's national identity should be constructed. While many of these debates occurred at the state level, it was clear that literature also played a role in imagining Guatemala as a nation. I became particularly interested in Miguel Ángel Asturias's novel, *Hombres de maíz*, because it stood apart from other Guatemalan novels published up to 1949. Not only did the novel criticize Ladinoization, it also drew heavily on the *Popol Vuh* and clearly fit the description of what Ángel Rama labeled a transcultural novel. Wondering if other novels also drew

on the *Popol Vuh* and, if they did so, whether they challenged the dominant imagining of Guatemala as a Ladino nation, I discovered *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá*, a novel written in the early 1970s by Luis de Lión, which also draws on the *Popol Vuh*. Based on the foregoing, I decided that an investigation into how transculturated novels challenged the dominant imagining of Guatemala as a Ladino nation was worth pursuing. The result is this dissertation, “*Guatemaltequidad: Indians and Ladinos in the Guatemalan National Imaginary.*”

In the first chapter, I demonstrate that the modern construction of Guatemala as a Ladino nation is the result of an intense political, economic, and cultural struggle among Creoles, Ladinos, and Indians that took place during the whole of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By the late 19<sup>th</sup>, elite Ladinos had taken over the state and had rearticulated “Ladino,” a term that had undergone several changes in meaning since the Conquest, to signify a modern Westernized Castilian speaking subject, and, “Indian,” a term also with a long history of meanings, to signify a “pre-modern” “relic” of Spanish colonialism. Ladinos now racialized Indians as an “obstacle” to modernization, as the main impediment to the formation of a modern nation-state. It is this modern imagining of the national subject as Ladino and Indian as a “relic” of the colonial period that was critical in establishing the dominant social relations between Ladinos and Indians. Contrary to World-System theorists who discount the existence of feudal relations of production, I drew on the work of Rudolfo Puiggrós and Ernesto Laclau to argue that the rearticulation of Guatemala as an imagined community of Ladinos corresponded to the enclosure of the Indian commons and the intensification of the quasi-feudal relations of production. Reduced into servitude on coffee plantations,

Indians were forced to provide the servile labor on which Guatemala's insertion into the world capitalist economy as a producer of coffee took place. After nearly a quarter century of Liberal dictatorships, the democratic revolutionaries of 1944 began the arduous process of dismantling those social relations and debating Guatemala's national identity. I dedicate my second chapter to this period when Guatemalan authors produced novels that challenged the virulent indofobia of the Liberal dictatorship.

In the second chapter, I analyze Mario Monteforte Toledo's novel, *Entre la piedra y la cruz*, and Asturias's aforementioned novel, *Hombres de maíz*. Although the authors wrote the novels in the late 1940s and published them in 1949, the novels provide a radically different representation of the Guatemalan imagined community. Monteforte Toledo's social realist novel promotes the cultural Ladinoization of the indigenous population and their biological mestizaje with Ladinos. In other words, the novel proposes that Ladinoized Indians may be incorporated into Ladino society, a process the novel suggests would be aided by mestizaje. Contrary to *Entre la piedra y la cruz*, *Hombres de maíz* rejects the Ladinoization of indigenous Guatemalans. Moreover, as a *realismo mágico* novel, it incorporates the indigenous Mayan cosmology, particularly the myths of the *Popol Vuh*. I read this incorporation and the formal changes that it effects on the novel to indicate a valorization of an indigenous cosmology, a stark difference to Monteforte's novel. In fact, I interpret the novel's reformulation of the indigenous cosmology that Ladinos disrupt at the beginning of the novel as the most radical critique of the Ladino imagined community produced during the period of democratic rule. While the novels represent starkly different

projects, they both represent a radical break with the indofobia of the Liberal dictatorships. Unfortunately, it is impossible to know if the revolutionary state would have produced a more inclusive national identity as both novels suggest, because the U.S. coup of 1954 not only curtailed the democratic process but also created the conditions that led to the armed conflict.

In the third chapter, I turn my attention to the period of armed conflict during the 1960s by analyzing Marco Antonio Flores's novel, *Los compañeros*, and as already mentioned, Lión's, *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá*. While many Guatemalan critics lauded *Los compañeros* on account of the technical innovations, I propose that the novel's merit lies in the rigorous critique it provides of the Guatemalan state of exception. The state's capture, torture, and assassination of *El Patojo* is a strident denunciation of the state's reduction of the insurgents to bare life. Equally important, *Los compañeros* also registers how the 1954 coup closed off the debate around national identity: the Ladino protagonists reproduce the dominant indofobia and represent indigenous Guatemalans as incapable of participating in the political sphere. Based on the foregoing, I argue that the protagonists in *Los compañeros* do not form a revolutionary ideology particular to Guatemala. In fact, I go as far as to claim that they are not revolutionaries; instead, they form part of a countercultural movement. I interpret *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá*, on the other hand, as an attempt to construct a revolutionary ideology particular to indigenous Guatemalans. By destroying the symbols of Ladino power, the indigenous characters take the first step in articulating a revolutionary ideology. The novel, however, provides only the possibility that such a revolutionary ideology and corresponding social relations may be constructed. While

the destruction of the Christianized indigenous community is analogous to Hunahpú's and Ixbalanqué's self destruction in their quest to destroy the Lords of Xibalbá, I interpret the lack of a symbolic rebirth as problematic and suggestive of an ambiguity towards the political future of the community. Given that the armed conflict in Guatemala displaced many Guatemalans to the U.S., I turn in the next chapter to analyze literature produced by U.S.-Guatemalans.

In the fourth and final chapter, I analyze the literary production of U.S. Guatemalan authors, specifically Francisco Goldman's *The Long Night of White Chickens* and Héctor Tobar's *The Tattooed Soldier*. I argue that both novels participate in what Marita Sturken labels an "active forgetting" of past traumatic events. For example, Roger Graetz, the protagonist in Goldman's novel, is mainly concerned with asserting his identity as a white American. As a biracial adolescent who is half Guatemalan, he responds to being discriminated by white Americans by reproducing the dominant U.S. representation of Guatemalans and Latin Americans as incapable of establishing democratic rule. For him, the unsolved murder of Flor de Mayo Puac and the Guatemalan armed conflict are evidence that Guatemalans are either "savages" or acquiesce to the dictatorship. Antonio Bernal, the protagonist of *The Tattooed Soldier*, is an elite conservative Ladino who interprets the murder of his wife and child as a vitiation of his masculinity. After encountering Guillermo Longoria, the Ladinoized indigenous ex-counterinsurgency soldier in Los Angeles, Bernal exacts his revenge by murdering him, thereby, affirming his masculinity. Either by racializing Guatemalans as unfit for democratic rule or reducing the armed conflict to a personal trauma, the novels *actively forget* the U.S. training, arming, and

financial support of the Guatemalan dictatorships. By participating in the *active forgetting*, Graetrz is able to construct himself as a white American and Bernal as an immigrant.

I have demonstrated in this dissertation that Guatemalan authors have utilized literature to criticize the construction of the Guatemalan national identity as exclusively Ladino. By valorizing an indigenous cosmology and suggesting that it should form part of a more inclusive national identity, the novels of Asturias and Li3n provide a rigorous critique of the indofobic discourse that was instrumental in the formation of the Liberal dictatorships in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. They register the need to either create a more inclusive national identity or to reformulate it altogether. I have also demonstrated that U.S.-Guatemalan authors have produced literature that *forgets* the armed conflict and the U.S. role in it.



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