

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Andrés C. López for the degree of Master of Arts in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies presented on May 16, 2016.

Title: Ni de aquí ni de allá: A Mythohistoriography of Growing Up In-Between

Abstract Approved:

Qwo-Li Driskill

Stories of the Guatemalan Civil War, which lasted from 1960 until 1996, have often focused on only encapsulating the violence indigenous people experienced at the hands of the Guatemalan government and military. Although these stories contributed to the many civil rights organizing and calls for justice that followed, these types of stories have also constructed a particular dominant narrative, which suggests that indigenous people were passive recipients of violence. Using Aurora Levins Morales' concept of "medicinal histories," and Audre Lorde's "biomythography," I construct a layered retelling of the histories and stories of resistance of the Maya – K'iche', Kaqchikel, and Ixil people that questions and creates a new history/story of the Guatemalan Civil War. This biomythographical *testimonio* weaves together multiple histories of the Guatemalan Civil War, indigenous stories of resistance in Guatemala, my family's stories during this time, and my own upbringing as this armed conflict was supposedly ending. With this layering project I create more rounded types of histories/stories, that do not just imply a singular linear type of story telling, but instead suggest that all these stories and struggles are all

intertwined. It is my hope that this project will become the beginning of a healing practice that can address the continual erasure and killings of indigenous peoples in Guatemala.

© Copyright by Andrés C. López
May 16, 2016
All Rights Reserved

Ni de aquí ni de allá: A Mythohistoriography of Growing Up In-Between

by
Andrés C. López

A THESIS

submitted to

Oregon State University

in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the
degree of

Master of Arts

Presented May 16, 2016
Commencement June 2016

Master of Arts thesis of Andrés C. López presented on May 16, 2016

APPROVED:

Major Professor, representing Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

Director of the School and Language, Culture, and Society

Dean of the Graduate School

I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Andrés C. López, Author

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As I begin to think about the various people I am grateful to have had in this journey throughout the completion of this thesis project, I am reminded of the fact that it is because the Kalapuya people allow me to reside on their land that I have been able to even begin to conceptualize this project. So I begin this section of gratitude with a big maltiox to the Kalapuya people, for their constant resistance and presence during my time here at OSU.

To the Maya – K'iche', Kaqchikel, and Ixil peoples of Guatemala, maltiox for your constant resistance to the occupation. *Maltiox por ayudarme a borrar la amnesia nacionalista que he heredado de Guatemala y E.E.U.U. Espero que en un futuro cercano pueda haber justicia verdadera.*

Maltiox Dr. Qwo-Li Driskill for your constant support and encouragement throughout the writing process, and my development as a scholar and person with integrity. More than that, Dr. Driskill, maltiox for providing me with the skills and tools to not just look at all aspects of my life critically but to always approach my life and the people in it with infinite compassion. I am incredibly grateful and honored to call you kin.

Maltiox to my committee, Dr. Patti Duncan, Dr. Christina León, Dr. Marta Maldonado, and Dr. Mila Zuo for all of your feedback, support, and pep talks during this process. Grateful for all the work you do behind the scenes.

To the entire Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies faculty and staff, maltiox for challenging me and teaching me to learn from everything and everyone. A big special maltiox to Leonora, who aside from giving amazing hugs,

sings the best inspirational jingles to get you through any type of day. To Kryn, thank you, thank you, thank you, for all of your support this term with my teaching. I would not be able to finish this project without your assistance. To Liddy, thank you for your constant reminders to stop and celebrate my accomplishments. I'm going to miss our "on my way to the bathroom" check-ins. It has been a privilege to learn and work with you all. Maltiox for everything!

To my fellow WGSS cohort mates, colleagues, and friends, it has been a pleasure to learn from and with you. Maltiox for the support and encouragements throughout my time in the program. To Daryl, Megan, Alex, Silvia, Suha, Tami, Emilee, Vanessa, Abritty, Reshma, Sanju, Kali, Whitney, Luhui, and Sophia, I'm grateful for your friendship and the fantastic memories I have with all of you. Could not imagine my time in the program without y'all. I am honored to know you all and call you my friends. I wish y'all luck in the many wonderful things to come.

To Nyk, our honorary cohort mate, maltiox for always bringing your kind and gentle spirit to our home. Looking forward to all the fantastic work and things you will do. Can't wait to see you in the Midwest this summer. And let me know when you publish that book, 'cause I want a signed copy.

To my family, maltiox for all of the lessons you taught me on purpose and by accident. To Mama Bertha, thank you for risking all you had and coming to the States; I would not have the opportunities and privileges I do now if it were not for you. To my many *tias*, maltiox for teaching me to be the *chingon* I am today. *Mami, yo sé cuanto te haz esforzado para que yo esté aquí hoy, y por eso*

quiero que sepas que te amo. Te amo tanto mamá, que no hay hojas subicientes para escribirtelo y decirtelo.

To Max, I have no words to express the many ways in which you make me feel loved. Maltiox for your constant support, encouragement, love, laughs, and silliness. You remind me everyday that I can reach for my dreams regardless of whether I achieve them, because we'll always have each other. Pluse, we can always move on to our next adventure. Maltiox for all that you do.

I owe the person I am today and the person who I am yet to become to all of you, MALTIOX!

Para todos aquellos que se encuentran todavía en la lucha,
nunca pierdan la esperanza

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
PROLOGUE.....	11
IF MOUNTAINS COULD TALK.....	1
 CHAPTER 1: A MYTHOHISTORIOGRAPHY OF BORDERLANDS: AN INTRODUCTION	 5
LIVING IN THE BORDERLANDS	6
MYTHOHISTORIOGRAPHY: MY MOTHERS' <i>HISTORIAS</i>	13
 CHAPTER 2: IN THE BEGINNING WE WERE CORN: ORIGIN STORIES/HISTORIES OF RESISTANCE	 20
DIASPORIC MEMORY: THE POLITICS OF NOSTALGIA	22
IN THE BEGINNING WE WERE CORN	27
<i>To Mama Bertha</i>	30
NUEVAS MEMORIAS HISTÓRICAS QUEER	34
 CHAPTER 3: NI DE AQUÍ NI DE ALLA: LIVING IN THE IN-BETWEENS	38
HAUNTING MEMORIES.....	40
<i>Receta Para Levantar a los Muertos (or Receta de Atol de Elote)</i>	51
 CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION: RETURNING HOME: THE WARS THAT NEVER ENDED.....	 53
REMEMBER ME.....	53
RETURNING HOME: STORIES YOU NEVER KNEW YOU CARRIED WITH YOU.....	58
 EPILOGUE.....	68
WHEN MOUNTAINS TALK BACK	68
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	71

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Page</u>
FIGURE 1: ALBUM FOTOGRAFICO DE DELINCIENTES.....	44
FIGURE 2: PHOTO OF IZABEL MOCHA MEDINA.....	45

Prologue

If Mountains Could Talk

I stand by the side of the Interamerican Highway near Tecpán
looking out into the mountains of El Quiche
If these mountains could talk
would they name the unmarked bodies buried inside them?
Would they share with me the hunger
the Ixil people felt when their homes were burned and they were displaced?
Would they disclose whose bodies lay buried beneath the milpas de maíz
now ready for the harvest?
Or will I be just another passerby admiring the scenery?
If these mountains could talk,
Could they tell me where I fit in?
Tell me if those who share my lineage and I are part of the problem
Tell me if I am just as responsible for the killings
terror tactics
genocide
silence
war?
If these mountains could talk,
Would they divulge to my ears the stories they hold?
How many lives were taken here

turning the Rio Negro blood red?

How many folks died because they starved?

How many because they found themselves with a bullet in their head?

How many bodies hidden

ancestors taken

Made examples so that the next generation would forget

I look out into the mountains of El Quiche

And wonder

If these mountains could talk,

Would they tell of the resistance?

share stories of survival?

Would they talk to me about roots and bark used for food?

Would the mountains know who is responsible for all the deaths?

Could they testify against them?

I look to the mountains of El Quiche

And know,

the revolution is just beginning.

hear the whispers of ancestors

“We are still living,

Still healing

Still here”

I begin this story by being in conversation with the mountains of El Quiche, Guatemala as a way to connect the land where some of the worst massacres during the 36-year civil war in Guatemala happened, to the descendants and heirs of the struggle. It was in these mountains that the Ixil, K'iche', and Kaqchikel were massacred en masse. These mountains were the site of violence, the site of despair and fear, the site of countless deaths; and simultaneously, these mountains provided the Ixil, K'iche', and Kaqchikel people with shelter, food, and cover from the military weapons actively being fired at them.

The mountains of El Quiche are also connected to a larger mountain range, La Cordillera de los Andes, which runs from the northernmost part of Canada to the southernmost part of Argentina and Chile. Physically connecting most of the Americas to each other, La Cordillera de los Andes is the backbone of the Americas. It is no coincidence that I wound up living, going to school, and working in the same mountain range, though given a different name. It is no coincidence that similar histories were lived on this side of the mountains. While los Andes connects the Americas historically, metaphorically, and physically, there are distinct histories that shape and affect different people throughout los Andes in very specific ways. In El Quiche for instance, this history is shaped by multiple, often contradictory, stories of genocide, hunger, and occupation.

This thesis project is a story about the histories of El Quiche and Guatemala as a whole. And since telling a story about El Quiche is not just telling a story about a place, but also a language and a community, this project is a story that attempts to connect all three. This is a story of resistance and survival. This is a story in which the main characters and actors are those who were and continue to be silenced and erased. This is a

story that attempts to tie everything together to question whether or not everything we think we know is even real. This is a story that calls for imagination. An imagination in which those “never meant to survive” are still

living,

healing,

here.¹

¹ Audre Lorde, “A Litany for Survival,” in *The Black Unicorn: Poems* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1995).

Chapter 1: A Mythohistoriography of Borderlands: An Introduction

En esta mitohistoriografía me encuentro con las historias que me contaron cuando era pequeño. Me re-encuentro con los rasgos de mi infancia que he dejado atrás. Y descubro la historia de un país que más que ningún otro lugar me ha formado, impactado e inspirado de maneras que hasta el día de hoy no he podido realmente empezar a poner en palabras. Al mismo tiempo, empiezo a poner en lugar los conflictos y contradicciones que se encuentran en mi relato de una historia que como todas otras historias esta llena de verdades y mentiras.

¿Cómo es que empiezo a contar esta historia mítica? ¿Cómo es que les empiezo a contar la historia de mi familia, la historia de mis abuelas, mis tías, y mis hermanas? ¿Cómo es que les cuento mi historia dentro del contexto de la historia mítica de un país al que a veces llamo hogar, y a veces llamo pasado? ¿Sera que al recordar las historias que me han contado encontrare lo que busco? ¿Sera que al ver hacia el pasado todo lo que creía cambiara? Quizás. Pero aunque tal vez no sepa como describir lo que busco en este relato, tal vez con tal solo escribirlo empezaremos a re-imaginar las historias olvidadas del pasado, re-inventaremos los personajes olvidados, e igualmente reconoceremos que tal vez lo que nos han contado es y no es tal como lo pensábamos.

I grew up around women. It was women who brought me up. Women who shared with me their stories. Women who told stories about each other and the women of the past, but never their own. I was brought up to be one of these women. I was taught how to be the proper wife and daughter who had respect for the women who shaped my life. Even though distance separated all of us, I grew up knowing all these women through the

stories I was told. I remember learning about my aunts and grandmothers through the stories my mother told us.

As a young child I knew that I could leave. I knew that no matter what happened these women would protect me. I knew these women were strong, independent, and most importantly, I knew that even though they were not here but instead *en el otro lado*, I would one day come join them. One day when I'm old enough. I knew that I too could be like them. I knew I would one day grow up to be just like them. Little did I know that yes, I would grow up to be the person they taught me to be, but also to be the person in-between their ideas of who they wanted me to be and my own conceptions of my becoming. Where did all of these dreams go wrong? Or did they? When did I start to deviate from their ideas of myself? When did I start to carve out my own path distant from theirs but always, always so close to home? I grew up surrounded by women. It was women who brought me up to become a woman who holds stories. I grew up to become the person who shares them and in turn the person who shares their lives, and therefore my own.

This mythohistoriography is for you *abuelas, tías, hermanas, y mamás*.

Living in the Borderlands

I want to start this section by sharing the story of how this project came into being. During my multiple moves throughout the U.S., I spent some time living in Oakland, CA. While I was working at a small community clinic in San Francisco I crossed paths with Veronica Perez-Arana, a newfound Chapina sister from another mother and friend. Though I didn't really tell her enough, the time I spent with her sharing and telling stories of our own family's migration from Guatemala, our own experiences of queering our

families, and our border identities are some of my favorite memories from my time in the Bay Area. I remember specifically one night when I went over to Vero's house, conveniently a couple of blocks from my own in Oakland, and we stayed up until 3 am talking about our families. After I'd shared with her some of the stories I've been told and had kept with me, she turned to me and said I should write these stories down. "You have to keep them for posterity" she said. I told her that I would write a book about them and then share it with her. Or at least I think I remember saying that. This short collection of stories is the beginning of what will become that book. This is the beginning of deciphering and expanding what it means for me as a queer, trans*, person of color to live in the borderlands.

At a very young age I realized that my legal status living in Guatemala was different from my mom's and my sister's status. I was a "*gringa*." I was an other, but an other that was not created out of fear but rather out of the presumed assumption that I would have it better than those around me.² Like Cherrie Moraga explains in "La Güera," "I was educated, and wore it with a keen sense of pride and satisfaction, my head propped up with the knowledge, from my mother, that my life would be easier than hers...I had it made."³ My education would not come into play until decades later, but at this very early time in my life, I grew up knowing I somehow was not like others around me. I was a very privileged other as my United States citizenry allowed me to travel in and out of Guatemala and the United States without question or suspicion. Although as a child I was not sure what being born in the United States meant, I knew that somehow that little

² Cherrie Moraga, "La Güera," in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* 2nd ed., (Latham, NY: Kitchen Table: woc press, [1981], 1983), 30.

³ Ibid., 28.

piece of my life history made me “better” than the people surrounding me. More than that, family, friends and even strangers around me made sure I knew that I was born in a place where I could do anything I wanted, a place I would eventually move to because why would anyone want to stay in Guatemala where the dirt roads lead only to poverty, corruption, and plenty of shame to go around. I learned to be ashamed not just of my Guatemalan roots but also of my Afro-Jamaican-Indian heritage. I was taught and I internalized the stories that said Guatemalans were “savages,” *indígenas*, uneducated and violent; I worried that if I was not careful I could become like them. Consequently, when my family and I moved to Miami, Florida, I was so ashamed of my family and background that I was determined to rid myself of the brownness that tainted me, because I was an “American.” Yet, once on the states side, I could never really do that because everywhere I went my skin color made others treat me a certain way, my citizenship got called into question, and my background was always questioned. Miami was my first experience in living in the “borderlands.”

In *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (2012), Gloria Anzaldúa describes the ways in which “borderlands,” are not just physical places that are divided by borders.⁴ Instead, Anzaldúa relates the concept of “borderlands” as a means to discuss the many ways in which the bodies of Chicanas and Chicanos have been divided, as they are not considered to be neither Mexican nor estadounidense.⁵ Additionally, Anzaldúa examines the vehicle by which she herself has been asked to give up part of her self in order to fit

⁴ Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* 4th ed., (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, [1987], [1999], and 2012).

⁵ Ibid.

into one identity: Mexican or estadounidense or queer.⁶ Not taking into account that she by definition could never fit into any one of these categories fully without giving up another. Anzaldúa's analysis of her experiences as a self identified Queer Chicana challenges the conception that there is one way in which to be queer: to deny any association to any other identity category. Rather, Anzaldúa's concept of "borderlands" allows for the inclusion of complexities when talking about sexuality and Latinx identities. In the "borderlands" everyone is not one or the other but rather a "*mestizaje*" or mixture of two or more identities in which "*la mestiza* is a product of the transfer of the cultural and spiritual values of one group to another."⁷ Like Anzaldúa, I create a history/story that complicates identities and calls for a more ambiguous "mestiza consciousness."

For this thesis project the "mestiza consciousness" I intend to create is based on Mayan Ixil, K'iche', and Kaqchikel ways of knowing. By centering the three biggest indigenous communities in Guatemala and their stories of resistance, this project marks a rewriting of wrongs done against all indigenous people during the Guatemalan Civil War and even today. In Mayan cosmology, each day is influenced by different energies called *nawales*.⁸ Each *nawal* then is said to affect the path we all walk throughout our lives. I was born on a day influenced by the energy of Q'anil, the rabbit or in other forms, the seed. Q'anil people are thought to have been conceived from Ajpu, the sun and

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., 100.

⁸ Carlos Barrios, *Ch'umilal Wuj: El libro del destino* 2nd ed., (Guatemala: Cholsamaj, [1999] and 2004).

reincarnated form of the grandparent Hunahpu.⁹ Additionally, those born with Q'anil influence are said to be destined for a path guided by Ajmaq, which calls them to “right all wrongs,” or is it “write all wrongs”?¹⁰

I'm writing this having just come home after my seventh doctor's visit in the past two months. While I am seeing them specifically because I've been experiencing pretty severe abdominal pain for the last several years and it is now beginning to limit my daily life, all the doctors I've seen this summer keep talking to me about blood pressure. One after another keeps bringing up the unavoidable fact that I have high blood pressure. “You need to watch what you eat!” “Exercise!” “Take this medication,” “You need to take care of this, it is important,” “You could die!” “You will die if you don't work on this!” They all keep repeating to me. I'm not denying that having high blood pressure does not worry me. Nor am I trying to say that it does not affect my life in specific ways. However, what I think some of these doctors are not really seeing is that my having high blood pressure is not just a reflection of my individual choices regarding my health, or health as they're defining it. My high blood pressure is not just about my veins being clogged by the extra fat that circulates through my body. My high blood pressure is not just about my heart straining to pump blood, nor is it about my blood struggling to get through my veins. High blood pressure – the way I see it – is about social and ancestral pressure and blood. As Qwo-Li Driskill states in “Stolen From Our Bodies: First Nations Two-Spirits/Queers and the Journey to a Sovereign Erotic,” engaging “sexual assault, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia...[as] entangled with the history of colonization”

⁹ Ibid., 238.

¹⁰ Ibid., 239.

necessitates “engag[ing] historical trauma”.¹¹ My health problems and concerns are all intricately connected to my relationships with past, present, and future kinships and genealogies. Precisely because I am not removed from the inheritance that conquest, slavery, genocide, and oppression have left me, I am not removed from historical generational trauma.¹²

Similarly to how high blood pressure connects me to the various systems of oppressions affecting my life, I would like to suggest that high blood pressure can be used to describe the current sociopolitical climate. Police brutality, erasure, microaggressions, denial of basic human rights and needs, displacement, gentrification, etc. are all examples of the constant state of violence communities of color have been subjected to throughout the existence of the state. Violence at home, violence in the streets, violence in our minds and bodies, violence we all cannot seem to run away from no matter how far and fast we run. Violence is the constant in our current state of being, and it is violence that creates pressure. It is this same violence that spills the blood we mourn. The blood of ancestors, the blood currently running down our faces and bodies, the blood of future kin who we hope to protect. High blood pressure then, is really also about the high instances of violence that spill blood and create pressure in our communities to constantly be on alert. A specific type of “distress” that continues to cycle into our bodies, families/kinships, and life. As Aurora Levins Morales explains, “‘Distress’ refers to patterns of thoughts, feelings and behaviors that are the result of

¹¹ Qwo-Li Driskill, “Stolen From Our Bodies: First Nations Two-Spirits/Queers and the Journey to a Sovereign Erotic,” in *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 16, no. 2 (2004): 51.

¹² *Ibid.*, 51.

being hurt, a kind of psychological scar tissue, that, like physical scars, are rigid and constrict free movement. Distress patterns do not represent our best thinking about the actual present moment, but can be quite convincing. All forms of oppression, including internalized oppression, are distress patterns.”¹³ It is no surprise to me that communities of color experience higher instances of high blood pressure and diabetes. Our bodies manifest the realities of our lived experiences.

Additionally, these realities of our lived experiences are interconnected to place and time. In *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*, Katherine McKittrick theorizes space as the site of racism and sexism. By analyzing geographies of domination through the use of “demonic” as a theoretical framework, McKittrick highlights the ways in which humanness is constructed, the changedness of cartography to suit particular purposes, the ways a bodily geography can help us imagine new futures. More importantly, McKittrick suggests that there is a “geographic relationship between the past and the present” not just as a connection to a land that was left behind and supposedly remained stagnant, but rather in thinking about time and spacial geographies which continuously change.¹⁴ McKittrick suggests that “[b]lackness becomes a site of radical possibility, supernatural travels, and difficult epistemological returns to the past and present”.¹⁵ In this way, McKittrick expands the working definition of diaspora. To elaborate, for McKittrick diaspora is not just about a home that was left behind and we can never return to, but also about the space of traveling and the current

¹³ Aurora Levins Morales, *Kindling: Writings on the Body*, (Cambridge: Palabrera Press, 2013), 61.

¹⁴ Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006) xxvii.

¹⁵ Ibid., 1-2.

space we embody with aspects of the past home and current present home. A sort of borderland home we embody through our constant movement back and forth among time, space, body, and memory. The histories of diaspora and borderlands I tell among these pages are also the *historias* I have been entrusted with by my grandmothers, my mothers, my aunts, and my sisters. These are the stories I was meant to keep with me to guide my path.

Mythohistoriography: My Mothers' Historias

In "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens," Alice Walker states, "...no song or poem will bear my mother's name. Yet so many of the stories that I write, that we all write, are my mother's stories."¹⁶ Walker describes women of color as creators of art and this reminds me about the many ways the women who raised me created, and continue to create, their worlds in a manner that resembles Audre Lorde's narrator in *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*.¹⁷ Although *Zami* is the story of Lorde's journey to finding herself, a socially conscious and autonomous self, *Zami* is also the story of the many women Lorde has loved and the realities of living in a society that does not value her whole self. As Lorde reflects on how she became a poet:

*"When the strongest words for what I have to offer come out of me sounding like words I remember from my mother's mouth, then I either have to reassess the meaning of everything I have to say now, or re-examine the worth of her old words"*¹⁸

Similarly, I think about my grandmother, Mama Bertha, who is the same age Audre

¹⁶ Alice Walker, "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens," in *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983) 240.

¹⁷ Audre Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*, (New York: The Crossing Press, 1982).

¹⁸ Ibid. (Italics in original) pp. 31.

Lorde would have been if she were still around, and her multiple migrations from Jamaica, Guatemala, and the U.S. And I can't help but wonder, how have her stories been told? Can my retelling of her *historias* "re-examine the worth of her old words"? Can my retelling of the *historias* my mother told me do the same? Writing the stories of people so close to me, who have shaped my very ways of thinking is for me an avenue to implement myself into the histories/stories that I am trying to tell.

Like Walker and Lorde, I too am writing "my mother's stories," I'm writing all of my mothers' stories through a mythohistoriography. Lorde uses the concept of a biomythography as a way to connect the stories/histories of her and her mother's tumultuous relationship, as well as Lorde's own socio-political self-awareness expressed through her writing. Lorde constructs a "biomythography" that serves not just as a site for retelling and complicating Lorde's own migration stories and upbringing, but also serves as a type of "medicinal history," where her queerness, blackness, and womaness are centered.¹⁹ "Medicinal histories," as Aurora Levins Morales discusses in "The Historian as Curandera," have the potential to "re-establish the connections between people and their histories, to reveal the mechanisms of power, the steps by which their current condition of oppression was achieved through a series of decisions made by real people to dispossess them; but also to reveal the multiplicity, creativity and persistence of resistance among the oppressed."²⁰ In other words, "medicinal histories" are a way to disrupt the conventional ways of imagining the work of historicizing. As such, I utilize the concept of biomythography combined with the idea of historicizing to construct a

¹⁹ Ibid.; and Aurora Levins Morales, "The Historian as Curandera," in *Medicine Stories: History, Culture and the Politics of Integrity*, (Cambridge: South End Press, 1998).

²⁰ Ibid., 24.

mythohistoriography within these pages that is a medicinal history.

Moreover, utilizing mythohistoriography as both a method and a methodology in this thesis project allows me to question the very ways in which particular histories have been held as absolute truths while others have been forcefully forgotten and erased. Morales explains that historicizing in ways that not just “document[s] the past” but rather “restore[s] to the dehistoricized a sense of identity and possibility” is important.²¹ In this way, Morales questions ideas about history as stagnant as well as the ability of historians to construct a history of truths. Morales suggests that particular forms of telling history have been used by colonizing powers to maintain regimes of power by controlling the relationships groups of people have with their own pasts.²² For Morales the framework of *testimonio*, “like the testimonies of Latin American torture survivors, in bearing witness to a much larger history of abuse and resistance in which many women and men participated,” positions the historian as active participant in the history that they create, while simultaneously suggesting that “socially conscious” historicizing can be an avenue for healing.²³ The mythohistoriography I construct here is both a framework by which I can implement myself within the family stories I am retelling, but also a means to implement my family into larger histories of genocide, war, and conflict from the Guatemalan Civil War.

Using Morales’ guidelines for “socially conscious” historicizing and Lorde’s concept of “biomythography,” I create a mythohistoriographical *testimonio* that weaves together multiple histories of the Guatemalan Civil War, indigenous stories of resistance

²¹ Ibid., 24.

²² Ibid., 23.

²³ Ibid., 25.

in Guatemala, my family's stories during this time, and my own upbringing as this armed conflict was supposedly ending. Just as Morales does in *Remedios: Stories of Earth and Iron from the History of Puertorriqueñas*, I interrogate the history that I am creating though questioning the very sources from which this new history is constructed.²⁴ And as Lorde implies in *Zami*, the mythohistoriography I construct is also a type of mythology whereby indigenous origin stories, my own queer and transness, as well as my family's migrations back and forth between the U.S. and Guatemala are centered.

This layering project attempts to create more rounded types of histories/stories, that do not just imply a singular linear type of story telling but instead suggest that all these stories and struggles are all intertwined. This biomythographical *testimonio* is meant to complicate stories of migration, genocide, diaspora, belonging, home, and queer families. As Qwo-Li Driskill suggests in "Doubleweaving Two-Spirit Critiques: Building Alliances between Native and Queer Studies," "doubleweaving" multiple splints from theories scholars can begin to build stronger dialogues through "much more complex and durable" stories.²⁵ In using this strategy of "doubleweaving," to interconnect various strands of histories/stories together I create a complex story that suggests that the "truth" of what actually happened during the Guatemalan Civil War is and is not entirely true but rather a series of truths woven together for the purposes of erasing the genocide of

²⁴ Aurora Levins Morales, *Remedios: Stories of Earth and Iron from the History of Puertorriqueñas*, (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, [1998] and 2001).

²⁵ Qwo-Li Driskill, "Doubleweaving Two-Spirit Critiques: Building Alliances Between Native and Queer Studies," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16, no. 1-2 (2010): 74.

indigenous people. The weaving of histories/stories is a strategic way to have all the themes I've outlined be in conversations with each other.²⁶

I integrate various forms of theorizing – poetry, narratives, sound, and images – that, as Barbara Christian articulates in “The Race for Theory,” exemplify how “...people of color have always theorized – but in forms quite different from the Western form of abstract logic...our theorizing...is often in narrative forms, in the stories we create, in riddles and proverbs, in the play with language, because dynamic rather than fixed ideas seem more to our liking.”²⁷ In other words, I use creative forms in order to write myself into being and to theorize in ways that are in line with traditions wherein communities of color have always created knowledge. Thus, writing myself as subject is in fact an act of theorizing and deconstructing the dominant culture's assertion that any of my mothers' stories do not exist. However, unlike Christian, I position these creative theorizings not as alternative forms to “Western form,” but as stories that supplement what is missing, what has been forcibly erased and forgotten, from the “literature” written about Guatemala, my mothers, and myself.²⁸ Weaving together these stories through various forms then becomes an act of piecing back together the histories settler colonialism has obscured and purposefully erased.

Additionally, I focus this woven biomythographical *testimonio* to interrogate the question of what it means for twice colonized peoples, referring to indigenous communities who have experienced ongoing colonization by Spain and U.S. alike, to

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Barbara Christian, “The Race for Theory,” *Feminist Studies*, 14, no. 1, (1988): 68.

²⁸ Malea Powell, “Listening to ghosts: an alternative (non)argument,” in *AltDis: Alternative Discourses and the Academy*, ed. Christopher Schroeder, Helen Fox, and Patricia Bizzell (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2002), 16.

construct histories and stories where we are actively centered rather than just included. What new futures can be created when retelling our stories of pasts centered on the very people “never meant to survive”?²⁹ While I hope to supplement forgotten and erased histories, I also question the ways in which I and my family are implicated in the histories/stories of genocide. As Morales, Lorde and multiple women of color feminists have outlined, re-centering histories and constructing our own histories/stories is a revolutionary act that has the potential to heal.³⁰ It is my hope that this project will become the beginning of a healing practice that can address the continual erasure and killings of indigenous peoples in Guatemala.

The subsequent chapters elaborate on these themes and theories. In Chapter 2, I will re-create Maya K’iche’ and Kaqchikel origin stories/histories as well as those of my family’s genealogies which positions my family in the Caribbean and Guatemala. This reconstruction of origin stories/histories is meant to highlight the interconnectedness of indigenous groups prior to the first conquest while also pointing to specific histories of particular indigenous communities. Additionally, Chapter 2 will begin to disclose the ways in which the subjugation of indigenous people, histories, and lands is not a new phenomenon only begun at the height of the Guatemalan Civil War, but rather these are tactics brought over by the Spaniards and most recently by the United States. Chapter 3 elaborates on the implicatedness of the U.S. in the genocide of indigenous peoples in Guatemala specifically during the 1980s, some of the bloodiest years of this “armed

²⁹ Audre Lorde, “A Litany for Survival,” in *The Black Unicorn: Poems* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1995).

³⁰ Aurora Levins Morales, “The Historian as Curandera,” in *Medicine Stories: History, Culture and the Politics of Integrity*, (Cambridge: South End Press, 1998).

conflict.”³¹ This chapter also focuses on the exchange of information, ideas, and people going back and forth between Guatemala and the U.S. The concluding Chapter will discuss the peace accords, as well as the current socio-political climate with which I suggest that the Guatemalan Civil War never really ended. Ultimately, this mythohistoriography is a retelling of my mothers’ stories, histories of genocide, and most importantly indigenous resistance. This mythohistoriography is a story of living in the borderlands. Consequently, this mythohistoriography is also about strategies for survival and resistance that have always and continue to be in place as well as the possibilities for healing from historical generational trauma.

³¹ Greg Gradin, *The Blood of Guatemala: A History of Race and Nation*, (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2000).

Chapter 2: In the Beginning We Were Corn: Origin Stories/Histories of Resistance

“In the beginning the Maya were a powerful wise people. We had the power to see into the future, see the hidden meanings in the Earth, and to make things manifest with just our minds. We became proud, arrogant, and careless with our powers. Until one day the gods decided to take our powers away. They cast us all to sleep and took away our ability to see beyond the physical realm. Although we haven’t had these powers of sight in a very long time, we are able to tap into them in our dreams. It is in our dreaming where we can *remember* our forgotten whole selves. Even after we wake and come back to the physical side, we can still remember the power that although taken away from us is still and forever within us ” - Veronica Perez-Arana

I remember driving through Oakland while Vero told me this story. I had just shared with her a dream I had the night before. In my dream I was in Guate in the house I grew up in. I walked up to the gated garden at the front with roses protecting the entrance. The black metal bars felt cold as I opened the gated door. It was early in the morning. I walked past the garden and went inside. My great-aunt Ruth, the singer and artist, designed the house so the whole place was pretty quirky and filled with things left behind as people moved to *el otro lado*. When I walked inside, I saw the familiar long hallway that crossed the small house. There was no one around, but the patio door at the end of the hall was ajar. I walked towards it, and found my 9 year old child self sitting on the concrete stairs outside crying. I walked up to child me, sat next to them, and hugged them. I hugged myself tight. I hugged myself all the while repeating out loud “we’re okay, we are going to be okay.” We released each other from our embrace and smiled at each other. Child me put their head on my shoulder while they held my hand and started telling me a story.

I woke up, and was laying on a borrowed mattress on the floor in my tiny humid basement room in West Oakland. It was my 25th birthday, and for the first time in the

quarter century of my current existence I knew that everything that happened when I was a child was not my fault. I remembered it all. I remembered the yelling, the drunken arguing, my father breaking furniture and punching out windows, the way his alcohol breath smelled, I remembered the first time my uncle touched me, I remembered being scared, I remembered my mother working graveyard shifts at the factory in Miami, I remembered hiding from people, I remembered how quiet I was, I remembered I was the “good one,” the one who didn’t question anything. I remembered the fear. I remembered it all. And in that moment of remembrance I knew that my story was just beginning.

I begin this chapter with a story about remembering to begin a discussion on the ways in which memory is associated with nostalgia through storytelling. More importantly, I want to connect memory to the work of recovering histories forcibly forgotten and erased. Thus in this chapter I focus on re-creating origin stories and histories of resistance of the Maya-K’iche’ and Kaqchikel people. While these recreated histories are meant as a continuation of the larger “medicinal history” project I outlined in Chapter 1, I position the origin stories I recreate here as part of a particular type of recollection of memory, a *memoria histórica* of sorts whereby the very act of recollecting and historicizing is connected to shared memories and resistance. Throughout the chapter I question the memories being recreated, while simultaneously suggesting that these memories of origin are part of a larger resistance that positions the subjugation of indigenous people, histories, and lands as happening before the height of the Guatemalan Civil War. Additionally, using McKittrick’s notion of a “geographic relationship between the past and the present” and her questioning of linear time, I too will question the

linearity of the histories and memories I revive and re-write.³² While I recreate origin stories and memories to imply that the recuperation of histories is part of what Aurora Levins Morales terms is a “medicinal history” with the power to heal communities,³³ I also explore the affective nature of a nostalgia for lost histories. Within this nostalgia for lost histories/stories I argue that diaspora is not linear nor entirely attached to a specific geographic location, but also regulated by a sense of nostalgia towards particular origin histories/stories that construct self and as Muñoz terms a “feeling brown[ness]” that mediates kinship and relationship with place, people, and self. Thus, both memory and nostalgia can be fabricated, but they both function in different ways that can have different affective results and purposes. Nostalgia often necessitates a performed depressive state, while memory is what often facilitates nostalgia. Consequently, my retelling of these histories is a means to complicate both nostalgic longings and memory.

Diasporic Memory: The Politics of Nostalgia

In “Feeling Brown, Feeling Down: Latina Affect, the Performativity of Race, and the Depressive Position,” José Esteban Muñoz discusses representations of depression as they are related to racial formations.³⁴ Muñoz focuses on a specific video installation by Nao Bustamante, *Neopolitan* wherein the viewer watches the artist sobbing, in order to “center...how depression itself is formed and organized around various historical and

³² Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2006), xxvii.

³³ Aurora Levins Morales, “History as Curandera,” in *Medicine Stories: History, Culture and the Politics of Integrity*, (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1998).

³⁴ José Esteban Muñoz, “Feeling Brown, Feeling Down: Latina Affect, the Performativity of Race, and the Depressive Position,” *Signs* 31, no. 3 (2006).

material contingencies that include race, gender, and sex.”³⁵ I am interested in the way in which Muñoz’ articulation of depression as being shaped by “historical and material contingencies” allows for depression not to be stagnant and genetically determined, but instead suggests a particular type of performativity of depression that is shaped by who happens to perform it and who reads it. Similarly, I juxtapose depression and nostalgia for lost homes in diasporic subjects as a type of performativity that is mediated by the histories of race, gender, and sex these subjects choose to recollect in their *memoria histórica*. In other words, the performance of nostalgia occurs as it is related to particular historical memories diasporic subjects recollect and try to recreate either in new physical homes or new homes within the same physical spaces. Consequently, within this chapter I position the origin stories of the K’iche’ and Kaqchikel both as a recovering of lost memories, but also as a constructed memory of resistance, or an queer diasporic history, as Gayatri Gopinath would suggest.³⁶ However, the queer diasporic history I create here is not one that is meant to further legitimize settler colonial practices by dismissing or erasing indigeneity. Rather, this indigenous queer diasporic memory is intended to move and shift as the particular needs of the community change to address different forms of violence and to create various meanings of home and coalition.

In *Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Cultures*, Gopinath argues that including a queer framework of diaspora will decenter heteronormative imaginaries of nationhood, particularly the nostalgic ideologies of nationhood left behind in the past home, but also in the articulations of the new home

³⁵ Ibid., 675.

³⁶ Gayatri Gopinath, *Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Cultures*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

being built in the image of the old home. One of the ways in which Gopinath discusses a queer diaspora is through her theorizing of “home.” For Gopinath, home within the “diasporic identity” is intertwined with “domestic, communal, and national space.”³⁷ Through reading postcolonial diasporic narratives as queer texts Gopinath suggests that “queer diasporic literatures...engage in a radical reworking of multiple home spaces.”³⁸ For Gopinath, “[q]ueer diasporic texts challenge postcolonial diasporic narratives that imagine diaspora and nation through the tropes of home, family, and community that are invariably organized around heteronormative, patriarchal authority.”³⁹ At the same time, these “[q]ueer diasporic texts” also subvert the “narratives of gay and lesbian subjectivity” which often position “queer subjects outside the boundaries of home and family.”⁴⁰ In other words, Gopinath suggests that “queer diasporic texts” serve two purposes: to challenge and dismantle postcolonial diasporic narratives of “tradition and home” as well as challenge gay and lesbian narratives of leaving home. However, in theorizing home within “domestic, communal, and nationalistic space,”⁴¹ Gopinath privileges the types of spaces in which home can be created for nationalistic purposes suggesting that queer diaspora will decenter these by “transforming it into a site where non-heteronormative desires and practices are articulated and performed,”⁴² which cannot happen unless these imaginings of past are no longer mediated by colonial understandings of self, home, history, and memory. More importantly, as Andrea Smith

³⁷ Ibid., 161.

³⁸ Ibid., 165.

³⁹ Ibid., 68.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 68.

⁴¹ Ibid., 161.

⁴² Ibid., 164.

critiques, Gopinath's use of "a subjectless critique [or in this case a queer diasporic critique] may disguise the fact that the queer, postcolonial, or environmentally conscious subject is simultaneously a settler subject."⁴³ Though I use queer diaspora in similar ways to Gopinath, I do this while also being in conversation with Indigenous Queer and Two-Spirit Studies. In other words, I look to Gopinath's queer diasporic subject as only one avenue in which to challenge the nation and nationalism(s), while simultaneously addressing the continual occupation of Native lands.

Similarly, in *Spaces Between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization*, Scott Lauria Morgensen discusses the ways in which queer "non-Native" settlers appropriate Native histories and identities in order to justify their continual occupation.⁴⁴ More than that, Morgensen articulates an interesting dynamic in which queer non-Native people feel as outsiders of white heteropatriarchy and look to Native "traditional" practices to find themselves as rightful inheritors to land.⁴⁵ This particular conversation is reminiscent of the types of nationalistic practices I have seen being practiced in Guatemala. I'm thinking specifically of the ways in which as a country, there is an invocation to Maya and indigenous culture as avenues to express our roots, while simultaneously erasing the state sanctioned violence that has and continues to affect indigenous communities in Guatemala. This in turn is related to Andrea Smith's second pillar of heteropatriarchy and white supremacy where "[t]hrough the logic of genocide,

⁴³ Andrea Smith, "Queer Theory and Native Studies: The Heteronormativity of Settler Colonialism," in *Queer Indigenous Studies: Interventions in Theory, Politics, and Literature* ed. Qwo-Li Driskill, Chris Finley, Brian Joseph Gilley, and Scott Lauria Morgensen, (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2011), 49.

⁴⁴ Scott Lauria Morgensen, *Spaces Between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

non-Native people become the rightful inheritors of all that is indigenous – land, resources, indigenous spirituality, or culture.”⁴⁶ (2009, 68). Both Morgensen and Smith point to the erasure and presumed disappearance of indigenous peoples in order for non-Natives to lay claim to Native epistemologies and cosmologies. Morgensen however expands on Smith’s point and suggests that it is through this “new found” appropriated Indigeneity that queer non-Native people are trying to argue acceptance and inclusion to white supremacist and settler colonial systems.⁴⁷

Rather than recreate these appropriative reclamations of Native belonging to assert a shared history, or including queer Native representations, in imbedding representations of queer Native experiences we find new ways of resistance, alliances, mourning, kinship, and loving. And in many ways Morgensen is calling for similar types of relationships to form. While “[d]iasporic queers of color and Native queers also engage the settler formation of globalism in queer modernities,” there are avenues where alliances can be made in order to address not just the colonial histories diasporic queer of color critiques examine, but also work in solidarity with Native queers in addressing settler colonialism’s heteropatriarchal impositions and supposed ownership of land and resources.⁴⁸ These types of connections and alliances already exist in some ways, but continue to be negotiated. More importantly, historicizing within this coalitional understanding of diaspora and colonial histories has the potential to address the continual erasure and appropriation of Native histories for the purposes of legitimizing settler

⁴⁶ Andrea Smith, “Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy: Rethinking Women of Color Organizing,” in *Color of Violence* ed. INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2006), 68.

⁴⁷ Scott Lauria Morgensen, *Spaces Between Us*, 2011, 31.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 177.

colonialism.

In the Beginning We Were Corn

Retelling of Maya – K'iche' and Kaqchikel origin stories functions as a way to recall a history of stolen lands, but to also imbed queerness throughout the historical recollection I create in this thesis project. More than that, I position queerness not as an addition to Maya – K'iche' and Kaqchikel cosmologies, but rather as a remembrance of these histories which have always, already existed.

In the beginning, it is said that the first humans were created in a time of darkness. In fact, earth sprang from the sea, and the growth of plants and people on its surface were all created before Hunahpu and Xbalanque reincarnated as the sun and moon, bringing light to earth-sky.⁴⁹ The gods who reside in the primordial sea, Maker, Modeler, Bearer, Begetter, Heart of Lake, Heart of the Sea, and Sovereign Plumed Serpent, were in conversation with the gods who come down from the primordial sky, Heart of Sky, Heart of Earth, Newborn Thunderbolt, Raw Thunderbolt, and Hurricane. They all decided they should make humans and they tried three times before they succeed at making acceptable humans who could walk, work, talk, and worship according to the rhythms of a calendar. The sowing and dawning they called it.⁵⁰ Their first attempt at making humans was a disaster, these beings had no arms to work with and couldn't really talk either. Animals are their descendants today, or so the story goes. For their second attempt the gods decided to make a being out of mud. Only to find that this being was so antisocial and solitary it slid back down into the earth and turned right back into nothingness. For their

⁴⁹ Dennis Tedlock, *Popol Vuh: The Definitive Edition of the Mayan Book of the Dawn of Life and the Glories of Gods and Kings*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985).

⁵⁰ Ibid., 163.

third attempt, the gods decided to consult Xpiyacoc and Xmucane, both *ah3ih* or “daykeeper” diviners who knew how to interpret the calendar.⁵¹ After consulting Xpiyacoc and Xmucane the gods decided to build humans out of wood. These wooden humans are closer to the type of being the gods had envisioned. However, they were horrible timekeepers and quickly lost the favor of the gods. Hurricane brought on a strong storm on their heads, and even their own tools turned against them. Today, they can be found living in forests hanging from the trees. In their last attempt the gods get word from fox, coyote, parrot, and crow of a mountain filled with yellow and white corn.⁵² Xmucane grinds the corn, and with the water she uses to rinse her hands she makes *masa* and provides the materials from which human flesh was created.⁵³ It is thus, that the four “mother-father” heads of K’iche’ lineage are born. It is thus, that we are the children of the corn.

Concurrently, the Kaqchikel people came from “across the sea” during the time of darkness.⁵⁴ Some say the Kaqchikel migrated from the lost city recently found at the bottom of Lago de Atitlán, the “Maya Atlantis” they call it.⁵⁵ While the Kaqchikel came to the highlands after the K’iche’, they too partook in the dawning of Hunahpu as the sun. The “Kaqchikel originally allied with K’iche’ to undertake the conquest of territories that

⁵¹ Ibid., 163.

⁵² Ibid., 163.

⁵³ Ibid., 164.

⁵⁴ Judith Maxwell and Robert Hill II, *Kaqchikel Chronicles: The Definitive Edition*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 3.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 4.

had been seized from old Mayan and non-Mayan occupants.”⁵⁶ Together they created the city of Iximche’ in Tecpán, which in Kaqchikel language literally translates to the city of seed of corn tree, “Ixim” meaning the seed of corn, “che” meaning tree.⁵⁷ Thus corn unites Maya-K’iche’ and Kaqchikel both in histories and memories of origin. Corn becomes the molding of humanness, and seed of corn or Q’anil is home.

I grew up en la zona 4 de Mixco, Guatemala City, Guatemala. I also grew up in the border between Hialeah, Miami Lakes, and Miami Gardens, Florida, U.S.; our street the literal crossroad by which one could venture into any of these cities. Like the origin story of creation, I too came into being in a time of darkness. Only, the darkness I experienced was a self-imposed darkness whereby I thought that leaving home would somehow make me different. That leaving would somehow wash away the brownness of my skin and turn me into the child I always wanted to be for my parents. Little did I know that in leaving I would get closer to home than ever before.

Only, the feeling of brownness never left me. I, like Muñoz explains, was “feeling brown” in “ways in which minoritarian affect is always, no matter what its register, partially illegible in relation to the normative affect performed by normative citizen subjects.”⁵⁸ In other words, my “gringa” designation by my family even after our move to the U.S. did not translate into my full access to the citizenship. My “feeling brownness” was, and continues to be, designated by the ways in which “[b]rownness, like all forms of racialized attentiveness in North America, is enabled by practices of self-knowing

⁵⁶ David Carey Jr., *Our Elders Teach Us: Maya-Kaqchikel Historical Perspectives: Xkib’ij kan qate’ qatata’*, (Tuscaloosa & London: University of Alabama Press, 2001), 41.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 41.

⁵⁸ José Esteban Muñoz, “Feeling Brown, Feeling Down,” 2006, 679.

formatted by the nation's imaginary;" and in this imaginary, brown is always related to "the public life of blackness," and never washes away.⁵⁹

I remember hearing stories of Mama Bertha. Whenever I did something that inspired such a story to be told I felt proud of myself, somehow feeling like I could be like my grandmother one day. Mama Bertha was born in 1936, and like me and her mother before her grew up in-between two countries, two streets, two languages. Mama Bertha's first country was Jamaica and her second Guatemala, or you could say that it was the other way around since she was born in the latter just like I was born on the states side. Mama Bertha came back to Guate looking for her estranged mother, Mama Anita, whom she was separated from by her father who thought Mama Anita was too cruel to their children, or so the story goes. Not much is said about how the reunion happened, but we know that at some point after the earthquake of '76 they both decided to buy a plot of land together and divided it in half. I grew up on this land, in Mama Anita's house, long after both of them had already left to the states side. They both left during the time of war.

To Mama Bertha

When I was a little one,

I remember wanting to spend all of my time with you.

And it's not that I didn't have other women in my life who I wanted to emulate,

it was that you were the one who was far away.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 680.

You were this mysterious, round, big, Black woman
who came to town once a year or two and completely amassed me.

You were the reason why I never really questioned
whether I would survive when I left home.

You had already done it.

And I loved you for that.

I wanted to leave with you,
because somehow in my child mind
I thought everything would be easier *en el otro lado*.
I thought you were freer to roam the complexities of our beings
in the States side of our homes,
but I would find out just how cruel the world has been to you with time.

The bitterness, sarcasm, and cruelty you spit out today
reminds me of the loneliness you must have felt
having left your children and home behind again
having left another man who drank away your hard earned labor
like my grandfather did.

Sometimes...

Sometimes, I wish you could've been born at a different time and place
so that your hands would not be marked by plantation work on the island

so that you could have had the opportunities you created for me
so that today, you and I could be friends in our queer social circle.

I know you don't want to talk about it
but I know you can see it in me
just as I see it in your hard troubled eyes,
that you and I are cut from the same tree, and somehow
even if you won't say anything
I know you love me for that.

Mama Bertha came to the States sometime in 1980. No one really talks about it much, but from the bits and pieces I've been able to put together living with my grandfather, Manuel, was no easy task. When she left, she headed to New York, leaving behind her youngest three daughters, Damaris, Denice, and Evelyn, the middle one being my mother.

I heard growing up that my mom and aunts spent three years at an orphanage after Mama Bertha left. Although I knew this was the case, I don't think that I quite grasped what that meant, or rather I don't think that I grasped what my aunts and mom thought it meant. In the summer of 2008 I thought about moving back to Guate. Although that didn't happen, I wound up going to Guate for a month and my mom joined me my last week there. My aunt Damaris, who is the only one of my aunts still living in Guatemala, said we should do a day trip to Panajachel. I was super excited about this idea since the last time I was there I was too young and car sick to remember anything but vomiting on

the side of the highway. We woke up pretty early the next day, got all covered up because Pana is in *tierra fria*, got in her car, and started driving.

As we left the city, we got onto a winding road headed towards the mountains. The forest multiplying around us I thought to myself, “this is why Guatemala es el país de la eterna primavera.” At one point after passing the Iximche’ ruins my aunt pointed out a street on the lefthand side of the Interamerican Highway mentioning that this is the street that leads to “el orfanato.” As soon as she mentioned this I knew there was a story coming. And as I watched the road ahead of us and the fog descend on the mountains surrounding us, I knew I was being transported to a different time and place.

El orfanato, is somewhere in Tecpán between Chimaltenango and Panajachel. The way my aunt tells the story is different than how my mom remembers it, but maybe it’s because my aunt was 15 when they stayed there. My aunt used to go with the nuns to the surrounding *aldeas* to preach. This was 1980 Guatemala. This was the main war zone where indigenous people were being massacred. This was at a time in which just being thought of as an *indio* could get you killed. This was the height of the military resistance in a country separated by races and ideologies that were not our own. This was the second *conquista* of our homes, only this time the colonizers were our own people doing the bidding of those who were not even there.

They say that the priest who led the church at *el orfanato* was found dead with two shots to his head. They say he spoke a dialect of Tz’utujil and would interpret for indigenous folks during visits to their towns, preaching and bringing more than religion to the area. They say that his body is now buried in the mountains among the bodies of countless others. They say he knew it was coming. If only he’d fled to México like my

Uncle Luis did when we knew they were coming for him.

Nuevas Memorias Históricas Queer

“Tecun Umán, Príncipe Quiche.”⁶⁰ On a February day in 1524 en los llanos de Urbina, they say that Tekúm Umám brought down Don Pedro de Alvarado’s horse.⁶¹ “Bravo capitán, Héroe nacional.”⁶² Tekúm thinking that Alvarado and the horse were one being turned his back on the “defeated” conquistador.⁶³ “Tecun Umán, Hoy the canto.”⁶⁴ In this moment, Alvarado took his sword and stabbed the K’iche’ prince.⁶⁵ “Yo quiero recordar, Tu gloria otra vez.”⁶⁶ Tekúm fell to the ground, blood pouring from the wound.⁶⁷ “En las selvas y montañas, En los valles siempre estás.”⁶⁸ They say that a quetzal flew out of the jungles and came to rest on the wound on Tekúm’s chest.⁶⁹ “Importante tu figura, Hijo amado del Quetzal.”⁷⁰ The quetzal flew away its feathers carrying Tekúm’s blood on its chest, forever keeping the Battle of El Pinar and Tekúm’s memory alive in the jungles of our homes and in our own hearts.⁷¹

I remember reciting the story of Tekúm Umán in song when I was a child during school functions or during activities for “independence day” in September. I never

⁶⁰ “Letra del Canto a Tecun Umán,” Accessed March 4, 2015, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/204880312/Letra-del-canto-a-Tecun-Uman-ok>.

⁶¹ Oswaldo Chinchilla Mazariegos, “Tecum, the Fallen Sun: Mesoamerica Cosmogony and the Spanish Conquest of Guatemala,” in *Ethnohistory* 60, no. 4 (2013): 693.

⁶² “Letra del Canto a Tecun Umán,” 2015.

⁶³ Mazariegos, “Tecum, the Fallen Sun,” 693.

⁶⁴ “Letra del Canto a Tecun Umán,” 2015.

⁶⁵ Mazariegos, “Tecum, the Fallen Sun,” 694.

⁶⁶ “Letra del Canto a Tecun Umán,” 2015.

⁶⁷ Mazariegos, “Tecum, the Fallen Sun,” 694.

⁶⁸ “Letra del Canto a Tecun Umán,” 2015.

⁶⁹ Mazariegos, “Tecum, the Fallen Sun,” 694.

⁷⁰ “Letra del Canto a Tecun Umán,” 2015.

⁷¹ Mazariegos, “Tecum, the Fallen Sun,” 695.

thought about whether or not Tekúm was a real person, I just knew that he was a national hero. I never learned that the story of Tekúm was appropriated as a national story in 1960.⁷² It is no surprise to me that the same year Tekúm Umám becomes a national hero, the Guatemalan Civil War began and the K'iche', Kaqchikel, Ixil, and all indigenous peoples in the area were once again the targets of nationalistic violence, massacres, and genocide. Some think of Tekúm's story as a story that highlights a shift in power from K'iche' rule to Spaniard conquest marking Spanish superiority as the cause.⁷³ Perhaps this interpretation of Tekúm Umám's story has more to do with who is retelling the story and who is reading it. Or rather who is remembering the story and for whom. As Morgensen articulates, who are these reclamations of historical memory benefiting by justifying settler colonial state?⁷⁴

Similarly, Patti Duncan questions histories in "History of Disease," where she retells the story of migration of her mother while simultaneously questioning the sources from which this story comes from.⁷⁵ Duncan does not just provide an "alternative" story to the typical trope of migration to the U.S., but also questions the reasons why this migration needed to happen in the first place, the "assimilation" or lack thereof that her mother and she are able to actually partake in, and the idea of memory that is intact from societal influences.⁷⁶ In this way, Duncan's narrative facilitates a conversation that is not just an alternative to dominant forms of storytelling and memory; she creates a story

⁷² Mazariegos, "Tecum, the Fallen Sun," 712.

⁷³ Jim Pieper, "Dance of the Conquest: Tecún Umán and Ajitz," in *Guatemala's Masks & Drama*, (Torrance, CA: Pieper and Associates Inc., 2006), 174.

⁷⁴ Scott Lauria Morgensen, *Spaces Between Us*, 2011, 17.

⁷⁵ Patti Duncan, "History of Disease," in *Q & A: Queer in Asian America*, ed. David L. Eng and Alice Y. Hom (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998).

⁷⁶ Ibid.

within which she and her family are within and outside U.S. imaginaries as always outsiders. In other words, her narrative functions as a form of dismantling of dominant forms of remembering by the mere fact that her narrative is in the lived experiences she recollects. Additionally, the questioning of these remembrances destabilizes the idea that any story is created without societal influences.

In thinking about creating and imagining new types of *memorias históricas*, I go back to the dream story Veronica shared with me the night of my 25th birthday. Going back to a time in which the powers of sight outside the physical realm is not possible, but tapping into those powers and using them to create a different type of remembering might be. I think it is important to question memory, particularly a memory of traumas and violence. This is not to say that this memory is more distorted than other types of memories, but rather that questioning memories is a means to highlight the ways in which particular histories get created for specific purposes.⁷⁷ However, there is a need to disrupt the historical amnesia that erases the long history of racial struggle, racism, and colonization in the United States and in Guatemala,⁷⁸ To this end, *memorias históricas* need to be created by centering a decolonization of the very remembrances being retold. As Qwo-Li Driskill states in “Doubleweaving Two-Spirit Critiques: Building Alliances between Native and Queer Studies,” “[b]y using the term *decolonization*, I am speaking of ongoing, radical resistance against colonialism that includes struggles for land redress,

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ David L. Eng, in *The Feeling of Kinship: Queer Liberalism and the Radicalization of Intimacy*, (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2010).

self-determination, healing historical trauma, cultural continuance, and reconciliation.”⁷⁹

This distinction between a decolonization that focuses on ending a “defined ‘postcolonial’ state” versus a decolonization that emphasizes the creation of new forms of being is important.⁸⁰ The former has the potential to assume that in moving away from a colonial state somehow we will be able to go back to a pre-colonial time and place. The latter on the other hand acknowledges the ways in which attempting to go to an assumed past is not necessarily possible. And in utilizing the latter as a foundation for creating origin stories, there is the potential for creating different imaginaries of home that exist within and outside of nostalgic recollections.

⁷⁹ Qwo-Li Driskill, “Doubleweaving Two-Spirit Critiques: Building Alliances between Native and Queer Studies,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16, no. 1-2 (2010): 69 their emphasis.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

Chapter 3: Ni de aquí ni de allá: Living in the In-Betweens

In the previous chapter I discussed the ways in which diasporic subjects create memory through nostalgia as an avenue to construct an affective relationship with place and time. More importantly, I retold specific Maya K'iche' and Kaqchikel origin stories in ways that, similar to Duncan's piece, question the act of remembering and the memories being told. To add to this constant questioning of memory, or rather to supplement the ways in which memory can be questioned, I suggest in this chapter that the act of re-membering has the potential to create different understandings of specific histories. A re-membering that re-centers specific actors meant to be purposefully forgotten or erased can shift the ways in which the past is understood and therefore shift our relationships to the present and the potential for a different type of future to occur. To do this work of re-membering a more complete *memoria histórica*, memory has to be always connected to land, kinships, and bodies. This connection between *memoria histórica* and land, kinship, and bodies is always mediated by specific relationships that though often thought to be separate, are always already intertwined.

In "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," Hortense Spillers deconstructs Daniel Patrick Moynihan's assertion that the "'Negro Family' has no Father to speak of" by historicizing kinship and familial relationships of slaves in the Middle Passage.⁸¹ More importantly, Spillers critiques Moynihan for constructing a rhetoric of "ethnicity" that is "perceived as mythical time" in which "the human body becomes a defenseless target for rape and veneration, and the body, in its material and

⁸¹ Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *Diacritics*, 17, no. 2, Culture and Counteremory: The "American" Connection (Summer 1987): 66.

abstract phase, a resource for metaphor.”⁸² Instead Spillers suggests that a reading of the “body” and “flesh” as separate symbiotic discourses informed by historical context has the potential to expand understandings of ethnicity and body as more than just metaphor.⁸³ It is this historical reading of the body as text that has the potential for creating different types of narratives and discourses that not just challenge but reconstruct histories that have been forcefully forgotten. As Spillers suggests, bodies become marked by the physicality of the violence they experience and this “phenomenon of marking and branding actually ‘transfers’ from one generation to another, finding its various *symbolic substitutions* in an efficacy of meanings that repeat the initiating moments.”⁸⁴ To Spillers the trauma of violence becomes imprinted on the body and can be read in the bodies of future generations; thus, a type of generational trauma that is only legible when looking at bodies through historical contexts ensues.

Bodies thus become recording mechanisms that not only imprint a memory of violence onto themselves that is then passed down through future generations but bodies also become the de-coding mechanisms whereby generational trauma can be addressed, remembered, and healed. In other words, bodies and flesh are a text that can tell stories even when we might not even know the meanings of these. Another way to think of the ways in which bodies contain a *memoria histórica* that can heal is through Cherrie Moraga’s concept of a “theory in the flesh.”⁸⁵ As Moraga outlines, “[a] theory in the flesh

⁸² Ibid, 66.

⁸³ Ibid, 67.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 67.

⁸⁵ Cherrie Moraga, “Theory in the Flesh,” in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, ed. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1981), 23.

means one where the physical realities of our lives – our skin color, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longings – all fuse to create a politic born out of necessity.”⁸⁶ It is this “politic born of necessity” which I address by sharing the *historias* found in this thesis project. The stories about bodies, land, and violence become the body and flesh of a work that transform part of the history of the *conflicto armado* and act as something more than metaphor to add to the historical context of the Civil War. Since the genocide that occurred during the Guatemalan Civil War has been contested and challenged as ever having existed, in historicizing kinship and familial relationships through the body I create a different type of relationship to the same historical events. I like Spillers look towards the body as being marked by violence. More importantly, it is in this body where I re-write memory. I write a *memoria historica* that I hope one day can be used for proving, testifying against, and convicting those responsible for the genocide.

Haunting Memories

I went to Guatemala this past summer for the first time since that trip my aunt, mom, and I did to Panajachel. This time, however I was traveling with a group of students and faculty from the university I currently attend and work at. This was the first time I’ve been back since physically transitioning, changing my documentations, and having a masculine presentation that doesn’t get questioned on a daily basis. This was also the first time I’ve been in Guatemala surrounded by primarily white folks who didn’t speak Spanish. It was different traveling with a group of folks who were not my blood family. We were connected with the Guatemalan Human Rights Commission and they set up meetings with various groups and activists doing human rights work. As part of our

⁸⁶ Ibid., 23.

visit, we drove about 10 hours to Nebaj, a small *aldea* in the Ixil Triangle. I remember walking around the main plaza and *mercado* and seeing a mural. Many months later I saw this mural in a Rebecca Lane music video about genocide and the gendered based violence used to enact it. I remember this mural very well.

2 de septiembre del 2015

Estamos en Nebaj, un pueblo en el Quiche pequeño. Vamos a hablar con la Red de Mujeres Ixiles dentro de un rato. El viaje para aca fue tan hermoso. Pasamos por Chimaltenango (the crossroads) y Tecpan donde paramos para comer. Luego despues de un largo rato Anuncia dijo que estabamos pasando por la parte donde hubo más violencia durante el conflicto. Estabamos a la par del Lago Negro. Pense muy bien sobre el significado de este lago. Anuncia nos conto que cuando los militares pasaban por ahi la guerrilla bajaba de las montañas y se enfrentaban ahi mismo entre el lago y las montañas.

Antes de eso pasamos por una laguna que dice Julio que una princesa K'iche' estaba huhiendo de los españoles y mientras huia lloraba por la perdida de su pueblo, sus ancestros, y su comunidad. Lloro tanto esta princesa que con sus lagrimas lleno la laguna de agua.

Estoy tan impactado y emocionado por todo lo que estamos viendo ademas de las personas que estamos conociendo. Realmente ha habido resistencia durante más de 500 años.

We visited two different organizations of Ixil women the two days we stayed in Nebaj. When we visited La Red de Mujeres Ixiles, we were given a tour of their establishment, and were told of all the different resources the women have collaborated

and implemented to support themselves and their children after leaving abusive households. Since the specific location we visited was only one of the many in the network of Ixil women, we only got to see the work done in this one location. The women shared that they've received multiple threats of violence. They told the story of how the place we were all gathered at that day was rebuilt after those making threats burned down their previous location. The women shared how they created materials to reach and support other women. They shared their publications with us. They talked about their radio show, "Pelando Papas," a play on words where *pelar* can mean both to peel or to gossip, and *papas* could be either potatoes or fathers, even without the tilde to distinguish this. At one point during our meeting other women came out from the kitchen and brought us all a plate of three small tamales de masa which were wrapped in soaked plantain leaves, and a cup of atol de masa. I'd never seen this type of tamale before. My grandmother's tamales were so different, but once I took a bite I realized just how similar they were too.

Julio, who happened to be sitting next to me, told me the story of the creation of the K'iche' lineage. While I'd read this story before, I'd never had someone else tell me the story while drinking atol. The way Julio told the story was different than the version I had read in English months before. Somehow this story as it was being told to me again through a different form took life within me and the atol I found myself drinking became the soothing sustenance I didn't realize my body and soul needed.

That afternoon we visited the Centro de Acción Legal de Derechos Humanos (CALDH). It was pouring rain and it took us a while to find the place even though we were staying only a block away. We then had a woman come meet up with us who then

escorted us to the house we missed as our group of 14 was scurrying around. We went inside this modest home all soaked from the rain and were greeted by a group of four women who brought us upstairs to a big dinning table and asked us to sit and make ourselves at home. As we introduced ourselves and the leader of CALDH started to talk about the work the organization does, more women came out of a different section of the house and brought us coffee and tamales de masa wrapped in plantain leaves. I was excited to see more tamales and thought it was interesting that I had never seen this type of tamales before and here I was having them being offered to me twice in one day.

Some of the women stayed and ate with us while others left the room again. As the rest of the session continued, the women present began to share their stories of violence at the hands of the military with us. One by one they told their own story of the dispossession of their lands in Nebaj, Huehuetenango, and Chimaltenango in the '80s. They said that when ex-president Rios Montt came to power in 1982, the military presence in the area increased. They said that the *militares* started dropping bombs by airplane and coming into town to massacre people so often that the community decided to unite and together they chose to leave. They thought that the violence would subdue and that after they had gone away for a while they would return and everything would be better. Over 500 people were forced to flee. Some were outside working in the cornfields when the soldiers came in and started killing people. The military came and burned all the corn so they were forced to live off roots and bark. It was 200 hours to get to the next town by foot and the military was following them closely, burning everything as they went. So they fled to the mountains. Many starved to death. Many were caught and killed

by the military closing in on their tracks. Many still, survived, went back, and told us this story over coffee and tamales. They said that the mountains saved their lives.

Later during this visit I finally understood that these were the women who had presented the lawsuit against ex-president Rios Montt. These were the women who had testified against him in 2013! And these were the women who would again testify against him in January of 2016! Their images carved onto my memory just as the memories of their bodies were being brought to life. Our bodies connected through memory and the healing ceremony of masa and corn. One of the last things they shared was that “we need to look back at history to connect the dots.” I would like to think that this history they speak of is one being shaped by their *memoria historica*. A *memoria historica* articulated through their bodies, my own, and the mountains that surround us all.

4 de septiembre del 2015

We went to the Archivo Histórico de la Policía Nacional this morning. Edgar, our guide, seemed intrigued at the fact that a big number of us were studying Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Edgar seemed excited and decided to take us to a space where he asked the curator to pull out the “libro de mujeres.” They pulled this from a cardboard box:



Figure 1: Album Fotografico de Delinquentes

The Album Fotografico de Delincuentes had pages and pages of photos, listing women's names, age, and where they were apprehended. Among them, this photo of Izabel Mocha Medina caught my eye.



Figure 2: Photo of Izabel Mocha Medina

I saw the handwritten “HOMBRE” on the top of her photo with an arrow pointed towards her image, and the side note indicating what her “real” name was. I wondered who Izabel was. I wondered where Izabel came from. Was she from Nicaragua? Costa Rica? Was she another person fleeing violence at the hands of the military? What were the “crimes” she was accused of? I wondered if she ever made it out of jail alive. Her image became ingrained in my memory just as the women from CALDH had made their way onto my *memoria histórica*.

As we continued our tour and walked through the Archives Edgar told us that the space we were touring was once a clandestine prison. He brought us into a dimly lit

hallway where now there are boxes of documents stacked on top of each other behind bars. The damp humid space felt haunted. I remembered Izabel and wondered still if she had once spent time in any of these cells. I wondered if her body was found in the junkyard left behind as the police tried to distract from their archives ever being found.

That afternoon we chatted with the women at REDMMUTRANS. This is one of the visits I have been waiting for this whole time. As their mission, la Red Multicultural de Mujeres Trans is invested in defending and promoting equal rights. Las compañeras shared with us the work that they're currently doing in educating communities about the struggles they face being trans women. They shared that for them this education work is also about discussing misogyny, patriarchy, and segregation. Salma, one of the women hosting us that afternoon, shared with us her work with indigenous communities in Alta Verapaz. As a K'iche' woman who speaks K'iche' fluently, Salma reiterated that because of patriarchy and churches many of them (trans women) are forced to migrate from place to place. Though she didn't really share this with the whole group, after their talk, Salma and I chatted for a little while and she said she herself was looking at fleeing the country because she had been receiving death threats due to her work with the community.

I thought about Izabel again. Her mug shot haunting my memory somehow. I wondered if she, like Salma, was fleeing other spaces that December of 1973 before she got detained by the Policía Nacional.

During the question and answer session, someone asked *las compañeras* about the history of trans identities in Maya culture. *Las compañeras* began a story about how our identities as trans people were revered in Maya culture, but they didn't have specifics. Or maybe they didn't want to share specifics with a group of academic tourists from Oregon.

I wanted to know more. Did the *Popol Vuh* relate the story of our origins as trans folks just as it relates the story of our being created from corn? Did the *Annals of the Kaqchikel* do this as it relates the story of the Kaqchikel coming from the depths of the sea? Or do we need to re-member these stories and create them once more? Does trans even mean the same thing in Maya culture and practices?

Both the *Popol Vuh* and the *Annals of the Kaqchikel* are translated transcriptions of oral histories presumably recorded by Spanish priests.⁸⁷ The K'iche' people mostly resided in "The Ixil Triangle," an area between Nebaj, Cotzal, and Chajul in the highlands of Guatemala.⁸⁸ The K'iche' in the Ixil Triangle defended their homelands from a first conquest attempt by Pedro de Alvarado in 1523 with the help of the Ixil people, and then came under Spanish control in 1530 with "the help of secessionist" Kaqchikels who aided the Spanish conquistadores.⁸⁹ Four years later, the Ixils rebelled against "abusive employers and their government allies" killing "a dozen Spanish officers and *encomenderos*," or those entrusted to carry out the conquest who were there to establish haciendas de café where the Maya K'iche' and Ixil would work the land and be converted to Catholicism.⁹⁰ These plantation style coffee farms worked similarly to the Missions that Deborah Miranda historicizes in *Bad Indians: A Tribal Memoir* (2013), in that Franciscan priests were trying to "save" the souls of Ixil, K'iche', and Kaqchikel

⁸⁷ Judith Maxwell and Robert Hill, *Kaqchikel Chronicles: The Definitive Edition* (Austin: University of Texas, 2006) 13.

⁸⁸ Victor Perera, *Unfinished Conquest: The Guatemalan Tragedy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995) 60.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 65-66.

people alike through a complete overhaul of Maya culture, customs, and beliefs.⁹¹ But Maya resistance remained.

It is no surprise to me that nearly 450 years later the Guatemalan military would still see the Ixil Triangle as a threat to the common wealth of the country. A military occupation named “Operación Ixil” was set in place to subjugate and “wipe out the peasant support bases of the two leftist guerrilla organizations most active in the highlands and to bring the 4 million Mayas living there (out of a total Guatemalan population of about 7.5 million in 1981) under military control.”⁹² Similarly to “Operación Ixil,” the Plan “Operación Sofía” was a strategic military occupation, called for by former president Efraín Ríos Montt, meant to actively control the Maya K’iche’, Ixil, and Kaqchikel in the highlands or to kill majority populations if control was not achieved.⁹³ This operation resulted in massive genocide and exorbitant numbers of sexual violence utilized as a terror tactic.⁹⁴ The current trial against Ríos Montt is being led by Ixil women testifying against him for sexual violence they experienced at the hands of the military Ríos Montt deployed, and in some ways is reminiscent of the earlier resistances the Ixils have always participated in.⁹⁵

But what do these memories of genocide, resistance, and conquest have to do with Izabel? During the height of the Guatemalan Civil War, more than 200,000 people were

⁹¹ Judith Maxwell and Robert Hill, 14.

⁹² Victor Perera, 62.

⁹³ “Genocidio en Guatemala: Ríos Montt Culpable,” *Federación Internacional de Derechos Humanos (FIDH)*, (Guatemala, 2013).

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 6.

murdered and disappeared.⁹⁶ It is not a coincidence that most of the people who were murdered and disappeared were indigenous. It is not a coincidence that sexual violence was utilized in order to contain and gain control over the Ixil and K'iche' populations in the Guatemalan highlands. And while I do not know Izabel's exact history, nor do I know if she was a local Guatemalan, or if she came into Quatemallan to escape from other types of violence happening all through Central America at that time, I can imagine Izabel being detained by the Policía Nacional. I can see her body being beaten and questioned. Not because she might or might not have been actively resisting the Guatemalan government, but because her story, her experiences, and her body were not the norm la Policía Nacional was accustomed to policing and monitoring. I too worry about my body being found out, not because my body is deviant or deceiving, but because others might not understand it. I too worry about how my story, my experiences, and my body might not be the norm for certain people. I see Izabel's mugshot in my memory and I see my face reflecting back to me even through our different corporeal realities and locations. Even if she did violate certain laws, Izabel's very existence threatened the establishment the Guatemalan government was attempting to maintain. Izabel's existence called into question the teachings of the Franciscan priests in the coffee plantations. The uncovering of the Archivo Histórico de la Policía Nacional has opened the possibilities for uncovering bodies that were disposed of by the Policía Nacional and buried just as deceptively as the clandestine prison they kept in their archives.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Betsy Konefal, *For Every Indio Who Falls: A History of Maya Activism in Guatemala, 1960-1990* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2010).

⁹⁷ Archivo Histórico de la Policía Nacional, *From Silence to Memory: Revelations of the AHPN*, (Guatemala: Archivo Histórico de la Policía Nacional, 2011).

And maybe in the rumbles that were left behind, Izabel might still be found.

Izabel still haunts my waking dreams. I still remember her face among the many other women in the book of delinquents. December of 1973, only three years before the massive earthquake of '76 that led my family to move from the highlands to the plot of land where I grew up in the 90s. Three years before Mama Bertha and Mama Anita purchased the plot of land I called home so long ago. While I don't know Izabel's exact story, Izabel still haunts me. Izabel is still a part of my memory. She's still part of my own story.

On the last day of January in 1980, 456 years after the quetzal dyed its feathers red with the blood of Tekúm Umám, a group of peasant, labor, and student activists took over the Spanish Embassy en la capital.⁹⁸ Some say that these activists were armed and burned themselves as a political statement after sacrificing hostages. Others say that the government sent in troops who burned the place down with the intent of leaving no one alive. 37 lives were taken that day, their bodies burned until they were no longer recognizable. Like the fallen Tekúm Umám their blood spilled as a sacrifice and example of the *conquista* that was happening and the deaths to follow. Today, with the evidence to *prove* that an Israeli weapon was used to incinerate the peaceful "terrorists," those responsible for their deaths continue to rule the country and the courts.⁹⁹

I grew up in a time of war, though I didn't really know we were at war.

I grew up in a time of war, though I didn't really know whose war we were fighting.

I grew up in a time of war, though I didn't really know it.

⁹⁸ Elizabeth Burgos, *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* (México, D.F.: Siglo Veintiuno editores, 1985).

⁹⁹ "Genocidio en Guatemala: Ríos Montt Culpable," (Guatemala, 2013).

Receta Para Levantar a los Muertos (or Receta de Atol de Elote)

- 7 tazas de granos de elote amarillo
- 3 tazas de agua fría
- canela al gusto
- azúcar al gusto
- 1 pisca de sal

Pelar y desmoronar el elote, asegurandose de que el elote sea granudo, no tierno. Luego licuar 6 tazas por pocos con $\frac{3}{4}$ de taza de agua. Colar y agregar las otras 3 tazas de agua, la canela y el azúcar al gusto. Poner a hervir a fuego lento mesclando constantemente para que no se pegue. Cuando hierva agregar la sal. Agregar 1 taza de granos de elote y cocinar hasta que el elote esté cocido. Servir caliente

They say that humans were made out of corn. Xmucane, one of the grandparents, grounded up corn and with the water they used to rinse their hands they made a corn *atol*.¹⁰⁰ The *atol* was the foundation from which human flesh was created. The four father heads of K'iche' lineage are born from this *atol de elote*. We are their descendants. *Atol de elote* is part of our beings. *Maíz* is our flesh and when we die we are buried among the corn. Our bones become the fertilizer and soil that allows corn to grow and our beings to be formed. It is corn that gives us power and in turn our remains that give corn power back.

What if Medina's story went something more like this: "During a recent exhumation attempt in the mountains of the Ixil Triangle, the body of Izabel Mocha Medina was found. Records from the *Archivo Histórico de la Policía Nacional* confirm that Medina was last seen being taken into custody by the Policía Nacional in December of 1973. Marks and bruises on Medina's body, provide probable cause to suspect that the Policía Nacional kept Medina within their clandestine prison during the time of her arrest.

¹⁰⁰ Dennis Tedlock, *Popol Vuh: The Definitive Edition of the Mayan Book of the Dawn of Life and the Glories of Gods and Kings*, Translated by Dennis Tedlock (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1985), 163.

According to the report from the team performing the exhumations, Medina's is not the only body they have found buried within the mountains of El Quiché. Nearly 35 other unidentified bodies have been found at this site.¹⁰¹ The team has also reported receiving threats from local authorities to stop exhumation attempts in the area. While these threats are common, the team will continue to exhume remains until all disappeared during the Civil War are found.

Medina will receive a proper burial ceremony next week. She will be buried among corn seeds and corncobs to ensure proper passage to *el otro lado*."

This re-writing of Medina's story is meant to re-imagine a different type of death and aliveness for Medina. Whereby Medina's death is connected to the mountains in which her body has been supposedly found and thus is also connected to the corn that currently grows there, and therefore to current practices and ceremonies. Corn then is the center of grieving practices where queer indigenous imaginings can occur, and the potential site of remembrance for those ancestors who have been forcibly forgotten and erased.

¹⁰¹ Victoria Sanford, *Buried Secrets: Truth and Human Rights in Guatemala* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 33.

Chapter 4: Conclusion: Returning Home: The Wars that Never Ended

Remember Me



I am calling on the voices of our ancestors

Those from the past and future

So that when I speak

I speak the words we were never meant to hear

Remember me

Remember me

When I am gone

Remember me

When I no longer traverse the physical side of our spirits

Remember me

When you feel like you're alone

Remember me

When you think you're the only one

Remember me

Remember me

Remember

(Repeat throughout)

I belong

Remember me to a plethora of communities and identities

Remember me And yet in the politics of belonging

Remember me I am lost in the noise

because I do not exist

I do not exist

in the imaginaries of a society that thinks

they've already killed me

But I am still here

I come from a long line of people who are still here

I am the incarnation

of the blood, sweat, and tears

of groups of people never meant to survive

of communities that have been silenced and killed

of groups of people who cannot afford

to never look back

to forget

I am here

(repeated)

I am here

I am here

Can't you see it in my body and my brown skin?

Can't you feel the lashes of the whip
that my grandmother took for sugar cane?
Can't you see the silence in my eyes at the knowledge
that you stole everything?

I am from here,
and from there,
and from a lot of different places
and I'm trying to remember what you took away from us

I'm trying to remember
the lives of ancestors come to past
the ways of our people
and yet I cannot undo the fuckery that are my homes today

I cannot undo the destruction

I cannot undo

me

All I can do is try to move forward

All I can do is remember

Remember

Remember

So that in a future soon to come

We will never be forgotten

Remember me

Remember

Remember

Throughout this thesis project I focused on the process of recovering histories/stories of resistance of Maya K'iche', Kaqchikel, and Ixil peoples. More than that I wove these stories together with my family's stories to create a more complex and complicated retelling that could act as a medicinal history and begin a practice of healing from generational traumas. I looked to the works of Aurora Levins Morales in *Remedios: Stories of Earth and Iron from the History of Puertorriqueñas*; Audre Lorde's *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*; and Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands: La Frontera: The New Mestiza* to inform the ways in which I wanted to construct these new narratives. More importantly, I looked at the style in which these narratives are told to construct a similar type of retelling of histories/stories that would include my own positionalities within them.

Additionally, throughout this thesis project I discussed memory, remembrance, and historicizing as a practice for healing. I began this project by talking about blood pressure as the physical manifestation of spilled blood the multiple communities I belong to and am excluded from have and continue to experience, and the societal pressure these communities find themselves in. I end this project by remembering, as the poem that begins this chapter suggests, that this lineage of violence I've inherited from ancestors is

one where the strategies for survival and healing also reside. It's in telling stories where the act of survival and resistance come to life. We tell stories of the folks we've lost. We tell stories of their lives, their secrets, their impact on us. And as we do that, these stories bring people back to life. The stories we tell merge our lives together so that in our telling we become the dead and the dead become us. It is in our story telling that we celebrate the spirits. It is in our stories of ourselves where we honor them. It is in the stories that we tell where we become complete. This fuller version of self has the potential to change the current status quo, even as violence continues to ensue.

Though the wars that have been fought for centuries over land, resources, and histories have not ended, as that violence continues to be deployed and experienced, resistance continues. This project is one of the many forms of resistance present. And in returning the words on these pages to home, I continue the connection I too have to these resistances, land, and histories, that although sometimes feel disconnected from my own experiences, have always and forever continue to shape the person I am and will be in the future.

Returning Home: Stories You Never Knew You Carried With You

Of all the places I've called home,
my wanderlust spirit never seemed to settle.
I've constantly kept moving,
Kept changing,
Kept keeping on.

I too am like the turtle in Gloria Anzaldúa's home.¹⁰²

I too carry my homes with me everywhere I go

And with them

I carry my histories

My memories

My soul

The day my aunt, my mom and I spent in Panajachel, we took a boat to the surrounding *aldeas* surrounding Lago Atitlán. We visited two of the multiple towns surrounding the lake. When we stopped in Santiago Atitlán, we took a *tuc tuc* tour of various places in the small town. Our tour guide took us to a small park with concrete slabs of writing. It was grey because there was still a lot of fog even once we had made it to Lago Atitlán. There was a mural on the side of this park and a gazebo with another concrete slab that the tour guide was talking about. I don't remember what I thought of this park. I don't even remember what our tour guide was saying either. I do remember however that after this park we went back down the mountain to the church and we walked through the *mercado* to get back to our rented boat.

I went back to this park this past summer. After everyone in our delegation left, a friend of mine, her aunt, and I spent a week in Guatemala. We spent a day in Antigua, which felt so odd after having spent ten days in conversation with indigenous women in resistance. The half-day we spent in Antigua before heading to Pana, we walked a couple miles to the Ruinas Convento e Iglesia la Recolección. I don't remember seeing these

¹⁰² Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands: La Frontera: The New Mestiza* Third Edition (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2007).

ruins in person before, but my mom has many photos of us there with my father. These are my father's favorite place in Antigua, or so I've been told even though I can't remember ever being there with him. We got to the demolished Franciscan convent and walked around piles upon piles of brick and rock that had come down after an earthquake in 1751.¹⁰³ I walked around, climbed some of the bigger structures, and took photos. I kept trying to remember my visits there with my family. I kept trying to see where my father must have stood, with his dark aviator sunglasses and macho pose. I could almost see my mother in the background, my sister and I on either side of her holding her hand. We walked around for a good hour or so and then walked back to our hotel through the *mercado* to catch our ride to Pana. On our way there I stared out the window and watched the rain, the smell of wet dirt permeating my nostrils as the sight of *milpas de maíz* reminded me of the other side of the mountains we'd been on the week before. I kept thinking about the ruins we had visited that morning, and thought about their name "Ruins of the Recollection." I wondered who and what we were meant to actually recollect. And who was not even mentioned or thought of in this act of recollection.

The day after we arrived in Pana, we too took a boat to the surrounding *aldeas* around Lago Atitlán. We also went to Santiago Atitlán and took a *tuc tuc* tour of the small town. This time however, I was the one to handle the negotiations with our tour guide and we selected to do the full tour rather than the smaller tour my aunt had negotiated years prior. We climbed onto the *tuc tuc* and started making our way up the mountain. We stopped at a couple of places and then made it to the small park full of

¹⁰³ "Ruinas Convento e Iglesia de la Recolección," *descubreantigua.com*, last modified September 6, 2015, <http://descubreantigua.com/ruinas-de-la-recoleccion/ruinas-convento-e-iglesia-de-la-recoleccion>.

concrete slabs with writing on them. When we got off the *tuc tuc* our guide started talking about *El parque de la paz* and he told of the story of how this park came to be. He said that back in the days of the armed conflict there was a military base that had been established across the street from where this park now stands. He said that the people of Santiago were upset about the heightened murders and kidnappings that were taking place at the hands of the military present. And on the night of December 1, 1990 the whole town gathered in front of the church around 10 pm. They put together makeshift white flags to signify that they came peacefully, and started marching up the mountain towards Panabaj, where this park now stands. As they started getting close to the military base, they heard the *militares* communicating with each other over radios. There was a short conversation that occurred and then out of nowhere the person who had the machine gun started firing at the people there. 13 people were killed and 33 were wounded that early morning of December 2, 1990. *El parque de la paz* is there today to commemorate the victims of *la masacre del 2 de diciembre*. As a result of this uprising by the community, the towns people were able to demand that the military leave their lands. Former President Marco Vinicio Cerezo Arévalo even came to the area and signed a peace accord with the town of Santiago stating that the military had to leave and could never return to Santiago. A replica of this letter is now carved in stone and can be seen inside the gazebo in *El parque de la paz*. This was the first peace accord to be signed by the Guatemalan government, though it's unclear whether Cerezo Arévalo did this because he wanted to begin the process of peace with the people of Guatemala, or because the U.S. suspended military aid to Guatemala after the news of the events of December 2

became public.¹⁰⁴

I listened to the story our guide shared with us, and it dawned on me that the last time I had been there I had heard this story, but I hadn't remembered it until I was ready to listen to it again in a different way.

I remember the day that the peace was signed. It was about a year before we left Guauhlemallan for good. I was 8 years old that December of 1996. My dad was home for once and wasn't drunk, breaking stuff, or yelling at anyone. We were all gathered around our tv watching President Álvaro Arzú Irigoyen sign the peace accords. The air in the cramped room was stuffed with anticipation and disbelief that the war was finally over. I remember my sister and I going around shaking hands with people saying "The peace! The peace! We have the peace!" for weeks afterwards. I don't think I understood what that meant. I don't think I quite understand it even now. Everyday since the peace was signed they place a white rose in the middle of the main courtyard in the *Palacio Nacional* to commemorate the lives of the people killed during the time of war, as if a single white rose could bring back the more than 200,000 people, mostly indigenous, who were murdered and disappeared. It reminds me of the attempts to strategically forget about the slave ships brought to Jamaica during the first *conquista*.

30 de agosto del 2015

We went to eat at El Adobe today. This restaurant packed full of people and the smell of *carne asada* and *tortillas*. There was a marimba band playing. I noticed that there was a lady who was interviewing people for a radio show.

¹⁰⁴ Rosanda Pacay and Nick Pacay, "02 de Diciembre 1990 - Santiago Atitlán | Memoria Histórica," Video, December 1, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILVBNtSpFG8>.

My dad used to play Radio Estrella *los domingos*, with their *solo marimba todo el día* slogan. He demanded that we have carne asada every Sunday. My mom would get the fire going outside on our small rectangular grill while he blasted the marimba music throughout our house. Sometimes I would be asked to walk down the street to buy 3 *Quetzales de tortillas*.

The sounds of wood pounding marimba as the backdrop to the scents of *asada* and *tortillas* brought me back to this memory. I didn't realize it at first, but the same program my father religiously listened to every Sunday was/is recorded in the restaurant we were at today. I recognized the jingle once the lady interviewing folks went to a commercial break. I didn't realize it at first, but Radio Estrella's program was and still is ingrained in my memories as my father's memory.

This is one of the very few fond memories I have of my father. One of the few memories I have of him just being himself without the preconceived notion that he was entitled to everything, even as he acted as if he was.

I had been living in Oakland for about five months when my father called me one morning. I hesitantly picked up the phone and debated if I should answer it, like I still do today sometimes. I answered the call. He said hello, and I expected the usual round of 20 questions we play every time we talk once or twice a month. Instead he told me he was in town and wanted to see me. He'd done this before when I had first moved to Portland years back, but I didn't go meet him then. I asked him where he was exactly and how long he was going to be there. I walked the mile and a half from my house to where he had parked his semi-truck to do the delivery he was doing that morning down by

Temescal. We chatted awkwardly at first, having not seen each other for almost a year since the last time I had been in Florida.

We waited for the person he needed to deliver supplies to and when he got off the truck to unload the packages I thought of what I could possibly tell him so I could leave soon. He got back on the truck and told me he had a handful of other deliveries to do in Oakland before heading to Sacramento and asked if I wanted to come with him. I said “sure,” even though I kind of didn’t really want to. We drove all around Oakland that morning and then he asked me if I wanted to just drive with him to Sacramento since he was going to be coming back south the next day. I debated this for a couple of minutes and then just said “sure, why not.” I had been unemployed since I’d moved to Oakland, five months prior, and I was quickly running out of money so maybe I could get a few free meals if I went to Sacramento with him.

We made a couple of deliveries in Richmond before starting to head to Sacramento. And stopped at UC Davis to deliver a couple of boxes of *mangos*. He called the contact folks at UCD before we arrived and asked them for directions with his broken English. The folks on the other end started telling him where to go, but they didn’t quite understand that he couldn’t drive the semi through the usual entrance to the university, so he just handed me the phone after he got frustrated with them. I saw the frustration in his eyes and remembered all the times when I was a child when he’d come home completely inebriated. I remembered the other times he was sober but would yell and break windows and furniture. His anger spewing off of his body onto everything he touched. Our house a battleground full of fear during the couple of weeks he was home and a peaceful haven during the handful of weeks he would travel when he drove his truck. I spoke with the

person on the phone, and we got to the location they had indicated. Two white women in their twenties met us there with a cart to transport their *mangos* to the “diversity” meal they were preparing. My father got off the truck and started making small talk with them. They looked him up and down and started talking to me instead. He opened the bed of the truck and climbed in looking for the *mangos* he was delivering while the women gave me shade for traveling with my father as opposed to getting an education like they were. I didn’t tell them I already had a BA I’d received two years prior. My father climbed out of the truck put the four boxes of *mangos* on their cart and they counted the number of *mangos* in each box. There were two *mangos* missing. They kept asking him about them and he said these were the only ones in the truck. We got back in the truck after they finally gave up harassing him for *mangos* and we started driving again. When we had finally left Davis, he turned to me and asked me if I wanted some *mango*. He had stolen them since as he said: “they were so rude.” I just laughed.

We kept driving and as we ate our *mangos* and we started talking for real this time. He told me stories of how he grew up. He told me he was sorry for all the mistakes he’d made with my mother, and as a father to my sister and I. He told me how much my grandmother leaving him when she too fled Guatemala hurt him. He told me how much his stepfather had beaten him. He told me how much he’d loved my mother. How much he’d tried getting back together with her for us, but how my mother kept saying no. He didn’t know my mother had told me her version of the story and it didn’t go as he was telling it, but that didn’t matter then. He told me how much he loved me, even if he didn’t understand my choices. I talked to him about how I felt about him and all the things he was sharing with me. This was the first and only real conversation my father and I have

ever had. In that moment of honesty and vulnerability with each other, it didn't matter that he was absent most of my life. It didn't matter that when he had been there he was violent, angry, or demeaning. It didn't matter that years later he completely ignored me when I came home to visit because his friends were over and he didn't want to seem like a *joto* for hugging me or showing me affection. It didn't matter that he and his friends made fun of my partner after dinner that night because he was too feminine for their idea of who men can be. In that moment none of that mattered because I finally saw my father as a complete human being for the first time in my life, with all of his imperfections but also with all of the hurt and sadness I was feeling too. It was hot outside. We ate our *mangos* all the way to Sacramento. I forgave him for everything that day, and then forgot the next time he did something that hurt me.

I went back to Guauhlemallan in 2007 for the first time since we moved to the states. My family was all gathered together to celebrate Mama Bertha's 70th birthday. I met people I hadn't seen since I was a little one. The marimba band playing "Tristezas Quetzaltecas" reminded us of the sorrows of the people of el Quetzal. I remember looking around feeling out of place for not recognizing people who knew me from years ago. I felt shame for the queerness that I presented and the Americanized Academic way in which I pronounced my Spanish. I was ashamed about the change of expression in people's faces when my aunt would re-introduce me as her *sobrina*. It was during those moments that I realized that although Guauhlemallan was home, I was not at home just like my physical home at the time in Jupiter, FL was not my home either. I was neither from here nor from there.

During the week following Mama Bertha's birthday party my aunt Damaris had arranged for us all to travel to the Tikal ruins in Petén. She called in a favor from a friend in the military she'd met while she herself was enlisted in the Ejército Nacional de Guatemala in the late 80's. My other grandmother, Mama Zoila, who had also left my dad behind when she came to the states side tagged along, feeling more connected to my mom's family than my dad's degrading comments about the type of work she had done to survive and send back to feed him. There were 15 of us cramped up in a microbus heading to tierra caliente and the "virgin" jungles of Tikal where the Ixlu people have lived for centuries.

The day we spent at the Parque Nacional Tikal I climbed up el Templo IV. I could see the fog clearing from the sky making the tops of the other temples visible as they stuck out from the thickness of the jungle. I could feel the essence of the spirits that live there. I could almost see the Chilam B'alam performing a dance that interpreted the wills of the gods, B'alam, or jaguar, as their guide. I could sense the sowing and the dawning come back to me as the gods had envisioned. I could feel it in my body just as I felt it in my soul, that I had finally ... finally ... finally come back home. Quauhlemallan, the lost, forgotten, and stolen home of my past. Quauhlemallan, the lost, forgotten, and stolen home in my heart.

Epilogue

I began this story with a poem being in conversation with the mountains of El Quiche, Guatemala as a way to connect the land to histories, memories, and people. I connected the mountains of El Quiche to the mountains where I currently reside in Corvallis, OR through my discussion of Los Andes as the backbone of the Americas. I end this story with another poem. This time however, I write this as I plan a move towards a different land scape where the Arapaho, Cheyenne, Chippewa, Dakota Sioux, Fox, Sauk, Iowa, Omaha, Otoe, Ottawa, Ponca, Winnebago, and Huron tribes have resided for all time remembered. I write this as I prepare to leave these mountains I've called home for so long, knowing fully well that I will see them once more, if only in my memories.

When Mountains Talk Back

I stand by the side of the Interamerican Highway near Tecpán
 looking out into the mountains of El Quiche
 and stand there in wonder.

I've seen them before,
 a long time ago.

I stand there in silence.

And wonder if they'll talk to me this time?

The Mountains say "Hello child, welcome back"

“It’s been a long time since we’ve seen you”

“I know,” I reply

lowering my gaze as I try to remember the last time I visited

“Let me tell you a story” the Mountains answer

The Mountains tell me the story of Hunahpu and Xbalanque,

the second generation of twin heroes,

who are summoned to Xibalba by the Lords of Death.

In this story Hunahpu and Xbalanque

Are killed by the Lords of Xibalba

Reincarnate as performers

trick the Lords of Xibalba

And kill them.

They then ascend onto earth-sky as the sun and the moon.¹⁰⁵

“I’ve heard this story before” I tell the Mountains,

“why do you share this with me now?”

The Mountains look back at me

I stand there in silence for a while

“It is the revolutions in our homes,

which you seek an answer to.

¹⁰⁵ Dennis Tedlock, *Popol Vuh*, 1985.

It is the revolutions
In our ceremonies and story telling which
Will guide you.
Like the sun, Hunahpu, and the moon, Xbalanque,
You too will one day move beyond this realm.
Such is the cycle in which we live.
I will be here to watch that revolution
End
and begin once more.”

The Mountains say no more

I look to the mountains of El Quiche
And know,
the revolution is just beginning.
hear the whispers of ancestors
“We are still living,
Still healing
Still here”

Bibliography

- Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. 4th ed. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, [1987], [1999], and 2012.
- Archivo Histórico de la Policía Nacional. *From Silence to Memory: Revelations of the AHPN*. Guatemala: Archivo Histórico de la Policía Nacional, 2011.
- Barrios, Carlos. *Ch'umilal Wuj: El libro del destino* 2nd ed. Guatemala: Cholsamaj, [1999] and 2004.
- Burgos, Elizabeth. *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia*. México, D.F.: Siglo Veintiuno editores, 1985.
- Carey Jr., David. *Our Elders Teach Us: Maya-Kaqchikel Historical Perspectives: Xkib'ij kan qate' qatata'*. Tuscaloosa & London: The University of Alabama Press, 2001.
- Christian, Barbara. "The Race for Theory." *Feminist Studies*, 14, no. 1, (1988): 67-79.
- Driskill, Qwo-Li. "Doubleweaving Two-Spirit Critiques: Building Alliances Between Native and Queer Studies." *Sexuality, Nationality, Indigeneity*. Eds. Daniel Heath Justice, Mark Rifkin, and Bethany Schneider. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 16.1-2 (2010): 69-92.
- Driskill, Qwo-Li. "Stolen From Our Bodies: First Nations Two-Spirits/Queers and the Journey to a Sovereign Erotic." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 16, no. 2 (2004): 50-64.
- Duncan, Patti. "History of Disease." In *Q & A: Queer in Asian America*, edited by David L. Eng and Alice Y. Hom, 157-165. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998.
- Eng, David L. *Feeling of Kinship: Queer Liberalism and the Radicalization of Intimacy*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2010.

- “Genocidio en Guatemala: Ríos Montt Culpable.” *Federación Internacional de Derechos Humanos (FIDH)*. (Guatemala), 2013.
- Gopinath, Gayatri. *Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Cultures*. Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2005.
- Gradin, Greg. *The Blood of Guatemala: A History of Race and Nation*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2000.
- Konefal, Betsy. *For Every Indio Who Falls: A History of Maya Activism in Guatemala, 1960-1990*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2010.
- Lane, Rebeca. “La Cumbia de la Memoria.” *Chesary Marroquín de MiCuarto Studios*. June 13, 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7bw_0e__U6k.
- “Letra del Canto a Tecun Umán.” Accessed March 4, 2015.
<http://www.scribd.com/doc/204880312/Letra-del-canto-a-Tecun-Uman-ok>.
- Lorde, Audre. “A Litany for Survival.” In *The Black Unicorn: Poems*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995.
- Lorde, Audre. *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*. New York: The Crossing Press, 1982.
- Maxwell, Judith and Hill, Robert. *Kaqchikel Chronicles: The Definitive Edition*. Austin: University of Texas, 2006.
- Mazariegos, Oswaldo Chinchilla. “Tecum, the Fallen Sun: Mesoamerica Cosmogony and the Spanish Conquest of Guatemala.” *Ethnohistory* 60, no. 4 (2013): 693-719.
- McKittrick, Katherine. *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006.
- Miranda, Deborah A. *Bad Indians: A Tribal Memoir*. Berkeley: Heyday, 2013.

- Moraga, Cherrie. *The Hungry Woman: A Mexican Medea and Heart of the Earth: A Popul Vuh Story*. New York: West End Press, 2001.
- Moraga, Cherrie. "La Güera," in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* 2nd ed. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa. Latham, NY: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, [1981], 1983), 27-34.
- Moraga, Cherrie. "Theory in the Flesh," in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, 2nd ed. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa. Latham, NY: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, [1981], 1983, 23.
- Morales, Aurora Levins. *Kindling: Writings on the Body*. Cambridge: Palabrera Press, 2013.
- Morales, Aurora Levins. *Remedios: Stories of Earth and Iron from the History of Puertorriqueñas*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, [1998] and 2001.
- Morales, Aurora Levins. "The Historian as Curandera." In *Medicine Stories: History, Culture and the Politics of Integrity*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1998, 23-38.
- Morgensen, Scott Lauria. *Spaces Between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011.
- Muñoz, José Esteban. "Feeling Brown, Feeling Down: Latina Affect, the Performativity of Race, and the Depressive Position." *Signs* 31, no. 3 (2006): 675-688.
- Pacay, Rosanda and Pacay, Nick. "02 de Diciembre 1990 - Santiago Atitlán | Memoria Histórica." Video. December 1, 2015.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILVBNtSpFG8>.

- Perera, Victor. *Unfinished Conquest: The Guatemalan Tragedy*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.
- Pieper, Jim. "Dance of the Conquest: Tecún Umán and Ajitz." In *Guatemala's Masks & Drama*, 172-197. Torrance, CA: Pieper and Associates Inc., 2006.
- Powell, Malea. "Listening to Ghosts: An Alternative (Non)Argument," in *AltDis: Alternative Discourses and the Academy*, ed. Christopher Schroeder, Helen Fox, and Patricia Bizzell. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2002, 11-22.
- "Ruinas Convento e Iglesia de la Recolectión," *descubreantigua.com*, last modified September 6, 2015, <http://descubreantigua.com/ruinas-de-la-recoleccion/ruinas-convento-e-iglesia-de-la-recoleccion>.
- Sanford, Victoria. *Buried Secrets: Truth and Human Rights in Guatemala*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
- Smith, Andrea. "Queer Theory and Native Studies: The Heteronormativity of Settler Colonialism," in *Queer Indigenous Studies: Interventions in Theory, Politics, and Literature* ed. Qwo-Li Driskill, Chris Finley, Brian Joseph Gilley, and Scott Lauria Morgensen. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2011, 43-65.
- Smith, Andrea. "Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy: Rethinking Women of Color Organizing," in *Color of Violence* ed. INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2006, 66-73.
- Spillers, Hortense J. "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book." *Diacritics*, Vol. 17 No. 2, Culture and Countermemory: The "American" Connection (Summer 1987): 64-81.

Tedlock, Dennis. *Popol Vuh: The Definitive Edition of the Mayan Book of the Dawn of Life and the Glories of Gods and Kings*. Translated by Dennis Tedlock. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985.

Walker, Alice. "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens." In *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*, 231-243. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983.