

Emergence and Progress of Contemporary Nahuatl Literature: Fray Ángel María Garibay Kintana, Miguel León-Portilla, and the Pre-Hispanic Past

La literatura contemporánea en náhuatl apareció como proyecto nacional del indigenismo o mestizaje en la década de los ochenta con los estudios y guías de Ángel María Garibay Kintana y Miguel León-Portilla. Garibay ideó dicha forma de la literatura prehispánica y colonial fundamentándose tanto en conceptos de las letras europeas como en la tradición colonial de la Nueva España. Haciendo las veces de fiel discípulo, León-Portilla aportó una base fundamental para el surgimiento de las letras contemporáneas en náhuatl aplicando la metodología de Garibay y educando a unos primeros estudiantes nahuas, quienes luego descollaron como escritores principales de la literatura contemporánea en la misma lengua. Este artículo analiza el origen y desarrollo de esta tradición literaria contemporánea en la política cultural de México a fines del pasado siglo y principios del presente.

The emergence of contemporary indigenous literature in Mexico was closely related to the process of nation building after the Revolution (1910-1917) which provoked unprecedented interest in the country's indigenous culture and history. The post-revolutionary state adopted the concept of *mestizaje* or *indigenismo* to promote Mexico as a racially and culturally mixed nation.¹ Numerous scholars such as Manuel Gamio and Alfonso Caso systematically studied indigenous history and culture, especially that of the pre-Hispanic period, and presented it as an essential part of Mexican national history.² This enabled the Mexican state and Mexican intellectuals to promote Mexico as a homogeneous 'mestizo' nation in which indigenous and European races and cultures constituted a single unified national identity. In the area of Mexican literature, several scholars such as Ruben M. Campos, Fray Angel María Garibay K., and Miguel León-Portilla actively participated in the nationalist project of *mestizaje*. By discovering colonial texts in Nahuatl, translating them into Spanish, and interpreting them as valuable sources for pre-Hispanic artistic traditions, these scholars introduced pre-Hispanic indigenous literature to their contemporary

Mexicans, most of whom had not even been aware of its existence. In this way, Campos, Garibay, and León-Portilla were able to extend the boundary of Mexican national literature from only Spanish texts to include those written in indigenous languages. The studies and translations of, especially, Garibay and León-Portilla on the pre-Hispanic literary tradition have served as the most important sources and models for the emergence of contemporary Nahua literature.

As several scholars (Bonfil Batalla, *México profundo* and “El concepto”; Gutiérrez, “What Indians Say”; Klor de Alva, “The Postcolonization; Moreno Figueroa, “Historically Rooted”) demonstrate, however, the official idea of *mestizaje* or *indigenismo* in Mexico in fact disguised the Europeanization of indigenous people and their cultures. The concept of a cultural or racial mixture between Europe and the Americas asserted by Mexican advocates of *indigenismo* was not based on the equality of cultures but rather on almost exclusively European values. The major reason for the Mexican intellectuals and state officials’ emerging interest in indigenous culture and history was grounded in the fact that they regarded their contemporary indigenous people as the origin of Mexico’s national backwardness and thus as obstacles for the modernization of their nation. The best way to speed up national modernization, in their view, was to educate indigenous people, which meant more concretely, assimilating indigenous people into a Western life style. In other words, Mexican scholars as well as the state tried to whiten or Europeanize indigenous people in the name of a homogeneous national identity and economic progress. The idea of *mestizaje* or *indigenismo* is then nothing but a cultural and political practice by non-indigenous people to appropriate indigenous culture and traditions for their own ideological purposes. Analisa Taylor accurately summarizes what the practice of *indigenismo* means for humanities scholars:

Indigenismo is complicated by its status as both a social policy and a representational mode. For the humanities scholar, it generally refers to intellectual, artistic and literary representations of indigenous peoples that hold fast to Eurocentric epistemologies. In other words, the content or raw material may be indigenous (such as indigenous testimonials, myths and legends, material, spiritual and aesthetic practices), but the form or mold into which these representations are made to fit does not radically disrupt Eurocentric forms of academic, literary or political discourse. (*Indigenuity* 92)

Pre-Hispanic Nahua literature and, later, contemporary Nahua literature, were created and developed through the same indigenist procedure: pre-

Hispanic indigenous artistic traditions as raw materials were appropriated by non-indigenous people and were transformed into European types of literature, and contemporary Nahua literature inherited these already Europeanized indigenous artistic traditions and developed them as if they were original indigenous forms. The main purpose of this article is to examine the origin and development of contemporary Nahua literature in the light of Mexican cultural politics of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

THE NATIONALIST INVENTION OF PRE-HISPANIC AND CONTEMPORARY NAHUA LITERATURE

The emergence of contemporary Nahua literature has been largely due to two major scholars of Aztec studies in Mexico: Fray Angel María Garibay K. and his disciple, Miguel León-Portilla. The former provided the theoretical foundation for the study of Nahua literature in general while, having inherited this, the latter assisted the birth of contemporary Nahua literature. As a strong believer in *mestizo* Mexico as the source of national identity, Garibay argues that one of the merits of studying ancient Nahua literature is that this literature “forma el sustrato necesario para la comprensión del México moderno. Pueblo mestizo, no puede sustraerse a la vena de lo indígena” (*Panorama* 163). Faithfully following Garibay’s nationalist ideas about the indigenous tradition, León-Portilla mentions three reasons why research on the ancient history of Mexico attracted him. The first, and most obvious, reason is that “el pasado prehispánico constituye el más profundo sustrato del ser histórico de la moderna nación mexicana” (“Perspectivas” 198). Thus, he argues that European and indigenous traditions should be treated equally as the two roots of modern *mestizo* Mexico.

As León-Portilla shows, Fray Garibay began to study Nahua literature and culture from the 1930s on and published indispensable works about Nahua literature such as *Poesía lírica azteca*, *Poesía indígena de la altiplanicie*, *Historia de la literatura náhuatl*, and *Poesía náhuatl* (“Para la historia” 731-32; “Lengua y cultura” 222). Through these studies, he theoretically defined and identified Nahua literature. Garibay proposed two different periods for Nahua literature: the pre-Hispanic period from the beginning of the Aztec empire in 1430 to the conquest in 1519, and the second period from 1519 to 1750 (*Historia* 21-24). Garibay explained that the reason he decided to end the second period in 1750 was not the decline of the use of Nahuatl but the decline of the number of books published in Nahuatl at this time, a fact which, in his view, caused Nahua literature to enter a folkloric stage. When Garibay was conducting his studies from the

1930s to the 1960s, the concept of contemporary Nahua literature did not exist. Notwithstanding, Garibay provided the fundamental concepts to justify the existence of pre-Hispanic and colonial Nahua literature. He first defined Nahua literary sources as texts published in Nahuatl, and he then introduced literary genres to classify Nahua texts by using Nahua terms. He presented two major genres, *cuicatl* or *in xochitl in cuicatl* defined as poetry and *tlahtolli* as prose, and later divided each of them into sub-genres: for instance, *cuicatl* could be classified as *teocuicatl* (sacred poetry) or *xochicuicatl* (flowery poetry) while *tlahtolli* could be classified as *teotlahtolli* (sacred prose) and *huehuetlahtolli* (ancient prose). In addition, he identified primitive forms of Nahua theater in numerous colonial Nahua texts. In sum, Garibay prepared the most basic but indispensable concepts for Nahua literature in general, which would later serve as prerequisites for the emergence of contemporary Nahua literature (Lee, "Mestizaje").

León-Portilla further developed the fundamentals of Nahua literature that Garibay had set out, but at the same time he had also to justify the existence of contemporary Nahua literature, which Garibay, of course, did not consider in his studies. León-Portilla consolidated the concept of Nahua literary genres developed by Garibay by adding more detailed explanations and examples (*El destino* 237-359; *Literaturas indígenas*; "Nahuatl Literature"). Furthermore, he had to find a way to add a new period to the two periods of Nahua literature, pre-Hispanic and colonial, which Garibay had originally proposed, and then to demonstrate how this new, more modern period was closely connected to the previous two periods. León-Portilla's new period started from the eighteenth century and continues until the present times. León-Portilla used the Nahua term *Yancuic tlahtolli* (New Word) to designate contemporary Nahua literature, which began to appear in the 1980s. In order to provide more information on this third period, León-Portilla published a series of anthologies in volumes 18, 19, and 20 of the *Estudios de cultura náhuatl*, which traced the historical development of contemporary Nahua literature through a selection of major poetic and narrative works. In the first two anthologies, León-Portilla included all types of Nahua literary genres such as *cuicatl* (poetry), *tlahtolli* (prose), and drama that were collected and transcribed in Nahuatl in the twentieth century. Along with these literary genres, León-Portilla also demonstrated that virtually the same genres found in pre-Hispanic Nahua literature could be found in the contemporary Nahua texts included in the anthologies. These genres include *teotlahtolli* (sacred prose), which records indigenous cosmology and religious ideas, and *huehuetlahtolli* (words of the old men), which shows advice from the elders to the younger generations. In this context, León-Portilla argued

that contemporary Nahua literature should be considered as the heir of a long indigenous literary tradition.

Fray Garibay and León-Portilla not only provided the theoretical background for classical and contemporary Nahua literature, but also disseminated Nahua literature to other scholars and indigenous people. They initiated the *Seminario de Cultura Náhuatl*, where they taught Nahuatl and pre-Hispanic historical and cultural traditions, and founded probably the most significant journal of Nahua studies, *Estudios de cultura náhuatl*. Perhaps, the most essential contribution that Garibay and León-Portilla made to contemporary Nahua literature was that major current Nahua writers such as Natalio Hernández, Delfino Hernández, Alfredo Ramírez, Librado Silva Galeana, and José Martínez Hernández learned Nahuatl in the *Seminario*, studied the pre-Hispanic and colonial history of their ancestors in this venue, and began to publish their works in Nahuatl in *Estudios de cultura náhuatl* (León-Portilla, "Lengua y cultura" 223-25; Silva Galeana, "El seminario" 259-261). As Natalio Hernández, probably the most active and leading Nahua writer, summarizes so well, Garibay and León-Portilla provided linguistic and cultural foundations for the contemporary Nahua writers:³

En el presente siglo cuando la tradición cultural de los antiguos mexicanos encuentra mayor difusión, a través de las investigaciones del doctor Angel Ma. Garibay y del doctor Miguel León-Portilla. Ambos han realizado importantes trabajos de paleografía y traducciones de los textos antiguos en lengua náhuatl. Su labor encuentra ahora la posibilidad de un mayor reconocimiento de la antigua palabra náhuatl, expresada en los *cuicatl* o cantos y los *huehuetlatolli* o la palabra de los viejos.

Junto con la antigua literatura náhuatl empieza a surgir, hacia los cuatro rumbos del Anahuac, el *yancuic cuicatl* o canto nuevo; son los propios hablantes de la lengua náhuatl los que han retomado la tradición antigua de los abuelos para expresar a través de la palabra florida sus problemas, sus preocupaciones y también sus proyectos de vida. (*Literatura indígena* 142-43)

As Natalio Hernández recognizes, without the contributions of Garibay and León-Portilla, the emergence of contemporary Nahua literature would not have been possible nor would it have prospered as now. Thanks to the studies and guidance of Garibay and León-Portilla, according to Natalio Hernández, current Nahua writers are currently able to express their themes, concerns, and plans through their traditional literary media.

Although the work of both Garibay and León-Portilla have been widely accepted as the standard by contemporary Nahua writers, their studies

and interpretations were only made possible by various stages of Europeanization of the pre-Hispanic indigenous artistic traditions. Garibay and León-Portilla took colonial texts alphabetically written in Nahuatl as their major sources for the study of pre-Hispanic and colonial Nahua literature, texts which were derived from the oral and pictographic traditions before the conquest in central Mexico. In this process of transformation from oral and pictographic to alphabetic texts, they did not take into account possible colonial interventions.⁴ As a priest himself, Garibay in particular believed many Nahua texts collected by Spanish priests such as the *Florentine Codex* to be pure, indigenous sources, and minimized the intervention of the priests. León-Portilla recognized possible colonial transformation in the colonial Nahua texts (*Destinos* 24), but after he compared alphabetic texts with surviving pictographic texts and other Nahua texts, he reached the same conclusion as Garibay: “A partir de lo aquí expuesto podemos afirmar que, al estudiar y traducir no pocos textos transcritos alfabéticamente en náhuatl, maya, quiche y otras lenguas, en verdad nos hemos acercado a la ‘antigua palabra’ mesoamericana” (s 70).⁵

As several scholars have already pointed out (Mignolo, “Anahuac” and *The Darker Side*; Klor de Alva, “Introduction”; Sánchez Prado; Lee, “Mestizaje”), however, the enormous number of ethnographic texts that Spanish priests collected went through an inevitable process of colonization in which original indigenous oral or pictographic forms and practices were evaluated, classified, selected, modified, or in some cases completely ignored by the European eyes of colonizer priests. For example, Nahua song texts such as *Cantares mexicanos* and *Romances de los señores de la Nueva España*, which Garibay and León-Portilla presented as collections of pre-Hispanic poems, went through just such colonization. The songs, *cuicatl*, which were used with music and dances as a part of religious ceremonies or social festivals, were simply recorded in the European alphabet, thus losing all those contextual elements that were apparent when the songs were performed. By overlooking this colonial transformation and only focusing on alphabetically recorded songs, Garibay and León-Portilla simply converted Nahua songs into Europeanized types of poems and later divided them into sub-genres. Nahua literature was thus created through a double Europeanization of Nahua artistic tradition in that modern scholars, such as Garibay and León-Portilla, applied European literary concepts to the colonial texts, which had already gone through a colonial transformation from the oral and pictographic to the alphabetic (Lee, “Mestizaje”). Consequently, the most serious issue regarding contemporary Nahua literature is that from the

beginning of their career, Nahua writers have accepted uncritically the concepts and generic classifications introduced by Garibay and León-Portilla as if they originated in the Prehispanic period.

COLONIAL TRADITION AND THE FORMATION OF CONTEMPORARY NAHUA WRITERS

Yancuic tlahtolli, contemporary Nahua literature, according to León-Portilla (*Destino* 260), began to appear in the 1980s. He explains that from the eighteenth century to the 1980s, texts written in Nahua almost disappeared, with most of them being preserved orally. León-Portilla calls this period “cuando la palabra pervivió tan sólo en el corazón” (“Yancuic Tlahtolli [1986] 129). Some of these oral texts were collected by linguists, anthropologists, and scholars of indigenous studies and served as precursors and sources for the recent contemporary authors, known as *yancuic cuicapicqueh* (new wordsmiths of songs) and *yancuic amatlacuiloqueh* (new writers), who began to publish their works in Nahuatl and Spanish. León-Portilla did detail the reasons for this long dormant period of Nahua literature. However, the disappearance of the publication of texts in Nahuatl for more than 250 years and the sudden emergence of contemporary Nahua literature in the 1980s are facts closely related to the literacy policy of the Mexican state. After the major *mestizo* and indigenous writers such as Fernando Alvarado Tezozomoc and Don Domingo de San Antón Muñón Chimalpahin Quauhtlehuanitzin in the late sixteenth century and early seventeenth century wrote about indigenous history and culture in Nahuatl, the use of Nahuatl was limited to legal and administrative documents like wills and land ownership documents, and this limited use of Nahuatl as a medium of expression continued until Mexican Independence.⁶

With independence, however, the status of Nahuatl was diminished even further. The state did not recognize the diversity of indigenous languages and ordered that “all education was to be imparted in the national official language, Spanish” (King 56). Thus, during the century between the declaration of independence in 1810 and the beginning of the Revolution in 1910, indigenous people went through an especially hard time in the “devastating destruction of indigenous organization and communities, a severe reduction of its population, and the period when Spanish became the majority language in the country” (Hamel 302). In such a situation, writing in Nahuatl functioned very little as a mode of literary expression. Instead, oral traditions and performance-oriented practices such as dances formed the major mode of artistic expression among indigenous people. Even after the Mexican Revolution, which provoked a

strong interest in indigenous culture, indigenous people continued to use the oral tradition as the principal method to convey their artistic traditions because the educational and indigenous policies sponsored by the state have never allowed indigenous people to educate their children in their own language and benefit. Even a standardized alphabet was only introduced relatively recently, in 1981 when a unified version of the Nahuatl alphabet was introduced by school teachers and educational authorities (King 80).

Almost all the contemporary writers of Nahua literature never learned their indigenous cultural and historical traditions in school. Most did not even know how to read or write in Nahuatl. For example, Natalio Hernández confessed that he did not know how to read or write in Nahuatl even after he finished his teacher's degree:

En 1968 me titulé como profesor de educación primaria en el Instituto Federal de Capacitación del Magisterio de la Secretaría de Educación Pública. Pensaba que con el título de maestro normalista, iba a satisfacer todas mis dudas e inquietudes pedagógicas. Ahora reconozco cuán equivocado estaba. Era apenas el inicio de un largo difícil camino para encontrar el sendero del conocimiento que anhela y sueña todo profesionista.

Debo decir que para entonces no leía ni escribía en mi lengua materna: era analfabeto en mi propia lengua. Aun cuando la disfrutaba al hablarla con mis padres y con las personas de mi comunidad, pensaba que era imposible escribirla. (*Exclusion 173*)

It would seem that all the foundational writers of contemporary Nahua literature went through the same experience Natalio Hernández faced in the process of learning how to read or write in his own language. Given this situation, the *Seminario de Cultura Náhuatl* that Garibay and León-Portilla founded served as a Mecca for contemporary Nahua writers. Librado Silva Galeana ("Miqueltzin"; "El seminario") has recorded in detail his experiences as a student at the *Seminario de Cultura Náhuatl*. Several Nahua speakers from various regions began to attend the *Seminario* in the early 1980s in order to learn more about Nahuatl and to help collect testimonies of current Nahua religious and linguistic practices to further Nahua scholarship. But from the beginning, all faced serious difficulties in writing in Nahuatl: "Una cosa cierta es que los nahua hablantes que nos reuníamos ... en esa época nunca habíamos escrito una sola palabra en nuestro idioma. Así que no salíamos de nuestro asombro al percatarnos de que algo tan común, tan cotidiano, y tan nuestro-nuestra lengua materna - se presentaba, a la hora de llevarla al papel, como algo extraño, ajeno,

complejo” (Silva Galeana, Seminario 264). It was León-Portilla who helped them resolve such obstacles while they were staying at the *Seminario*.

Contemporary Nahua writers had to learn independently not only linguistic skills but also their own cultural and historical traditions since they had had little opportunity to access such traditions in the public educational system in Mexico. Silva Galeana (Seminario 262-72) recorded his first contact with pre-Hispanic traditions as a student at the *Seminario de Cultura Náhuatl*: “Por primera vez estuvimos en contacto con leyendas, mitos y tradiciones que nos confirmaban la importancia de la literatura que a nivel local teníamos, que correspondían a una antigua tradición nuestra, pues habían sido creadas en nuestra lengua, pertenecían a gente como nosotros y se conservaban gracias a que preservábamos la lengua Mexicana” (270). As Silva Galeana demonstrates, Nahua students relied greatly on the *Seminario* to learn about their own historical and cultural past.⁷ Clearly, Garibay and León-Portilla's studies on pre-Hispanic literature served as indispensable source material for them. By studying Nahuatl and pre-Hispanic culture and history under the direction of Garibay and León-Portilla, several students of the *Seminario* such as Natalio Hernández, Delfino Hernández, Alfredo Ramírez, and Librado Silva Galeana emerged as the principal writers of contemporary Nahua literature or *Yancuic Tlahtolli* in the 1980s, and their mission was to promote pre-Hispanic traditions among Nahua communities.⁸

Nevertheless, it is important to note here that the training and guidance given by Garibay and León-Portilla at the *Seminario de Cultura Náhuatl* was derived from a European, colonial, and paternalistic mind-set which these modern scholars had themselves learned from the Spanish priests of the colonial period. According to Garibay and León-Portilla, those priests who arrived at Tenochtitlan a few years after the Conquest, such as Pedro de Gante, Andrés de Olmos, Motolinia (Toribio de Benavides), and Bernardino de Sahagún, rescued authentic pre-Hispanic indigenous culture. One of their first missions was to teach indigenous children how to read and write Nahuatl in the European alphabet. At church schools and the famous school for indigenous descendants, *Colegio de Santa Cruz en Tlatelolco*, the Spanish priests dedicated much of their time to educating bilingual students. The priests collected information on indigenous culture and history from their students, who later wrote books in Nahuatl about their culture and history under the priests' guidance. For example, the famous *Florentine Codex* was created through the efforts of indigenous informants guided by Bernardino de Sahagún. According to León-Portilla, such a model of education searched for “auténtica comunicación e intercambio de conocimientos y valores, europeo-

cristianos y de origen precolombino" ("Trauma" 121). Moreover, León-Portilla did not perceive a colonial, but rather a balanced, relationship between the teacher-priests and the student-Indians at the *Colegio*. In reality, however, indigenous students were educated there according to a European Renaissance curriculum, and there was no mutual interaction between the indigenous and European cultures. As Edmundo O'Gorman argues, "Lejos, pues, de implicar una fusión de culturas, el experimento del Colegio de Santiago Tlatelolco es patente instancia de la implantación e imposición de la cultura mediterránea en, para usar las palabras de León-Portilla, 'su espléndida versión hispánica'" (28-29).

In fact, Miguel León-Portilla applied almost the same methodology in training to the students at the *Seminario de Cultura Náhuatl* that the Spanish missionaries had used about four and half centuries earlier. Like their ancestors who learned Nahuatl using the European alphabet at monastery schools, Nahua students, who would later become major writers of contemporary Nahua literature, learned how to read and write their native language at the *Seminario*. Just as their ancestors were educated by and served the Spanish priests of the sixteenth century, these contemporary indigenous writers started as students, served as informants for non-indigenous *mestizo* and white scholars, and finally became writers in Nahuatl. The contemporary Nahua writers seemingly depended even more heavily on the non-indigenous white people than their ancestors of the sixteenth century who at least were familiar with pre-Hispanic cultural and historical traditions and could thus serve as informants for the Spanish missionaries, because the contemporary writers, while familiar with contemporary Nahua cultures, had to learn their own pre-Hispanic traditions using the studies of non-indigenous scholars. Both Nahua writers of the sixteenth century and the present in fact participated in processes of colonization and cultural *mestizaje* respectively that submitted their own indigenous culture to the European ideological paradigms.

If the emergence of contemporary Nahua literature was indebted to the theoretical and linguistic guidance of Garibay and León-Portilla, it was also indebted to the Mexican state, which helped the writers of this literature financially through employment and grants. Many of the contemporary Nahua writers have served the state as bilingual teachers, researchers, or administrative officials of state organizations, as for example, Silva Galeana and Natalio Hernández. In addition, the Mexican state has also offered publication opportunities and financial support through national and regional scholarships and awards for writers. For example, the Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas at Universidad

Nacional Autónoma de México published several books in Nahuatl by the end of the 1980s, and CONACULTA (*Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes*) funded the series *Letras indígenas contemporáneas* that published literary texts in indigenous languages including Nahuatl. In addition, literary awards such as the *Premio Nezahualcoyotl* and central and local state scholarships given by the *Fondo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes* (FONCA) and the *Dirección General de Culturas Populares* (DGCP) have been granted to writers in indigenous languages. Not only the founding writers of contemporary Nahua literature like Natalio Hernández and Librado Silva Galeana but also those of later generations like Gustavo Zapoteco Sideño have been subsidized by state-sponsored prizes and scholarships, and they have been able to publish their literary works in academic journals or through publishers sponsored by both central and local government bodies.⁹

The contemporary Nahua writers who have been supported by the state through employment, publication opportunities, and grants have also served as collaborators in the making of state policy (or at least in the avoiding of conflict with the state). As employees of the government, they have served as intermediaries between indigenous people and the state, but few of them have reached positions of authority, which means that indigenous writers-researchers have played a more passive than active role in the decision making process of their own indigenous issues and resources, by working for the non-indigenous, higher ranking officials.¹⁰ In addition, and on occasion, contemporary indigenous writers have had to toe official lines in order to maintain and receive government grants (Coon 174-75). As indigenous intellectuals supported by the state, contemporary Nahua writers sometimes reproduce the views and ideas of the dominant *mestizo* and white Mexicans toward indigenous culture and history in their literary works. By doing so, they have ironically taken part in transforming their own artistic traditions into European traditions as “agents of the state, promoting and participating in their own cultural and epistemological genocide” (McDonough 184).

EUROPEANIZATION OF INDIGENOUS TRADITIONS AND CONTEMPORARY NAHUA LITERARY GENRES

Contemporary Nahua writers use in general various Nahua terms such as *cuicatl* and *tlahtolli* and also Spanish terms like *teatro* (drama) to classify their own works. Librado Silva Galeana, Delfino Hernández, and Alfredo Ramírez, who all attended the *Seminario*, published in 1987 a collection of contemporary Nahua literary texts entitled *In yancuic Nahua Tlahtolli: Relatos y cantos en Náhuatl* (1987). In this collection, Silva Galeana included

a narrative and Hernández and Ramírez several poems. The generic division of this collection followed exactly the classification of Nahua literature that Garibay and León-Portilla had previously introduced. Later, Librado Silva Galeana and Natalio Hernández, as co-editors, published a collection of pre-Hispanic literary texts, *Flor y canto de los antiguos mexicanos* (1990), following again the generic division of Garibay and León-Portilla but with their own translations. In his introduction to the Nahua literary genres, for example, Silva Galeana acknowledged the major contribution of Garibay and León-Portilla to the study of Nahua literary genres in the following way:

Debemos a los doctores Angel María Garibay y Miguel León-Portilla los estudios más acuciosos que sobre la literatura prehispánica en lengua náhuatl se ha llevado a cabo en nuestro país en los últimos años. El padre Garibay no solamente echa las bases de una investigación que ha venido dando frutos, sino que además establece, basándose en los propios conceptos nahuas, las categorías literarias del castellano al analizar las creaciones verbales nahuas, evitándose de esta manera el uso de conceptos ajenos, que pudieran reflejar solo lateralmente el sentido de aquellas.

La costumbre ha venido a designar, de un modo concluyente, a los vocablos *cuicatl* y *tlahtolli* como correspondientes a los de verso y prosa. Ambos términos, de uso corriente en la época prehispánica, los hallamos por lo general en palabras compuestas, en las que el vocablo adyacente es el que denota el tipo específico del canto o discurso en cuestión. Como en otra parte se habla de los *cuicatl*, aquí haremos mención únicamente de algunos de los principales géneros de *tlahtolli*, tal y como los han establecido los maestros antes mencionados. (17)

The Nahua generic terms such as *cuicatl* and *tlahtolli*, however, seem to be disappearing and are being replaced by solely European terms such as poetry and narrative. In the 1990s and at the beginning of the twenty-first century, several anthologies of Nahua literature were published. Most of them divide the Nahua texts into narratives and poems. In 1990, Natalio Hernández published an anthology titled *Literatura indígena, ayer y hoy*, collecting Nahua texts from the pre-Hispanic period to the present time. He divided the texts into two genres: *poesía nahuatl* and *narrativa nahuatl*, without using any Nahua generic terms. Since the early years of the twenty-first century, not only Nahua writers but also non-indigenous scholars have tended to use Spanish generic terms to classify contemporary Nahua texts. Probably the most significant anthology of contemporary indigenous literature in Mexico is *Words of the True Peoples/Palabras de los Seres Verdaderos*, edited by Carlos Montemayor

and Donald Frischmann. It consists of three volumes, in each of which a specific genre is collected: prose in the first volume, poetry in the second, and theatre in the third." As this tendency shows, generic divisions of contemporary Nahua literature such as *cuicatl* and *tlahtolli* are gradually fading and are being substituted with European literary genres such as poetry, prose, and drama. This Europeanization of Nahuatl literary genres is a natural process that is not at all surprising since the Nahua generic terms such as *cuicatl* and *tlahtolli* were, in fact, from the beginning already Europeanized concepts.

Garibay and León-Portilla, who introduced genre divisions to Nahua literature, found their criteria for these divisions in European concepts of literary genres, and current Nahua writers continue to use those terms as if they really represented original indigenous artistic genres. In order to make indigenous traditions fit in the European concept of literary genres, Garibay and León-Portilla even modified and transformed original indigenous texts (Lee, "Mestizaje"). The following song titled "*Xochicuicatl*" (flower song) comes from the *Cantares mexicanos*:

Can tiyanemia ticuicanitl maya hualmoquetza xochihuehuetl quetzaltica
 huicontiac teocuitlaxochinenepaniuhcicac y ayamo aye yliamo aye hui y
 ohuaya ohuaya.
 tiquimonahuiltiz in tepilhuan teteucti o in quauhtloocelotl ayamo etc
 Yn tlaca'ce otemoc aya huehuetitlan ye nemi in cuicanitl huia çan
 quiquetzallintomaya quexexeloa aya ycuic ipalnemoa quiyananquilia in
 coyolyantototl oncuicatinemi xochimana mana ya toxocha ohuaya ohuaya.
 (Bierhorst 160)

This song originally had twenty-one stanzas, but I reproduce here only the first three. These stanzas show some typical structures of Nahua songs collected in the surviving texts such as *Cantares mexicanos* and *Romances de los señores de Nueva España*. Unlike European-style poems, each stanza looks like a descriptive narrative and the length of the stanzas is very irregular, probably because the existing songs "preserve not the writings of poets, but the transcripts of ethnographers who recorded what they heard" (Bierhorst 42). Keeping in mind these observations, let us compare these original stanzas with León-Portilla's following paleography and translation of the same stanzas, which show how Garibay and León-Portilla classified literary genres of Nahua literature:

Can tiyanemia ticuicanitl
 maya hualmoquetza xochihuehuetl

quetzaltica huicontiac
 teocuitlaxochinenepaniuhticac
 y ayamo aye yliamo aye hui y ohuaya ohuaya

Tiquimonahuiltiz in tepilhuan
 teteucti o quauhtloocelotl
 ayamo *aye yliamo aye hui y ohuaya ohuaya*

Yn tlaca'ce otemoc aya huehuetitlan
 ye nemi in cuicanitl huia
 çan quiquetzalintomaya
 quexexeloa aya ycuic Ypalnemoa
 quiyananquilia in coyolyantototl
 oncuicatinemi
 xochimana mana ya toxoch a ohuaya ohuaya

[¿Dónde vives tú, cantor?
 ya viene a levantarse el atabal florido,
 entreverado con plumas de quetzal,
 y flores doradas entrelazadas.

Darás placer a los príncipes,
 los señores, las águilas, los jaguares.

En verdad ya bajó al lugar de los atabales,
 ya vive el cantor,
 desata cual plumas de quetzal,
 dispersa los cantos del Dador de la vida.
 Le responde el pájaro cascabel,
 anda gorjeando;
 ofrece flores, ofrenda nuestras flores.] (*Cantares* 114-15, León-Portilla's
 edition)¹²

The original units in Nahuatl do not show any divisions into verses, and the original authors or performers did not even care about such divisions because the divisions are not needed for their actual performance. León-Portilla's paleography and translation, however, divide each unit in the typical structure of a European poem. Thus, an indigenous song which was composed for performance is here converted into a European-type of poem for silent reading. León-Portilla explicitly explains that he divided the units into verses in order to make them more similar to European

poetry: “Teniendo a la vista los indicadores de las unidades de expresión de los *cuicatl*, debemos preguntarnos hasta qué punto ha sido adecuado presentar la traducción de estas composiciones fraccionando las unidades de expresión que aparecen en los manuscritos, convirtiéndolas en versos y estrofas al modo de los poemas en las distintas lenguas de la familia indoeuropea” (*Destino* 267). Then, he adds that stylistic structures such as “parallelism” or the “repetition of the same ideas” could be considered as “unidades de expresión.” Following these principles, many translators such as Garibay and León-Portilla have divided *cuicatl* into verses and stanzas.

The “parallelism” and the “repetition of the same ideas,” however, are not fixed but rather are arbitrary criteria to divide indigenous artistic genres. Garibay and León-Portilla both demonstrate their flexible criteria of genre classification, but here I shall focus on León-Portilla’s studies because he was more influential in the birth of contemporary Nahua literature. He quotes Joel Martínez Hernández’s work titled *¿Quesqui Nahuamacehualme Tiiztoqueh?* (How Many Nahuas Are We?) several times in his different anthologies and studies. On two occasions, León-Portilla (*Aftermath* 169-71; *Literaturas indígenas* 334-36) presents the work as a poem as follows:

Algunos coyotes [hombres voraces no indígenas] dicen
que los macehuales [los de la gente del pueblo]
desapareceremos,
que los macehuales nos extinguiremos,
que nuestro idioma no se escuchará más,
nuestro idioma no se usará más.¹³

On another occasion, however, León-Portilla presents a prose version of the same text as follows: “Algunos coyotes [hombres voraces no indígenas] dicen que los macehuales [los de la gente del pueblo] desapareceremos, que los macehuales nos extinguiremos, que nuestro idioma no se escuchará más, nuestro idioma no se usará más” (León-Portilla & Shorris, *Antigua y nueva palabra* 449).

León-Portilla does not provide adequate reasons for the different generic classifications of the same text, but his predetermination to view Nahua texts as similar to types of European literature appears to demonstrate his belief that indigenous literature must be classified in either poetic or narrative genres. Contemporary Nahua writers, as faithful followers of Garibay and León-Portilla, do the same. In his work *In tlahtolli*, Natalio Hernández presents the following text both as a poem and a narrative:

Ipan in Altepetl
 timoquetztica
 axcan cahuitl ximopalehuili
 nochi in Anahuac
 ihuan semanahuac;
 ihuan quen quix tlalticpac chaneque
 ihuan nochi tlen quitlasohtla
 in toyesmecayo. (*In tlahtolli* 53)

and

Ipan in Altepetl timoquetztica, axcan cahuitl ximopalehuili nochi in Anahuac ihuan Semanahuac; ihuan quen quix tlalticpac chaneque ihuan nochi tlen quitlasohtla in toyesmecayo.

[En esta ciudad te yergues, te levantas; bríndale tu ayuda al Anáhuac, al Universo, a los seres que habitan la tierra, y a todos aquellos que aman nuestra herencia, nuestro linaje.] (*In tlahtolli* 126)

The genre division which Garibay and Leon-Portilla introduced for Nahua literature is only acceptable when this literature is presumed to be a European type of literature, that is, only when indigenous artistic traditions are assimilated or molded into European genres such as poetry and prose. Non-indigenous people created indigenous literary genres through an Europeanization of indigenous culture, and contemporary Nahua writers, ironically, participate in the Europeanization of their own culture.

PRE-HISPANIC PAST AND IRONY OF IDENTITY IN CONTEMPORARY NAHUA LITERATURE

Contemporary Nahua writers who are well aware of their ethnic group as culturally and politically marginalized have stressed not only promoting ethnic identity but also denouncing the social contradictions such as discrimination and exploitation which they face in their everyday life. In order to advocate Nahua ethnic identity, they have especially focused on pre-Hispanic cultural traditions that they believe represent a common cultural background for all current Nahua communities. From the emergence of contemporary Nahua literature to the present times, pre-Hispanic cultural and historical traditions have served as major inspirational sources for contemporary Nahua writers. Among those

traditions, Nahua poetry, which Garibay called *in xochitl in cuicatl* (flower and song) in the Nahua term, has had the most significant impact on almost all of the contemporary Nahua writers in terms of contents and themes. The surviving Nahua songs describe Aztec heroes and gods, representing them in the form of all kinds of birds, insects, animals, flowers, and plants, commonly using the words *huitzilihuitl* (hummingbird), *toztli* (parrot), *papalotl* (butterfly), *cacahuaxochitl* (cacao flower), *ocelotl* (ocelot), and *cuauhtli* (eagle). In addition, many natural goods and decorative items such as *xihuitl* (turquoise), *chalchihuitl* (jade), *maquitzli* (bracelet), *cozcatl* (necklace), and *quetzalli* (plume) that were considered very precious in Aztec society frequently appear in the songs. Moreover, some major themes such as ephemerality and brotherhood also frequently appear in the surviving Nahua songs.

Many contemporary Nahua poets have tried to incorporate such metaphorical images and major themes into their literary works. Natalio Hernández is probably the most diligent practitioner of this type of poetic adaptation. The titles of some of his poem collections such as *Xochikoscatl/Collar de flores* (Necklace of Flowers), *Papalocuicatl/Canto a las mariposas* (Song to the Butterflies), and *Semanca Huitzilín/Colibrí de la Armonía* (Hummingbird of Harmony) explicitly show the influence of Prehispanic song traditions. Many individual songs of Hernández demonstrate such an influence as well. The following poem is a clear example:

Icnocuicatl

Mostla . . .
 queman nehuatl nionmiquis
 amo queman ximocueso;
 nican . . .
 ocsepa nican nionhualas
 cualtzin huitzilín
 nimocuepas.

[Canto de orfandad

Mañana . . .
 mañana que yo me muera
 no quiero que tú estés triste;
 aquí
 aquí yo volveré
 convertido en colibrí.] (*Papalocuicatl* 27-28)

The title of the poem itself, *Incocuatl* (song of orphanage), was borrowed from one of the thematic songs of the *Cantares mexicanos*. Nahua songs were performed during pre-Hispanic and colonial times to promote brotherhood among indigenous nobles who would mourn their death because they would have to leave their friends but at the same time would happily accept their death because they would come back to see their friends as messengers of the gods. In the poem, the poetic subject, “yo,” returns as a hummingbird (colibrí), which is an incarnation of the dead “yo,” to meet his living friends on earth. Natalio Hernández translated the title of the poem, *incocuatl*, as *canto de orfandad* (song of orphanage), which describes the sadness of the living nobles who have lost their fellow nobles, but on the other hand the title could be also translated *canto de hermandad* (song of brotherhood), as it promotes brotherhood among the living and dead warriors.

In addition to pre-Hispanic song tradition, contemporary Nahua writers draw on historical and mythical traditions as inspiration for their creative works. The creation of the world as well as religious and historical figures have been important sources for them. The Aztec cosmological text *Leyenda de los soles*, which was inscribed in the famous *Piedra del sol*, has inspired many works of contemporary Nahua literature. In his book *Totomej intljatol* (La lengua de los pájaros) (17-36), José Hernández Ramírez recreates the legend of the suns from the first sun, *Achtoui tonatij*, to the last sun, *Olintonatij*, through which he recreates world history through his own cultural cosmology. Not only poetry but also other literary genres have been inspired by pre-Hispanic traditions. Based on the mythical story of *Chicomexochitl*, Román Güemes Jiménez published a short story titled *Chicomexochitl: Ne konetsij tlen tiopamitl kikuajki* (Chikomexóchitl: el niño devorado por el templo), which symbolically describes how an indigenous cultural ceremony dedicated to *Chikomexóchitl* was replaced by the Catholic religion. Eliseo Aguilar also wrote a story about the creation of the father and mother and the birth of the *macehuales* (commoners), based on the Aztec legend of Tlalocan (Place of Tlaloc or Heavenly Place) and Mictlan (Place of the Dead). The reason why contemporary Nahua writers stress their cultural roots is obvious: remembering their past and passing it on to their children is a critical matter for their survival, as Natalio Hernández insists:

Ximoyoltlapokaj nopiluj
 nijneki nikon ijtos se ome tlajtoli
 nikon tenkixtis se ome uajapantlajtoli
 tlajlamikilistli tlen ika titlachixtialtokej

Melauak axmiak tlajtoli Nikon ijtos
 pampa tlen yejektlajtoli axmiak
 san moneki xikajokuikaj
 san moneki xijmaluikaj
 uan xijtlepanitakaj.

[Abran sus corazones hijitos
 quiero decirles unas cuantas palabras;
 les expresaré algunas palabras antiguas
 que contienen la sabiduría de nuestra sobrevivencia

En verdad no diré muchas
 las palabras bellas no siempre son muchas,
 necesitan guardarlas
 necesitan tener cuidado de ellas
 necesitan respetarlas y preservarlas.] (*Sempoalxóchitl/Veinte flores* 38-39)

In this poem, Natalio Hernández urges the younger generation to remember and preserve their ancient words, which could symbolically represent their cultural origin or essence. This poem reminds us of *Huehuetlahtolli* (Words of Old Men or Ancient Words), which the Aztec sages (*tlamatinime*) used to educate their children before the Conquest.

In the treatment of their past history and tradition, contemporary indigenous writers have faced serious obstacles like those they faced when they tried to learn their own languages and revive indigenous artistic genres. As they have never been able to access pre-Hispanic culture and history in the official educational system, once more they had to rely on the studies and guidance of non-indigenous scholars such as Garibay and León-Portilla. This means that contemporary Nahua writers had to build their ethnic identity by faithfully following studies provided by non-indigenous people. In fact, several aspects of the interpretation of the Pre-Hispanic period that these writers incorporated into their creative works are seriously problematic. For example, in his studies León-Portilla sometimes uncritically accepted the information on the pre-Hispanic indigenous past provided in the colonial chronicles of Spanish priests like Bernardino de Sahagún and Europeanized *mestizo* chroniclers like Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl. The most conspicuous example might be his interpretation of Nahua songs as *xochitl* (flower) which exclusively represents Pre-hispanic metaphysical ideas such as beauty and peace. Throughout his studies, León-Portilla presents the practice of Nahua songs,

in xochitl in cuicatl, in clear contrast to human sacrifice and, thus, as the most peaceful symbol of Aztec civilization. In his study, the assumed authors of the songs, whom León-Portilla called poets, appear as the *tlamatinime* (sages) who promoted their peaceful ideology against Aztec militarism and religious practices (*Literaturas* 163-210; *Antiguos* 116-46). This interpretation of Nahua songs has been one of the most important inspirational sources for most contemporary Nahua poets.

Based on the perspective of León-Portilla, numerous contemporary Nahua poets present their poems as *xochitl*. Thus, in many of their poems, Nahua poets tend to deal with peace, harmony, reconciliation, and friendship. In the original Nahua songs, however, *xochitl* has several meanings. The most frequent and significant representation of *xochitl* in the surviving song collections would be dead warriors who were sacrificed or killed on the battlefield for their gods. The eulogies to the dead and sacrificed warriors in the songs better fit the reality of Aztec society where gods and warriors played a decisive social role and were highly respected as essential parts of their society (Lee, *Allure* 173-89). By conceiving Nahua song practice as peaceful act, several contemporary Nahua poets try to promote the concept of cultural harmony or *mestizaje* which Garibay and León-Portilla promoted through their studies of Nahua literature:

Itlamiya cuicatl
 Sintli tlapali
 omonechico:
 chichiltic, istac,
 costic ihuan tilitic sintli
 omonechicohqueh.

Yancuic tonatiu
 tech tlahuilia.
 Miequintin tlapaltic tlahuili
 tech ixtilahuilia.

Chicuasen Tonatiu
 onasico.

[Final del canto

Los colores del maíz
 se han mezclado:
 el rojo, el blanco,

el amarillo, el negro
se han mezclado.

Un nuevo sol
ya nos alumbra.
sus rayos multicolores
iluminan nuestros rostros.

El Sexto Sol
ha llegado.] (Hernández, *Semanca Huitzilin* 166-168)

Natalio Hernández describes a *mestizo* Mexico through a mixture of different colors of maize, which would represent a new sun or world. According to the *Leyenda de los soles*, the current sun, *Ollintonatiuh* (Sun of Movement), which is the fifth sun, will be destroyed by earthquake and hunger. Based on his own ethnic cosmological view, Natalio Hernández proposes or dreams of a future Mexico, *Chicuasen Tonatiuh* (Sixth Sun), in which all types of races and cultures might be illuminated and recognized. As the title of the book *Semanca Huitzilin/ Colibrí de la Armonía* (Hummingbird of Harmony) which includes this poem shows, the poet stresses harmony in the nation, confirming that this harmonized nation already “has arrived” (ha llegado). Hernández’s confirmation of harmony could be, however, in danger of anesthetizing current cultural, political, and economic exploitations from which Nahua people are suffering (Coon 187), a confirmation that shares the same attitude as the state policy of *mestizaje*.

Contemporary Nahua literature was created by nationalist scholars who intended to build a homogeneous and harmonious nation in the name of *mestizaje*, but the very existence of such a *mestizo* literature ironically asserted that Mexico could not be a homogeneous nation but rather a heterogeneous one instead (Montes Romanillos viii). The bilingual publications of Spanish and Nahua themselves demonstrate the linguistic diversity in Mexico. In addition, Nahua writers do not always focus on the themes such as the pre-Hispanic past which non-indigenous scholars have introduced, but they do pay special attention to unjust treatment, discrimination, and exploitation of indigenous people and culture by the dominant white or *mestizo* race and culture. The reclamation of their own ethnicity and the self-confirmation of maintaining their culture have been important topics of the contemporary Nahua writers of all generations. Gustavo Zapoteco Sideño, who belongs to the second generation of Nahua

writers, describes the everlasting resistance of indigenous people and culture despite discrimination and exploitation:

Yunca panohua xihuitmej
 panohua xiumopillimej,
 panohua xiumopilli
 ihuan tahuamej nicanemi,
 nica canon tlallinemi
 nica canon tlallichanti,
 yeyiamej titahuamej
 tlin tlajtolque insensi
 tlin tajhuamej in tloque nahuaque,
 in tlin xocmictisque
 ica ilnamiquemej,
 ica tekialtepemej,
 tenemi chantimej pan tlayohuali
 tlica titenechtia
 tomictisque, tomictisque,
 tenemi in tlilpitzintzin on tlicuil
 on oquipitz huejcaexnexcha,
 tenemi monemitimej,
 tenemi monemitimej...

[Han pasado años
 han pasado siglos,
 han pasado xiumopilli
 y seguimos aquí,
 aquí donde la tierra esta
 aquí donde la tierra vive,
 seguimos siendo nosotros
 los que hablamos en uno mismo
 los que somos el Tloque Nahuaque,
 los que no nos mataron
 con ideologías,
 con sistemas,
 seguimos viviendo en la oscuridad
 porque si salimos a la luz
 nos matan, nos matan,
 somos el rescoldo del tlicuil
 el suspiro de la esperanza,
 seguimos vivos,

estamos vivos... ("Cuicatl in yolomasehualtin/canto del corazón indio" 66-67)

Zapoteco begins with the perpetual presence of indigenous people by describing the passage of European centuries as well as the indigenous century, *xiumopilli*, which refers to the cycle of the Aztec century (52 years). They were forced to accept ideologies and systems, an example of which might be the nationalist *mestizaje* project, but they would continue to maintain their own culture, which is symbolized in the name of the pre-Hispanic indigenous god, *Tloque Nahuaque* (Owner of the Near and the Close). In order to avoid those ideologies and systems, indigenous people now live in their own hidden place separated from the dominant culture and power. Zapoteco's poem demonstrates a contradictory situation that nationalist ideologies and systems such as *mestizaje* try to establish in Mexico because contemporary Nahua literature, which was born as a nationalist *mestizaje* product, ironically challenges the very project.

CONTEMPORARY NAHUA LITERATURE AND ITS FUTURE PROGRESS

Due to centuries of colonial domination and the mestizo state policy, indigenous people in Mexico have lost most of their pre-Hispanic traditions. Judith Friedlander, for instance, observes this phenomenon in Hueyapan, Morelos:

[T]he Hueyapeños' indigenous culture is in ruins and has been for centuries. Nevertheless, the villagers are acutely aware of still being Indians, for they are continuously so designated by outsiders. Few pre-Spanish customs actually survive in Hueyapan today. What is more, most of those that do lost their Prehispanic significance long ago and display only the merest traces of the past. (xv)

Contemporary Nahua literature parallels this long process of de-indigenization. From the conquest to the present, indigenous culture has been modified by and assimilated to European cultural paradigms. Nahua song practice, for example, has been an essential oral tradition from the pre-Hispanic, but after the conquest European colonizers identified this practice with European-type poetry. In the twentieth century, Garibay and León-Portilla took advantage of such colonial ideas to create and promote contemporary Nahua literature. From the emergence of contemporary Nahua literature to the present, none of the Nahua writers have seriously given thought to possible European influences in their sources or the literary genres in which they choose to write. They have simply considered their writing as symbolic artistic acts that revive an indigenous tradition. In this context, contemporary Nahua literature has been an inherently

colonial and pro-dominant cultural product. Contemporary Nahua writers will thus continue, albeit unwittingly, to participate in the colonization of their own culture until they recognize ideas and perspectives different from those of their patrons, Garibay and León-Portilla, a critical distance advocated by Frances Karttunen, James Lockhart, John Bierhorst, Amos Segala, Gerturdis Payas and others, who provide more reliable interpretations of pre-Hispanic artistic traditions.

Despite its inherent colonial emphasis, contemporary indigenous literature is a paradoxically anti-colonial and pro-indigenous cultural product because it challenges the incorporation of indigenous traditions into European or other dominant cultures. As Paja Faudree demonstrates, indigenous intellectuals consider their contemporary literature as an essential part of indigenous revival movements in order to “reverse the erosion of indigenous-language use that resulted from the imposition of Spanish and thereby push back against five hundred years of cultural, linguistic, and political oppression” (208). Contemporary Nahua writers are no exception. From the beginning of their career, some identified themselves with the *tlamatinime* which literally means “wise men,” but they actually use the word to refer to writers who made it possible to maintain cultural traditions. In another words, they proclaim themselves to be the keepers of past and current Nahua tradition over and against colonization or homogenization of indigenous culture. Second generation writers as shown in the analysis of Zapoteco Sideño also claim to decolonize contemporary Nahua literature, focusing on the economic and political concerns such as poverty, agrarian struggles, and political autonomy that the Nahua community currently faces (Coon 175). As their several ancestors already exemplified during the colonial period by taking advantage of colonial system to denounce colonial rule, contemporary Nahua writers use hegemonic literary mediums to denounce hegemonic culture and politics which exploit their indigenous culture. Probably, this paradoxical, decolonizing impulse that produces a colonized product will continue to be an essential part of and an existentially fraught reason for the future development of contemporary Nahua literature.

University of North Texas

NOTES

- 1 The concept of *mestizaje* might be considered broader than that of *indigenismo*, because the latter tends to focus on discursive practices while the

former concentrates more on social and political practices regarding indigenous people and their cultures. In this article, however, both terms will be used interchangeably depending on the context, for Nahuatl literature not only represents a discursive practice but is also created and developed as a social and political product of indigenous tradition in the twentieth century. More importantly, both terms refer to an appropriation of indigenous culture and history by non-indigenous agents such as *mestizo* or white scholars and the state.

- 2 Eduardo Matos Moctezuma and Marcus Winter provide in detail the biography and scholarly achievements of Gamio and Caso respectively. Both scholars had a significant impact on the indigenous studies of Mexico; in particular, Gamio has been considered the father of modern archaeology in Mexico.
- 3 Lee (“Mestizaje”) studies how Garibay invented Nahuatl literature, not only taking colonial chroniclers as principal sources but also applying European concepts of literature to the texts published in Nahuatl. Lee’s study will be used as the fundamental basis for the analysis in this article.
- 4 For criticism of Garibay’s studies, see Mignolo and Lee. See Klor de Alva for criticism of León-Portilla’s study.
- 5 By following Garibay’s lead, León-Portilla’s studies have also received almost the same criticism. Klor de Alva aptly summarizes how León-Portilla’s studies have been critically evaluated by later scholars (“Introduction” xxi-xxiii).
- 6 Tezozomoc wrote Aztec histories in Nahuatl such as *Crónica mexicayotl*, and Chimalpahin left several texts in Nahuatl about the Chalco area.
- 7 On another occasion, Silva Galeana testifies about similar experiences as a student at the *Seminario de Cultura Náhuatl*: “En verdad fue en el Seminario en donde por primera vez escuchamos, supimos algo de los antiguos forjadores de cantos que vivieron en la época anterior a la llegada de los hombres de Occidente. Supimos también de Alonso de Molina, de Andrés de Olmos, de Bernardino de Sahagún y de los sabios indígenas que ayudaron a éste en la admirable tarea de recopilación que emprendió. Conocíamos nosotros más o menos bien nuestra lengua náhuatl, conocíamos algunas de las antiguas costumbres, aquellas en las que habíamos nacido, pero de la antigua forma de vida sólo en el Seminario, con nuestro maestro supimos de ella” (“Ye cempoalpa” 259).
- 8 Contemporary Nahuatl writers followed the guidance of these scholars about their missions or functions for their communities and nation. León-Portilla pointed out the major missions of contemporary Nahuatl writers as follows: “A varios de ellos [escritores contemporáneos] se debe el empeño de hacer accesible a los nahuas de diversas comunidades contemporáneas algunas muestras del antiguo legado literario en su propia lengua. Otro tanto debe decirse acerca de la tarea, promovida también por ello, de difundir en

antologías y otras publicaciones no pocas muestras de la narrativa y la poesía nahuas contemporáneas. De este modo, la que he llamado *Yancuic Tlahtolli*, Nueva Palabra, no sólo florece en varias regiones del país donde perdura el náhuatl, sino que cada día llega su mensaje y su belleza a mayor número de personas ansiosas de conocerla y disfrutarla” (*El destino* 260-61).

- 9 I am following Coon’s division of the two groups (175). According to him, Natalio Hernández, Librado Silva Galeana, Juan Hernández, Crispín Amador Ramírez, and Ildelfonso Maya belong to the first generation while Gustavo Zapoteco, Mardonio Carballo, and Martín Barrios, who were born in the late 1970s and 1980s, belong to the second. Some of these writers such as Natalio Hernández received the *Premio Nezahualcoyotl*, and Zapoteco Sideño also received government grants (Coon 174). In addition, most of their works were published with the financial aid of CONACULTA.
- 10 Gutiérrez explains well the position of indigenous officials at state institutions: “Agencies and programs with official state support are in many cases instrumental in counteracting the autonomous dynamic of certain indigenous cultural initiatives. An example is the recent case of the Program of Development for Indigenous Peoples, begun in 1991 and based on the aforementioned INI [“Programa de lenguas y literatura indígenas” 1993, 3]. This plan offers support in terms of financial aid and investment in areas of culture and education; however, there is no provision for indigenous people’s participation, direction, or administration of their own ethnic affairs or cultural resources” (*National Myth* 134).
- 11 Just like generic divisions of European literature, some scholars include the essay as a fourth genre of contemporary Nahua literature. Carlos Montemayor, who is the most influential scholar of Maya and Zapotec studies, published two volumes of contemporary indigenous literary texts. In these two volumes, Montemayor classified indigenous texts into four genres: poetry, narrative, drama (volume 1), and the essay (volume 2). Pilar Máñez also included the essay as a sub-genre of contemporary Nahua narratives.
- 12 León-Portilla learned this methodology from Garibay (*Poesía náhuatl*), who translated into Spanish the existing Nahua song texts such as *Cantares mexicanos* and *Romances de los señores de la Nueva España*. Garibay did not include this particular song in his work but in his entire book, he reorganized Nahua songs just like León-Portilla did in the quoted song.
- 13 This text is included as a poem in Natalio Hernández’s anthology titled *Literatura indígena, ayer y hoy* (110-13).

WORKS CITED

- ALCINA FRANCH, JOSÉ. "Literaturas indias del México de hoy." *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos* 526 (1994): 7-29.
- AGUILAR, ELISEO. "Toteiskaltijkauan Talokan/Nuestros creadores de Talokan." *Narrativa Nahuatl Contemporánea*. Mexico City: Editorial Diana, 1994. 77-95.
- BIERHORST, JOHN, TRANS. *Cantares Mexicanos*. Stanford: Stanford U P, 1985.
- . "General Introduction and Commentary." *Cantares Mexicanos*. Trans. John Bierhorst. Stanford: Stanford UP 1985. 120-21.
- BONFIL BATALLA, GUILLERMO. "El concepto de indio en América: una categoría de la situación colonial." *Anales de Antropología* 9 (1972): 105-24.
- . *México profundo: Una civilización negada*. Mexico City: Grijalbo, 1989.
- CAMPOS, RUBÉN M. *La producción literaria de los aztecas: compilación de cantos y discursos de los antiguos mexicanos, tomados de viva voz por los conquistadores y dispersos en varios textos de la historia antigua de México*. Mexico City: Talleres Gráficos del Museo Nacional de Arqueología, Historia y Etnografía, 1936.
- COON, ADAM W. "El rescoldo del tlicuil: Visceral Resistance to Coloniality and Generational Tension Among Contemporary Nahua Authors." *A Contracorriente* 10.3 (2013): 171-98.
- FAUDREE, PAJA. *Singing for the Dead: The Politics of Indigenous Revival in Mexico*. Durham and London: Duke UP, 2013.
- FRIEDLANDER, JUDITH. *Being Indian in Hueyapan: A Study of Forced Identity in Contemporary Mexico*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975.
- GAMIO, MANUEL. *Forjando patria*. Mexico City: Editorial Porrúa, 2006.
- GARIBAY K., ÁNGEL MARÍA. *Historia de la literatura náhuatl*. Mexico City: Editorial Porrúa, 1992.
- . *La poesía lírica azteca*. Mexico City: Bajo el signo de ábside, 1937.
- . *Panorama literario de los pueblos nahuas*. Mexico City: Editorial Porrúa, 1997.
- . *Poesía indígena de la altiplanicie*. Mexico City: UNAM, 1940.
- . *Poesía náhuatl*. 3 vols. Mexico City: UNAM, 1993.
- GÜEMES JIMÉNEZ, ROMÁN. "Chikomexochitl: Ne konetsij tlen tiopamitl kikuajki/ Chikomexóchitl: The Child the Church Devoured/ Chicomexóchitl: El niño devorado por el templo." *Words of the True Peoples/Palabras de los Seres Verdaderos*. Ed. Carlos Montemayor and Donald Frischmann. Vol. 2. Austin: U of Texas P, 2004. 208-30.
- GUTIÉRREZ, NATIVIDAD. *Nationalist Myth and Ethnic Identities: Indigenous Intellectuals and the Mexican State*. Lincoln and London: U of Nebraska P, 1999.
- . "What Indians Say about Mestizos: A Critical View of a Cultural Archetype of Mexican Nationalism." *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 17.3 (1998): 294-296.

- HAMEL, RAINER ENRIQUE. "Indigenous Language Policy and Education in Mexico." *Encyclopedia of Language and Education*. Ed. S. May and N.H. Hornberger. Vol. 1. Heidelberg: Springer Science/Business Media LL, 2008. 301-313.
- HERNÁNDEZ, NATALIO [José Antonio Xocoyotzin]. *De la exclusión al diálogo intercultural con los pueblos indígenas*. Mexico City: Editorial Praxis, 2009.
- . *In tlahtolli, in ohtli/la palabra, el camino: Memoria y destino de los pueblos indígenas*. Mexico City: Plaza y Valdés, 1998.
- . *Literatura indígena, ayer y hoy*. Mexico: Instituto Tamaulipeco de Cultura, 1990.
- . *Papalocuícatl/Canto a las mariposas*. Mexico City: Editorial Praxis, 1996.
- . *Semanca Huitzilín/Colibrí de la Armonía/Hummingbird of Harmony*. Mexico City: Torre Abolida, 2005.
- . *Sempoalxóchitl/Veinte flores: una sola flor*. Mexico City: UNAM, 1987.
- HERNÁNDEZ RAMÍREZ, JUAN. *Tlatlatok Tetl/Piedra incendiada*. Mexico City: Escritores en Lenguas Indígenas, A.C., 2010.
- . *Totomej intlajtol*. Veracruz: Editora del Gobierno del Estado de Veracruz, 2008.
- KARTTUNEN, FRANCES AND JAMES LOCKHART. "La estructura de la poesía nahuatl vista por sus variantes." *Estudios de cultura nahuatl* 14 (1980): 15-64.
- KING, LINDA. *Roots of Identity: Languages and Literacy in Mexico*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1994.
- KLOR DE ALVA, JUAN JOSÉ. "Introduction." *The Aztec Image of Self and Society: An Introduction to Nahua Culture* by Miguel León-Portilla. Salt Lake City: U of Utah P, 1992. vii-xxiii.
- . "The Postcolonization of the (Latin) American Experience: A Reconsideration of 'Colonialism,' 'Postcolonialism,' and 'Mestizaje'." *After Colonialism; Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements*. Ed. Gyan Prakash. New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1995. 241-275.
- LEE, JONGSOO. *The Allure of Nezahualcoyotl: Pre-Hispanic History, Religion, and Nahua Poetics*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 2008.
- . "Mestizaje and the Creation of Mexican National Literature: Angel María Garibay Kintana's Nahuatl Project." *Bulletin of Spanish Studies* 91.6 (2014): 889-912.
- LEÓN-PORTILLA, MIGUEL, ED. *Cantares Mexicanos*. Trans. Miguel León-Portilla. 2 Vols. Mexico City: UNAM, 2011.
- . "Aftermath." *The Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico*. Ed. Miguel León-Portilla. Boston: Beacon Press, 1992.
- . "Lengua y cultura nahuas." *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 20.2 (2004): 221-30.
- . *Literaturas indígenas de México*. Mexico City: Editorial Mapfre/ Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1992.
- . *Los antiguos mexicanos a través de sus crónicas y cantares*. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1996.

- . *Los destinos de la palabra*. Mexico City: El Colegio Nacional/ Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1996.
- . "Nahuatl Literature." *Supplement to the Handbook of Middle American Indians*. Ed. Victoria Reifler Bricker. Vol. 13. Austin: U of Texas P, 1985.
- . "Para la historia de 'Estudios de Cultura Náhuatl'." *Historia Mexicana* 50.4 (2001): 731-42.
- . "Perspectivas de la investigación sobre la historia prehispánica de México." *Historia Mexicana* 21.2 (1971): 198-216.
- . "Trauma cultural, mestizaje e indigenismo en Mesoamérica." *Cuadernos Americanos* 201.4 (1975): 113-133.
- . "Yancuic Tlahtolli: Palabra nueva. Una antología de la literatura contemporánea." *Estudios de cultura náhuatl* 18 (1986): 124-69.
- . "Yancuic Tlahtolli: Palabra nueva. Una antología de la literatura contemporánea (Segunda parte)." *Estudios de cultura náhuatl* 19 (1989): 363-405.
- . "Yancuic Tlahtolli: Palabra nueva. Una antología de la literatura contemporánea (Tercera parte)." *Estudios de cultura náhuatl* 20 (1990): 312-69.
- LEÓN-PORTILLA AND EARL SHORRIS. *Antigua y nueva palabra: Antología de la literatura mesoamericana desde los tiempos precolombinos hasta el presente*. Mexico City: Aguilar, 2004.
- MATOS MOCTEZUMA, EDUARDO. "Manuel Gamio." *Historiadores de México en el siglo XX*. Ed. Enrique Florescano and Ricardo Pérez Montfort. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1995. 41-48.
- MAYA, ILDEFONSO ET AL, EDS. *Narrativa Nahuatl Contemporánea*. Mexico City: Editorial Diana, 1994.
- MÁYNEZ, PILAR. *Breve antología de cuentos indígenas: aproximación a la narrativa contemporánea*. Mexico City: UNAM, 2004.
- MCDONOUGH, KELLEY SHANNON. "Indigenous Experiences in Mexico: Reading in the Nahua Intellectual Tradition." Diss. University of Minnesota, 2010.
- MIGNOLO, WALTER. "Anahuac y sus otros: la cuestión de la letra en el Nuevo Mundo." *Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana* 28 (1988): 32-33.
- . *The Darker Side of The Renaissance: Literary, Territoriality, & Colonization*. Michigan: U of Michigan P, 2003.
- MONTEMAYOR, CARLOS. *La literatura actual en las lenguas indígenas de México*. Mexico City: Universidad Iberoamericana, 2001.
- . *Los escritores indígenas actuales*. 2 vols. Mexico City: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1992.
- MONTES ROMANILLOS, SONIA. "Poesía indígena contemporánea de México y Chile." Diss. University of California-Berkeley, 2008.
- MORENO FIGUEROA, MÓNICA G. "Historically Rooted Transnationalism: Slightedness and the Experience of Racism in Mexican Families." *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 29. 3 (2008): 283-297.

- O'GORMAN, EDMUNDO. "La falacia histórica de Miguel León Portilla sobre el 'encuentro del Viejo y Nuevo Mundo'." *Revista Complutense de Historia de América* 12 (1987): 17-31.
- PAYAS, GERTRUDIS. "Algunas claves de la traductología para entender a Garibay." *Escritos. Revista del Centro de Ciencias del Lenguaje* 30 (2004): 107-135.
- . "Translation in Historiography: the Garibay/León-Portilla Complex and the Making of a Pre-Hispanic Past." *Meta* 49.3 (2004): 544-61.
- SAHAGÚN, BERNARDINO DE. *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España*. Ed. Angel María Garibay K. Mexico City: Editorial Porrúa, 1997.
- SEGALA, AMOS. *Literatura náhuatl. Fuentes, identidades, representaciones*. Trans. Mónica Mansour. Mexico City: Grijalvo, 1990.
- SILVA GALEANA, LIBRADO. "El seminario de cultura náhuatl." *In ihiyo, in itlahtol/Su aliento, su palabra: Homenaje a Miguel León-Portilla*. Mexico City: UNAM, 1997. 257-86.
- . "Miqueltzin León-Portilla ihuan macehuallahtolmomachtihqueh/ Estudiantes indígenas nahuas y Miguel León-Portilla." *Estudios de cultura náhuatl* 37 (2007): 317-33.
- . "Ye cempoalpa in hualquiza in 'Estudios de cultura náhuatl'." *Estudios de cultura náhuatl* 21 (1991): 238-69.
- SILVA GALEANA, LIBRADO, DELFINO HERNÁNDEZ AND ALFREDO RAMÍREZ C. *In yancuic nahua tlahtolli/Relatos y cantos en Náhuatl*. Mexico City: UNAM, 1987.
- SILVA GALEANO, LIBRADO AND NATALIO HERNÁNDEZ. *Flor y canto de los antiguos mexicanos*. Mexico City: El Día en libros, 1990.
- TAYLOR, ANALISA. *Indigeneity in the Mexican Cultural Imagination*. Tucson: U of Arizona P, 2009.
- . "Thresholds of Belonging: Myths and Counter-Myths of 'Lo indígena' in Mexico (1940-1994)." Diss. Duke University, 2002.
- WINTER, MARCUS. "Alfonso Caso y la arqueología de Oaxaca." *Historiadores de México en el siglo XX*. Ed. Enrique Florescano and Ricardo Pérez Montfort. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1995. 71-86.
- ZAPOTECO CEDEÑO, NOÉ. *Cantos en el cañaveral/Cuicatl pan tlalliouatlmej*. Morelos: Instituto de Cultura de Morelos, 2004.