

Racialized Subalternity in the Short Stories of Luis de Lión

En el presente artículo se examinan los cuentos del autor maya guatemalteco Luis de Lión. Estos cuentos han sido recientemente re-editados por el Ministerio de Cultura de Guatemala en un volumen titulado La puerta del cielo (2011), cuyo título proviene del cuento más famoso del autor, también analizado en este trabajo. Propongo que los cuentos que preceden la gran novela de Lión, El tiempo principia en Xibalbá (1985), constituyen un laboratorio para representar la subalternidad racializada en diferentes formas y modos. Estos cuentos son un preámbulo experimental de su proyecto novelístico que ya se asomaba en su mente al momento de escribirlos. En las primeras etapas, cuando escribió estos cuentos, el autor todavía no había configurado exactamente cómo la subalternidad racializada podría convertirse en un proyecto emancipador y descolonizador. Este proyecto va a realizarse completamente en su novela, El tiempo principia en Xibalbá. Sin embargo, habiendo incorporado la indigeneidad que predeterminaba en él un sentido subalternizante de sí mismo y que lo posicionaba a él, y a otros como él, en una suerte de sistema social de castas que le impedía cualquier tipo de movilidad social debido a su condicionante racial, de Lión ya había configurado lo esencial de lo que significaba un proceso de racialización, y cómo este proceso afectaba las subjetividades indígenas.

Indigenous peoples cannot forget the genocide they went through in the decades following 1520. Nor can they forget what has gone on since then, what they have lived through to this day. They, certainly, are most qualified, and authorized, to utter James Joyce's statement that this history is indeed the nightmare from which they are trying to awake.¹ In Guatemala's case, there have been two more genocidal campaigns since the 16th century. The first one took place in 1871, following the Liberal Revolution led by Justo Rufino Barrios. This was associated with the "coffee fever," a process whereby Maya lands were confiscated by force and then privatized to turn them into coffee plantations. The second occurred in the 1980s, when the Guatemalan Army led by General Efraín Ríos Montt launched a campaign over the Central and Western Highlands

to defeat guerrilla organizations and razed over 600 Maya villages to “take the water away from the fish.”²

In the last 30 years, a growing body of literary work enumerating the incarnate memory of indigenous experience has emerged throughout Latin America. This literature articulates a counter-modernity to the West’s teleology of progress and ethos of “natural” superiority, as indigenous subjects struggle to emerge from within the subalternity and racialization to which they were confined by colonial thinking. As we know, despite embodying technologies of power deployed by colonial and colonized institutions, indigenous peoples continue to struggle to emerge from the confines of coloniality-legacies of European colonialism in social orders and forms of knowledge- without renouncing their cultures, to the specifics of their singular identities.³ These are transparently crafted in those literary texts they have begun to produce since the second half of the 20th century not only to show but also to argue, and prove, that their identities, are rooted in a sophisticated world view anchored in complex epistemological articulations, themselves grounded in a comprehensive elucidation of the cosmos.

One of the pioneers in the turn towards indigenous literature was Guatemalan Kaqchikel Maya writer Luis de Lión.⁴ Born on August 19th, 1939, he is without a doubt the first self-identified Maya writer in Guatemalan modernity. Luis de Lión was born as José Luis de León Díaz in the small town of San Juan del Obispo, a few miles away from Antigua Guatemala, the colonial capital of Central America. San Juan del Obispo was the spot chosen by Guatemala’s first Catholic bishop and founder of Antigua, Francisco Marroquín (1499 - April 18, 1563), for his personal residence.⁵ De Lión knew this. The old bishop’s palace is still the main tourist attraction to this town, named “del Obispo” (the literal translation here would be “St. John of the Bishop”) quite literally because of Marroquín’s residence there. Those who built his palace, or worked as his servants, established themselves around the palatial structure, giving rise to a new indigenous town without a pre-Hispanic existence, a focus of De Lión’s acerbic irony in some of his earlier short stories and poems. De Lión was a Kaqchikel Maya, as are most indigenous peoples from this region of the country, transplanted there by the Spaniards to serve them. The Kaqchikels are the second largest Maya group after the K’iche’s, and have vied for hegemony with them since the 1400s.⁶ His first book of stories was *Los Zopilotes* (1966), followed by *Su segunda muerte* (1970). He was politically active in the communist Guatemalan Workers Party (PGT) in the 1970s. Indeed, it is nearly impossible to understand de Lión’s masterpiece, *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá* (1985; *Time Commences in Xibalbá*, 2012),

without knowing the context of what happened in Guatemala, his country of origin, more or less since the 1970s. This situation became a clear example of what Boaventura de Sousa Santos calls “the invisible abyssal line that separates the realm of law from the realm of non-law.” The ubiquitous presence of the military base emblemized the visible dichotomy between the legal and the illegal. In this logic, the Maya side of the line represented an assemblage of discarded experiences by the Ladino-controlled Guatemalan nation state. It was inevitable that this limit-experience was transformed into a civil war followed by a genocidal campaign against the Mayas. In this context, Luis de Li3n was kidnapped at noon on May 15th, 1984 from a street in the capital, tortured and assassinated in June of the same year. His body was never recovered but evidence of his assassination, notes and his photograph, survived in the military archive. These were found two decades later.⁷

In the present article I shall proceed to examine the stories that have recently been re-issued by Guatemala’s Ministry of Culture in a single volume titled *La puerta del cielo* (2011), a title taken from his most famous story, also analyzed in this article. I argue that the short stories preceding de Li3n’s ground-breaking novel are much more than personal remembrance, as early works in most major writers often are. Instead, they comprise a laboratory for representing racialized subalternity in various forms and fashions. They constitute a sort of dress-rehearsal for the novelistic project already lurking in the back of his mind at the time of their writing. It is my contention, therefore, that at the earlier stage in which de Li3n wrote his stories, he still had not configured exactly how racialized subalternity might become an emancipatory decolonial project. He would only stage this in *Time Commences in Xibalb3*. Nonetheless, having embodied indigeneity which pre-determined a subalternizing sense of selfhood that positioned him and others in a caste-like social system impeding upward mobility by virtue of their racial determinants, de Li3n had already configured what racialization meant, and how it affected indigenous subjectivities.⁸ He was thus staging it in various ways and forms in his earlier stories, in experimental fashion. We can see, in consequence, an anticipation of future theoretical turns in many of them.

By racialized subalternity we mean those implications of the ethnic/racialized classifications of the populations conquered by the Spaniards in the 1500s as explained by An3bal Quijano in his theorization of the “coloniality of power.”⁹ That de Li3n might conceptualize it at such an early age, given his erratic schooling in a country with such low-quality public education as Guatemala, only attests to his brilliance and sensitivity. Indeed, the presence of notions of racialized subalternity in Luis de Li3n’s

early short stories is striking, even when these do not appear as the central theme of many of them. In part, his aesthetic project reassesses the internalized inferiority felt by provincial Maya youth as a result of racialized subalternity, and struggles to transform these negative traits into a viable and legitimate cultural identity, one capable of generating agency and articulating an emancipatory movement at a future date. However, specific imagings and figurations of racialized subalternity do appear in all of his short stories.

I begin my analysis by looking at the first story in the volume I am presently examining, “El inventor” (The Inventor). In this text, the categorical phrase that begins the narrative by stating “this is the town of Juans” (23), positions readers at the entrance to a world that has internalized its own racialization.¹⁰ The gesture of naming everyone with the same name, “Juan”, generalizes the objectifying gaze of Ladino racism (i.e., a mixed European and indigenous identity with a Western worldview).¹¹ Ladinos often name all indigenous subjects “Juan” or “José” (and all women as “María”) because they objectivize indigenous peoples as racialized non-beings. In the racist’s gaze, they are not subjects. They are simply objects. Nonetheless, de Lión plays with this uniquely unpleasant turn of events and turns it upside-down by articulating the incongruity of irony as a rhetorical device. His discursive use of irony enables him to re-appropriate Maya subjectivity as a mechanism for agency:

Juan Caca, el del mismo olor de su nombre, pero que, sin embargo, siempre es invitado de honor en todas las reuniones. Y Juan Hueso, el casi sin carne y sin sangre y que, para su suerte, vive junto al cementerio. Y Juan Burro, el viejo medio baboso que, además, es dueño de un animalito orejón que da las horas más puntual que los mejores relojes. Y Juan Poste, el insensible en su cuerpo, el quieto toda la vida, el firme cuando camina. (23)

[Juan Crap, the man who smells like his name, but who, nonetheless, is always the guest of honor at all of the gatherings. And Juan Bone, the man who’s got no meat on him, no blood and who, lucky him, lives next to the cemetery. And Juan Burro, the old, half dumb man who is also the owner of a long-eared little animal who is more punctual in keeping time than the best watches. And Juan Post, numb in body, quiet his whole life, solid when walking.]

Mocking begins with his capacity to make fun of indigenous peoples by representing them as provincial (“pueblerinos”), and indigenous, on top of that. The narrative voice introduces this element to contrast the subjects named with the original meaning of the words defining them (bone, crap,

donkey) and their surnames, an obviously artificial notation. This generates an incongruity between what is said and what is meant. The rhetorical word-play absorbs the humour of the characters' names, a discordance deliberately created that depicts a situational irony, one where Ladinos mocked indigenous peoples with these insulting nicknames, yet the indigenous writer appropriates them in turn to mock Ladinos by making incongruous the outcome of the insulting nicknames. At the same time, the descriptive expressions that accompany the "Juanes" also individualizes them, thereby transforming them into subjects. They are no longer interchangeable Juanes, but have become specific Juanes with differentiating characteristics. This rhetorical gesture humanizes them. The sarcastic play thus becomes a simulacrum of the Ladino racialized model, recalling them to their own truth. We can consider what Baudrillard said more than thirty years ago - the simulacrum does not hide the truth, but rather the truth hides a lack of substance. According to him, when it comes to simulation and simulacra, "It is no longer a question of imitation, nor duplication, nor even parody. It is a question of substituting the signs of the real for the real" (2), thus pointing to the loss of our ability to make sense of the distinction between nature and artifice.¹² In this double play, by mocking the reification of Maya subjects, de Li3n ends up mocking the lack of substance in Ladino racialization.

Of course, in this particular story the parody centers on Juan Father (Tata), whose representation transforms itself into a burlesque reversal of the colonizing process, and, in turn, humanizes the representation of the Catholic Christ figure:

Este Juan, sin embargo, no es de este cielo; es de m1s all1 de estas monta1as y aun de la mar; naci3 en la otra cara del mundo y de all1 se vino cuando lo mand3 a llamar un obispo que hab1a dispuesto fundar aqu1 su encomienda. (23)

[This Juan, however, isn't from this heaven; he's from beyond these mountains and even beyond the sea; he was born on the other side of the world and that's where he came from when a bishop who had decided to establish his *encomienda* (land grant)¹³ here called for him.]

The parodic play previously stated is complicated by the details that Juan arrived with his goat, "sweating, struggling, and holding himself up with his wooden staff" (23). The text tells us that he arrived half naked, "only a few pieces of leather covered his private parts" (23), and was surprised when they grabbed him, asked to name the town after him, ushered him

into a procession, put him in a palace “of stone and brick, with stairs leading up to it and bell towers”,¹⁴ and:

...lo metieron a puro huevo hasta adentro de su casa, lo colocaron en el centro del altar principal acompañado de su chivo, le dijeron que contara su historia, que inmediatamente pintaron en grandes cuadros en ese mismo altar para que nadie olvidara quien era él, y lo dejaron allí para siempre. (24)

[...they forced him violently into his house, they put him in the middle of the main altar accompanied by his goat, they told him to tell his story, which they immediately painted in huge portraits around the altar so nobody would forget who he was, and they left him there forever.]

As such, the easiness of the story transforms itself into a counter-discourse of colonization. Underneath the parody of the Jesus figure, there is a problematization of the local population’s Catholic beliefs and a critique of dominant models of exegesis about Jesus’ life. A little while later, a character named Juan Without History appears before Juan Father. The narrative voice changes at this point from the third to the first person. This narrative “I” is the indigenous subject; Juan Without History, “a man who had nothing between heaven and earth, because not even the little piece of my today in which my feet found themselves was mine, much less the time that my shadow occupied” (25-26).¹⁵ Once again, the ironic sarcasm articulates the centrality of the peripheral subject: the marginal Maya subject lacking interpretive history due to their exclusion from official history. Official history, in turn, exposed as an imposture in this rendering, only recognizes a Criollo-Ladino teleology to justify the occupation of the geopolitical space, a literary chronotope in the Bakhtinian sense, which Ladinos name “Guatemala” and Mayas call “Iximuleu”.¹⁶

The sarcasm that turns to irony evidences the textual tension existing between the uses of signifiers indicating playfulness in contrast to the scathing denunciation articulated by Maya subjectivity. It displays the black holes hidden within Ladino rhetoric, which they violently attempt to impose as Reason itself. The writing process is, thus, a struggle to create an alternative truth, and to validate it above and beyond the racist “official” Ladino discursivity. The stories are written in Spanish. However, behind the specter of this imperialist language, one may subtly, metalinguistically, perceive the hidden presence of the author’s native Kaqchikel. De Lión is proposing to make himself understood from the perspective of this basic conflict: the existing tension and dispute between written Spanish and a Kaqchikel voice lurking behind those utterances, exploiting turns which

are unacceptable to the Spanish Academy. This positionality enables a discussion about the Eurocentric nature of the concept of “literature” and the problems implied when oral practices defying attempts at translation are included within the framework of what is labeled “literature.” It also opens up a debate regarding the Eurocentric nature of literariness as the only recognized form of constituting social imaginaries in illiterate countries such as Guatemala.

Let us return to the analysis. In “Los hijos del padre” (The Sons of the Father) de Li3n rearticulates parody by way of two Holy Week processions - one for the “rich” and one for the “poor”. Yet underneath this class antagonism lies, once again, the specter of racialism. It is known that the processions on which this story is based are those of the “Escuela de Cristo” (Christ’s School), Church where upper-class Ladinos with a Criollo world-view from both Guatemala City and Antigua participate, while the “poor peoples” procession is that of San Felipe, a suburb of Antigua, where the penitents are primarily indigenous. The race between the processions to be the first to cross an intersection in the town of Antigua is, thus, also about “race,” broadening the presuppositions of this signifier. Inevitably, it leads to a confrontation of the two groups of “cucurucho.” A “cucurucho” is a pointy hat of conical form. In Guatemala, however, “cucurucho” has become the name for the male penitents that carry over their shoulders the processional floats with images of Christ and the Virgin, regardless of whether they wear or not such pointy hats. A crucial line in this story reads, “it had been a long time since our little father enjoyed his processional carpet; a long time now that the other one left ours only the discarded bits and pieces of it” (30).¹⁷ Here de Li3n is describing the carpets made mostly of dyed sawdust, flowers, seeds, fruits, and bread, by residents, friends, and families along processional routes. They are offered up as a sacrifice in anticipation of the procession that will ruin them. The “cucurucho” carry the floats over these carpets, inevitably destroying them with their feet as they walk over them. Thus, a procession that passes over any given carpet in second place only gets “the discarded bits and pieces of it,” the phrase in de Li3n’s story. The tropes in this phrase synthesize the unfortunate consequences of five centuries of colonial oppression. Indigenous subjects only get leftovers, bits and pieces of the country they once owned, in metonymic fashion. The trace of coloniality, hidden behind this chain of significations, problematizes Ladinist rhetoric, if colloquially, and inevitably generates the irreducible energy of those others who see themselves as humiliated, forgotten, marginalized and racialized. We have here an echo of Derrida’s words that “play is the disruption of presence. The presence of an element is always a signifying

and substitutive reference inscribed in a system of differences and the movement of a chain. Play is always play of absence and presence” (292).

When the poor procession’s “cucuruchos” literally fight those participating in the rich one, so as to get there first for once, their reaction stages the struggle for decoloniality; that is, the poor “cucuruchos” embody the energy of those subalternized subjects who, without knowing coloniality’s logic, react viscerally against the conventionalist rhetoric of a racist and exclusionary modernity. The phantasmatic shadow of indigeneity emerges from under the cucurucho’s hood. We know that “my mother, my father and my dog went down to Antigua to be with our own for a while” (28).¹⁸ This sentence clearly delineates an indigenous family that transports itself not only geographically but also conceptually from the Maya village to the Ladino colonial city, and its positioning is clearly racialized:

Ambos (cristos yacentes) son hermanos. Si son hijos del mismo Padre.
Pero el de la ciudad es el que les hace los milagros a los Ladinos...
Y el de la aldea es el que nos hace los trabajitos a nosotros, la indiada, la pobrería de los pueblos. (28)

[Both (recumbent Christs) are brothers. They are children of the same Father after all.
But the one from the city works miracles for the Ladinos...
And the one from the village does little jobs for us, the mass of Indians, the poor townfolk.]

The quotation reveals the point of articulation between the illusion of a world that considers itself and constructs itself as the only possible one (that is, the logic of Ladino modernity) and the underlying consequences behind the axiomatic imposition of such arbitrary rhetoric (the logic of coloniality weighing on Maya culture). The short story clearly captures all existing binary oppositions - rich/poor, city/village, Ladino/indigenous - in a few lines, and articulates the colonial wound inflicted, in this case, on the Maya population. Additionally, the story further underlines its irony by referring to both social groups through the same ritual figure and religious practice, namely, the recumbent Christs of Good Friday, in the Catholic Holy Week. Here we have the first demonstration of a decolonial turn in Spanish American literature.

A different way of presenting similar issues occurs in “La puerta del cielo” (The Door to Heaven), the featured story in this volume. Ethnicity affirms itself in a regional locale marked as a *topos*, a geographically

delineated identitarian space associated in turn with the perspective of childhood:

Yo no he salido más allá de los ixcos de Guatemala, pero a todos aquéllos que traen en sus pestañas el color de otras tierras, que traen su corazón bailando con otras músicas distintas de la música de la marimba, que traen en sus zapatos miles de capas de polvo de otros caminos - tanto que ya nos parecen más altos - les he preguntado si en alguna otra parte donde no hay guardabarrancas ni cenizontles ni quetzales ni xaras ni chipes, sino otra clase de pájaros, hay alguna puerta del cielo. Me han dicho que no. (31)

[I haven't ventured beyond the ixcos¹⁹ of Guatemala, but of all those who carry in their eyelashes the color of other lands, whose hearts dance to music that is different than the marimba, who carry on their shoes thousands of layers of dust from other roads - so many that they seem taller to us - I have asked if in different places where there are other kinds of birds, where there are no *guardabarrancas*, *cenizontles*, *quetzals*, *xaras* or *chipes*, if there is a door to heaven. They've told me there is not.]

"Ixcos", music, the color of the land and birds are the topographical factors configuring identity in a specific "habitus" in the sense of Bourdieu, one that generates what Abril Trigo labels an "emotional memory," without which we cannot conceptualize social imaginaries.²⁰ When the local children discover the door to heaven, "we were a mass of barefoot, flea-ridden kids with broken Spanish" (32).²¹ De Lión adds the element of childhood to consolidate the reliability of a non-real trope (a door leading to Heaven), but ratifies the topographical trait laden with ethnicity. The children are positioned in a precise place and geographical environment, as are their economic conditions:

...de lunes a sábado íbamos la mitad del día a la escuela y la otra mitad a trabajar duro en el monte y casi todo el domingo lo ocupábamos en ayudar en otras cositas a nuestros tatas ... acarrear agua, ir a conseguir leña ... cortar frutas para que nuestra nana las vendiera en el mercado, y solo en la tarde...cuando el sol se vuelve el pan de que se alimenta el volcán de Fuego, nos juntábamos ... a jugar futbol con una pelota de trapo... (32)

[From Monday to Saturday we spent half the day in school and the other half working hard in the fields, and almost all day Sunday we spent helping our folks out with other little things ... getting water, finding firewood ... gathering fruit so our moms could sell it in the market, and only in the evenings ...when the sun

becomes the bread that feeds the Fuego volcano, we would get together ... to play soccer with a ball made out of rags...]

The description names ethnicity without enunciating it. The rest of the plot unfolds from the perspective of Chabello, a child who sees what adults cannot because they are not positioned in the same cultural and imaginative perspective, in the same locus of meaning. The adult man who “was not from around here” is incapable of observing what the children see. Parodic enunciations manifest themselves in the description of this man which clearly marks him as an alien figure within the tightly-knit community:

Su cara era colorada y llena de rayitas de lo chupada; tenía unas cejas grandes, como si fueran de paja ... y unos ojos que ... buscaban a saber qué; su nariz era larga, puntiaguda, afilada como machete, de gruesos pelos en las ventanas, y debajo de la nariz le nacían unos bigotes que se alargaban y luego se enrollaban como patas de mesa colonial. Era alto y seco ... Tenía una voz vieja, reguardada, podrida, que antes de que le saliera por la boca, le hervía primero en el pecho. (34)

[His face was red and full of those lines that skeleton-thin people have; he had some big eyebrows that looked like they were made out of straw ... and eyes that searched around for who knows what; his nose was long, pointy, sharp like a machete, with thick hairs in his nostrils, and under his nose whiskers grew out and curled up at the ends like the legs of a colonial-style table. He was tall and skinny ... he had an old, guarded, rotten voice that, before it came out of his mouth, first boiled up in his chest].

Parody, from the Greek *paroidia*, meaning “burlesque poem or song,” is both a symptom and a weapon; it disfigures canonical presuppositions, but, fundamentally, it is a critical act of revalorization. Certainly the “literariness” of the work is marked by the presence of the parodic element. In the background, however, stand contingent discursivities of Ladino teleology, against which de Li6n’s figures and signifiers are measured as if they were catachreses. Parody thus inverts the racialized subject’s sense of non-existence, the dehumanization and inferiorization felt, and the structural and institutional racialization and subalternization that continue positioning Maya subjects, their knowledges, logics and life systems below those of a Eurocentric perspective. Once de Li6n describes Ladinos and foreigners, they can never again be seen as “normal.” His signs efface their credibility; they are left as if pre-read and deconstructed. They have been transformed into objects of mockery. Additionally, de Li6n’s

parody is an acclimatizing gesture. When he mocks the subject residing in a “place above” - here, the rich foreigner who came to the village to construct a mansion on a mountain top - the narrative voice makes the reader familiar with the Maya cosmovision from within which the child operates. It forces the reader to work to locate him or herself within Chabello’s perspective. The reader thus unknowingly enters into a Maya cosmovision, which makes seeing the door to heaven possible. The latter is a trope acting as a metonymy of a secretive culture.²² It plays into Mayas’ knowledge of the cosmos, an ecstatic set of signifiers that intend to activate a non-rational understanding of the human spirit, if we are to understand “non-rational” here within strict Western parameters. However, parody is still the principal, formal means of the thematic construction in the text, against which the “gate of heaven” stands in contemplation, a symbolic means of articulating a sense of the subject’s integrity with his/her cosmic environment. Furthermore, the contrast between parody and the cosmic symbol accomplishes a hermeneutic function by articulating a reading that specifies the cultural and ideological space from which the act of reading itself should be practiced. It forces the reader to configure his or her subjectivity as a reader - to feel Maya in the act of reading.

Parody is one of the principal means of self-reflexivity. De Li3n seems to suggest that all fiction is a grimace copied from reality in the sense of both informing the reader of events that might have happened, as well as articulating an effort to convince him/her of the their veracity. His corrosive mockery dissolves the pompous, querulous Ladino-ness desirous of inscribing itself within Eurocentric patterns of power through an exercise of the idea of race as a system of domination and subordination, precisely because they are insecure or unknowledgeable about their own identitary configuration. Ladinos continue to flee from the Mongolian stain that would seal their belonging to an indigenous world.²³

According to this logic, “The Door to Heaven” becomes the untangling of a textual strategy that articulates the superior discernment and clairvoyance of the Mayas *vis-à-vis* Eurocentric subjects (whether this is confirmed or not), and its violation by the latter. De Li3n’s critical vision as articulated in various grammatical and semantic variations is a performative force that wants to engage with Eurocentric racism from within its own rhetorical system as an event of resistance. He launches humorous provocations with excess, so as to then unchain an alternative subjectivity - Maya subjectivity - that opposes as well as complements Ladino discursivity. The humor of his provocations nonetheless frames de Li3n’s truth. The categorical ending of the story, that is, the affirmation that the door to heaven is closed “forever,” anticipates An3bal Quijano’s

theorization in the 1990s of the problem of the colonality of power. The ending symbolically configures the world as one marked by social stratification based on racialization. This is what has blocked Mayas' entry to "heaven," a trope of their aspiration to a qualitatively superior existence, and one which would only be possible if racialized subalternization were to disappear. In other words, it could only happen prior to 1492, before those men with "red faces" (as that of the adult man who "was not from around here") first appeared on the mountains. Without a doubt this is one of the most complete stories of the collection.

In contrast to this story, parody functions in a different way in the story "Tarzan de los monos" (Tarzan of the Apes). The textual appropriation of the popular early 20th century British series complicates the plausibility that a reader might accept a Maya subject named Benigno Julián as playing the role of Tarzan, and that his girlfriend "Jane" could be Angelina Chonay, a woman who also happens to be Maya. Therefore, the parodic play is here the reverse of the previous story. This time around, mockery strikes the Maya actants of the text.²⁴ The latter is somewhat ameliorated once again by the fact that the protagonist is a child. The story articulates the fantasy of this boy who, believing he is Tarzan, falls in platonic love with another child he calls "Jane." She is older than Benigno. When she falls in love with somebody else she abandons "her" Tarzan. The story is also a proposition for settling accounts with the Anglo-Saxon imaginary that permeates popular culture, pushing it to its limit.²⁵ It thus offers a new model for processing the transference and reorganization of the Eurocentric legacy and archive for populations that happen not to be of that accursed cultural origin. The children "meet" Tarzan in the Díaz Theatre in Antigua. The child "realizes" that he is Tarzan and he projects that imaginary onto his surroundings:

Desde que anunciaron que yo iba a aparecer en historietas, me puse a ahorrar para comprarme. Centavo que me daba mi mama, centavo que guardaba. Cuando apareció el primer número, inmediatamente me compré. Me gustó un poco, pero no tanto. Allí aparecía yo hablando bien el español, y eso no era cierto. Con cada número me desilusionaba más, pues siempre se me exageraba. A veces aparecía manejando un avión, yo que solo los veía pasar en el cielo. Un tal Lex Barrer era el que me imitaba. A pesar de eso, siempre me compraba. (42-43)

[After they announced that I was going to be in a comic strip, I started saving to buy myself. A coin my mother gave me was a coin I saved. When the first issue came out, I immediately bought myself. I liked it ok, but not that much. It showed me speaking Spanish well, and that wasn't the truth. With every issue, I was more

disappointed, since they were always overdoing me. Sometimes I'd be flying a plane - me, who'd only seen them go by in the sky. Some guy named Lex Barrer played me. Regardless, I always bought myself.]

The parodic form of double-identity plays with the tension created by the historical awareness of the gap between the fantasies articulated by the Eurocentric world and those of its other operating outside of the privileges of the former. In the imaginative world of Tarzan, an English Lord turns into the "noble savage" whose empire consists of animals from the African jungle. In the imaginative world of Benigno, he is Tarzan. He does not know, however, to swim because there is no river and this humorous description marks those traits spelling underdevelopment:

Si apenas había agua en las pilas. Antes si había un pequeño riachuelo que venía del nacimiento de las Minas en el pico del cerro del Cucurucho. Pero como África estaba en una finca, el dueño lo desvió para sus regadíos y nos dejó sin río. (41)

[There was hardly any water in the water tank. Before, there was a little river that came down from the Minas spring up on top of the Cucurucho Mountain. But because Africa was on a plantation, the owner rerouted it to water his fields and he left us with no river.]

Similarly, while it might have been fun being Tarzan on Sunday, he stopped being Tarzan on Monday, when he had to:

Agarrar su azadón y su machete e ir a trabajar a su minifundio, luego regresar al mediodía, cargando de leña y sin waziris que me ayudaran y de ahí agarrar para la Antigua, a la escuela, a pie y no en los lomos de Tantor, mi elefante, y regresar ya casi de noche. (41)

[Get his hoe and machete and go work on their little plot of land, then come home at noon carrying wood with no Waziris to help me, and from there, be on my way to Antigua, to school, on foot and not on the back of Tantor, my elephant, and then return home late in the afternoon.]

The subalternized reality of a Third World contrasts with the idealized Africa found in comic books, which themselves elude the racial tragedy of the so called "Black Continent," a colonial epithet originating in 19th century Europe. The story thus transforms itself into an allegory of the exploitation of subalternized innocence that also names the African racialization embodied in the Tarzan narratives so as to project a sense of global

coloniality, while continuing to demand sovereignty for Mayas' cultural patrimony. The parody in the story reveals the crisis of inequality marking the relationship between the imperial subject and the colonized subject. The story becomes circular, one where a Maya Tarzan denotes the historical impossibility of a subalternized subject being a super-hero. At the same time, the elliptical displacement of his irony-laced rhetoric points at the historical possibility of a need to combat global racism:

Muchá, nos quitaron África y África es nuestra - les decía a mis amigos.

A ellos les daba risa....

...¿Y qué querés que hagamos?

-Luchemos, muchá. Ya no para nosotros. Para nuestros hijos. (44)

["Guys, they took Africa away from us, and it is ours," I would say to my friends.

They would just laugh...

..."And what do you want us to do about it?"

"Let's fight for it, guys. Not for us. For our children."]

In other words, the story evidently questions Eurocentric premises of a coherent and uninterrupted universality of significations rooted in a world closed off to racialized subjects of the planet, while deferring explicit political solutions in the name of humor. De Lión's parody openly challenges the universality of those imaginaries articulated from within the positionality of hegemonic centers of cultural decision-making that uniformly reduce non-whites to mere signifiers of exoticism in a simplistic, homogeneous form.

Parody also appears in the story "El simio" (The Monkey), which is one of the most overtly political stories of the collection. However, it avoids creating simplistic binaries, as the narrator announces at the start of the story that he had always believed that the comparison of Latin American dictators to apes was over the top, "until one day...". Then the narrator, a school teacher, tells us the story of Juan Bonito, a Maya faith healer (*curandero*), and his little monkey. "El mico era el alma de don Juan, y don Juan decía lo mismo. Y andaba con él pararriba y parabajo" (The monkey was Juan's soul-mate, and even Juan said so. They went everywhere together, 47), we are told. In this instance, de Lión plays with the cartoonish stereotype of a dictator. Instead of representing him as an ape, as often done in political lampooning, the dictator is represented as consulting with a monkey to avoid political coups. The gesture of ridiculous imitation, a typical trait of political satire, becomes an inversion in the story's structure. The challenge posed by de Lión is that of regulating the caricature so as to transform it into ironic difference. At the same time,

he does add a carnivalesque element to his description to induce easy laughter. For example, the cathedral, referred to at the beginning of the story, is not an important religious temple; rather, it is a shack behind the school, where Juan Bonito lives with his monkey. The dictator is described as follows:

Era gordo y mantecoso como un cerdo y llevaba una cachucha, una estrellita al hombro, un montón de babosaditas en el pecho y una .45 en la cintura. Caminaba tieso, bien macho, rodeado de su ministro de la defensa, de su plana mayor y de sus asesinos, todos con lentes oscuros. (45)

[He was fat and greasy like a pig and he wore a military hat, a little star on his arm, a bunch of stupid little pins on this chest and a .45 at his belt. He walked tall, a real macho-man, surrounded by his minister of defense, his staff officers and his assassins, all of them wearing dark sunglasses.]

But the parody goes beyond these mocking quips. Rather, it is located within the power of the Maya ritual. As a healer, Juan makes the dictator, “who had at his disposal a stream of psychologists instilling terror” (49), repeat the monkey’s prayer and drink contaminated water “that Juan kept on his altar and gave to everybody who consulted him” (49).²⁶ The healer makes a fool of the dictator, something he will do again, later in the story, when his monkey dies from alcohol poisoning. The dictator orders a dignified funeral for the monkey and sends a coffin lined with white silk for the burial. The corrosive irony appears in the narrative voice when the teacher recalls, “when I saw it, I thought about the child who days earlier had his wake at the train station and who had been wrapped up and buried in some newspapers” (51).²⁷

This perspective highlights a reconsideration of the norms and expectations with which this dictator articulates his power. It is not merely a shameless abundance of superstition and idiocy taken beyond imaginable limits. The transgression primarily points to the latency of the invisible and infinite fear perpetually gripping the dictator, which the Maya healer is capable of conjuring up. For that reason, parody lies in the transference of fear from the population living under the dictator’s rule to the dictator himself, which thus frees the population from the dictator. The dictator’s behaviour becomes laughable; something ridiculous that strips him of his authority and power. If what is called “normalcy” is preserved by repressing perversion, in this story Juan Bonito succeeds in making the dictator incite it and reveal it in turn, thereby breaking the unstable and precarious balance of the “order of things” and guaranteeing its failure.

This loss of fear turns into rage when the dictator's agents insist that the monkey be buried in the cemetery. They insist, despite the municipal mayor's objections that the animal is not human and should not be buried there. The dictator's agents mandate that the burial take place:

Y fue enterrado en el cementerio, entre una lluvia rala de rezos y cantos y una lluvia espesa de flores que habían sido llevadas en un jeep. Don Juan le puso una cruz, una bonita cruz de cedro oloroso que también había sido donada por el Dictador. (53)

[And he was buried in the cemetery, in a light rain of prayers and chants, and a heavy rain of flowers that had been brought in a jeep. Juan placed a cross on his grave, a beautiful cross of fragrant cedar that had also been donated by the Dictator.]

The transgressive act of the funeral impacts the dictator as expected, a closure of presence, so to speak. He indeed falls victim to a *coup d'état*. The power play articulated by de Lión is subtle. For the imaginary society represented in the text, the monkey's burial on sacred land represents a transgression. It is unacceptable. But this image is generated by the linguistic function of the utterances. As artifacts, they are the ones defining the anthropological function that conjoins the complexities of absolute power to the absolute fear felt by the dictator himself.

The dictator's lack of moderation is translated into ethical terms. The transgressive function - the burial - generates an invisible element within the text. Between the lines, in the blank spaces devoid of signifiers, we, as readers, may imagine popular opposition cracking the power structure and hastening the fall of the tyrant. Once this happens, the cycle repeats itself. The new dictator gives Juan Bonito a new monkey as a gift so that he can foresee potential *coups*. As the story comes to a close, we see that real power lies with Juan Bonito. The fact that he is a healer points in the direction of a Maya cosmovision. Without naming it, the story highlights the superiority of the latter, while simultaneously demonstrating how humor is capable of corroding fear of dictatorships. Maya cosmovision, though never named, becomes the place where new power/knowledge relationships favouring subalternized and racialized subjects may be built, overcoming traditional "Indigenous/Ladino" dichotomies. Additionally, the story reveals the anti-humanism of dictatorships without falling into the trodden paths of the social literature of the 1930s. This story is emblematic of the collection in that it questions those prejudices localized underneath the racialized assumptions of the Ladino nation and the apparatus it has built to exercise a tyrannical, yet fragile domination.

“La miss” (The Beauty Queen) is closer to “La puerta del cielo” in the sense of articulating the imaginaries of the marginal Maya subject in the context of Eurocentric modernity. Again narrated in the first person, but this time by the protagonist, we find out that José Raxón is obsessed with the image of a woman from a faraway city. Due to the story’s title, and the referential signs pointing to the image of a desired “miss,” the reader assumes that we are dealing with a foreign woman who the narrator saw in a magazine photo at some point:

De la revista pasó a mis ojos y se quedó en mis pupilas. Para no perderla, me esforcé en soñar todas las noches. Pero mantener la cabeza habitada por una mujer es terrible. Mis ojos amanecían con bolsas debajo de los párpados y mi boca se abría cada instante para emitir bostezos. ¿Escribirle? No. En la revista solo estaba el nombre de la ciudad. No había otro camino que viajar y buscarla. O mi cabeza estallaría. (55)

[She went from the magazine to my eyes and she remained in my pupils. So as not to lose her, I tried to dream about her every night. But, having a woman inhabit your head is terrible. My eyes would wake up with bags under the lids and my mouth opened all the time to emit yawns. Write to her? No. Only the name of the city was in the magazine. There was nothing to do but travel and look for her. Or my head would blow up.]

The narrator’s obsession with the image of this woman encodes a movement from a rational and ordered state to an irrational and disordered one. In this transition we find the transgression in the story. The transvalued image seen in the foreign magazine names a trope of a mirage of the developed world that draws towards itself subalternized subjects of colonized countries in a nonanalytic fashion, while simultaneously articulating the image of that desired world into a fetishistic desire for the self. But the crossing to irrationality goes further. It implies transforming the main character’s will to power into a cruel joke, an abyssal shadow game. The narrator is so determined to meet the fetishized image that he saves money his whole life to be able to travel and do so. He starves himself, sells his parents’ property when they pass away, and obtains a passport. Although supposedly articulating his desire to meet this mysterious foreign woman through a series of scenes that also evinces his low self-esteem, they in fact contain a veiled attack on the moral, social and legal borders that define the Guatemalan state. It is here where the story’s transgression is located. This display constitutes an astonishing articulation of the theories of excess originally enunciated by

French philosopher George Bataille, in his book *The Accused Share*, where he evokes the limits imposed on the subject. We should remember here how according to Bataille's theory of consumption, the accursed share is constituted by that excessive, non-refundable part of any economy destined for social expenditure. This excess must either be spent luxuriously and knowingly without gain in the arts, in non-procreative sexuality, in spectacles and sumptuous monuments, or it is destined for outrageous and catastrophic disbursements such as wars.

The ending of the story reveals once again a humourous irony. The narrator travels to New York, and the reader discovers that the object of his affection was the Statue of Liberty. However, lacking a visa, he is deported back to Guatemala. The protagonist then returns to Aura, his childhood girlfriend, who had a child with her cousin during the narrator's long absence, because she has dimples similar to those of the Statue of Liberty. The latter, humourous as a "silly" object of affection, nonetheless remains standing as a trope of liberty in evoking Emma Lazarus's lines ("Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,"), in contrast to Guatemala's perpetual dictatorships.²⁸ This gesture thus reveals an ambiguity about the neo-colonial role of the US from a subaltern, racialized perspective and the double bind for subjects who cannot enjoy this freedom in either country. Ultimately, though, the narrator remains mired in his world and perspective, with Aura's dimples standing as scant trace of a freedom and a modernity that remain out of reach for racialized indigenous subjects.

"El perro" (The Dog) reduces the care and generosity one may have toward animals to a problem of power. Once again we have two contrasts. On the one hand, Teodoro, nicknamed "el teniente" (the Lieutenant), who names his dog Fuhrer. The Lieutenant, despite being a Ladino, is proud of his German heritage even though it is essentially limited to his last name. Nonetheless, his character reflects the attraction that subjects originating in "underdeveloped" societies often have for the developed world's authoritarian models of power:

Y Mi Teniente cerraba los ojos por un momento y se veía, con quepi y uniforme, parando en una tribuna, firme como un poste del alumbrado público, mientras abajo desfilaban cientos de soldados. Pero abría los ojos y se veía nuevamente tal cual era, un oficinista de la Municipalidad capitalina recibiendo órdenes de unos jefes civiles que le decía Mi general, en broma.

Todos los domingos, sin embargo, Mi teniente se realizaba a medias. Todos los domingos, sin preocuparse de su mujer y sus hijos, salía rumbo al campo de Marte a patear y putear a las fuerzas de reserva del ejército. Era instructor. (66-67)

[And my Lieutenant would close his eyes for a moment and imagine himself with his kepi and uniform, standing on a platform, solid as a lamp post, with hundreds of soldiers parading by below him. But he would open his eyes and see himself once again exactly as he really was – an office worker in the City Hall taking orders from civilian bosses who would call him “My General” as a joke.]

[Every Sunday, however, my Lieutenant became half way what he imagined. Every Sunday, unconcerned for his wife and children, he would set out for Camp Marte to hassle and kick around the Army Reserve soldiers. He was an instructor.]

Teodoro Flhor actually was a volunteer instructor. He was not paid for it. However, as a result of his aforementioned German last name, his Germanophile obsession (“remember that in this country of Indians you have German blood - it doesn’t matter that it is just a few drops,” his father used to tell him, 68),²⁹ leads him to desire the transformation of his subjectivity. He projects himself into a psychologically torturous imaginary:

...cuando era adolescente, siempre se miró en el espejo y esperó el momento en que dejaría de ser lo que era para pasar a ser un teutón. Y amó a las rubias, pero ninguna de ellas se fijó en el moreno que era él. Pasaron los años y, como a pesar del uniforme que por un tiempo había usado como caballero cadete, no pudo conseguirse una novia de color de cerveza tuvo que casarse con una muchacha de segunda, con Lámpara... (68)

[...when he was a teenager, he always looked at himself in the mirror, wishing for the moment in which he would cease being who he was and become a German. And he loved blondes, but none of them noticed a brown guy like him. The years went by and, despite the cadet’s uniform he wore for a while, he couldn’t get a beer-colored girlfriend, so he had to marry a second-rate girl, Lámpara...]

The irony, of course, is present in both his self-inflicted social repression as well as in his own limitations. Teodoro could not be an army officer because he could not pass mathematics. He placed his hopes in having a blond boy, but instead he had three dark-haired girls. Thus, the phantasmatic projection of his anxieties about being a brown Ladino is transferred to the dog. He orders his family members to ensure that the dog never be tied, so he might roam freely in the house without any boundaries. This is another transgressive gesture, but one that reverses the one articulated in the previous story. Here, the Lieutenant transgresses

the limits of the family's social interactions by destabilizing himself as a subject. His behaviour is neither stable nor rational.

The contrast to Teodoro (who aspires to be a dictator) and his dog named Fuhrer is represented by "Pulgoso" (Fleabag), a "lumpenproletariat" dog rescued by a poor family in the neighbourhood. In contrast to Fuhrer, Pulgoso has a happy upbringing. He receives all the love and affection that Fuhrer does not have. The story does not end there for Pulgoso, but in this story there will not be any winners. The dogs, and what happens between them, become metonymies of the armed conflict of the 1980s. The subject of the narration disappears. Nothing remains. In the Fuhrer's last escapades, the scenes slip from one to the next with no point of reference to place them. The metaphoricality of dizzying destructive movements lacking sense, evokes the disturbing atmosphere of the systemic violence of the 1980s, in which all of civil society's moral truths were threatened.

It goes without saying that, for the most part, the richness and complexity of Luis de Li3n's stories is found in their resistance to being reduced to a single interpretation or a simplistic binary meaning. The author wills a continuous and consistent articulation of otherness that weaves into language and tone an ethical narrative, forcing an environment of parody, irony, and other rhetorical mechanisms at his disposal, capable of generating humor, to engrave in the reader's consciousness the phantasmatic memory of indigenous will to power. This humor is thus not an end in itself. It is deployed to disarticulate the referential horizons framing Guatemalan Ladino-ness. Ethics emerge from within language itself by his foregrounding the false rationalist frame that traditionally would denote meaning and lay it open to the judgment of others. De Li3n never loses faith in the transgressive capabilities of literature. He flirts with cartoonish stereotypes but he always flips them upside-down to extract ethical meaning from them.

The self-reflection in the structures of De Li3n's stories provides a new model of artistic processing of knowledge. He demystifies the fetichization of the indigenous subject, previously represented by the various *indigenismos* either as sullen, opaque, long-suffering, hieratical, or hermetical figures, but always, by extension, as dehumanized subjects; or, else, depicted as comical drunkards who could magically transform themselves into their *naguales* according to whim and will.³⁰ In contrast to these dated images, de Li3n articulates parody to seek the reader's complicity. Once this has been obtained, he simultaneously mocks the conditions which subalternize both himself and Mayas as a whole, by enunciating a bitter, acidic, corrosive laughter while allowing

environments to talk. He displays a textual strategy in which the obsession with cultural memories and the tyrannical weight of oppression are reversed through self-irony. In each of these stories, his capacity for ironizing the conditions of subjection affecting indigenous subjects provides the elements that articulate their emancipatory potential. This representational achievement destroys the Ladino world.

We may conclude by arguing that whereas Luis de Li3n wrote his stories in the mid and late 1960s, when most decolonial theories were still non-existent and Marxism still reigned in Latin America, his artistry, and his own embodiment of racialization, enabled him to anticipate them by way of his creative work, one articulating an embedded conception of agency. His work proves, once again, that Latin American writers do not need to follow paths previously opened by conceptual theories, nor that a writer needs theoretical orientation to generate meaningful creative acts. His fictions clearly place the corporeal body within the realm of race perception, and he plays around with the idea of the body as a signifier clearly denoting racialization and subalternity. As I have previously stated in *Taking Their Word*, in the realm of ideas there is no such thing as a linear, progressive history moving from the centre to its periphery. Ideas can indeed be rediscovered, reconceptualized, or reprocessed by just about anyone, which is why subalternized, indigenous writers living on the “fringes” of the modern world can, and do, indeed, prefigure notions that will only appear much later in theoretical writings from the “centre.” Far from imitating, de Li3n anticipates many of the theoretical tendencies that would come in vogue in the 1990s and the early 21st century. It is now time, therefore, to give a master his due. It is befitting that de Li3n should be credited with initiating those ideas linked to racialization and decoloniality that constitute to date the most epistemologically significant instruments for freeing most racialized subjects from the Eurocentric subjection that the coloniality of power imposes upon them. His ideas continue to stand as a revolt, against actuality, against the heritage of the Enlightenment’s “order of things.”

The University of Texas at Austin

NOTES

- 1 In James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, one of the two main characters, Stephen Daedalus, states that “History is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake” (157). This quotation appears in Episode Two, during Stephen’s conversation with Mr.

- Deasy. Stephen sees Irish history as filled with violence. Deasy's and Haines's conceptions of history enable this violence by either excluding certain people from history (in Deasy's case, those who lack a Catholic faith), or, else, by absolving from blame those who perpetrate this violence (Haines's case).
- 2 The phrase was uttered by General Ríos Montt who declared that he would "take the water away from the fish": the Maya being the water and the guerillas the fish. See "Breaking Down the Wall of Impunity in Guatemala" by Victoria Sanford. A controversial trial began in Guatemala City in March 2013, whereby the General has been charged with genocide.
 - 3 I take the concept of embodiment originally from Foucault's *Discipline and Punishment*, as do most scholars. However, like Elizabeth Grosz, I tend to understand it as the categorization of the body as normatized by particular and distinctive sets of criteria. To explore how the body is constructed by Eurocentric racialization we have to explore the normative assumptions articulated to constitute this particular discursive and social entity: a body that, supposedly, because of the colour of its skin automatically denotes an inferiority to the European white body, and to the subject within. "Normalization often takes place with distinctive criteria of embodiment, converting the heterogeneous flux of perception into a reified stable object," states N. Katherine Hayles in *How We Became Posthuman* (1996). See both *Volatile Bodies* by Grosz and *How We Became Posthuman* by Hayles.
 - 4 The first-ever indigenous novelist was Colombian Wayuú novelist Antonio Joaquín López with *Los dolores de una raza* (1956; *The Sorrows of a Race*), published in Maracaibo, Venezuela. This would make Luis de Lión the second indigenous writer ever to publish in Latin America, when he published his first book of short stories, *Los zopilotes* (*The Buzzards*), in Guatemala City in 1966.
 - 5 Marroquín became bishop of the "Kingdom of Goathemala" on December 18, 1534. He became provisional governor of Guatemala after conqueror Pedro de Alvarado's death, and that of his wife, in 1541. She was swept to her death by a flood that destroyed the original town of Santiago de los Caballeros. Marroquín, as provisional governor, ordered the move to the valley of Panchoy, where the new Santiago was built. After its destruction by an earthquake in 1773, the capital was moved once more, to the present site of Guatemala City. Since then, the old city of Santiago is known as "Antigua," short for "Antigua Guatemala" (old Guatemala City).
 - 6 Approximately half a million Kaqchikel speakers still reside in Guatemala.
 - 7 His posthumous novel *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá* (1985), originally written in the early 1970s, won the *Juegos Florales Centroamericanos de Quetzaltenango* Prize in 1972 and is presently considered a foundational text of contemporary Latin American indigenous narrative.

- 8 As Gayatri Spivak has argued recently, the boundaries of nation-states “are increasingly inconvenient,” but we have no choice but to consider them, since “the limits and openings of particular civil society are state-fixed” (100). Such is the case for Mayas in Guatemala, one of the most racist nations in the world.
- 9 With coloniality of power we mean the imposition of a racial/ethnic classification onto a population, which establishes a hierarchy of inequality among European and non-European identities. Also included in this is the domination of the former over the latter, for which mechanisms of social domination were established and designed to preserve the historical foundation and social classification. The concept was invented by Aníbal Quijano (1992) and later developed by Walter D. Mignolo, Arturo Escobar, Javier Sanjinés and theorists of decoloniality.
- 10 All translations to English of Luis de Li3n’s stories were done by Amy T. Olen. The book has yet to be published in English. The line quote here says “Este es el pueblo de los juanes” in the original Spanish.
- 11 *Mestizos* are historically known in Guatemala as “*Ladinos*”; however, contemporary Mayas are making the distinction between both terms: for them, a *Ladino* is a racist subject, whereas a *Mestizo* is a non-racist subject of mixed Indigenous/European descent, who may even manifest an alliance and, or, recognition, of indigenous perspectives over his/her own. See *Emma Chirix conversa con Ana Cofi3o* 37.
- 12 See the first pages of *Simulations*.
- 13 In the US, it is a land grant. However, an *encomienda* stands for a system started in 1503 which gave certain Spaniards an estate or tract of land in the Americas together with the indigenous inhabitants who were living in that land; thus, it is a tract of land as well as its inhabitants. The owner of the land tract stood to benefit from the slave labour of the indigenous inhabitants, allegedly in exchange for being taught the Catholic doctrine. The *encomienda* became a back-door method to justify slavery in the Americas after King Charles V of Spain issued The New Laws, in Spanish *Leyes Nuevas*, on November 20, 1542 to prevent the exploitation of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas by the *encomenderos* as a result of Fray Bartolom3 de las Casas’s campaign against the *encomienda*.
- 14 In the original Spanish, “sudando, pujando, apoy3ndose en un bord3n de madera” and “nada m3s unos pedazos de cuero le cubr3an las partes.”
- 15 In the original Spanish, “un hombre sin nada en medio del cielo y la tierra, porque ni el pedacito de mi hoy en que estaban mis pies era m3o, mucho menos el tiempo que ocupaba mi sombra.”
- 16 *Criollos* are descendants of the Spaniards born in Guatemala. Though extremely few *Criollos* survived the Liberal revolution of the 1870s, their world-view and teleology remains dominant in present-day Guatemala. This

includes a Western-centered world where “Whites” are considered superior and civilized, while Indigenous subjects continue to be regarded as barbarian and irrational. For more on Guatemala’s Criollos see Marta, *Guatemala: Linaje y racismo*.

- 17 In the original Spanish, “ya era mucho que el tatita de nosotros no gozara su alfombra, que el otro le dejara las sobras.”
- 18 In the original Spanish, “mi nana, mi tata y mi chucho bajamos a La Antigua para acompañar un rato al nuestro...”
- 19 *Ixcos*, a Maya term, denotes the four stakes or posts placed on the ground to mark the piece of land a peasant is supposed to clean in a plantation.
- 20 See *Memorias migrantes: Testimonios y ensayos sobre la diáspora uruguaya*.
- 21 In the original Spanish, “éramos una plebe de patojos tixudos, piojentos, media Castilla.”
- 22 Maya religious practices were forbidden by Spaniards in the 16th century. They were only legalized after the 1996 Peace Treaty. In de Lión’s time, thus, these practices were still illegal and, in consequence, held in secret; that is, hidden from public view to avoid repression.
- 23 Myth has it that the Mongolian origin of indigenous peoples of the Americas can be detected by a “Mongolian stain” that all indigenous children have at birth, which disappears after a few weeks.
- 24 In narrative theory, actant is a term from the actantial model of semiotic analysis of narratives. A.J. Greimas (1917-1992) is widely credited with producing the actantial model in 1966. Julia Kristeva also attempted to understand the dynamic development of the situations in narratives with Greimas’s Actant-Model. She postulated that subject and object might change positions and that the Supporter and the Opposition might also change the positions accordingly. See *Structural Semantics: An Attempt at a Method* by Greimas and *Le texte du roman* by Kristeva.
- 25 I remember that throughout the 1950s, the featured strip in the front page of the Saturday comics’ section of the country’s most important paper, *El imparcial*, was *Tarzan* (there were no Sunday papers at the time).
- 26 In the original, “que tenía a su servicio un chorro de psicólogos para implantar el terror / que don Juan mantenía en el altar y que le daba a beber a toda la gente que le consultaba.”
- 27 In the original, “cuando yo la vi, pensé en el niño que días antes había sido velado en la estación del tren y había sido enterrado envuelto en unos periódicos.”
- 28 These lines are part of “The New Colossus,” a sonnet by American poet Emma Lazarus (1849-87), written in 1883. In 1903, it was engraved on a bronze plaque that stands inside the lower level of the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty.

- 29 In the original Spanish, “-Recordá que en este país de indios, vos llevás sangre alemana. No importa que sea poca - le decía su padre.”
- 30 A *nagual* is the power to transform oneself by magic into an animal form. The general concept of nagualism is pan-Mesoamerican. It is linked with pre-Columbian religious practices, where all humans have an animal counterpart to which their life force is linked. Normally, a healer whispers into the ears of the newly born person who his or her nagual is, according to the calendar.

WORKS CITED

- BAKHTIN, MIKHAIL. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*. Trans. Caryl Emerson & Michael Holquist. Austin: U of Texas P, 1981.
- BATAILLE, GEORGES. *Consumption*. Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Zone Books, 1991. Vol. 3 of *The Accursed Share*. 3 Vols.
- BAUDRILLARD, JEAN. *Simulations*. Trans. Phil Beitchman, Paul Foss and Paul Patton. New York: Foreign Agents Series, Semiotext(e). Columbia UP, 1983.
- BOURDIEU, PIERRE. *The Logic of Practice*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1990.
- COFIÑO, ANA Y EMMA CHIRIX. *Emma Chirix conversa con Ana Cofiño*. Guatemala: Librovisor, 2008.
- DE LIÓN, LUIS. *Su segunda muerte*. Guatemala: Nuevo Signo Editores, 1970.
- . *Los zopilotes*. Guatemala: Editorial Landívar, 1966. (Published under the name José Luis León Díaz).
- . *El tiempo principia en Xibalbá*. Guatemala: Artemis Edinter, 1996.
- . *Time Commences in Xibalbá*. Trans. Nathan C. Henne. Tucson: U Arizona P, 2012.
- DE SOUSA SANTOS, BOAVENTURA. “Beyond Abyssal Thinking: From Global Lines to Ecologies of Knowledges.” University of Victoria. Victoria. 1 Dec. 2006. Conference. N.p.
- DERRIDA, JACQUES. *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1980.
- ESCOBAR, ARTURO. “Mundos y conocimientos de otro modo’: El programa de investigación de modernidad/colonialidad latinoamericano.” *Tabula Rasa* 1 (2003): 51-86.
- FOUCAULT, MICHEL. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Allan Sheridan London: Penguin, 1978.
- GREIMAS, ALGIRDAS JULIEN. *Structural Semantics: An Attempt at a Method*. Trans. Daniele McDowell, Ronald Schleifer, and Alan Velie. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1983.
- GROSZ, ELIZABETH. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism (Theories of Representation and Difference)*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 1994.
- JOYCE, JAMES. *Ulysses*. Introduction by Cedric Watts. London: Wordsworth Editions, 2010.

- HAYLES, N. KATHERINE. *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1999.
- KRISTEVA, JULIA. *Le Texte du Roman: Approche sémiologique d'une structure discursive transformationnelle*. The Hague: Mouton de Gruyter, 1970.
- LIÓN, LUIS DE. *La puerta del cielo*. Guatemala: Ministerio de Cultura, Colección narrativa. 2001.
- MIGNOLO, WALTER D. *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2000.
- QUIJANO, ANÍBAL. "Colonialidad del poder: eurocentrismo y América Latina." *La Colonialidad del saber: Eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales. Perspectivas latinoamericanas*. Ed. Edgardo Lander. Buenos Aires: CLACSO/UNESCO, 2003. 201-42.
- SANFORD, VICTORIA. "Breaking Down the Wall of Impunity in Guatemala." *NISGUA*. 14 March 2013. Web. <http://nisgua.blogspot.com/2013/03/breaking-down-wall-of-impunity-in.html>.
- SANJINÉS, JAVIER C. *Mestizaje Upside Down: Aesthetic Politics in Modern Bolivia*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 2004.
- SPIVAK, GAYATRI CHAKRAVORTY. *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2012.
- TRIGO, ABRIL. *Memorias migrantes: Testimonios y ensayos sobre la diáspora uruguaya*. Rosario/Santa Fe: Beatriz Viterbo/Ediciones Trilce, 2003.