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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, MERCED

Remembering Ethnocide: Social Imaginaries of State
Violence

A Thesis submitted in satisfaction of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Arts

in

Interdisciplinary Humanities

by

Danielle Elizabeth Bermúdez

Committee in charge:

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2017

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Dedicated to Rafaela del Tránsito Fernández and Julio Barton Hernández

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ABSTRACT

In January of 1932, the Salvadoran military government systematically killed between 7,000 to 50,000 people, mainly Nahuat Indigenous peoples, in the Western region of the country over a period of three weeks. This tragedy came to be known as “La Matanza”, or “The Killing/The Massacre”. Hegemonic understandings of 1932 often represent three dynamics of the massacre through discourses of: 1) the coffee economy, 2) the Communist narrative, and 3) the Presidential elections of 1931. This thesis considers the following questions: How were Nahuat communities impacted by La Matanza? How do Mármol’s social imaginaries represent the massacre? And, how can social memories of the ethnocide function as forms of testimony to reify and/or confront state violence? To answer these questions, this thesis conducts a brief historical overview of 1932, reflects on interdisciplinary works in memory studies, and analyzes cultural production of La Matanza through Roque Dalton’s renowned book *Miguel Marmól: los sucesos de 1932 en El Salvador*. I argue that Dalton’s representation of Mármol responds to hegemonic understandings of 1932 by problematizing the aforementioned discourses. Even so, his spoken memories also reified gaps and silences, particularly of the physical and symbolic violences that Indigenous and gendered communities endured during and after the ethnocide.

INTRODUCTION

El Salvador is the smallest and most densely populated country in Central America. Most known for its 12-year civil war, 334,000 Salvadorans entered the United States from 1985-1990. An estimated 25 percent of the population fled from violence during the war, and over 1.6 million Salvadorans now live in the United States (Tilley 2007: 15). El Salvador is informed by histories of colonialism, long-lasting and repressive military regimes that remained in control of the country until the 1980s, as well as continuous foreign military intervention, primarily from the United States, shaping the country's geopolitical history. Yet the country is also a site of resistance and survival. As El Salvador currently reckons with violences of the past and its intersections with the present, it is important to recognize the power of social memory in bearing witness to these histories.

The Salvadoran government has excluded Afro-descendants, ethnic immigrants, and Indigenous peoples from dominant histories. Francisco Andres Escobar's work "Turbios Hilos de Sangre" describes how El Salvador has, until very recently, attempted to hide from its history of Afrikan slavery (Escobar 1994: 15). Afro-descendants have and continue to be subalternized and racialized in El Salvador through lack of public or institutional recognition in the country. In turn, ethnic immigrants have often been referred to as "Turcos" and "Chinos" in the country (DeLugan 2016: 12). The 2004 Presidential campaigns of Antonio Saca and Shafik Handal in El Salvador shed light on the "not so hidden" ethnic minorities in the country. Both Presidential candidates were Palestinian. Some ethnic immigrants from the 19th and 20th century who are now living in El Salvador include Lebanese, Syrian, Palestinian, Chinese, Jewish, and other populations (DeLugan 2016: 11). The Salvadoran government has also historically not recognized Indigenous communities, including Nahuat, Lenca, Cacaopera-Kakawira, Maya, and more. Afro-descendants, Indigenous communities, and ethnic minorities have different experiences of subalterity through enslavement, genocide, and/or racialization and marginalization from mainstream society. Understanding these subalternized histories is central to understanding gaps and silences in the historiography of the country. Only in 2014, after years of Indigenous advocacy, the Salvadoran Constitution was officially modified (Article 63), to explicitly recognize Indigenous peoples in the country (DeLugan 2016: 14).

This Master's thesis examines a state-sponsored massacre known by most Salvadorans as *La Matanza* (the killing/massacre) of 1932. In January of 1932, the Salvadoran government systematically killed between 7,000 to 50,000 people, mainly Nahuat men, in the Western Izalco region of the country in less than three weeks (Ching 1998: 14). Scholars, such as Thomas Anderson (1971), may refer to *La Matanza* as one singular event. However there were multiple state-sponsored massacres and other acts of violence that occurred simultaneously in January of 1932, over a period of several weeks. Virginia Tilley refers to the massacre of 1932 as an *ethnocide*, due to the mass killings of Indigenous peoples. I will also use the term *ethnocide* in this thesis in reference to *La Matanza* of 1932 (Tilley 2005: 76).

Scholars of La Matanza have traditionally described the historical event from three distinct narratives: (1) the economy (coffee production and trade), (2) politics (the presidential elections of 1931), and (3) ideology (the influence of communism) (Lauria-Santiago and Gould 2004: 120). Gould and Lauria-Santiago call into question the use of these three frameworks of analysis. They argue that these dominant discourses of the ethnocide privilege certain narratives about 1932, and leave out other marginal narratives (Lauria-Santiago and Gould 2004: 20). A more nuanced understanding is needed to understand what La Matanza was truly about. Tilley also argues that scholars of La Matanza often treat the massacres of 1932 in isolation from other political activity in the country (Tilley 2005: 80).

DeLugan cites, “It is rarely noted that the 1932 popular uprising was one of a long history of Indigenous uprisings in El Salvador... forty-three Indigenous revolts occurred between 1771 and 1918 in El Salvador” (DeLugan 2012: 34). These gaps and silences memorialize particular histories of La Matanza, while attempting to silence history made by subalternized and racialized communities. Dominant discourses of the ethnocide, such as in the three frameworks mentioned previously, omit the humanity of Nahuat peoples that were brutally massacred in 1932.

In 2007, 75 years after La Matanza, the first public commemoration of the massacre occurred in Izalco and Nahuizalco, two sites where massacres took place. Many of the main organizers of the commemoration were Nahuat and Maya women, including Juliana Ama, the niece of Feliciano Ama, a Nahuat leader that was killed by the military government in 1932.

“Many community stakeholders gathered in Izalco in 2007, for varying reasons. Some gathered to examine 1932 testimonials as evidence to support a possible legal charge of genocide. Social activists sought recognition for the thousands of Indian remains still buried in mass graves in Western El Salvador. Others saw commemorative practices as essential to revalorizing Indigenous cultural identity” (DeLugan 2012: 82).

These initial public gatherings, which have now turned into annual commemorations, reinforce social memory through embodied performance (Connerton 1989: 12). Commemorations transform intimate, personal memories into shared expressions. This brings to the surface Nahuat memories of La Matanza, thus challenging what Western scholars once considered silenced or hidden memories. For survivors and their descendants, whose population includes those who seek to heal from what has been nearly an 80-year trauma, this public acknowledgement of what took place can help re-imagine what justice may look like in the aftermath of ethnocide.

While new academic attention, such as the work of Patricia Alvarenga, Jeffrey Gould, Aldo Lauria-Santiago, Hector Lindo-Fuentes, etc., has focused on 1932 and its impact on Nahuat communities today, these efforts have yet to meaningfully address gender in this context. Specifically, scholarship has lacked focus on honoring Nahuat women’s memories from Western El Salvador who survived the massacres. Such gaps reveal what lived experiences scholars still need to address. It is necessary to question how the production of knowledge negotiates polyvocality, particularly Othered voices, within hierarchal structures of competing narratives. La Matanza has largely been characterized by scholars as a “silenced” memory for Nahuat communities in Western El

Salvador, because of government repression, ensuing histories of violence, dictatorships, and the lack of formal recognition of Indigenous groups (Ching 1998: 84). Even so, notions of silence and memory are always contested processes, especially as Indigenous poetics of resistance (Figueroa 2013: 7; Siu 2010: 14).

Violence is an ongoing colonial process of differentiation for Nahuat communities, particularly for women. This Master's thesis lays the foundation for future ethnographic fieldwork I plan to conduct in Western El Salvador for my doctoral research. In the first section, I offer brief historical context for La Matanza of 1932, focusing on the three narratives of the coffee economy, the Presidential election of 1931, the ideologies of Communism, as well as the aftermath of the massacre. Then, I discuss the role of social memory utilizing a theoretical framework. In the second section, I analyze social imaginaries of the ethnocide from the 1972 book *Miguel Mármol* by Roque Dalton.

Cultural production can convey what "official" documents and quantitative data often cannot capture. This occurs by filling in important historical gaps and silences, and producing social imaginaries for those most impacted by violence and oppression. Further, understanding relations of power through the processes of knowledge production highlights the already existing agency of underrepresented and marginal voices in the academy. An interdisciplinary approach to my research allows me to transcend traditional disciplinary conventions, to widely engage my project through a variety of perspectives. As a result, this approach opens up new ways of examining La Matanza of 1932 to expand future research on this topic.

The study and processes of social memory help to demonstrate how the past informs the present. Social memory can shed light on the formation of subjectivities, and shared cultural understandings and social practices. Consequently, the study and processes of social memory are imperative to investigate. This field can be transferred through social and cultural expressions of art, languages, literatures, oralities, "official" and counter- histories, and more. Additionally, the study of social memory is interdisciplinary, as the dynamics of memory are expressed through diverse cultural expressions across space and time. Examining the dynamics of social memory, history, and power provides a framework to rigorously understand the dynamics of relationality and intersectionality. This can include studying affect, trauma, fear, intergenerational violence, silences, postmemory, forgetting, forgiveness, recollection, consciousness, testimony, knowledges, imaginations, embodiment, agency, resistance, and more. My focus is on how social memory serves not only as sites of survival in terms of what a society remembers, but also how counter-memories serve as sites of individual and collective agency and resistance against hegemonic power structures.

In the context of knowledge production, Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995) analyzes the power of silence in the creation of history. He defines silence in four ways: silence in the creation of sources, silence in the creation of archives, silence in the moment of retrieval, and silence in the moment of retrospective significance. Silence in the moment of retrieval is the way in which individuals seek to find historical information in a vast environment of competing narratives. This is what later can become the "final" product of "history" (Trouillot 1995: 20). He argues that whenever historians make and record an event there is an application of silences in sources, archives, narratives, and history through competing narratives. Trouillot emphasizes

that “history is written by victors” by stating that there is “unequal access to the means for such production [of history]” (Trouillot 1995: xix). In other words, it is a critique of “History” as a Western epistemology. Trouillot cautions creators and consumers of history to be aware of these silences in order to make power dynamics visible. By acknowledging that there is power in history, scholars can challenge systems of power to make alternative discourses more readily visible (Trouillot 1995: 82).

Furthermore, cultural production can often reveal more nuanced understandings of the past. They have the power to recreate, shape, and transform our imaginaries to represent new alterities in a way that reclaims a space for marginalized voices, histories and memories to be recognized. Literature challenges the history-as-state/state-as-history relationship through problematizing the binary tropes of oppressor-oppressed and colonizer-colonized. This relationship returns agency to the creator who is providing testimony and allowing for a reimagining of a historical event that would have otherwise been left untold. This becomes a powerful tool in which individuals and communities demonstrate their agency that bears witness to their inner truths. This can reveal a history from the “bottom up” using language unrestricted by the scholarly rigors of a purely academic subject.

Cultural production provides alternative social imaginaries to represented historical “truths”. The *social* relates to an identity or set of practices in which we define ourselves to the world, and the *imaginary* to one of many constitutive constructions of the world. Thus, a social imaginary can be one of many ways of envisioning discursive or symbolic resistance (Taylor 2006: 21). While evidence can be gathered from a carefully sanctioned archive, an archive can also reproduce violences through omissions. Thus, the critical scholar’s duty is to examine the gaps, such as the intersections of indigeneity, class, and gender in deconstructing power relations. Ultimately, turning attention to the voices of Nahuat communities in their memories of La Matanza of 1932 is an important shift. An analytical lens of social memory and cultural production, through the social imaginary, challenge dominant discourses, and allow for greater understandings of 1932. This shift serves to valorize and honor Nahuat memories of survival and resistance through an assertion of humanity, dignity, and respect. Ultimately, this also points to an understanding of what justice can be for Nahuat communities in the aftermath of ethnocide.

Consequently, I have divided this thesis in two sections. In section 1, I will provide a brief historical overview of 1932. I will review how the history of 1932 has often been described as a silenced memory. I will explore how memory studies provides a unique and interdisciplinary framework to understanding La Matanza. In section 2, I will cover cultural production of 1932 through Roque Dalton’s *Miguel Mármol*. I will do so by discussing the book as a social imaginary in responding to state violence and ethnocide in El Salvador, as well as understanding the dynamics of indigeneity and gender during 1932 in how Dalton represents these identities.

SECTION 1: HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND SOCIAL MEMORY

Nahuatl in Cuzcatlán and Coloniality

The Nahuatl in El Salvador were believed to have migrated from the Toltecs in Central Mexico from the capital of Tula (Sampeck 2014: 17). Although scholars still contest much of this history, most have contended that there were four main Indigenous societies in what was known as Cuzcatlán/Cuscatlán/Cushcatán (in the region of what is now known as El Salvador, as well as in other nearby regions in Central America): The *Cuzcatlecos* (now the town of *Antiguo Cuscatlán*), the *Izalcos*, known for cocoa production, the *Nonualcos* from the central region, and the *Mazuahas* known for the white tailed deer (Tilley 2005: 72; Campbell 1985: 33). Some Nahuatl urban centers were centered in areas now known as Sonsonate and Ahuachapán. The term “Pipil” or Cuzcatlecs is related to the Nahuatl word *-pil* "son, boy," although the term *pipil*, others argue, translates directly to "childish" or “childlike” (Campbell 1985: 34). *Pipil (Nawat)* was used by scholars to refer to language in Central America as an Uto-Toltec language; however, the Nahuatl language in Mexico differs from Nahuatl in Cuzcatlán that reduces the *tl* sound to simply a *t* (Sampeck 2014: 15). Many in El Salvador recognize this Indigenous community as “Pipils,” yet due to the term “Pipil” being a designation by Spanish colonizers to refer to Nahuatl communities as “childlike;” Indigenous communities in El Salvador self-identify as “Nahuatl” (DeLugan 2012: 47). Therefore, I also utilize Nahuatl in this thesis, instead of Pipil.

Spanish colonizers first arrived in what is now considered El Salvador in 1522 (Lauria-Santiago 1999: 29). Between 1524 and 1525 the Spaniards forcefully gained control of Cuscatlán (White 2009: 77). A need for a labor force for the Spanish crown engendered a system of *castas* or castes by the Viceroyalty of New Spain (Sampeck 2014: 12). The Spanish *castas* were highly elaborate and based on a system of ancestry to categorize individuals based on several different racial “mixtures.” As Golash-Boza writes, “By the end of the colonial period in 1821, there were over one hundred possible categories that were memorialized in a series of *casta* paintings” (Golash-Boza 2015: 32).

While Spanish *castas* were based on ancestry, those at the top of the chart were Españoles and Ladinos, of European descent, and had the lightest skin color. Groups categorized at the bottom of the Spanish caste system were typically those of African and Indigenous descent, who often had darker skin color, and were deprived of political, social, and economic opportunities by the Viceroyalty of New Spain. Although the official Spanish *casta* system is no longer officially practiced as law in Latin America today, the system of privileging individuals with lighter skin color and oppressing individuals with darker skin color, or colorism, remains a prevalent practice in Latin America, including El Salvador. Such common practices are highlighted and reinforced in day to day interactions among Salvadorans, who comment on lighter skin color as a beautiful *mestizo* attribute and frequently put down Indigenous communities by using traditional *dichos* or sayings, such as “No seas un Indio” or “Don’t be an Indian” when remarking on someone’s perceived “savage” or “uncivilized” behavior (Golash-Boza 2015: 32).

These ideologies of scientific racism began in the academy of the Global North. In his field study of the Nahuat in El Salvador between 1896 and 1899, the Anthropologist Carl V. Hartman conducted a language study in Nahuizalco of the Nahuat-Pipil, who he called the “Aztecs of El Salvador” (Siu 2010: 28). He concentrated his work on daily life, customs, and the natural world of Nahuat. He also did an extensive anthropomorphic study. In that time, anthropomorphism was utilized in Anthropology as part of a legacy of scientific racism, which measured skull sizes and other body parts to classify Indigenous peoples. Many drawings depict Indigenous peoples skulls next to monkey’s skulls in order to dehumanize “the native.” Similar to the casta paintings, anthropomorphism was yet another example of that reinforced the colonizer’s blatantly false idea that Europe was far superior in comparison to Indigenous peoples.

To conduct his study, Hartman obtained permissions by the Minister of War in El Salvador to take naked photographs of around 71 Nahuat men. These men had to follow Hartman’s directions, as they were under the order of the Salvadoran government. Hartman would insist on photographing them naked in front of a measuring stick. Hartman also stole sacred artifacts from Nahuat communities for his own collection, which remained in his personal home (Siu 2010: 28). Hartman believed that the Nahuat would soon all disappear, due to the accelerated rate of “development” and privatization of lands, which served as a driving justification for Hartman to believe in the importance of his own study. Hartman ended up producing very detailed descriptions related to the Nahuat cultural beliefs in his more than 500 plaques developed for Anthropological inquiry related to “the Native” (Siu 2010: 29).

Walter Mignolo contends that European modernity and coloniality simultaneously worked in tandem as a violent and epistemological project of power and domination in the colonization of the Americas. Specifically, Mignolo describes three modes of colonization, which he ties directly to the European Renaissance and period of Enlightenment: (1) language and writing, (2) memory and archiving, and (3) cartography (Mignolo 2003: 77). Mignolo argues that not only did Europe undergo a significant social and cultural transformation during the European Renaissance, but that the Americas, as a result, underwent a colonial transformation as well. It was through European language itself, such as Castilian, that the written word, as codified in books and encyclopedias, was utilized as a tool of the colonizer to justify rendering Indigenous epistemologies as savage, uncivilized, backwards, and underdeveloped.

Similarly, Aníbal Quijano argues that the coloniality of power still exists today in modern forms (Quijano 2000: 163). In other words, colonialism manifests itself in the form of racial, political, and/or social orders in Latin America, to this day, a model was imposed onto Indigenous communities by European colonialism. Quijano states that these hegemonic orders can be broken down into three categories: systems of hierarchies, systems of knowledge, and cultural systems. In the first system, European colonialism imposed racial classification systems in Latin America based on phenotype, placing Spaniards at the top of the caste system. This racialized classification system created a division of labor between elites, typically lighter skin and of European ancestry, and slaves, typically darker skin and of Indigenous and/or African ancestry; which impacted other forms of colonial classifications, including ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and class (economic). This allowed for the colonizers to remain in a dominant position of power in

society, and continues to have an impact in Latin America today, in which lighter skin color is valued in society and labor continues to be divided among these imposed categories, despite European colonialism “ending”. Like many decolonial scholars, Quijano does not believe that we are “post-colonial” or that colonial is over. In fact, Quijano believes that colonialism continues to have an impact across the world, as Mignolo notes, colonialism is not over, it is all over (Quijano 2000: 169).

Coffee Economy

One of the main crops supporting the Salvadoran economy in the early 1900s was coffee. It continues to be a central product of export to this day. The majority of the workers on these large-scale coffee plantations in the early 1900s were Indigenous males, mainly of Nahuat descent, and mestizo campesinos (rural peasants) (Lauria-Santiago and Gould 2004: 51). The coffee plantations had become an integral part of the country’s growing agro-export model, causing migratory shifts to the rural coffee regions during the harvest season. Because coffee was seasonal, Nahuats had to survive off of the meager wages earned in the coffee plantations. Motivated by agricultural production, the Salvadoran government supported mass land privatization policies (latifundia) concentrating land ownership among the social elite, thus creating vast inequality among the poor (Anderson 1982: 75). Sampeck cites that colonizers traditionally gained control of land through cartography, or otherwise privatizing space (Sampeck 2014: 13). The process of map-making was a crucial way of establishing legal control of land and thus building power through empire. Imperial perceptions of “empty” or “mismanaged” native land was often seen as a commodity to be taken from Indigenous hands. Ned Blackhawk writes, “Violence enabled the rapid accumulation of new resources, territories, and subject peoples” (Blackhawk 2009: 9).

Fourteen families in El Salvador, known as “Los Catorce” or “The Fourteen”, controlled almost 90 percent of the land (Lauria-Santiago 1999: 200). The fourteen families of El Salvador were, for the most part, elite mestizos or ladinos. The 14 families benefited greatly from the labor of poor mestizo, Indigenous, criollo, and mulato populations (Euraque, Gould, and Hale 2005: 29). The latifundia policies, sustained by the wealthy Ladinos, reinforced the economic and political disenfranchisement of Afro-descendant, Indigenous, and other ethnic communities by creating greater social, political, and economic inequities that contributed to the political struggles of the times (Tilley 2005: 164-166).

These privatization policies led to the political organizing and mass protests of the Indigenous and campesino workers. Women organizers, such as Amparo Casamahuaca and Julia Mojica were among the leaders. They marched along with some 544 other women in Nahuizalco in 1922 to protest the substandard working conditions that they were subjected to in the coffee plantations (Gould, Consalvi, and Salmon 2002: 40). The campesinos and campesinas working on the coffee plantations felt that they were being exploited for their labor due to their long work hours, low pay, and harsh working conditions (Ching 1998: 202). Then, in the early 1930’s, El Salvador experienced an economic downturn as a result of the worldwide Great Depression. The price of coffee

beans radically dropped, leaving the workers on the coffee plantations as the most severely impacted (Lara 2011: 17).

Presidential Elections of 1931

In 1931, Salvadoran Army General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez, became the President of El Salvador after a staged military coup to oust the former democratically-elected President Arturo Araujo (Lara 2011: 10). Araujo's election in El Salvador had marked the country's first "free" election, although he only remained in office for nine months (Ching 2014: 150). Araujo had chosen Army General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez as his Vice President and Minister of War to help appease tensions among military officers at the time. They had not received consistent pay during Araujo's time in office (Lindo-Fuentes 2007: 78). United States Minister to El Salvador C.B. Curtis, was said to have had a more active and visible role in the development of the military coup "as he ferried officers from one barrack to another in order to reach a consensus on the formation of a military junta" (Anderson 1982: 82). A statement issued by the military junta on December 3rd, 1931 did not provide any reasons for the government takeover. They simply stated that Araujo had "resigned" (Williams and Walter 1997: 43). General Hernández Martínez was "appointed" as President shortly thereafter. Following the coup, the *Prensa Gráfica* (National newspaper) featured an article on the front page in which the United States government and Guatemala publicly denounced Martínez's government, stating that they would not recognize his Presidency in El Salvador.

Until very recently, scholars of La Matanza had not recognized Prudencia Ayala as an important figure during this time. She is considered the first woman in Latin American to run for President. In 1931, she attempted to run for President of El Salvador, but was prohibited by the Supreme Court of the country because she was a woman. This was also at a time when women did not have the right to vote in El Salvador. Women obtained suffrage in 1939 with restrictions requiring literacy and a higher age. All restrictions were lifted in 1950 allowing women in El Salvador the right to vote.

Even so, Ayala, who was also Afro-Indigenous, ran on a strong platform of supporting women and poor families, in which she advocated for the right to vote, better job opportunities, better pay, recognition of illegitimate children, protections for mothers, against public corruption, support for labor unions, and freedom of religion (Lauria-Santiago and Gould 2004: 42). Her advocacy was largely informed by her experiences, but particularly by a massacre that occurred ten years prior to La Matanza, known as the Christmas Day massacre, in which hundreds of women began protesting in front of the National Palace in San Salvador for better working conditions. The unarmed women were ambushed and killed with machetes by National Guardsmen (Lindo-Fuentes 2007: 60). This left a deep impact on Ayala. Her historical erasure is part of an ongoing and broader one of Afro-Indigenous women's contributions to Salvadoran history that has recreated and reinforced dominant, masculinized and racialized representations of the elections of 1931, and of greater political contexts for Afro-Indigenous women surrounding issues associated with the period of the Matanza.

Communism Narrative

In the early 1920s in El Salvador, there were more labor unions than mutual aid organizations, such as the Red Cross and other public service agencies (Almeida 2008: 122). Some of these organizations included the *cofradías*, the Partido Comunista de El Salvador (PCS), and Indigenous leadership networks. *Cofradías* existed for the sole purpose of organizing church activities (Tilley 2005: 88). She notes, “the *cofradías* served a political purpose crucial to any colonized people: they were a central participatory mechanism - indeed, the only formally democratic one permitted - for Indigenous political life” (Tilley 2005: 112). Thus, the religious *cofradías* allowed for political representation based on genuine internal Indigenous hierarchies (Tilley 2005: 55). In this regard, *cofradías* functioned as the most important organizational infrastructure in the early 1930s, quickly connecting networks of Indigenous communities together. Directly prior to the 1932 insurrection, *cofradías* were responsible for organizing masses of Indigenous workers along with the Federación Regional de Trabajadores (FRT) (Almeida 2008: 97). Menjívar cites that, at one point, the FRT represented a reported seventy-five thousand members across El Salvador’s fourteen departments (Menjívar 1985: 90). This accounted for 10.6 percent of the population at the time. *Cofradías* still function as an important part of Salvadoran society, regularly electing *alcaldes de común* (mayors) as part of local leadership structures (Tilley 2005: 43).

The presence of FRT and the Socorro Rojo in Western El Salvador threatened elite positions within the city’s municipalities due to the popularity of the organization’s political candidates among Indigenous workers and peasants. Martí was a bourgeois intellectual who worked alongside Feliciano Ama forging solidarity networks. *Cofradía* and Communist leader, Ama was very popular and commanded a large following among the Juayúa Indigenous cantones (hamlets). “Ama was committed to the struggle and told me about the abuses he had suffered,” said labor leader Miguel Mármol, “He showed me the scars on his fingers from the hanging and told me he was going to allot his plot of land for the Indians who had nothing” (Dalton 1972: 215). Mármol was a political activist and founding Communist party member in El Salvador. He helped mobilize Indigenous communities and campesinos prior to and during January of 1932. As a *cofradía* leader, Ama was a critical link to the recruitment of masses (Menjívar 1985: 50). He was well-respected in the Indigenous *cofradías* as noted in the 2010 documentary *Cicatriz de la Memoria* (Gould, Consalvi, and Salmon 2002). Ama’s role is also evidenced in testimonies collected in Museo de la Palabra é Imagen (MUPI)/Museum of the Word and Image in El Salvador through their exhibitions on 1932.

In 1931, returned Salvadoran exile Agustín Farabundo Martí, along with several other Indigenous workers and campesinos founded the Communist Party of Central America. This party was known in El Salvador as the *Socorro Rojo* and the *Partido Comunista de El Salvador* (PCS)/Salvadoran Communist Party. The Party was grounded in Marxist-Leninist teachings to organize the masses and end land privatization policies to bring about land reform (Anderson 1971: 23). In his time in exile, Martí had spent time in Guatemala and Mexico and also worked with Nicaraguan revolutionary leader

Augusto César Sandino, forming transnational solidarity networks. Martí was considered a national threat, because he was popular among the working classes in El Salvador. There were rumors of his nomination for President in 1932 (Lindo-Fuentes 2007: 89). Additionally, the presence of the Socorro Rojo and PCS in Western El Salvador endangered elite positions within the city's municipalities due to the popularity of the organization's political candidates among Indigenous workers and campesinos (Almeida 2008). The Salvadoran government feared that Martí's ideologies and those of the Socorro Rojo and PCS would jeopardize the country's economic, political, and social progress. Martí and his compatriots wanted to gather enough support from the coffee workers for an Indigenous and campesino rebellion against the Salvadoran government's political corruption and military brutality (Ching 2009: 234).

On January 22, 1932, leader Agustín Farabundo Martí, university students Mario Zapata and Alfonso Luna, and Indigenous leader Feliciano Ama, among other laborers, took over several towns in Western El Salvador in the municipalities of Tacuba, Juayúa, Nahuizalco, Izalco, and Teotepeque. They also took over several cuarteles (military barracks) in Western El Salvador in Ahuachapán, Santa Tecla, and Sonsonate. Armed with machetes, small pistols, and tools from coffee plantations, the protestors were reported to have killed between 30-100 civilians and military men (Anderson 1971: 80). Urban and rural social elites feared an uprising. Army General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez ordered the military to quickly retaliate against the workers. The Salvadoran government utilized ideological scare-tactic campaigns to construct the coffee plantation workers as savage, violent, and irrational Communists (Ching 1998: 75). In addition, the military also responded with brutal force in the Western towns in Sonsonate of Nahuizalco, Juayúa, Apaneca, and Izalco (Gould, Consalvi, and Salmon 2002: 43). In a matter of weeks, the Salvadoran military systematically killed between 7,000 to 50,000 people, mainly men over the age of 12 and of Nahuat descent (Ching: 1998 52).

Power and Control

The Salvadoran government imposed new forms of social control in 1932. The newly appointed Minister of Government General Salvador Castañeda Castro applauded the efforts of General Hernández Martínez's government claiming that the country needed to educate those who remained "backwards" and "stuck in the past" in order to protect the interests of the "elite and well-to-do classes" (Williams and Walter 1997: 57). General Castañeda Castro soon implemented *cédulas de vecindad* requiring all citizens to register for identification cards in their local municipalities. General Castañeda Castro felt that the *cédulas*, as a direct response to La Matanza, would create greater "social order" to prevent further "anarchy, disorder, and social problems" (Williams and Walter 1997: 61). However, an exclusive *cédula* called the *cédula patriótica de defensa social* was also available for purchase for one hundred colones. The *cédula patriótica* was aimed at the social elite to give them a more powerful identification card based on status, with the goal of raising one million colones for the *Fondo de Mejoramiento Social* (The Fund for Social Betterment). The fund would go to programs to prevent attacks on property as well as to educate the poor on the values of family, work, and private property. With a monthly payment plan, the middle-class could also buy a *cédula*

patriótica, which gave them the opportunity to apply for a permit to request to carry weapons (Ching 1998: 73). The identification cards codified an already hegemonic social sector.

Not long after the cédulas were mandated, the Salvadoran government also created the Guardia Civica, a paramilitary civilian system that functioned alongside the national military, which primarily recruited civilians from the middle-class or social elite if they met the “right credentials.” The connection between the identification cards and the creation of the Guardia Civica allowed the militarized government to exert power over the population through social control.

“For many a male in the rural population, then, life included a very close and constant relationship with the military. At seventeen or eighteen, he was drafted and served as an infantry soldier... In this manner, the military established a structure of control and discipline that extended from the President of the Republic himself to the humblest campesino” (Walters and Williams 1997: 80).

Such a highly structured military system would allow for greater social and self-regulation, hence minimizing the likelihood of another mass civilian protest. The National Guard patrolled the countryside. In addition, they offered private police protection to the haciendas (Keen and Haynes 2012: 486).

Justifying State-Sponsored Ethnocide

In *Los Sucesos Comunistas en El Salvador* (1932), Joaquín Méndez, a military officer for the National Guard, describes the violences of La Matanza, from his perspective, by writing adamantly against communism, Indigenous peoples, and by justifying the government-sponsored killings in 1932 (Lindo-Fuentes, Ching, and Martínez 2007: 135). Méndez’s writings demonstrate the ethnocidal actions of 1932 against peasant and Indigenous workers. Méndez writes his own interpretations of the event, deeply defending the position of the Salvadoran government as being justified for killing *Comunistas campesinas* (peasant Communists) to save the country from despair. He also captures testimonies from people who believed that the government took the most appropriate course of action, and notes locations of where people died in certain spaces of the various towns in the Sonsonate department (Méndez 1932: 2). The text creates moments of (in)visibility for Indigenous death, and the military brutal massacres, bolstering common government-sponsored narratives at the time of peasant and Indigenous peoples as “Communists” that “deserved” to be killed.

Méndez had the power and access to “write” a government-accepted history of La Matanza, and to silence Nahuat voices. His writings also illuminate critical pieces of information that lay the foundation for challenging the government’s justifications for such brutal repression and killings. In a section called, *Lo que dicen las muchachas* (*What women say*), Méndez notes in Sonsonate a testimony from two women. He writes: “Solo de día estamos tranquilas. ¡De noche, Dios santo! De noche es horrible. Yo me despierto a cada rato. No dejo de soñar cosas horribles” (Méndez 1932: 11). (“Only in the day we are relaxed. At night, Holy God! At night it’s horrible. I wake up at every other moment. I don’t stop dreaming about horrible things”).

Méndez captures a gendered experience of La Matanza, in which two women in Sonsonate tell him that at night is a terrifying experience, insinuating that the Indigenous peasant Communists are the ones creating a climate of fear in the country by killing innocent citizens, and committing violence against women. These unnamed women's testimonies of gendered violence are often not discussed regarding La Matanza, and they are important to highlight. Yet, in Méndez's entire book, he only quotes women once. Méndez does not note who these women are. They might have feared the military government, "Communists", Méndez, violence in general, or did not fear sharing their testimony at all. From this short narrative, one can question how Méndez utilized their experiences to fit popularized government propaganda of Communist threats. This depicted masculinized savior narratives of women-needing-rescuing. It was also used to describe Indigenous peoples in the same violent colonial tropes of being "savages," that assault and kill "innocent" (elite mestiza or ladina) women. Méndez used this testimony to further justify the massacre of Indigenous peoples.

In Izalco, Méndez asks a man about life in the town prior to the arrival of the "Communists", he records the man saying:

"Muchas puertas cerradas. Mucho silencio. Ninguna animación. ¿Así es siempre? ¡Qué va! Este ha sido un pueblo alegre, donde se podía vivir con tranquilidad. Todas esas puertas cerradas, toda esa tristeza, se debe a los Comunistas. Ya verá la huella del machete y del hacha" (Méndez 1932: 18).

("Lots of closed doors. Lots of silence. No movement." "Is that how it always is?" "Yeah right! This used to be a happy town, where one could live in tranquility. All these closed doors, all this sadness, it's owed to the Communists. Time will tell the mark of the machete and the hatchet").

Méndez utilizes a testimony of a man in Izalco, who states that "Communists" have created a climate of fear. Seemingly because of this, no one goes outside, and the place is an empty ghost town. He claims that the town was "happy" before the "Communists." He leaves Méndez with a threatening comment against the Nahuat, that soon they will be met with machetes and hatchets (Méndez 1932: 18). Again, little is known about the people that Méndez highlights. Repeatedly, Méndez selectively features testimonies that bolster his own viewpoints that would justify the logic of proceeding with an Indigenous massacre. Government propaganda was strong in depicting Indigenous and peasant workers as a Communist "threat" to the nation (Dalton 1972: 310). When Méndez quotes the man as stating that the town was "happy" before the "Communists", and that the Communists caused fear among the town, one can problematize these statements to ask, happy for whom? Once again, Méndez reifies these problematic tropes of Native incivility and savagery, in ruining the ruling class' "happiness" and causing them "fear". Rather than recognize the government's perpetuation of repression and violences that exploits, displaces, dispossesses, and systematically kills Indigenous communities, Méndez's solution is to further these violences by making physical threats against an already marginalized and persecuted community. His use of these testimonies reveal the heteropatriarchal and hypermasculinized logics of colonialized racism and ethnocidal violence perpetuated against Nahuats in 1932.

To mark the killing sites of Nahuat communities in Izalco, Méndez pens an account from a man who witnessed the death of an Indigenous leader: “En la plaza de Izalco está el árbol donde fue ahorcado por el pueblo el cacique indio José Feliciano Ama” (Méndez 1932: 24). (“In the plaza of Izalco is the tree where chief Indigenous leader Jose Feliciano Ama was hung by the people”). Ama played a significant role in mobilizing Nahuats to organize for their rights as coffee plantation workers (Menjívar 2000: 20). Killing a leader of a movement, by public hanging, specifically a Nahuat cacique, made a public spectacle to witness Indigenous death. Méndez’s writing creates a declarative conqueror narrative in which Nahuat lives were disposable to the nation-state. This act of violence also sent a message to followers of Ama that death would be their eventual fate as well (Dalton 1972: 310).

Impact of the Ethnocide

Paul Almeida describes the massacre of 1932 as “One of the largest episodes of state repression witnessed in the Americas in the twentieth century” as well as “One of the greatest single acts of popular insurgency in Latin America during the 1930s” (Almeida 2008: 11). In fact, an estimated one to three percent of the population in El Salvador was killed during La Matanza of 1932 (Tilley 2005: 26). This included any individual who appeared to “look, dress, or speak like an Indio” (Indian), such as wearing *huipiles*, *refajos*, and *caites* (traditional Indigenous wear and shoes) (Tilley 2005: 30). According to survivor witnesses’ accounts, thousands of unarmed *campesinos* were lined-up, shot in their backs to death, and buried in mass graves (Gould, Consalvi, and Salmon 2002: 41). Survivors recall the harsh echoes of bullets sounding off throughout the night, and the large number of trucks transporting the bodies of dead for many days thereafter (Peterson 2007: 13).

Patricia Alvarenga writes that La Matanza pervasively produced “una cultura y ética de violencia” (“a culture and ethic of violence”) in El Salvador (Alvarenga 1996: 55). On February 5, 1932, the popular newspaper *El Diario de El Salvador* reported: “At the moment in the department of Sonsonate, and in many places in Ahuachapán and some in Santa Ana, pork meat has become so discredited that it has almost no value... All of this is the consequence of pigs eating in great quantities the flesh of corpses that have been left in the fields” (Lauria-Santiago 1999: 242-244). This is one example of the culture and ethic of violence that Alvarenga describes. Ching also notes that silence surrounding the massacre proliferated through decades of brutal military control (Ching 1998: 175). Mármol states, “For years and years the people in the countryside kept being unpleasantly surprised all the time on seeing the skeleton of a hand, a foot, a skull cropping up out of the Earth” (Peterson 2007: 15). These were constant visual reminders of the ethnocide. In the aftermath of La Matanza, the Salvadoran government purported the myth that “all of the indios (Indians)” in El Salvador had now been killed. Thomas Anderson notes the specific colonial dynamics surrounding the government’s narrative of Indigenous erasure through massacre, he writes “killing them [Indigenous, workers] became a defense of not only nation but of civilization” (Anderson 1971: 98).

Benedict Anderson describes national belonging through “imagining”. For Anderson, an imagined community is both limited and sovereign (Anderson 2006: 75).

An imagined community is limited due to the impossibility of knowing everyone within that community, and because people imagine the “finite” boundaries that a nation has. The success of an imagined community also depends on the ties that one has to the community they imagine. These cultural, community ties are what allows a nation to be powerful. Anderson contends that images of a nation and institutionalization of *Difference* and *Othering* can be extremely powerful in building a sense of community as well as exclusion among its residents (Anderson 2006: 110). In El Salvador, distinction of “the native” from mestizos and ladinos became a way for the government to ingrain concepts of Difference. These colonized ideologies stratified groups through marking who did and did not belong to a society. During 1932, elite mestizos and ladinos were landowners, while Indigenous and Afro-descendants were coffee plantation workers. The events leading up to the ethnocide demonstrated that the Nahuat were not part of the imagined community of the modern nation-state through their mass killings.

After 1932, the government of El Salvador declared that no Indians existed in the country anymore, because they were killed in the Matanza. Tilley (2005) argues that the myth of Indigenous erasure after 1932 signifies the Salvadoran government’s attempts to remove the country’s links to indigeneity. By separating themselves from Indigenous populations, the Salvadoran government endeavored to remove the stigmas and negative emotions attached to being Indigenous to embrace the European side of their mestizo identity, often propagated as an ideology of mestizaje (Tilley 2005: 53). Mestizaje has inter-generationally functioned to serve the nation-state as a form of collective memory.

Similarly, Mac Chapin (1989) challenges the government narrative of Indigenous erasure in El Salvador, and describes how indigeneity, race, and ethnicity are localized and conceptualized differently in El Salvador because of La Matanza. He argues that the myth of mestizaje plays a prominent role in El Salvador, stemming from the Viceroyalty of New Spain. This myth helped support a government narrative of Indigenous erasure after 1932 (Chapin 1989: 1). He contends that since La Matanza, Salvadorans and scholars alike have attempted to “measure” indigeneity in El Salvador in comparison to other Indigenous cultures, such as through physical, cultural markers like traditional Indigenous clothes or speaking a native language.

Chapin asserts that because of brutal government repression, indigeneity in El Salvador is different from other places in Latin America, such as Guatemala, where cultural markers of indigeneity are more widely present (Chapin 1989: 1). This is, in part, due to greater numbers of Indigenous communities in Guatemala, than in El Salvador. Despite blatant racism by mestizos, Indigenous communities in Guatemala assert their cultural values, as a majority population. Chapin also argues that when these Indigenous markers are not immediately identifiable to the public, this transforms the “Indio” into a perceived acculturated mestizo (Chapin 1989: 1). Subsequently, Chapin contends that indigeneity must be defined by Indigenous communities themselves for self-determination (Chapin 1989: 1).

Paul Ricoeur calls alterations of collective memory *commanded memory* or *amnesty* (Ricoeur 2004: 455). Ricoeur warns of commanded memory by stating that: “If this were to happen – and unfortunately nothing stands in the way of crossing the thin line of demarcation separating amnesty from amnesia – private and

collective memory would be deprived of the salutary identity crisis that permits a lucid re-appropriation of the past and of its traumatic charge” (Ricoeur 2004: 456).

For Ricoeur, *collective amnesia* would signal a loss of a valuable part of history. As he states, collective amnesia can allow for a dangerous revisionist interpretation of the past. For these reasons, Ricoeur argues that individuals have an ethical duty to remember, and an ethical duty to tell so that memory cannot be distorted for malicious means. Moreover, Ricoeur emphasizes the power of testimony when he states that “We have nothing better than testimony and the critique of testimony to give credibility to the historian’s representation of the past” (Ricoeur 2004: 278). This produces an important form of speaking truth to power, as a way to create multiple narratives rather than one all-encompassing discourse. Testimony can serve as a means to challenge commanded memory or amnesty, by allowing polyvocal histories of the past to inform the present and future.

For Ricoeur, in order for one to remember something about the past they must have a deep concern for it, and so they assign a significant meaning to the past. In remembering, individuals help bring the memory to the present. Additionally, by remembering and sharing their memory with others, the individual helps to impute their meaning of a past event to future generations. Ricoeur asserts that memory of the past affects the present and the future, and that this dialectic is cyclical in nature. Imputing memory makes individuals “heirs” of the past, making individuals carry the “heritage” of the past within them. By remembering, individuals help to fight against erosions of traces of the past. However, he points out that memories are also like narratives. They contain a plot, a sequence, and characters. Narratives can also be selective. Ricoeur warns, therefore, that individuals should not just have memories of “victors”. He asserts that a parallel history is needed of those who have been “victims” of history. Ricoeur refers to this notion of parallel history as “keeping the wound alive” or rather keeping alive the “memory of suffering”, such as with memories of violence. In doing so, he believes that we can transform ourselves into having a culture of “just” memory (Ricoeur 2004: 312). Ricoeur utilizes Todorov’s ideas to state that by retelling these memories, individuals can set an example of “just” memory in order to prevent unjust events from happening again. For this to occur, Ricoeur claims that individuals must trust the testimonies of others. He contends that individuals’ knowledge of past events are committed to truth, even if our memories of the past are “uneven”. Memory is non-linear as it shifts and changes through time and space. “The question of whether we regard these memories as historically true will turn out to be less important than whether they regard their memories as true” (Fentress and Wickham 1992: 26). As a result, because an individual believes their memory to be true, it becomes a “truth-claim”, which signals to others that their testimony should be trusted. This process of truth-claiming, therefore, must involve a community of mutual trust (Ricoeur 2004: 403). This moment of truth-claiming are important markers for how Salvadorans remember the Indigenous ethnocide of La Matanza of 1932, as well as Nahuatl survival and resistance.

Maurice Halbwachs (1992) explores the questions of how individuals remember events in their life, and more broadly, how societies recall memories generation after

generation. Halbwachs contends that human memory is produced collectively through an active process of remembering in which individuals recall specific events, and help reinforce each other's memories through selection (Halbwachs 1992: 5). For an event to be remembered, he asserts that two processes need to occur: (1) that someone in a group must recall an event (2) that the group must be interested in discussing the event in order for the memory process to continue. Thus, collective memory is socially constructed (Halbwachs 1992: 5). The process of recalling an event or a series of events as a group activity is also why Halbwachs asserts that memory is a selective process. He contends that families/kin and oftentimes religion(s) play a powerful role in helping one to remember.

While the Salvadoran government attempted to force the collective memory of La Matanza out of the Salvadoran national consciousness through repression and a climate of fear, honoring the loss or survival of family, friends, or acquaintances would have certainly allowed for the persistence of social memory after such brutal trauma. Under the roof of one's own home and within the privacy of the family, individuals may have felt more open to discuss La Matanza, rather than in the public realm. Public silence surrounding La Matanza might have become the social norm, especially for Indigenous women who often endured greater forms of persecution because of their gendered social status.

The mass killings of thousands of workers of mainly Indigenous ancestry during La Matanza had a great impact on the country's social, political, economic, and cultural legacy, as the people that survived – such as Indigenous women, were subjected to live in fear for their lives and for the lives of their children for decades. Some scholars have argued that survivors of La Matanza stopped publically speaking their native language, Nahuat, and stopped wearing huipiles, refajos, and caites (traditional Indigenous wear and shoes) after the ethnocide. This idea is now contested (Ching 1998: 200). More and more evidence reveals the day to day resistances of Nahuats who challenged living their lives, cultures, and identities in fear or silence.

Cecilia Menjívar (2000) also records forms of violence against women at the time, she notes, "In Chanmico and Las Grandillas, the National Guardsmen burned all the ranches in an area of twenty square kilometers and raped all the women over 10 years old" (Menjívar 2000: 157). La Matanza would serve as a brutal reminder to Indigenous communities of the deathly consequences of challenging the government. Illiterate Indigenous women, especially the widows of those who did not survive the massacre, were readily taken advantage of. "Many women found themselves destitute and their children facing starvation. Some went to the local *patrones* (bosses) asking for food. A bag of rice would be granted – in exchange for their [land] deed" (Lauria-Santiago and Gould 2004: 55).

Marianne Hirsch's (2012) examines gender and social memory. She argues that women's memories have been historically overlooked. Hirsch and Smith note, "...gender is an inescapable dimension of differential power relations, and cultural memory is always about the distribution of and contested claims to power. What a culture remembers and what it chooses to forget are intricately bound up with issues of power and hegemony, and thus with gender. Finally, the cultural tropes and codes

through which a culture represents its past are also marked by gender, race, and class” (Hirsch and Smith 2002: 7). This demonstrates the variations between what kinds of memories are often told or forgotten, including how these memories are transmitted and constructed. Hirsch highlights “counter-memories” that provide untold, forgotten, or erased histories. Indigenous repertoires of resistance, especially for women, state:

“Even in the face of genocidal repression of 1932,... individual survivors from the FRT (Federacion Regional de Trabajadores) and PCS (Partido Comunista de El Salvador/Communist Party of El Salvador) played an important role in passing on organizational skills and knowledge to future generations of activists who would lead the organized opposition in the 1960s and 1970s” (Almeida 2008: 51, 69).

Tracing Empire

Edward Said interrogates how the ideas of empire through “contrapuntal readings” influence culture and imperialism (Said 1993: 140). In fact, Said argues that the novel has the power to narrate relationships, as he encourages readers to re-read these texts, as manifestations of colonialism and empire, as an attempt to understand how the power of the novel is tied to employing culture and displaying the operations of imperialism. Specifically, how imperialism is maintained through culture. The power lies, not only in who is telling the story, but also what gets written into the story, and what is left out. Said brings attention to these gaps and silences by stating “Without empire, there is no European novel as we know it...” (Said 1993: 69). The practices, ideas, attitudes, and discourses towards “the Native Other” is embedded through the stories told, in which the novel is “(the) Desire to enhance supremacy through representation” (Said 1993: 121). In controlling the message of the story, this also works to powerfully re-tell through the colonizers eyes how the history of a colonized place or peoples is created, widely disseminated, and maintained. The colonist’s desire of colonial possession is represented in these stories that devalue and exploit the Native Other. For these reasons, Said warns readers that we cannot “treat them [the novels] reductively as imperialist propaganda” nor dismiss them simply as entertaining stories, for the lived realities of Indigenous peoples and the afterlives of empire continue to harm and shape the colonial gaze today, and contrapuntal readings allow for a problematizing of these colonial narratives (Said 1993: 130).

Mishuana Goeman calls for *intertextuality* as a critical reading praxis as forms of resistance, utilizing metaphors as a form of spatial poetics against empire (Goeman 2013: 5). Like Goeman, Jodi Byrd utilizes genre as a mnemonic device to connect the violences and genocides of colonization to cultural production and political movements of Indigenous peoples. The memory of historical traumas, or remembrance, is used as a means to counter empire. Byrd articulates that understanding the following is important: (1) colonization matters, (2) understanding the function of United States empire matters, (3) originary peoples matter, and (4) Indigenous-centered approaches matter (Byrd 2011: 60). Hence, decolonial justice for Indigenous peoples is tied to land, life, and grievability. Indigenous peoples can re-interpolate themselves through a modality of movement, emerging from the ground up, to discuss identity and sovereignty. This is

what Goeman contends when she notes that Indigenous epistemologies are embodied, and that there is value and no fear in recognizing the painful yet beautiful past to articulate oneself in the present as part of a remembering praxis, as we will see in the next section in Dalton's *Miguel Mármol*.

SECTION 2: SOCIAL IMAGINARIES OF STATE VIOLENCE AND ETHNOCIDE

The Life of Roque Dalton: Brief Overview

Roque Antonio Dalton Garcia (1935-1975) was a Salvadoran poet, essayist, journalist, political activist, and intellectual. He is most known for his political writings on El Salvador. Winnall Dalton, of Irish descent and Roque's father, emigrated to Mexico, and later arrived in San Salvador, El Salvador in the 1920s (Lindo-Fuentes, Ching, and Martínez 2007: 148). Winnall Dalton married María García Medrano, a socialite in the country, and Roque was born on May 14, 1935 (Lindo-Fuentes, Ching, and Martínez 2007: 148). In his young adult life, Roque Dalton joined the Communist Party of El Salvador (PCS), and was arrested during Jose Maria Lemus' Presidency (1956-1960) for his political involvements (Lindo-Fuentes, Ching, and Martínez 2007: 148). Dalton then studied law for his undergraduate degree at the University of Chile, where he often attended leftist and socialist lectures. Dalton later returns to El Salvador to pursue a professional law degree at the National University. Dalton later traveled to Cuba in 1961, where he did some military training. There, he published his writings through the *Casa de las Americas*. Based on his political writings and government criticisms, such as in his book *Las Historias Prohibidas del Pulgarcito* (1974), as well as many published poems in mainstream newspapers in the country, such as *La Prensa Gráfica*, regarding history, corruption, repression, and violence (Lindo-Fuentes, Ching, and Martínez 2007: 150). Dalton often lived clandestinely or in exile from El Salvador throughout much of his life as a result of his writings.

Upon returning to El Salvador in 1965, Dalton was arrested and was awaiting execution in the country. However, an earthquake knocked the wall of his prison cell down, and Dalton was able to escape before his execution (Lindo-Fuentes, Ching, and Martínez 2007: 151). He then traveled to Prague for a Socialism Party conference (Lindo-Fuentes, Ching, and Martínez 2007: 152). In Prague, Dalton met Miguel Mármol, of whom he had previously heard before through the PCS. Dalton documented Mármol's life and role in the Communist Party in a biographical testimonio called *Miguel Mármol*, upon meeting him in Prague. Once returning to El Salvador in the 1970s, Dalton attempted to join a founding segment of the FMLN (Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional/National Liberation Front Farabundo Martí), called the FPL (Fuerzas Populares de Liberación Farabundo Martí/Popular Liberation Force Farabundo Martí). He was rejected, and was deemed to be a poet (Lindo-Fuentes, Ching, and Martínez 2007: 155). This only motivated Dalton to join another founding segment of the FMLN called the ERP (Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo/People's Revolutionary Army) instead (Lindo-Fuentes, Ching, and Martínez 2007: 156). An internal conflict with Edgar Alejandro Rivas Mira in the ERP about tactics, such as establishing bonds with civil organizations, led to Dalton's assassination by the orders of ERP leader Joaquín Villalobos, who was also known as "Atilio". Dalton was also accused of working undercover with the CIA. The source for these allegations are strongly speculative, and have been debated by many over the years (Lindo-Fuentes, Ching, and Martínez 2007: 155).

Dalton is considered one of the greatest poets of the 20th century in El Salvador's (Lara-Martínez 2007: 12). After the 1992 Peace Accords were signed, Dalton received a posthumous recognition by the Salvadoran government as a "Poeta Meritísimo," also earning an honorary doctorate degree from the National University of El Salvador (Lindo-Fuentes, Ching, and Martínez 2007: 160).

Roque Dalton and *Miguel Mármol*

In 1972, thirty years after La Matanza, Roque Dalton published the biographical testimonio previously mentioned, *Miguel Mármol*. Dalton documented the life of Mármol. He spent three weeks interviewing Mármol in Prague and taking detailed notes about his involvement with the Communist Party and his labor organizing (Lindo-Fuentes, Ching, and Martínez 2007: 148). Mármol survived a firing squad in January 24, 1932, when he was 27 years old. Mármol states that a firing squad shot at the captured group of campesinos seven times (Dalton 1972: 363). After two bullets grazed him, one in the chest and the other in the head, Mármol fell unconscious into the trench dug behind the entire line of people executed. Others shot at the time fell on top of him. Thus, after the executions, soldiers presumed he was dead (Dalton 1972: 364). Mármol asserts that he was the only survivor of that killing (Dalton 1972: 364).

Years after La Matanza, Mármol lived in exile, sometimes spending time in prison or working with the Communist Party in other countries in Latin America (Lindo-Fuentes, Ching, and Martínez 2007: 148). Mármol met Dalton 35 years later at a Socialist Party conference in Prague. Both disagreed on particular ideologies and political directions related to the Communist Party of El Salvador (Dalton 1972: 3). Dalton states that he recorded Mármol's spoken memories as he described them (Lindo-Fuentes, Ching, and Martínez 2007: 148). Even so, Dalton did provide a few introductory comments in the book about Mármol's dislike for the intelligentsia and bourgeoisie. Dalton calls the book a *testimonio*, a literary genre popular in Latin America at the time, often representing a disenfranchised voice (Lindo-Fuentes, Ching, and Martínez 2007: 148). The book highlighted the complexities of state violence in 1932, emphasizing the significance of this historical and political event in the country.

Even so, Lindo-Fuentes, Ching, and Martínez, (2007) argue that the book should be considered an interpretive history, after analyzing Dalton's personal archives and handwritten notes from the Mármol interview. They argue that Dalton does a "narrative reconfiguration," in which he [Dalton] "turned a few dozen pages (sixty-one pages) of handwritten notes into a published book of more than five hundred pages during a five-year period between 1966 and 1971 (Lindo-Fuentes, Ching, and Martínez 2007: 138). As Lindo-Fuentes, Ching, and Martínez argue, understanding critiques of *testimonio* literature is important to contextualizing how readers receive and interpret these texts. It is especially important to note which audiences these texts were written for and for what purposes. Lindo-Fuentes, Ching, and Martínez argue that Dalton contributed his own opinions to the book more than he would like to admit. These scholars also recognize that the book is a collection not just of Mármol's own remembrance of events, but of many different memory groups, which forms a constitutive collective commemoration of 1932.

These scholars contend that Dalton was intrigued by Mármol's story because he highlighted and politicized La Matanza of 1932 as a Communist Salvadoran. They note, "Had Mármol not been a Communist, and had his story not lent itself to the promotion of communism and the study of 1932, Dalton likely would not have been interested" (Lindo-Fuentes, Ching, and Martínez 2007: 148). Consequently, Dalton's popularity among the masses as a political writer in El Salvador made Mármol's life story more widespread among Salvadorans, and contributed to Mármol being known as a central figure in the history of La Matanza. Accordingly, *Miguel Mármol* is considered a fundamental text in El Salvador, in contextualizing the experiences of La Matanza, not just nationally for Salvadorans, but also internationally, through its highly emphasized Communist causal narrative.

Miguel Mármol remains an important text for its political analysis, Dalton's representation of Mármol's actions, and because it is one of the few testimonial literatures on La Matanza of 1932. Further, Dalton is considered one of Central America's best writers in the 20th century. And, *Miguel Mármol* continues to attract large readership internationally. The events of the book vary from the spread of the labor movement, to the creation of the Communist Party of El Salvador, the social and working conditions of the working class and the poor, the unconstitutional government of Maximiliano Hernández Martínez, the reasons for the failure of the 1932 movement, to Mármol's involvement in the planning of the 1932 movement, and his survival after being shot several times by government soldiers and then pronounced dead. In the following sub-sections, I discuss chapters 6 and 7. Both of these chapters represent Dalton's telling of events of La Matanza of 1932 through the spoken memories of Mármol. Following a brief recounting of Chapters 6 and 7, I will present a critique of the invisibilization of gender and indigeneity by both Mármol and Dalton.

Chapter 6 of *Miguel Mármol*, La Matanza of 1932: Brief Overview

Once captured by soldiers, Mármol talks about jail as a place of fear, disgust, and death. He describes the horrible smells of the latrine, small spaces for eating, defecating, and sleeping all in one cell. Prisoners were piled on top of one another, and soldiers were threatening to shoot at any moment. During his interrogation, he says, "I know you, and I know you have been always poor, like us Communists, like me. If right now I asked you to lend me two pesos, I know you wouldn't have the money. This is a struggle of the poor against the rich, and it's terrible that it's poor people like you who the rich use to repress other poor people" (250).

In the morning, Mármol is brought a copy of the newspaper. He notes that the newspaper had negative propaganda against the Communist party. The newspaper stated: "La prensa diaria vomitaba veneno sobre la supuesta barbarie roja y las iglesias y los púlpitos de Herán tribunas de agitación en la que se pedía la cabeza de los demonios Comunistas sobrevivientes. Desde entonces se comenzó a pintarnos como una horda de desalmados que entrábamos en las ciudades machete en mano, asesinando y saqueando, volándole la cabeza a los propietarios y viólando a las vírgenes" (254).

"Wicked," "bloodthirsty," "terrorizing," "red hordes," "machete-

wielding,” “destroying private property,” and “raping women, virgins, wives, young, and old.”

The headline “Murdered by Communists” and the descriptions of the Communist party were meant to terrify the masses, so the party would have weakened support. The descriptions also helped to justify the military and government-sanctioned mass killings of party leaders and members, who were mainly peasants and Indigenous workers (254).

Mármol and the prisoners soon took notice that they are being taken to a firing squad. While they are lined up by the wall, a guard yells, “A ver, ¿quién es el que quiere morir ahora?” (256). (Who wants to die now?). Mármol steps forward, and describes the shooting:

“Los tiros me atravesaron la tetilla y el brazo izquierdo...Vino otra descarga. Aquí sí me dieron bien. Sentí varios golpes en el cuerpo y un como timbrazo, un como golpe eléctrico en toda la cabeza. Después vi una luz intensa y perdí el sentido. Al despertar estaba de bruces, manando sangre de la cabeza. Mi pensamiento estaba claro. El cuerpo del ruso estaba sobre el mío y todavía goteaba sangre caliente” (259).

(“The next shots hit my head and left arm. Another round. Here they hit me good. I felt several hits on my body. An electric shock all in my head. Then I saw an intense light, and I lost consciousness. In waking up, I was bleeding from my head. But my thoughts were clear. The body of the Russian was over me, and he still dripped warm blood on me”).

Mármol pretends to be dead, and the soldiers see the Russian man’s brain matter on top of Mármol’s head. Thinking it is his, the soldiers presume he is dead. Mármol is able to get up after some time, and he travels back to his hometown. He notes:

“Lo más tremendo para mí en aquellos días eran las descargas cerradas que se oían al anochecer: vidas de camaradas y personas inocentes que no iban a tener mi suerte. Murieron como vivieron: fieles a sus convicciones, al Partido y al pueblo” (266).

(“The biggest thing for me in those days were the sounds of bullets throughout the night: lives of comrades and innocent people who wouldn’t have the same luck. They died loyal, with their convictions for the Party, and for the people”).

Chapter 7 of *Miguel Mármol*, Reasons for the losses of 1932: Brief Overview

Once Mármol recovered from his injuries, he began to work in a shoe shop. The group of workers study Marxist theory and review the causes leading to the failures of 1932. Mármol states that the lack of communications after the police detained Martí, Luna, and Zapata had a big influence on the organization. The government had gained enough information about Communist Party actions to stop the smaller numbers and conflicting visions of PCS members as well as of the mobilization of the poor, Indigenous, workers movement before it even began.

The government also released a false document that publicized lies about Communists cutting off the heads of property owners. Another false statement was that the Party promised to hand out distribution passes to rape any women they wanted to, including virgins (297, 300, and 312).

“Fue en documentos como éste que las fuerzas represivas trataron de basar la justificación del asesinato masivo de 30 mil campesinos y obreros: alegando que se trataba de una acción preventiva contra los crímenes programados supuestamente por los Comunistas. *Instrucciones al Comunismo Salvadoreño para su ofensiva general del 22 de enero de 1932*” (313).

(“It was in documents like these that the repressive forces tried to base their justification of the mass assassinations of 30 thousand peasants and workers: alleging that it was a preventative act against the supposed programmed crimes of the Communists. *Instructions for the Salvadoran Communism offensive for January 22, 1932*”).

The false document angered Communist party members. Members abandoned the party due to the false document. Mármol states that the government targeted and killed people associated with the Communist party. They did this through the use of party voting lists, workers at plantations, and using terror as a method to indiscriminately kill. Mármol insisted that the government was responsible for the violence, not the Communists. The government murdered, robbed, raped, and tortured the poor workers. This ultimately strengthened the foundations for continued oligarchal-imperialist domination in the country (304, 316).

Mármol described brutal forms of violence people endured at the hands of the military-government. In Izalco, majority women and children were massacred in a plaza. Military officers commanded peasants to smell their pistols, and they fired the gun once the workers would come close. Other peasants dug their own graves before being killed. Another military officer ran over peasants. He said that one could hear people’s bones bursting under the pressure. Indigenous leader Feliciano Ama was hung in a plaza where schoolchildren were made to watch. Mármol stated that Ama’s killing was considered one of the largest symbolic killings of Indigenous peoples, following the death of cacique Anastasio Aquino in 1833 (305-308). Mármol commented that Ama did not join the struggle as an Indigenous person, but rather as an “exploited man” (308).

Mármol stated that Communist members only killed people that resisted their takeovers, such as the military:

“Veintidós muertos, la casi totalidad de ellos en franco combate y el resto en circunstancias no del todo determinadas, y cuatro heridos, son las cifras que se nos pueden achacar a los Comunistas en esta acción. El resto de los 30 mil muertos que hubo es culpa negra y eterna de la oligarquía y la burguesía Salvadoreña, del Ejército de la tiranía de Martínez, del sistema capitalista dependiente del imperialismo norteamericano.” (313-315).

(“20 dead, the almost totality of them in direct combat and the rest in unknown circumstances, and four injured, these are the figures that we can blame the Communists in this action. The rest of the 30 thousand dead is the dark and eternal fault of the oligarchy and Salvadoran bourgeoisie, the army of the Martínez tyranny, of the capitalist system dependent on North American imperialism”).

Mármol also addresses the gaps and silences of public discourse surrounding 1932. He states that the government would not attempt to quiet this history, unless they were denying the truth of what happened. He asks:

“¿Por qué es que sigue siendo prácticamente prohibido en El Salvador hablar de 1932? ¿Por qué hasta los periódicos de aquella época tremenda han desaparecido de las bibliotecas y hemerotecas, de los archivos de las mismas empresas periodísticas, que se ofrecen como servicio público? ¿Por qué nuestros historiadores y periodistas se siguen conformando con dar a la juventud la visión esquemática, falsa y criminal de “la matazón que en 1932 hicieron los Comunistas,” y no se atreven a plantear con pelos y señales la verdad desnuda?” (317).

(“Why is it that remains virtually banned in El Salvador to speak of 1932? Why is it that even the newspapers during that tremendous epoch in time have disappeared from the libraries and newspaper, files of the same newspaper companies, which are offered as a public service? Why have our historians and journalists continued to conform to give the youth a false and criminal schematic overview of ‘the massacre of 1932 that the Communists did,’ and do not dare to speak the naked truth?”).

Mármol said that understanding the history of La Matanza is important for being a “good” Communist, as well as a “good” Salvadoran revolutionary (318).

Representation of women in *Miguel Mármol*

Before, during, and after La Matanza, Mármol’s support system was predominantly women (Zuniga 2015: 115). Women who help Mármol include his sister, his wife, his mother, a nurse, and other women who cook for him (Dalton 1972: 118). These women provide warnings about the military, food, financial assistance, medical care and a resting/hiding place in order for Mármol and other men to survive (118). Mármol provides several men’s names in his spoken memories of 1932, but rarely mentions the names or identities of women who were also central to the movement. Women are often portrayed as periphery actors in the book. Mármol notes:

“Nuestras mujeres vendían fruta por la mañana y por la tarde hacían tamales también para vender a fin de sobrellevar la situación y a fin de que los hombres nos pudiéramos dedicar por completo al trabajo organizativo y revolucionario” (117).

(“Our women sell fruit in the morning, and in the afternoon they make tamales also to sell, so ultimately the men can completely dedicate themselves to organizational and revolutionary work”).

These women Mármol refers are either the wives of workers, or women in the markets or that sell and/or give food to men from the Communist cause. Mármol reveals a gendered division of labor. Lugones refers to this as the *coloniality of gender*. This is how heterosexuality becomes a “key part of how gender fuses with race in the operations of colonial power” (Lugones 2007: 186). Mármol demonstrates this describing how women cook for the men. Men would then take up arms against the bourgeoisie. Women’s roles, according to Mármol, is one of paternalistic domesticity,

and while he thanks women for their food, and for sustaining the men, he does so in a patriarchal tone, as he does not seem to equate women cooking to an equal role of men in doing the “real” work of revolution. Even so, Mármol neglects, more as an afterthought, that sustaining the revolution through food and providing nutrients is, too, a form of resistance.

In another example, when Mármol survives the firing squad and is able to arrive at his sister’s house, he describes his family’s shock at finding out he is alive (207). His family had made an altar for him and prayed every night. So Mármol would not be discovered, his sister puts him in a back room. Mármol asks her to proceed with her prayers at home, so that people continue to believe that he has died.

“Detrás del altar, que tenía unos cortinajes que les había prestado un amigo sacristán, me improvisaron un lecho para descansar, allí me quedé incluso cuando llegaron los vecinos a rezarme” (208).

(“Behind the altar, from some curtains a sacristan friend let my family borrow, they improvised a space for me to rest, I stayed there when the neighbors came to pray for me”).

Mármol stated his amusement to listen to the prayers of his sister. This included the prayers of his neighbors, and the memories they had of him. His sister would have to create a façade of feeling sad. She would also speed up her prayers out of fear that the neighbors might find out about his survival. Even so, Mármol’s sister could not pray too fast, so that she did not raise any suspicions. She would also have to tell the neighbors that a rat died in the house to convince them of the bad smell in their home. The smell had actually come from Mármol’s infected wounds. Even while he describes feeling grateful to his sister for helping, Mármol seems to think the entire façade is funny. The day his sister found out he was alive, Mármol mentions how he let her cry the entire night so that she could get her emotions out of the way. He does not seem to meaningfully understand her initial shock at seeing him alive. Nor does he seem to grasp how stressful and precarious it must have been for her to ensure his safety and survival following his attempted government killing.

As family, it appears that Mármol’s sister is more than glad to help him, yet Mármol’s lack of character development for women in the book is telling. While Mármol, *vis a vis* Dalton, can go on for pages about his male comrades who help organize the revolution with him, the lack of information on his sister, bearing on a virtual invisibilization of her subjectivity, reveals his heteropatriarchal lens, and his own lack of meaningful appreciation for women. Women literally kept him and others alive. Mármol eventually survived the ethnocide and went on to live his life for many decades to come. Mármol seems to make an assumption that this is simply what women are *supposed to do* for him. He takes for granted, minimizes, and even attempts to silence women’s sacrifices. Mármol does this similarly with his mother and wife. He does not share much about them in the book besides gendered scripts of care. Mármol’s descriptions of his sister protecting him appear trivial or dismissive by his characterizations. Yet by grieving his death, hiding him in her house, maintaining the façade of his death, continuing to pray to his altar, hosting the neighbors to also pray for him, and speeding up the prayers, these all can function as forms of resistance to not only

protect Mármol, but also herself, her family, and her community. It is precisely these gaps and silences that reveal Mármol's (and Dalton's) bias. Through Said's *contrapuntal* or Goeman's *intertextual* readings, it is possible to have another understanding of women's resistances in El Salvador confronting state violence.

Another prominent example that Mármol described is his recovery from his injuries. Through the help of his sister, she is able to find him a place to stay. There, Mármol stated that the woman taking care of the house revealed herself as a nurse named Lucía. Mármol's sister had told Lucía that he had hurt himself by falling down while drunk. She told Mármol that she knew he had lied. Lucía knew his injuries were from bullets, and that the smell was from an infection from open wounds. She stated, "Yo le puedo salvar, porque soy enfermera graduada, pero me tiene que decir la verdad de lo que le ha pasado, porque, si no, lo entregaré a las autoridades" (210); ("I can save you, I am a licensed nurse, but you have to tell me the truth of what happened, because, if not, I will turn you in to the authorities"). Here, Lucía demands to be heard. Mármol tells her the truth of how he survived the firing squad and was able to get to safety. After learning this, Lucía helped heal him. Mármol stated how he hoped God blessed that woman's revolutionary charity. Mármol seems to have a better appreciation for Lucía, because he introduced her as a strong woman through her demands. While she appeared to be one of the more dynamic women represented by Mármol, her passage is only about a page and a half in length. Not much else is known about her. Ultimately, Lucía nurses him back to health. This fits the script of what Mármol expected for a woman to do, to serve him and the revolutionary cause. His masculinist behavior denoted heterosexist gender oppression. Gender hierarchies were inherited from colonizers to create a binary division between men and women (Lugones 2007: 206). Yet coloniality continues to be extant, by observing the labor leader, who fights against class oppression, reproduce patriarchal behavior daily (Zuniga 2015: 116).

Reflections on *Miguel Mármol*

As Dalton reiterated in his own book, what better way to tell the history of 1932, than from the perspective of someone who survived? Due to *Miguel Mármol's* popularity, Dalton's work greatly contributed to one form of traditional knowledge of the state violence and ethnocides of 1932. Accordingly, Rafael Lara Martínez, anthropologist and critical literary scholar, conducts a critical reading of *Miguel Mármol* through an analysis on what he labels "testimonial surrealism and magical Marxism" in his edited book, *Del dictado, Miguel Mármol, Roque Dalton y 1932, del cuaderno (1966) a la "novela-verdad" (1972)*. He does so as a pun on magical realism, a category over-utilized in the 1960s to depict Latin American literature. This is a way to transform testimonio, which allegedly represents "the real truth," into an oxymoron: testimonial surrealism. Lara Martínez asserts that texts like Roque Dalton's *Miguel Mármol*, provided the foundation and continuing legacy of the historiography of 1932. This would be the case of Thomas Anderson's book *La Matanza* (1971). Anderson's book helped create language in the West in which the massacres of 1932 came to be known as La Matanza, instead of as an Indigenous ethnocide. Scholars have not often pushed more on the limits of this historiography. Thus, the book *Miguel Mármol* establishes a social

imaginary of 1932, whereby, by blending the positionality of a poet-revolutionary (Dalton) and that of a Party organizer (Mármol), and their co-creation. This testimonio of the ethnocide transformed an understanding of events into a new ‘official story,’ at least for significant sectors of Salvadoran society. This countered government narratives and silences of these brutal events (Harlow 1991: 2). Yet Lara Martínez also focuses on how Mármol revealed not just a Communist reading, of the book, but also an Indigenous version through Dalton’s own production of gaps and silences. As his own invention, Lara Martínez explores how testimonial surrealism functions in the book for Mármol while simultaneously how the text produces a postmodern nostalgia for Dalton (Lara-Martínez 1999: 115).

Lara Martínez examines *Miguel Mármol* from the first encounter. This is from the first time Dalton gathers the testimony to the subsequent structuring of it. To then recreating his own writings to transform the words into a complete narrative. This is what Lara Martínez calls *intermediation* by Dalton, as well as by Mármol recovering his childhood struggles in El Salvador, and being able to narrate them belatedly in Prague, in a luxurious setting, across time and space (Lara-Martínez 1999: 116). This is a point where the text moves from orality to textuality. As previously mentioned, Dalton stated that he represented Mármol exactly as Mármol shared his memories, and says he is only a compiler of information, thus attempting to erase that ambiguity, power, and liminality between a traditional model of a testimonio between the author and the person providing the testimony. Yet as the text also makes clear, the book is a Communist perspective of 1932. Hence, Lara Martínez asks, how can there be restitution for the voice of the “pueblo” (“people”) in Mármol’s memories? The “Latinoamericanismo” fragments and harms Indigenous people who are affected and silenced by a mestizo essentialist narrative. How can we construct these persons in the present absences? There does not seem to be a way to restore the original, or get back what was lost, only exceed certain histories (Lara Martínez 1999: 117). The subaltern soon becomes a privileged person through recognition in a Western context. Through this new positionality, Lara Martínez argues that this gives an illusion of a testimony.

Mármol used the term “campesino” or peasant, which erases the notion of indigeneity in El Salvador, of Nahuat communities. Mármol’s use of the word campesino is also used by Mármol interchangeably to refer to a worker, which he envisions as part of his Communist agenda. Only in one point does Mármol make a distinction between campesino and Indigenous, when he acknowledges that in Guatemala he is listening to Indigenous peoples issues who seemed to have “different thinking” from Mármol, not like other campesinos who apparently all shared similar struggles (Dalton 1972: 520). Lara Martínez notes that Mármol also never describes Izalco at all, nor the Occidental/West, in which he spends the majority of his time organizing workers, what Lara Martínez deems is more of an anthropological perspective of Izalco being referred to as “un lugar con indios sin indios” (“a place with Indians without Indians”) (Lara Martínez 1999: 118). This is problematic as it subsumes indigeneity as simply a class issue. Lara Martínez asks, “How can he reduce indigeneity simply to an agricultural proletariat identity? Or campesino? This is the destitution of the most intimate identity of an Indigenous person’s ethnic consciousness” (Lara Martínez 1999: 119). Even as

Mármol does this, this form of testimonio allows a now larger, and even Western audience the ability to “experience” something like what Mármol went through as represented by Dalton. However, it does so at the expense of continuing to erase Indigenous people from the histories of 1932, who were one of the most impacted by the ethnocide. Despite this problem, testimonios still create sociocultural distances between the author/narrator and the reader. As much as an outside may try to make intelligible what are unspeakable violences, the reader will never fully understand those experiences of those who lived those violences.

Lara Martínez notes Doris Sommer’s (1991) feminist reading of Mármol through gendered and sexual politics in the book. He said, “No tuve mas remedio que buscar refugio en San Martín, en la casa de otra mi mujer que yo tuve y de la cual no he hablado hasta aqui, ni hablaré mas, por razones que solo a mi me importan ... yo era el padre de su hija” (394-395); (“I had no other choice but to find refuge in San Martín, in the house of my other woman that I had and whom I have not mentioned up until now, nor will I say more, for only reasons that matter to me... I was the father of her daughter”). Sommer refers to Mármol’s machismo as a “secreto/secret,” or otherwise the gaps and silences of Mármol’s intimate life in the book. He also stated: “Pero como dice el tango, de las mujeres no hay que hablar” (440-441); (“How tango says, of women you shouldn’t speak”). Sommer argues that Mármol relegates sexuality to the private sphere, as something separate from politics. She even notes that the etymology of testimonio comes from testiculos or testes referring for a man to speak. That, as Mármol previously states, the (formula for) revolution is “cosa de hombres” (“thing of men”) (494-495). Thus, the absence of the presence of women, such as through Mármol’s masculine identity and sexual politics creates a gendered distance that Sommer describes as a homoerotic act through the exclusion women (Lara Martínez 1999: 117). This excludes the voices and representation of women in the historiography of 1932, as well as for Indigenous communities.

Lara Martínez invokes Spivak over whether the subaltern can/not speak. The very act of transcription itself, of writing and moving from orality to textuality, erases subaltern voices through the narrative taking of that intimate voice; and that this is an act of betrayal by the author, of stealing the oral and attempting to “rescue” subaltern secrets to make public (Lara Martínez 1999: 119). Lara Martínez states that Nahuatl was not meant to be written, and that by speaking for/over Indigenous communities, through Mármol’s usage of “campesino/peasant worker”, and the absence of Indigenous bodies, Dalton is problematically resurrecting the dead through the aura of testimony. This is a form of speaking over bodies to re-present their lives, and to take and create an emptiness left by others (Lara Martínez 1999: 120).

Dalton’s testimony also resurrects Mármol, such as through his survival from the firing squad, to create a voice for the “dead.” This creates a supernatural quality to the book, from Mármol arising from the dead, and becoming Dalton’s testimonial hero, in what Lara Martínez refers to as testimonial surrealism. This is also tied to how Mármol notes during the ethnocide how political unrest always seems to happen during natural disasters. In this case, Lara Martínez cites the way Mármol talks about a volcano erupting during the ethnocide (Dalton 1972: 310). This also, according to Lara Martínez,

includes how Mármol talks about magical spiritual characters, miracles happening, dreams, hallucinations, hauntings, and more. Mármol describes possibly running into la Cihuanaba¹ at a river once, and him praying and not traveling forward after seeing her as a sign to protect himself, just in case it was her, despite him claiming he is not religious because he is a Communist. Even so, Mármol has dreams that he recounts that guide him to living a longer life.

This, according to Lara Martínez, demonstrates how despite Mármol's Communist beliefs that he still sometimes puts Marx and "folklore" on the same level of truth-blending. Similarly, death and resurrection are also part of a Christian belief. These forms of magical aura are what Lara Martínez describes as ethnographic surrealism or testimonial surrealism. Mármol is forever remembered, to a degree, as a "spiritual leader" (Marxism, Leninism, and unionism) through the creation of these narratives, thus giving legitimacy in his role as a union leader and founder of the Communist Party of El Salvador. To note, scholarly interpretations of "folklore," "magic," "spirituality," "belief," etc. can also be detached, objectifying, anthropological, Western, etc. and attempt to devalue Indigenous epistemologies as only mythical, and not a valued contribution to global knowledge production.

Consequently, by writing *Miguel Mármol*, Dalton allows him to live for eternity in print as a hero. Moreover, Dalton's encounter with Mármol awakened his political sensibilities for his homeland in creating a postmodern nostalgia in his joy of remembering. This gave Dalton a greater connecting to his homeland while being abroad for so long in Prague. He created a political project that used the Matanza as a point of departure for a revolution. Mármol was an ideal subject for his next book to create a testimonial truth-project of political historical order for the ethnocide of 1932. *Miguel Mármol* helped to weave in the three differentiated narrative lines, with Mármol's voice taking the lead: 1) a leftist historiography of 1932, 2) ethnographic and testimonial surrealism, and 3) postmodern nostalgia. It is important to acknowledge that the book was part of Dalton's political project. He later returned to El Salvador to join a guerilla organization, and was eventually assassinated for his attempts. The book is one lasting representation of the events of 1932 that depict a social imaginary confronting state violence. There are other representations, voices, and experiences as well. Even so, these histories largely leave out women and Nahuat communities from being able to meaningfully share, or not, their own lived experiences of the ethnocide, of their motivations, of life, of death, of love, of hopes, of dreams, of resistances, of survivals, and of imagined futurities.

¹ Often referred to as a supernatural character from Salvadoran folklore, la Sihuanaba is a shape-changing spirit that typically takes the form of an attractive, long haired woman seen from behind. She lures men away into danger before revealing her face to be that of a horse or, alternatively, a skull. There have been more recent feminist reclamations of la Sihuanaba that construct her as a symbol of empowerment, and no longer a sexist representation.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I provided a brief historical context of the ethnocide of 1932. I argued that dominant understandings of 1932 often represent three dynamics of the massacre, which have shaped normative historiographies of the ethnocide: the coffee economy, the Communist narrative, and the Presidential elections of 1931. While there is utility in breaking down these dynamics to understand the ethnocide of 1932, the rigidity in these structures does not allow for flexibility for polyvocal understandings of the ethnocide. The Communist party narrative was utilized by the government to justify the mass killings of Nahuat communities. The Communist party mobilized poor and Indigenous groups to change the power and control from wealthy elites, particularly after the price of coffee dropped. Class and mestizo male leadership (i.e. Mármol, Martí, etc.) are highly emphasized dynamics to understand 1932, stemming from the government Communist narrative, yet gender and indigeneity, as well as important anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist critiques have often been an overlooked category of analysis. The military ousting of Araujo by Martínez forever changed the country's trajectory politically and socially through a series of authoritarian dictatorships. His repressive military regime lasted long after the ethnocide of 1932. While these elements have been understood as contributing factors for 1932, there is also a lot of resistance to these narratives. Nahuat communities were fighting for their lives resisting coloniality as subalternized and racialized peoples.

Some scholars have referred to the movement of 1932 as an “uprising” or an “armed insurrection.” Indigenous communities have pushed back on these descriptors, especially by Western scholars who have imposed, and remain dominant, in telling the histories of 1932 (DeLugan 2012: 119). Limited Salvadoran scholars, or Indigenous scholars, have written about the ethnocide, especially women. Moreover, it begs the question of who and how can we write about ethnocide? Is it permissible to do so in the first place? These questions negotiate how stories are told, who gets to speak, as well as intersectionality and positionality in challenging dominant understandings of 1932. While new academic attention has focused on 1932 and its impact on Nahuat communities today, these efforts have yet to meaningfully address gender; specifically, Nahuat women from Western El Salvador, who survived the massacre. There is much more to hear from the testimonies of Nahuat communities, such as from Nahuat women, whose memories function as important sites to resist state violence. Understanding 1932 should be considered through an intersectional lens to understand the nuanced dynamics of the ethnocide.

A mechanism to address these dynamics can be through a lens of social memory. I mentioned historical silences, as in the reference to Trouillot, to challenge “history from the victors” perspectives. This also includes other untold histories of the ethnocide. One area that could be expanded includes how the ethnocide of 1932 impacted other Indigenous communities in El Salvador, such as Lenca, Cacaopera-Kakawira, Maya, and more. Conflating peasants with Indigenous peoples overlooks Nahuat communities that were massacred in the ethnocide of 1932. The aftermath of the ethnocide perpetuated the myth that all Indigenous people in El Salvador were killed by the military government. This is one of many contradictions about the Indigenous people that Salvadorans repeat, as a result of the ethnocide. This includes common phrases used to demean people, such as by calling Indigenous people in Izalco “brujos/brujas” (“witches”). This works as a

contradiction in which Indigenous people are not supposed to exist, yet they do. This also includes how gender and memory function together. Moving beyond a binary construction of gender, how can we also begin to discuss the dynamics of memory, state violence, and ethnocide across gender binaries? This is still one area in which dynamics of power have attempted to exclude histories of the ethnocide. What social or collective memories exist? Social memories function as sites of testimony to tell different histories. Social and political imaginaries create different reckonings, conjurings, and futurities of what is possible. Roque Dalton's *Miguel Mármol* responds to Communist understandings of 1932, yet Mármol's memories also worked to reify certain epistemic gaps and silences about 1932, by overlooking the specific violences that impact Indigenous and gendered communities during and after the ethnocide.

The histories of the ethnocide of 1932 are connected to larger histories of colonial violences, foreign imperialism, the 1980s war, and currently mass migrations, detentions, deportations, and gang violences in El Salvador. Even more so, the ethnocide is also inextricably linked to previous and ongoing histories of indigenous, feminist, poor, rural, and worker social movements in the country, what Almeida (2008) refers to as *holdovers* or rather our political ancestors that carry agency, memories of organizing, and resistance to state violence. Understanding the importance of the ethnocide to these histories is key. For instance, transnational and diasporic artists like Alicia Maria Siu (2010) highlight these hauntings (1998) of violence, but also Nahuat, Indigenous women's survivance of the ethnocide. The voices of Nahuat communities, particularly that of women, still need to be widely represented in the scholarship of 1932 and in the academy. Other scholarly approaches, such as Indigenous studies, transnational feminist studies, and queer studies would enrich future research on this topic.

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