

“Tu táan yich in kaajal” [On The Face of My People]:
Contemporary Maya-Spanish Bilingual Literature and Cultural Production
from the Yucatan Peninsula

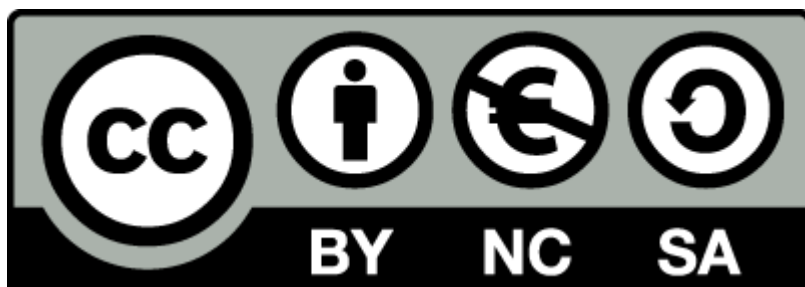
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Introduction. Contemporary Maya-Language Literature

La lectura es un árbol cuyas semillas se plantan en la mente, sus hojas son palabras que dan sombra y sus frutos dulces están llenos de conocimiento para alimentar al espíritu.¹
—Isaac Carrillo Can

Discourses on Mexico's mixed *mestizo* identity² and on pre-Hispanic Maya exceptionalism have often eclipsed the thriving contemporary population of Maya cultural inheritors who live both on and off the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico, many of whom still speak the Maya language. In university courses I teach in the United States, I often assign students contemporary Maya texts written since the 1990s. Perceptions that indigenous cultures and indigenous-language writing belong to pre-Hispanic times or cannot be modern are so ingrained that I can introduce a unit on contemporary Maya literature by showing authors' recent pictures and providing authors' birthdates and publication dates, and very bright students can still assume the texts they read predate cars and electronic technologies. Nonetheless, contemporary Maya authors are fomenting a thriving written literature in the Maya language from the Yucatan Peninsula and increasing the visibility of contemporary modalities of Maya culture.

This internationally renowned literary corpus provokes compelling questions. Although the pre-Hispanic Maya utilized a hieroglyphic writing system, since the sixteenth century, colonial and neo-colonial process have caused the Maya language to survive mostly in oral form over five centuries of Maya and Spanish linguistic coexistence. What does it mean to write in a language that features a robust oral storytelling tradition, a largely non-standardized contemporary writing system, and exponentially more speakers than readers? When the Maya have so often been represented by popular imaginaries—2012 and “the end of the world” was

¹ See “Perspectiva” 165.

² An identity of mixed Amerindian and European heritage

not so long ago—, how are the Maya themselves representing their history and contemporary world? In a contemporary imaginary that juxtaposes a glorious pre-Hispanic Maya civilization with current Spanish-language hegemony on the Yucatan Peninsula, how do authors participate in or respond to ongoing revalorization efforts that seek to legitimize and raise the prestige of contemporary Maya language and culture? What are authors' strongest literary influences when they are products of Spanish-language education but also seek to promote Maya identities and language? How do they situate their work among Maya written and oral canons and colonial-language literary canons? Why do authors almost exclusively compose and publish this corpus in symmetrical bilingualism, in which a single text has both a Maya and a Spanish version? How do authors perceive their contributions to revalorization?

In this dissertation, I examine a corpus of bilingual Maya-Spanish written literature published since the 1990s. These works form part of a flourishing contemporary literary scene especially fomented through literary workshops in the 1980s and 90s that sought to professionalize Maya-language authors. The writers who participated in these seminal workshops are in many senses forerunners of a contemporary Maya-language literary corpus. My focus is primarily on the lesser studied generation of authors who follow them but are no less groundbreaking, as their varied approaches diversify manifestations of Maya literature, cultural motifs, and language use.

This corpus intersects with categories such as 'Indigenous literatures' and 'Maya literatures', which are concepts with competing definitions. While I do not reformulate these definitions, I do want to explain the relationship of the corpus I examine to the debates about them. Discussing Native American literature from the United States, Robert Dale Parker underscores that categories like 'Indian writing' are inventions, and demonstrates that these

categories are not limited to expressing Indian identity or embodying a specifically Indian aesthetic. In fact, he challenges scholars who propose there is a unique Indian aesthetic by mentioning non-Indian Modernist and contemporary writers who employ characteristics often associated with Indian writing, such as non-linear time. In so doing, he exposes the essentialism of these critical approaches and shows Native American literature to be an “invention” (1054, 1057-62). Maya K’iche’ scholar Emilio del Valle Escalante asserts that insistences on defining indigenous literatures as writing in indigenous languages obscures that many contemporary indigenous people do not speak their languages, citing “castellanización, asimilación, desplazamiento y disgregación” as social and linguistic processes that discourage learning indigenous tongues (*Teorizando* 6-7). Speaking specifically about a Maya corpus, Paul Worley defines ‘Maya literature’ through the creator’s cultural affiliation and importantly recognizes oral, folkloric, and written modalities as literature (15-16).³

Considering these reflections, I examine one part of the story of Mayan literatures: a subgroup of texts written in the Maya language from the Yucatan Peninsula, which includes the states of Campeche, Yucatan, and Quintana Roo. Although the word ‘Yucatan’ in English can refer to both the whole peninsula and the state, my usage encompasses the peninsula, unless otherwise specified. When studying some of the same works I examine, other scholars have framed their studies in different ways,⁴ which reveals the “invented” nature of the corpus I examine. However, framing my study through a linguistic distinction (Maya-language texts, which also happen to be bilingual) allows me to acknowledge that Maya authors working on the

³ As Worley explains, “Overemphasis on the word *tradition* in the expression ‘oral tradition’ thus occludes the fact that this tradition remains a viable mechanism through which Yucatec Maya and other indigenous communities understand the modernity we all share” (*Telling* 133).

⁴ Luz María Lepe Lira and Carlos Montemayor, for example, situate these works in Indigenous literatures from so-called ‘Spanish America’. Arturo Arias and Worley have used pan-Maya perspectives. I follow Cristina Leirana Alcocer and Francesc Ligorred Perramon in focusing specifically on a Maya-language bilingual corpus from the Yucatan Peninsula.

Yucatan Peninsula almost exclusively publish Maya-Spanish bilingual editions, assume and promote a Maya identity,⁵ have consciousness of themselves as professionalized writers of literature, and write from similar linguistic and cultural backgrounds, despite regional differences within the peninsula.

This dissertation participates in a moment in criticism in which scholars demonstrate much interest in increasing the visibility of marginalized voices. The Maya have often been the objects of study or (mis)representation, but increasingly articulate their realities on their own terms, and often in the Maya language. This context makes the current moment an important one for studying Maya literature. Maya literary voices provide a means to consider Maya contributions to current local and international conversations and authors' aesthetic fashioning of their interventions. Many scholars have analyzed Maya perspectives and aesthetics in pre-Colombian hieroglyphic texts and Maya colonial texts written in the Latin alphabet.⁶ However, less critical attention has been placed on contemporary literature and aesthetics. When examining contemporary Maya literature, scholars have largely attempted to track literary production and create catalogues of authors and written works published.⁷ Publishing anthologies or describing authors separately are also dominant scholarly practice.⁸ Finally, studies often read the texts for cultural information.⁹ More recently, scholars have theorized how to read this literature and

⁵ Worley signals the "intimate connection between writing and the development of Yucatec Maya cultural consciousness" ("U páajtalil maaya ko'olel" 146).

⁶ Scholars in these areas include but are not limited to Ramón Arzápalo Marín, Michael Carrasco, William F. Hanks, Kerry M. Hull, Timothy Knowlton, Linda Schele, and Dennis Tedlock.

⁷ Leirana Alcocer and Maya-language author Miguel May May are among those who have created catalogues of writers and publications to explain and track authors' current activity. Others, such as Arzápalo Marín and Tedlock have written analyses and catalogues stretching back 500 and 2,000 years, respectively. Alfredo Barrera Vásquez must also be mentioned for his early efforts to promote Maya-language literature, culminating in his coordination of the impressive *Diccionario Maya Cordemex*.

⁸ Carlos Montemayor and Donald Frischmann have published anthologies that focus on and/or include *maaya*-language texts. Leirana Alcocer's *Catálogo* and Ligorred Perramon's approach in Chapter 7 of *Los Mayas tienen la palabra*, for example, describe authors' work separately.

⁹ See Celia Esperanza Rosado Avilés and Óscar Ortega Aranga. While arguing that critics have tended to use Maya texts to extrapolate cultural knowledge, they also argue that because Maya-language authors tend to be cultural

examined the texts as literary and artistic objects.¹⁰ These studies demonstrate that this literature is valuable not just because it is written by Maya authors or in the Maya language, but because the texts provide good literary reading. However, much work remains to be done building upon this foundation of this scholarship, including further analysis of the diverse approaches to literature and Maya culture in this contemporary corpus, identification of texts' positioning among Maya and non-Maya literary canons and genres, and analysis of the textual aesthetics authors use to represent their history and contemporary world.

This is the first study beyond article length that places a corpus of twenty-first century Maya-language written literary texts in dialogue with each other. Whereas the few studies of contemporary Maya literature engage with only one text in the bilingual editions, I am one of a handful of critics who engages the literature on a bilingual level. Using approaches from Translation Studies, I read between the *maaya* and Spanish texts, rather than considering them equivalent texts.¹¹ This bilingual reading illuminates authors' double articulation of their literary projects and examines how these versions often express different nuances or even tensions with each other, as even supposed equivalencies can enact different chains of signifiers within each of the cultural and linguistic codes of the texts' multiple possible readerships. My decision to read bilingually also aligns with authors' desires to forward Maya linguistic and cultural revitalization. I engage the Maya-language text as a communicative text, not just as aesthetic complement to the Spanish text that enjoys a wider readership.

promoters and educators without academic training in literature, they tend to respond more to cultural preservation in their primary texts than literary concerns (122).

¹⁰ Several scholars, including but not limited to Arturo Arias, Rosado Avilés, Gloria Chacón, Emilio del Valle Escalante, Silvia Cristina Leirana Alcocer, Luz María Lepe Lira, Francesc Ligorred, Ortega Arango, Paul Worley, and *Parallel Worlds*, an edited volume by Kerry M. Hull and Michael D. Carrasco, have made important contributions using literary perspectives that examine Maya-language publications.

¹¹ I owe a great scholarly debt to Worley and his bilingual critical perspective. Leirana Alcocer, Ligorred Perramon, and Montemayor also offer analyses of the aesthetic sounds and devices of the Maya language.

The production of this literature within a diglossic context of Spanish-language dominance and efforts to revitalize Maya language and culture cannot be ignored. This context influences authors' language use, access to funding and publication opportunities, readership, and the reception of their work, among other factors. Indeed, publishing in a language despite its minimal readership performs literary activism and reveals writers' ideological commitment to the Maya language. Common language ideologies on the peninsula stereotype the Maya language as only useful in traditional realms, such as the home and the *kool* or *milpa* fields, and linguistic activism works to demonstrate the myth of such beliefs. When discussing efforts to promote Maya language and culture, I follow the distinction Josep Cru makes between linguistic *revitalization*, which inserts a language into new domains and expands its uses ("From" 26), and *revalorization*, which creates positive perceptions about the language (47). His assessment is that Yucatan demonstrates revalorization but not revitalization. Cru argues that in Yucatan, "the notion of revalorisation characterises as yet a piecemeal sociocultural process which is not fundamentally challenging the socioeconomic and political subordination of most Maya speakers" (226-27). He recommends grassroots mobilization in order to translate revalorization into revitalization (109). I also follow Cru's decision to describe the Maya language not as a "minority" language, a designation in debates about rights, but rather as a "minoritized language", which Cru asserts is, "a productive concept to represent the dynamic process whereby the use of languages becomes increasingly reduced due to socio-political oppression" (27).

The Stakes of Studying Contemporary Indigenous Literatures in Latin American Literary Studies

As Paula Gunn Allen states, “In many ways, literary conventions, as well as the conventions of literacy, militate against an understanding of traditional tribal materials” (403). Considering indigenous-language literature in the context of national, regional, or global literatures, then, necessitates a radical rethinking of the definitions of these literatures. Does our current study of “Latin American literature” reflect all its manifestations? How does the structure of literary studies in university settings create boundaries, overemphasis, and blind spots in our study of global literatures?

This contribution to forming a body of literary criticism around contemporary Maya-language texts is beneficial both because of what literary scholars can add to the understanding of Maya cultural production and how the texts themselves modify literary scholars’ understanding of literary traditions, aesthetics, and genre. In the first case, considering Maya texts to be aesthetic creations in dialogue with other literary traditions and discourse surrounding the Maya can offer new insights into understandings of Maya writing in multiple disciplines. In the second case, considering indigenous-language texts as an integral part of canons of American, Latin American, and global literatures requires a reexamination of how literary departments are organized around national languages and definitions of what literature is and does. Maarten E. R. G. N. Jansen portrays the necessity of better incorporating indigenous works into programs of literary study, as he asserts, “The literary heritage of indigenous peoples for the past centuries has been formed, transformed, and transmitted in a colonial context of inequality and injustice. Modern literary criticism and postcolonial theory have much to offer when it comes to issues of representation, gender, power, and social ethos” (246). The methods and

findings of my dissertation may be useful for scholars of literature, anthropology, Indigenous Studies, (Latin) American Studies, Gender Studies, Translation Studies, Postcolonial Studies, and Cultural Studies.

Organizing literature departments under colonial languages excludes indigenous-language writers and reproduces hierarchies still present from the colonial legacy in the Americas. Canons often exclude or minimally represent indigenous authors. Worley notes that Latin American literary anthologies often limit discussions of indigenous literatures to pre-Colombian or colonial texts (*Telling* 3). This approach reinforces perceptions that indigenous cultures disappeared upon the European conquerors' arrival instead of showing the dynamism of indigenous cultural production over time. Another common practice is creating separate anthologies of indigenous and indigenous-language literatures, which Worley sees as another disservice: "This separateness allows the canons of Latin American literature and the ideologies of integration through *mestizaje* and hybridity they reflect to remain undisturbed" (4).

Maaya-language literature reveals not only a need to rethink language hierarchies between American indigenous and European languages but also what really defines Mexican literature, and by extension Latin American literature from other polylingual regions. Miguel May May demonstrates consciousness that his and other Maya-language authors' works form part of wider literary canons, as he writes that Maya literary activity since the 1980s "permite que tanto mayas como no mayas conozcan un poco más sobre la literatura maya contemporánea. De esta manera, los aportes de los escritores mayas no solo enriquecen a la literatura maya, sino también a la literatura yucateca y a la universal" ("Poesía" 97). Similarly, Maya-language literature can also inform scholarly understanding of topics related to literature and language, such as the social and political experiences of citizens in plurilingual nations and diglossic

regions, contemporary definitions of literature and literacy, relationships of power and ideologies to systems of literary publication and distribution, and authors' strategies to garner a readership in a minoritized language. No longer can Latin American national literatures be assumed to be written only in European languages. The consciousness of the literary horizon is changing, as Michela E. Craveri argues that the case of Maya shows in Mexico (12). This dissertation contributes to a growing literary criticism surrounding *maaya*-language texts and places pressures on the Latin American literary canon that has largely excluded indigenous authors despite the enormous contributions of indigenous cultures to the Americas.

The Ambiguous Term “Maya”

The Maya language from the Yucatan Peninsula is one of thirty-one contemporary languages in the Mayan language family that descend from a mother language that linguists call Proto-Mayan (Coe 28). Today, there are approximately 800,000 speakers of the Maya language, and *náhuatl* is the only indigenous language in today's Mexico that has more speakers than Maya (“Programa”). Linguists, anthropologists, and academics call the Maya language ‘Yucatec (Maya)’ to distinguish it from other Mayan languages, each of which has its own name. However, native speakers call their language ‘*maaya(t’aan)*’ in their native tongue and ‘*maya*’ in Spanish, and do not adopt the ‘Yucatec’ modifier.

Throughout this dissertation, I respect the name speakers give to their language and use the terms *maaya* or *maayat’aan* to specifically refer to the Yucatec Maya language as opposed to other languages in the Mayan language family. I always use the term *maaya* as a linguistic designation. When referring to a category of identity or ethnicity from Yucatan, I use the English term ‘Maya’. I use the term ‘Mayan’ only to refer to a wider vision of what scholars call the

Maya area or Mundo Maya, which includes heterogeneous peoples from multiple regions of southern Mexico and Guatemala that have aspects of a shared cultural legacy. However, readers will note that other scholars commonly use the term ‘Mayan’ to specifically refer to the Maya from Yucatan.¹²

A Note on *maayat’aan* and Orthography

To contribute to *maaya* linguistic revitalization, I default to *maaya* terms over Spanish terms in my discussion of bilingual quotations unless I am specifically discussing an author’s Spanish text. For this reason, along with the largely non-standardized nature of contemporary *maaya* writing, a few words on orthography are necessary to avoid confusion. Readers will note wide variation in the *maaya*-language orthography across the different publications I examine. Scribes originally rendered *maaya* through hieroglyphs rather than the Latin alphabet. Today, the language is minimally represented in formal education in Mexico, resulting in the strongly oral character of *maayat’aan*. Since Spanish friars first attempted to render *maaya* phonetics in the Latin alphabet upon arriving to Yucatan in the sixteenth century, various attempts have been made to create a standardized *maaya* orthography. Orthographic variation has resulted from adapting a Latin writing system to *maaya* phonetic features not found among European languages. For example, *maayat’aan* features short vowels (a e i o u), long vowels (aa ee ii oo uu), glotalized vowels (a’ e’ i’ o’ u’) and rearticulated vowels (a’a e’e i’i o’o u’u) with high tones (áa ée íí óó úú) and low tones (aa ee ii oo uu). Standardizing contemporary orthographic norms is also complicated by speakers’ frequent and varied forms of contractions in oral speech, and

¹² See Castañeda “Maya or Mayans?” for a thorough discussion of correct usages of the terms ‘Maya’ and ‘Mayan’.

decisions over how to designate what should be written as separate lexical items and what should be agglutinated or written in a compound form.

Some of the most common inconsistencies involve norms that have changed over time. For example, the glottal stop characteristic of *maaya* was conveyed in colonial orthographies by a repeated consonant, but in contemporary orthographies render it with the apostrophe ('). The fricative sound denoted as *dz* in colonial times is now written as *ts'*. To convey the /h/ phoneme, different authors use *h* or *j*. Prefixes required to mark the gender of certain nouns also involve variation in letters. Noun descriptors of people such as names, nicknames, family relationships, professions, or geographical origin, in addition to animals and gods, are all words that require gendered prefixes (Briceño Chel and Can Tec *U nu'ukbesajil u ts'ibta'al maayat'aan* 285-91). Variation in female prefixes include *x*, *ix*, *X*, or *Ix*, while male prefixes are *ah*, *h*, *aj*, *j*, and their capitalized forms. In some texts, gendered morphemes stand alone, while in other texts, they attach to the word they describe.

The most recent norms were published in 2014 as *U nu'ukbesajil u ts'ibta'al maayat'aan / Normas de escritura para la lengua maya*, coordinated by Fidencio Briceño Chel and Gerónimo Ricardo Can Tec. These norms are the culmination of collective debate by multiple individuals and twenty organizations that foment Maya language and culture who agreed on the importance of establishing written norms for use in bilingual education in Yucatan (173-75). The concept of orthographic standardization and what standardization should look like has caused much debate. The editors present this project as a wide-spread collaboration among *maaya*-speakers who seek to exert self-determination surrounding the norms that govern writing and education in their own language, predicting that the result will raise the status of *maayat'aan* as it flourishes in written form (177-78).

The recent nature of these norms, the underrepresentation of *maayat'aan* in formal education, and disagreement surrounding how or whether to standardize continue to cause orthographic variation in texts. Any direct citations reflect authors' orthographic decisions. However, to respect the most recent norms and discuss the same concept across multiple texts with consistency, my prose adheres to the 2014 norms, including the use of the consonants *j*, *ts*, and *ts'*. Gendered prefixes *x*- and *j*- attach to the words they describe, either directly if they precede a consonant, or with a hyphen if they precede a vowel. Gendered prefixes are capitalized in the case of proper nouns, with the attached name itself in all lower-case letters (284-90). I also follow the norms by utilizing colonial forms *aj*- and *ix*- for names of gods, government officials, authorities, and professions (290-91). Finally, any term with the prefix *-o'ob* represents a noun's plural form.

A Note on Translations and Language

Throughout this dissertation, I use bilingual quotations from bilingual published editions. Therefore, *maaya* and Spanish quotations come from authors' publications, unless otherwise stated. All English translations are my own. As I use them as a tool for comparing corresponding *maaya* and Spanish passages for those who do not read *maayat'aan*, English fluidity is not my priority. Instead, in a Nabokovian sense, I seek to capture a quite literal version of the *maaya* vocabulary and grammatical structure in order to best compare how the passage functions in *maaya* and Spanish. Any English-language gloss or definition of a *maaya* word is also my own unless I cite a dictionary. I do not translate Spanish passages.

A Literary History: Twentieth-Century Literature Related to the Maya

Many critics and authors have traced a literary history of *maaya*-language written texts that extends to pre-Conquest times.¹³ As Briceño Chel explains, “Para el caso de los mayas de Yucatán podemos decir que ciertamente ha habido una continua producción literaria del grupo maya y acerca de este grupo cultural” (“¿Literatura?” 27).¹⁴ Because of the contemporary focus of this dissertation, I focus a brief literary history on the twentieth century to provide context on factors that have contributed to increasing literary activity in recent decades.

Other Voices Telling the Maya Story

In nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Latin America, non-indigenous authors often represented indigenous characters in literature, a genre since identified by scholars as *indigenismo*. Jean Franco explains that the earliest roots of this *criollo* fascination with indigenous cultures arose “first, because the rejection of Spain made the intellectuals of America reinterpret the pre-Columbian past; second, because Romanticism had popularised the myth of the noble savage” (82). Thomas Ward identifies two strains of this phenomenon. *Indigenista* authors defended their indigenous countrymen by portraying inequalities and *indianista* authors romanticized indigenous peoples while avoiding reference to contentious social and economic spheres (401).¹⁵

¹³ See Arzápalo Marín, Rosado Avilés y Ortega Arango, Ligorred Perramon, and Tedlock.

¹⁴ Ligorred traces a brief literary history, including written, oral, and sung forms, passing from hieroglyphic writing, to sixteenth-century colonial texts in a Latin alphabet like the *Libros de Chilam Balam* and *Cantares de Dzitbalché*, to twentieth-century publications, to efforts to standardize a contemporary *maaya* alphabet (*Mayas* 123).

¹⁵ Prominent examples of *indigenista* works include the Ecuadorian Jorge Icaza’s *Huasipungo* (1934), Guatemalan Miguel Ángel Asturias’ *Hombres de maíz* (1949), Mexican Rosario Castellanos’ *Balún Canán* (1957), and Peruvian José María Arguedas’ *Los ríos profundos* (1958). Prominent examples of *indianista* works include the Ecuadorian Juan León Mera’s *Cumandá* (1877) and the Cuban poet Nápoles “El Cucalambé” Fajardo’s *décimas* (1938).

In the context of Yucatan, *indigenismo* was a major movement, including beyond literary spheres. When Felipe Carrillo Puerto became governor of Yucatan in 1922, he delivered an inaugural speech in *maayal'aan*, and thereafter used his time in political office (1922-1924) to encourage literary and artistic movements that explored Maya culture (Rosado Avilés and Ortega Arango 115-16). While the literary and scholarly works produced during this time were mostly examples of *indigenismo*, or a non-Maya view of the Mayas, indigenous people were more recognized under his leadership. On a national level, President Lázaro Cárdenas instated policies of *indigenismo* during his presidency (1934-1940), supporting indigenous languages and elements of indigenous culture that were appealing to dominant society (117-18).

Two famous Yucatecan novels published during these political times favorable to indigenous causes include Antonio Mediz Bolio's *indianista* novel *La tierra del faisán y del venado* (1922) and Ermilo Abreu Gómez's *indigenista* novel *Canek* (1940). I discuss their representation of the Maya to better appreciate the Maya-voiced projects I examine. A high literary register marks both of these works, which respectively portray the pre-Conquest Maya civilization and nineteenth-century social upheaval in Yucatan. While sympathetic to injustices committed against the Maya, these accounts are divorced from the aesthetic of social realism. For example, Mediz Bolio's account portrays Maya grief in the city of Maní upon the end of their autonomy, but the text does not mention the historical event in Maní that caused this end: the Spanish Inquisition, specifically the 1562 *auto de fé* in which friar Diego de Landa burned Maya codices, images, and effigies. Abreu Gómez's novel fictionalizes the story of Jacinto Canek, the historical leader of a failed Maya rebellion almost a century prior to the nineteenth-century Caste War.¹⁶ Similarly to the sympathetic portrayal of the pre-Hispanic Maya in Mediz

¹⁶ The El Chilam Balam blog, an example of Maya digital activism, refers to historical documents to explain Canek's history as "el maya rebelde y trotamundos" who arrived to the Maya town of Cisteil in 1761, and "los

Bolio, Abreu Gómez exposes the injustices that incite Canek's revolt and constructs him not as a rebel, as the Spanish certainly would have viewed him, but rather as a noble hero, whose death even his executioner mourns (94).¹⁷

Mediz Bolio's work uses the subtext of the clandestine colonial-era Chilam Balam manuscripts, which, as Timothy Knowlton explains, contained historical knowledge and secrets recorded by educated Mayas for their Maya communities. Throughout the colonial period (roughly 1540-1820), these documents circulated outside the published print culture approved by the colonial system in Yucatan, where publications were subject to the Inquisition's careful monitoring (91-94). In the twentieth century, Mediz Bolio translated the *Libro de Chilam Balam de Chumayel* to Spanish. His romantic vein in *La tierra*, therefore, describes Yucatan by adopting a similar prophetic style shrouded in secrecy and mystery as do these much earlier Maya writings. Mediz Bolio's organizational method takes readers through pre-Conquest Yucatecan geography and time, Maya city by Maya city, as the narrator shares an anecdote of a famous Maya story, figure, or symbol linked to each place. The text opens in Izamal with origin stories and closes in Maní with "todo pasó", Mediz Bolio's romanticized gloss meaning 'colonization'. The final chapter prophesies that the Maya will one day return to power, when the deer and the pheasant referenced in the title will again live without fear as they did when the Maya controlled the area. *La tierra*, while rooted in history, archeology, and colonial Maya texts,

instigó a exterminar a los españoles, haciéndoles creer que la batalla estaba ganada". However, the Spanish defeated the poorly armed Maya and assassinated Canek to deter further rebellions. The blog entry demonstrates contemporary unrest in Cisteil that shows that Canek's uprising is still relevant, and focuses on Maya remembrance of this figure to the present day ("El rey").

¹⁷ This sympathetic and romanticizing aesthetic is far from, for example, another fictional execution in Mexican literature, told thirteen years later in Juan Rulfo's short story "¡Diles que no me maten!" (1953). Rulfo's story focuses on a man who, thirty-odd years before, killed his neighbor and *compadre* in desperation to get his starving cattle access to pasture. Rulfo's narration, instead of glorification, portrays the man's agony close to death and later, in grim detail, describes how his family members will not recognize the body.

fixes a Maya story firmly in pre-Conquest times. Mediz Bolio expresses that he seeks to pay homage to the region's Maya heritage by adopting an indigenous point of view (12-13).

However, as Worley suggests, Mediz Bolio's narrative maneuvers actually portray the Maya as objects instead of subjects (*Telling* 67) and enact their silencing (68): "the cultural broker/author-narrator makes no pretense of including indigenous voices and presents himself as speaking from within Maya culture" (67). A note on *La tierra*'s cover announces that this is the text used in the Light and Sound shows at the Maya city of Uxmal, now an archeological site and popular tourist destination. The use of this text exemplifies the tourist industry's folklorization of the Maya that constantly appeals to an "authentic" or pure pre-Conquest Maya culture without contemporary contextualization of Maya communities today (Hervik 69).

Abreu Gómez' *Canek* differs from *La tierra* because it names injustices and shows Maya people after the colonial period. However, similarly, the novel evokes sympathies for the Maya, and Abreu Gómez names this as a goal for his work: "*Canek*, bueno o malo, es el libro que mejor refleja mi dolor por el dolor de los humildes, de los indios de mi tierra. Si su lectura aviva la conciencia del hombre frente a la injusticia, me tendré por satisfecho" (17). Having this *indigenista* bent, the author humanizes the figure of Canek, showing the eighteenth-century leader's response to many social injustices in a poetic tone that constructs Canek as a benevolent character concerned for others and proud of his indigenous identity. Abreu Gómez portrays Canek as a friend, protector, leader, and visionary before he is ever a warrior or instigator of violence, and his decision to rise up is portrayed as a necessity as the repression of Spanish feudalism grows ever stronger.¹⁸ *Canek* posits an ethnic conflict of enslaved "indio" against master "blanco". Just as Mediz Bolio's text, Abreu Gómez's work elides the uglier side of the

¹⁸ This narrative image of Canek contrasts with the cover image of the 2014 edition by Editores Mexicanos Unidos, which ironically shows a figure, presumably Canek, as a muscular, serious, and armed Maya warrior.

struggles, mentioning horrific scenes but never dallying to share details or characters' interior subjectivity. The poetic narrative style is organized in brief vignettes that depict scenes of helplessness or inequality, as the work evokes rather than states Canek's sadness upon witnessing these scenes. The book ends upon Canek's death, so readers consume a version of his heroic role even as the text refrains from commenting on the character's posthumous impact. *Canek's* poetic aesthetic differs from the realist vein used by contemporary *maaya*-language women authors to denounce social injustice, as I discuss in Chapter 3.

Another important example of literary *indigenismo* is *Yikal Maya Than*, a bilingual journal that ran from 1939 to 1955 and encouraged contemporary *maaya*-language writing under the Cárdenas administration in the twentieth century (Leirana Alcocer *Conjurando* 27-28). Silvia Cristina Leirana Alcocer asserts the journal was produced by non-Maya editors for a non-Maya audience, as intellectuals posited the greatness of the Maya civilization and positioned themselves as its inheritors to increase prestige for their Yucatecan identity. The editors needed *maayat'aan* and Maya legends if they were to present a convincing case of Yucatecan exceptionalism that could compare to the country's dominant Central Mexican identity. The readership was also intellectual, and the magazine did not seek to portray or create solidarity with the experiences of the contemporary Maya (26-28). In fact, Leirana Alcocer asserts that the magazine featured a modernizing vein in which contributors sought to bring "la luz de la civilización" to the Yucatecan and Maya identity (26). This preoccupation with civilizing the Other is common in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Latin American literature, through which a ruling class descended from European colonizers sought to concretize new regional and national identities by establishing social hierarchies that privileged white Europeans and excluded other populations, including Amerindians and individuals of unclear origins or

mixed blood.¹⁹ Further emphasizing the non-Maya intellectual agenda behind *Yikal Maya Than*, Leirana Alcocer notes that the publication was probably written in Spanish and translated to *maaya*, as the *maaya* syntax reflects the Spanish expression (28-29). Like Mediz Bolio's novel, *Yikal Maya Than* elides mention of the conquest and an examination of its effects (27).

Maya Voices Telling Maya Stories

More recently, Rosado Avilés and Ortega Arango observe the existence of a “nueva literatura maya” (112), because, in opposition to *indigenismo*, Mayas voices tell Maya stories and publish representations of their own perspectives, whether that be through compiling oral narratives or composing original texts. Carlos Montemayor observes that the 1980s were a watershed moment for the emergence of indigenous writers throughout Mexico, which he calls “one of the most profoundly important cultural events in Mexico at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century” (*U túumben k'aayilo'ob x-ya'ache'* 47). As opposed to what he describes as a five-hundred year history in which non-indigenous researchers have spoken on behalf of indigenous groups, he asserts, “With these new writers we have the possibility for the first time of discovering, through the indigenous groups' own representatives, the natural, intimate, and profound face of a Mexico that is still unknown to us” (48).

Montemayor's comments demonstrate the importance of this burgeoning literature. It is important, though, to qualify the idea of Maya literature or Maya self-representation as new. Feliciano Sánchez Chan demonstrates the blind spots in dominant scholarly modes that do not recognize the unbroken continuance of *maaya* literature: “la literatura maya y por consiguiente,

¹⁹ In literary nation building projects, examples of wariness demonstrated toward either native or mixed-blood groups abound, including the Cuban Cirilo Villaverde's *Cecilia Valdés* (1839), Argentine Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's *Facundo: Civilización y barbarie* (1845), Colombian Jorge Isaacs' *María* (1867), and Argentine Esteban Echeverría's *La cautiva* (1937).

su escritura; es tan antigua como las literaturas en otras lenguas del mundo, con la diferencia de que durante la Conquista, la Colonia y aún en los tiempos actuales, los descendientes de los conquistadores y herederos de su proyecto cultural, continúan con su visión colonizadora, mirando desde el sesgo de considerarse superiores a todo lo que es distinto culturalmente” (“Escritura” 184). When considering *maaya* literature in both written and oral forms, it is undeniable that it has an uninterrupted legacy that spans centuries. In this view, contemporary *maaya*-language literature is an old phenomenon that today’s authors are forming in new ways.

The trend of a Maya-produced written literature in *maayat’aan* has become especially meaningful since the 1980s in Yucatan.²⁰ Most literary histories of *maaya*-language written literature begin their discussion with the literary workshops that formed in the 1980s and 90s.²¹ Indeed, in an essay describing writers’ experiences in the earliest workshop, the Taller de Literatura Maya that ran from 1982-1994 in Mérida, Maya writer and workshop participant Miguel Ángel May May affirms that the members considered themselves to be a new generation of writers, naming the resulting journal *Uyajal maya wiiniko’ob (El despertar de los mayas)* (“La formación 353). In contrast to the *indigenista* journal *Yikal Maya Than*, publications resulting from the workshops were by and for *maaya* speakers. A common thread among the three workshops that figure most prominently in criticism was their campaign for linguistic

²⁰ For a thorough discussion of this history, I would direct readers to Leirana Alcocer, Rosado Avilés and Ortega Arango, and Worley (“U páajtalil maaya ko’olel”) in the bibliography. The 1980s featured the publication of the *Diccionario Maya Cordemex* (1980), efforts to establish a standardized *maaya* orthography, Dzul Poot’s series of bilingual recreations of oral narratives, and the encounter between José Tec Poot and Carlos Montemayor that led to the formation of a literary workshop sponsored by the Dirección General de Culturas Populares. This workshop was foundational in forming participants’ consciousness of themselves as writers in their language. Its participants are among some of the most successful writers (“U páajtalil maaya ko’olel” 146-48). These happenings initiated a flourish of literary activity and the professionalization of writers in Yucatan, including a surge in publication rates of *maaya*-language works in the 1990s, with publications stemming from both literary workshops and individual efforts and writers. For example, Waldemar Noh Tzec and Briceida Cuevas Cob published poetry collections through fellowships from the Fondo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes (FONCA) (Leirana Alcocer *Catálogo* 11-29).

²¹ See Rosado Avilés and Ortega Arango and Miguel May May (“Poesía” 97). Leirana Alcocer begins her *Catálogo de textos mayas* in the 1990s, as that is when publications resulting from the workshops begin to appear.

purism and avoiding Spanish-language influence in *maaya* expression (Rosado Avilés and Ortega Arango 131-32, Leirana Alcocer *Conjurando* 40). Beyond writer professionalization, workshops aimed to foment literary activity in support of efforts to increase *maaya*-language literacy and demonstrate the importance of preserving the language (M. A. May May “La formación” 360). The workshop experience and training also prepared participants to organize and lead additional workshops (356, Leirana Alcocer *Catálogo* 23).

These workshops warrant discussion for their influence on a groundbreaking generation of writers and the foundation they laid for the field of Maya literary criticism as participant debated what Maya literature is and should be. The earliest opportunity, the Taller de Literatura Maya, was sponsored by State organizations, including the Unidad Regional Yucatán de Culturas Populares. José Tec Poot, URYCP director at the time, and northern Mexican Carlos Montemayor originated the idea for the workshop. Montemayor coordinated the sessions (M. A. May May “La formación” 351-52). M. A. May May explains that the primary concern was professionalizing Maya cultural promoters to create a quality contemporary written literature in their language (“La formación” 356). Renowned *maaya*-language writers who participated included but are not limited to Gerardo Can Pat, Santiago Domínguez Aké, María Luisa Góngora Pacheco, M. A. May May, and Feliciano Sánchez Chan. The dominant genres were narrative and theater (Rosado Avilés y Ortega Arango 126), as the preservation of traditional genres and the clarity of prose was of high priority to the group. As the title “workshop” suggests, participants reviewed each other’s work, and final versions of their compositions were compiled in a workshop-sponsored publication (May May “La formación” 352-53). Entitled *Maya Dziibo’ob Bejla’e / Letras Mayas Contemporáneas*, the twenty volumes were mostly composed of literary

recreations of traditional tales (Rosado Avilés and Ortega Arango 126), for which Rosado Avilés and Ortega Arango identify “subsistencia cultural” as the workshop’s foremost motive (130).

Linguistic purity was also a priority, as the group sought to create a *maaya* expression separate from Spanish syntax. M. A. May May declares that a valuable lesson and methodology was writing in *maayat’aan* without thinking first in Spanish (“La formación” 352-53): “nos podemos dar cuenta cómo la lengua española sí influye en nosotros y en nuestra lengua, pero hay una forma de escribir o de decir propia de lo pensado en maya con características mayas” (359). He reports that participants debated what sort of diction was appropriate for high quality literature (“Poesía” 98-99). Other questions discussed during the URYCP workshop that remain topics of great debate include: What characteristics should written literature have as opposed to oral literature? Given the lack of a standardized alphabet and the oral nature of the language, how should *maaya* be written in literature in order to be understood? How can writers create a natural expression in *maaya*, and achieve clarity given the many ambiguities built into the *maaya* language? How can writers make their works appealing and understandable to *maaya* speakers from different regions of Yucatan? Should the Spanish language or Spanish-language literature have a role in the composition of *maaya*-language literature? (“La formación” 352-53, 356).

Francesc Ligorred Perramon criticizes this State-sponsored workshop for producing an expression of indigenous identity that ultimately perpetuates State discourses that continue to marginalize the Maya. His criticisms include, “un espíritu controlado de rescate y de preservación lingüística y literaria de lo *indígena* como fundamento para la integración de una sola *Nación Mexicana*; una impresión-presentación populista; un indigenismo apegado al ámbito rural y alejado de la modernidad; una transcripción de la oralidad; un bilingüismo dudoso” (*Mayas* 126). Like Perramon Ligorred, Worley also shares concerns with the official representation of

the Mayas that the workshop promoted: “That these works are ethnographic (as opposed to literary) would seem to frame the project at least in part as facilitating the discovery of Mexico’s indigenous heritage that is at the heart of twentieth-century *indigenismo*” (*Telling* 4). While the workshop captured a relatively one-dimensional vision of the Maya incompatible with the heterogeneity of contemporary Maya identities, it functioned as a fundamental impulse in contemporary literary writing in *maayat’aan* by its speakers and acknowledged Maya perspectives on their own culture. Its relatively long life, value in mobilizing writers to foment literary creation, and establishment of the idea of professionalizing *maaya*-language authors on the peninsula cannot be denied.

The other two workshops most prominently discussed in criticism did not receive governmental sponsorship. Starting in 1992, a decade after the Taller de Literatura Maya, the Calkiní workshop began in the state of Campeche under the direction of *maaya* poet Waldemar Noh Tzec. Leirana Alcocer reports that the group’s aim was to produce a literature from the *maaya* language without influence from Spanish-language canons (*Catálogo* 18-19). Briceida Cuevas Cob is a second renowned poet from this group. The Calkiní workshop focused on poetry, because it was as an effort born of the Primer Encuentro de Poetas Mayas in Bacalar, Quintana Roo, in 1991. Participants produced the anthology *Tumben ik’tanil ich maya t’an / Poesía contemporánea en lengua maya* (Rosado Avilés and Ortega Arango 129). The third workshop, directed by Santiago Arrellano Tuz, is Yaajal K’in in Valladolid, Yucatan. This workshop started in 1993 through the efforts of the organization Mayaón, A.C. [Somos Mayas]. Among others, Miguel May May participated. This workshop has a pedagogical objective of creating *maaya*-language didactic materials that seek to use a pure *maaya* without influences of Spanish or common spoken *maaya* (Rosado Avilés and Ortega Arango 130-32).

Despite the important role of literary workshops, *maaya*-language writer Ana Patricia Martínez Huchim has noted their lack of continuity (“De la recopilación”). It must be noted as well that Leirana Alcocer observes that not all writers who have published renowned texts participated in literary workshops. She mentions Jorge Miguel Cocom Pech, Jorge Echeverría Lope, Martínez Huchim, and Marisol Ceh Moo among writers who have written and published independently of workshops (*Catálogo* 24-29).

Chapter Outline

In the following chapters, I engage in textual analysis as a means of discussing authors’ representations of their contemporary world. My comparisons between authors’ works are situated within anthropological, historical, cultural, and literary perspectives. Chapter 1 further describes the literary culture and contexts that affect writers’ literary production on the Yucatan Peninsula. I introduce the authors and works I study, outline challenges that I see particularly influencing contemporary authors’ work in the literary and political culture of the Yucatan Peninsula, and propose ways to conceptualize literary genre from the *maaya* language in order to be able to articulate textual aesthetics and projects during my analyses in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 2 examines how Maya authors Castillo Tzec, Martínez Huchim, and Cuevas Cob represent diverse ways of being Maya in the context of debates on the nature of contemporary Maya identity and its relationship to notions of pre-Hispanic Maya culture. Based on anthropological understandings of the breach between identities imposed on the Maya and local categories of self-identification, I illuminate how the authors’ female protagonists negotiate being named and naming to reclaim cultural control, each revising dominant perceptions surrounding the Maya in different ways.

In Chapter 3, through a framework based on *maaya* terms for traditional and non-traditional Maya women, I observe that male writers tend to depict Maya women within a traditional legacy that does not challenge State-sponsored folklorization of indigenous peoples. In contrast, women writers demonstrate cracks in Maya traditional exceptionalism and create more nuanced visions of Maya women. Women narrative writers Ceh Moo and Martínez Huchim on one hand utilize realist aesthetics in socially committed works to fictionalize abuses women suffer in Maya communities. On the other, both also leave the realist realm when depicting rebellious women fashioned after the Yucatecan femme fatale, the Xtáabay.

In Chapter 4, I ask if mandated indigenous bilingualism in State-sponsored literary competitions provides a platform for internationalizing a canon of *maaya*-language literature or if it reproduces Spanish-language dominance by relegating *maaya* texts to a symbolic position. I determine that reproducing or disrupting linguistic hierarchies and dominant literary canons depends upon each author's practice of writing, bilingual writing, and self-translation. Translation and self-translation theories, interviews with authors about perceptions of their creative processes, and bilingual analyses of texts by Carrillo Can, Ceh Moo, Martínez Huchim, I. May May, Sánchez Chan, and Villegas Carrillo inform my discussion. I conclude that Martínez Huchim's work is the most resistant to Spanish-language hegemony and literary aesthetics and makes the strongest claims for *maaya* language revalorization within a bilingual corpus.

Chapter 5 addresses the potential for contemporary *maaya*-language literature to increase *maaya* language use in varied social spheres. I take into account writers', readers', and translators' use of alternative forums to publish and distribute contemporary literature for local, national, and international audiences. These forums include social media, blogs, audio

recordings, online radio transmission, and public readings. An analysis of wider language revitalization efforts in education, journalism, music, radio, and digital activism contextualize my discussion of contemporary literature. I determine that the presence of the *maaya* in technology and an audio component for literature offer the most potential for language revitalization and an increase in a *maaya*-language readership when reading *maaya* literature is currently accessible almost exclusively to an educated elite.

Chapter 1. *Maaya*-Language Literary Culture and Contexts

In this chapter, I provide a context and vocabulary for discussing contemporary *maaya*-language literature. This corpus is one example of how indigenous literatures problematize dominant approaches to the study of Latin American literatures, which focus primarily on Spanish- and Portuguese-language texts (and monolingual texts) and prioritize European perspectives on literature, its function, and methods of studying it. In the sections that follow, I explain how I chose the works and authors I study, provide introductions to each author, outline challenges that I see particularly influencing contemporary authors' work in the literary and political culture of the Yucatan Peninsula, and propose ways to conceptualize literary genre from the *maaya* language in order to be able to articulate textual aesthetics and projects during my analyses in subsequent chapters.

Author Introductions

By choosing writers to include in my dissertation, I only tell part of the story of contemporary *maaya*-language literature. While oral literature and publishing compilations that preserve oral narratives are dominant and highly valued literary modes on the peninsula, I focus instead on authors who compose original written literary works. Luz María Lepe Lira proposes three strains of contemporary indigenous literature in Spanish America: recovering memory, which involves compiling oral narratives; recreating tradition, which utilizes oral aesthetics in writing; and hybrid indigenous literature, which she defines through differentiation with the first two categories (*Lluvia* 128). The texts I examine fall within the latter two categories. Through this focus, I address the new literary veins that *maaya*-language writers are forging and how they exist in harmony and tension with Maya colonial writing and oral literary canons.

The efforts of many influential figures who work in linguistic and sociocultural realms on dictionaries, education, and cultural advocacy are vital to my understanding of the literary texts I examine, but an analysis of their production is not my current aim. As studies often focus on the workshops of the 1980s and 90s, along with notable participants' subsequent literary production,²² I mostly consider a corpus of a generation of writers who follow them. When considered together, these most recent writers tout different stances on Maya identity and work in varied aesthetics as they push the *maaya* language to new or recovered usages. I chose a corpus of texts based on their visibility in efforts to forward written *maaya*-language literature. Indicators of texts' visibility included reception of literary awards and availability of publications, which are often interconnected factors. Because of the prominence of governmental sponsorship in indigenous-language print publication, texts' visibility also often aligned with their publication by State cultural organizations. These factors result in an absence of theater from my discussion, despite the genre's popularity in Yucatan. As I discuss in Chapter 4, government-sponsored literary competitions do not often sponsor publication of theatrical texts. Within this corpus, I discuss texts that illuminate and problematize the themes of interest that form the middle three chapters of this dissertation: representations of Maya identity, Maya women, and authors' practices of linguistically doubled writing. Following are introductions of the authors whose work I examine. I provide chronology and mark generational shifts, while focusing on brevity so as not to repeat the excellent literary histories that already exist of *maaya*-language literature in Yucatan.

From the groundbreaking generation of writers who participated in literary workshops in the 1980s and 1990s, I discuss Briceida Cuevas Cob and Feliciano Sánchez Chan, as both have

²² See Rosado Avilés and Ortega Arango, Chacón, Leirana Alcocer, Ligorred Perramon, Worley *Telling*, "Máseual", and "U páajtalil maaya ko'olel".

continued publishing, are representative of Maya literary innovation, and have tirelessly worked to foment *maaya*-language literature and literary activity. Cuevas Cob, from Tepakán, Calkiní, in the state of Campeche, is an internationally renowned poet. She is perhaps the *maaya*-language author who has received the most critical attention and representation in anthologies.²³ Her multiple poetry collections include *U yok'ol awat peek' ti kuxtal pek' / El quejido del perro en su existencia* (1995), *Je' bix k'iin / Como el sol* (1998), and *Ti' u billil in nook' / Del dobladillo de mi ropa* (2008). Her work appears in multiple anthologies of Mexican indigenous-language writers and has been translated to multiple languages, including English, French, Dutch, and Italian (*Kuxa'an t'aan* 19). In 1996, she won a Fondo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes (FONCA) fellowship, which led to the publication of *Je' bix k'iin* (Leirana Alcocer *Catálogo* 20). She has participated in international literary festivals and been a member of an evaluating panel for the Premio Nezahualcóyotl de Literatura en Lenguas Mexicanas. She is also a founding member of the Asociación de Escritores en Lenguas Indígenas de México (*Kuxa'an t'aan* 19).

Sánchez Chan, from Xaya, Tekax, Yucatan, is a poet, playwright, and cultural promoter involved in digital activism and many self-initiated and institutional efforts that advocate for Maya culture and literary activity. He has formed part of the Unidad Regional Yucatán de Culturas Populares (URYCP) since 1981, served as coordinator of publications and distribution in the Casa de los Escritores en Lenguas Indígenas in Mexico City from 1997-2000, and as assistant director of the Insitituto para el Desarrollo de la Cultura Maya de Yucatán (Indemaya)

²³ See anthologies edited by Montemayor and Frischmann, and works by Chacón, Cecilia Enjuto Rangel, Rosado Avilés and Ortega Arango, and Worley (“U páajtalil maaya ko'olel” and chapter 5 of *Telling*). Leirana Alcocer asserts, “varios estudiosos de la literatura coincidamos en que el poeta (la poeta, para ser más exacta) en lengua maya cuya obra tiene la mejor factura artística es Briceida Cuevas Cob” (*Catálogo* 20-21). Montemayor even goes so far as to say, “Briceida Cuevas Cob (1969-) ha logrado posiblemente la más alta expresión lírica de todas las escritoras actuales en lenguas indígenas. La fuerza de su lenguaje, la fulgurante sucesión de imágenes y la profunda emoción que va invadiendo cada poema hacen de su poesía uno de los más poderosos testimonios femeninos de México” (*Words of the True Peoples* vol. 2, 16).

from 2001-2007. In addition to compilations of oral memory, he has published the theater collections *Baldzamo 'ob I and II* and *Teatro maya contemporáneo I and II* (1994) as part of the *Maya Dziibo 'ob Bejla 'e / Letras Mayas Contemporáneas* publication stemming from the URYCP workshop. He also published the poetry collection *Ukp 'éel wayak' / Siete sueños* (1999) (*Kuxa 'an t 'aan* 91), which was translated to English by Jonathan Harrington as *Seven Dreams* and published in North Carolina in 2014 as the first book-length English-language publication of a Maya author's work (Harrington). Sánchez Chan's writing has also appeared in multiple anthologies. His literary honors include the 1993 Premio Itzamná for *maaya*-language literature sponsored by the Instituto de Cultura de Yucatán (ICY), a 1994 FONCA fellowship, the 1997 ICY Medalla al Mérito Artístico, and the 2003 Premio Domingo Dzul Poot in the II Juegos Florales Universitarios de la Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán (UADY) (*Kuxa 'an t 'aan* 91). He has led literary workshops during the 1990s, both independently and through the URYCP, and has also been an instructor at the Escuela de Creación Literaria in Mérida's Centro Estatal de Bellas Artes, which founded a three-year program for creators of *maaya*-language literature in 2011. He has also organized literary readings in public spaces and, through the URYCP, a Feria del Libro Maya that began in 2010 (Sánchez Chan "Escritura" 181-83).

These acclaimed forerunners, along with others I do not discuss in the dissertation, published frequently in the 1990s, opening the way for a second generation publishing in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. Isaac Carrillo Can, from this most recent generation of writers, honors their role in facilitating *maaya*-language literary activity:

“ahora el camino es más transitable, precisamente a la generación de Briceida Cuevas, Feliciano Sánchez, entro otros (lengua maya) le tocó la difícil tarea de abrir el camino y posicionar a la literatura maya (contemporánea) dentro del

repertorio de riqueza lingüística nacional. A nuestra generación le corresponde fortalecer ese trabajo . . . , pero la cosmovisión propia de la cultura siempre ha sido que hay que dejar huella para que alguien siga nuestros pasos, así como alguien dejó pasos para nosotros” (Martínez).

Carrillo Can emphasizes that the work and mentorship of his generation must continue so as to foment an ongoing literary heritage on the peninsula. I discuss members of this generation below in alphabetical order.

Carrillo Can is a recognized writer who worked in prose, dramatic, and poetic genres from Peto, Yucatan. Upon his untimely death in November 2017 at the age of 34, he left an important legacy. A graduate of the Escuela de Creación Literaria, Carrillo Can won the prestigious national Premio Nezahualcóyotl for his prose work *U yóok’otilo’ob áak’ab / Danzas de la noche* in 2010; the 2007 Premio Nacional de Literatura ‘Maya Waldemar Noh Tzec’ sponsored by the Ayuntamiento de Calkiní, Campeche; and the 2008 and 2009 ‘Alfredo Barrera Vázquez’ award in the UADY’s Juegos Literarios Nacionales Universitarios. Posthumously, he was awarded the ‘Waldemar Noh Tzec’ international poetry award in 2017, which considers poets from the wider Mayan world. Along with selections by Cuevas Cob and Sánchez Chan, Carrillo Can’s poems and narrative appear in the *Kuxa’an t’aan* anthology of *maaya*-language poets that was published in 2012. Arturo Arias describes his work as dreamlike, and dance and theater are influences in his prose. His writing has roots in tradition, and emphasizes Maya linguistic and cosmological difference. With a degree in art education, Carrillo Can also worked as an educator. He created bilingual educational materials through the Secretaría de Educación del Gobierno del Estado de Yucatán (*Kuxa’an t’aan* 173). He was also involved in visual arts.

Felipe Castillo Tzec, cultural promoter, educator, writer, and translator from the town of Dzan, Yucatan, participates in multiple efforts to promote *maaya t'aan*. As a student of prominent Maya intellectuals, an Indemaya employee, a Maya linguistic activist, and the author of two recent *maaya*-to-Spanish vocabulary books that are crucial given the general lack of didactic materials for *maaya* language learners,²⁴ Castillo Tzec's work is helping to influence a generation of bilingual educators and *maaya* language students. In addition, his recent creative work has received multiple awards and media attention on the peninsula. Most recently, his "Kisin Yuum K'iin" / "El sacerdote malvado" won the 2016 Juegos Literarios Nacionales sponsored by the UADY. His short story "Tàanxal kaajile' ku chiimpoltaj maaya kaaj, ma' je'ex tu lu'umile' / "La cultura maya es respetada en otros lugares, no como en la nuestra," won the 2006 edition of the same award, with its publication the following year. His novel *Ix-Ts'akyaj / La yerbatera* (2014) won the Premio Estatal de Narrativa Maya 'Domingo Dzul Poot' 2010-2011. His work expresses pride surrounding Maya culture. In fact, his 2006 short story narrates the experience of an immigrant to the United States who, despite being bullied as a *maaya* speaker while living in Yucatan, learns to value his culture outside of Mexico, where his new community respects the Maya. Castillo Tzec also teaches *maaya*-language classes to international students through programs sponsored by the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill with Duke University, and Michigan State University. El Chilam Balam blog, an example of Maya digital activism, reports that Castillo Tzec is currently preparing a *maaya*-language course for the Facebook platform ("Felipe Castillo Tzec, escritor").

From Calotmul, Yucatan, Sol Ceh Moo is a cultural promotor, translator, and interpreter with a degree in education from the UADY. She perhaps rivals Cuevas Cob in renown and

²⁴ *T'aano'ob yéetel u yoochelo'ob: Vocabulario ilustrado bilingüe*. Mérida: INDEMAYA, 2010. / *U áanalte'il u tsikbalil ts'aak / Manual de frases médicas*. Mérida: INDEMAYA, 2013.

critical and media attention.²⁵ The most prolific publisher in *maayat'aan*, Ceh Moo has received multiple awards for her prose, including the 2014 Premio Nezahualcóyotl for her novel *Chen tumeen x ch'úupen / Solo por ser mujer*, the 2007, 2008, and 2010 'Alfredo Barrera Vázquez' awards of the UADY-sponsored Juegos Nacionales Literarios Universitarios, and three Fonca awards. She is part of the Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes (Conaculta) Sistema Nacional de Creadores de Arte. Her novel *X-Teya u puxi'ik'al ko'olel / Teya, un corazón de mujer* (2008) was presented in the media as the first novel in *maayat'aan* (García Hernández), although there are competing claims for this honor.²⁶ Her other novels include *T'ambilak men tunk'ulilo'ob / El llamado de los tunk'uiles* (2011) and *Sujuy k'iin / Día sin mancha* (2011). She has also published two collections of short stories, *Tabita y otros cuentos mayas* (2013) and *Kaaltale', ku xijkunsik u jel puxi'ik'alo'ob / El alcohol también rompe otros corazones* (2014). Her work also includes poetry in *Nikté t'ano'ob tu paakil peel / Mis letras en las paredes de la vagina* (2015). Ceh Moo is known for pushing boundaries and breaks the mold as a *maaya*-language writer through her genres and themes, which often look beyond traditional norms.

From Tizimín, Yucatan, Ana Patricia Martínez Huchim is a writer, anthropologist, oral history compiler, cultural promotor, and educator whose efforts span national boundaries. While Ceh Moo affirms that her recent writing is for academics and elites (Personal Interview), Martínez Huchim orients her work more for Maya communities, although she fashions it for reading access by national and international audiences as well, as I discuss in Chapter 4.

Trained in anthropology at the UADY with concentrations in linguistics and literature, Martínez

²⁵ For studies on her work, see Arias, del Valle Escalante ("The Maya World" 38-46), and Ligorred (*Los mayas tienen* 49-51).

²⁶ Leirana Alcocer asserts that Jorge Miguel Cocom Pech published the novel *Mukult'an in nool / Secretos del abuelo* in 2001 (*Catálogo* 24). The El Chilam Balam blog attributes this title to Javier Abelardo Gómez Navarrete's novel *Cecilio Chi'. Nen óol k'ajlay*, published in 2003. The site argues that Ceh Moo is the first woman to write a novel in *maaya* ("Cecilio Chi'").

Huchim has published both compilations of oral narratives²⁷ and two collections of original short stories that are based on oral histories. Her original collections are *U yóol xkaambal jaw xúw / Contrayerba* (2013) and *U k'a'ajsajil u ts'u'noj k'áax / Recuerdos del corazón de la montaña* (2013), the latter of which won the 2005 Premio Nacional de Literatura Indígena “Enedino Jiménez”. Her short story “Chen konel” / “Es por demás” also won first place in *maaya* narrative in the UADY’s IV Juegos Literarios Nacionales Universitarios in 2006, the year before Castillo Tzec won. Martínez Huchim’s texts are steeped in a specifically Maya context and demand a level of cultural competence not as necessary when reading Ceh Moo’s work, which, while still embodying a decidedly Maya character, at times brings more universal aspects of the Maya context to the forefront. Martínez Huchim is an educator who leads courses on *maayat’aan* in Yucatan and San Francisco, California.

Ismael May May, from Kimbilá, Izamal, Yucatan, has a background in education and anthropology. He has taught *maayat’aan* both in Yucatan and the United States and trains teachers, translators, and interpreters. He has also worked as a translator, voice on the radio, and television anchor. He was awarded the 2001 Premio ‘Itzamná’ in *maaya*-language literature for his collection of short stories for young adults, *Ka’aj máanen te’elo’, tu lu’umil Mayab / Cuando pasé por ahí, en la tierra del Mayab* (2011). His short story “U ja’il Cháak” / “Agua de lluvia” won the 2013 ‘Alfredo Barrera Vázquez’ award in the UADY-sponsored XI Juegos Literarios Nacionales Universitarios. For both of these publications, the Spanish-language texts are Martínez Huchim’s translations of May May’s *maaya* versions. May May also published the didactic book *Kan maaya yéetel mejen tsikbalo’ob / Aprenda maya con breves diálogos* (2010).

²⁷ *U tsikbalo’ob mejen paalal / Cuentos de niños* (1997), *Cuentos enraizados* (1999), and *Tsímin tuunich, jWáay miis yéetel Aluxo’ob: Maaya tsikbalo’ob / El caballo de piedra, El jwáay gato y Los aluxes: Antología de relatos orales mayas / The Horse of Stone, The jWáay-Cat, and The Aluxes: Anthology of Mayan Oral Tales* (2015).

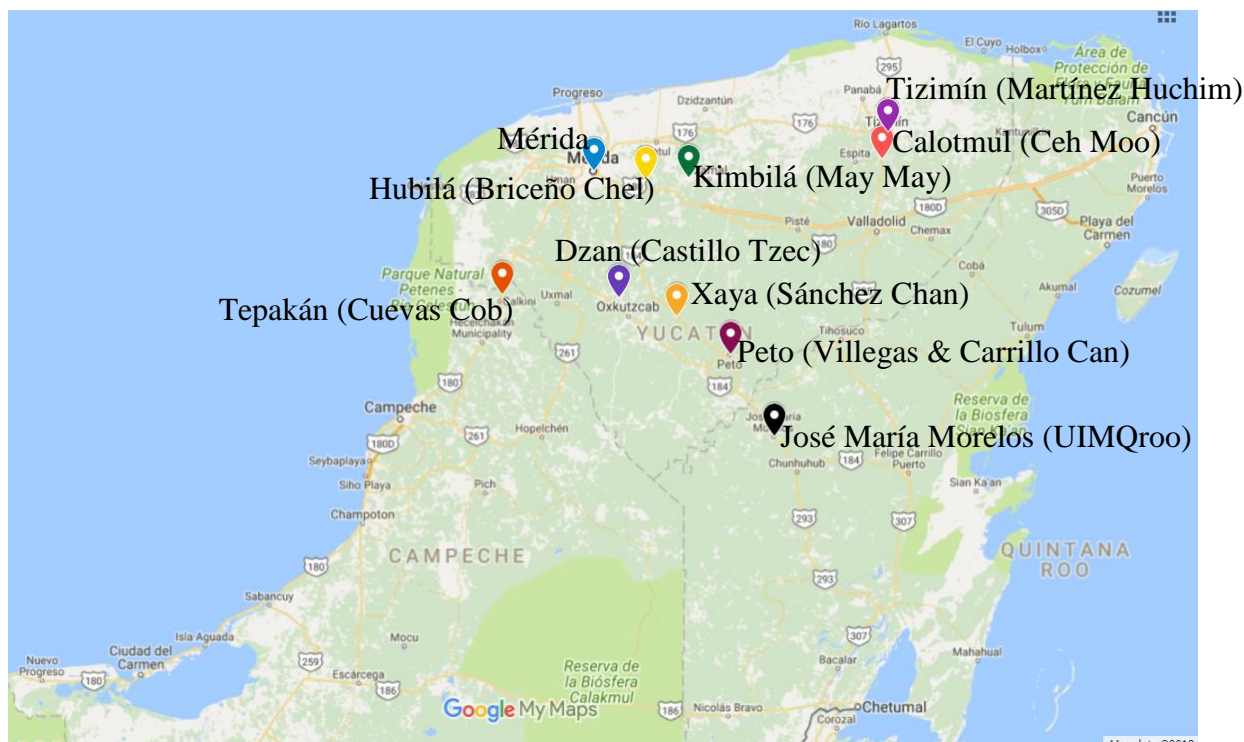
May May participates in linguistic activism in Yucatan through his efforts in education and publishing, and he has presented in national and international academic conferences on *maayat'aan*.

From Peto, Yucatan, Wildernain Villegas Carrillo is a poet, linguist, and professor at the Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo (UIMQRoo). In 2008, he became the first *maaya*-language author to win the prestigious national Premio Netzahuacóytl de Literatura en Lenguas Mexicanas. He has published multiple poetry collections, including *U k'aay ch'i'ibal / El canto de la estirpe* (2009), *Súusut sáasil / Girándula* (2012), and *Áak'abe' ku ya'alik táan u k'áaxal ja' / Lluvia que la noche dicta* (2012). His newest work, *U k'uubul t'aan / Ofrenda de la voz*, came out in 2016, after winning the 2004 Premio Internacional de Poesía del Mundo Maya 'Waldemar Noh Tzec'. Villegas' poetry bridges contemporary perspectives and tradition, as he infuses an intimate, first-person perspective from the twenty-first century into a centuries-long collective tradition; the lyric voice both yearns to maintain the traditions of the grandfathers while simultaneously articulating change and forging a new language and new practice of what it means to be Maya today.

Map of the Yucatan Peninsula

The following map portrays the Yucatan Peninsula, including the three states Campeche, Yucatan, and Quintana Roo. I label authors' birthplaces as a gesture towards the existence of regional linguistic and cultural differences among *maaya* speakers on the peninsula. Besides differences among the three states, there are also intrastate regional distinctions. Two of the regions that Briceño Chel discussed frequently during my *maaya* studies in 2015 were central Yucatan (state) and Oriente in Yucatan (state). Central Yucatan, which includes the area

surrounding the state capital, Mérida, is home to Briceño Chel and Castillo Tzec. Oriente, the eastern region of the state, includes Valladolid and the surrounding areas, and features distinct but mutually intelligible speech patterns. Pisté, where I studied *maaya* for the first time, is part of Oriente.²⁸



I include Mérida on the map, because as the state capital, it is a cultural center with many organizations and institutions relating to Maya culture. Many Maya writers, intellectuals, and cultural promoters reside and work in Mérida, including but not limited to Castillo Tzec, Ceh Moo, I. May May, and Sánchez Chan. This demonstrates trends of moving from rural areas to urban centers. José María Morelos, Quintana Roo, appears on the map as well, as it is the home of the UIMQroo, where Villegas and Castillo Cocom now work. While both are originally from Yucatan, they now work in Quintana Roo. Further areas of inquiry would be exploring to what extent these varying migrations affect literary production and speech patterns, and how regional

²⁸ See Armstrong-Fumero for a map of Oriente (15).

differences manifest themselves in authors' literary representations of identity and social dynamics on the peninsula.

Challenges Facing Indigenous-Language Writers in Yucatan

The analysis of a literary corpus written in an indigenous language involves discussions that scholars would never have surrounding monolingual literature in a national or colonial language. Reactivating a written literary tradition for contemporary times in the face of Spanish-dominant Mexican language policy is no easy feat. The near exclusion of indigenous languages from educational and public spheres in Mexico has led to perceptions that indigenous languages are incomplete or only capable of describing domestic or traditional spheres. The lack of formal education in these tongues also means most writers were educated first in Spanish and learned to write in their languages as adults, and that there is not one definitive way of writing them. As Montemayor points out, to even start writing, indigenous authors must choose among competing alphabets to render their thoughts, when languages feature debates on how to standardize their writing (*U tiumben k'aayilo'ob x-ya'axche'* 49-50). Following, I identify what I consider to be the most significant challenges and debates that inform the production and reception of Maya literatures as opposed to dominant-language literatures.

Prescriptive Perceptions for Maya Literary Production

The threat of cultural and linguistic shift away from Maya culture and *maayat'aan* provides a backdrop that defines nearly all the debates and conversations surrounding this literary corpus and its reception. In order to prevent loss and raise the prestige of the contemporary culture and language to match Maya historical exceptionalism, many writers and

critics have felt it imperative to prescribe what and how *maaya*-language authors should write. Interrogation into these debates often reveal the essentialist perspectives about indigenous cultures, including discourses of ‘authenticity’, that lie at their core.

Many *maaya*-language writers consider it imperative to form a Maya literature through traditional thought and linguistics. M. A. May May and Leirana Alcocer discuss that generating expression based on Maya linguistic capabilities and literary devices was of utmost importance in the URYCP and Calkiní workshops, respectively.²⁹ Sánchez Chan and Carrillo Can also emphasize language competency and the importance of creating from natural *maaya*-language means of expression as opposed to thinking in *maaya* through the filter of Spanish.³⁰ Speaking of workshops he gave in the mid-1990s, Sánchez Chan asserts, “insistimos en la necesidad de tener un amplio dominio y conocimiento de la lengua maya: saber identificar sus recursos estéticos, las funciones gramaticales de la lengua, las variaciones estilísticas, en fin, los recursos literarios desarrollados históricamente y que han continuado hasta nuestros días, pero también los nuevos hallazgos posibles, en función de la evolución de la lengua” (“Escritura” 181). Carrillo Can discusses Maya writers’ Spanish texts as what he calls “las traducciones frías de un pensamiento maya” and gives examples of how Maya configurations of genre become flat or oversimplified when pushed into a mold of Spanish-language genres (“Perspectiva” 162). In this way, he demonstrates his commitment to producing a Maya literature from Maya cosmology. He asserts,

En su mayoría los textos publicados hasta la fecha son de carácter popular, son la recopilación de las narraciones que desde tiempos muy antiguos han pasado de boca en boca y de generación en generación, pero cuyo contenido es de suma importancia para el pueblo maya, y que a pesar de pertenecer a la memoria

²⁹ By M. May May, see “La formación” (359). By Leirana Alcocer, see *Catálogo* (20)

³⁰ By Sánchez Chan, see “Escritura”. By Carrillo Can, see “Perspectiva”.

colectiva, cada persona que cuenta, le agrega un toque personal llegando de todos modos al mismo fin. Es pues la oportunidad que se le presenta al escritor de demostrar su capacidad de inventiva e imaginaria para proponer textos nuevos que sean pensados desde la perspectiva maya y promover desde luego la lectura de los mismos; la palabra “nuevos” no hace referencia a alejarse de la cultura y escribir en la lengua maya pensamientos ajenos, sino demostrar que la lengua tiene presencia en las épocas actuales pero con sus raíces bien cimentadas, ya que de lo contrario vendría a ser como una hoja seca que el viento arrastra y se la lleva. (“Perspectiva” 160)

These stances advocate for creating a Maya literature that challenges current hegemonies and tips the balance from Spanish as a default in the region in order to capitalize on and experiment with possibilities that the *maaya* language and Maya thought provide.

Perhaps when literature is perceived as working at the service of language and cultural revalorization, a movement that seeks to regain lost ground, this stance becomes vital. Making use of Spivak’s term “strategic essentialism”, Lepe Lira argues that indigenous authors maintain their cultural difference through their writing to challenge the epistemological violence that has marginalized indigenous ways of knowing and expression (*Lluvia* 128-29). These stances also approximate an instance of Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of “minor literature”. They state, “How many styles, genres, literary movements (even very small ones) have but one dream—to fill a major language function, to offer their services as the language of the state, the official tongue (psychoanalysis today which thinks that it is master of the signifier, of metaphor, of word-play). Fashion the opposite dream: know to create a becoming-minor” (“What” 27). In their view, minor literatures embody “the revolutionary conditions for every literature within the

heart of what is called great (or established) literature” (*Kafka* 1453).³¹ In this way, *maaya*-language writers oblige readers to adapt to their literary traditions, instead of molding their literature to be read by non-Maya people.

On the other hand, Ceh Moo takes a wider view of what genres and aesthetics can be Maya as she writes with literary devices and genres commonly found among non-*maaya* canons. Ceh Moo’s outlook is quite different from those that expect Maya writers to write only about Maya realities. When I interviewed her in 2015, she explained her literary objectives: “No ser un escritor regional, local. Quiero ser un escritor internacional que pueda ser competitivo con los escritores de todo, de todo el mundo. Ser universal en las expresiones que manejo, sobre todo en la literatura, manejar temáticas importantes con relevancia contemporáneas, y mi más grande meta es obtener el Premio Nobel de la Literatura” (Personal Interview). Upon the presentation of her first novel, which features a protagonist who is a non-Maya *indigenista* activist, she asserted in an interview with *La Jornada*:

Aunque no escriba específicamente de mi cultura, en el material se descubre qué clase de mujer lo hizo, mi cosmovisión, mis sentimientos, mi forma de vida, que es maya. Pero cuando se me exige que escriba apegada a géneros como el cuento, el mito, la leyenda, dije: ‘por qué escribir lo que ustedes desean?’ Yo quiero emprender el género de la novela’.

³¹ *Maaya*-language literature can be considered a minor literature according to Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptualization of the term insofar as authors mold the region’s dominant language, Spanish, to express Maya difference. While Deleuze and Guattari’s definition assumes a monolingual author who deterritorializes language through modifying a dominant language to a minor use (*Kafka* 1451-53), *maaya*-language authors who publish bilingually utilize a minoritized language, and many also enact minor or alternative uses of Spanish that dialogue with Maya literary conventions, oral tradition, and a minority context in Mexico and Yucatan. In contrast to their deterritorialization criterion, however, scholars often consider Maya culture to be regional or local precisely because of Maya influence in Maya territories and a cultural perspective originating from the context in which they write. Lepe Lira takes such a view in a critical framework within which she views Indigenous literatures as regional or universal: “¿es necesario pertenecer a una literatura universal o es más importante hacer literatura regional que puedan leer los compatriotas?” (*Lluvia* 108).

--¿Quiénes la presionaban para ceñirse a determinados géneros?

--Existe un grupo de escritores en el estado (de Yucatán) que se han abocado a escribir en los géneros que mencioné y que me decían que no era posible que alguien rebasara las tradiciones de nuestro pueblo, que alguien rompiera un paradigma para mí inexistente, que sólo ese grupo veía.

Entonces fui excluida por no acceder a sus solicitudes. Ahora ellos empiezan a entender que lo que estoy buscando es abrir las puertas para las generaciones que vienen atrás. (García Hernández)

Ceh Moo's comments suggest that her Maya identity does not prescribe her to write in traditional forms and themes of representation, but rather that her identity as a Maya woman will condition her understanding and representation of her own and other cultures no matter what genre she writes. In other words, for Ceh Moo, no matter what she represents in her literature, her perspective will always be a Maya perspective. Additionally, reading her comments alongside those of "strategic essentialist" writers demonstrates that *maaya*-language writers have similar goals of fomenting Maya culture, language, and literature, but differ widely in their approach. Ceh Moo's stance is that dominant culture genres and themes can still be enunciated from a Maya perspective in the *maaya* language.

Both of these stances are held among the Maya elite who write in their language, and in my perspective, both views have resulted in important contributions to Maya literary production. At this time, Maya communities at large have little investment in either form of writing as a measure of contemporary identity, as most monolingual *maaya* speakers do not read their language and are more familiar with oral tradition. I later discuss how Maya works are not often

distributed in Maya communities. Therefore, ideas that *maaya*-language literature recuperates a Maya identity among Maya people is in many ways an imagined, constructed ideal.

Additionally, what is strategic essentialism in the hands of authors themselves is hegemonic neo-colonialism in the hands of critics. Rather than a prescriptive stance that imposes boundaries on literary production, I accept each author's thematic and aesthetic decisions. I believe the diverse veins of Maya writing enrich the language and culture by appealing to many different target audiences, including subgroups of Maya readers. My critical approach, then, allows for any view of what Maya literature should be and the nuances between them. I take odds with perspectives that pigeon-hole conversations about *maaya*-language literature in a binary in which writers cannot win. On one hand, writers who engage with Maya oral storytelling canons are criticized for being too traditional and perpetuating State discourse in which indigenous groups are conceived as a rural and unmodern periphery of the nation. As I discussed, this has often been the critical reception of the literary output generated from the 1980s workshops. On the other hand, writers who engage with non-Maya literary canons in dominant and colonial canons have been criticized for selling out to "Western" culture and weakening tradition, including by other *maaya*-language authors.³² Such views no doubtedly influenced Ceh Moo's defense of her Maya identity in the interview with *La Jornada* that I cite above. This dissertation attempts to complicate such binaries and focus on the varied decolonial

³² Cecilia Esperanza Rosado Avilés and Oscar Ortega Arango, writing that authors in the Taller de Literatura Maya demonstrated Western influences from Montemayor's coordination, assert, "De tal forma que, de nuevo, los mayas logran la asimilación—como en tiempos coloniales con los procesos de castellanización y catequización—de elementos externos hacia su propia realización cultural" (128). However, these statements ignore that Maya writers can appropriate these canons for Maya use and represent an essentialist posture surrounding Indigenous identity. Zapotec-language writer Javier Castellanos signals that there is still a significant portion of the Indigenous population that considers writers in Indigenous languages to be sell outs who weaken orality (Lepe Lira *Lluvia* 112).

projects that Maya authors enact in their works, along with the diverse literary voices they are forming to represent their contemporary world in *maayat'aan*.

Debates surrounding Orality and Literature

The presence of oral tropes in written literature has long been part of debates about literary quality in Yucatan. Signs of orality in *maaya*-language literature have often been considered the result of a lack of literary craftsmanship. Ligorred Perramon criticized the URYCP workshop for producing transcriptions of orality (*Mayas* 126), and M. A. May May also notes of the work produced, “Nuestros trabajos iniciales tenían la característica de estar escritos tal como hablamos cotidianamente” (“Poesía” 98). Such stances assume that written literature should not imitate orality, or that oral narrators do not make aesthetic choices in how they frame and tell stories.

However, Worley describes what he calls the “literary practice” of oral storytellers (*Telling* 99-104). His discussion of the Maya storyteller demonstrates the narrative flourishes and performative agency that each storyteller adds to a given narrative (1-2, 96-98). Montemayor also describes the complexity of intertextuality in oral storytelling: “the sources of Indigenous peoples’ oral tradition are not ‘primitive’: they include at least Spanish written and oral tradition and the *written* and oral tradition of pre-Hispanic civilization” (*Arte* 22). Lepe Lira explains *maaya*-writer Jorge Cocom Pech’s perspective on oral tradition sources:

En relación a la tradición oral, considera que muchos relatos provienen de los mitos del *Popol Vuh* y del Libro de los libros del *Chilam Balam*, conservados en la memoria de las comunidades y traspuestos a los géneros de narrativa y poesía. Estos textos exponen las costumbres y tradiciones de los pueblos mayas

entremezclados con elementos hispanos y modernos, pues la tradición oral no es estática sino que se recrea y reelabora con las nuevas situaciones. (*Lluvia* 120)

Cocom Pech's anthology of *maaya*-language writers, *La oralidad en la literatura maya contemporánea* (2006), insists that oral tradition is the foremost literary influence among contemporary *maaya*-language writers (Lepe Lira *Lluvia* 119).³³ These views highlight many similarities between written and oral literatures, including narrators' and writers' creative agency and the multiple intertextualities that inform their narrations.

Differently than the reception of Maya authors' literature with influences from orality, non-indigenous writers who adopt oral tropes have been considered conscious and innovative aesthetic choices. The mulatto poems of Nicolás Guillén (1930-31), Juan Rulfo's work depicting rural Mexican life in Jalisco (1950s), and sections of Augusto Roa Bastos' *Yo el supremo* (1974), for example, are firmly canonical works that reproduce orality, popular speech, or unfiltered thoughts and speech. Testimonial novels, such as Elena Poniatowska's *Hasta no verte Jesús mío* (1969), a literary adaptation of interviews with a *soldadera* from the Mexican Revolution, involve distinct yet similar processes to Maya speakers' compiling of oral tradition. In Yucatan, Mediz Bolio's *La tierra* also appeals to orality in a very stylized and poetic prose, as is evident from apostrophes like, "Escucha, hijo del Mayab, y escucha tú también, extranjero, si quieres saber" (37).

In other words, debates surrounding orality in *maaya*-language literature highlight a double standard that posits orality as the "default" or only mode of indigenous-language writers, which, as such, is unsurprising and unoriginal. The other side of the same assumption is that if non-indigenous authors like Rosario Castellanos, Octavio Paz, Abreu Gómez, and Mediz Bolio

³³ In his anthology, he includes the writers Cuevas Cob, Dzul Poot, María Luisa Góngora Pacheco, Maas Collí, M. May May, and Sánchez Chan, along with his own work.

use oral tropes, it is purposeful, masterful, and original. To combat these suppositions, Worley's approach seeks recognition for the vitality of oral traditions in definitions of 'literature' and for the incorporation of oral literature into literary studies in addition to its established place in anthropological and folklorist fields: "Rather than a mark of backwardness or underdevelopment, oral literature serves to sustain indigenous cultures and constitutes evidence of these cultures' vitality and continuity under colonial conditions" (*Telling* 1).

My critical perspective appreciates how writers adopt, modify, or break with oral tradition, and views orality as a form of literary intertextuality. I also consider both the presence and absence of oral tropes to be authors' narrative posturing in artistic work. My discussion throughout this dissertation makes clear that *maaya*-language authors utilize a variety of modes, some that dialogue with oral tropes and others that are removed from oral traits.

Conceptions of the Superiority of Linguistic Purity

Linguistic purity is of great concern to most *maaya* speakers. Spanish is the lingua franca of the Mexican nation and the local language of prestige in Yucatan. Despite the 2003 General Law on Linguistic Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which articulates the Mexican State's commitment to a plurilingual, pluricultural identity,³⁴ in practice, the law has effected few changes in speakers' rights to access education and public services in indigenous languages.³⁵ On the ground as well, language ideologies continue to favor Spanish. The case of *maaya* therefore becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy; as *maaya* is not often used for public transactions,

³⁴ Article 3 of the 2003 Ley General de Derechos Lingüísticos de los Pueblos Indígenas demonstrates that Mexico conceives of itself as a plurilingual and pluricultural nation on an ideological level: "Las lenguas indígenas son parte integrante del patrimonio cultural y lingüístico nacional. La pluralidad de lenguas indígenas es una de las principales expresiones de la composición pluricultural de la Nación Mexicana". Article 4 adds that Indigenous languages and Spanish "tienen la misma validez", and Article 5 promises, "El Estado . . . reconocerá, protegerá y promoverá la preservación, desarrollo y uso de las lenguas indígenas nacionales" (Estados Unidos Mexicanos).

³⁵ See Güémez Pineda, Herrera Alcocer and Canché Xool; Pech Dzib (29-30); Worley "Máseual" (1-2).

perceptions dominate that the language is useful only in domestic or traditional spheres.

Discriminatory language ideologies surrounding *maaya* are compounded by perceptions, even among speakers, that their spoken *maaya* is contaminated by Spanish. This contemporary impure variety of *maaya*, which speakers call *xe'ek'* [mixture], contrasts with *jach maaya* [true *maaya*], or a pre-Hispanic variant imagined as a pure form (Cru "From Revalorisation" 167-74).

Fernando Armstrong-Fumero suggests that preoccupation with linguistic purity is the legacy of twentieth-century Mexican policies of Hispanicization in education. Early twentieth-century leaders sought to unify the nation by imposing one national language, disregarding local heritages they believed divided the nation (104). In twentieth-century rural schools, students' maternal languages were indigenous, but Spanish was pragmatically the language of education and ideologically the language of national citizens. Instructors in these schools stigmatized code switching, leading to a valorization of linguistic purism (96). Armstrong-Fumero affirms that the same ideas about 'good' (pure) and 'bad' (mixed) language are utilized today by "Maya-language activists who are critical of the use of common Spanish borrowings and sentence-level calques in Maya speech" (109-110). Cru notes that such purist stances are common among revitalization activists, who often seek to standardize and reify languages to regain ground: "The aim is to counterbalance the pressure of deeply ingrained language ideologies, stemming from dominant institutions and speakers, which often conceptualise minoritised languages as 'incomplete', 'mixed' or 'dialects' in a derogatory way, as these languages may not be standardised and are not commonly used for literacy" ("Bilingual" 9). Purism, then, seeks to legitimize the language in popular perceptions to dismantle ingrained power structures.

However, the same standard of linguistic purity is not expected of Spanish. Yucatecan Spanish has a markedly *maaya* flavor both in vocabulary and grammatical structures that

distinguishes it from varieties of Spanish spoken in other regions (Armstrong-Fumero 107-08). While Cru discusses that Yucatecan Spanish can be looked down upon in Central Mexico, it has also been an important part of regional pride and exceptionalism, especially among upper classes (*From Revalorisation* 187-90). Even a quick Google search reveals numerous blogs that proudly explain Yucatecan Spanish uniqueness for tourists and expats. Any traveler to Yucatan will also observe that regional humor often depends on Yucatecan Spanish code-switching with *maaya*. As such, values of linguistic purity are not evenly applied to *maaya* and Spanish. Purity is also phantasmal, as any attempt to recover a pure form of any language will surely result in failure.

Many Maya intellectuals' insistence on using *jach maaya* separates them from Maya whose speech patterns demonstrate language mixing with Spanish. Cru even argues,

An emphasis on language 'normalisation' rather than on the legitimization of nonstandard ways of speaking and, more importantly, the improvement of socioeconomic and political conditions of speakers may just perpetuate minorisation. It is overcoming social subordination and inequality of speakers rather than merely standardising codes that may work towards language maintenance and reproduction. (230)

When literature often participates in more formalized and stylized codes than colloquial or conversational registers, Cru's comments suggest that fomenting literature and revitalization may at this point be incompatible aims.

The authors I examine demonstrate different stances on debates surrounding linguistic purity. As previously discussed, literary workshops' concern for linguistic purity trained a recent generation of writers to experiment with possibilities inspired from *maaya*-language thought. However, in this view, writers with language interference from Spanish were not considered to

be making quality *maaya*-language literature. In fact, Leirana Alcocer's discussion of linguistic purity makes it seem like a natural given in a literary realm: "La creación literaria abre un espacio al uso de la lengua maya. También da lugar al conocimiento de una variante del idioma, comúnmente llamada 'la hach maya',³⁶ en la cual se rechazan los préstamos de otros idiomas y las contracciones propias del lenguaje coloquial; y se buscan las especificidades que en otros tiempos tuvo el maya coloquial" ("La literatura" 116).

This view, however, is also somewhat prescriptive considering the varied literary aesthetics and language use represented in the corpus I examine. Writers' work embodies varying stances in debates about linguistic purism. Carrillo Can, Castillo Tzec, I. May May, Sánchez Chan, and Villegas uphold *maaya* linguistic purism in their works and avoid Spanish loan words in the context of their *maaya* texts, which creates a contrast with spoken *maaya* rife with Spanish loan words. In an interview with me in 2013, Villegas explained his decision to avoid Spanish loan words in his poetry: "Siendo el proceso literario creativo una disciplina, finalmente, entonces, creo que es preciso explorar las posibilidades de nuestro idioma. Recuperar palabras que están caídas en desuso, hacer neologismos, plantear versiones, . . . nombrar el mundo occidental en maya" (Personal Interview). Villegas' words assert his commitment to generating new uses of *maayat'aan* that expand upon current spheres of expression. Additionally, his goal to name the Western world in *maayat'aan* inverts hierarchies as it insists that a thousands-year-old American language is contemporary and modern as he uses it to express twenty-first century realities. In a conversation with me in 2015, Castillo Tzec expressed similar sentiments for why he also avoids using Spanish loan words in his *maaya*-language writings. He affirms that speech and writing are different spheres, and perceives writing in

³⁶ This is the supposedly pure variant I discuss as '*jach maaya*'.

maaya as a way to revive the language and plant seeds for the future (Personal Interview). *La Jornada* reports that Ceh Moo is a proponent of forming neologisms to make the language more complete (García Hernández). These writers' tendencies to opt for neologisms or lesser heard *maaya* terms when the Spanish loan word is more common in spoken *maaya* establish written literary registers of *maaya* that differ from colloquial or oral narrative language.

Ceh Moo's short story collections also mostly adhere to linguistic purity of *maayat'aan*. She demonstrates a commitment to *jach maaya* by utilizing *maaya* words in contexts when it is common for *maaya* speakers to use Spanish loan words. For example, in her short story "Kaaltale' ku xijkunsik u jel puksi'ik'alo'ob", the *maaya* counterpart to "El alcohol también rompe otros corazones" (2014), Ceh Moo uses *maaya* numbers beyond 'three,'³⁷ conjunctions [ej. *ba'ale'* instead of the common Spanish-derived *peero*], and names for types of electronics.

Unlike Sánchez Chan, Castillo Tzec, and Villegas, however, Ceh Moo uses Spanish loan words sparingly in her *maaya* texts. In "Kaaltale' ku xijkunsik", she adopts a few loan words common in spoken *maaya*, such as "déesda" [*desde*] and "máas" [*más*]. When Spanish appears in her *maaya* text, her spelling demonstrates how speakers pronounce loan words through *maaya* phonetic norms. I believe the use of such Spanish loans in a *maaya* text are powerful for two reasons. First, from speakers' perspectives, they legitimize aspects of their quotidian *maaya* speech in written form to combat perceptions that they speak an incomplete language. Second, including Mayanized Spanish loan words demonstrates instances when Spanish is subject to *maaya* norms, which destabilizes the dominance of conversations that center on *maaya* 'impurity' and obscure the *maaya* attributes in Yucatecan Spanish. As Briceño Chel espoused

³⁷ In my experience, *maaya* speakers often use *maaya*-language numbers up to the number three or the number five, after which they use Spanish loan words for numbers. Cru states that it is up to the number four, with Spanish numbers starting at five (*From Revalorisation* 173).

when I studied under him in the summer of 2015, such ‘loan words’ are no longer Spanish words, but rather have become *maaya* words. For example, the Spanish word *huipil* is written and pronounced *iipil* in *maaya*. Additionally, borrowed Spanish verbs feature the *-ik* morpheme that classifies *maaya* verbs as transitive.

Martínez Huchim’s work differs from previous writers discussed, as it resists ideologies of linguistic purity and captures the hybrid nature of quotidian oral expression in her work. As such, her work compares to U.S. Latinx writers who insist on valuing Spanglish as representative of their hybrid identity. Martínez Huchim’s writing questions the dominance of linguistic purity in publications and demonstrates that *jach maaya* does not have to be the only suitable register for literature. Also a compiler of oral histories and international educator, Martínez Huchim’s original creative work engages with oral storytelling canons and fictionalizes collected oral histories. Via Facebook Messenger in 2017, she shared with me that her first draft mixes both languages, and only later drafts parse out a mostly *maaya* and a mostly Spanish text. Her work is similar to writers who compose *jach maaya* literary texts while incorporating some *maaya* in their Spanish texts, as Martínez Huchim’s practice often favors demonstrating *maaya* influence over Spanish. While some of her Spanish-language texts feature substantial *maaya* presence, her *maaya*-language texts use noticeably fewer Spanish loans.

Maya intellectual attitudes that uphold linguistic purity are in my view a double-edged sword. On one hand, they result in attempts to strengthen *maayat’aan*, correct common misconceptions, and create pride in the language. In Cru’s assessment, revalorization efforts have created more positive perceptions of *maayat’aan*, which he declares “is not a small feat considering decades of downright stigmatisation of the Maya language and culture (*From Revalorisation* 227). On the other hand, efforts that recuperate lost *jach maaya* vocabulary to

replace common Spanish loan words in *maaya* result in linguistic chasms between educated and non-educated speakers and have echoes of “authenticity” debates that fix Maya culture in a distant past without recognizing the changing cultural and linguistic paradigms of today. These views also suggest that languages with loan words and calques are “weak”, a stance that ignores how dominant languages assimilate foreign elements in situations of language contact. Despite the fact that all contemporary Spanish varieties utilize Arabic loan words in their speech, Arabic is not considered to be a threat to the Spanish language. In fact, in the case of English, despite the myriad loan words from various languages, including the French after the Norman invasion of England in the eleventh century, English is one of the most-spoken languages in the world and speakers openly admit the various linguistic heritages that have combined to form today’s English. However, *maaya*’s status as a minoritized language motivates speakers and intellectuals to strive to recoup loss.

If, as Armstrong-Fumero asserts, speaking ‘good’ *maaya* is considered a measure of regional identity (96), writers who employ a pure *maaya* legitimize their Maya indigenous identities through linguistic choices. For a writer like Ceh Moo with international aspirations, using a pure *jach maaya* register affirms her identity as an indigenous woman and indigenous-language author, which provides her with credentials that distinguish her work as unique in style, language, and perspective from literary works in dominant languages. Similarly, Cru has shown how using the *maaya* language in rap music has opened opportunities for the artist Pat Boy (“Bilingual” 10-11).

Expectation of Bilingual Publication

As I discuss in Chapter 4, *maaya*-language authors must publish in bilingual *maayat'aan*-Spanish editions. This occurs because literary contests, one of the most available means of print publication for many writers in Mexican indigenous languages, often require bilingual submissions and always require bilingual publication. On one hand, these circumstances are practical, as indigenous languages have fewer speakers, which problematizes the evaluation of submissions in plurilingual contests and would also limit marketability if resulting publications were monolingual. However, the same expectation of bilingualism was not placed on Spanish-language Mexican literary greats like Mariano Azuela, Rosario Castellanos, Carlos Fuentes, Elena Garro, and Octavio Paz, even when their works represent indigenous groups and diglossic regions. Their texts might be translated to other European languages by a third party, but there is no pressure to publish bilingually or to translate into Mexican indigenous languages. The same is true for middle-class white Yucatecos who write about the Maya heritage of Yucatan, such as Mediz Bolio and Abreu Gómez. As Worley asks, “Why is the obligation of dialogue born by indigenous languages alone?” (“Máseual” 21-22, n. 7).

Ceh Moo, Martínez Huchim, and Villegas see both languages as fundamental to their creative processes, despite the fact that they all use different methods to compose their works, as they each told me in interviews. On the other hand, Carrillo Can and Sánchez Chan view translation to Spanish as a tedious obligatory addendum, prioritizing *maaya*-language creation instead. Regardless of varying perceptions surrounding the expectation of bilingualism, authors’ methods of self-translation or bilingual creation gesture to the bilingual lives most writers have led since a young age, along with their initial education in Spanish. Lepe Lira reports Zapotec-language writer Javier Castellanos’ view that it is not surprising that indigenous authors publish

in Spanish. He explains that Spanish is the language of written literacy, and emphasizes that only through individual efforts have writers gained the proficiency to write in their mother tongues (*Lluvia* 113). Among *maaya* authors, Villegas shared that while he has always spoken *maaya*, he learned to write it when he was twenty years old working as an educator in rural zones through the Consejo Nacional de Fomento Educativo (CONAFE) (Personal Interview). As such, Spanish writing can be as much a part of an author's identity as *maaya*-language writing.

In this context, Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi's declaration that translation can provide opportunities is provocative. They write, "Students of translation almost all start out with the assumption that something will be lost in translation, that the text will be diminished and rendered inferior. They rarely consider that there might also be a process of gain" (4). Despite how writers perceive the expectation of their bilingual composition, in my scholarship, I consider bilingual editions as gain in my scholarship. The publication of the two texts invites a double reading, and the interplay between the two texts can enrich nuances of understanding, signal tensions that are worth further exploration, or demonstrate what is revealed or hidden from different readerships.

Minimal Readership

Carrillo Can notes that only 2% of the Mexican population has a culture of reading ("Perspectiva" 153-54). In the frame of that limited number, he addresses three groups of potential readers for specifically *maaya*-language texts. He asserts that monolingual *maaya* speakers, who he calls the "ideal" group of readers, have typically not accessed authors' texts because poor quality education in Spanish impedes their literacy in both *maaya* and Spanish. A second group of readers who do access the texts are highly educated *maaya*-Spanish bilingual

individuals who participate in revalorization and revitalization efforts. Finally, there are monolingual readers in Spanish or other languages who want to learn *maaya* and enthusiastically seek out the texts (“Perspectiva”). Sol Ceh Moo alluded to this third group when she told me in a 2015 interview, “Escribes en maya, pero no te leen en maya. Te leen en español. Y quienes te leen son personas como Uds. que les interesa esta literatura y saber por qué la hacemos” (Personal Interview). She affirms that her target audience includes readers more knowledgeable than her, which provides motivation for improving the quality of her work. Since there are so few readers in *maayat’aan*, she says that for her at this point, writing in *maayat’aan* is, “Más que nada, es como un punto estético, o un cumplimento de lo que estoy haciendo”. Writing in *maaya* also gives her great satisfaction: “Pero definitivamente, escribir en lengua maya es mucho más rico que en español. Se vive, se siente, las cosas se regresan a los tiempos. En español, es algo lineal, algo que usas para comprender el género”. Much work remains, she asserts, in literacy projects to increase readership in *maayat’aan*. Villegas also asserts that *maaya*-language writers are read mostly by other writers, suggesting, “Creo que eso influye en cuidar las formas. Te va a leer una persona que sabe más que tú. Entonces, tienes que escribir bien”. He emphasized that he hopes his texts will be read by young people:

que cuando un joven maya lea a mi texto, vea alguna cosa ahí reflejado de su yo, de su futuro, de su identidad. Y que sobre todo, el gran afán es que al leer un texto, él también se siente impulsado y motivado a hacer lo propio, también a expresarse, a tomar elementos de su cultura para hacer su arte, para hacer su canto, para hacer su pintura, para hacer su poema, para hacer su cuento, para hacer su novela. (Personal Interview)

In this way, Villegas perceives his work as strongly connected to revalorization and revitalization efforts. While his poetry collections are not aimed at a young audience, he also has projects for creating children's literature that foment a *maaya*-language readership.

At this point, though, literature is an elite activity. Briceño Chel asserts of contemporary *maayat'aan*, "En cierta medida su uso escrito solamente está presente para un grupo reducido de personas, si bien no se puede llamar una élite maya, sí se puede observar que el común de la gente no tiene acceso a este conocimiento, tal como se ha planteado para la Antigua civilización maya donde los *ajts'ib*, o *xcribas* eran los encargados de la escritura" ("Los (nuevos)" 92). This demonstrates the historical continuity of Maya writing as an elite activity, although for differing reasons. However, Rosado Avilés and Ortega Arango point out that the disconnect between priorities of Maya elites and communities, describing how *maaya* texts are "dirigiéndose hacia un público medianamente 'ilustrado' que desea conocer lo que los 'mayas' están realizando, pero que, en suma, poco tienen que ver con la dinámica que al interior de las comunidades se quieren gestar" (123). These comments demonstrate that communities, as opposed to elites, may have different values surrounding the type of literature, language, and genre promoted in narratives and the value of written literature itself. Beyond a disconnect in language use and literacies, these comments point to different priorities and objectives that exist between writers, who are mostly university-educated intellectuals, and inhabitants of rural communities, who, according to Pedro Bracamonte y Sosa and Jesús Lizama Quijano, often battle with poverty, lack of access to resources, lack of financially sustainable work opportunities, political invisibility, alcoholism, lack of quality education and health care, illiteracy, and other subsistence-based issues (Bracamonte y Sosa). While education and literacy in *maayat'aan* certainly has potential for improving rural communities' quality of life by creating new opportunities and strengthening the

prestige of the language and its speakers, intellectuals' promotion of *maaya* written literature is often not an effort that communities have awareness of, participate in, or prioritize over what seem like other more pressing needs. This remits to Cru's comments that revitalization efforts may be most strengthened if they result in reducing the inequality that *maaya* speakers face (*From Revalorisation* 230). There are efforts, as I discuss in Chapter 5, to involve Maya communities in written literature by means of audio and collective creation.

Publishing and Distribution Challenges

While access to *maaya*-language literature is limited within Maya communities, it is similarly inaccessible outside of cities on the peninsula. Both publishing and distribution are factors in Maya literature's limited availability. The difficulty and delay in achieving publication is documented in print (Ligorred *Mayas* 122-23) and is a theme in comments writers have made (Castillo Tzec Interview and Martínez Huchim "De la recopilación"). In a discussion about *maaya*-language authors, Ligorred refers to the "muchas y absurdas dificultades, materiales e ideológicas, para publicar sus textos, ya que son pocas las instituciones oficiales estatales y federales que de vez en cuando se los editan" (122-23). Martínez Huchim has likewise commented on her years-long wait to see her original works in print ("De la recopilación"). Once publication is procured, many works have print runs of just 1,000 to 2,000 copies, so access by any reader is limited. Ceh Moo's *Tabita y otros cuentos mayas* has a print run of just 200 copies. To make publishing more complicated, Rosado Avilés and Ortega Arango also point out cases of foul play in which publishing houses treat *maaya*-language writers unfairly through acts such as withholding royalties, falsifying information about the size of the print run, and not printing the authors' rights reserved (120). Beyond these publishing related challenges, Jorge Cortés Ancona,

head of the Departamento de Fomento Literario y Promoción Editorial de la Secretaría de la Cultura y las Artes (Sedeculta), affirms that the lack of an effective distribution infrastructure is a large part of the problem: “Muchos intermediarios y pocas acciones, hay que ver costos, transporte, accesibilidad. Y muchas veces no es fácil coordinar instancias de gobierno para la consulta y venta de los ejemplares” (Góngora).

Distribution is another problematic factor. The majority of books are only available for purchase at bookstores in Mérida or on the peninsula. These bookstores are often operated by State cultural organizations, such as the Sedeculta and Conaculta bookstores in Mérida. These organizations are two of the largest publishers of *maaya*-language texts. Only rarely are works available for online purchase in book form, which facilitates scholars’ access but remains largely unhelpful in rural Maya communities without post offices or a reliable mail delivery system. Rosado Avilés and Ortega Arango point out that the texts are not distributed to Maya communities: “su distribución y consumo, en la dinámica de comprador-lector, se realiza fuera de las comunidades” (123). Cortés Ancona suggests increasing the production of digital books as a way of improving the distribution of *maaya*-language literature (Góngora). Digitalization could provide economic and instantaneous access to community members as well, who have increasing access to the Internet through cell phones, wi-fi, and Internet cafés.

The Problem of Critical Approach

How to examine the complexity of indigenous literatures is a topic of hot debate among scholars and writers. As I have shown, the dynamic surrounding the production, reception, and corpus of *maaya*-Spanish bilingual literature involves particularities that do not affect many other literary corpuses. Language barriers, cultural knowledge, a critical apparatus and critical

terminology for classification and analysis, and the effectiveness of regional or pan-indigenous perspectives are commonly discussed. Ceh Moo appreciates the idea of forming a field of literary criticism around *maaya*-language works. “A mí me gusta mucho la crítica,” she says. “Y vivo de que hablan de mí, de que hablan de mis obras” (Personal Interview).

Other *maaya*-language writers take issue with approaches to their work. Sánchez Chan warns that non-Maya approaches to the texts, including ones that aim to increase their visibility, do not further literary creation in the language (“Escritura” 173). He cites four critics, Cristina Álvarez, Montemayor, Miguel León-Portilla, and Alfonso Lacadena, who have examined *maaya* texts in a way that appreciates the unique worldview and literary aesthetic they espouse (173-81). In a related but different vein, Carrillo Can argues that it is an error to only look at this corpus monolingually:

existen personas quienes de alguna forma se acercan con la intención de analizar o simplemente conocer la producción hecha en maya, pero desafortunadamente también caen en el mismo error al analizar la literatura desde la perspectiva del español y no en la del maya mismo, pues omiten o pierden la conciencia de que ambas lenguas con sus respectivas manifestaciones tienen características y comportamientos distintos. (“Perspectiva” 157)

While Cocom Pech differs from Sánchez Chan and Carrillo Can, suggesting that Western literary devices can enrich *maaya* literature, Cocom Pech asks, “¿hasta qué punto las poéticas occidentales pueden responder a las características de la poesía contemporánea en lenguas indígenas?” (qtd. in Lepe Lira *Lluvia* 116).

My position is that a corpus of literature is enriched through a strong presence of criticism that represents varied approaches. Considering that most *maaya*-language writers

perceive their works as participating in linguistic revitalization, I find it important for some scholars to take the invitation to read *maaya*, although I do not think that a lack of *maaya* literacy should exclude a scholar from reading the available Spanish-language text. Arias points out the challenge that language poses to critics, as it is impossible for one critic to gain reading proficiency in all languages in which indigenous peoples are writing, or even in which all Mayan peoples are writing (213-14). To his linguistic discussion, I would add the challenge of acquiring multiple cultural competencies for working across different indigenous groups.

Differently than many *maaya*-language writers have proposed, I suggest a critical method that takes into account both Maya and dominant-language literary traditions, including oral literature. I utilize this approach because the varied aesthetics and intertextualities I observe in the works I examine cannot be fully explained by *maaya*-language traditions alone. Lepe Lira utilizes a framework in which she considers indigenous literary texts either regional or universal. Of options that indigenous-language writers face, she asks, “¿Cómo insertarse en el mundo literario desde una cosmovisión indígena?, ¿es necesario pertenecer a una literatura universal o es más importante hacer literatura regional que puedan leer los compatriotas?” (*Lluvia* 108). However, I believe criticism can more precisely label the specific traditions in supposedly ‘universal’ literature. ‘Universal’ seems to be a coded way to express that indigenous writers can alter their texts to be familiar to non-indigenous peoples, and the term collapses many diverse literary corpuses into one category incapable of describing all literature not written in indigenous languages. Only by disarticulating ‘Western’ universality will critics be able to contextualize it for what it is: a series of localities. The situation in which literature is an elite activity currently consumed by both Maya and non-Maya writers and intellectuals also complicates critical lenses

that assume a Maya reader for the *maaya* text and a non-Maya reader for the Spanish text. Neither should critics conflate the two texts as ‘saying the same thing’.

My method draws from anthropology, history, literary studies, linguistics, interviews with *maaya*-language authors, and my own linguistic and cultural studies in Yucatan. When studying a culture that has had such a strong presence in a global imaginary, evaluating if sources view their studies of the Maya through this imaginary or if they utilize a solid critical approach has been an important part of my methodology. I seek to identify when a study takes an essentialist stance on Maya linguistic and cultural identity that is simply not tenable, versus when studies recognize the homogeneity and change that marks cultures over time. Such evaluation of academic studies allows me to recognize inevitable biases of scholars trained under specific paradigms or raised in an environment in which contemporary Maya populations are relegated to specific roles that do not threaten current structures of power. Openness with a bit of skepticism has been vital to focus on the perspective that I favor in this dissertation: how *maaya*-language authors comment on these debates over Maya identity and *maayat’aan* in a globalized and transnational twenty- and twenty-first-century world.

Culturally Contextualized Genres

This dissertation assumes readers’ familiarity with colonial European-language literary genres. However, a discussion of genre from the Maya perspective is necessary, even as this discussion is far from offering a complete picture of Maya narrative and poetic discourse. The difference in Maya conceptions of genre will be immediately obvious upon reading the genres that appeared in the Maya journal *K’aaylay: Canto de la memoria* that Martínez Huchim edited between 2006 and 2010. Martínez Huchim describes the genres submitted as follows: “*ku*

ya'ala'ale' (se dice que), *ku tuukulta'ale'* (se piensa que), *chiikul t'aan* (señales), *u k'aay ch'iicho'ob* (interpretación del canto de p'ajaros); el *tsikbal*, o narrativa, que incluye los géneros que occidentalmente son novela, cuento, mito, fábula, anécdota, trabalenguas, bombas, adivinanzas y cantos y poemas" (*"K'aaylay"* 141). These categories illustrate how Maya thought prioritizes different areas of representation than other literary canons, and the impossibility of using colonial-language genres to fully describe these discursive areas. Carrillo Can agrees, asserting that texts "se minimizan al ser clasificados simplemente como 'cuentos, narraciones o historias' por tener características que quizá encajen bien en el español, pero que en el maya al ser considerados como equivalentes se comete un terrible error, ya que cada uno tiene una forma distinta de ser construida, tiene una forma definida y una intención propia" (*"Perspectiva"* 158).

Just as literary trends have changed from *indigenismo* toward Maya self-representation, literary scholars and anthropologists alike have much work to do in shifting to and elaborating a conceptual framework for textual analysis contextualized in a Maya worldview. To be able to appreciate Maya writing it all of its richness and nuance, it is important for scholars to establish and agree upon a critical language adjusted to Maya worldviews and modes in which writers have worked and are working. Overlap and discord in generic terms as conceived by Maya perspectives and by literary criticism should be interrogated. Misinterpretations and incomplete explanations of Maya works can result if categories are simply transferred from other literary traditions without discussion. In what follows, I briefly provide information about how scholars have discussed *maaya*-language genres in the past, and how I plan to do so in this dissertation.

Generic terms have a long history in Yucatan. In 1933, anthropologist Margaret Park Redfield reports in her ethnography of the Maya town of Dzitás, Yucatan, that the townspeople used the labels "cuento", "ejemplo", and "historia" to categorize the oral stories they told in what

Park Redfield calls “folk literature”. A less common but also culturally applicable label her research shows is “adivinanzas” (4-5). She remarks that the category “leyenda” is not commonly used by townspeople in Dzitás, although she heard it evoked in urban settings on the peninsula to speak of “legendary happenings among the ancient Maya” (5). In Martínez Huchim’s generic breakdown from the much later *K’aaylay*, these genres would mostly likely be considered *tsikbalo’ob*.

More recent discussions among scholars of *maaya* literature describe more precise genres than Park Redfield does in her early 20th century ethnography. In 2001, Ligorred Perramon proposed a breakdown of oral literature poetic and prose categories. In prose, he names the genres “el cuento, la fábula y la leyenda”. In poetry, he names genres like “rezos”, “bombas”, “poesía lírica, de contenido amoroso”, and “una poesía étnica que canta las antiguas historias de los mayas y sus reivindicaciones culturales presentes” (*Mayas* 122). These genres recognize the importance of ritual language, the humorous popular coplas, and values of cultural revalorization. They also acknowledge the representation of an interior subjectivity in lyric poetry. In Montemayor’s plethora of anthologies of Mexican indigenous-language authors, genres that stand out are prose (in some anthologies, he separates out narrative and essay), theater, and poetry. While these labels are attuned to dominant prose, poetic, and popular forms in Yucatan, in this dissertation, I reject terms like ‘legend’ that relegate *maaya*-language literature to a subaltern, folk status from the perspective of contemporary dominant-language cultures.

Understanding genre from both Maya perspectives and from literary studies in colonial European languages allows the critic to use either *maaya* or dominant-language terms to express when texts respond to Maya genres or other conceptions of genre. In his ethnography of oral

genres among the tzozil-speaking Chamula people in Chiapas, Gary H. Gossen shows how aesthetics and cultural worldview are connected:

although I generally agree that native taxonomies have intrinsic descriptive value, I do not think they stand alone as ends in themselves for the purpose of analysis. I wish to go beyond this to suggest that Chamula oral tradition constitutes an ethical statement whose categories (genres) are organized according to attributes which also organize other aspects of Chamula expressive behavior and values. In this way, the structure of the whole of Chamula oral tradition may be seen to be isomorphic with the structures of other aspects of Chamula life such as religion and world view. (145)

Similarly, I believe using *maaya* generic terms when appropriate facilitates a literary criticism adjusted to Maya priorities and worldviews. Having Maya concepts as part of my critical repertoire also frees texts from linguistic and cultural frameworks that prioritize single-author written texts over oral and communal authorship. Following, I discuss prose and poetic genres among which the authors I examine situate their works.

Prose genres in *maayat'aan* include *tsikbal* and *popolt'aan*. The Maya genre *tsikbal* is a term that means conversation, which is perhaps most relevant in oral storytelling. The *Diccionario Maya Cordemex* (1980) defines *tsikbal* as a noun meaning “conversación”, “plática”, and “cuento”.³⁸ Allan F. Burns shares how oral *tsikbalo'ob* are often told between a narrator and a respondent (*An Epoch* 22).³⁹ While the narrator plays the largest role in expressing

³⁸ As a verb, “parlar”, “estar en conversación”, “tratar algún negocio; burlar de palabra en conversación”, and “decir cuentos o gracias” (860-61). Beyond the definitions of *tsikbal* as oral conversations and stories, some definitions reveal the Maya propensity for humor and bawdiness.

³⁹ Burns’ study of Yucatec Maya oral literature includes an excellent study of oral *maaya* genres, including types of speech and subcategories of *tsikbal* dialogues, like “small talk”, “story”, “secret knowledge”, “ancient conversation”, “true narrative”, and “counsel” (*An Epoch* 19-24). While these labels are in English, not *maaya*, they represent the Maya worldview well.

the story, Burns says, “The respondent’s speech ranges from simple affirmatives to questions and comments on the speech of the narrator. The respondent and the narrator converse in front of an audience, people who are not expected to pay particularly close attention to every detail of the story but who may become interested in some exciting episodes” (22). He shares that when he arrived in Yucatan to record oral stories, he was advised not to do so, because he would be rude to the storyteller if he sat still listening and recording; therefore, Burns had to learn to assume the role of the respondent during recording sessions (23). In academic settings, *tsikbal* can also refer to a guest lecture or conference presentation, which involves an element of response in the question and answer period.

Another important aspect of the conception of *tsikbal*, as Briceño Chel teaches, is the root of the word, *tsik-*, which the *Diccionario Maya Cordemex* defines in verb form as “obedecer”, “honrar”, “respetar”, “hacer caso”, and “reverenciar y acatar reverencia” (860). While the definition of *tsikbal* as a conversation involves two parties, the root-word definition makes clear that respect is of utmost importance to the meaning of this dialogue. Similarly, the 2015 trilingual museum exhibit *To’on: Maayáa’onil le k’iino’oba’ / Mayas Contemporáneos / We the Maya of Today*, held at the Museo Maya de Cancún,⁴⁰ asserts that the *tsikbal* is “la plática, la conversación, el intercambio, que no solo implica hablar, *t’aan*, sino también escuchar, *u’uy*”. Continuing, the exhibit reads, “Para nosotros, *tsikbal* es el respeto a la palabra en movimiento, en discurso. En ese sentido es también el respeto al otro, a la contraparte, al *nuup*, al compañero, a mi otro yo en el discurso que busca en consecuencia respetar y ser respetado a través de la palabra reverenciada” (“U bixil”).

⁴⁰ This exhibit was sponsored by the Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP), Conaculta, and the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH).

Despite the oral nature of the *tsikbal*, writers have transferred the oral genre into the written realm. Indeed, Burns discusses the difficulty, and even the impossibility, of capturing the *tsikbal*'s dialogic exchange in transcription (*An Epoch* 24). As a written genre, I consider the *tsikbal* to be similar to the short story, but with important differences. Because Worley treats both oral and written forms as *tsikbalo'ob*, he conceives of the *tsikbal*'s dialogue as interaction between "storyteller/author" and "listener/reader" (*Telling* 20). In a written sense, I conceive of the *tsikbal* as a short story that responds to oral tradition or adopts oral tropes. Oral *tsikbalo'ob* commonly open with phrases, such as "Ku tsikbata'al" / "Cuentan que", through which narrators situate their version in a tradition of competing versions. *Tsikbalo'ob* conclude with the narrator's first-hand experience related to the narrated events, introduced with the phrase "Ka'aj máanen" / "Cuando pasé". Martínez Huchim is an example of a writer who plays with the *tsikbal* as a written genre. In both of her original collections, the tables of contents label her short narratives *tsikbalo'ob*. Her literary production has strong ties with oral tradition, and she bases her written *tsikbalo'ob* on oral histories. Additionally, as I discuss in Chapter 2, the organization of her work *U k'a'ajsajil u ts'u'noj k'áax* / *Recuerdos del corazón de la montaña* (2013) follows framing formulae from Maya oral storytelling. It would be a critical mistake to conflate authors' utilization of the *tsikbal* with transcription of orality. In future chapters, I discuss authors' innovation in creative *tsikbalo'ob*.

Speakers in Quintana Roo discuss 'fiction' through a variation on the term *tsikbal* through the phrase '*tsikbal tuus*', as 'tuus' designates a lie. For example, a book edited in Quintana Roo in 2007 is entitled *U tsikbal tuusilo'ob yéetel u na'atilo'ob u k'áaxil u lu'um maay'áao'ob* / *Cuentos y adivinanzas de la Selva Maya de Sian Ka'an*, which uses the plural form "tsikbal tuusilo'ob" instead of "tsikbalo'ob". This term distinguishes a fictional form of

narration from narration that transmits knowledge. As Montemayor explains, in Maya narrative, there is not a meaningful distinction between fiction and non-fiction. He writes, “it is not always possible to speak of fiction writing, since all narrative writing is based on traditional information and is therefore of historical and social value: in other words, nonfiction” (*U túumben k’aayilo’ob x-ya’axche’* 50). This adjectival designation used in Quintana Roo can be a meaningful tool to describe difference from the oral tradition, as contemporary writers consciously create forms of fiction. However, the terms currently compete on the peninsula. Anecdotally, Paul Worley shared an experience with me in which speakers from Yucatan and Quintana Roo had different ideas about what term was appropriate at a presentation.

The organization of the *To’on* museum exhibit at the Museo Maya de Cancún in 2015 demonstrates the importance of the *tsikbal* for the Maya and exemplifies how *maaya* speakers use innovative presentations of their *tsikbalo’ob* to bridge oral and written storytelling, as I discuss more in depth in Chapter 5. The exhibit was not in a format a museum patron might expect. The exhibit did not convey statistics about where the Maya live, how large the population is, or impersonal explanations of typical ways of living. Rather, *maaya*-language *tsikbalo’ob* formed the organizational structure of the exhibit, which presented the material in a way reflective of Maya norms for cultural transmission. While not embodying dialogue, the *tsikbalo’ob* were interactive, as patrons engaged with the experience using multiple senses. *Tsikbalo’ob* were trilingual (*maayat’aan*, Spanish, and English) and multi-medium, with both written text and *maaya*-language audio playing as visitors passed through the exhibit. Photographic images and “artifacts” of contemporary life such as tools and traditional clothing, visually reinforced and complemented the narrations. Stories of unnamed Maya characters, then, formed the structure of the information presented. *Tsikbalo’ob* told accounts of childbirth, a

widower's experiences, a man neglecting to perform rituals upon constructing his new house, the role of dogs in a Maya community, regional birds, an explanation for the origin of work, and how a ritual leader (*jméen*) cures an imbalance between man and the gods. These museum narrations used oral tropes, including common framing devices such as: "Yaanchaj bin . . . / Hubo una vez . . . / Once there was . . .", "Ku ya'ala'ale' . . . / Se dice que . . . / It is said that . . .", "Bey túun úuchik . . ." / "Fue así que . . ." / "So . . .",⁴¹ "Juntéenake' . . . / Una vez . . . / Once . . .", "Jach bin ojéela'an . . . / Es sabido que . . . / It is known that . . .", "Tsikbalta'ab tene' . . . / Me contaron que . . . / They told me once that . . ." (*To'on*).

In this dissertation, I use the term *tsikbal* when writers fashion their writing according to Maya modes of oral storytelling. However, I use the term 'short story' when writers follow conventions for short stories in the Latin American canon, such as those by Horacio Quiroga and Juan Rulfo, for instance. Seeing these influences helps critics consider how writers position themselves and how their texts function by aligning with canonical conventions or expanding understandings of what literature is and can be. I choose not to translate *tsikbal* into English or Spanish, as any translation loses the Maya-specific cultural reference. A book like Domingo Dzul Poot's reinterpretation of oral stories in *U tsikbalo'ob le chiich ti' yáabilo'ob ichil sajkab*, for example, is translated as *Relatos que la abuela contaba a sus nietos en la cueva*. The translation to *relatos* can refer to either oral or written short stories, but uses a category familiar to Spanish-language readers, when texts adopt *maaya* oral storytelling aesthetics unfamiliar to at least segments of Spanish-language readership. Readers in *maayat'aan* will recognize Dzul Poot's presentation of the *tsikbalo'ob* as related to Maya oral origins.⁴²

⁴¹ I would translate the English more literally as "Therefore, then, it happened that . . ."

⁴² Another term that intellectuals are recovering from *jach maaya* to describe narrative is *t'aan popolt'aan* or *popolt'aan*. While every *maaya* speaker understands the term *tsikbal*, *t'aan popolt'aan* or *popolt'aan* are terms only employed by intellectuals and not community members, and even educated speakers and cultural promoters are

There are multiple terms in *maaya* to refer to poetry. *K'aay t'aan*, represents a Maya conception of poetry. While the term 'poetry' in English and Spanish has musical or melodic connotations through meter and rhyme, these connotations become even stronger in the *maaya* word *k'aay t'aan*, as the root *k'aay* has a primary definition of "música, canción" before "poesía" in *Diccionario Maya Cordemex* (391). Other definitions of *k'aay* include "canto, gorjeo, canción, pregón, amonestación de matrimonio", "cántico". As a verb, it means "cantar los hombres y gorjear y cantar las aves, cigarras, etc" (391). These definitions suggest the root of the Maya *k'aay t'aan* genre are the songs of nature, including those of humans, animals, and insects, and the compound generic term, which literally means 'song language' demonstrates a close relationship between song and poetry.

While *k'aay t'aan* is the term for poetry, poets also label their work *k'aay* [song]. Such an equivalency between song and poetry appears in the title Villegas chooses for his first poetry collection: *U k'aay ch'i'ibal* [song of lineage]. Instead of using the term for poetry, Villegas presents his poems as songs, and they imitate the sounds of a Maya natural and human world, including ritual language. Via Facebook Messenger in 2017, Villegas explained that *k'aay* relates more to orality from an academic standpoint. However, he wrote, "para mí, la poesía no solo se

unfamiliar with it. Feliciano Sánchez Chan uses the term *t'aan popolt'aan* in a list of genres in his blog in 2012 (*Literatura*). A Chilam Balam blog article asserts that Castillo Tzec's preferred genre is "el popolt'aan, es decir, la narrativa en lengua maya" ("Felipe Castillo Tzec, escritor"). Carrillo Can uses the term in his essay "U siijil t'aan / Nacimiento de la voz" to describe how spoken words infuse both oral and written discourse in a tribute to the importance of orality as viewed from Maya culture:

U juum le t'aano' u na' k'ayt'aano'ob, táanpopolt'aano'ob, yéetel áak'ab tsikbalo'ob, u juum le t'aano' u chiich payalt'aan, k'áatankilil yéetel yaanyan tich' óolal, jump'él siibal ts'a'ab tumen k'ujob utia'al ma' u xiibil k'a'ajesajil kex tuneen taak u bisa'al tuneen le ja'abo'obo'.

La voz es la madre de poemas, de cuentos, de historias nocturnas, la voz es la abuela de los conjuros, de las súplicas, de las invocaciones. La voz, el regalo de los dioses para que la memoria permanezca a pesar de que el tiempo quiera llevársela. (179)

The *Diccionario Cordemex* defines "tan popol kan" and "tan popol t'an" as "cuentos, pláticas y palabras públicas que todos los saben, los dicen y cuentan" (775). More investigation is needed to fully understand the term as intellectuals are employing it, including its relationship to oral and written discourse and if it refers to narrative in the widest sense or a form with specific generic conventions.

escribe sino también se canta”. The same link that Villegas finds between poetry and song is similar in Martínez Huchim’s *U k’a’ajsaajil / Recuerdos*, which also presents poems as songs by titling a section of written compositions in verse as “k’aayo’ob”. Martínez Huchim’s work presents these poems as songs of nature, trees, and people.

Alternative terms for poetry include *ik’il t’aan*, which suggests that this type of language comes from the spirit.⁴³ As Villegas explained to me via Facebook Messenger in 2017, *ik’il t’aan* “es la palabra que nace del espíritu”. This is the term for poetry that Sánchez Chan uses in his blog (*Literatura*). The *Diccionario introductorio* from the Universidad de Quintana Roo, edited by Javier Abelardo Gómez Navarrete, uses “iik’t’aan” for “poema” (130), but there is no entry related to *ik’il t’aan* in the *Diccionario Maya Cordemex*. Villegas wrote to me that the most common term for poetry is *k’aay iik’* [song spirit], which combines the roots of the previous two terms.

The trilingual anthology of *maaya-language* literature, *U túumben k’aayilo’ob x-ya’axche’ / Los nuevos cantos de la ceiba / The New Songs of the Ceiba* (2009), edited by Montemayor and Donald H. Frischmann, incorporates *maaya-language* genre labels into its organization. The anthology divisions are always trilingual: Tsikbaalo’ob / Prosa / Prose, K’aayo’ob / Poesía / Poetry, and Balts’amo’ob / Teatro / Theater. This seems an important step towards acknowledging a Maya way of ordering anthologies and literary criticism from the perspective of scholarly method. The editors do include a clear reasoning for their genre

⁴³ The *Diccionario Cordemex* defines “ik” as “el espíritu, vida y aliento”, “aire o viento”, “enfermedad que el vulgo llama aire”, “contar fábulas o nuevas” (266).

categorization. However, there is no discussion about what the *maaya*-language genre terms mean and how they differ or overlap with the Spanish- and English-language genre terms used.⁴⁴

Utilizing a bilingual or multilingual framework for the generic organization of anthologies of indigenous-language works provides a space for placing minoritized and lesser spoken languages at the center and adapting dominant languages to their frameworks. Categories defined by the language of the literature may be the best starting point to reflect a culture's priorities. Translations of genres provide a frame of reference regarding indigenous-language terms for readers from outside the culture. Supplementing such translations with editorial explication would be vital to describe significant differences in cultural understandings of genre to bring the reader as close as possible to a contextual understanding of the indigenous-language term within its value system.

My Positionality

After studying in Mérida, Yucatan, in 2007, my life completely changed course. I added Latin American literary studies to my English major, and I returned to visit, live, and work in Mérida. However, it wasn't until I began *maaya* language study in Pisté, Yucatan, the town next to the renowned archeological site Chichén Itzá, that my language studies and the friendships I formed in the community opened up nuances of Yucatan and its Maya heritage that I had never been aware of. I come to this corpus as an eager student of *maayat'aan* and the worldviews it expresses. I have delighted in the creative fashioning of these texts, the challenge of reading them over the past three years, and the sound of *maaya* as I spent hours reading aloud in a now

⁴⁴ The introduction states, "En términos generales, los escritores mayas contemporáneos cultivan el teatro, el ensayo, el relato, la canción y la poesía" (29). However, the anthology does not use those genres to organize the literary selections.

defunct Dunkin' Donuts in Charlottesville, Virginia. I am writing this dissertation because learning to see the world through *maayat'aan* and growing my friendships with the people who speak it has been a great gift to me and enriched the way I understand the world. These texts have influenced me and become a part of who I am and how I think, and I hope this dissertation serves to further *maayat'aan* and foment the remarkable literature authors are producing in this language.

My status as a U.S.-based scholar studying the Maya culture from Yucatan, Mexico, to some degree places me in a position of power in which I create knowledge and have the opportunity to shape perceptions on a culture that is not my own. This is obviously not the first time foreign scholars have studied other cultures. However, the rise of postcolonial and decolonial approaches have made scholars take into account what effects such a situation might have on maintaining current hierarchies of inequality. In a review of scholarship on Indigenous literatures, Jansen discusses the problematics of a lack of Indigenous scholarly voices in conversations about Indigenous literatures (246):

A consequence of the structural exclusion of indigenous experts is that it not only impoverishes the interpretive process, it also leads to the ongoing presence of a colonial gaze. Modern scholarly texts are—often explicitly—written for Western (academic) audiences. Their perspective, terminology, and choice of topics are mostly influenced by Western points of view. They may even reproduce and follow the discriminatory language and presuppositions of the colonial sources (for example, in the archaeological designation of figurines as 'idols'). (247)

He also points out the benefits of being a native speaker of the literary language: "Native speakers and cultural participants are in a privileged position to explore meanings and

connotations of the signs, terms, and concepts of ancient texts” (247). With similar caution, Frantz Fanon reminds us, studying a language that is not your own is a great responsibility: “To speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization” (qtd. in Mignolo “Epistemic” 165).

I believe that a variety of perspectives enriches understanding, and I identify my position as one of a community of voices, both Maya and non-Maya, who are discussing these texts. To avoid scholarly practices that in effect excludes Indigenous and underrepresented voices from conversations about their own and others’ cultural production, I seek wherever possible to incorporate Maya voices, studies, terms of analysis, and cosmology into my discussion of these texts. As Georgina Rosado Rosado and Celia Rosado Avilés assert of oral literature: “estos textos exigen del lector una enorme competencia cultural” (188). While I have extensive experience in Yucatan, these texts challenged my cultural competence, linguistic abilities, and reading and critical abilities. I take full responsibility for any errors. My positionality requires recognizing my own spheres of cultural understanding and misunderstanding. The readings of these texts that I propose are arguments I have wrestled with, thought, and rethought over years. I hope they do justice to these authors’ remarkable texts. If I contribute nothing else, I hope this project demonstrates a thorough enthusiasm for the texts, their language, and their daring challenges to perceptions surrounding Maya language and culture.

Chapter 2. *U k'aaba' máako'ob* [People's Names]: Maya Identities in Three Literary Representations of Transformed Yucatecan Society

The *maaya* word for names, *k'aaba*, is one of the first words any student of the language will learn. As I spent the summer of 2015 continuing my study of *maaya t'aan* in Yucatan, new vocabulary was not presented as *t'aano'ob* [words] in the framework I use to introduce Spanish- and English-language vocabulary to my students. Rather, our instructor, the linguist and cultural promoter Briceño Chel, introduced us to new 'names'. Our vocabulary was organized into the sections *u k'aaba' máako'ob*, *u k'aaba' ba'alche'ob*, *u k'aaba' ba'alo'ob*, and *u k'aaba' kaajo'ob* [names of people, animals, things, and towns]. We began class by learning names for men, women, and towns. These categories of names, which are not part of any university-level Spanish curriculum I have taught, demonstrate Maya difference in organizing and making sense of the world. Later, the linguist explained that in Maya cosmology, “*tu láakal ba'al yaan u k'aaba', yaan u yuumil, yaan ba'ax u beelal*” [all things have a name, a guardian, and a purpose].

Historically, names and naming have a fraught history given European colonialism in the Americas. Multiple Spanish chroniclers, including Diego de Landa, record how Native American peoples were (mis)named by Europeans who struggled to understand indigenous tongues whose sounds they encountered for the first time. These instances of misnaming were only the beginning of the marginalization of indigenous languages and cultures through colonial systems in the Americas. Specifically on the Yucatan Peninsula, where *maaya* is a minoritized language in a Spanish-dominant context, naming makes Maya worldviews and contributions more visible. In fact, I discussed earlier how Villegas equates his creative writing with the intellectual labor of adapting the *maaya* language to 'name' contemporary realities (“*nombrar el mundo occidental en maya*”, Personal Interview). His choice of the verb '*nombrar*' to describe the act of literary

creation and his insistence on the naming the world in *maaya* gesture to the power of naming as a tool for cultural control, or what Walter Mignolo calls “control of knowledge” (“Epistemic” 162). In this chapter, I consider naming to be an expression of identity as framed by oneself or others, and recognize that naming takes place within political and social structures that condition opportunities for a given individual or group to name.

Contemporary works written in *maaya* demonstrate a preoccupation with names and nicknames, as in the case of the three works I examine in this chapter: Castillo Tzec’s novella *Ix-Ts’akyaj / La yerbatera* (2014), Martínez Huchim’s collection of *tsikbalo’ob* and *k’aayo’ob*, *U k’a’ajsajil u ts’u’noj k’áax / Recuerdos del corazón de la montaña* (2013), and Cuevas Cob’s poem “In k’aaba”, which appears in the *Kuxa’an t’aan* anthology (2012). I illuminate how authors’ treatment of naming and names in these bilingual works denotes conceptions of identity on multiple levels—interethnic, ethnic, and individual—that revise dominant perceptions of the Maya. When dominant folkloric visions of the Maya result in linking contemporary Maya identity to a singular notion of a past “authentic” Maya culture, reading these works together is notable for the heterogeneity of the Maya identities they name and signify. In the sections that follow, I analyze how each author conceives of identity through their practices of naming people and their surroundings. This provides a window into how authors use literature as a space to (re)imagine self-identity outside of political, social, and historical identities that have been externally imposed. I show how this naming involves literary and linguistic reframing of the social landscape in Yucatan, possible in the literary mode even if not immediately possible in reality. Whereas the genres and perspectives of the texts are diverse, all three works modify discussions of Maya identity through the vehicle of a female protagonist.

My discussion of naming is indebted to multiple perspectives, including Maya conceptions surrounding names, along with anthropological and historical understandings of Maya practices of naming. I also consider naming in the vein of Lévi-Strauss as a system that positions individuals in their society and in the vein of Althusser, in which subjects, hailed or interpellated when called by name, recognize the ideological system they are a part of and behave according to its norms. These ideas account for cultural differences in how names function. Semiotics and the analysis of sign systems demonstrate that the power to name means the power to signify meaning. They also serve as reminders that names, as signifieds, have the potential to be interpreted differently by different groups in different moments.

Debates surrounding Maya Identities and Naming

While global society often refers to a people from southern Mexico and northern Central America as ‘the Maya’, *maaya* speaker and scholar Juan Castillo Cocom problematizes this identity name in his statement, “all the books about ‘The Maya’ were written by non-Maya people” (“Maya Scenarios” 18). Castillo Cocom’s placement of ‘the Maya’ in quotation marks points to the contested nature of this name, and also suggests a cause for the polemic: the underrepresentation of Maya voices in scholarship about the group. There are plenty of reasons to question using the name ‘Maya’ as an identity label.⁴⁵ The term ‘Maya’ was first used as an ethnic label by non-Maya people to label speakers of languages descending from the Mayan language family before speakers ever self-applied the name. This situation would be like naming all speakers of modern romance languages ‘Latins’ because they share Latin as a common

⁴⁵ Scholars have engaged in a nuanced historical overview of the term ‘Maya’. See a special issue edited by Quetzil Castañeda and Ben Fallaw of what is now called *The Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology*. See also work by Castañeda, Castillo Cocom, Wolfgang Gabbert, Ronald Loewe, and Matthew Restall.

ancestor language. Applying the name ‘Maya’ erases many distinctions among diverse linguistic and cultural groups who speak Mayan languages in different regions. Most *maaya* speakers do not view themselves as part a shared culture with other Mayan groups.

Despite the fact that inhabitants of the Yucatan Peninsula shared *maayat’aan* as a language before Spanish colonialism, *maaya* speakers have not considered themselves a homogenous group. In a historical explanation of the diversity among *maaya* speakers, Nancy Farriss explains about the Spanish conquest, “The Maya had no overarching imperial structure that could be toppled with one swift blow to the center. Yucatan was divided into at least sixteen autonomous provinces with varying degrees of internal unity. Each of the provinces, and sometimes the subunits within them, had to be negotiated with, and failing that, conquered separately” (12). Matthew Restall affirms that pre-Hispanic *maaya* speakers identified first and foremost with their towns, and then with their lineage, which was based on their patronym (*The Maya World* 2). Restall uses evidence from the colonial period to argue that Spaniards assigned racial and cultural identities based on assumptions that there was a common regional identity of “indios” (“Maya ethnogenesis” 73, 78). He notes that in the colonial notarial record, the term ‘Maya’ is an adjective that describes language, not people (*The Maya World* 14). Moving forward to the nineteenth-century Caste War, Wolfgang Gabbert shows that white Yucatecan elites fostered the idea that loyalties were drawn around ethnic, racial, and caste lines between ‘the Maya’ on one hand and the Spaniards and American-born *criollos* of Spanish descent on the other. However, Gabbert demonstrates that “legal Indians” fought on both sides of the conflict. He argues that socioeconomic class and region were more significant dividing lines, and finds no evidence to suggest there was a Maya ethnic consciousness before or after the war. In fact, Gabbert explains that while *maaya* was the mother tongue of both indigenous and Spanish

descendants at the time, he asserts that the war created deep divisions among *maaya* speakers (“Of Friends” 92). He finds that by the early twentieth century, *maaya* speakers outside of the rebel region assimilated into the surrounding Yucatecan and immigrant population, negating an ethnic formation (105).

Today, there is much discussion on whether a “Maya” ethnicity exists or to what degree, if at all, *maaya* speakers self-identify as a “Maya” group in the state of Yucatan, where both Castillo Tzec and Martínez Huchim are from (Armstrong-Fumero 7-8, Castañeda *In the Museum* 12-14, Castañeda “We Are *Not*” 41-42). Deconstructing the notion of “the Maya,” Quetzil Castañeda explains the most significant names and classifying factors that *maaya* speakers from the state of Yucatan use for self-identification:

On the one hand, as any student of Yucatan will tell you, those that are known as “Maya” in anthropology books and tourist discourses use a variety of self-identific terms that are based on cross-cutting criteria of class, gender, and language, but not ethnicity. Thus, a male “Maya” might be Maya, but more likely *masewal*, *otzil*, *humilde*, *mayero*, *catrín*, and *mestizo*. Note that a female “Maya” is a *mestiza* because she dresses like a Maya, speaks Maya, and lives “Maya culture.” (“We Are *Not*” 53)

Some terms Castañeda lists have principal connotations of poverty (*masewal*, *otzil*, *humilde*), whereas others describe someone who speaks *maaya* (*mayero*) or who uses traditional dress (*mestizo*) or not (*catrín*). His sample provides insight into the diversity of ways in which speakers conceptualize themselves within their societies, none of which correspond to the label “Maya”.

Castillo Cocom declares, “my Maya identity is a western invention” (“Maya Scenarios” 19). He explains that *maaya* speakers’ identity tends to be local, with town of origin as the most important factor in identity (19). He refers to the lack of political organization based on indigenous or Maya identity in the state of Yucatan (“It Was Simply” 145-46), with Fernando Armstrong-Fumero making the comparison, “Yucatán is remarkable for the relative lack of grassroots organization based on indigenous identity” (11). Rather, Armstrong-Fumero finds that today’s *maaya* speakers from the Oriente region in Yucatan are divided by factionalism mostly derived from new economic hierarchies resulting from varied roles in the tourist economy (13). Briceño Chel’s work demonstrates the local nature of loyalties through linguistics. He identifies five regional variants in the *maaya* language in Yucatan. While he declares that the variants “muestran los lazos existentes entre los mayas de hoy,” he also examines language change on the peninsula and finds that “estos cambios están sirviendo como identitarios de zonas, regiones o pueblos que los propios hablantes señalan como distintivos por su manera de hablar” (“Lengua”). It is in this social, political, and linguistic milieu of conflicting identity labels that *maaya*-language authors assume, transform, or reject the varied perspectives surrounding Maya identity involved in these debates.

Castillo Tzec, Narrative Alliances, and the Battle to Name

Castillo Tzec puts names at the forefront of his 2014 novella *Ix-Ts’akyaj / La yerbatera*. Winner of the Premio Estatal de Narrativa Maya “Domingo Dzul Poot” 2010-2011 in Yucatan, the novel represents Castillo Tzec’s longest published creative work. In a personal interview in 2015, Castillo Tzec recounted being bullied in school for being a *maaya* speaker and only learning to value his culture upon immigrating for three years to the United States. There, his boss greatly respected Maya employees for their heritage. I believe this background and his work

as a linguistic activist are strong influences in the text. Castillo Tzec's text rewrites the Yucatan Peninsula's colonial history. Instead of touting the national mixed *mestizo* identity that dominated twentieth-century Mexican policy and caused the marginalization of indigenous and other non-*mestizo* voices, Castillo Tzec uses literature to create a textual logic based on two separate identities, the Maya and a foreign white colonizer, who both inhabit Yucatan. Castillo Tzec's reimagining of a homogenous Maya cultural identification defies historical and anthropological scholarship demonstrating that the peninsula lacked a unifying ethnic identity. The unified Maya group ensures their cultural and linguistic continuity through a clear-cut victory over the white newcomers. While the novella demonstrates the physical violence involved in intercultural conflicts, it more so places this colonial battle on a linguistic plane. The conflicts that arise in the novel as two groups seek to name the Maya area allow Castillo Tzec to respond to the historical silencing of the Maya.

The novel's action rewrites the story of Spanish colonialism in Yucatan, centering on one extraordinary protagonist, Xsaklool.⁴⁶ As she learns healing from her grandmother, little *aluxo'ob* [guardian sprites] whisk the child Xsaklool away because her grandmother harvests herbs without complying with ritual offerings to them. When Xsaklool is found again, her time with these guardians has left her with an extraordinary gift for healing, and she becomes the most capable and sought-after healer in the area.⁴⁷ However, in her adult years, foreign white soldiers, who conceive of curative talents as the devil's work, prohibit these activities. When Xsaklool persists as a healer and practitioner of Maya religion, the foreigners punish her. Even so, she still

⁴⁶ In Castillo Tzec's orthography, her name is ixSaklool. I render her name as Xsaklool, according to the orthographic norms in the 2014 *U nu'ukbesajil u ts'iibta'al maayat'aan / Normas de escritura para la lengua maya*, coordinated by Briceno Chel and Can Tec.

⁴⁷ Mary H. Preuss notes that the situation Castillo Tzec portrays has roots in oral tradition. In a sample of oral narratives she collects, she notes, "The *aluxes*—the most frequent actors who appear in about half of the accounts—engage in mischievous activities, scare people, demand respect, and teach pharmacology to bright children" (461).

seeks to help the soldiers. For instance, she warns them that the area where they plan to set up an overnight camp is dangerous and that chewing tobacco repels snakes. However, the soldiers ignore her warnings and grow convinced that she has special powers when a soldier is bitten by a snake, whereas Xsaklool remains unharmed. The white foreigners decide to burn her at the stake, but rain drenches the soldiers who attempt to light the fire, and they are unable to follow through on their threats. When only the white men who tried to light the fire become sick, the soldiers become so full of fear that they abandon the town forever. Xsaklool succeeds in saving herself and her community from their white oppressors because of her knowledge of herbs and the protection of the Maya deity Ixcheel.

Narrative Alliances: With the maayáaj kaaj (los mayas) or the sak wíinik (los blancos)

Castillo Tzec's historical revision in *Ix-Ts'akyaj / La yerbatera* starts with the names he chooses for the two opposing cultural groups. In the opening paragraph, the narrator evokes the prophesied moment when white men first arrived in Yucatan, a gloss for the Spanish conquest in the sixteenth century. The *maaya*-language text conceptualizes the two identities involved as the "sak wíinik" [white man] and the "maayáaj kaaj" [Maya people]. In the Spanish text, the foreigners are "los conquistadores" or "los blancos", who harm "los mayas" and change their ways of living because the newcomers find them strange (7).

Whereas most Yucatecan *maaya* speakers primarily conceptualize their identities through town of origin and socioeconomic class, the novella's references to the *maayáaj kaaj* suggest that what is at stake in Castillo Tzec is not just a local loyalty but rather a larger peninsular pre-Hispanic collective identity. The term *maayáaj kaaj* appears in the most recent norms for writing *maayat'aan*, entitled *U nu'ukbesajil u ts'libta'al maayat'aan / Normas de escritura para la*

lengua maya (2014) and coordinated by Briceño Chel and Can Tec through the Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas (INALI). The norms state that “maayáaj” refers to Maya ethnicity, and “maayáaj kaaj” means “**pueblo maya**” (bold in original) (321). The terms’ appearance in the orthographic norms demonstrate Maya intellectuals’ adoption of the Maya name to foment ethnic consciousness for language and cultural revalorization.⁴⁸ In both Castillo Tzec’s novella and the orthographic norms, *kaaj* functions like the Spanish *pueblo*, which specifically means ‘town’ but often refers to ‘people of a country or region’. This wider usage of *kaaj* in *Ix-Ts’akyaj / La yerbatera* is reinforced as the narration never mentions the name of Xsaklool’s town but emphasizes from the novella’s first words that the action takes place in Yucatan. According to Worley, the term ‘Maya’ operates similarly in Castillo Tzec’s short story “Tàanxal kaajile’ ku chiimpoltaj maaya kaaj, ma’ je’ex tu lu’umile’ / “La cultura maya es respetada en otros lugares, no como en la nuestra” [sic] (2007). Of this story, he says: “We can situate Castillo Tzec’s use of the word ‘maaya’ as participating in a broader project of Pan-Maya consciousness raising through which Maya activists encourage others to self-identify as Maya” (40). Similarly, *Ix-Ts’akyaj / La yerbatera* does not focus on *maaya* speakers’ heterogeneity but rather solidifies a cultural identification of Maya people in Yucatan and demonstrates its exceptionalism as group members successfully defend their cultural traditions. While a pure Maya culture with an ‘authentic’ set of traditions maintained since pre-Hispanic times is a myth,⁴⁹ the novella’s depiction as such affirms the power of Maya ontologies and language and illustrates a means for maintaining cultural control in a contemporary context of *maaya* speakers’

⁴⁸ Some revalorization efforts among Maya intellectuals also extend concepts of Maya identity beyond Yucatan into a wider Pan-Maya identity. Such an approach is exemplified by the 2012 translation of the *Popol vuh* from the K’iche’ Maya tradition in Guatemala into *maayat’aan as Póopol Wuuj (Póopol)*. Briceño Chel and Rubén Reyes Ramírez coordinated this project.

⁴⁹ The cultural mixing among Mexican and Central American groups even before Europeans ever knew of the Americas is well documented. See, for example, Briceño Chel “Lengua”, Farriss 23, Hanks *Converting* 366-70, and Morales and Bastarrachea.

marginalization. Castillo Tzec's writing inverts contemporary social, linguistic, political, and economic hierarchies and makes a case for the utility of placing Maya perspectives and knowledge, passed down through generations of Maya people, at the center. The clearly defined Maya identity allows the Maya characters to rally in support of each other against a common, clearly defined threat.

Castillo Tzec's name for the oppressors, *sak wíinik* [white man],⁵⁰ evokes a clearly non-Maya group. The plural form of *wíinik* describes both the Maya and the Spanish colonizer in the colonial-era Maya manuscripts known as the Books of Chilam Balam; in the orthography of the time, the Book from Chumayel use the term "Maya uinicob" [Maya men] frequently to refer to the Maya and the term "zac uinicob" [white men] occasionally to refer to the colonizers⁵¹ (Roys). Just as Maya intellectuals employ the term *maayáaj kaaj*, my experience with the term *sak wíinik* in a contemporary context is also from educators and cultural promoters who participate in language revitalization efforts as they describe the group of Caste War-era Spaniards and their descendants. Whereas the term (*maayáaj*) *kaaj* [pueblo / people] connotes collective solidarity as

⁵⁰ Castillo Tzec uses the term in a singular form, but my plural translation demonstrates common usage in *maaya* as speakers do not always employ plural markers to speak of plural nouns.

⁵¹ While Castillo Tzec chooses to name the foreign colonizers *sak wíinik*, scholarship often configures Maya conflicts with the *dzulo 'ob* (modern *ts'uulo 'ob*), as Castillo Cocom notes ("Maya Scenarios" 15). The colonial-era Book of Chilam Balam from Chumayel uses *dzul* to name the conquistadors, according to Mediz Bolio's translation (123). Castillo Cocom asserts that *ts'ul* is "roughly understood as 'white male'" (15), while Hanks translates it as "foreigner, wealthy person" (*Converting* 366). Similarly to *Ix-Tsakyaj / La yerbatera*, María Luisa Góngora Pacheco collects a contemporary oral *tsikbal* told by Don Emiliano Tzab from Maní, Yucatan, that utilizes the term *sak wíiniko 'ob* to describe a conquest situation ("U suumil k'i'ik' Maní" 16 / "La sogá de sangre" 17). Contemporary versus historical difference in terms also appears in accounts of the nineteenth-century Caste War. Despite contemporary intellectuals' use of *sak wíinik* to describe a Maya enemy, Hanks shows that during the war, the rebels used the term *dzul* for their enemy (366). This enemy consisted both of Maya people from the peninsula's northwest region and non-Mayas (Gabbert 101). In *Diccionario Maya Cordemex*, "ts'ul" has multiple meanings, such as "extranjero de otro reino", "advenedizo", "forastero", "actualmente se dice del europeo o de su descendiente, equivale a español", and "encomendero" (892). Castillo Tzec does use the term *ts'ul* in *Ix-Ts'akyaj / La yerbatera*, but always as a title for an individual leader, such as when a soldier or a Maya person addresses the white commander (see, for example, 20, 40, 45). He never uses it to identify a social group or ethnicity. Similarly, Castañeda asserts that *ts'ul* today does not describe collective identity and that those called *ts'ulo 'ob* by *maaya* speakers never self-identified with the term ("We Are Not" 53). Castillo Cocom also shows that this term can apply to Maya people ("Maya Scenarios" 27). Perhaps for this reason, the term would not be useful for creating the ethnic binary Castillo Tzec utilizes to provide the Maya group in a position of self-determination.

demonstrated by Castillo Tzec's Maya characters, the root *wíinik* [man] has more individualistic connotations in contemporary usage. The *Diccionario Maya Popular* defines "wíinik" as the gender neutral "humano" or "individuo" and the masculine "hombre, señor" (245), and Bricker et. al. demonstrate the derivation between "wíinik" ["man"] and "wíinkil" ["body"] (305). As such, the *kaaj* and *wíinik* terms express conflicting configurations of identity, especially considered through contemporary primary meanings of each term's root. It is possible that Castillo Tzec chooses *kaaj* over *wíinik* as a descriptor only for Maya people because *kaaj* better constructs a Maya collective and ethnic identity in a contemporary context in which usages of *kaaj* and *pueblo* are similar and usages of *wíinik* and *individuo* are similar. The adjective *sak* [white] defines this identity in a way that contrasts with an indigenous Maya identity.⁵² The name *sak wíinik*, then, identifies Spanish conquistadors through Castillo Tzec's own Spanish version of the text. However, in the *maaya* text alone, the term could even be conflated with present-day groups of European descent whose cultures and governmental policies have been much discussed as neocolonialist.⁵³

The fact that the *sak wíinik* in *Ix-Ts'akyaj / La yerbatera* are all soldiers is reminiscent of historical armed clashes, such as those involved in the repeated Spanish attempts to subdue the peninsula in the sixteenth century (Farriss 14), and the Caste-War-era attempts by the elite-controlled government to squash the lower-class uprising in the eastern part of the peninsula (Gabbert 91). This portrayal of an invasion may be a way of marking historical time in the

⁵² Literary representations of Maya identity as conceptualized through dark features of an individual's outward appearance include, for instance, Cuevas Cob's celebration of a Maya girl's black eyes in her poem "Je' bix chúuk" / "Como el carbón" (*Kuxa'an t'aan* 25) or Martínez Huchim's description of birthmarks common to Maya and other dark-skinned babies in her *tsikbal* entitled "U bo'ol Concepción Yah Sihil" / "La recompensa de Concepción Yah Sijil" (*U yóol xkaambal jaw xfiw* 31 / *Contrayerba* 91), which I discuss in Chapter 4. It is also common for couples in both *maaya* and Yucatecan Spanish to use pet names derived from the *maaya* term *boox* [black].

⁵³ Intellectuals' use of this term suggests that on the ground, popular memory or current elite portrayals paint the Caste War as ethnic in nature.

novella, a stance reinforced by the fact that I have heard the term *sak w'iniik* used to describe Caste War armies. However, when much of the oppression historically faced by the Maya has more subtle, non-military origins,⁵⁴ characterizing threats to Maya culture as military in nature can be read as an aesthetic decision that portrays external influences as unwelcome and forced upon the region. It also creates a metaphor in which the fight for cultural control is a literal battle with high stakes, including cultural and linguistic loss, or even life-and-death consequences.

The ethnic binary in *Ix-Ts'akyaj / La yerbatera* addresses *maaya* speakers' preoccupations surrounding contemporary Maya culture as 'inauthentic', a claim in prominent discourses that enact discriminatory expectations of indigenous cultural purity.⁵⁵ While an anthropologist like Castillo Cocom writes to deconstruct this ethnic binary because it is not an accurate model for the heterogeneity of Yucatan ("Maya Scenarios" 15), an author and cultural promoter like Castillo Tzec activates the binary to artistically empower a culture he identifies with and promotes. Through the demarcation of a Maya identity, Maya cultural promoters like Castillo Tzec seek to make their culture more visible and equalize hierarchies on the peninsula.⁵⁶ Similarly, portraying a Maya people able to maintain cultural continuity and resist external influences is a trend that Leirana Alcocer considers characteristic of *maaya*-language literature: "Los poemas actuales, y la creación literaria en general, van acompañados de una fuerte

⁵⁴ Morales and Bastarrachea assert that historically, oppression faced by the Mayas after the conquest stems from labor exploitation, economic realities of *criollo* henequen production, the loss of communal lands, discrimination against "*indios*", and education.

⁵⁵ This same purity or cultural continuity is not demanded of European colonial cultures, which demonstrate influences from colonized cultures that are often a source of regional pride, as is the case with the Maya influence in Yucatecan culture.

⁵⁶ Castillo Tzec's promotion of a Maya identity follows trends that Ronald Loewe identifies when he declares, "However effective the rhetoric of mestizaje is in creating unity out of difference, it is an ethnic discourse that has begun to fray around the edges as indigenous community leaders reassert their identity as Mayan speakers" (78). Shannan L. Mattiace and Patricia Fortuny Loret de Mola provide an example of an activist whose stance is similar to Castillo Tzec's. In their discussion of Yucatec Maya organizations in San Francisco, California, home of a large immigrant community, they affirm of the executive director of the Instituto Familiar de la Raza, "For [Estela] García, expressing indigenous identity is a form of combating discrimination, which has been a focus of her life and work for decades" (211).

ideología que busca demostrar la vigencia de la cultura maya, trazar una línea continua desde lo prehispánico hasta la actualidad, reivindicando la tradición” (*Conjurando* 47).

Ix-Ts’akyaj inverts existing hierarchies as the omniscient narrator clearly favors the Maya community. The narrator emphasizes the truth value of a Maya perspective on colonization and points out Spanish misunderstandings of local customs. This rhetorical stance, demarcating Maya truth and Spanish untruth, resists Spanish-authored truth claims in chroniclers’ accounts of the conquest of the Americas. For example, even from his title, *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España* (1576), Bernal Díaz del Castillo insists that his version of events is definitive among other competing Spanish versions. While affirming Maya perspectives, Castillo Tzec’s narrator never adopts a first-person association with the Maya. In this way, *Ix-ts’akyaj* does not participate in oral tradition’s first-person closing device in which narrators elucidate their own experiences related to the *tsikbal* events.

This narrative voice overtly interprets the correctness or incorrectness of names applied by both the *maayáaj kaaj* and the *sak wíinik* to describe Yucatan and its people. While the white men refuse to consider Maya perspectives, the narrator creates sympathy for the Maya people and the female protagonist by making sure that readers know the Maya side of the story and understand the white men’s abuses in the colonial period. As such, this omniscient perspective dispenses with the guise of objectivity that accompanied nineteenth-century realist novels, for example. The following quotation exemplifies how the narrator functions by validating truth statements or rejecting false statements in the novel’s intercultural clashes. The narrator relates soldiers’ misunderstanding of Xsaklool’s work as a healer:

ku tukultiko’obe’ leti’ jo’olpesik tuláakal meyaj ku beeta’al yéetel kisin, kex
tumen ma’ beyi’, leti’e’ chéen ixts’aak yéetel xíiw. Ba’ax ma’ u yojel le

máako'oba' le máax meyajtik le ts'aak yéetel xíwo' ma'u k'áat u ya'al wa
juntúul xpulya'aji'. (24)

Ellos creían que ella encabezaba todos los trabajos para el diablo en la región, a
pesar de que esto no era cierto. Ella era sólo una yerbatera, una mujer que sanaba
con yerbas. Lo que no sabían estas personas era que trabajar con yerbas no es
sinónimo de ser brujo. (66)

The narrator can refute the white soldier's misunderstandings because they *think* ("ku
tukultiko'ob" / "ellos creían") that Xsaklool works with the devil. However, the narrator
responds that this is not true ("ma' beyi'" / "esto no era cierto") and then, without any
introductory clause, makes a truth claim to correct the misunderstanding: the protagonist is an
herbal healer. In the novella, the interplay between the verbs *tukultik* / *creer* and *ojel* / *saber*
frequently points to false belief versus truth, respectively. In the last sentence of the passage, the
narrator clarifies a difference in names between the two cultures: 'herbal healer' is not
synonymous with 'witch'. This naming discrepancy shows the radical difference in two cultural
groups' interpretations of the same practices. The narrator therefore releases Xsaklool from the
soldiers' wrongful blame: "beey úchik u beeta'al u bo'otik jump'éeel si'ipil mina'an ti'o' chéen
le máako'ob tukultik k'asa'ano'" (28). / "fue así como hicieron que pagara una culpa que no
tenía. Sólo esos hombres creían que era mala" (70). The narrator has a position of authority and
understands the situation better than the white men. In other parts of the novella, the narrator
describes how characters feel and explains events that the characters have not yet understood
themselves.

The ethnic binary established through naming is the first of many layers of binary as the
knowledgeable and well-intentioned Maya community seeks to resist the cultural influence of the

dominating white soldiers, who constantly misunderstand or actively ignore Maya voices. Other layers of the Maya/foreigner binary are: peaceful/violent, knowledgeable/lacking knowledge, female protagonists/male protagonists. These Manichean contrasts justify Maya victory not just because of the group's exceptional knowledge and cultural heritage but also on moral grounds. The names and characteristics that Castillo Tzec creates for these separate but coexisting societies establish the systems and ideologies into which named characters are interpellated. Only one character, Xisabel Box Uj, exists outside of these two ethnic categories. Her role in the novella is antagonist foil for Xsaklool as she denounces the healer to the white foreigners. I analyze both characters' names and roles in the following section.

U k'aaba' máako'ob: *Individual Names and Identities*

Despite my extensive discussion of the novella's ethnic names for the two battling groups, these names are taken as a given in the textual logic. In fact, the majority of the work focuses on Xsaklool's response to the milieu of these clashing forces. Starting with the events at her birth, the novella distinguishes Xsaklool as an individual who will grow up to have a special role in her community. While the names *maayáaj kaaj* and *sak wíinik* are never contested, the high stakes of naming at the individual level is a metaphor for the work's larger ethnic conflict.

Historical understandings of Maya practices of naming shed light on how Castillo Tzec frames proper names in *Ix-Ts'akyaj / La yerbatera*. I here consider Lévi-Strauss' differentiation between personal names, given to individuals, and collective names, given to lineages or groups, as this distinction is significant for the Maya context (175). Matthew Restall demonstrates that in pre-conquest times, naming practices for girls followed the formula ix + mother's matronym + father's patronym. His example is that the daughter of Namay Canche and Ixchan Pan would be

Ixchan Canche. As boys' names replaced 'na' for 'ix' in the same pattern, their son would be Nachan Canche (*The Maya World* 41). In this way, Maya names reflected both patrilineal and matrilineal descent. However, the last name denoted collectivity most strongly, because the important *ch'i'ibal* lineage was determined by the patronym. After town of origin, *ch'i'ibal* was the second most important factor of identity (2). Restall defines the function of *ch'i'ibal* in a town as "a kind of extended family, most of whose members seem to have pursued their common interests wherever possible through political factionalism, the acquisition and safeguarding of land, and the creation of marriage-based alliances with other chibalob of similar or higher socioeconomic status" (17). Because naming practices followed a formula, all girls and all boys of the same parents would have the same given name, necessitating the use of nicknames. After the conquest, if Christian names were adopted, they replaced the mother's matronym. However, the patronym remained (42), demonstrating the importance of *ch'i'ibal*. As Restall explains, "the pre-conquest patronyms in Yucatan carried a lineage and organizational significance too important to be abandoned" (47-48). Today, the El Chilam Balam blog reports that although most *maaya* speakers prefer foreign names, cultural activists and artists on the peninsula commonly assign their children *maaya*-language names. In fact, Sánchez Chan published *400 nombres mayas para tus hijos e hijas* (2013), which compiles ancient and modern Maya names, along with proposals for additional names ("Buscando").

Castillo Tzec only provides his heroine's first name, or matronym. The lack of a patronym-specified *ch'i'ibal* emphasizes Maya unity and avoids distinguishing difference among *maaya* speakers. In the novella's textual logic, Xsaklool explains how she was named and what her name signifies. In her words, she declares that her name was "ts'áabilak tumen in chiich, yéetel yaan ba'ax u yil yéetel ba'ax in beelal tu yóok'olkaab" (28). In Spanish, "me lo dio mi

abuela y marca mi deber en esta tierra” (69). The heroine, then, views her name as indicative of her destiny. Similarly, Lévi-Strauss considers proper names, or “individuation,” to be indicators of an individual’s classification in a social system (192). Through naming, he says, “individuals are not only ranged in classes; their common membership of the class does not exclude but rather implies that each has a distinct position in it” (172).

In Xsaklool’s case, her name positions her in a Maya world and forms matrilineal continuity. Her name literally means ‘white flower.’ The feminine prefix X- transforms the common noun into a woman’s name. Considering the textual association of the protagonist’s name with her life purpose, ‘white flower’ evokes the herbs Xsaklool uses in her position as the most renowned healer among the towns in her region. In terms Althusser might use, when patients call, Xsaklool is a ‘good Maya subject’ as she ‘works all by herself’ in compliance with the duties of her highly respected social station, including when her Maya practices are prohibited (1359-60). As patients call her name, Xsaklool responds, recognizing her role as healer in Maya ideologies, to be interpellated into appropriate behaviors for this station as she activates her knowledge of herbs and plants, models Maya religious practice, and leads her people to safety and well-being when confronted with foreign oppression.⁵⁷ Xsaklool’s name denotes matrilineal continuity because it is reminiscent of both her grandmother’s and mother’s names: Xsakbej [white path] and Xlool [flower], respectively. The continuity registers not only on the level of their similar names. From her grandmother, Xsaklool learns healing and religious practices, including praying to Ixcheel, the goddess of fertility, childbirth, weaving, and the arts (Chacón 99, 102). Particularly, her grandmother teaches her that Ixcheel manifests herself in the

⁵⁷ Xsaklool is a model of Maya religious practice, as her prayers to Ixcheel atop a nearby pyramid inspire other healers to adopt the same practice (18).

moon and is the mother of humankind (8-9). Likewise, the deity serves as the two women's protectress in the novella.

Beyond the women in Xsaklool's family, the text only names one other character: the heroine's antagonist, Xisabel Box Uj. This woman is also the only character with specified last names, or a *chi'i'bal*. This distinction signals the division Xisabel creates in the text. Her last names, which mean 'black moon,' evoke her origin in the *maayáaj kaaj*, but her adoption of a Spanish-language first name suggests that she has been baptized. The hybridity of her name symbolizes her position in between two cultures and part of none. Her *maaya*-language 'black moon' patronym positions her in a villain role as a foil for the moon goddess Ixcheel. This name-based textual comparison suggests that Xisabel embodies a perversion of Maya religion, which further manifests itself in the text's assertion that Xisabel is a *pu'ulyaj* [witch]. Similarly, the color contrast between villain Box Uj [black moon] and heroine Xsaklool [white flower] evokes a Manichean good-evil moral binary. On the other hand, Xisabel's Spanish-language first name evokes Isabella I of Castille, the earlier queen who financed Christopher Columbus' first voyage to the Americas. Her eponym suggests Xisabel's acceptance of the conquerors' rule and positions her as subject to their ideologies. Still, her *maaya*-language last names signal that neither is she fully integrated into the soldiers' society. Xisabel Box Uj's culturally and linguistically hybrid name interpellates her into two societies simultaneously, but her failure to please the white soldiers or participate in Maya ethnic solidarity demonstrates the impossibility of her success in both depicted societies.

The text portrays Xisabel as a villainous character, similarly to the white foreigners, as she and the soldiers revel in the suffering of the Maya people. In the context of bans on Maya religion and healing, unnamed reminders of colonial-era Inquisition measures in the novella,

Xisabel Box Uj creates division in the *maayáaj kaaj* by twice reporting Xsaklool, beloved by the other Maya characters, to foreign officials. The narrator makes clear that Xisabel Box Uj accuses Xsaklool of witchcraft even though she knows her allegations are false (19/61). Her actions result in Xsaklool's public punishment, including being beaten and nearly burned at the stake. While proclaiming Xsaklool's innocence, the narrator confirms that Xisabel Box Uj practiced witchcraft as a *pu'ulyaj* [witch] prior to colonial rule (19/61). This affirmation signifies that even disregarding her pacts with the white men, Xisabel Box Uj holds a dubious place within the *maayáaj kaaj*, as my ensuing discussion on *pu'ulyaj* demonstrates. Whereas Xsaklool did not believe the soldiers would punish her disobedience to the colonial system because of her town's distant location, Xisabel Box Uj lives in a closer town regularly patrolled by white soldiers, which causes her to stop using witchcraft (19/61). Although the text does not specify a reason for her difference from both societies' norms, Xisabel's proximity to the colonial center may explain why she is more influenced by the foreigners' traditions. Xsaklool's distance insinuates that without Xisabel, Xsaklool never would have been punished. The text presents Xisabel Box Uj as antagonistic to the cultural values and loyalties of the rest of the more like-minded *maayáaj kaaj*, who value Xsaklool's capacity for healing and wish to protect her.

The Battle to Name Profession: ts'akyaj / yerbatera or pu'ulyaj / bruja

The difference between the names *ts'akyaj* [doctor/healer] and *pu'ulyaj* [witch] form perhaps the most contested linguistic battleground as two distinct cultures use conflicting terms to name a single referent: Xsaklool's profession of healing. According to Maya cultural norms, the narrator, and the protagonist herself, Xsaklool is an herbal healer (*ixts'akyaj / yerbatera*). However, the white men interpret her healing methods through the lens of their own religion,

which defines her as a witch (*ixpu'ulyaj* / *bruja*), who works with the devil. The implications of this naming clash are life and death. Under the colonizers' laws, Xsaklool's medicinal practice becomes a legal crime, punishable by death. Castillo Tzec's narrator strongly resists the foreigners' imposed renaming of this Maya profession (see 22, 24, 64):

[B]in le sak wíiniko'obo', tumen ts'o'ok tsikbalta'al ti'ob yaan juntúul xunáan jach ma'alob u ts'akik máak yéetel xiiwi', ba'ale' leti'obe' ku tukuliko'ob juntúul ixpulya'aj, tumen jach ya'ab u ch'a'achi'ital u k'aaba', ba'ale' le ko'olela' ma' ixpulya'aji' chéen jach ts'aaba'an u páajtalil le ts'aak tumen le yuumtsilo'obo'.
(21-22)

[L]os hombres blancos fueron hasta ahí, porque les habían hablado de una mujer que curaba con hierbas y que por ese motivo creían que se trataba de una bruja. Sin embargo, está claro que esta mujer no era una bruja, sino que había recibido de los dioses el poder de sanar a las personas. (63)

The narrator explains the discrepancy in worldview that motivates the foreigners' application of an alternative term for the profession. The *ixpu'ulyaj* label used by the white men is not innocent: it involves a redefinition of Xsaklool's role in her community. However, the narrator eschews such renaming through rhetoric that guides readers to consider Maya perspectives as truth by marking white soldiers' opinions as subjective ("ku tukuliko'ob" / "creían") and using absolute terms for Maya perspectives ("le ko'olela' ma' ixpulya'aji'" / "está claro que esta mujer no era una bruja"). Finally, the narrator offers the justification for rejecting the incorrect definition of "witch" in Xsaklool's case: "chéen jach ts'aaba'an u páajtalil le ts'aak tumen le yuumtsilo'obo'" [her ability to cure was just really given by the gods].

As two words in *maayat'aan* denote 'doctor / healer,' Castillo Tzec's choice of *ts'akyaj* to name the protagonist's profession reinforces the binaries the novella depends on.⁵⁸ Unlike its synonym, *ts'akyaj* grammatically parallels *pu'ulyaj*, as both are compound words ending in *-yaj* [pain]. However, the initial verb of the compounds reveals opposite associations to this pain. As the verb *ts'ak* means 'to heal' and *pu'ul* means 'to throw', *ts'akyaj* means 'to heal pain', while *pu'ulyaj* means 'to throw pain', an image of spreading pain throughout the world. It is evident even morphologically, then, how the foreigners' renaming of Xsaklool's profession defines her as an individual warranting punishment.

Xisabel Box Uj seeks to capitalize on her understanding of the implications of this discrepancy in naming to harm her rival when she denounces Xsaklool as a *ixpu'ulyaj*. The narration gives multiple reasons for her betrayal: rivalry because Xisabel was forced to renounce her witchcraft even as Xsaklool continues defying the Inquisition (19/61), a personal but unexplained hatred for Xsaklool (32/74), and a desire to look good in front of the colonizers (32/73). However, the Maya characters capitalize on difference in naming practices to resist colonial oppression. Townspeople's deliberate misunderstanding momentarily protects Xsaklool from the white soldiers who seek to detain her. When the white men ask, "Tu'ux yaan le *ixp'ulya'ajo*" (22) / "¿Dónde está la bruja?" (64), townspeople respond, "Ma' in wojeli', weye' mina'an mix juntúul *ixpulya'aj*" (22) / "No lo sé. Aquí no vive ninguna bruja" (64). As the foreign label and definition are incongruent with their cultural values, Maya townspeople can respond negatively to the question, even as they are aware of the white men's search for

⁵⁸ The synonym is *ts'aknáal*. Castillo Tzec uses both *ts'aknaal* and *ts'akyaj* as translations for 'doctor' in two different Maya-to-Spanish vocabulary books (*T'aano'ob* and *U áanalte'il u tsikbalil ts'aak*). The suffix *-náal* can be added to the root of a verb to convert the verb into an agentive (Bricker et. al. 408). As *ts'ak* is the root of the verb meaning 'to cure, to heal', *ts'aknáal* means 'person/agent who does *ts'ak*, or who heals or cures.'

Xsaklool, and they know her whereabouts. Maya linguistics and naming become a tool of resistance.

Cultural Continuity through Naming

The narrator asserts that the white foreigners forbid Maya people from invoking Xsaklool's name during times of hardship (27). Maya people's hailing of the healer as Xsaklool would interpellate her into Maya ideologies instead of the white foreigners' systems. Just as Hanks describes colonial-era Spanish policy of *reducción*, or reordering and reorienting native individuals, society, and language to spread Catholicism (*Converting* 7), the white men in Castillo Tzec's novella endeavor to reorient the Maya people through altering *maaya* names. Their competing name for Xsaklool's profession, backed with legal ramifications, is one such reorientation in the novella, but imposing a new name for her character is perhaps their most successful action. Even physical punishment cannot compare to the devastation Xsaklool suffers when a soldier pronounces her forced renaming, as the narrator describes, “ya’ab ba’ax je’el u éejentike’, ba’ale’ u k’e’exel u k’aaba’e’ ma’, tumen u chiich ts’áaj ti’ le k’iin ka síijo” (28). / “Podría aceptar muchas cosas, pero no que le cambiaran el nombre, porque su abuela le impuso ese nombre el día en que nació” (69). The healer's resistance is not just to her new name but to the new social and cultural role it assigns her.⁵⁹ Much like today's cultural promoters, then, Xsaklool fights to maintain the continuity of her familial and cultural heritage as signified in her name.

⁵⁹ “Ba’axten ka k’exik in k’aaba’, tene’ ma’ táan u béeytal u k’exik in k’aaba’, tumen le yaan teena’ ts’áabilak tumen in chiich, yéetel yaan ba’ax u yil yéetel ba’ax in beelal tu yóok’olkaab” (28). / “¿Por qué me vas a cambiar de nombre? Tú no puedes cambiármelo, porque me lo dio mi abuela y marca mi deber en esta tierra” (69).

The protagonist's new name, Xmaría Saklool, alludes to the Virgen Mary, which reorients Maya calls for help toward a Spanish and Catholic avenue of redress. Imposing the name María embodies the Christianization of the Maya language as discussed by Hanks as the foreigners impose new linguistic and religious models over her native ones. By changing her name to one of Spanish and Catholic origins, the referent moves from her role as a healer in her Maya cultural system to a central figure in the Catholic religion. Now when sick people invoke the healer's name, they invoke the Virgen Mary as well. The linguistic change, then, produces a religious reordering as well. According to Xsaklool's worldview, her punishment is undeserved. The narrator makes clear that under the colonial situation, the protagonist's extraordinary knowledge has turned into the source of her suffering: "sakpile'enchajij, lúub u yóol tumen u kuxtale' jach talamchaj chéen tu yóok'olal ba'ax u yojel" (35). / "Quedó pálida, decayó. Su vida eran puros problemas debido a su oficio" (76).⁶⁰ Although estranged from her new name, Xsaklool beseeches townspeople to use it so they do not incite further harm under a violent colonial system: "ma' tu béeytal k beetike'ex mix ba'al, le óok'olale' ko'one'ex u'uyik t'aan" (31) / "No podemos hacer otra cosa, por eso vamos a obedecer" (73). Her goodness as she protects the collective over herself further cements the good/evil, peaceful/violent binaries between the *maaya kaaj* and the *sak w'ínik*. The narrator protects the image of Xsaklool, and maintains that her character is compassionate and without defect.

At the end of the novella, Xsaklool's knowledge helps her escape from being burned alive as punishment for continuing to pray and heal. According to the white men's definition of Xsaklool as a witch, they believe her knowledge comes from the devil, or anti-Catholic forces, and they leave Xsaklool's community in fear. The novel's final words, showing the vindicated

⁶⁰ The Spanish translation uses the word "oficio" where the *maaya* text uses the word "u yojel", or her knowledge.

protagonist immediately giving thanks to the Maya goddess Ixcheel, show the unadulterated continuation of a Maya system of belief. Castillo Tzec revises and rewrites history in a way that assumes a Maya identity that traces continuity and maintains cultural control and knowledge from pre-conquest times. The final words of the novel deal with the protagonist's name, which returns to its original Maya: "xu'ul u ya'aliko'ob ti' ixMaria Saklool, p'áat chéen ixSaklool u t'aniko'ob tu ka'atéen, je'el bix ts'aabik u k'aaba' le k'iin síij tumen u chiiche'" (47) / "dejaron de llamarla María Saklool. Solamente le decían Saklool de nuevo, tal como fue llamada por su abuela el día que nació" (87). Xsaklool's priority, maintaining continuity of the *maayáaj kaaj*, enjoys success as the Maya maintain control of naming the Maya world. Just as Mignolo wonders of the conquest, "who is in a position to decide whose knowledge is truth" (*The Darker* 75), Castillo Tzec places the Maya community in that position of power and shows how Maya knowledge is uniquely able to triumph in Maya territory.

This push-back against hegemony by Castillo Tzec's Maya protagonists follows in a tradition of *maaya* writing that exercises discursive agency in a context of colonial repression. Official documents written for Spanish-speaking colonial officials, along with clandestine documents such as the *Libros de Chilam Balam*, written by and for Mayas outside circulation of the printing press and official colonial pathways, exemplify this tradition (Hanks *Converting Words*, Knowlton, *Libro de Chilam Balam de Chumayel*, and Restall *The Maya World*). In the case of the bilingual text *Ix-Ts'akyaj / La yerbatera*, the battle for naming creates different relationships of the Maya people with hegemony in each language. Castillo Tzec's *maaya* text is more resistant to externally imposed customs, as it portrays even the colonizers framing their worldviews through *maaya*-language categories and understandings. In this way, the *maaya* text provides the Maya people with the upper hand from the beginning, as the white soldiers must

adapt to the local language instead of the inverse. On the other hand, the text's insistence that the events of the novella take place in Yucatan means that the Spanish text utilizes the colonizers' language. Linguistically then, *La yerbatera* is obligated to participate in reinforcing hierarchies inherited from colonial times even as the plot works to invert them.

While *Ix-Ts'akyaj / La yerbatera* harkens to a colonial era, it speaks to the present moment as well, suggesting Maya people can continue to valorize their cultural practices and demand respect from others who impose assimilation or cultural change. Through the novella, Castillo Tzec celebrates the knowledge and cultural practices of his Maya identity.

Martínez Huchim and The Creation of a New Deep-Forest *ch'i'ibal* Lineage

The textual logic in *Ix-Ts'akyaj* assumed an identity of a *maayáaj kaaj*, but Martínez Huchim's work *U k'a'ajajil u ts'u' noj k'áax / Recuerdos del corazón de la montaña* (2013) outlines naming practices among one social group inside a larger *maaya*-speaking society. Her collection refashions identity on the peninsula by portraying personages from an era often overlooked by scholars. Winner of the Premio Nacional de Literatura Indígena "Enedino Jiménez" in 2005, *U k'a'ajajil u ts'u' noj k'áax / Recuerdos del corazón de la montaña* focuses on the identity of the *jch'ak ya'o'ob* or *chiclero* laborers who earned a living harvesting *chicozapote* tree resin in the Mexican states of Yucatan and Quintana Roo. These laborers in Mexico supplied resin for the twentieth-century North American chewing gum industry (Redclift 73, 84, 91). Martínez Huchim, an oral history compiler among many other hats, bases her account on oral histories of *jch'ak ya'o'ob* workers (13).

Despite its foundation in oral histories, the text is a mixture of genres, transitioning between poetry and prose in a way that flaunts its status as a work of art. The structure of the text is as follows: "K'aayo'ob" / "Cantos", a section of three *k'aayo'ob* songs written as poems

without music; “Ku tsikbata’al” / “Cuentan que”, a short prose paragraph that introduces the protagonist, a *maaya*-speaking woman who lives in the heart of the tropical forest practicing her ancestral customs; “Tsikbalo’ob” / “Cuentos”, a section of nine short stories that narrate the protagonist’s life and death; “Ka’aj máanen” / “Cuando pasé”, a short prose paragraph of the narrator’s observations upon returning to where the protagonist once lived; and “U xuulil k’aay” / “Canto último”, one final song. This organization follows traditional oral storytelling forms that situate a narrative between oral history versions (“Cuentan que”) and the narrator’s first-hand experience on the topic (“Cuando pasé”) (Ligorred Perramon “Literatura” 348).

While Martínez Huchim’s poems and *tsikbalo’ob* provide readers with snapshots of life in the isolated camps where the *jch’ak ya’o’ob* laborers lived, the protagonist Xtuux, the spirited camp cook and one of two women in the camp, is the thread that creates cohesion among the vignettes. Martínez Huchim’s subtle omniscient narrator almost seems invisible, especially compared to the strong presence of Castillo Tzec’s narrator in outlining truth claims for the Maya perspective. Her poems and short vignettes form a collection of memorable moments that evoke emotion rather than explain. Vignettes each focus on individual workers and mention both their names and nicknames. In fact, the *tsikbalo’ob* often relate the origin of a given character’s nickname.

U k’a’ajsajil u ts’u’noj k’áax / Recuerdos del corazón de la montaña refashions a *maaya*-speaking peninsular identity. This occurs in three ways: through the work’s focus on often overlooked aspects of Yucatecan history and oral histories, a new conceptualization of *ch’i’ibal* lineage based on forest motifs and collective memory, and the importance of socially negotiated identities as signaled by the prominence of characters’ nicknames over their given names. More important for Martínez Huchim’s work than a Maya ethnic identity is the *jch’ak ya’*

class and the individuals positioned in that class, to use Lévi-Strauss' language. In Martínez Huchim, the *chicozapote* tree becomes a motif for lineage in the deep forest in the historical time and space of the resin industry. Martínez Huchim's text focuses on a lifestyle and lineage that ended many years ago, according to her work, and provides less information about changes in places that Xtuux and the *jch'ak ya'o'ob* once occupied.

Centering Peripheral Aspects of Yucatecan History

Martínez Huchim's goal of remembering through *U k'a'ajsajil u ts'u'noj k'áax / Recuerdos del corazón de la montaña* makes her framing different than Castillo Tzec's. A trained anthropologist, Martínez Huchim here uses a literary mode as her text recenters the story of the peninsula over a new *ch'i'ibal* lineage. Instead of a *chi'i'ibal* founded on bloodlines and patronyms, *ch'i'ibal* in the text is based on a feminine perspective and motifs from an industry on the periphery in Yucatecan history. Rather than fighting against colonizing antagonists, characters in this work struggle against a dangerous environment in the deep forest and for belonging in their own families upon returning to their towns. While names are central to her text, Martínez Huchim shows a more skeptical view of names and identity than Castillo Tzec. Her work features a protagonist known only by her nickname and her methodology fictionalizes characters' names despite the work's inspiration in real-life experiences.

In the introduction to her work, Martínez Huchim does not identify the people she describes in her work as belonging to a *maaya kaaj*. Rather, she identifies them by profession, and states the goal of remembering this dying identity:

Ojelta'ab le tsikbalilo'oba' ich láak'tsililo'ob. *U k'a'asajil u ts'u'noj k'áax ku tsikbatik bix úuchik u kuxtal juntúul ko'olel meyajnaj yéetel jch'ak ya'ob, síiji ti'*

jump'éeel kaaj yaan tu lak'inil ti' u lu'umil Yucatán. Le áanalte'a' utia'al k-
 k'a'ajsik leti' yéetel u yéet meyajnajo'ob: leti'ob tu bo'oto'ob yéetel u k'i'k'el u
 k'eexi u yiits le ya'e'. (13)

Con base en testimonios de familia, *Recuerdos del corazón de la montaña* es la historia de una mujer que fue cocinera en los llamados “tiempos de la chicletería”, nacida en un pueblo del cercano oriente del estado de Yucatán. El presente escrito está inspirado en su memoria y en el [sic] de todas las mujeres y hombres que pagaron con sangre propia el costo real de la codiciada resina del zapote. (57)

U k'a'ajsjil u ts'u' noj k'áax / *Recuerdos del corazón de la montaña* does not make any claims about an overarching cultural, ethnic, or linguistic group. *Maaya*-language nicknames and references to Maya cultural celebrations like *Janal Pixan*, the Yucatecan version of Day of the Dead, illustrate the characters' heritage. However, the priority in the work is not cultural continuity so much as remembering the stories of an aging generation. The primary portrayed identity, *jch'ak ya'o'ob* laborers and their cook, is not in vogue in popular storytelling in the region or in debates about what Maya identities have meant or mean. It is not sexy like the X'táabay seductress or prominent like Maya motifs such as the *ceiba* tree, *alux* guardian sprites, or *wáay* wizards who morph into animal forms. Additionally, most writers, historians, and anthropologists discuss henequen and tourism as the twentieth-century industries that have dramatically altered economic, social, and cultural structures on the Yucatan Peninsula.⁶¹ Instead of these identity markers, Martínez Huchim's textual world converts the resin industry into the backbone of identity. The image of lineage as a *chicozapote* tree in the work's songs also supplants the *ya'axche* or *ceiba* tree as the central tree motif in Maya cosmology. The *ceiba*,

⁶¹ For academic studies, see Armstrong-Fumero, Baklanoff, Castañeda, Loewe, and Re Cruz. For a literary representation, see Ismael May May “U ja'il Cháak”.

which Linda Schele and David Friedel discuss as “the most sacred tree of all” in Maya cosmology, often grows at the edge of natural *cenote* sinkholes and symbolizes the axis that connects the skies, the human plane, and the underworld represented by the *cenotes* (61, 72). Utilizing the *chicozapote* tree reorients this cosmology as the text shifts new ecological and economic icons into the center of the region’s historical identity.

The work presupposes familiarity with the resin industry, as the narration provides little background for readers. Some narrative anecdotes will not make sense without understanding how the resin was harvested, what the daily life of the *jch’ak ya’o’ob* was like, and the role that the resin industry played in transforming the forests of Yucatan and Quintana Roo. While resin harvesting peaked from the 1890s to the 1950s (Redclift 114), the events in Martínez Huchim’s work most likely represent the 1920s conditions and demographics, when the industry was booming with foreign demand for chewing gum, local *maaya* speakers as opposed to outsiders began to work as resin harvesters (68-69), and workers lived in forest camps facing dangerous conditions and privations as do Martínez Huchim’s characters (86-88).⁶² Michael Redclift explains that most of the resin for the gum industry came from the states of Yucatan and Quintana Roo (Redclift 75). However, while the text does not specify place names, the spatial aspect that Martínez Huchim emphasizes, and perhaps the most important indicator of identity, is apparent right from the title: the deep forest. The wilderness setting is the backdrop that marks every *k’aay* and *tsikbal*, and is the most prominent aspect of the three opening *k’aayo’ob* poems, two of which feature the anaphora of “Tu ts’u’ noj k’áaxile” / “En el corazón de la montaña”.

⁶² As *U k’a’ajsajil u ts’u’ noj k’áax* / *Recuerdos del corazón de la montaña* focuses more on the life experiences of the laborers than on political and economic factors driving the *chicle* industry, there is little information to pin down its exact timeframe, leaving open the possibility that the events could also extend into the 1930s, when the industry was still strong and Mexican President Lázaro Cárdenas began cooperatives to help improve the earnings of the *jch’ak ya’o’ob*, who could then cut out intermediaries and sell directly to foreign companies (Redclift 104-06), or the 1940s, when the wartime demand for chewing gum in the United States was “insatiable” (78).

This emphasis on the setting is notable, as Redclift describes: “The chicleros’ way of life was intimately connected with the forest” (83). Considering the dangerous and harsh nature of life in the resin harvesting camps, the characters’ identity name as *jch’ak ya’o’ob* portrays their tenacious, brave, hardworking, and resourceful natures.

A Lineage of jch’ak ya’o’ob Laborers

Jch’ak ya’o’ob lived in isolated regions far from their families and dominant social structures. Martínez Huchim’s work shows the difficulty resin harvesters had reintegrating into society in the *tsikbalo’ob* entitled “XTuux” / “La doña de los *tuuxes*” and “Óotsil *jMuuts*” / “El desventurado *Muuts*’.” Xtuux herself dies not in the arms of her family members but while she hugs a *chicozapote* tree (43-44/88-89). Martínez Huchim’s fiction, then, creates alternative ways of defining kinship beyond the *ch’i’ibal* blood lineage passed through the father’s name. Instead, her work forms a new *ch’i’ibal* through shared memories and socially negotiated identities. Her poem “U k’aayil junkúul ya’” (18) / “El canto del zapote” (62) describes this lineage in the likeness of a *chicozapote* tree:

U Yuumil u ts’u’ noj k’áax
 U chuun u ch’i’ibal noj Junkúul Ya’.
 Noj K’áax u k’aaba’.
 U chuun u ch’i’ibal jch’ak ya’ob.
 Junkúul ya’ u che’il.
 Chak kúul ya’ u topil.
 Sak kúul ya’ u ma’alobil.
 Éek’yube’en kúul ya’ u ayik’alil.
 U yiits ya’ u k’i’k’el.

El Señor del corazón de la montaña
 es el tronco del linaje de *Junkúul Ya’*.⁶³
Noj k’áax es su nombre.
 Y es el asiento de la cepa de “Los del chicle”.
 El árbol de zapote es su árbol.
 El zapote es su fruto.⁶⁴
 La resina del zapote rojo es su escasez.
 La resina del zapote blanco es su medida.
 La resina del zapote morado es su abundancia.
 La blanca resina es su sangre.

⁶³ Martínez Huchim’s glossary to the work defines “ya’” for readers: “Árbol y fruto del zapote” (99). *Junkúul* is the number one (*jun-*), along with a numerical classifier that classifies the counted object as a type of plant. I discuss these classifiers in detail in Chapter 4.

⁶⁴ This verse does not appear in the *maaya* version, which explains why the Spanish-language stanza is one verse longer. If this verse were removed in the Spanish stanza, the rest of the verses would correspond to the *maaya*.

Jats'uts che',
 u k'u' ma'ax:
 ya'ab a tamaxchi'
 ya'ab xan a ma'alobil.
 Joolch'ak bej,
 ts'aakil che',
 ts'ibóolbil ich,
 ts'ibóolbil iits:
 jump'éelele' k-k'aaylay,
 juntúulile' k-ch'i'ibal,
 polok k-chuun yéetel taamil k-moots.

Maam,
 na',
 kiik,
 íits'in,
 iich,
 láak'. (18)

Madera preciosa,
 nido de monas:
 muchos son tus presagios
 grandiosos tus prodigios.
 Camino de profusos senderos,
 benéfica asistencia,⁶⁵
 curativa pócima,
 apetecible fruto,
 ambicionada savia:
 única es nuestra memoria,
 nuestra estirpe una sola
 de grueso tronco y raíces profundas.

Abuela,
 madre,
 hermana mayor,
 hermana menor,
 gemela,
 amiga. (62)

Both the *maaya* and Spanish song titles offer readings as 'The *Chicozapote* Tree's Song' or 'Song about the *Chicozapote* Tree'. I read the song in the latter vein as a description, because the lyric voice at times addresses the tree. The poem transforms aspects of resin workers' lives into motifs that evoke their shared *ch'i'ibal*. The guardian of the forest, *Noj K'áax* [literally, 'Big Forest'], becomes the founder of the *ch'i'ibal* named *Junkíul Ya'* [*Chicozapote* Tree] (v. 1-3). The role of *Noj K'áax* reinforces the deep forest setting as a basis for the new lineage. The *chicozapote* represents the family tree, and its resin is life-giving blood (v. 9/10). Illustrating the *ch'i'ibal* name, even the shape of the poem simulates a tree, with longer verses as foliage in the first stanza, a more slender trunk as the second stanza, and brief one- or two-word verses that evoke roots in the third stanza. The lyric voice is unnamed, but the speaker's identification with this lineage, juxtaposed with the feminine relationships in the Spanish-language third stanza, suggest the voice is feminine: Xtuux. The woman inserts herself into the *Junkíul Ya'* lineage by

⁶⁵ This verse does not appear in the *maaya* version, which explains why the Spanish-language stanza is one verse longer. If this verse were removed in the Spanish stanza, the rest of the verses would correspond to the *maaya*.

adopting a third-person plural voice to express collective identity (v. 18-20/20-22). In the context of Martínez Huchim's larger collection, Xtuux's collective mode of speaking involves her speaking to the *chicozapote* tree, rendering apparent the close connection she has to her experiences in the deep forest, which is apparent throughout the work and especially in her death. However, in another reading, Xtuux's collective declarations encompass all *jch'ak ya'o'ob* workers, whose lives were also changed in the forest and who likewise descend from *Noj K'áax* in this new *ch'i'ibal* configuration (v. 4). The metaphor evoking the thick trunk and deep roots of this lineage and its collective memory emphasizes its strong, lasting nature (v. 19-20/21-22).

Martínez Huchim's creation of a new *ch'i'ibal* lineage is completed in the third and final stanza, when the poetic voice defines family relationships in ways that continue to alter expectations surrounding lineages. The string of relationships has a semblance of generational order from oldest to youngest as the stanza's tall, thin root shape stretches deeper into the 'soil' with each new generation. However, upon arriving to the last two relationships, the generational sequence ruptures as 'twins' and 'friends' are included in the lineage (v. 25-26/27-28). These interruptions to sequence reinforce that in Martínez Huchim's portrayal, the new lineage and the deep-forest social ties it describes go beyond blood kinship. While some of the *maaya* relationship terms are gender neutral,⁶⁶ the Spanish-language lineage specifies feminine relationships. This prioritizes matrilineal lineage as an organizing factor of identity, which is in keeping with the work's focus on a female protagonist among the mostly male workers. Besides

⁶⁶ Bricker et. al. defines *màam* as "mother, Mrs." (179), and the *Diccionario Cordemex* defines *mam* as "abuelo de parte de madre" (491); neither definition corresponds to Martínez Huchim's use of the word. The more typical terms for grandmother would be *chiich*, while grandfather would be *taat*, so the poem uses an alternative with more complex interpretive options. *Ítsin* does not denote gender but age, as it describes a sibling of either gender who is younger than the speaker (Bricker et. al. 10). *Íich* is gender neutral (11), as is *láak'* (*Diccionario Maya Popular* 126).

placing a marginal industry at the center of her text, Martínez Huchim also recenters the *jch'akya'o'ob* story on feminine experience.⁶⁷

The *tsikbal* “XTuux” / “La doña de los *tuuxes*” suggests that imagined deep-forest kinship ties are stronger than blood kinship ties through Xtuux’s mixed reception among her family and granddaughters (25/69). Xtuux has long left behind the forest camps at the time of this *tsikbal*. As some of work’s few unnamed characters with dialogue, the granddaughters have a symbolic, rather than specific, role in representing intergenerational relations. One granddaughter’s negative perception of Xtuux leads her to call her grandmother “*xkaxan ba'ate'el*” (25) / “*pleitista*” (69). Meanwhile, Xtuux curses at her granddaughters, much as the *tsikbalo'ob* illustrate she was accustomed among male coworkers. Another granddaughter defends Xtuux, asserting that the woman is unaware of what she says. Later, Xtuux’s nieces and nephews tell the granddaughters, “*A chiiche'exe' tu p'uchubaj meyaj utia'al u ch'ijsko'on*” (26) / “*Su chichí* [*“abuela”* in Yucatecan Spanish] *se rajó el cuero en la montaña para levantarnos*” (72, gloss mine). Whereas the younger granddaughters show lack of appreciation for Xtuux’s different life, the nieces and nephews’ statement espouses the text’s portrayal of the *Junkiul Ya'* lineage: the hardworking, resilient, and brave men and women who labored to improve their families’ lot in harsh conditions. Such generational disconnect is palpable in Yucatan in perceptions on adherence to or distance from Maya identity, as I discuss in Chapter 3.

⁶⁷ The following poem, “*U k'aayil jch'ak ya'*” (19) / “*El canto del chiclero*” (63) describes the life of a *jch'ak ya'* laborer, member of the *ch'i'ibal* founded in the previous poem. This poem focuses on the male experience, highlighted by the *j-* masculine prefix. Readers learn of the sounds or ‘music’ he commonly hears, in addition to his food, his dwelling, and his fears. Each stanza illustrates specific manifestations in each of those categories. Verses use two clauses—the mention of something in the forest, followed by a description of its function in the *jch'ak ya'* worker’s life. For example: “*U k'aay much ti' jaltun, u jats'utuil ya'abkach k'aay*” / “*el croar de ranas, su orquesta sinfónica*” (v.3). These forest descriptions become more ominous by the poem’s end, with hints at the danger inherent in the occupation. The final stanza suggests feelings of both caution and hope: the machete is the right and left hand of the *jch'ak ya'*. This person, surviving difficult conditions with a fighting spirit, is the image of the *maaya*-speaking *ch'i'ibal* that Martínez Huchim describes. While this poem does not specify feminine pronouns, later *tsikbalo'ob* demonstrate that the female protagonist experiences many of the same sounds and fears.

Much as the work's title evokes memory, the concluding sections describe this *ch'i'ibal* as ended. In a conclusion to the metaphor of *chicozapote* sap as blood of lineage, the final *tsikbal* relates Xtuux's death through the character's fusion with the *chicozapote* tree, which she hugs. The final line of the *tsikbal* suggests that the *jch'ak ya'* lineage ends with the protagonist's death: "*Ch'aaj, ka lúub u yaalab yiits le ya'e*" (44) / "*Ch'aaj, cayó la última gota de resina*" (89). The penultimate section, the final prose section, evokes the closing formula in *maaya* oral storytelling through its title "*Ka'aj máanen*" / "*Cuando pasé*". In oral storytelling, this phrase introduces the storyteller's first-hand experience with narrated events. Likewise, Martínez Huchim's narrator observes the site where Xtuux once lived in the heart of the forest, which now features a closed well, an empty yard, a felled *chicozapote* tree, and a new paved road on which "*túumben ba'alo'ob*" / "*cosas nuevas*" that pass by (45, 91). The paragraph is a written still-life that evokes nostalgia as evidence of Xtuux's life dwindles among new changes. Martínez Huchim here shows the death of an old identity and alludes to the birth of a new one in the same area. Pointing to the ephemeral nature of memory, the juxtaposition of new and abandoned constructions leaves readers to infer how past identities will configure in the new present. The final *k'aay*, "*U xuulil k'aay*" (47) / "*Canto último*" (93), insists that the *jch'ak ya'o'ob* lifestyle and livelihood has ended. The second stanza's anaphora of "*Xuul ti' + (deep forest motif)*" / "*Se acabó el tiempo de + (deep forest motif)*" lists what is now extinct: the jungle, the *jch'ak ya'o'ob*, the *chicozapote* trees, the resin, and the white blood. The metaphor of white resin as blood reinforces that the deep-forest social bond of the *Junkiul Ya'* lineage.

Family Names and Nicknames: The case of Xtuux

Like the work's evocation of an identity based on deep-forest social ties, Martínez Huchim's text suggests that nicknames, which are socially negotiated through shared life experiences, can be stronger markers of identity than a given family name. Xtuux is known only by her nickname, as the character herself has even forgotten the birth name that her father gave her in honor of his mother (25/69). Her nickname Xtuux [dimples] refers to the dimples that appear when she laughs: "U paatk'aaba' 'xTuux' tumen ken che'ejnajke' ku k'omta'amtal tu ka'atséel u p'u'uk" (21) / "Popularmente la llamaron *xTuux*, por un par de hoyuelos que sonreían en su rostro" (65). This nickname contrasts with her tough-as-nails, crass persona, producing a comic effect as do many of the nicknames in Martínez Huchim's *tsikbalo'ob*. For example, the only other woman in the camp is nicknamed *Xpoot* [crest] because even in the wilderness she wears a fancy updo; a man who thinks Xtuux flirts with him by garnishing his beans with a rare portion of meat is nicknamed *Janamás* or *Comegrillos* when all discover a cricket got into his food; *Jmuuts* [eye closer] describes Xtuux's adopted son after an accident leaves his eyes always semi-closed; *Jts'o'oyla'* or "flaquísimo"⁶⁸ is skinny; and *Jkitam* [peccary] smells like a wild boar. Even the prostitute the resin harvesters fight over upon returning to town has a nickname, *Xcho'om* [pubic hair]. This emphasis illustrates Jesús Amaro Gamboa's affirmation of the vitality of nicknaming in Yucatan: "El apodo en Yucatán es consustancial con la existencia misma" (64).

While different from birth names, practices of assigning nicknames and birth names have certain similarities. Just as with Xtuux's forgotten family name, individual volition has no role, as characters are given nicknames. Although readers can assume *Janalmás* would prefer a

⁶⁸ This definition comes from Martínez Huchim's own glossary at the end of the work (99).

nickname that is not a constant reminder of his embarrassing miscalculation, the nickname stands as a name negotiated and applied by other members of his class of resin harvesters. Similarly, the nickname Xtuux becomes so synonymous with the protagonist's identity that she cannot recall her given eponym. In each case, the nickname superimposes over the given name to become the identity of social significance in the isolated forest. It is unsurprising then, that the text introduces characters by their nicknames instead of their full given names.⁶⁹

The work's prioritization of nickname-based identity disassociates characters from normative society and solidifies their *ch'i'ibal* lineage based on shared experience and shared humor rather than blood kinship. As the characters occupy a unique social and geographic context separated from typical life in the towns (*kaajo'ob*), they recreate social structures based on new premises. Unlike in Castillo Tzec's novella, in Martínez Huchim's collection, birth names do not determine an individual's position in a cultural or social system. Instead, names change depending on context and memory. The nickname 'Xtuux' interpellates the protagonist into a socially negotiated family, while her given name would have hailed her into town life as the granddaughter of so-and-so. The text makes clear that Xtuux's experiences in the forest are her defining moments in how she and others view her identity. The experiences gave her memories, shaped her life, and helped her achieve economic autonomy, independence, and the means to support her family. The *tsikbalob* portray various moments that demonstrate the stronger social bonds Xtuux shares with her *jch'ak ya'o'ob* campmates than with her blood relation. In fact, episodes with her campmates dominate the work, while her family appears in just one *tsikbal*. In turn, her granddaughters are estranged from an aging, senile woman whose background is so different from their own.

⁶⁹ The text only provides the full given name for a deceased character in the short story "U tamaxchi'kubaj *jMaako*" / "'Se presagió' Maco".

The final song “U xuulil k’aay” (47) / “Canto último” (93) pays homage to characters’ memories in the first stanza, which precedes the second stanza’s emphasis on the end of the *Junkúul Ya’* lineage. The first stanza remembers characters through their nicknames and nickname origins, suggesting that while other aspects of the experience are gone, collective memory remains as the characters survive in the pages of the book and in memory.

Remembering nickname identities is reminiscent of Castillo Cocom’s “Maya Scenarios”, in which he reflects on Yucatec Maya identity and suggests that death does not interrupt the vital presence that town members continue to have in collective memory: “Although they have left us, paradoxically, they departed only to remain with us” (21). Similar to how Martínez Huchim’s work focuses on nickname origins instead of other aspects of character development, more than once, Castillo Cocom lists names in his discussion of Yucatec Maya identity. He includes full names of deceased townspeople from Xocempich, where he grew up, because they still configure in the community’s imaginary (“Maya Scenarios” 21). When discussing his friend Francisco, Castillo Cocom shares the names of Francisco’s parents, six children, and wife (24), and Francisco goes on to recite the full names of his five grandchildren, even though he repeats the same last name five times (25). In a similar way, Martínez Huchim’s record of nicknames articulates the continuance of their memory. Her depiction of Xtuux’s renewed life after death in the *tsikbal* “U xuulil kuxtal” (47) / “El final de la vida” (88), in which Xtuux reunites with other deep-forest characters, emphasizes that death is only a new form of life.

Cuevas Cob and the Unnamed

Cuevas Cob’s poem “In k’aaba” / “Mi nombre” (*Kuxa’an* 44) features what Althusser would label a “bad subject”, as the lyric voice rejects responding to her name, instead showing a

vision of naming and identity that individuals can discard and change at their discretion. The poem's first-person speaker does not name her society or culture, and actively resists revealing her given name, birth or nickname, in a sign of its rejection. While the title creates an expectation that readers will learn the lyric voice's name, the poem does not satisfy such curiosity. From the lyric voice's musings, readers infer that the speaker has fallen into disrepute in her society. The poem, open for multiple interpretations, leaves the reader to intuit this and many other aspects of the poetic situation presented. What is certain is that, unlike Castillo Tzec's and Martínez Huchim's characters who embrace their identities and communities, Cuevas Cob's protagonist rejects the ideologies of a society that shuns her and taints her name:

In k'aaba'e',
 tikin oot'el
 chi'il chi' u chi'ichi'al,
 u cha'acha'al tumen u ts'a'ay máako'ob.
 Ts'o'ok in pitik u nook'il in k'aaba'
 je' bix u pots'ikubal kaan tu xla' sóol.
 ¿Báanten ma' táan u ya'ala'al xkáakbach ti' uj?
 Leti'e' suuk u xíinbal bul áak'ab,
 suuk u bulik u wíinklil,
 suuk u balik u su'utal,
 suk u t'ubkubaj ich eek'joche'enil tumen ts'o'ok
 u p'ektik u sáasil.
 Tumen leti'e' sak ki'ichpan xba'aba'al.
 In k'aba'e'
 cha' ta'aka'an ti' paalal.
 Bejla'e' mina'an in k'aaba'.
 Tene' aluxen táan in so'oso'ok't'ik u tso'otsel u
 pool yaamaj.

Mi nombre,
 pellejo disecado,
 de boca en boca es mordido,
 es masticado por los colmillos de la gente.
 Me he despojado del ropaje de mi nombre
 así como la serpiente de su piel.
 ¿Por qué no llaman prostituta a la luna?
 Ella acostumbra caminar por las noches,
 acostumbra apostar su cuerpo,
 acostumbra ocultar su vergüenza,
 acostumbra sumergirse en la oscuridad
 porque ya detesta su claridad.
 Porque ella es una hermosa alimaña blanca.
 Mi nombre
 es chicle prohibido para los niños.
 Ahora ya no tengo nombre.
 Soy un duende que le revuelve la cabellera al
 amor.

This poem portrays a subject discredited by her society, as her name is chewed by human fangs and shed like a snake's skin until she maintains no name whatsoever (v. 1-4, 14-16). The speaker shares the social censure incited by her behavior, but leaves readers to infer what her supposed transgression is. While the poem does not identify the lyric voice, the preoccupation with feminine personages that do not follow social norms suggests the subject is female.

Depending on interpretation, this protagonist could symbolize women in general, or women who push the bounds of what their societies consider acceptable feminine behavior. I even enjoy imagining the poem's subject as the mythical Xtáabay seductress from *maaya* oral tradition, who I discuss in Chapter 3. Cuevas Cob's protagonist compares herself to another prominent female in Maya cosmology: the moon, an evocation of the Maya goddess Ixcheel, although this reference remains unnamed, much like the speaker's identity (v. 7). The lyric voice perceives her behavior as similar to the moon's. However, the speaker's interrogative suggests that society considers her to be a prostitute even as it reveres the Ixcheel moon for her nocturnal presence. Despite their similarities, the speaker must defend herself whereas the feminine moon enjoys more social freedoms. Cuevas Cob's parallel verse structure of [habitual aspect *suuk*] + [transitive verb] + [possessed noun] emphasizes the multiple faces of these similar 'transgressions' of the flesh (v. 8-11). Readers can assume society reveres Ixcheel as much as it censures the speaker.

Whereas the speaker and the moon are the agents as subjects of transitive verbs, the outside society that discredits the speaker's name, and by extension, her personhood, is only indirectly referenced in passive verbs. For instance, her name "u cha'acha'al" / "es masticado" (v. 4). The lyric voice also asks, "¿Báanten ma' táan u ya'ala'al xkáakbach ti' uj?" / [Why isn't the moon called a prostitute?] (v. 7). Passive voice suggests the unidentifiable source of disregard for the protagonist that originates in social ideologies and norms. This non-specificity provides the poem a universal sense and addresses marginalization of women in many societies.

As the lyric voice's name harms her reputation and identity, she uses her own means to cast it aside. As such, Cuevas Cob's protagonist has the most control over her own name and identity among characters in the three works analyzed, at least on the level of her individual

subjectivity. In fact, the poem declares the protagonist has taken off her own name even before providing context to explain why she would do so. Active voice and the transitive verb *pitik* [undress] show the lyric voice's agency in her own 'undressing': "Ts'o'ok in pitik u nook'il in k'aaba'" / "Me he despojado del ropaje de mi nombre" (v. 5). The aspect marker *ts'o'ok*⁷⁰ reinforces that this undressing was recently completed. In other metaphors, the speaker likens her name to items that either she or others can discard: her name is chewed dry skin (v. 2-4), molted snake skin (v. 6), and chewing gum (v. 15). The first two metaphors define names as appearance and costume, which can be shed or changed. The other depicts the chewing gum reminiscent of the resin industry in Martínez Huchim's text. In the poem, this name-gum is a delight children are not permitted. The speaker's metaphors are ambivalent, as society and she can both discard her name. However, whereas discarding of her name by society enacts her social censure, her own discarding of her name resists this censure. By rejecting her name, Cuevas Cob's speaker does not share Castillo Tzec's preoccupation with cultural continuity and identities assigned from birth or Martínez Huchim's concern for remembering. Rather, Cuevas Cob's lyric voice refuses to occupy the position in society as indicated by her name. In this way, the poem suggests that assigned names, whether birth or nicknames, are not determinative of identity.

Besides discarding her own name, the speaker also exercises an act of naming as she attributes a new identity to Ixcheel in an abrupt statement that stands out as the poem's only fragment: "Tumen leti'e' sak ki'ichpan xba'aba'al"⁷¹ / "Porque ella es una hermosa alimaña blanca" (v. 13). This oxymoron proposes an identity that is half pure and half evil. The speaker

⁷⁰ Instead of tenses, *maaya* grammar is based on aspects. Briceño Chel calls *ts'o'ok* the terminative aspect and compares it to the completive aspect that marks actions completed before the moment of speech: "Marca acciones terminadas pero no completadas, por lo que, semánticamente, no son formas tan pasadas como las del completivo" (*Los verbos* 23). The actions it introduces have just ended; Briceño Chel translates the concept using the Spanish "ya" (24).

⁷¹ *Diccionario Maya Cordemex* defines "ba'aba'al" as "el maligno o el diablo; demonio" (23).

empathizes with the moon as she interprets her through the lens of social norms that teach feminine modesty and discourage women from drawing attention to themselves; according to such norms, the moon shamelessly exposes herself at night. As the lyric voice observes that the moon has characteristics often attributed to prostitutes in her nighttime visibility (v. 8-11), she imagines herself and the moon as sufferers of ongoing social censure. Through this configuration, the lyric voice inverts typical conceptions of purity and impurity and Ixcheel's role in Maya cosmology. Whereas many contemporary literary works, including Castillo Tzec's novella, uphold Ixcheel as feminine protectress, Cuevas Cob's speaker imagines a moon subject to human social norms by which she would be considered socially deviant. In her interpretation, the moon dislikes her light and seeks out darkness to hide her constant exposure (v. 12). Her interpretation of the moon in this manner suggests this vision reflects her own experience. In this way, she disassociates light from its common connotations of purity and goodness. Still, her oxymoronic name for the moon demonstrates that the speaker does not censure the moon because of these social norms. Two positive adjectives outweigh the one negative noun and convert the risk-taking moon into a positive motif of uncontained passion. The logic of the oxymoron evens the moon's and lyric voice's reputations into a simultaneous good-bad. According to the speaker, the moon is white and beautiful, but also risqué and non-conforming. She is therefore only able to show herself at night, in the refuge of darkness. While the speaker discards her own name, she provides the moon with a new name to represent the heavenly body as she views her: in solidarity with her own situation. This depiction offers a stark contrast with Ixcheel's portrayal in Castillo Tzec as feminine protector and moral model of the Maya. The protagonist's musings on the moon allow her to vindicate herself before society by transforming the symbolic value of a revered Maya goddess who she views as similar to herself.

While Castillo Tzec provides his protagonist with the means to maintain her original name, Cuevas Cob's lyric voice changes her name to affirm her identity. The final verses feature only the first-person voice, without the passive-voice references to her name's reception in society (v. 14-17). It is as if the speaker has forgotten the social censor she faces. In this way, the poem ends on the speaker's own terms. Instead of identifying herself by an assigned name, the lyric voice describes herself as an *alux* ("duende") (v. 17), grouping herself into a class of mischievous sprites who guard land in exchange for ritual offerings. The *maaya* poem is more emphatic, emphasizing the speaker as the subject who assumes her new identity through the first-person "Tene'" topicalizer. As the *aluxo'ob* are known for their mischief, the poetic voice seems to have no plans to alter her behavior. Rather, her practices of naming alter both her and Ixcheel's identities to her own norms, altering a Maya moral and religious compass. The final verse suggests the freed and mischievous speaker will enjoy continuing passion as she describes herself ruffling love's tresses into a tangle. In the context of Yucatan, hair images immediately evoke intertextuality with the Xtáabay seductress, who is said to comb her luscious tresses beneath the *ceiba* tree as she awaits masculine prey. In this way, Cuevas Cob's lyric voice overlays three prominent figures in Yucatecan narrative, Ixcheel, the *alux*, and Xtáabay, as she reconfigures her own identity, rejecting the reputation her given name has, to celebrate her own mischievousness, seductiveness, and blamelessness.

Conclusion: Names as Transformation

The works I examine present three heterogeneous configurations of Maya identities, as names and practices of naming signify identity within their communities and transform dominant perceptions surrounding the Maya. In Castillo Tzec's work, Xsaklool demonstrates the vitality

and utility of Maya ways of knowing to invert social hierarchies and provide Maya culture with the space and power to engage in cultural self-determination. Martínez Huchim remembers a Maya identity from the twentieth-century resin industry that offers a different picture of Maya social bonds as she invents a lineage to demonstrate the intimacy shared by characters who live and work in the deep forest. Finally, while the previous works feature characters that are concerned with their larger communities, Cuevas Cob's poetic voice disregards social censure to triumphantly use naming to refashion her and Ixcheel's identities according to her lifestyle instead of society's wishes. These authors all create aesthetic worlds in their works that allow the female protagonists to remake their societies. In the next chapter, I examine the role of gender and sexuality in this remaking of Maya identities.

Chapter 3. Continuity and Rupture: Representations of Women Imagined by Male and Female Writers

Maya and non-Maya anthropologists often characterize Maya views on gender relations as different but complementary. Maya scholar Briceño Chel teaches of duality and complementarity in the Maya world, including in the realm of gender, through the concept of *nuup*. Bricker et. al. define “nùup” as “the other [of a pair]; spouse”, with examples in which the word describes a shoe, a wife, and an earring (202). In Briceño Chel’s description, the Maya often conceive of a whole as composed of two parts, with “nuup” as a descriptor of this complementarity. For Briceño Chel, from a Maya perspective, a person is not considered complete without his or her “nuup” (“Cosmovisión”). Mary H. Preuss similarly asserts, “In the Maya world the presence of dualities denotes order that results from maintaining an equilibrium, while imbalance brings chaos and disorder” (458). Noting how this configuration affects Maya understandings of gender, anthropologist Landy Santana Rivas writes, “En la cosmología maya se ha podido observar un concepto dualista donde lo masculino y lo femenino no se oponen sino, más bien, se complementan” (“La mujer” 43).

In the Yucatecan imaginary, the *mestiza* and *mestizo* are the respective Maya woman and Maya man par excellence. The two terms describe the most “traditional” modalities of Maya identity. They follow current on-the-ground usage of the term ‘Maya’ to evoke notions of an “authentic” Maya culture linked to an inherited past.⁷² Castañeda’s explanation of the *mestiza* identity in Yucatan (state) describes her role as symbol of such visions of Maya culture: “a female ‘Maya’ is a *mestiza* because she dresses like a Maya, speaks Maya, and lives ‘Maya

⁷² Accordingly, “Maya” and “mestiza/o” do not describe Maya cultural inheritors who do not follow these customs associated with this past, or often, who do not speak *maaya*, even if an individual descends from Maya bloodlines.

culture” (“We Are *Not*” 53).⁷³ Castañeda’s use of ‘Maya’ in quotation marks makes explicit that definitions of ‘Maya’ (including what is ‘not Maya’) should be recognized as constructed rather than inherent. As such, the visual marker of the white huipil, feminine regional dress, identifies the *mestiza*. Describing the particulars of *mestiza* dress, Hervik specifies daily use of the Yucatecan huipil with an underskirt, shawl, gold jewelry, and the *t’uuch* hairstyle, in which hair forms a knot at the nape of the neck (35). In Martínez Huchim’s glossary in *U k’a’ajsajil u ts’u’noj k’áax / Recuerdos del corazón de la montaña*, dress defines a *mestiza*: “Mujer que porta el traje regional yucateco” (97), but her glossary in *U yóol xkaambal jaw xíiw / Contrayerba* further clarifies that the dress is “de uso cotidiano” (122). Hervik adds additional aspects to the identity, stating that *mestizos* of all genders “express their ethnic identity by having a common language, Maya, as their mother tongue, by having a common dress pattern, occupation (agriculture), past-oriented identity, and ritual practices” (52).

Notions of traditional Maya culture also involve gendered roles and spaces. Hanks describes “a strict division between male and female activities” (*Referential* 111). Women’s space is the *solar*, or the house and patio, where they prepare food, wash clothing, raise chickens, turkeys, and pigs, and tend to fruit trees and other plants grown around the home (111). Women also occupy public spaces as buyers and sellers in the market (113). The hearth cooking fire (*k’ooben / fogón*), situated between three stones, often symbolizes the *mestiza*’s space. Hanks shows that in contrast, the Maya man is most strongly associated with work in the *kool*, or *milpa* fields. There, men grow corn, beans, squash, and other subsistence crops (111).

⁷³ Castañeda uses “Maya” in quotation marks in this passage because *maaya* speakers in Yucatan usually do not self-identify as Maya. Rather the term has been externally applied. The term ‘maya’ is more often used as an adjective to describe language and culture, although contemporary Maya cultural promoters and intellectuals are reclaiming the term as an ethnic identity. See Chapter 2 for a discussion and bibliography of work on Maya terms of self-identity.

Young children are introduced to the *mestiza-mestizo* gender model ceremoniously through the *jéets méek'*, a ritual for newborns that provides babies with gendered tools specific for their future vocations as either Maya men or Maya women. In all *jéets méek'* rituals, a godparent who shares the baby's biological sex carries the baby straddling their hip, walking in nine circles around an altar first to the right, then to the left (Rosales Mendoza 55, Loewe 71). Gender organizes this ritual in multiple ways. Baby boys have *jéets méek'* ceremonies at four months old, symbolizing that their future *kool* [field] will have four corners. On the altar for a boy's *jéets méek'* are items that prepare him for a masculine Maya world, including a machete, rifle, *mecapal* carrying strap, and bag for agricultural work. For baby girls, the ritual occurs when they are three months old, as their future *k'óoben* [hearth] will have three stones. Items on the girl's altar to prepare her for a feminine Maya world include sewing needles, a grinding stone, a *xamach* / *comal* tortilla griddle, scissors, and thread. According to Rosales Mendoza, altars for more recent ceremonies in eastern Yucatan around Valladolid include a notebook or pencils to encourage schooling for both genders. Similarly, in the state of Quintana Roo, the location of the Riviera Maya and Cancun, an English dictionary prepares children for work in the tourism industry (56).

Just as outward feminine dress signifies *mestizas'* proximity to "traditional" culture, female Maya cultural inheritors who choose not to wear the huipil also have an identity label: *catrina*. Martínez Huchim defines "catrina" as "[p]ersona que porta ropa occidental" (*U k'a'asajil u ts'u' noj k'áax* 97). Hervik specifies that *catrinas* have Maya heritage but do not wear the huipil; therefore, he views *catrines* of all genders as a sub-category of a wider *mestizo* category (30, 34). He explains attitudes surrounding the *catrín* identity in his town of study: "In Oxxutzcab today *catrines* are 'mestizos' who dress differently, and 'mestizos' see them as

individuals who have taken an unfortunate step away from the Maya culture, but who nevertheless share the same cultural knowledge. More precisely, *catrinas* are women who dress differently” (51-52). His remarks demonstrate that communities consider there to be a ‘right’ way to be Maya and live Maya culture. Hervik affirms that individuals do not self-identify as *catrines*, and that speakers apply the term to individuals to suggest their aspirations of social climbing (30). While a man’s decision to adopt non-Maya style clothing involves a subtle change, Hervik notes that a woman’s decision to forgo traditional Maya dress is obvious and irreversible (31). In addition to dominant-culture fashion, *catrinas* may also wear the *catrina* huipil, which is narrower and characterized by different styles of flower embroidery than appears on the *mestiza*’s huipil. *Catrinas* do not use the shawl and often do not use the underskirt (35).

Attitudes surrounding these two feminine identities reveal conflicting reactions, drawn along generational lines, to notions of “authentic” Maya culture. According to Hervik, age and generation are often determining factors in identification as *mestizas* or *catrinas*. Older generations wear the huipil daily as *mestizas* whereas younger generations dress in dominant culture fashions and infrequently wear *catrina* huipiles (28-31). Hervik’s account demonstrates a generational rift in perceptions surrounding these two identities:

Conservative older ‘mestizos’ employ the word *catrín* to express their disapproval, and scold the *catrínes* for disavowing their Maya cultural and social roots. Most *catrínes* in turn use the ‘mestizos’ to refer to their own parents who they consider old fashioned. They regard the non-‘mestizo’ style of dress as forming part of a process of ‘cultural modernization’ in which they themselves are participating. (31)

Interpreting visual signs of Maya identity depends on the viewer's assumptions and identity in addition to the visual markers themselves. Whether communities will integrate trends of "cultural modernization" into conceptions of Maya identity remains to be seen. In Martínez Huchim's view, 'mestiza' is a negative term. To her definition of "mestiza" in the *U k'a'ajajil u ts'u'noj k'áax / Recuerdos del corazón de la montaña* glossary, she adds: "Es un despectivo para nombrar a la mujer maya" (97). Hervik's comments suggest that so-called modernizing trends contribute to such negative connotations by conceiving of *mestizas* as old-fashioned.

Despite these connotations, Hervik and Loewe both find that a second, positive use of 'mestizo' describes all Yucatecans, not just those of Maya heritage, who participate in Yucatecan regional culture, such as the *jarana* dance (Hervik 52, Loewe 70-71). Loewe calls this version of the term "the legitimate mestizo" and asserts that it refers to a person engaged in an expression of regional culture that "not only unifies the peninsula but sets Yucatecans apart from residents of central Mexico" (70). In terms of my discussion of Maya womanhood, one version of *mestiza* is a source of regional pride, honored for maintaining a celebrated cultural legacy. However, at the same time, the rural *mestiza* of Maya heritage is spurned for her traditional way of life, which Castañeda notes is often perceived as "non-Modern" ("We Are *Not*" 54-55).

Beyond the signposts of the *mestiza* and *catrina* feminine identities in Maya communities, Maya women form part of wider imaginaries as well. Worley signals "the simplistic representations of Yucatec Maya women that litter popular culture and thus normalize a singular vision of Yucatec Maya womanhood based on a romanticized, mute passivity" ("U páajtalil" 155-56). The dominance of such images of Maya women suggests the success of what critics have named the concept of the *indio permitido*, in which the State encourages indigenous cultures to flourish but only so long as they do not place demands on the State (Worley

“Máseual” 9). Similarly, Loewe asserts that legitimate mestizos participate in what have become folklorized practices of regional culture (70-71). In terms Castañeda has used,⁷⁴ these discourses result in the dominance of a “museum” Maya culture that does not threaten social or political status quo. Gender-specific concerns suggest the utility of discussing an *india permitida* to recognize the different set of criteria placed specifically on indigenous women for compliance with modalities of politically and socially accepted indigenous femininity.

Similar to the imaginary surrounding the *mestiza* as the representation of Maya tradition par excellence, Gloria Chacón points out that the Maya woman, moreso than the Maya man, is imagined as a cultural repository in which Maya customs, dress, and language maintain continuity over time:

Las mujeres son responsables de la reproducción biológica, del mantenimiento del idioma y de portar el traje típico (asociado con el oficio cultural de tejer), así como de la continuación de la cultura. Identificadas como las preservadoras de los idiomas —a diferencia de sus compañeros, que salen en busca de trabajo a las ciudades y forzosamente tienen que aprender el español—, ellas se quedan en casa en un ambiente predominantemente monolingüe. De esta manera, en la cultura dominante la vinculación de la mujer maya con el idioma adquiere un aura de atraso. (98)

In this view, women—*mestizas*, to be precise—enact cultural continuity as the keepers of tradition even as youth and males are more exposed to influences external to Maya culture. Chacón stresses that the conception of the strong link between Maya women and tradition originates from both outside and within Maya culture (98).

⁷⁴ See *In the Museum*.

Representations of Maya Women in *maaya*-Language Literature

In the texts I study,⁷⁵ male authors primarily bridge contemporary times and notions of a celebrated past authentic Maya culture in the context of contemporary *maaya* speakers' marginalization. In doing so, they primarily respond to discourses that obscure the contemporary Maya against a backdrop of pre-Hispanic Maya impressiveness that has been fetishized by the lucrative tourist industry, the State, and even humanist scholars, or to discourses that perceive contemporary Maya culture as inferior or impure when measured against this "authentic" past. As male writers create continuity and celebrate Maya difference, they also tend to construct the Maya woman as a *mestiza* as opposed to a *catrina* or other feminine identities. These representations correspond with the popularized images of Maya womanhood discussed by Worley and Chacón. Their traditional feminine portrayals are one aspect of their work that demonstrates a commitment to emphasizing and revindicating visions of Maya cultural continuity with a pure past as a strategy for preventing or recouping cultural loss. However, their adherence to variations on a *mestiza* feminine identity simultaneously reinforces notions of an authentic, essentialist, or "correct" Maya culture that consider mixed, "impure" contemporary Maya culture to be inferior to both global dominant cultures and an imagined pure Maya past.

⁷⁵ I base my conclusions on the following sample of original literary texts published in 2013 or before. The corpus I study does not always encompass all of an author's body of work in this time frame. My sample of male-authored texts includes: Carrillo Can, *U yóok'otilo'ob áak'ab / Danzas de la noche* (2011) and selections from *Kuxa'an t'aan* (2012); Villegas Carrillo's poetry collections, *U k'aay ch'i'ibal / El canto de la estirpe* (2009), *Girándula / Súusut sáasil: Poesía maya* (2012) and *Áak'abe' ku ya'alik táan u k'áaxal ja' / Lluvia que la noche dicta* (2012), and selections from *Kuxa'an t'aan*; and Sánchez Chan, selections from *Kuxa'an t'aan* and "Tomoxchi" (2004). My sample of women-authored texts focuses on their *tsikbalob*. By Ceh Moo, I examine *Tabita y otros cuentos mayas* (2013) and *Kaaltale', ku xijkunsik u jel puksi'ik'alo'ob / El alcohol también rompe otros corazones* (2013). I do not address her published novels. By Martínez Huchim, I examine "Chen konel" / "Es por demás" (2006), *U k'a'ajsajil u ts'u'noj k'áax / Recuerdos del corazón de la montaña* (2013) and *U yóol xkaambal jaw xíiw / Contrayerba* (2013).

On the other hand, I observe that women authors are more critical of Maya tradition, as they show community norms that harm or unfairly restrict women.⁷⁶ By portraying cracks in tradition that permit abuse of women and girls, they expose gender complementarity to be an imagined value that does not consistently transfer into social practice. Through both realist and non-realist aesthetics, their works demonstrate areas in which tradition should not be glorified but changed. Women authors create women characters who occupy nuanced subject positions and expand the identities and social spaces available to Maya women. Intertextualities with a mythical Maya feminine figure, the deadly Xtáabay seductress, provide an avenue for proposing and affirming new models of Maya womanhood.

In the remainder of this chapter, I analyze representations of Maya women by both men and women authors. I use the singular terms “*mestiza*” and “the Maya woman” to refer to a conception of Maya womanhood as conceived through “traditional” imaginaries. The terms “*mestizo*” and “the Maya man” are the corresponding terms I use to evoke the imaginary of Maya manhood. When discussing how writers construct alternative visions of men and women in Maya culture, I use plural terms such as “Maya women” or “feminine identities”. I also identify a young girl character that recurs in both male- and female-authored texts. This motif foreshadows Maya women’s possible future identities.

⁷⁶ In fact, both Ceh Moo’s *tsikbal* “X Ma Cleofas” / “Cleofas. La anciana” (*Tabita*, 2013) and Martínez Huchim’s *tsikbal* “Xchokojo’ob” / “Calenturientas” (*U yóol*, 2013) recount the stories of young girls who are incestually abused by older male relatives. Ceh Moo’s *tsikbal* goes so far as to relate two generations of incest, as the protagonist’s father is simultaneously her father, the father of her daughter, and the father of her daughter’s child. Both of their stories suggest that disastrous results follow first-of-kin unions to criticize the social norms that allow male abuse to occur with impunity. Read together, the *tsikbalo’ob* show that institutions, such as law enforcement and the church, and even a victim’s own mother, are complicit in or at the extreme, even condone the abuse. In both *tsikbalo’ob*, the victims’ Maya communities reject them; in Ceh Moo, after reporting the abuse to authorities, the mother and daughter are exiled from their town, and in Martínez Huchim, prostitution is the only remaining opportunity for the young victim.

“Teen máax yaabilmech” / “Soy quien te ama”: The Male-Authored Maya Woman

In male-authored portrayals, women are often objects of male desire or preservers and transmitters of cultural and societal norms. As objects of male desire, the female beloved's voice and perspectives are often absent, and readers have access to her character only through male narrators' desire.⁷⁷ As cultural repository, the woman is a romanticized *mestiza*⁷⁸ or preserver of cultural continuity.⁷⁹ When portraying suffering, male-authored texts tend to show suffering as a universal or Maya condition, not a gendered one.⁸⁰ Male writers' focus on pleasurable romantic relationships or Maya cultural revitalization is noticeable when women writers in both prose and poetry often depict social struggle and situations of oppression. In male-authored poems that feature the (presumably male) lyric voices' relationships with women, sometimes the first-person lyric voices express intensely personal suffering and distress because of their lover's indifference, absence, or death, but the poems more often portray tender moments between the lovers with amorous or even erotic overtones. Carrillo Can's prose is the notable exception to this norm when he portrays suffering as a gendered condition in *U yóok'otilo'ob áak'ab / Danzas de la noche* (2011). In this novel, a young girl recounts in first person how her feminine sex increases her household obligations, makes her vulnerable to sexual and economic exploitation

⁷⁷ See Carrillo Can's "Kex ma' a k'aate' a tia'alén" / "Soy tuyo aunque no quieras" in *Kuxa'an t'aan*; Sánchez Chan's "Táan máank'inal" / "Es fiesta" and "Tu bejil ich kool" / "Camino a la milpa" in *Kuxa'an t'aan*; and Villegas' "Ix táabay" / "Ix táabay", "Yáax ch'úulil" / "Primigenia humedad", and section III of "U paakato'ob chan paalil" / "Paisajes de la infancia" in the collection *U k'aay ch'i'ibal / El canto de la estirpe*.

⁷⁸ See Carrillo Can's "Kex ma' a k'aate' a tia'alén" / "Soy tuyo aunque no quieras" in *Kuxa'an t'aan*; Sánchez Chan's "X-Maruch" / "María" in *Kuxa'an t'aan*; and Villegas' "U k'uubal uk'aj" / "Ofrenda de la sed" in *U k'aay ch'i'ibal*.

⁷⁹ See Sánchez Chan's "X-wak' k'aán" / "Urdidora de hamacas" in *Kuxa'an t'aan*.

⁸⁰ For suffering as a universal condition, see Carrillo Can's "Xma' t'aanil, jkiim yóok'ol kaab" / "Silencio, ha muerto la tierra" in *Kuxa'an t'aan* and Villegas' "Yaayaj óol" / "Incertidumbre" in *Girándula*. The poetic voice in many poems in Villegas' collection *Áak'abe' ku ya'alik táan u k'áaxal ja' / Lluvia que la noche dicta* evokes disenchantment with contemporary urban life as opposed to a rural life more in sync with the natural world. For suffering as a Maya condition, see Castillo Tzec's *Ix-ts'akyaj / La yerbatera* and my discussion in Chapter 2; Sánchez Chan's "In kaajal" / "Mi pueblo" in *Kuxa'an t'aan*; and Villegas' "Súusut sáasil" / "Girándula" in *Girándula*.

by adult guardians, and ultimately forces her to flee her adoptive parents' home in fear that her adoptive father will kill her for her baby brother's accidental death. However, in this section, I examine Carrillo Can's poetry, along with Villegas', as representative of the ways I observe male writers mostly depicting *mestiza* identities that adhere to popularized images of the acceptable Maya woman.

Isaac Carrillo Can fashions the beloved as a *mestiza* in his poem "Teen máax yaabilmech" / "Soy quien te ama", which appears in the *Kuxa'an t'aan* anthology (2012) (180). In the poem, the lyric voice portrays a tender and amorous relationship with his *mestiza* beloved. She does not speak, and the lyric voice constructs her image as he addresses her:

Teen le ja' ka yalik ta paacho'	Soy el agua que viertes en tu espalda
le ku bin u yayalankil tak tu'ux ku síjil kili'ich	el agua que descende al sitio en el que nacen
náayo'	los sueños
teen le iipil báaytik a ki'ichpamilo'	soy el hipil que acaricia tu hermosura
teen la bóoch' ku leechlankil ta kaalo'	el rebozo que cuelga enredándose en tu cuello
teen la k'áan méek'ikech tuláakal áak'abo'	soy la hamaca que te abraza noche a noche.

The poem is a series of metaphors in which the speaker responds specifically to a *mestiza*'s needs as a tender lover. The speaker equates himself with cultural symbols of the *mestiza*: the huipil, or the strongest marker of *mestiza* identity, including the shawl that a *catrina* would not use.⁸¹ While the hammock is not gender-specific, it is strongly associated with *mestizo* ways of life. The metaphors indicate that the lyric voice conceives of himself as cleansing and refreshing, for he is water, along with loving and tender, as he caresses and embraces the beloved. The apostrophe of "teen" / "soy" emphasizes that the poetic voice is the one who loves and provides for the woman. However, this anaphora also calls attention to the poem's focus on the male speaker's conception of the beloved and the absence of the beloved's perspective. In fact, the

⁸¹ While I read the poem in a heterosexual framework and interpret the lyric voice to be male, the poem invites a queer reading, as there are no markers of the speaker's gender in either poem, and the metaphors associate the lyric voice with feminine dress. In either reading, the beloved's construction as a *mestiza* is clear.

poem is more about the lyric voice's perception of himself as lover than about his beloved. The poetic voice's self-descriptive metaphors depict him as an integral part of the beloved's *mestiza* identity. In fact, if the *mestiza* identity depends on her garments, the poetic voice is what makes her a *mestiza* as he becomes the trappings of feminine regional dress. While sonneteers often focused poems on descriptions of feminine beauty, Carrillo Can's poem only suggests the beloved's attractiveness without describing her physical features. The poem names her back, beauty, and neck. As the speaker constructs the beloved's identity through the outer trappings that cloak her, the image of her naked body is present underneath the garment that is her lover.

The metaphor of male as *mestiza* garment suggests the speaker's physical intimacy with his beloved and brings the poem's sensual nature to the forefront. The second verse adds erotic undertones by referring to the beloved's genitalia through the euphemism, "tu'ux ku síijil kili'ich náayo'" / "sitio en el que nacen los sueños". In an explanation of the two *maaya* terms for dreams, Cuevas Cob defines *náay*, Carrillo Can's choice, as "un sueño suave que se concibe desde el espacio terrenal. . . . alude a la ilusión, a entretenimiento" (qtd. in Lepe Lira *Lluvia* 123). On the other hand, the term *wayak'* is "el sueño profundo y verdadero, el encuentro con el mundo subterráneo de los mayas, el lugar sagrado de *Xibilbá* (el inframundo), que los *jmenes* usan en rituales, pues tradicionalmente son quienes pueden leer los sueños" (123). Cuevas Cob asserts that in contemporary usage, the terms have become synonymous (123). Considering this framework, Carrillo Can's description of the birthplace of *náay* dreams describes a source of pleasure, and the overlay of *wayak'* meanings in contemporary usage suggests the dream originates in the underworld, or the vagina. As Maya cosmology views natural *cenote* sinkholes as the door to the underworld (Schele and Freidel 61), Carrillo Can's poetic connection between the vagina-*cenote* and the underworld becomes clear. His poem only alludes to the metaphor of

vagina as *cenote*, but Villegas explicitly makes this comparison in his poem “Ix táabay” in *U k’aay ch’i’ibal / El canto de la estirpe*.

The non-specificity of Carrillo Can’s unnamed and voiceless *mestiza* invites reading the poem as a more general declaration of love for Maya culture. Carrillo Can’s construction of the *mestiza* as desirable rejects negative perceptions of this identity. Carrillo Can’s sensual construction of a *mestiza* beloved honors the continuity of the values of the Maya community across time and resists perceptions that Maya regional culture is unmodern or unfashionable by demonstrating Maya variations on erotic love poetry. At the same time, the beloved’s lack of voice enacts her folklorization, and she exists only as another defines her.

Of the male-authored love poems I study, Wildernain Villegas’ erotic poem “Ix chéel” / “Ix chéel” from his collection *U k’aay ch’i’ibal / El canto de la estirpe* (60/136) depicts the most nuanced feminine subjectivity, providing a space for the expression of feminine sexual desire and cultural perspectives. However, two feminine characters are still subordinated to male desire and agency. The three females in the poem are Ixcheel, the moon goddess of fertility, childbirth, and weaving (Chacón 102); a wife; and a baby girl. Ixcheel is the poem’s central referent, as each of the poem’s four sections is a prayer addressed to her. A husband speaks in the first and third sections, and the wife voices the second and fourth sections. The couple’s interweaving and proportionate speech enact Maya values of gender complementarity as the two voices together complete the poem. This configuration is also symbolic of their conception of a child through the fertility ritual. The baby girl appears upon her birth in the last section.

Although the poem’s title invokes Ixcheel as the subject, the goddess has no voice. Rather, the husband and wife speak to her. In fact, the husband claims that his voice fashions Ixcheel’s presence: “kin wa’akech yéetel t’aane’ ya’ax tuunich utia’al in póolik a wanil” / “te

nombro y el verbo es jade para esculpir tu presencia” (v. 3). Similarly to Carrillo Can’s *mestiza* beloved in “Teen máax yaabilmech” / “Soy quien te ama,” Ixcheel’s representation depends upon her construction through her devotees’ address. The wife finds the goddess present in the husband’s impregnating semen: “ix k’ujil jujuy itsil ku yáalkab tin nak” / “diosa polen que en savia fluye a la entraña” (v. 12). For the husband, Ixcheel is the object of desire. He declares that the goddess is present in his wife’s face when they make love: “yéetel tu táan yich in xuune’ kin paktikech” / “en el rostro de mi esposa te contemplo” (v. 23). Both sections spoken from the male voice portray him involved in the sexual act. In the first section, his partner is Ixcheel, and in the third section, his partner is his wife, but Ixcheel is also present, superimposed in the wife’s face as she facilitates the inception of the couple’s child.

Villegas’ portrayal of Ixcheel in conjunction with a male character is rare. Ixcheel and her corresponding moon image are primarily associated with female characters, to whom she is a model and counselor-protector.⁸² In fact, the wife’s voice in Villegas’ own poem places Ixcheel in the role of female counselor. While most contemporary literary representations of the goddess do not inscribe her with sexuality, Villegas is not the only writer to do so. The lyric voice in Cuevas Cob’s “In k’aaba” / “Mi nombre” perceives prostitute-like behaviors in Ixcheel’s moon symbol, as I discuss in Chapter 2. However, Villegas’ Ixcheel does not exercise sexual freedom but rather is the silent partner as male desire defines her sexuality through the husband’s narrative. The poem does not express Ixcheel’s subjectivity or perspective, a silence consistent with her portrayal in other contemporary literary texts, which also focus instead on those who

⁸² By Castillo Tzec, see *Ix-Ts’akyaj / La yerbatera* (2014), which focuses on how the protagonist, a woman healer, seeks help and mentorship from Ixcheel. There is a brief mention that their practice inspires other healers of both genders to follow suit, but the goddess is never sexualized or portrayed through male sexual desire. By Ceh Moo, see “X-Lo’obal yaan Evencia” / “Evencia” (2013). By Cuevas Cob, see “In k’aaba” / “Mi nombre” and “U áak’abil tu chibil uj” / “Noche de eclipse”, both in *Kuxa’an t’aan*. See also Chacón’s discussion of Cuevas Cob’s reimagining of the moon symbol (102-03).

seek her comfort. As an invoked presence, Ixcheel does not act either. In contrast, the husband is the subject of multiple actions: “kin wa’akech” / “te nombro” (v. 3), “kin wokoltik” / “robo” (v. 6), “Kin wokol” / “Penetro” (v. 18), “kin paktikech” / “te contemplo” (v. 23), “kin wuk’ik” / “bebo” (v. 25).

Despite the fact that Ixcheel is the most silent character, the poem positions the goddess as the character most vital to the poetic mechanism. The husband and wife do not speak to each other, but instead depend upon Ixcheel’s silent mediation to fulfill their respective desires. This dynamic creates a triangle of desire. In fact, when the male speaks about intercourse, his ambiguous language leaves open to interpretation which of the two women he identifies: “Kin wokol tu ajalkab ko’olel in yaabilma” / “Penetro el alba de la mujer que amo” (v. 18). Unlike Ixcheel, the husband and wife make their desires known. According to the terms each uses, the husband desires sexual satisfaction and the wife wishes for a child. Villegas’ Ixcheel remains a source of aid, as both characters’ wishes are fulfilled. Ixcheel’s role is reminiscent of common portrayals that Worley observes of the passive *mestiza*. Villegas’ goddess reinforces notions that women continue tradition, as she is petitioned to facilitate reproduction.

Although the poem does not ascribe desire to Ixcheel, the wife expresses sexual desire, expanding the possibilities for Maya women characters when contemporary *maaya*-language literature does not often feature women who articulate sexual desires. The wife prays that her partner be placed at the service of her desire: “ka’a u bulen u k’abo’ob, / k’ax tin taakil” / “que sus manos me inunden, / átaló a mi urgencia” (v. 14-15). The *maaya* noun “taakil” (Spanish “urgencia”) has the root *taak*, which evokes want and anxiousness (*Diccionario Maya Cordemex* 755, Bricker et. al. 268). Villegas does, however, tie the wife’s desire to the function of maternity in the final verse of section II when she discusses the man’s semen: “u k’uubale’ u meent u xítíl

u jobonil in nak” / “que su entrega germine mi vientre” (v. 17). In contrast, the male voice never alludes to reproduction, even in a poem about a fertility goddess. Instead, he voices a love poem and describes his sexual encounter with Ixcheel in erotic terms. In an implicit reference to the goddess’ moon symbol, he even situates himself as a lover among others who have looked upon the goddess’ naked body (v. 5-8). In fact, he does not explicitly mention his wife until verse 23, the third-to-last verse in his voice.

Despite her expression of sexual desire, the wife demonstrates aspects of the *mestiza* identity. Her prayers to Ixcheel, which demonstrate her Maya ritual religious practice, construct her as a *mestiza* as they emphasize her cultural continuity with pre-Hispanic ways of living. The wife approximates dominant portrayals of *mestiza* passivity, because the poem ascribes her less agency than the husband. Her voice petitions (section II), while the male voice acts without petition (section I and III). While the wife’s sections comprise slightly more verses than her husband’s, she is the subject of just two active verbs. In a metaphor for her menstruation, she sprouts: “kin k’u’uk’ankil” / “retoño” (v. 11). She also burns the incense that accompanies her ritual: “Kin tooik” / “Quemo” (v. 34). In section IV, the wife’s voice narrates what presumably results from her petitions. In these verses, she is a self-described repository in a literal take on Maya women’s role as cultural preservers: her body is the receptacle her baby girl emerges from, and her breasts nourish the new life.

Her baby girl enacts cultural continuity as Villegas positions her as his poetic successor by describing her through an echo of his collection’s title: “paakat ku chikixtik *u k’aay ch’i’ibal*” / “es mirada que arrulla *el canto de la estirpe*” (v. 29, italics mine). Describing the collection and the baby girl’s songs through the same language implies that her songs will continue Villegas’ work. Her inscription into a Maya *ch’i’ibal* lineage also reinforces her Maya cultural

inheritance.⁸³ However, the synecdoche in which the girl's gaze stands in for her person emphasizes that she sings her own perception of Maya heritage. Instead of her mouth, her songs originate in her gaze. In the following verse, the use of her mouth as a stand-in for her person ("chan xch'uupal chi" / "boca niña") illustrates the nourishment she consumes from her mother in milk, and by extension, in cultural and social information. In addition to her own view, this "nourishment" will influence her songs. This youngest generation demonstrates feminine expression of Maya tradition. The baby girl motif has resonances of Villegas' goals that his work inspire young people to write, read, and create in *maayat'aan* (Personal Interview).

"Mi madre me advirtió": Women-Authored Socially Engaged Portrayals of Maya Women

Unlike male poets' amorous and idealizing descriptions of women, Ceh Moo and Martínez Huchim often write in realist modes that criticize the state of gender relations in Yucatecan Maya culture. Whereas I discuss in Chapter 2 how Castillo Tzec's *Ix-ts'akyaj / La yerbatera* portrays a unified Maya group who must struggle against outside cultural influence, women authors portray women characters struggling against a society hostile to their well-being. Unlike sensual male-authored romances, Ceh Moo's and Martínez Huchim's texts depict failed marital relationships and male desire harmful to women, whose sexuality is controlled and limited by men. Their depictions shift the focus from the emphasis Preuss observes on the cruelty of women, particularly stepmothers, in *maaya*-language oral tradition (465). Ceh Moo and Martínez Huchim instead depict women's suffering due to male behaviors, which include alcoholism, physical and sexual abuse, lack of economic contribution to the household, sexual double standards, and lack of manhood. Their feminine protagonists also face other women who

⁸³ The concept of *ch'i'ibal* lineage is an important organizational structure in Maya thought, as I discuss in Chapter 2. Villegas' use of the term evokes a Maya lineage in general.

enforce norms that prioritize male interests. In their works, then, Maya women's struggle is not against an Other, but is one that seeks respect and safety within her own community. Women-authored texts often prioritize women's voices to create a more nuanced vision of Maya women and their varied attitudes about their culture and tradition. As such, women's narrative frameworks reject singular adherence to folklorized or traditional depictions of Maya women.

All of the three foremost women writers in *maayal'aan*, Briceida Cuevas Cob from the first generation, and Sol Ceh Moo and Martínez Huchim from the subsequent generation, expand the spaces available to Maya female subject positions beyond variations on the *mestiza* identity. As Cuevas Cob's groundbreaking work in contemporary *maaya*-language literature is prevalent in criticism,⁸⁴ I instead analyze works by the next generation of writers. Especially focusing on

⁸⁴ Cuevas Cob's poetry demonstrates a contemporary perspective on being a Maya woman that simultaneously honors and breaks with tradition. While some of Ceh Moo's and Martínez Huchim's *tsikbalob* portray injustices against women permitted and normalized by the Maya community, Cuevas Cob's poetry questions tradition but also celebrates and empowers women.

Scholars such as Gloria Chacón and Paul Worley⁸⁴ have completed excellent analyses of her work, in which they discuss how Cuevas Cob depicts Maya women as agents and expands possibilities for representation of Maya women beyond the stereotypical. Expanding upon one-dimensional depictions of Maya women, Worley notes that Cuevas Cob depicts Maya womanhood as being "wholly modern and wholly traditional" (*Telling* 160), without having to choose one or the other. For example, in her poem "Yaana bin xook" / "Irás a la escuela", he argues that Cuevas Cob puts forth a hybrid educational model for young Maya girls that values both formal education and oral education passed down through generations of women (160). Secondly, Worley shows how Cuevas Cob's multiple depictions of Maya women reject romanticized portrayals of a submissive *mestiza* in various ways ("U páajtalil"). In his analysis of Cuevas Cob's poetry collection *Je'e bix k'in / Como el sol* (1998), he cites the example of a campaign that the Yucatecan Instituto para el Desarrollo de la Cultura Maya (INDEMAYA) sponsored in order to raise consciousness among Maya women about their rights by printing a list of their rights on tortilla packaging, and argues that Cuevas Cob's poetry describes how Maya women are already enacting agency (164-65). For example, in her poem "U áak'abil tu chibil uj" / "Noche de eclipse", Worley describes how the protagonist chooses not to heed her mother's instructions for cultural norms surrounding childbirth, and instead embraces her own practices of welcoming her child and her child's Maya identity. While in Maya thought, her mother's advice would prevent dark features and birthmarks that in Yucatan are indicative of Maya ancestry, the daughter does the opposite, scratching her eyes so her child will have darker pupils, or in other words, a more apparent Maya identity. In this way, the girl demonstrates her cultural pride. Additionally, Worley discusses how Cuevas Cob's poetry imitates colloquial *maaya*-language woman's speech, including bawdy language and a public dispute complete with threats. He argues that these poems "exalt the everyday lives and voices of Yucatec women even if these women do not necessarily embody the 'honor and modesty' for which they are popularly famed" (158). He concludes that Cuevas Cob's work "implies that this more complicated figure is no less beautiful or less worthy of respect" (158).

Gloria Chacón argues that Cuevas Cob's poetry reenvisions Maya symbols in ways that demand more respect for women (103-04). The critic asserts that Cuevas Cob's women protagonists at times rebel against traditional readings of symbols and demonstrate new ways of conceiving them. She also analyzes the poem "U áak'abil tu chibil uj" / "Noche de eclipse", arguing that the fact that the protagonist swallows the moon, a representation of Ixcheel, demythifies the moon goddess' power and elevates women's power. Chacón concludes,

their *tsikbalo'ob*, I demonstrate the varied ways in which they propose models of Maya womanhood for the twenty-first century that provide space for women's well-being and individuality. In this section, I analyze a text representative of women's realist condemnation of gender oppression, Ceh Moo's *tsikbal* "X-Lo'obal yaan Evencia" / "Evencia. La joven" from her collection *Tabita y otros cuentos mayas* (2013). In the remaining sections, I conclude with a discussion of how Ceh Moo and Martínez Huchim expand the available models for Maya women through intertextuality surrounding Xtáabay, the Yucatecan version of the *femme fatale*, in two distinct non-realist narrative genres.

I discuss Ceh Moo's "X-Lo'obal yaan Evencia" / "Evencia. La joven" (*Tabita* 17-38) as an example of women-authored socially engaged literature for its portrayal of the female protagonist's change of consciousness surrounding Maya womanhood. I draw upon its presentation of Maya gender construction as a foundational text for proposing how Maya women should navigate discordant views about Maya womanhood. The protagonist Evencia's mother and grandmother adhere to beliefs propagated in their Maya community that equate aspects of womanhood with sinfulness. However, Evencia's character rejects these views and envisions a new model for Maya womanhood and gender complementarity. While "Evencia" does not follow conventions of oral narrative, I consider it a *tsikbal* because it relates a conversation that the first-person narrator, the pregnant Evencia, has with her unborn baby girl. In fact, Evencia addresses her baby from the first sentence: "In na' a'alten, tu k'iinil yaanen ka'ach je'e bix téech bejlae'" (17). / "Mi madre me advirtió, cuando yo estaba como tú ahora" (29). As Evencia relates

"la voz del poema protesta contra la práctica de venerar a una deidad femenina como la luna o Ixchel, cuando el dar a luz de las mujeres debe ser venerado de igual manera" (102-03). In this way, Cuevas Cob praises Maya women and seeks their empowerment.

her life story, she provides her unborn baby girl, and other Maya women by extension, with a guide for how to interpret messages about femininity and womanhood.

Evencia's older maternal relatives act as spokespeople for Maya communities' beliefs about womanhood. In particular, her mother and grandmother teach that womanhood is synonymous with sin. In the *tsikbal*'s very first paragraph, the text relates Evencia's mother's maxim: "U sìijil paal chan x ch'uupale', in x paale' jun p'éeel si'ip'il" (17) / "Nacer mujer, mi niña, es un castigo" (29). What the Spanish text renders as "castigo", the *maaya* text calls a "si'ip'il" ['ofensa', 'pecado' (*Diccionario Maya Cordemex* 781)]. Expressing this difference in terms of feminist debates over the definition of "women", the *maaya* text portrays these beliefs as essentialist (womanhood is a sin), while the Spanish text suggests they are a socially constructed response to women (womanhood results in punishment). Therefore, although the maxim is key to understanding Maya women's oppression in Ceh Moo's view, it also represents a moment when the bilingual text demonstrates inconsistency in its portrayal of dominant perceptions about women in Maya communities.

In both texts, Evencia's grandmother propagates an essentialist view of Maya womanhood as she teaches Evencia that women's sin originates in female anatomy at the sites of the breasts and the vagina. As opposed to male-authored depictions of the vagina as a site of feminine sensuality, the grandmother in Ceh Moo's text explains to her granddaughter that nature cannot accept the openness of the vagina:

<<Jach beyo' chan ch'uupal, ko'olelo'one', ka'aka's paak'alo'on>>
 <<ba'axten chiich?>> Kin k'áatik ti'. Leti' ku pajken yéetel jun p'éeel nojoch yaabilaj, ku ye'esikten tun tu yaanal in wiipile'. <<Tu yo'olal le ba'ala' chan paal, tu yo'olal lela', le ka' síijo'one' pa'chaja'ano'on, la'atene' kuxtale' ma' tu k'amko'on>> <<ba'ale' ba'ax yáan in wila'aj téen>> ku t'áan je'ex suuktie'. <<Ti' mix máak yáan u siip'il in chan ch'uupal, chen ba'ale' bey ken kuxlako'on>>. Ku ya'alikten yéetel u jets'a'an óolil. (21, italics in original)

<<Así es, hija, las mujeres somos mala semilla>> <<¿por qué abuela?>> le preguntó [sic]. Ella me mira, con ternura infinita y me señala hacia debajo de mi hipil. <<Es por esto, niña, es por esto, estamos rajadas y eso la naturaleza no lo acepta>> <<Pero que culpa tengo yo>> protesto como siempre. <<Nadie tiene la culpa mi niñas, [sic] pero ese es nuestro destino>>, Me sentencia, sin misericordia alguna. (32, italics in original)

The passage shows the grandmother's resignation to society's belief that women's bodies condemn them to an unacceptable status. Her metaphor of women as bad seeds evokes how a batch of seeds includes both good seed, which germinates and produces plants, and bad seed, which will not. In this essentialist model, men are good seed while women, bad seed, will be unable to grow because of their innate defectiveness.

Breasts, on the other hand, explain why Evencia will not finish school. Pointing to her breasts, her grandmother says: "yéetel lelo' ts'ó'ok u k'uuchul u k'iinil a kaaník u jel ba'alo'ob ma' ten u kaansbiltech tu naajil xóok" (18) / "*es tiempo de aprender otras cosas, que en la escuela no enseñan*" (30, italics in original). This comment, while less essentialist, points to cultural norms surrounding spheres appropriate for women's different stages of anatomical maturity. Evencia rejects this restriction on her education. Her reaction, retorting that she will never grow breasts so she can finish elementary education, shows she has internalized lessons about women's sin being in the body. Before Evencia's change of consciousness, her youthful self rejects the natural processes of feminine puberty because of what these bodily changes signify in society: the end of her education. Evencia interprets this chain of signifiers for her listener. According to community norms, puberty signals the end of her schooling, which in turn signals to men that she is now marriageable. Outside of school, her mother's lessons instruct that it is a sin for menstruating women to enter a church and that women cannot climb trees, because the fruit will become thick with worms.

This *tsikbal* exemplifies other texts by Ceh Moo and Martínez Huchim that show women enforcing women's oppression.⁸⁵ In "Evencia", the mother's and grandmother's lack of resistance to their own oppression illustrates the weight of social pressures for women to conform to the model of the pleasant and passive *mestiza*. In fact, the grandmother's name is Plácida, which suggests she has a gentle and agreeable nature, even as she reproduces norms that contribute to Maya women's detriment. Evencia's mother, on the other hand, actively resists her daughter's rebellion against unequal gender relations and does not understand her daughter's desire to be an educated female. The mother is resigned to what for her is an inescapable destiny that haunts women from birth. When Evencia declares that she will never allow her husband to hit her, her mother rebukes her:

¡Máaxech ka tuukultik beya?. [sic] Teech ka wa'alik ti tuláakal le ba'alo'ob ku
yuuchulton ko'olelo'one', ma' ten u uuchuk teech. ¿Ba'axten ka tuukultik yaan a
puuts'ul ti'? (19-20)

¿Quién te crees que eres? Según tú, nada de lo que nos sucede a las mujeres, te
pasará. ¿Por qué crees que te salvaras [sic]? (31)

Through these statements, the mother participates in a male-determined social system that oppresses women. She even goes so far as to suggest about male abusers, "U siip'il ma' u tia'ali', k tia'al tumeen síijo'on x ch'uup" (20). / "La culpa no la tiene él, la culpa es de nosotras por haber nacido mujer" (31). In the mother's view, her education of Evencia does not condemn Evencia to a life a hardship. Rather, the mother's life experiences have taught her that having a drunken, physically violent husband is inevitable. Her statements, along with her attempts even

⁸⁵ Both narratives about incest by Ceh Moo and Martínez Huchim depict mothers complicit in their daughters' abuse. See Ceh Moo's *tsikbal* "X Ma Cleofas" / "Cleofas. La anciana" (*Tabita*, 2013) and Martínez Huchim's *tsikbal* "Xchokojo'ob" / "Calenturientas" (*U yóol*, 2013).

during her pregnancy to prepare her daughter through her maxim, suggest her desire that Evencia confront social realities. While the mother does not believe that babies can hear from inside the womb, Evencia insists that her mother's lesson shaped her own perceptions from before birth. Evencia tries to avoid even thinking like her mother so she will not negatively affect her own unborn daughter (17/29). While male-authored love poetry provides no indication that amorous relationships can be harmful for women,⁸⁶ Ceh Moo portrays suffering as a condition of Maya womanhood through the mother character's marital situation. Evencia agrees with her mother about the harsh reality of Maya womanhood, but sees potential for activism to change gender dynamics.

Evencia's oral autobiography demonstrates that throughout her life, she resists essentialist traditions that limit her opportunities because she is a woman and takes action to secure wellbeing and equality in her home. She does not bear abuse as does her mother. Instead, Evencia uses varied strategies to resist the life her mother and grandmother believe Maya women must endure. For example, Evencia hits her husband to scare him from hitting her. She also places dry rice and beans on his dinner plate one night to protest his drunkenness and failure to contribute to the household. She reasons that if he does not contribute, neither should she (25 / 36). This conjugal model reverses gender roles that condone male abuse, which the text portrays as a norm, and instead transforms the woman from receiver to giver of physical blows. Evencia also remains mentally and even physically resistant to the ideas her mother propagates: "Kin laachik in jo'ol, kin jatsik yéetel in k'aabo'ob, kin kaxtik ma' tu yookol tin túukul ba'axo'ob ku

⁸⁶ Carrillo Can is again the exception, as his "Kex ma' a k'áate' a tia'alén" / "Soy tuyo aunque no quieras" features a poetic voice who turns himself into corn in order to surrender himself to his *mestiza* beloved, who may mistreat him while processing the corn but who will then consume him, granting him a place inside her. However, this is an oxymoronic sweet pain to which he surrenders in order to reach his beloved. Any other instances of pain in the poems by males that I study are limited to a lyric voice's angst over unrequited love or the absence of a deceased beloved.

ya'alik in na'o'" (20). / "Me rasco la cabeza, la golpeo sin control con la mano, me niego a que esos razonamientos se metan en mí" (31-32). This passage demonstrates that Evencia must actively and even violently remind herself of her personal beliefs about Maya womanhood in the face of opposing prevalent conceptions that until now have shaped the reality she lives.

Evencia is successful in bringing about a new marital model, as her efforts are rewarded when her previously alcoholic husband begins to work. Evencia explains that she has turned her husband into a real man: "tin kaxtáj jun túul máak tu cha'aj in wantik ka xi'ichaj tu jaajil, chen ba'ale' lelo' na'atsil mix bi k'iin ken a na'atej" (27) / "me encontré un hombre que lo he ayudado a ser un hombre, pero [mamá,] eso tú nunca lo vas a entender" (37). My more literal translation of the *maaya* is: 'I found a man who let me help him become a true man, but mother, you will never understand that.' Here, the notion of gender is learned, making Evencia's newfound perceptions of womanhood align with social constructivist views of the category 'woman'.⁸⁷ As Evencia's declaration shows that her husband can adapt to a new profile of male behavior, she proposes a model that exposes, in Judith Butler's terms, the performative nature of gender.⁸⁸ While the passage suggests there are multiple types of male behavior, the word choice in the *maaya* text reveals that for Ceh Moo, there is a "right" kind of man, and by extension a "right" kind of woman. This "right" type of manhood that her protagonist Evencia seeks to normalize does not mistreat women but rather approximates values of gender complementarity. The narrative framework of mother addressing daughter does not allow for much insight into Evencia's relationship with her husband. Based on examples Evencia shares with her daughter,

⁸⁷ As Simone de Beauvoir famously wrote, "One is not born, but rather becomes, woman (330)." Ceh Moo additionally shows the complementary notion that 'man' is a social construction.

⁸⁸ Butler asserts, "If gender attributes and acts, the various ways in which a body shows or produces its cultural signification, are performative, then there is no preexisting identity by which an act or attribute might be measured; there would be no true or false, real or distorted acts of gender, and the postulation of a true gender identity would be revealed as a regulatory fiction" ("From" 2553).

she most likely motivates her husband's improvement by mirroring negative aspects of socially condoned Maya manhood, such as violence and laziness. Regardless of her methods, Evencia takes credit for her husband's transformation. In this way, the text upholds women as teachers and suggests that they can teach and transmit rupture as well as continuity.

By the end of the story, Evencia has reframed the womanhood-as-sin formula, which the *tsikbal* constructs as a traditional belief through its intergenerational transmission. Evencia's reasoning no longer bases itself on the body, as she was taught by her maternal predecessors, but on the work of consciousness raising. For Evencia, gender categories are stable, but she rejects the idea that women's bodies are inherently sinful. Her basis for this rejection is her growing awareness of gender as a construct, inculcated into an individual's thought patterns by social norms: "Je'e bix to'one' yéetel toop oksa'ab ti' k jo'ol ko'olelo'obe' síijo'ob u tia'al saawal muk'yaj. Bey xan ti' xiibe' oksa'ab tu jo'ol máax máas xiibe', le ku yuuk'ik ya'ab k'ak'aj jae' ku jats'ik u yatan" (27). / "Así como a nosotros a fuerza de golpe nos metieron en la cabeza que las mujeres nacimos para sufrir calladamente, también al hombre le metieron que en su cabeza que el macho, es quien aguanta más trago y golpea diariamente⁸⁹ a la mujer" (37). Evencia articulates the violence involved in this process of social conditioning, and the way it works at the service of male hegemony. Her understanding makes explicit Althusser's concept of the subtle work of ideological State apparatuses, such as the School and Family, in perpetuating the interests of the ruling class (1341-43). While his Marxist outlook speaks directly to class structures, Ceh Moo's illustration of intersections between power and male interests make his ISA concept useful for considering how ideas about gender become accepted norms as well.

⁸⁹ The idea of "diariamente" is absent from the *maaya* text. Instead, the *maaya* verb is in the incomplete aspect, similar to present tense in English and the Romance languages, suggesting that the action is habitual.

Similarly, in Evencia's new understanding, women are not innately defective but rather come to understand that they are lesser than men through widespread systems of abuse.

Evencia perceives solidarity in her thinking with the feminine moon when the *tsikbal*'s human characters of both genders accept and perpetuate women's oppression. As she bathes in the moonlight, Evencia reasons that women deserve equal respect. In the moon image, the goddess Ixcheel is present as Maya women's protector and counselor. In Chapter 2, I discuss how Cuevas Cob's lyric voice in "In k'aaba" / "Mi nombre" identifies with aspects of the moon, but finds that the feminine behaviors they share result in society's censure of her behavior but adoration of the moon. Ceh Moo's Evencia, however, is empowered through gender solidarity with the moon, as she declares, "Kin paktik u yich Uj, kin wa'alik tu ti' <<Téech ka na'atiken, tumeen layli' x ch'uupech je'e bix teene'>>" (27, italics in original). / "Miro a la luna y le digo <<tú me comprendes, por que [sic] tú también eres mujer, como yo>>" (37, italics in original). In contrast with her mother, who is resigned to Maya women's present situation, Evencia's perception of the feminine moon's support inspires her to fight for a better future for Maya women. Evencia's rejection of her mother's model of Maya womanhood goes so far as to refuse to name her unborn daughter after her mother. In fact, she never mentions her mother's name in the text. Reading Ceh Moo through the lens of Castillo Tzec's portrayal of given names as indicative of an inherent identity, as I discuss in Chapter 2, this *tsikbal* suggests that Evencia wishes to avoid assigning her baby a gendered and marital destiny like her mother's.

Evencia's reframed understanding of Maya womanhood is all the more important because the *tsikbal*'s opening and closing allude to Evencia's unborn baby girl, a representation of the imminent arrival of the next female generation. Vastly different from how her own mother prepared Evencia, Evencia hopes that her daughter will finish elementary education and beyond,

and that maybe she will achieve Evencia's own dream of working in a large store in Mérida. She clarifies that these dreams' fulfillment depends on gender complementarity and continued male support from her husband. As in Villegas' poem "Ix chéel", the baby girl motif and juxtaposition of multiple female generations highlight how mothers transmit beliefs about Maya womanhood to daughters. In both works, the baby girl embodies women's uncertain future in Maya society, because their portrayal at young ages leaves an open ending as readers must infer how they will respond to their womanhood within their future societies. However, both texts position a girl as the harbinger of the future, and suggest that women will set the tone for subsequent generations. As Ceh Moo's *tsikbal* embodies Evencia's "textbook on life" for her daughter, readers witness the type of education Evencia provides her daughter even before her birth. In this way, Ceh Moo's text suggests with more certainty than Villegas' poem that women's future will be different and much improved from the social realities they endured in the past.

Maya Women as Xtáabay Figures: Imagining New Models for Maya Womanhood

Just as a majority of contemporary literary texts evoke the goddess Ixcheel as a positive model for Maya womanhood, popular imaginary offers a model of dangerous femininity through Xtáabay, the Yucatecan version of the *femme fatale*. I would argue that Xtáabay is the most renowned and ubiquitous woman in the region's oral and written storytelling. In fact, Ceh Moo's work has been celebrated in the media for treating topics beyond Xtáabay lore. An article in *La Jornada* lists not telling "la enésima versión de la leyenda de la X-Tabay" as a criterion for her novel *X-Teya / Teya*'s innovation (García Hernández), a comment which suggests an overuse of her figure in storytelling. However, Ceh Moo's and Martínez Huchim's comparison of their protagonists in two *tsikbalo'ob* to this mythical seductress do not repeat formulas for Xtáabay's

representation or women's representations but rather use her figure to affirm rebellious women who depart from norms of the smiling *mestiza*. Traditionally, Xtáabay is a dangerous woman associated with the *ya'axche'* or *ceiba* tree who carries off men in the night. Hair is a common trope of her identity, and Martínez Huchim's glossary even defines Xtáabay as a "personaje mitológico femenino de larga cabellera" (*U yóol xkaambal jaw xíiw / Contrayerba* 123).

Versions of Xtáabay's story often describe her combing her hair beneath the *ya'axche'* tree.

Georgina Rosado Rosado and Celia Rosado Avilés assert Xtáabay's story is one of the oldest stories in the Maya oral tradition ("De la voz" 205), and suggest reading Xtáabay accounts for social information about gender and sexuality: "La leyenda de la hermosa mujer de características indígenas mayas que se aparece cerca de las ceibas (árbol sagrado) para asesinar a los hombres con los encantos de su apasionado amor, trasluce toda una gama de valores asociados a la sexualidad, a la virtud humana y, por ende, a la feminidad" (193). In the Yucatecan imaginary, Xtáabay's excessive sexuality makes her dangerous and, as the tale goes, even life threatening. In their reconstruction of Xtáabay's origins, Rosado Rosado and Rosado Avilés assert that Xtáabay's contemporary figure originates in the Maya goddess Ixtab, who simultaneously encompassed life and death as goddess of pregnancy and suicide. They relate that in Maya cosmology, Ixtab appeared next to trees and escorted persons who committed suicide directly to paradise (195-96). In contrast, the Christian beliefs introduced during the Conquest condemned suicide as a sin. Rosado Rosado and Rosado Avilés assert that in the context of these conflicting values, Ixtab became distanced from her ambiguous duality and was reinterpreted as the one-dimensional evil figure Xtáabay, whose sexuality was considered dangerous (197-98). Xtáabay today is a mythological feminine figure, but not a goddess.

According to Rosado Rosado and Rosado Avilés, oral tradition attributes Xtáabay's sexual excess to tension with Christian sexual values. Oral tradition surrounding this feminine archetype compares two models for Maya womanhood. It celebrates the *xk'eban* [female sinner], who exercises her sexuality beyond the bounds of Christian morality but has compassion for the downtrodden and performs good works. Upon her death, she becomes the sweet-smelling *xtabentún* flower. On the other hand, the *uts ko'olel* [good woman] practices chastity in compliance with Christian morality, but yet treats others with disdain. She is punished, as is the cult of Christian chastity by extension, as a spiny cactus in death. In this configuration, *uts ko'olel* becomes the modern seductress-murderer Xtáabay (198-201). Rosado Rosado and Rosado Avilés suggest, "La castidad se presenta, en esta versión, como algo sumamente peligroso para el equilibrio humano, ya que el no ceder a los impulsos sexuales, como manda la moral cristiana, se considera algo alejado de un actuar humano y esa represión forzosa genera, únicamente, perversos sentimientos" (201). In the contemporary imaginary, Xtáabay's unbridled sexuality is enticing yet dangerous, and the oft-told tale incites fear in those who believe her story. In fact, Preuss humorously declares that Xtáabay supports Alcoholics Anonymous, as lore specifies that she targets drunk men out late in the streets (454).

Instead of portraying Xtáabay as the deadly figure from oral tradition, however, Ceh Moo and Martínez Huchim resignify Xtáabay as a positive model for Maya womanhood in their work. These writers find an avenue for creating new options for Maya women characters in Xtáabay's mythic proportions, moral ambiguity, and non-conformity to norms that demand women's pleasantness and purity. In this section, I examine two *tsikbalo'ob*, one by each of the two writers, in which both use Xtáabay as a subtext to celebrate unique women protagonists. Through their comparisons with this Maya *femme fatale*, Ceh Moo's and Martínez Huchim's protagonists

make startling breaks with traditional expectations for women. In doing so, they expand the social places available to Maya women in fiction. In both *tsikbal* 'ob, the writers abandon a realist aesthetic and adopt alternative genres that allow them to portray new models for Maya women.

Ceh Moo's Xtáabay: Eliminating a Contemporary Gender Double Standard

In the *tsikbal* “Jun tuul aj kalan” (61-67) / “Chaperón de alcurnia” (69-74)⁹⁰ in her *Tabita* collection, Ceh Moo adapts an oral tradition trope, a series of challenges, to create Maya gender equality, as her character Evencia envisioned.⁹¹ Ceh Moo resignifies traditional oral portrayals of Maya stock characters to deconstruct a sexual double standard and affirm a Maya woman who enjoys social freedoms that Ceh Moo's *Tabita* collection suggests are normally permitted only to Maya men. “Jun tuul aj kalan” / “El chaperon de alcurnia” creates a humorous, bawdy battle of the genders that empowers feminine variants of Maya stock identities (Xtáabay, the devil, and

⁹⁰ Given the *tsikbal*'s title, readers might incorrectly assume the chaperon will be the victorious protagonist or the focal point of the narrative. The bilingual title also suggests different ideas of how events will unfold in each language. The *maaya* title “Jun tuul aj kalan” means ‘guardian’ or ‘protector’, and the *aj*- prefix expresses that this guardian is a man (Bricker et. al. 121). This title is quite innocent compared to the Spanish title “Chaperón de alcurnia”, which means ‘lineage chaperon’. Whereas both titles reveal that there will be a chaperon character, the Spanish title reveals what the chaperon will monitor: lineage, or in other words, reproductive relations. The Spanish title, then, is reminiscent of Spanish Golden Age honor plays in which lineage and succession are the prioritized concerns. Just as husbands in these plays guard their honor against wives they suspect to be unfaithful, Ceh Moo similarly writes of a doubting husband, although one whose fears are well founded. Her humorous account contrasts in tone with the theatrical tragedies of the Golden age.

⁹¹ Besides Evencia's desire for gender equality, other *tsikbal* 'ob in the *Tabita* collection make a case for the need to protect women in Maya society. In “X Tabita. Chan chúupal” / “Tabita. La niña”, townspeople do not allow the young protagonist's parents to surgically repair their daughter's cleft lip, because popular wisdom teaches that individuals with cleft lips are pleasing to the gods, ensuring the provision of town necessities. However, the *tsikbal* condemns town prioritization of collective well-being over the girl's well-being, as bullying drives the young protagonist to commit suicide. In “X-Lo'obal yaan Evencia” / “Evencia. La joven”, husband characters are physically abusive, alcoholic, and lazy. In “X Ma Cleofas” / “Cleofas. La anciana”, layers of incestual sexual abuse result in punishment of the women victims, whereas public and private institutions are complicit with male abuse. The protagonist's father sexually abuses her and subsequently impregnates the daughter they have together, while law enforcement, the church, and healers condone his behavior. Additionally, the community rejects the female victims instead of the male abuser. The fact that these stories progress through life stages as they focus on a young girl, a married pregnant woman, and finally an elderly woman suggests that there is no time of life when a Maya woman is free of abuse and mistreatment.

the *mestiza*) while ridiculizing their male foils (the male devil and the *mestizo*). These feminine and masculine Maya archetypes compete in a series of tests, fashioned after such challenges found in traditional Mayan tales, including Yucatecan accounts of The Dwarf of Uxmal⁹² and Guatemalan K'iche' Mayan accounts of the Hero Twins in the *Popol wuj*. In Chapter 2, I discuss how Castillo Tzec inverts an ethnic binary in *Ix-ts'akyaj / La yerbatera*. Similarly, Ceh Moo's "Jun tuul aj kalan" / "Chaperón de alcurnia" inverts women's subordination to men through the woman protagonist X-inocenta's victory over her male chaperon, the devil.

In the *tsikbal*, newly married X-inocenta Cuxim⁹³ is a clever Maya woman so in control of her sexuality and destiny, that she outsmarts the devil to seek sexual pleasure in her husband's absences during sometimes weeks-long work trips. As her husband prepares to travel, X-inocenta remarks that their hammock is very big for her alone (61, 69), insinuating that she will be unfaithful to her husband in his absence. The husband, unable to bear the thought of his wife's infidelity, convinces his friend the devil to monitor X-inocenta and ensure her fidelity. While the devil resists X-inocenta's attempts to seduce him, he fails to match her wit when she challenges him to a pair of tests that she designs. Her terms are that if she wins, the devil will renounce his guard over her, and if the devil wins, she will comply with religious standards of marital fidelity: "kin súut bey jun túul x yutsil ko'olel antaj yuum k'iin" (65) / "me portaré como monja de convento" (72). When the devil is unable to solve her tests, the tale concludes with the sounds of hunters' dogs and the love song X-inocenta sings (67/74). Her song insinuates that her continuing marital infidelity is both imminent and unchecked as men approach her home.

⁹² Paul Worley discusses different versions of this tale in both contemporary *maaya*-language oral storytelling and non-Maya-authored publications in chapter 2 of *Telling and Being Told*.

⁹³ Her name in the Spanish text is Inocencia. I use her *maaya* name throughout my discussion.

Ceh Moo's modification of oral tradition introduces a new morality. Preuss affirms that stories in Maya oral tradition "show the values and ethics learned from their forefathers and explain why we should adhere to them. They are trying to give our lives orientation and meaning" (468). An example of this moral instruction is Preuss' finding that narratives in her sample of *maaya*-language oral literature punish marital infidelity (460). However, Ceh Moo's "Jun tuul aj kalan" / "Chaperón de alcurnia" shifts that moral code by permitting X-inocenta's infidelity, and even embracing it. In fact, her text explores what a moral code would look like if Maya women were offered the freedoms her other work suggests the Maya man enjoys.

Whereas oral tradition commonly uses a series of tests to finalize the marriage contract, Ceh Moo refigures this function through her character's tests. According to Preuss, the most common depiction in Maya oral tradition of the motif she identifies as "Tests" involves suitors who must pass a series of challenges to receive their bride as a reward (465). However, Ceh Moo's *tsikbal* uses the same motif to justify a woman's break with the marriage contract and celebrate a woman protagonist who satisfies her sexual desire inside or outside of marriage. Ceh Moo alters the oral narrative gender model of woman as prize and instead places a woman in the tester role. This woman establishes the contest terms and also reaps the benefits of its rewards.

Similarly to how Cuevas Cob's protagonist in "In k'aaba" / "Mi nombre" redefines the moon, which I discuss in Chapter 2, Ceh Moo's "Jun tuul aj kalan" / "Chaperón de alcurnia" similarly resignifies common associations surrounding Maya stock characters and identities. Ceh Moo's text converts socially censured feminine identities, including Xtáabay, the *mestiza*, and the unfaithful wife, into positive referents. In contrast, celebrated male variations of these identities, including the womanizer and the witty trickster figure, are inferior. Moreover, while X-inocenta is a *mestiza* because she wears the huipil, her character does not conform to typical

images of the *mestiza*. Instead, the text demonstrates that other modalities of the *mestiza* identity are possible.

Far from the image of the passive *mestiza*, X-inocenta is a Maya woman who vocalizes her desires and takes action to fulfill them. When her husband claims he provides for her, specifically citing his contributions of clothing, food, corn, and wood for cooking (61, 69), the protagonist reminds him that her needs are not purely material: “Le k’aano’ jach nojoch chen in tia’al” (61) / “La hamaca es muy grande para mi [sic] sola” (69). This *mestiza* seeks recognition for women’s sexual needs and insinuates that infidelity can be a strategy for fulfilling them. When articulating her wishes gains her nothing, the protagonist acts to meet them on her own, much as Villegas’ husband character in “Ix chéel” acts without petition.

X-inocenta’s construction in the text as a devil trickster figure and Xtáabay further destabilizes passive images of the *mestiza*. Preuss asserts that devils are common stock characters in *maaya*-language oral literature (456): “Devils most frequently play the role of handsome young men who deceive young women and literally and symbolically carry them off to hell” (456). Again, Ceh Moo reverses gender dynamics to create a feisty female devil who leads the male devil to his perdition, as X-inocenta’s victory forces the devil to break a promise to his friend and abandon his chaperon role. Ceh Moo’s male devil becomes the deceived instead of the deceiver, the tempted instead of the tempter. In this way, the female devil subtext provides an opportunity to celebrate women’s wit, including as the first test asks the devil to straighten a hair that X-inocenta later reveals to be one of her pubic hairs.

Ceh Moo reveals male hypocrisy through the ridiculous situation of the devil (and by extension, the *mestizo*) imparting moral judgement. While charged with chaperoning X-inocenta’s marital fidelity, the devil himself is a known womanizer (63/71). The devil’s

questionable morality is a metaphor for male-dominated power structures that permit a gender double standard. The devil prides himself on his fidelity to the bonds of male friendship.⁹⁴ However, his temptation by X-inocenta demonstrates his minimal commitment to other aspects of morality, such as marital fidelity, that women like X-inocenta must follow. Because of his truthfulness⁹⁵ and loyalty,⁹⁶ the devil's failure as a chaperon is not entirely due to flawed morality. Rather, lesser wit is the determining cause of his downfall. The assertion that a *mestizo* man is the devil emphasizes the author's critical perspective of the Maya man in *Tabita* in its suggestion that the *mestizo* is both immoral and impotent.⁹⁷

X-inocenta's description as a devil creates parallelism between the male and female characters as trickster figures.⁹⁸ The woman's devil uses cleverness to dismantle sexual double standards and claim a new type of morality that equally permits sexual freedoms to both genders. In fact, X-inocenta proves to be a better devil than the devil himself. The *maaya*-language omniscient narrator describes X-inocenta's perception that she is the more devilish of the two through her manner of explaining the first challenge to her chaperon: "tu ya'alaj bey máas ma'alob leti' ket le kisino', ka'alikil ku bin u che'ejtik yéetel jun p'éel che'ej chen leti' u k'ajol

⁹⁴ The narrator asserts, "tu yiláj ma'a ma'alob ba'ali' ku toop u kumpale', wa u jets'maj u tuukul tu yok'ol u k'abo'ob" (64). / "le pareció una actitud deleznable traicionar la confianza que su compadre le puso en sus manos" (72).

⁹⁵ The devil asserts, "U t'áan kisne', jun p'éel ma'alob t'áan" (63). / "Palabra de diablo, es palabra de honor" (71).

⁹⁶ The devil demonstrates allegiance to male friendship by ultimately resisting immediate sexual temptation as he enjoys watching his friend's wife's body move under her huipil. In fact, the text maintains a physical distance between them that visually demonstrates the devil's moral compliance with his promise as he sits on the fringes of the property (63, 71).

⁹⁷ The devil's *mestizo* profile is explicit as the narrator introduces him with the term and through the clothing that identifies the traditional Maya man (62/70). All the accustomed trappings of the formal dress of the Maya male are present in the devil's introduction: the white sombrero, white *guayabera*, the white pants, sandals and the red handkerchief around the neck.

⁹⁸ The *maaya*-language narrative voice calls X-inocenta a devil through labels like "le menkisin x ko'lelo" (65). While *menkisin* is a mild curse similar to 'dang', on a literal level, it means 'little devil woman'. The Spanish-language text does not feature the same humorous double reading. It reads, "la desvergüenza de la fêmeina" (72), demonstrating faithfulness more to the usage of *menkisin* as an insult rather than a literal devil image. A bilingual identification of X-inocenta with the devil appears in the affirmation that X-inocenta is a devil with only the appearance of a woman: "le ko'olele', jun puli' xan jun túul x kisik [sic] u tep mubaj yéetel u k'awelil [sic] jun túul jach jaj x ch'uupe" (64). / "la mujer era toda una diabla envuelta en piel de verdadera hembra" (71-72).

bey máas kisín leti’ ket le kisno’” (65).⁹⁹ My translation from *maayat’aan* is: ‘she said it as though she were better than that devil. As she went, she laughed at him with a grin; only she recognized that it was as if she were more devil than that devil over there.’ The *maaya* text suggests that X-inocenta better fulfills her devilish role than the failed male devil, as she has privileged knowledge about the devil’s defining characteristics. Her insinuation through the phrase “chen leti’” [only she] that even the devil himself does not understand what it takes to comply with his identity. Ceh Moo concretizes this hierarchy between the two devils by capitalizing on situational humor involving a common curse. Upon his failure, the devil chaperon admits he is subordinate to another devil when he curses, “Ku bissen kisín jun puli’” (66) / “Me lleva el diablo” (73). The phrase expresses the devil’s frustration, but in a literal reading, he blames his woes on a devil: ‘The devil has me.’ As metatextual humor, the devil’s curse faults himself for his own problems. However, reading the passage through the subtext of X-inocenta as devil, the devil curses X-inocenta. In this humorous option, X-inocenta is the origin of his hardship and shame as she beats him at his own game. The curse is more humorous because the devil could have used other common variations on the phrase to blame non-devil culprits. In either reading, the *maaya*-language double entendre creates humor at the expense of the male.

The protagonist’s Xtáabay subtext expresses Maya feminine sexual freedom. Without mentioning Xtáabay’s name, the text establishes X-inocenta as an Xtáabay through classic Xtáabay tropes such as nighttime, hair combing, attractiveness, and seduction.¹⁰⁰ The Xtáabay

⁹⁹ The corresponding Spanish text reads: “le dijo retadoramente, mientras blandía una maléfica y enigmática sonrisa” (73). In this passage, there is not a clear comparison between X-inocenta and the devil as an identity. The narrator only describes the woman through devilish adjectives.

¹⁰⁰ The text reads: “Ich aak’abe’ le x ko’olelo’ tu ichkinaj yéetel u ja’il u yits che’ ts’o’okole’ ka tu xachtaj u muulix jo’ole’ yéetel u xache’il k’áax. <<Ko’oten chitaj tin k’aam, –ichil ch’ujuk t’aanile’, ku t’áanik le kisno’, ka’alilikil ku t’áanik xan yéetel u yaal u noj u k’abil” (64). / “Por la noche, la mujer se bañó con hojas de salvia y su cabellera ondulada la rastreo [sic] con peine de monte. <<Ven acuéstate en mi hamaca –convidávale [sic] con voz melosa y movimientos de invitación con los dedos de su mano derecha” (71).

subtext also provides an assertive voice for X-inocenta's seduction attempts. The first night of her husband's absence, X-inocenta bathes herself, combs her hair, and actively invites the devil to have intercourse: "Ko'oten chitaj tin k'aam"¹⁰¹ / "Ven acuéstate en mi hamaca" (64 / 71).

Because X-inocenta is an Xtáabay, the text foreshadows that she will get her way with men. She asserts that if the devil resists her, nearby hunters and wood gatherers will accompany her in her loneliness: "letio'obe' jach u yojelo'ob tin k'aane' mants'ats' [sic] ken u kaxto'ob jun p'éeel 'chan jool'" (64) / "bien saben que en mi hamaca siempre encontraran [sic] un huequito" (72). Her logic is that if she does not have one man, she will have another; just like Xtáabay, she will have her prey.

Whereas Maya men indulge in marital infidelity in other works by Ceh Moo, the author reverses this dynamic in "Jun tuul aj kalan" / "Chaperón de alcurnia" as a Maya woman occupies this role. As such, the text capitalizes on the moral ambiguity of the Xtáabay subtext to resignify both women as positive figures. The text does not criticize X-inocenta's infidelity, but rather questions why the male gender should have singular claims to sexual freedom. The textual comparison between the gendered devils implies that if the devil chaperon can be a womanizer, X-inocenta, too, can exercise sexual freedom. The text casts doubt on the grounds for moral judgment of X-inocenta/Xtáabay. In fact, superimposing the two feminine names Xtáabay and X-inocenta highlights the unstable grounds for moral judgement of the character. Xtáabay is not 'innocent' in the sense of 'naïve' or 'virginal', meanings X-inocenta's name connotes. However, Xtáabay in Ceh Moo's portrayal is 'innocent' of wrongdoing, despite the devil chaperon's moral

¹⁰¹ While a standardized spelling of hammock in *maaya* is *k'aan*, Ceh Moo's "k'aam" exemplifies how her dialogue often imitates Yucatecan colloquial speech. With this term, the author incorporates the classic feature of Yucatecan pronunciation of the letter 'n' as /m/.

condemnation of her behavior. Rather, the *tsikbal* celebrates X-inocenta as a powerful, witty, and attractive figure subject to no one, just like the oral tradition's Xtáabay.

These layered subtexts reject a morality based on flawed male logic. The *mestizo* devil's dismay at a female character who exercises the full extent of the behaviors acceptable for Maya men exposes *mestizo* hypocrisy and support of a gender double standard. In fact, the devil finds X-inocenta morally reprehensible despite his own flaws. Specifically, he is scandalized by her speech.¹⁰² However, the devil's impotence to correct her speech embodies a textual rejection of male hypocrisy: "Takchaj u k'ee'ik bix u t'aan le menkisín x ko'olelo' ba'ale' chen beychaj u jok'ol tu chi' chen jun p'iit buts' tu chi'" (65). / "Quiso reclamar la desfachatez de la fémina, pero, de su boca sólo salió un poco de humo" (72).¹⁰³ Ceh Moo's silencing of the devil suggests that because of the devil's own immoral background, there are no words for him to protest the woman's bawdy language and marital infidelity. In this way, the devil is not permitted to express moral judgement of the protagonist, and the text liberates X-inocenta from accountability to a morally devoid chaperon.

The text relishes in women's triumph as the devil's defeat by a woman only increases his humiliation upon failure. This nuance is especially apparent in the *maaya* text, where the devil's

¹⁰² The devil is scandalized by women's vulgar speech:

J Lucifer tumeen mants'ats' [sic] leti' u meyaje' súuk u yu'ubik ba'alo'ob beyo', ba'ale' nich'banaj tu yo'olal u x ma'su'utaj yaatan u kumpale u taj yabiltmajo', ts'ó'okole' ma' súuk u yu'ubik tu chi' kio'olel [sic] k'ak'ast'áano'ob je'e bix le ku ya'alik le x ko'olelo'. (64-65) / Lucifer que en razón de su mismo oficio había escuchado miles de confesiones, se escandalizó por la desfachatez de la mujer de su querido compadre, además no era afecto a escuchar de las mujeres, palabras soeces. (72)

The offense or scandal in the devil's perspective is not the speech content but rather its enunciation by a woman. While Ceh Moo's "Evencia" portrays Maya beliefs that view women's bodies as the origin of their dangerous nature, this *tsikbal* suggests that patriarchal society, represented by the husband and the *mestizo* devil, views women's speech as another origin of danger. The fact that the devil would not protest her speech if she were a man reveals the double standard that limits feminine behaviors more than male ones.

¹⁰³ In the *maaya* text, what is "desfachatez" in the Spanish text is rendered as 'how she talks', further clarifying that the devil takes issue with the woman's speech over her actions. The specificity of the *maaya* text in terms of how she speaks, *bix u t'aan*, instead of what she does, *ba'ax ku beetik*, is even more notable because the concept of 'speech' is absent in the Spanish text.

shame is masculine in nature: “u xiibile’ nich’bana’an tu yo’olal toop tumeen le ko’olelo” (66). / “su orgullo estaba sangrando por the herida de la derrota” (73-74). The Spanish text creates a non-gender-specific image of wounded pride. However, the *maaya* text, meaning ‘his manhood was frustrated because of the bother of that woman,’ highlights a gender battle in the contrast between *u xiibil* [manhood] and *le ko’olelo’* [that woman]. The possessed noun form *xiibil*, defined as “masculinidad, fuerza, fortaleza” and “valentía” in the *Diccionario Maya Cordemex* (941), encompasses meanings connoted in Ceh Moo’s “orgullo”. However, *xiibil* additionally means ‘penis’ (941) and its root *xiib* is a noun meaning ‘boy’ or ‘male’, through which the *maaya* text takes on gender connotations to describe a specifically male type of pride that contrasts with X-inocenta’s feminine threat. The text takes another opportunity to illustrate the devil’s shame for losing to a woman: “le u toopol tumeen le x ko’olelo’ jun p’éel ba’al ma’ tu pajtal u mansiki” (66) / “the derrota era una afrenta que no podía superar” (73). My translation from *maayat’aan* is: ‘the harm from that woman was something he could not undergo’. Like in the previous passages, the *maaya* text highlights a gender battle that disappears in the Spanish text. Ceh Moo could have expressed the *maaya* sentence without attributing the harm and defeat to the woman by omitting “tumeen le x ko’olelo” [by that woman], she could have made the gendered comment less noticeable by using X-inocenta’s name, or she could have used a gender-neutral term like *maak* [person]. However, the option Ceh Moo chooses emphasizes the gender of the devil’s opponent, suggesting that her feminine identity is what really bothers the male.

By modifying oral tradition and capitalizing on *maaya*-language humor, Ceh Moo presents a *mestiza* overlaid with Xtáabay and devil imagery to make a case for women’s capabilities for their own self-determination, especially in the context of male hypocrisy. The text delights in X-inocenta’s feminine wit and outspokenness, through which she defeats her

male chaperon, much to his chagrin, and earns the opportunity to exercise the same sexual freedom that he does.

Martínez Huchim's Xtáabay: Expanding Contemporary Maya Conceptions of 'Woman'

Unlike the battle of genders in Ceh Moo that ultimately concretizes a male/female binary, Martínez Huchim's *tsikbal* "Xsaataj óol" (45-51) / "Divagación" (103-08) offers a feminine model that blurs the boundaries between male and female. The *tsikbal* genre aptly describes the text, as Martínez Huchim based the larger collection, *U yóol xkaambal jaw xíim / Contrayerba* (2013), on oral stories she collected (9/71). While Ceh Moo's X-inocenta capitalizes on her femininity, Martínez Huchim's female protagonist performs male attributes. In Martínez Huchim's text, the Maya town cannot read the protagonist's ambiguous gender, so the townspeople distance themselves from her and label her crazy, more clearly denoted by her *maaya* nickname (Xsaataj óol) than her Spanish one (Divagación). *Xsaataj óol* means crazy or "neurotic", and the root *saat* evokes a state of being "lost" or "distracted" (Bricker et. al. 243). Similarly to Martínez Huchim's emphasis on socially negotiated nickname identities in *U k'a'ajsajil u ts'u'noj k'áax / Recuerdos del corazón de la montaña*, as I discuss in Chapter 2, Xsaataj óol is known by her community-given nickname, as her birth name is unknown. Similarly to this gap in knowledge, this *tsikbal* functions through the tension between reported gossip about this woman (expressed through variations on the narrative framing phrase, "ku ya'ala'al" [it is said]) and the all-knowing third-person narrator's descriptions. While townspeople gossip about the protagonist's male behaviors and dress, the narrator's and a young girl's viewpoints humanize her, creating empathy despite her social ostracism. A mythic, stylized

portrayal of the protagonist as an Xtáabay figure reinforces the character's femininity and describes her non-normative gender performance as desirable.

Martínez Huchim's framing of this *tsikbal* presents the protagonist both symbolically and literally. The story's geographic and temporal framework opens upon an elevated area in the East and ends on a rise in the West. In this framing, the sun's trajectory during one day symbolizes the course of the protagonist's life. Between this stylized exposition and conclusion, a more realist plot, which recreates the protagonist's life, takes place in the valley between the two high points.

The opening compares the protagonist to a queen, and marks the origin of the character's association with feminine motifs such as butterflies and flowers, which the text declares are fit for a female ruler: “bey wa pulbil beeta’abo’ob tumen junts’íit k’ab ma’atáan u yila’al utia’al u tsikbe’enta’al juntúul x-ajaw, ya’abilak péepeno’ob jela’an u bonilo’ob éemo’ob te k’o’opo” (45). / “cual pétalos arrojados por alguna mano invisible para honrar a una reina, cientos de mariposas de variados colores descendieron hacia la rehayada” (103). This simile equates the butterflies with flower petals tossed on the floor to honor a powerful female leader: in Spanish, ‘queen’, and in *maaya*, *x-ajaw*. Linda Schele and David Freidel explain that this *maaya* term for ‘leader’, here in feminine form with the prefix *x-*, refers to “living gods” (17). In pre-Hispanic Maya society, the term simultaneously referred to a class of lords and one lord of the lords, who Schele and Freidel call “the high king” (57). As this *ajaw* title was inherited patrilineally (221), Martínez Huchim's decision to create a female *x-ajaw* subverts tradition.¹⁰⁴ Although the butterflies help create the flutter on high that creates the protagonist's royal feminine image, the

¹⁰⁴ This is similar to how the Maya *ajaw* Pakal created written history to justify a change in rules of succession after he inherited power matrilineally (Schele and Friedel 221-25).

children who play at killing the butterflies when they fly into the cotidian space of the valley foreshadows the hostile treatment this *x-ajaw* queen will receive there as well.

Just as Ceh Moo uses a non-realist archetypal battle of the genders that riffs off Maya oral tradition to expand social norms for Maya women, momentary non-realist aesthetics in Martínez Huchim's *tsikbal* also expand available feminine identities. Besides the *tsikbal*'s symbolic framing, an episodic structure, as opposed to one narrative arc related through a guise of objectivity, orders perspectives on the protagonist. Third, elements of magical realism,¹⁰⁵ such as the above-mentioned butterflies and other natural elements such as hummingbirds and sweet-smelling flowers decorate the protagonist's presence. The frequent yet scientifically unlikely way that butterflies and other natural elements seem to follow Martínez Huchim's character is reminiscent of the yellow butterflies that trail Mauricio Babilonia in Gabriel García Márquez's seminal magical realist novel, *Cien años de soledad* (29). While both Ceh Moo and Martínez Huchim use a realist mode in other *tsikbalo'ob*, their stylization of women protagonists who defy social expectations suggests that current gender relations on the peninsula do not acknowledge the myriad identities that Maya women have. Their writing then becomes a tool to create alternative visions for Maya women's identities.

The narrative voice disputes townspeople's perspectives about the protagonist to create sympathy with her non-normative model for Maya womanhood. While the townspeople know the protagonist in Spanish as Divagación [wandering], the Spanish-language narrator always places the nickname between quotation marks to protect the character. Doing so conveys her

¹⁰⁵ Wendy B. Faris affirms that magical realism "expands fictional reality to include events we used to call magic in realism" (17). Just as Martínez Huchim's *tsikbal* supports a model for Maya womanhood that the text shows is currently censured in Maya communities, Faris' definition exposes that the magical realist genre embodies a change of perspective, as its conception challenged the time's dominant literary paradigm of realism. Magical realist texts suggest that not all aspects of reality can be easily explained by utilizing a realist aesthetic to present magical or fantastic elements of reality as expected and normal (28).

wandering either as a perceived rather than innate characteristic or as townspeople's speech rather than the narrative voice's label. The narrator relates community members' opinions regarding the protagonist through oral stock phrases like "ku ya'ala'ale" [it is said], which separates the narrator's perspective from majority ones.

Describing the origin of the nickname Xsaataj óol / Divagación, the narrator affirms that an abusive man results in the protagonist's nickname and social censure. A soldier, her cohabitating lover, abuses her by swindling her with false claims and promises, only to disappear with all her wealth. The narrator foreshadows the man's unsuitability by describing the soldier as "juntúul máak jela'an" (47) [a strange man], an adjective that Bricker et al. defines as "different, strange (unacceptable behavior)" (102).¹⁰⁶ After the soldier's disappearance, the protagonist deviates from her previously normative feminine behaviors. The townspeople's explanation for her change is, "k'aaschaj u pool yo'olal juntúul xiib –ku ya'alik le máako'obo'" (47) / "se 'enculó' –opinaban los vecinos" (104). My translation of the *maaya* passage is "her head went bad over a man", said the people". The Spanish text's vulgar phrase describes falling deeply in love through an image of anal penetration.

Both the narrator and the townspeople's reported speech describe how the protagonist's new behaviors include adopting masculine dress and performing masculine behaviors:

Ka máan le k'iino'obo' le xba'alo' ku yilike' le máako' ma' suunaji', ts'o'ok u p'a'atal. Ka túun tu ch'a'aj u nook' le máako' ka tu búukintaj: bey úuchik u p'áatal bey xiibe', kex beyo' mix juntéen tu xoot'aj u chowakil u tso'otsel u poolo'. Tuláakal máak a'alik p'aat xiibilch'uup tumen ku cha'achik k'úutz yéetel ku jáak túubik. (47)

¹⁰⁶ In the dictionary's orthography, the term is "helá?an" (102)

La mujer, después de algún tiempo, asimiló el abandono y como reacción tomó la ropa que dejó el tipo y se la puso. Desde entonces viste como varón, aunque nunca se cortó el largo pelo rizado. La gente dice que se volvió marimacho porque también masca tabaco todo el tiempo y lanza escupitajos. (105)

The protagonist reveals the constructed nature of sex and gender as she adopts new gendered practices. The townspeople recognize her new clothing, smoking, and spitting as masculine behaviors. Because of the protagonist's daily wandering in the streets, a woman who learned the term *divagar* on a radionovela coins the protagonist's nickname: "Sa'at u yóol, chéen *divagar* ku beetik –ku ya'alik juntúul ko'olel" (48) / "Perdió la razón, puro *divagar* hace –defendió alguien" (105).¹⁰⁷ While her comment describes the protagonist's actions in verbs, the nouns derived from these verbs become the woman's nicknames. The Spanish text's insistence that the nicknamer defends the protagonist suggests a view that the protagonist's behaviors result from factors out of her control (losing her mind) instead of purposeful action. The idea that the protagonist 'just wanders around' also suggests that she is not harmful to anyone, but just different. Even so, town norms result in the protagonist's social ostracism, including her expulsion from practicing her Catholic faith in church (47-48, 105).

Townspeople's descriptions of the protagonist's previous behaviors delineate social and gender norms, against which they later consider her neurotic. As the gossip goes, Xsaataj óol was not always crazy. Comments demonstrate that for townspeople, 'not crazy' means following other women's feminine behaviors: "ka'ach úuchile' bey ma' sa'atak u yóoli', xSaataj óole' juntúul xch'úup jach t'a'aj utia'al meyaj yéetel ku jach biskubáa yéetel u jeel ko'olelo'ob" (46). /

¹⁰⁷ While the Spanish text does not specify the nicknamer's gender, reading the Spanish through the *maaya* text suggests the nicknamer is a woman. Applying the verb *divagar*, a word both texts say the nicknamer learned through a radionovela supports this reading, as women would form the primary listening audience.

“antes de perder la razón, ‘Divagación’ había sido una mujer trabajadora y sociable” (104). What Spanish designates as “sociable”, in *maaya* reads as, ‘she got along very well with other women.’ In other words, she was previously not considered crazy because her fellow females viewed her behavior as normal and she was able to maintain social relationships with them. She also worked in a way that is acceptable for a woman. The narrator describes her work as selling all manner of harvested foodstuffs in nearby towns (46-47/104). This is a common endeavor for Maya women, as Hanks explains in the context of the Yucatecan (state) town Oxkutzcab (*Referential* 113). However, the discrepancy between accepted norms for women and the protagonist’s masculine behaviors leads townspeople to re-identify her as a hybrid gender: “xiibilch’uup” (47) / “marimacho” (105). These compound terms unite both genders in a single concept, as *xibilch’uup*¹⁰⁸ means ‘mujer varonil’ (*Diccionario Maya Cordemex* 941) and *marimacho* combines the feminine name ‘María’ with masculine descriptor ‘macho’ (*Diccionario de la Lengua Española*). This gender cross can simultaneously connote sexuality. Bricker et. al. define *xiibilch’uup* as ‘lesbian’ (257), and *marimacho* can take on this connotation as well. The townspeople’s nickname for and reaction to the protagonist suggest that although Maya society has a term for hybrid gender, practicing the behaviors it describes is considered socially deviant.

On the other hand, the narrator never questions the protagonist’s identification as a woman, and gender categories remain stable. The narrator never describes the protagonist as a male, but rather as a woman who is like a male. This configuration is possible because for Martínez Huchim, the category ‘woman’ is more expansive than its conception in the portrayed community. Unlike the townspeople’s perspective, the definition of ‘woman’ that the *tsikbal* puts forth encompasses Xsaataj óol’s behavior both before and after her change. The narrator

¹⁰⁸ The entry is ‘xibilil ch’uplal’ in the orthography of the *Diccionario*.

constructs her as a woman by means of the feminine morpheme X- that precedes her nickname (X)saataj óol and the simile in the exposition that compares her with a specifically female ruler (*x-ajau / reina*). She never cuts her hair, foreshadowing her later identification as an Xtáabay figure. Butler's views illuminate Xsaataj óol's changes, as the critic provides grounds for rejecting assumptions that identities are stable: "what grounds the presumption that identities are self-identical, persisting through time as the same, unified and internally coherent? More importantly, how do these assumptions inform the discourses on 'gender identity'?" (22). This line of questioning, in the case of Xsaataj óol, opens room to normalize changes in identity and to identify discord between the protagonist's conception of her own identity and townspeople's attribution of her craziness. The text insinuates that the protagonists' outward transformation occurs because her despair upon being betrayed is so overwhelming that she is no longer subject to the regulatory practices of the cultural matrix.

The omniscient narrator offers a definitive glimpse into the protagonist's identity and supports the model of Maya womanhood that the protagonist embodies. This narrative technique is similar to how Castillo Tzec's narrator in *Ix-ts'akyaj / La yerbatera* guides readers to affirm Maya perspectives on coloniality, as I discuss in Chapter 2. Martínez Huchim's narrator confirms that the protagonist excels above other women in cultivating plants in her *solar*, which is typical work for the Maya woman (Hanks *Referential* 112). In fact, despite the protagonist's masculine dress and manner, the narrator shows that she performs women's tasks better than women who exclusively follow behaviors that Maya culture recognizes as feminine. For instance, the narrator describes reactions to the gardenia plant only the protagonist can grow:

U ki'ibo'okil u loolo'olbe' ku beetiku naats'al péepeno'ob yéetel u yik'el kaab,
bey xan ts'unu'uno'ob. Le óolale' ku ch'a'a p'ekta'al tumen u láak' ko'olelo'ob

ma'atech u kuxtal u pak'al loolo'ob. Tuláakalo'ob je'el bix le xko'olelo' ku
nách'kunkuba'ob. (48)

Su aroma cautivaba mariposas, abejas y colibríes, y provocaba la envidia de amas
de casa que no conseguían que les viviera aquella planta. (105)

Beyond women's jealousy, the above passage reinforces the protagonist's womanhood by linking her with feminine motifs like flowers, floral scents, butterflies, bees,¹⁰⁹ and hummingbirds, which evoke honey, sweetness, pollen, nourishment, and new life. Furthermore, the protagonist attracts these living beings into the tamed sphere of the Maya patio, which Hanks affirms is the Maya woman's space, as opposed to the outside terrain, which is the Maya man's space (*Referential* 111-12). The narrative voice mentions that her patio features both wild and domesticated plants. By extrapolating her patio as representative of the living space of the whole Maya community, I read this mention as an assertion that there is room for diversity in Maya social space.¹¹⁰

All genders and ages comment on the character's identity and behaviors, which suggests that all social demographics have a vested interest in women's conformity to gender norms. It also points to the fear that results from women's nonconformity, which, in its most extreme form, is demonstrated in Maya culture through Xtáabay tales. The narrator's identification of women gossipers also evokes social pressure among women. However, the narrator condemns gossipers through such labels as, "le máako'ob bey ku beetiko'ob tuláakal ba'al tu beele" [people

¹⁰⁹ In my experience, beekeeping is an exclusively male activity in Yucatan. However, because the bees are drawn into the Maya woman's space by a planted flower, I interpret this mention as a feminine motif.

¹¹⁰ Humorously, the protagonist's social outsider perspective reveals the arbitrary nature of socially decided gender norms. From the protagonist's perspective, "ku yilik le yuum k'iino' bey juntúul xnuuk ko'olele' tumen u ts'aamaj u chowak nook'" (47). / "veía que el cura, a su vez, parecía una señorona enfundado en su hábito sacerdotal" (105). This view, which challenges gender norms by comparing male priests' robes to women's clothing, gestures to the arbitrary nature of gender norms and questions the logic of their social enforcement.

who act as if they do everything correctly] (48) / “mojigatos” (105). The narrator also combats town perceptions when the protagonist herself rejects others’ beliefs about her. Although townspeople do not know how to respond to her religious devotion to a poster of El Santo, the Mexican *lucha libre* wrestler whom she calls ‘Santo’ and worships as a saint, the protagonist takes the poster’s survival of a domestic fire as proof of the wrestler’s protecting power. She celebrates by shouting to listeners:

–¡Jump’éeel *milagro*, jump’éeel *milagro*, ma’ eel in *Santoi*’! –ku ya’alik ya’ab u téenel ti’ máaxo’ob bino’ob u yilo’ob táan u yawat–. ¡Ts’o’ok a wilike’ex, ts’o’ok a wilike’ex, ts’o’okole’ te’exe’ ka wa’alike’ex xSaataj óolen. (50)

–¡Es un milagro, es un milagro, no se quemó mi *Santo*! –decía una y otra vez a los vecinos que acudieron al oír sus gritos–. ¡Ya lo ven, ya lo ven, y ustedes que piensan que estoy loca! (107)

In the Spanish text, the protagonist rejects the town’s claim that she is crazy (“loca”). However, in the *maaya* text, she rejects her very nickname through the passage’s final clause [You all just saw! You just saw! After that, you all say I’m Xsaataj óol]. By discrediting her nickname itself, the *maaya* text offers a stronger rebuttal of townspeople’s ideas about her, because it challenges the manner in which townspeople know her and speak about her.

Associations of the protagonist with Xtáabay motifs demythify and humanize both feminine figures by portraying the protagonist’s kind and gentle nature. For example, the protagonist sits under the shade of a *ya’axche’* or *ceiba* tree to heal one of the butterflies that the children attempted to kill. Although she occupies a space where Xtáabay is said to wait for her prey, she is engaged in healing rather than kidnapping. The anecdote demonstrates that the non-normative protagonist is more compassionate than the butterfly-killing children and the

hypocritical townspeople who outwardly comply with socially accepted behaviors (45-46, 103-04). The protagonist's nature recalls oral versions of Xtáabay as the kind but unchaste *xk'eban*. The protagonist's butterfly healing creates even more sympathy for her character considering Preuss' assertion that *maaya*-language oral tradition punishes individuals who kill butterflies (460).

The episode with the most explicit Xtáabay comparison reveals how the community's gaze constructs the protagonist as an object of the townspeople's desire. Because the episode portrays the community's taboo desires, the narrator makes the glimpse into this scene possible. The narrator asserts that the protagonist's afternoon custom in the dry season, bathing outdoors and drying her naked body under the sun, is a spectacle that the townspeople do not miss. As the protagonist undresses, revealing her naked body and long hair, an Xtáabay reference reinforces the protagonist's feminine essence underneath her masculine trappings: "Ku lu'sik u p'óok yéetel ku chóolik u tso'otse u pool, ku náakaltak tu pool u píix, bey juntúul ki'ichpam xtáabaye'" (48) / "Se quita el sombrero y, cual *xtabay*, se suelta el cabello, que le llega hasta las rodillas" (106). The Xtáabay intertextuality suggests the protagonist is a tantalizing woman, which confronts the town's rejection of her gender performance. The narration confirms townspeople's attraction for her unique custom and her naked body: "Mixmáak ku p'áatal mun cha'an" (49). / "Nadie pierde la función" (106). Their simultaneous attraction to the protagonist and gossip about her difference exposes townspeople's contradictory reactions to the protagonist. Like Ceh Moo, Martínez Huchim uses hair to identify her protagonist as an Xtáabay figure. While Xsaataj óol generally wears a sombrero that covers her hair, the bathing scene reveals that under her outer garments, Xsaataj óol simultaneously uses the *t'uuch*, the *mestiza*'s traditional hairstyle (49). As the protagonist takes out her *t'uuch* and lets her hair down, Martínez Huchim reinforces her

character's feminine and Maya identity. In this way, the narrator affirms the *mestiza* identity as an essence that outward appearance does not change, which challenges current usage of the term. In fact, the text's modification of the *mestiza*'s appearance argues for flexibility in Maya definitions of femininity and womanhood.

Calling the scene a spectacle (“cha’anil” in *maaya*) reinforces the townspeople’s desire in the Xtáabay bathing scene. Yucatec Maya anthropologist Genner Llanes Ortiz compares the Maya concept of *cha’anil* to the notion of ‘performance’ in a bilingual essay:

U k’áat u ya’al jun p’éel meyaj tukulta’ab tia’al u ts’aik ki’óoltsil ichil bix u péeksik u wíinklil máak, wáa ichil u péets’il k’aay wáa ik’il t’aan ku ya’alik tu táanil máak. Máake’ ku páajtal u cha’antik u yóok’ostal k’éek’en pool, pay wakax, balts’am, televisión yéetel películas. (29)

Se refiere a una actividad concebida para producir deleite, agrado, o bien, un fuerte sentimiento (*ki’óoltsil*), a través de la acción de sus intérpretes, del sonido del canto, o de la palabra recitada en público. Dicho en español yucateco, la gente puede “gustar de” eventos como la danza de “la cabeza de cochino”, la corrida de toros, el teatro, la televisión o el cine. (29)

Cha’anil, then, describes cultural productions meant to delight spectators. This configuration constructs the Xtáabay protagonist as an unsuspecting performer and the townspeople as spectators. Definitions of the transitive verb root *cha’ant-* as “behold, view, look on, enjoy” (Bricker et. al. 64) emphasize that *cha’an* is not just watching but enjoying through watching.

This stylized stage of the *cha’anil* is set through feminine motifs of butterflies, floral scents, and birdsongs, along with a perceived manipulation of time, to form a magical realist episode:

Le k'iino' bey ma' tun yáalkabe', káajal túun jump'éeel cha'anil: u xiknal
 péepeno' ob tu yóok'ol bey xan ku yu'uba'al u ki'ibokil le loolo'obe'. Xsaataj
 óole' ku xuuxub chaambéel, ba'ax ku sa'atal ichil u jats'uttil k'aay ch'ícho'ob
 mix ojéela'an tu'ux u taalo'obi'. (48-49)

Como si el día no transcurriera, la mujer, jícara tras jícara, se echa encima el agua
 fresca. Así inicia una fiesta: el revolotear de mariposas en torno suyo y el perfume
 embriagador de flores. 'Divagación' emite un silbido tenue que se camufla con el
 canto sinfónico de las aves que vienen de quién sabe dónde. (106)

Around Martínez Huchim's protagonist-actress, butterflies and floral scents set the stage with a
 pleasant ambiance. The protagonist's humming, mixed with birdsongs, is the musical score.¹¹¹
 Martínez Huchim's narrator expresses the presence of these motifs matter-of-factly,
 incorporating their stylization into a vision of reality in magical realist treatment. Just as Faris
 notes that magical realism has often been used as a tool of resistance (83), Martínez Huchim's
 "Xsaataj óol"¹¹² upholds a new model for womanhood by humanizing a protagonist marginalized
 in her Maya society and creating space for her non-normative gender performance in the
 category 'woman'.¹¹³

¹¹¹ While Llanes Ortiz glosses *cha'anil* as 'fiesta' or 'espectáculo' (30) and Martínez Huchim's Spanish-language text uses "fiesta". However, 'party' or 'festivities' are not one-to-one translations of *cha'anil*, because 'party' can but does not necessarily involve a viewed spectacle.

¹¹² Faris asserts, "Regardless of their specific political agendas, magical realist texts are often written in the context of cultural crises, almost as if their magic is invoked when recourse to other, rational, methods have failed" (83).

¹¹³ Critics question magical realism's power to challenge colonization when its relationship with indigenous worldviews can be problematic. Magical realist texts often assume a non-native perspective that treats indigenous worldviews as magical (169). However, as a Maya-authored text, "Xsaataj óol" does not conflate Maya beliefs with magic. Rather, the portrayal of the constant presence of butterflies around the protagonist is a stylistic decision, not typical of Maya representations or understandings of butterflies. Preuss notes that in oral tradition, butterflies announce the presence of deceased loved ones and must be protected (455, 460). Ceh Moo illustrates this popular wisdom surrounding butterflies in her *tsikbal* "Chan sak peepeno'ob" / "Maripositas blancas" in *K'aaltale' ku xijkunsik u jel puxsi'ikalo'ob* / *El alcohol también rompe otros corazones* (2013). In the story, a husband welcomes his deceased wife in butterfly form for a visit each October during *Janal Pixan*, the Yucatecan version of Day of the Dead. While Martínez Huchim's frequent mention of butterflies near the protagonist differs from such conceptions,

The *cha'anil* bathing scene even evokes desire surrounding the protagonist's brand of womanhood, especially when read through the lens of Llanes Ortiz's essay and Ceh Moo's "Jun tuul aj kalan" / "Chaperón de alcurnia". When read together, these texts demonstrate how moving bodies can be interpreted as examples of *cha'an* inscribed with desire. The examples of *cha'anil* in the Llanes Ortiz fragment above include "bix u péeksik u wíinklil máak" [how people move their bodies]. His rendering in Spanish, "la acción de sus intérpretes", describes bodily movement in public artistic performance. However, Ceh Moo's text shows that the concept also encapsulates private spectacles and sexual desire. She uses the transitive verb form *ku cha'antik* to describe the vendor husband observing his wife: "ku cha'antik bix u bin u pekskubaj le x ko'olelo" (61). / "escrutaba los movimientos sensuales de la dama" (69). The *maaya* passage reads, 'he enjoyed watching how that woman was moving (herself).' In a bilingual reading, male desire permeates this instance of *cha'anil*, as the husband delightedly views ("ku cha'antik") the wife's sensuality ("movimientos sensuales"). As in Ceh Moo's use of *ku cha'antik*, desire cannot be separated from how Martínez Huchim uses *cha'anil* in "Xsaataj óol". Even as the townspeople are attracted to the protagonist's naked body, they disguise their interest by engaging in gender- and age-appropriate quotidian tasks while they draw near the scene. The men cut wood, the women wash, and the children climb tress or hide behind walls (49/106). As they wish to keep their observation hidden from their neighbors, the text suggests townspeople's perceptions that their voyeurism indulges in taboo desires. In this way, the text insinuates that townspeople's social rejection of the protagonist hides their non-normative desires.

The townspeople's attraction to the protagonist's naked body suggests what Yolanda Martínez San-Miguel calls "deseo polífono". Thinking within a heterosexual matrix, it is

the positive ambiance her butterflies create around the protagonist aligns their portrayal with their revered presence in Maya oral tradition.

impossible to categorize the collective voyeurism, as Martínez Huchim's Xtáabay character attracts not just heterosexual men but rather all genders and all ages. For the townspeople, the protagonist lies outside the bounds of what is "culturally intelligible" in Butler's terms (39), and she is considered a "Xsaataj óol" because of this. Butler argues, "The cultural matrix through which gender identity has become intelligible requires that certain kinds of 'identities' cannot 'exist'" (23-24). However, Martínez Huchim makes an identity that is unintelligible in the town exist through her literature. While the townspeople are keepers of gender normativity in their treatment of the protagonist's difference, the *cha'anil* shows the cracks in the heteronormative dominant culture. Like Martínez Huchim's configuration of the rift between the protagonist's *mestiza* identity underneath her masculine appearance, townspeople also have hidden desires repressed in their normative performance of gender and sexuality. When the protagonist tucks her hair back into the *t'uuch* style and covers it with her *sombrero*, the narration cuts to another episode, signaling the end of the time-stopping spectacle of this dry-season gender ritual. Simultaneously, it marks the end of a rare glimpse into the townspeople's intimacy with an ostracized woman before the appearance-based social status quo is restored in town.

Like Villegas' "Ix chéel" and Ceh Moo's "Evencia", Martínez Huchim's text includes a motif of a young girl who symbolizes Maya women's possible futures. Young Mercedes is the only character who observes and perceives the protagonist instead of gossiping about her. Whereas other children flee from Xsaataj óol, Mercedes remains hidden to watch the older woman: "chan Mercedesese' ma' bini', p'áat mix tun péeki', chéen táan u yilik le xko'olelo'" (46) / "la pequeña Mercedes no huye; se ha quedado quieta mirando atentamente" (104). She scrutinizes the protagonist from a close vantage point, even noting the thickness of the protagonist's lips. The girl observes that Xsaataj óol resembles her own grandmother Benigna

(46, 104), which further humanizes and individualizes the protagonist. The girl watches the protagonist until the very end of the *tsikbal*, when her grandmother calls her home.

Similar to the other authors' motifs of the young female, Mercedes' identity as a young Maya girl suggests that her vantage point symbolizes a young generation of women who learn about gender in society as they observe social interactions. As Mercedes' behavior differs from her peers', her character points to an alternative path in society. Mercedes offers a model of observation and perception, finding similarity in difference, and empathizing with others. In contrast with other townspeople who clamour to voice their opinions about the protagonist, Mercedes' character only thinks and never speaks. In this way, "Xsaataj ool" / "Divagación" teaches that characters are more than their mythical proportions in oral tales. Mercedes exemplifies how to "see" a character instead of allowing dominant narratives to be definitive conclusions on an individual.

At the end of the *tsikbal*, symbolic framing creates parallelism with the stylized exposition as Mercedes looks on. Whereas the *tsikbal* mostly narrates afternoon events, the ending's evening time of day symbolizes the protagonist's approach to the end of life at nighttime. The protagonist's image mixes with the clouds as she climbs the Western hill, the location of the setting sun.

It is clear that social forces will continue to challenge Mercedes' perspective on the protagonist when her grandmother Benigna calls her inside in the final lines. The grandmother warns that there are *k'anmúuyal* clouds and that *k'ank'ubul ja'*, a rain that harms growing things including children, is about to fall (51, 108, 122). While Benigna perceives these omens in the sky, the fact that Xsaataj óol has become part of the sunset horizon associates her character with the omens. Benigna perceives these clouds, and therefore Xsaataj óol, as a threat to her

granddaughter. The *tsikbal* is open-ended, as the text is silent on how Mercedes will respond: will she heed her grandmother's warnings, which symbolize assuming the town's perspectives, or will her observations of Xsaataj óol help her create a different opinion on the protagonist?

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed how male-authored works portray the Maya woman as a *mestiza* in a signifier of Maya cultural revalorization in a Spanish-dominant hegemonic context. Leirana Alcocer demonstrates that such celebration of Maya tradition is a dominant mode in *maaya*-language literature, as I discussed in Chapter 2.¹¹⁴ In contrast, women's portrayals resist a singular Maya feminine identity and expand the identities available to women in Maya communities. As women writers question Maya cultural norms but male writers mostly do not, it suggests that male writers have primarily sought to empower their culture as a whole. Women authors likewise participate in cultural revitalization, yet their texts are critical of Maya traditions that create gender inequality and hinder women's well-being, suggesting a respect for Maya culture while advocating for certain customs to change. Judges' comments demonstrate that Ceh Moo's socially engaged perspective on gender, which offers a distinct perspective from dominant idyllic portrayals of indigenous cultures, was the determining factor in her reception in 2014 of the Premio Nezahualcóyotl de Literatura en Lenguas Mexicanas for her novel *Chen tumeen ch'úupen / Sólo por ser mujer*.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ She writes, "Los poemas actuales, y la creación literaria en general, van acompañados de una fuerte ideología que busca demostrar la vigencia de la cultura maya, trazar una línea continua desde lo prehispánico hasta la actualidad, reivindicando la tradición" (*Conjurando* 47).

¹¹⁵ A Secretaría de Cultura article relates a quotation from the panel of judges, who state that Ceh Moo's novel *Chen tumeen ch'úupen / Sólo por ser mujer*

se sitúa en el contexto actual, saliendo del leitmotiv, flor y canto y/o madre tierra, para hablar de la violencia de género y cómo se vive este fenómeno en las comunidades indígenas de Yucatán. La protagonista de la novela es una mujer que rompe con los parámetros de conducta establecidos para la mujer en la sociedad maya contemporánea ("Marisol").

Despite current social realities as women's works portray them, the repeating motif of the young girl in these texts is suggestive of future possibilities for women in Maya communities.¹¹⁶ While Villegas positions the baby girl in a way that suggests she will continue his work and create cultural continuity, Ceh Moo and Martínez Huchim position the girls in their *tsikbalo'ob* as disruptive and privy to new ways of thinking about Maya women.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ In this chapter, I analyze the motif of a young girl as a symbol of women's futures. However, writers also provide portraits of young boys. Both Ceh Moo and Martínez Huchim depict grandmothers who raise their grandsons. See "X Ma Cleofas" / "Cleofas. La anciana" in Ceh Moo's *Tabita* and "U chiich Tusit" / "La abuela de 'Tusit'" in Martínez Huchim's *U yóol xkaambal jaw xíw*. Carrillo Can features a son protagonist in "Áak'abil cháak" / "Lluvia nocturna" and a young boy in "Bolon" / "Nueve" in *Kuxa'an t'aan*. Sánchez Chan's protagonist in "Tomoxchi" is a young male.

¹¹⁷ While I did not discuss Isaac Carrillo Can's novel *U yóok'otilo'ob áak'ab. Danzas de la noche*, the young female protagonist discovers she is an orphan and therefore looks to her past to reconstruct her identity. She continues disrupting tradition as one of the dancers in her biological father's town who choreographs didactic public dance routines using lessons she learns from her mother in dreams.

Chapter 4. “Ka’ap’éeł meyaj yaan ti’”¹¹⁸ [They have two tasks]: Writer-Translators and the Status of *maayat’aan* in Bilingual Writing

Translation into Spanish and bilingual publication are a norm for writers who publish in a language spoken by approximately 800,000 people (“Programa”) and read by an even smaller demographic, given the dominance of Spanish-language education in Mexico. With 759,000 speakers, *maayat’aan* ranks as the Mexican indigenous language with the second largest demographic of speakers after Nahuatl language families (1,376,000 speakers) and before Mixtec and Zapotec language families (a little over 400,000 speakers each), according to INALI statistics published in 2009 (“Programa” 17).¹¹⁹ Bilingualism is more prevalent among *maaya* speakers than among other sociolinguistic groups in the country (Burns “Humor” 399). Considering these factors, Rosado Avilés and Ortega Arango go so far as to say: “[E]l escritor maya yucateco, a diferencia del escritor de carrera dentro del gran circuito literario occidental, nace no sólo como creador-recopilador, sino que además tiene que ejercer la función de traductor: ser escritor maya es ser traductor al español” (123). *Maaya*-language writer Feliciano Sánchez Chan has also expressed this idea, according to an article in *K’iintsil*, the monolingual *maaya*-language section of the newspaper *La Jornada Maya*. The newspaper reports his comments at the 2016 Feria Internacional de la Literatura Yucatán (Filey) in Mérida about *maaya*-language writers:

¹¹⁸ From Sánchez Chan, Sasil. While the *maaya* phrase uses a grammatically singular possessor of the two tasks (“ti’” versus the plural “ti’o’ob”) to speak in general terms about *maaya*-language writers, my translation uses “they” to adhere to English-language norms that discuss generalities through plural subjects.

¹¹⁹ *Maayat’aan* embodies one linguistic variant, and all speakers are mutually intelligible to each other despite regional differences. The other categories of comparison are language families that encompass multiple linguistic variants (18-19). While this dissertation focuses on *maaya* speakers in Mexico, *maayat’aan* is spoken in parts of Belize. It should also be recognized, as I discuss in Chapter 5, that *maaya* speakers participate in processes of national and international migration.

tu súutukil u t'aan aj ts'iib Sánchez Chane', tu jets'aj tuukulo'ob yo'olal ba'ax ku yúuchul yéetel maaya t'siibo'ob [sic], leti'e tu ya'alaje' ku yantal ka'ap'éeł meyaj ti' máax beetik tumen ma' chéen ts'iib u ka'ajo'obi', láayli' ku yantal u sutko'ob ich káastelan t'aan ba'ax ku ts'iibtiko'ob. (Sánchez Chan, S.).

[During the writer Sánchez Chan's presentation, he laid out thoughts about what is going on with *maaya*-language writers. He said that they have two jobs because they don't just write to get started, they still have to translate what they write into Spanish.]

The assumption that *maaya*-language authors must both write [*ts'iib*] and translate [*sut t'aan* (turn language)] seems innocent enough. In fact, writers who work in *maayat'aan* do not live monolingual lives, perhaps making a bilingual form of writing a better representation of authors' experience and regional realities than a monolingual text could be. However, this chapter questions expectations of bilingual production in the case of indigenous-language writers and explores if bilingual publications hinder or encourage Maya cultural and language revitalization when they simultaneously offer readers an indigenous- and a corresponding dominant-language text.

There is awareness in translation studies of a need to question the motives of translation projects. As Maria Tymoczko points out, "Studies of translation are increasingly alert to the circumstances under which books are chosen for translation and translations are published" ("Post-colonial" 31). In an analysis of the English-language translation industry, Lawrence Venuti identifies what he calls an "ethnocentric violence" in contemporary translation practice and commerce (*The Translator's* 20). He asserts that the translation industry reinforces the hegemony of the English-speaking world, as English-speaking countries produce few

translations from other languages, while translations, usually from English, form a higher percentage of total publications in other markets (9-17). This asymmetry means that readers from other languages have more access to English-language works than English-language readers have to works from other languages. Additionally, for Venuti, contemporary stylistic norms for English in translation, which valorize fluency and a naturalness of expression, result in “an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values” (20). According to these norms, the goal is for the translator to become invisible and for the translation to replace the original (1-2). In Venuti’s view, this “domesticating” translation obscures the context and worldview that inspires and permeates the original text (20). Venuti’s discussion is a reminder to question instances of translation and ways of translating instead of accepting them at face value. While the case of *maaya*-language literature does not always involve an English-language market, Venuti’s remarks demonstrate translation’s possibilities of reinforcing or resisting linguistic and cultural hierarchies even as activists in and beyond Yucatan seek to revalorize *maayat’aan* amid such hierarchies.

The fact that almost all contemporary literary publications by *maaya*-language writers are bilingual *maayat’aan*-Spanish editions merits attention when not all publications become translated and there is uneven cultural transmission oftentimes embedded in the production and distribution of translations. In my experience, it is more likely that a work will be *maaya*-Spanish-English trilingual or even multilingual than monolingual *maaya*.¹²⁰ Pragmatic factors

¹²⁰ For a trilingual *maaya*-Spanish-English edition, see the anthologies edited by Carlos Montemayor and Donald Frischmann: *Words of the True Peoples: Anthology of Contemporary Mexican Indigenous-Language Writers / Palabras de los seres verdaderos: Antología de escritores actuales en lenguas indígenas de México* (2004), and *U tiumben k’aayilo’ob x-ya’axche’: Los nuevos cantos de la ceiba / The New Songs of the Ceiba* (2009). For a trilingual children’s book, see *Tsíimin tuunich, jWáay miis yéetel Aluxo’ob / El caballo de piedra, El jwáay gato y Los aluxes / The Horse of Stone, The jWáay-Cat, and The Aluxes* (2015) compiled by Martínez Huchim. A multilingual text is *Adivinanzas Mayas Yucatecas. Na’at le ba’ala paalen: ‘Adivina esta cosa ninio’* (2006-07), which features Yucatec Maya riddles compiled by Briceño Chel and published in Spanish, *maayat’aan*, English, Tzotzil, and French. Relating to monolingual *maaya* publication, Lepe Lira reports that writers in literary workshops

certainly compel bilingual and multilingual publication of *maaya*-language works. *Maayat'aan* has much fewer readers than Spanish. When I asked the poet Wildernain Villegas in 2014 if he hoped readers would read both versions of his bilingual poetry collections, he did not respond with aspirations but rather stated realities he is well aware of: “Sé de antemano que va a haber más lectores en español y menos lectores en maya. Lo tengo presente. Es un hecho que no podemos negar. Porque, lo van a leer en maya en la península, pero lo van a leer en español en el país y en otros lugares”. He went on to specify that readers of the *maaya* poems will mostly be university educated or other *maaya*-language writers (Personal Interview). Felipe Castillo Tzec expressed similar sentiments in a conversation with me in 2015; he suggested that bilingual editions are necessary for attracting readers even as he expressed his aspirations to increase the number of *maaya*-language readers as *maaya*-language education improves (Personal Interview). At this moment, however, translating *maaya* texts into Spanish becomes necessary, as Rosado Avilés and Ortega Arango suggest, to reach a reading public beyond the Yucatan Peninsula or even from the peninsula when there are more speakers than readers of the language.

Another pragmatic reason, however, for the prevalence of bilingual publication is that most print publishing opportunities for *maaya*-language writers in Mexico are State-sponsored competitions or grants for creative writing that dictate what type of texts will be published and in what format.¹²¹ Notably, multiple literary competitions require indigenous-language writers to

in the state of Quintana Roo have insisted upon monolingual *maaya*-language publication of their work through the Dirección General de Culturas Populares de Quintana Roo. She quotes their statement, “si quieres saber qué dicen nuestros poemas, narraciones y cantos, aprende la lengua maya” (110). I do not have access to their works for this project.

¹²¹ Beyond dictating bilingual submission, literary contests can predetermine the genres Indigenous-language authors work in. For example, FONCA submission guidelines for the category “Letras en lenguas indígenas” specify the following genres: *crónica y relato histórico, cuento y novela, ensayo creativo, poesía, dramaturgia*, and *guión radiofónico* (“Fondo” 4). Having specified genres encourages writers who seek avenues for funding and publication to write in these modes, even if they are not the common genres for their languages. While it is essentialist to limit Indigenous-language writers to traditional cultural genres, it is also notable that most categories relating to oral tradition are non-existent. The radio script offers one such opportunity, but Spanish-language competitors have

submit bilingual manuscripts with corresponding texts in writers' mother tongues and Spanish. Perhaps the most prestigious such competition is the national Premio Nezahualcóyotl de Literatura en Lenguas Mexicanas ("Premio 14^o"). As a contest only available to indigenous-language writers, it offers an important avenue for increasing the visibility of contemporary talent and perspectives from indigenous peoples, who are often excluded in many ways from national conversations. Another national competition, sponsored by the Fondo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes (FONCA), provides Jóvenes Creadores awards for Mexican writers and artists ages 18-34. The competition features the categories "Letras" and "Letras en lenguas indígenas", with the former for monolingual Spanish submissions and the latter requiring bilingual indigenous-language/Spanish manuscripts ("Jóvenes"). Multiple *maaya*-language writers, including Carrillo Can, Ceh Moo, Cuevas Cob, Noh Tzec, Sánchez Chan, and Villegas, have participated in these contests and funded and published their work through their favorable outcomes. Bilingual requirements at the national level likely result from practical considerations. Writers from eight different indigenous languages have won the Premio Nezahualcóyotl since its inception in 1993 ("Dedican"),¹²² and it is quite probable that writers from additional languages have submitted manuscripts. Unless the evaluating panel members can read all the languages of submission, it is impossible to compare the indigenous-language texts on their own terms. Therefore, the dominant-language texts become a tool to evaluate literature in multilingual competitions. Once

additional categories available to them in audiovisual genres like film scripts ("Fondo" 4). The narrower scope of the Premio Nezahualcóyotl has even more potential to dictate genres. Held every two years since the year 2000, each competition focuses on one of three alternating genres: poetry, short stories, and novels ("Premio Nezahualcóyotl" *Enciclopedia*). For example, the 2014 contest accepted submissions of novels and graphic novels, in which visual artists and textile artists could participate ("Premio 13^o"), and the 2016 contest focused on oral poetry ("Premio 14^o"). While it appears that the competition concept of genre is somewhat fluid, as demonstrated by the inclusion of graphic novel and textile arts in the 2014 narrative category and the focus on oral poetry as opposed to other types of poetry in 2016, theater and essay are noticeably absent. Additionally, the featured genre in each competition could curb other types of creativity if it influences writers to work in the genre of the approaching competition in order to have an opportunity to publish.

¹²² Three *maaya*-language writers have won the award: Villegas (2008), Carrillo Can (2010), and Ceh Moo (2014).

a winner is chosen, Spanish serves to promote commercial interests, making works marketable to a broader audience.

One national award competition, the UADY-sponsored Juegos Literarios Nacionales Universitarios, does more to disrupt linguistic hierarchies in Yucatan as it awards *maaya*-language authors based on the merit of their *maaya*-language creative work alone. The standing category “Narrativa en lengua maya” does not require bilingual submission. Still, the contest requires eventual translation, as according to submission guidelines, “el trabajo en lengua maya premiado, deberá ser traducido de inmediato al español para su publicación” (“Convocatorias”). These terms do not specify that the winning writer must complete the translation, so this award does not foment a bilingual writing process in the same way that the Premio Nezahualcóyotl and the FONCA grants do. Compared to national awards open to multiple indigenous languages, the Juegos Literarios judging panel reviews manuscripts only in *maayat’aan* and can therefore feasibly base award decisions on the indigenous-language text. As such, the competition better affirms the communicative and literary value of *maayat’aan* and foment a specifically *maaya*-language literature during the creative process. However, the ultimate obligation of bilingual publication produces the same result as other national competitions, reproducing expectations of bilingualism for writers but not readers.¹²³

Despite practical considerations that to some degree necessitate bilingual publications, writers and scholars must consider their effects on the local and global status of *maayat’aan* and ongoing language revitalization efforts. Sánchez Chan expressed concerns during the 2016 Filey

¹²³ All of these literary competitions separate out categories for Indigenous-language literature, rather than considering all literary submissions in the same category, which also raise questions. Having separate Indigenous-language categories ensures a winner from an underrepresented population and creates space for authors to express distinct cultural underpinnings and work within Indigenous-language genres and canons. However, it simultaneously ensures that Indigenous-language literary creation will always be seen as tangential to dominant-language literary canons, not a norm that can exert influence on dominant-language writers.

in Mérida that the expectation of bilingualism for indigenous-language authors does not encourage quality *maaya*-language writing, according to *K'iintsil*. In a summary of the writer's comments, the newspaper states: "[U] ya'abil le ketlamo'ob ku jóok'salo'ob tia'al maaya ts'íibo'obe', ku táanilkunsiko'ob káastelan t'aan, kex tumen u maayaili' ma' jach ma'alo'ob yaniki'" (Sánchez Chan, S.). [In many competitions they come out with for *maaya*-language writers, Spanish puts them ahead, even though their *maaya* is not very good]. His comments demonstrate that the practical effects of bilingual publishing at best result in promoting a bilingual creative process more than an indigenous-language literature in its own right. At worst, as Sánchez Chan has also expressed elsewhere, they result in encouraging writers to tend to their Spanish-language texts more than their indigenous-language texts as the avenue to literary success.¹²⁴ From a revitalization perspective, the competitions' contributions to furthering indigenous languages are therefore ambivalent.

While Spanish ensures wider access to *maaya*-language literature, it also reproduces the hegemony of the Spanish language over *maaya* and other indigenous languages. Even the national Premio Nezahualcóyotl contest, which honors the ongoing contributions of indigenous Mexico and provides indigenous authors a means of publication, depends upon a transplanted, colonial language as its lingua franca. If the Spanish text is the one a majority of readers will access, the practical result is that the indigenous-language texts are relegated to a role of legitimizing authors' indigenous identities, defining eligibility, and functioning as an aesthetic complement instead of communicating meaning.¹²⁵ This situation is reminiscent of the lack of

¹²⁴ Of the Premio Nezahualcóyotl, he states, "lo seguro es que le leerán en la lengua franca, pues la institución convocante no le va a poder poner jurados que hablen cada una de las lenguas de los concursantes. Lo anterior se traduce entonces en que varios de los concursantes, procuran "pulir" con sumo cuidado sus textos en castellano y descuidan gravemente sus textos en lengua propia" ("Escritura" 171).

¹²⁵ Alternatively, the competition's linguistic focus, as advertised in the name Premio Nacional de Literaturas en Lenguas Mexicanas, obscures the fact that monolingual Spanish texts can express an Indigenous perspective and that linguistic hegemonies in educational and social spheres mean that many individuals of Indigenous heritage no

change in speakers' access to their languages despite the 2003 Ley General de Derechos Lingüísticos de los Pueblos Indígenas, which articulates the Mexican State's commitment to a plurilingual, pluricultural identity and promise to promote indigenous languages.¹²⁶ While the law guarantees indigenous peoples' rights to use their languages in the public sphere, Worley asserts that the law "perhaps further entrenches the status of Spanish as a hegemonic language as in practice it normalizes both non-indigenous monolingualism and indigenous bilingualism" ("Máseual" 7).

Readers of these bilingual texts have the option to access only the *maaya* text, only the Spanish text, or both. However, Worley offers a reminder that when approaching bilingual texts, "any reading done in monolingual isolation remains by definition incomplete" ("Máseual" 16). In his analysis of poems from Waldemar Noh Tzec's bilingual collection *Noj Bálam / El grande jaguar* (1998), Worley concludes that the *maaya* poems feature a rebellious indigenous poetic voice, whereas the Spanish-language poetic voice acquiesces to Mexico's socio-cultural status quo (12). Within this bilingual dynamic, which Worley calls "máseual excluido"/"indio permitido", he defines the acquiescent Spanish-language text as an example of "neoliberal translation":

longer speak their ancestors' languages. The competition title also claims indigenous tongues as Mexican. While contemporary indigenous peoples oftentimes consider themselves simultaneously Mexican and indigenous (see my discussion of Pat Boy Rap Maya in Chapter 5), these languages also predate the Mexican nation, rendering the name's implications anachronistic at best and neo-colonial at worst.

¹²⁶ Article 3 of the 2003 Ley General de Derechos Lingüísticos de los Pueblos Indígenas demonstrates that Mexico conceives of itself as a plurilingual and pluricultural country on an ideological level: "Las lenguas indígenas son parte integrante del patrimonio cultural y lingüístico nacional. La pluralidad de lenguas indígenas es una de las principales expresiones de la composición pluricultural de la Nación Mexicana". Article 4 adds that indigenous languages and Spanish "tienen la misma validez", and Article 5 promises, "El Estado . . . reconocerá, protegerá y promoverá la preservación, desarrollo y uso de las lenguas indígenas nacionales" (Estados Unidos Mexicanos). Multiple scholars have shown the law's stated commitments to be lip service. See Güémez Pineda, Herrera Alcocer and Canché Xool; Pech Dzib (29-30); Worley "Máseual" (1-2).

[N]eoliberal translation allows for the production and presentation of indigenous-language texts so long as these are reduced, almost by definition, to being a symbolic supplement to Spanish texts that are actually read. Through this process, moments of irreconcilable otherness are translated into the terms and structures of the neoliberal multicultural nation-state, thereby reaffirming that nation-state's norms and values. In this sense, the Spanish-language works are not translations per se so much as they are original productions that rearticulate potentially troubling indigenous subjectivities. (2)

Although monolingual Spanish-language readers experience the reappropriation of the “indio” insult into a positive term of identity, they are not privy to the “máseual” identity touted in the *maaya* poem. A historical label used by Caste War rebels, “máseual” expresses a challenge to social and cultural hierarchies (“Máseual”).

Whereas bilingual texts in two dominant languages, such as Spanish-English bilingual editions of Neruda's or Vallejo's poetry, presuppose a reader who either understands both languages or is a student of language who seeks to better understand the original text through translation. In the same way, bilingual indigenous-language editions can be seen as an invitation to radically rethink linguistic and cultural hegemonies through bilingual consumption. As Cecilia Enjuto Rangel asserts of Cuevas Cob's poetry,

El formato bilingüe de los poemarios de Cuevas Cob retan al lector a leer los poemas en sus dos versiones, en maya y castellano. En muchos sentidos, esto representa un valioso aporte cultural a la literatura latinoamericana actual, no sólo porque reivindica la riqueza cultural de los pueblos indígenas y recuerda que América Latina es un espacio multilingüe, multirracial y multicultural, sino

también porque nos invita a pensar en el maya y en el castellano poéticamente como parte de un mismo espacio, de una misma página. (279-80)

This passage can be read as a call to scholars. The existence of indigenous-language literary works advocates for creating more space within the literary discipline for studying texts in lesser studied languages.

My wish here is certainly not to diminish the achievements of writers in their mother tongues or to suggest that multilingual competitions evaluated in colonial languages are lesser gains for *maayat'aan*. Rather, I wish to analyze how the “required bilingualism” in various competitions for indigenous-language authors ideologically situates these indigenous languages in national cultural projects. I believe that assumptions and policies that essentially mandate an entire literary corpus to exist in translation must be critically interrogated. What is at stake in translation for indigenous authors? Does translation or self-translation involve a negotiation that widens the reading public so that *maaya*-language works can take a place in wider literary canons? Or does the act of translating to a dominant language negate the importance of the minoritized language and render it invisible? Do means of production heavily influenced by literary contests support indigenous literatures or undermine them when works are evaluated in Spanish and/or published bilingually?

I take the stance that the act of translation to Spanish itself does not revalorize or obscure *maayat'aan*, but rather that authors' translation strategies bring more or less awareness of *maayat'aan* to the Spanish-language reading experience.¹²⁷ I believe authors most effectively

¹²⁷ While I do not discuss this aspect at length in this project, publication format can also affect Spanish-language readers' awareness of the *maaya* half of bilingual editions. Works that divide editions into a *maaya* collection and a Spanish collection, such as is the case with Villegas' *U k'aay ch'i'ibal / El canto de la estirpe* poetry collection, Martínez Huchim's original works, and most of Ceh Moo's novels, better gesture towards how the *maaya* and Spanish texts can stand alone, as they often necessarily depend on different linguistic and cultural mechanisms. The format of other texts, such as some of Ceh Moo's short story collections, alternate between *maaya* and their corresponding Spanish texts. However, publications such as Carrillo Can's short novel *U yóok'otilo'ob áak'ab /*

resist current hierarchies through their Spanish-language composition, which, in addition to having a larger readership, provides writers the greatest opportunity to represent Maya perspectives to a non-Maya readership.¹²⁸ As indigenous writers face the obligation of self-translation, translation becomes a personal decision for how to mediate their culture with readers foreign to it. As Tymoczko asserts of Post-colonial writing when comparing it to translation, “some texts make more severe demands on the audience, requiring the audience to conform to the beliefs, customs, language and literary formalism of the source culture, while other works conform more to the dominant audience’s cultural, linguistic and literary expectations” (“Post-colonial” 29-30).

Theories of translation help recognize that authors’ two versions are not mere copies or replicas of each other. Instead, they are each autonomous texts in which even so-called equivalencies can enact different chains of signifiers in each cultural and linguistic code. Thinking about the ‘cultural turn’ in translation studies, in which translation is not just considered to be a linguistic activity but the navigation of distinct cultural systems that come into contact, is important as I consider how *maaya*-Spanish bilingual writers negotiate the distinct world perspectives embodied in each of their languages, along with the norms, assumptions, and expectations of their multiple readerships in two different languages. When writers must work

Danzas de la noche and the poetry selections in the *Kuxa’an t’aan* anthology position the *maaya* and Spanish texts beside each other, which provides a constant reminder of the texts’ bilingual nature and invites readers to engage with the *maaya* poems as they are able. This could take the form of visual means – how the works use space on the page, visual comparison of the *maaya* and Spanish texts, or observation in the *maaya* text of patterns, repetition, orthographic differences, or Spanish loan words. It could also be through audio means – reading the text aloud or listening to a recording if one is available. While any reader of any bilingual edition can engage with the indigenous-language text, certain publication formats facilitate this reading practice. Even so, publishing houses often determine these formats beyond writers’ control. For example, although the standard format for Premio Nezahualcóyotl publications when Villegas won the 2008 award separated the *maaya* collection from the Spanish one, Villegas prefers an anthology format (Personal Interview).

¹²⁸ I state this with the caveats that not all Spanish-language readers will be non-Maya and that not all *maaya*-language readers will be Maya.

within systematic bilingualism, my analysis of their self-translation practices can provide insight into writer agency in subverting the system from within it. My scholarly interest in translation as resistance arises because most Maya writers are also *maaya*-language educators, cultural promoters, or linguistic activists who seek to strengthen the visibility and prestige of their language in a Spanish-dominant context, as I discuss in Chapter 1.

In this chapter, I analyze how five authors represent *maayat'aan* and the cultural underpinnings of their *maaya* texts for a non-*maaya* literate¹²⁹ readership, including ways in which the same author can demonstrate different translation strategies within their own corpus. In Friedrich Schleiermacher's terms, do these bilingual author-translators move the author to the reader by adapting texts to Spanish-language literary norms and culture? Or does the translator move the reader to the author and adapt Spanish-language conventions to norms for Maya language, cultural underpinnings, and narrative canons? When the *maaya* and Spanish languages differ to such a large extent,¹³⁰ what translation strategies do authors take to render 'untranslatable' Maya linguistic features and cultural aspects in Spanish? My methodology is informed by theories of translation and self-translation, interviews with *maaya*-language authors, and knowledge of *maaya* linguistics. Authors' *maaya* texts are integral to my approach as I identify moments when *maaya* texts condition Spanish texts.

¹²⁹ I use the term "non-*maaya*-literate" as a way of pushing back against assumptions that Ligorred identifies: "en la Península de Yucatán, el identificar analfabetismo con monolingüismo maya sigue siendo una inclinación cultural perversa de transparente *espíritu colonial*, sobre todo si tomamos en cuenta la rica y milenaria tradición literaria maya (escritura jeroglífica, textos coloniales, y materiales modernos –orales y escritos–, ...)" (*Mayas y coloniales* 138-39). My use of the term displaces Spanish-language literacy as the default for deeming an individual to be literate and seeks to normalize ideas of *maaya*-language as an equal literacy. While I use this term specifically as a way to discuss reading literacy, in other contexts it could encompass the importance of Maya oral literacies.

¹³⁰ Some seminal ways in which *maayat'aan* differs from Spanish include the use of aspects instead of tenses to situate actions in time, the lack of the copular "to be" verb, and an agglutinating morphology. *Maayat'aan* also requires verbs to be conjugating differently when used transitively or intransitively, the use of numerical classifiers, and situating mentioned nouns in a spatial relationship to the speaker. Phonetically, *maayat'aan* is characterized by high and low tones and glottal stops. These linguistic differences are compounded by the differing cultural perspectives embedded in each language.

Besides authors' bilingual writing strategies, I consider reading practices to be a factor in determining a work's potential for resisting linguistic hierarchies. Given the multiple reading options available in a bilingual text, reader response theories help me consider readers' role in constituting a text, as Wolfgang Iser conceptualizes (1972). Stanley Fish's concept of "interpretive communities" challenged me to articulate in more nuanced ways the multiple Spanish-language readerships these texts could have (1988-92). Some readerships will find Maya literature more familiar than others. Spanish-speaking Yucatecans who share in a regional identity based on Maya heritage will most likely have a different experience with the text than either other indigenous Spanish speakers or an international Spanish-speaking population. Additionally, students of the Spanish language with reading proficiency can come from many backgrounds. Readers' backgrounds will influence their reading of Maya culture and aesthetics in varied ways.

Is Translation an Innocent Process?

Theories that recognize translation as a highly complicated and ideologically laden process question the grounds upon which critics and even *maaya*-language writers themselves can consider translation to be necessary for *maaya*-language writers. As Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi affirm:

translation does not happen in a vacuum, but in a continuum; it is not an isolated act, it is part of an ongoing process of intercultural transfer. Moreover, translation is a highly manipulative activity that involves all kinds of stages in that process of transfer across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Translation is not an innocent, transparent activity but is highly charged with significance at every stage; it

rarely, if ever, involves a relationship of equality between texts, authors or systems. (2)

Their definition of translation as intercultural transfer is meaningful for the context of Yucatan, as authors respond to at least two cultures in their bilingual texts because of the multiplicity of cultures and languages in contact on the peninsula. Their characterization of the translation process as manipulative provokes questions about how *maaya*-language writers, who determine the composition of both literary texts, negotiate these unequal hierarchies for both local and foreign readerships.

To counter the unequal hierarchies involved in translation's cultural and linguistic exchange, Venuti calls for a method of "foreignizing" translation that preserves the original texts' foreign culture for readers in another language:

Foreignizing translation signifies the difference of the foreign text, yet only by disrupting cultural codes that prevail in the target language. In its effort to do right abroad, this translation method must do wrong at home, deviating enough from native norms to stage an alien reading experience—choosing to translate a foreign text excluded by literary canons, for instance, or using a marginal discourse to translate it. (*The Translator's* 20)

Based on this definition, the mere fact that *maaya*-language authors work and publish in a lesser studied language involves foreignizing translation, as it increases the visibility of an original text that is less likely to be studied within current organizations of literary studies. However, in this chapter, I analyze additional foreignizing strategies that writers use to disrupt linguistic hierarchies that privilege Spanish and to draw readers' attention to the presence of the *maaya* texts.

Self-Translation and/or Bilingual Writing

As the majority of writers in *maayat'aan* practice self-translation, what does self-translation involve and how is the act of self-translation different from the work of a translator in the traditional sense? Gustavo Pérez Firmat asserts that the translator's constant task of seeking equivalency in two languages becomes more difficult during self-translation: "The temptation to tinker, to amend, to get it right or righter the second time around, will tend to alienate the self-translated work from its original. The revisions may improve the original, may damage it, or may produce a version so unlike it that comparison is all but impossible. But only rarely will the two versions coincide" (108). Pérez Firmat contends that this difference in translation can also occur because the emotional ties that the writer has with each language are untranslatable (14). In a 2015 interview, *maaya*-language writer Ceh Moo, who has been bilingual for as long as she remembers, explains, "una característica principal entre los dos idiomas para mí es el enlace emocional y cosmogónico que me llevaría a ser primero maya y después hispanohablante". Given such emotional considerations, the self-translator may deviate from the impartiality the translator normally seeks, leading Pérez Firmat to declare: "No translation is more treacherous than self-translation" (14). The large grammatical, lexical and phonetic differences between *maayat'aan* and Spanish surely facilitate the experimental freedom in translation feared by Pérez Firmat, as it is impossible for *maaya* and Spanish texts to produce exactly the same effect.

As *maaya*-language authors write both texts in their bilingual publications, I follow Liliana Ruth Reierstein and Vera Elisabeth Gerling, who dispense with binaries that prioritize the source text and consider the translation an unfaithful copy. They assert that their 2008 edited volume on third-party translation considers both texts "como un espacio de procesos creativos,

que implica circulación de poder y que puede tanto reforzar las estructuras establecidas como subvertirlas” (11-12). As *maaya*-language authors fashion both texts, ideas of a first, definitive text to which a secondary, derivative text must demonstrate faithfulness do not adequately explain the dynamics. Bilingual writing processes blur distances between source and translated texts and beg the question if such processes should be called ‘translation’ or ‘self-translation’ at all. As bilingual authors represent their cultural perspectives to potential readers from inside and outside their cultural context, does self-translation or bilingual writing offer *maaya*-language authors a unique opportunity to equalize the power hierarchies that structure traditional third-party translation? Do authors aspire to contribute to the revitalization of their mother tongue or do they have more personal goals for their work? How do authors on the peninsula practice self-translation?

For Ceh Moo, translation is an integral and necessary part of her creative process. In 2015, she declared, “para mí, la creación es bilingüe. Tienen que estar las dos partes para hablar de este tema” (Personal Interview). Her creative process, which she describes as the composition of the *maaya* source text followed by a corresponding Spanish translated text, approximates traditional translation. Unlike Pérez Firmat, Ceh Moo views self-translation as a methodology that is more faithful to the source text than third-party translation: “He pensado que si otra persona me tradujera el texto, necesitaría mucho tiempo conmigo. Para saber cómo lo pensé, cómo lo sentí, cómo lo vislumbré, y acercarse a ese mensaje tan fiel. . . . Para traducir, no confío en el contenido exterior” (Interview). Ceh Moo’s view of translation, then, is one in which the job of the translator is to recover and represent the original author’s intent rather than interpret the original text.¹³¹ As she explained to me in an interview, she prefers to translate herself

¹³¹ Ceh Moo’s approach is similar to the one recommended by Yves Bonnefoy, who writes: “We should in fact come to see what motivates the poem; to relive the act which both gave rise to it and remains enmeshed in it; and released

because, unlike a third party, she knows the impulses and inspirations that beget the *maaya* work and can therefore reproduce them in her Spanish text: “Cuando termino una obra, la dejo reposar para dejarla de amar, y traduzco ya al español. Y me doy cuenta realmente de los detalles . . . me acuerdo todavía de las emociones, de cuando lo creas, cuando lloras por un personaje, cuando lo matas, y revives las emociones de amor con ellos y lo vuelves a plasmar en esta obra y entonces das la obra de traducción” (Personal Interview). Additionally, Ceh Moo suggests that her professional experiences as a cultural promoter and translator uniquely prepare her to create the best translation: “Además de que tengo la promoción, traducción e interpretación en lenguas originarias, me siento capaz de hacerlo” (Interview). Speaking of *maaya* and Spanish in her bilingual creation, she asserts: “ambos se pueden mezclar en cualquiera de los contenidos” and “los puedo manejar muy bien dentro del mismo libro” (Interview). Ceh Moo’s statements demonstrate her belief that she is the ideal author of both texts in her bilingual editions.

The poet Villegas shares Ceh Moo’s embrace of bilingual writing, but his creative method strays further from the schemas normally involved in translation. For Villegas, self-translation provides a creative advantage that helps him improve both texts. What he calls “textos híbridos” originate from this creative process, as he described in an interview in 2014:

Un texto te lleva a otro texto y el otro texto te lleva a otro texto. Puedo escribir un poema en maya y que al momento de releerlo y de traducirlo al español, regreso al texto en maya y le aumento cosas. Porque al momento de traducirlo en español, de repente, surgen otras cosas que se pueden agregar. Y, pues, es mi texto, lo

from that fixed form, which is merely its trace, the first intention and intuition (let us say a yearning, an obsession, something universal) can be tried out anew in the other language” (188). In his method, translators draw on their own experiences that are similar to the ones portrayed and reconstruct the poem through the sensations felt (188-89).

puedo hacer. Es la ventaja. Y también hay ejercicios creativos en español, que, al momento de verlos desde una óptica maya, crecen. (Personal Interview)

Given this creative method, the poet characterizes his work not as poetry in translation but as bilingual poetry: “Creo que hago poesía bilingüe. Es lo que puedo concluir. Sí, poesía maya. Pero no puedo decir que es una poesía... Si dijera que es una poesía solo maya, no estaría diciendo lo que sucede en el proceso. Yo creo que lo que sucede en el proceso es que da como resultado una poesía que se nutre de los dos idiomas, tanto del español como del maya”

(Personal Interview). Villegas’ creative process is less about self-translation, which presupposes the existence of a source text and a translated text, and more about bilingual creation, as both texts occupy each of these positions at different moments in the process.

Whereas the previous authors’ bilingual practices result in even separation of *maaya*- and Spanish-language texts, Martínez Huchim’s method and work appreciate speakers’ oral *maaya* expression, which demonstrates *maaya* and Spanish intermixing on both the lexical and syntactic levels, giving rise to the speakers’ name for the variant as *xe’ek’ maaya* [mixture].¹³² She told me over Facebook Messenger in 2017 that her first drafts are a mixture of both languages. During her creative process, she separates the mixture into a mostly *maaya* text and a mostly Spanish text.¹³³ As her bilingual texts demonstrate speakers’ hybrid linguistic patterns, her work reveals the ideal of linguistic purity that underlies separate *maaya*- and Spanish-language literary texts. Martínez Huchim instead creates a realistic portrayal of the mixed linguistic expression of quotidian life on the Peninsula, just as U.S. Latinx writers have insisted upon valuing Spanglish

¹³² In fact, in my experience, Yucatecan humor and *bombas*, which are popular picaresque rhymes, often operate through code-switching from Spanish into *maaya*.

¹³³ Martínez Huchim writes, “La primera versión de un cuento es una mezclanza, un (xeek’). Entonces hago una versión maya y otra en español yucateco. A veces primero sale la versión completa al español, otras veces al maya”.

as representative of their hybrid identity. This hybridity is much more apparent in her Spanish-language texts, whereas her *maaya* texts use minimal Spanish-language loans.

Whereas the previous writers' processes incorporate bilingualism as an essential part of creation, Carrillo Can and Sánchez Chan view translation to Spanish as a tedious obligatory addendum, prioritizing *maaya*-language creation instead. Sánchez Chan decries the effects of monolingual Spanish-language evaluation of bilingual works, and his methods in literary workshops emphasize *maaya* creative possibilities and eschewing Spanish influence in *maaya* ("Escritura" 171, 181). With a similar perspective, Carrillo Can looked forward to a future with a stable readership for *maaya* texts, at which time, he asserted, "no será necesario hacer ninguna traducción al español, sometiendo al texto a la ya conocida tortura, pues a falta de expresiones, se recurre a las mutilaciones o a las frases frías, imprecisas y lejanas de su verdadero significado" ("Perspectiva" 157). His description of the torture of translation lays bare his emotional closeness to *maaya* and distance from Spanish, an affective bond that scholars often discuss as a factor that influences the self-translation process (Klosty Beaujour, Cordingley). Carrillo Can's distinct relationships with each of his languages make expressing Maya perspectives in Spanish a painful process for him. He views metaphor as part of the nature of Maya, and asserts, "el maya que es una lengua metafórica no puede ser traducida de manera literal como normalmente sucede" ("Perspectiva" 163). During translation, Carrillo Can recommends: "pensar en maya para hacer los textos en maya y pensar en español para hacer los textos en español ya sea al momento de crear o de traducir" (164). Unlike Pérez Firmat's disapproval of difference in self-translated texts, Carrillo Can advocates for difference to

demonstrate integrity to each text's unique cultural and linguistic underpinnings. His comments gesture toward the astounding skill involved in authors' literary doubling of texts.¹³⁴

In the remaining sections, I examine specific textual examples and analyze the extent to which bilingual authors' Spanish texts provide readers with glimpses of Maya realities and *maaya* language use, thereby disrupting the linguistic and cultural dominance of the Spanish language and global dominant cultures on the Yucatan Peninsula. In my trajectory, I move from least resistant Spanish-language texts to most resistant.

Author Stance: Fluid Translation

Ceh Moo's bilingual writing tends to facilitate Spanish-language readers' experience with the text. While her body of work is large and varied, this occurs on one hand because she aligns part of her work with larger Latin American and European literary traditions or writes about universal themes with minimal references to a Yucatecan context or Maya cosmology. On the other hand, in part of her work that highlights a Yucatecan regional perspective, the narrative voice explains references to Maya cosmology for readers. While her self-translation strategies vary according to the perspective embedded in the specific work, the audience she seems to appeal to is one unfamiliar with Maya culture. This may be explained by her aspirations; Ceh Moo told me in 2015 that she seeks international renown and her dream is winning the Nobel Prize in literature (Personal Interview).

Ceh Moo's short story "Kaaltale' ku xijkunsik u jel puxsi'ik'alo'ob" / "El alcohol también rompe otros corazones," published in 2013 in the short story collection of the same

¹³⁴ Similarly, Montemayor declares about *maaya*-language authors from Yucatan, "the writers often use the Spanish language not as a neutral vehicle for the translation of a poem or a story but rather as a new space in which to continue creating or re-creating their works" (*U túumben k'aayilo'ob x-ya'axche* '57-58).

name, is an example of her work that appeals to universal sensibilities. Its themes of alcoholism, family ties, grief, and loss are not unique to Yucatan or Maya culture. Perhaps because of this universality, the Spanish-language “El alcohol” largely does not resist linguistic and cultural hierarchies on the peninsula. For most Spanish-language readers, the short story will align more with European-language literary canons, as the Spanish texts gesture infrequently to their *maaya* counterparts.¹³⁵ The few region-specific identifiers in the story include a handful of *maaya*-language insults, a mention of the Yucatecan mythological figure Xtáabay, and the geographic references to Cancun and the protagonists’ fictional hometown of a *maaya*-derived name. For most Spanish-language readers, the town name, Kaltalká [Drinking Town],¹³⁶ evokes a Maya context through recognition that the term is not from Spanish. Only Spanish-language readers familiar with *maaya* will recognize that the town name foregrounds the text’s critique of alcoholism and suggests the widespread nature of the vice in town. The protagonist, the alcoholic taxi driver Jmoyo, provides the main conduit for evoking the human cost of alcoholism. Intercalated stories of three families culminate in a foreshadowed tragedy when the inebriated Jmoyo loses control of his taxi in front of a school. The accident kills nine elementary students, including the children of two of the families portrayed. While the narrator never explicitly states a moral, the short story’s depiction of tragedy resulting from excessive drinking responds to the State of Yucatan’s years-long status as the Mexican state with the highest number of incidences of alcohol poisoning (“Estragos”)

Beyond the universality of the story’s theme, the texts in both languages demonstrate intertextuality with European-language literary canons familiar to Spanish-language readers. In a

¹³⁵ The resistance this short story does participate in combats conceptions that minority authors can only represent their own communities, because it expresses universal themes that just happen to be set in a Maya context and described in *maayat’aan*.

¹³⁶ The town name in the *maaya* text is Kaaltalkáaj.

2015 interview, Ceh Moo told me that her literary influences are Western. While she expressed appreciation for the work of other *maaya*-language writers, she distanced her work from theirs, asserting, “La mayor influencia que he tenido es de occidente. Si bien la literatura de los contemporáneos aquí en círculos mayas... mmmm, sería yo demasiado deshonesto decir que no me gustan. Sí me gustan los textos. No son influencias para mí” (Personal Interview). These remarks demonstrate Ceh Moo’s desire to be seen in terms of wider canons rather than regional or indigenous ones. Widely read, she presented her biggest influences as Nietzsche and Kafka, and also mentioned Latin American authors Rosario Castellanos, Juan Rulfo, Gabriel García Márquez, and Mario Vargas Llosa.¹³⁷ Similarly, Ceh Moo’s “Kaaltale’ ku xijkunsik” / “El alcohol” does not primarily evoke *maaya* oral storytelling canons.¹³⁸ Instead, her short story dialogues with contemporary European-language literary traditions as an omniscient narrator uses foreshadowing and interweaves simultaneous narratives. Additionally, an ever-increasing plethora of women patients who suffer sleep deprivation caused by a recurring dream that the sky is raining blood is reminiscent of García Márquez’ plague of insomnia in *Cien años de soledad*.¹³⁹ Ceh Moo’s magical realist episode is just one of the multiple unsettling signs that the story’s protagonist, nicknamed El Adivinador, seeks to interpret in his quest to understand the future, which ends in tragedy.

¹³⁷ Indigenous narrative writers she mentioned as influences include Nicolás Huet Bautista, Mario Molina Cruz, and Javier Castellanos Martínez (Personal Interview).

¹³⁸ I contrast Ceh Moo’s work specifically with oral literature because I consider oral canons and orally transmitted customs to be the largest influence in contemporary narrative trends and storytelling continuity across time, given the post-Conquest policies that have destroyed, censured, and impeded *maaya* writing over centuries. Likewise, Cocom Pech’s anthology of *maaya*-language writers, *La oralidad en la literatura maya contemporánea* (2006), insists that oral tradition is the foremost literary influence among contemporary *maaya*-language writers (Lepe Lira *Lluvia* 119).

¹³⁹ Among other authors from wider Latin American literary tradition, Ceh Moo expressed appreciation for García Márquez. She said, “Inclusive llegó un momento que me decían que la literatura mía tenía mucha influencia de García Márquez” (Personal Interview).

The short story's dialogue demonstrates that Ceh Moo appeals to a wider readership by opting for the more widely known Mexican Spanish rather than regional Yucatecan Spanish, which creates distance between her *maaya* and Spanish texts. For example, Ceh Moo translates a *maaya* expletive in Jmoyo's voice to a Mexican alternative, despite the fact that the *maaya* expletive is in common use even among monolingual Spanish speakers in Yucatan. When Jmoyo wakes up after a night out drinking, he exclaims, "¡¡Peeel u na'!! le kaaltal oniajko'" (9) [*Peeel u na'!!* That drunkenness last night]. In literal translation, the *maaya* expletive refers to the mother's vagina. Ceh Moo translates the phrase to Spanish as a similar, if less explicit, Mexican exclamation: "¡Ta madre!" Qué peda la de anoche" (37). The Spanish-language expletive preserves the image of the mother, capturing one of the many Mexican expressions involving the mother while eliding the regionally popular *maaya* expression. The reference to "peda" [drunkenness] is a Mexican expression common in Yucatan. Another example of how Ceh Moo deemphasizes regional markers from Jmoyo's Spanish-language dialogue occurs when Jmoyo, anticipating his wife's impending wrath, regrets spending his earnings on alcohol instead of paying bills: "¡Maare! U jajile' le x ko'olelo' jaj u t'áan" (10). [*Maare!* The truth is that the woman is right.] *Maare* is a common expression in the Yucatecan Spanish dialect, but Ceh Moo opts for a Mexican expression: "¡Chale! La verdad que la vieja tiene razón" (38). Jmoyo's use of the term 'la vieja' in reference to his wife reflects how Mexican males often refer informally to significant others or women in general. As Jmoyo's regional expressions disappear in the Spanish texts, his Spanish dialogue obscures his Maya identity.

One of the few moments that "El alcohol" does gesture to the corresponding *maaya* text is through the angry wife's dialogue with Jmoyo. While Jmoyo's Spanish-language portrayal appeals to a national rather than regional identity, Ceh Moo emphasizes his wife Xmarisela's

Yucatecan and Maya identity by preserving her *maaya* expletives even in the Spanish text. When Xmarisela finds her husband sneaking out of the house to avoid her after his night of drunkenness, she reprimands him: “¡¡Peeel a na’!!, ¿tu’ux ka tuklík táan a bin beya?, ¡¡Menkisín kaltaj máak!!” (10).¹⁴⁰ / “¡Péel a na’! ¿A donde [sic] crees que vas, borracho de mierda?” (38). The different approach toward each character in translation when they articulate the same expletive illustrates the gender divide in which women are more likely to be monolingual *maaya* speakers and maintain traditions than the men who often migrate to work in contexts that necessitate use of Spanish (Chacón 98). Similarly, a woman’s exclamations become the vehicle for rendering a Maya context from within the Spanish short story.

Similarly to Jmoyo’s Spanish-language Mexican manner of expression, Ceh Moo’s self-translation suggests that she negotiates her bilingual world by adapting “El alcohol” to Spanish-language literary norms over Yucatecan ones. In both texts, foreshadowing and images guide readers toward the tragedy. The narrator describes a figurative rope that connects seemingly disparate events simultaneously happening in two different contexts, school and taxi:

Chen jun p’éel chan chowak súum ma’ tu yila’ale’, tu nup’aj le jum tu béetaj le chan nuukul tu’ux ku ya’alal ti’ mejen paalal ka ojko’ob xook yéetel le kisbut’s yáan u xookil 231 ku taal tu noj káajil Cancuno’; layli’ ti’ le suutuk jeelo’ le j Mooyo’ [sic] bo’ota’ab ku biis ka’atul máak jach k’a’abéet u k’uchlo’ob ti’ noj káaj. La ka ts’óok u jets’iko’ob u toojol ken u bo’oto’ob bey xan u xaanile’, tu yilajo’ob ma’alob. Déesde ti’ le súutuk jeelo’ le kuxtalilo’ jo’op’ u nuup’ik le chan súum kun nuup’ik le ba’ax kun yuchlo’.

¹⁴⁰ [Peeel a na’!! Where do you think you’re going? You damn drunkard!!].

U xúulilo'ob le súumo' tak ken maanak kam p'éeel u suutukil k'iin ken nuup'ko'ob. (27).

[Just one small, long rope that couldn't be seen connected the sound that the small appliance made where it was said to the little children and they went in to study, with that car that had the number 231 that came from the city of Cancun; still in that moment, Jmoyo was paid to take two men who really needed to arrive to the city. When they finished setting the price when they payed also for the trip time, it seemed good to them. From that there moment, that life began to connect the small rope; it would connect the things that were going to happen.

The ends of the rope would connect upon the passing of four moments in the day.

Un hilo invisible y largo unió el instante en el cual el timbre de la escuela llamaba a los niños a ocupar sus salones de clases con el taxi 231 de Cancún. En ese mismo instante El Moyo fue contratado por dos pasajeros que tenían prisa por llegar a Ciudad Grande. Después de un breve regateo, tanto precio como tiempo les parecieron lo justo a los pasajeros. A partir de ese momento, la mano insondable del destino empezó a jalar ese delgado hilo que lo unía. Los extremos del hilo se juntarían cuatro horas después. (54)

In both passages, a thread image symbolizing life or fate intertwines seemingly unrelated narrative threads into a shared denouement. Such narrative consciousness of simultaneous but different plotlines is not a prevalent feature of *maaya* oral narrative, and so shows influence of other literary traditions.

The rope motif offers double interpretive options if viewed through Maya narrative tradition and Greek tradition. Spanish-language readers familiar with the Maya area recognize the living, growing rope [*suum*] from oral tradition. This rope, which bleeds when cut and cannot be trapped or enclosed in any container,¹⁴¹ is conceptualized as a symbol of Maya vitality that points to a foretold day in which Maya people will enjoy renewed freedom on their lands.¹⁴² Ceh Moo's account resignifies the symbol of the rope as an umbilical cord for the Maya people. The newly joined ends of the rope are a culminating moment. However, whereas this moment in oral tradition results in Maya triumph and self-determination, in Ceh Moo's short story, it defines a future of grief and loss. The bleeding rope of oral tradition becomes accident-related bloodshed. This is all the worse, because when oral accounts portray an intercultural clash between Maya and conqueror, Ceh Moo's short story portrays an intracultural clash caused by a vice that ravages communities from within. Depression upon losing her two daughters even drives a

¹⁴¹ Dzul Poot's *tsikbal* "Hapai Kan" (*Cuentos mayas* vol. 1 47-58) and María Luisa Góngora Pacheco's *tsikbal* "U suumil k'i'ik' Mani" / "La sogá de sangre" in Montemayor's *La voz profunda* anthology (16-19) depict the rope similarly. Both depictions of the rope describe its inability to be enclosed, its never-ending length, and its bleeding upon being cut. They also both demonstrate political leaders who use the rope to travel across long distances quickly. The rope symbolizes Christian morality. In Dzul Poot's *tsikbal*, the now-buried rope will function as a type of tightrope stretching to the city of Mérida in a Mayanization of judgement day. Corrupt leaders will fall and be eaten by a winged serpent, whereas moral ones will arrive to Mérida. Góngora Pacheco's work frames a *tsikbal* told by Don Emilio Tzab, from Maní, Yucatan, who relates that the rope facilitated travel between the cathedral in Maní and the city of Mérida. The account describes the rope's importance as the umbilical cord of the Xiú *ch'i'ibal* lineage.

¹⁴² Góngora Pacheco's *tsikbal* "U suumil k'i'ik' Mani" / "La sogá de sangre" (Montemayor *La voz* 16-19) explains Maya prophecies about the day when the ends of this rope will come together:

U nojoch máakilo'ob le kaajo'obo' ku ya'aliko'obe' b'ín k'uchuk u k'i'inil u núup'ul le suum tu ka'teena', tu'ux kun ba'ate' x-t'arach y'eetel tóolok; le k'i'in je'ela' yan u yantal ba'ate'il ichil w'íniko'ob ti'al u yilik u ch'aiko'ob ba'al u ti'alo'ob:

U ch'ilabkabilo'on maya'obe' táan k-paa'tik ka k'uchuk le k'iino'ob je'el u ya'alma'j Chilam Balam, u J-K'i'inil Mani' ka'acho'. (16, 18)

Montemayor's Spanish-language translation is:

Los viejos pobladores de estos pueblos afirmaron que un día la sogá volverá a unirse y encima de ella pelearán la lagartija *x-t'arach* y el camaleón de cresta *tóolok*; ese día habrá guerra entre los hombres para que se vea lo que pertenece a cada quien.

Nosotros los mayas esperamos ese día proclamado por el Chilam Balam, por el antiguo Gran Sacerdote de Mani' (*La voz* 19, f. 4).

Montemayor explicates that Maya tradition teaches that *x-t'arach* symbolizes the Maya and *tóolok* symbolizes the conquistador, describing Maya beliefs that the symbolic battle foretold for that day will result in Maya people's renewed freedom on their lands (*La voz* 19, n. 4).

mother to alcoholism, demonstrating the continuity of the vice. Through these Maya intertextualities, Nazario becomes a failed Chilam Balam prophet figure, as he struggles to interpret signs to foretell the future. When he cannot prevent the tragedy, he blames himself for the deaths.

While this Maya rope motif is usually evoked as “soga” in Spanish, Ceh Moo instead utilizes the finer “hilo”, which perhaps primarily points to a reading through a non-Maya subtext: the Fates of Greek mythology. Mythological metaphors of threads as the length of human lives in Ceh Moo’s text point to the imminent deaths of the schoolchildren. This intertextuality is clearer in the Spanish text, which personifies the idea of fate when a hand pulls on the thread, much like the Fates control the threads of mortal lives. Foreshadowing, apparent in the final two sentences of the *maaya* passage and the use of the conditional in the Spanish passage, is not a prevalent feature of narrative perspective in *maaya* oral storytelling.¹⁴³ This mode is more common in an inherited *maaya* written tradition, including the prophesies in the colonial-era *Libros del Chilam Balam*, which, like foreshadowing, gesture toward the future. Considering this background, Ceh Moo’s narrative techniques expand contemporary literary uses of *maayat’aan*; however, they do not challenge a Spanish-language reader who may not realize the innovation in the *maaya* text.

Even in a text such as “Chan sak peepeno’ob” / “Maripositas blancas” that depends on a regional Maya context, Ceh Moo facilitates the experience for readers unfamiliar with Maya cosmology by providing in-text explanations of cultural references. In fact, her narrator explains Maya cultural references even in the *maaya* text, suggesting that the author’s intended audience

¹⁴³ Prophecy and references to the future is less common in oral storytelling. In dialogue, characters commonly refer to the future, but narrators do not often do so. Dzul Poot’s collected *tsikbal* “Hapai Kan” in *Cuentos mayas* (vol. 1) (47-58) provides an example of an oral narrative perspective that juxtaposes two anecdotes, one featuring the flying serpent and another featuring the rope, and that adopts a prophetic voice. However, I have not found these characteristics to be common in compiled oral stories.

is foreign to Yucatan in both linguistic readerships. As she told me in a 2015 interview, many people who read *maayat'aan* are not Maya but scholars from outside of the peninsula. Published in the same *Kaaltale' ku xijkunsik / El alcohol* collection as the previous story I discussed, “Chan sak peepeno'ob” / “Maripositas blancas” imitates tropes of orality and depicts a specifically Yucatecan context during the time of *Janal Pixan*, the region's version of the Day of the Dead. The exposition features narrative framing characteristic of oral storytelling such as “Ku ts'ikbalta'al” (165) / “Cuentan que” (169) and “ku ya'alal . . . tumeen nojoch máako'ob” (165) / “las personas mayores llaman” (169). Besides embodying oral formulae, the latter phrase regarding elderly perspectives bases the account in orally transmitted ancestral wisdom in a reflection of traditional Maya values.¹⁴⁴ While I identify this story as a *tsikbal*, the work still shifts norms for oral *tsikbalo'ob* to a written *tsikbal* genre. One way this occurs is that the *tsikbal* opens with a second-person question directed to the reader, which breaks from the omniscient perspective typical of oral narrative.

Perhaps because Ceh Moo sets “Chan sak peepeno'ob” / “Maripositas blancas” in the context of Yucatan and inherited Maya beliefs and customs, her Spanish text preserves more *maaya* words and concepts than in “El alcohol”. Through these features, the Spanish-language *tsikbal*'s composition reminds readers of *maayat'aan* as a contemporary language more so than the previous short story. “Chan sak peepeno'ob” / “Maripositas blancas” constructs the protagonists as a traditional couple. The husband Don Maximino Mex works in the *kool* fields.

¹⁴⁴ In her translation of the second narrative phrase I cite, Ceh Moo adopts a standard way of expressing an attribution in Spanish instead of opting for its Yucatecan expression, which again exemplifies how she adapts her Spanish texts for a wider readership. Her *maaya* text uses a grammatical structure common to spoken *maaya*: a verb in passive voice (*ku ya'ala'al* [it is said]) followed by the identification of the agent after a preposition (*tumeen nojoch máako'ob* [by the elderly]). Her Spanish translation uses an active sentence, although spoken Yucatec Spanish features a structure similar to the *maaya* in which a third-person plural verb precedes the agent after a preposition. In this instance, a Yucatecan alternative to the standard “las personas mayores llaman *pe'epénitos*” (169) could be rendered as ‘le llaman *pe'epénitos* por las personas mayores.’

The wife Mila Can makes her own tortillas, along with other typical foods, and subscribes to traditional beliefs. For example, she believes the orally transmitted wisdom that the white butterflies that appear at the end of October for *Janal Pixan* are spirits of the dead returning to spend time with their loved ones. One day during this time of year, white butterflies overwhelm the couple's house. One flies up Mila's nose, causing instant unpleasant sensations and her death the following day. Many witnesses later observe a white butterfly escape from the dead woman's mouth. Maximino is sure that this butterfly is his wife's soul. This loving husband anxiously awaits the end of October each year, when he prepares his wife's favorite food and recounts his year of experiences to the butterfly he recognizes as Mila. The narrator reports that Mila's story is often retold because so many witnessed her unlikely and medically inexplicable death.

Through this anecdote and direct explanation, the narrator expresses that even if many people do not pay attention to elderly people's teachings on butterflies, God has granted the dead permission to return in this way, and no one should consider butterflies' ubiquitous presence to be strange. These narrative techniques connect traditional Maya and Christian belief systems.¹⁴⁵

To help readers navigate this culturally specific belief system, Ceh Moo explains beliefs in both texts through descriptive appositive clauses. The following passage provides explanation of the wife's actions when her husband arrives home from the *milpa* fields:

Ku jan ts'aik u yo'och chokoj sakám ti', jun p'éel chokoj sa' kex tun k'ilkabile'
lelo' jun p'éel ba'al jach tun ki' ti'al u yicham. (165)

¹⁴⁵ The Biblical undertones that Ceh Moo inscribes into the teachings of the elderly in the passage I refer to here (167-68 / 171) are even clearer in the Spanish text, which uses language like “prédicas en el desierto” (171), a John the Baptist reference, to describe elderly people's teachings that lack believers. The clear Spanish-language intertextuality with Bible stories is not apparent in the same way in the *maaya* text. However, the mention of “kichkelem yúum” in the *maaya* passage still constitutes a reference to the Christian God that connects the Maya belief to Christian cosmology (168).

[She quickly gives him his *chokoj sakám*, a hot atole. Even though he is sweating, it is something very delicious for her husband.]¹⁴⁶

[L]e servía en una meseta su *chocosaakan*, atole muy caliente que a pesar del calor era un deleite para su cónyuge. (169).

The explanation of this hot corn-based beverage allows readers unfamiliar with the *maaya* word and *maaya* loan word to acquire the information necessary to understand the cultural practice of drinking atole. The word is not only defined, but the text anticipates an implicit question from readers unfamiliar with Yucatecan customs: If the husband is hot from working, why would he drink a hot beverage instead of a cold one? While the text does not engage with Yucatecan beliefs surrounding hot and cold as fundamental elements of beliefs about health and sickness, the narrator does assure readers that drinking this hot atole is pleasing, and therefore normal, for the husband. In the above passages, Ceh Moo's spelling of the *maaya* drink changes to reflect her use of a *maaya* word within its original linguistic system and a *maaya* loan word in a Spanish linguistic system. The explanations of these terms in both the *maaya* and Spanish texts anticipates a non-Maya readership for both.

An earlier passage in the *tsikbal*'s exposition alludes to the necessity of explaining these references for readers through an in-text assumption that the narrator and reader have different cultural backgrounds. This assumption is clear as the narrator explains the Maya concept *pixan*:

¹⁴⁶ My translation into present-tense English, in contrast with the Spanish past-tense passage, demonstrates the grammatical difference of storytelling in *maayat'aan*, which functions through aspects instead of tense. I render this passage in present tense to recreate the immediacy of the events in the *maaya* text, which frames Mila's work in the continuous and habitual aspects and uses demonstratives that locate descriptions close to the speaker rather than farther away, as in the opening to the this paragraph, which begins, "Lela' jun p'éeel k'iin..." [This one was a day...] (165).

Ku ts'ikbalta'al le mejen sak peepeno'obo', ku ya'alal peepenito'ostio'ob tumeen nojoch máako'obe', u pixan máak u ma'alobile' u pixan máaxo'ob ts'ó'ok u kimilo'ob, to'one k k aaliktio'ob pixan máaxo'ob ts'ó'ok u bino'ob ba'ale' ku suuto'ob ximbal wayé ti' u jel tuuxilo'ob ma' k'ajoltan tumeen máak. (165)

[It is told that those little white butterflies, which are called *peepenitos* by the elderly, are people's souls. Better, they are the souls of those who have already died. As for us, we apply the term 'souls' to people who have gone but who return to visit here from other places unknown to humans.]

Cuentan que esas maripositas blancas –que las personas mayores llaman *pe'epenitos*–, son los espíritus, o sea, el alma (que en maya llamamos *pixan*) de las personas que ya murieron y regresan de los lugares desconocidos para los hombres. (169)

Both narrators speak from a first-person plural perspective, which shows their cultural affiliation with a Maya collective identity. The Spanish passage alludes to the *maaya* language to define group membership in this 'we' ("que en maya llamamos *pixan*"), while the *maaya* passage suggests this collective encompasses a Maya identity by explaining the group's custom in the *maaya* language. Having to explain the custom suggests the 'we' is exclusive rather than inclusive of the reader. In both texts, the explanation of *pixan* becomes clearer by the end of the passage, as the narrator provides readers with more specificity regarding the concept *pixan* with each mention. The Spanish text does this by choosing ever more precise synonyms for *pixan* before simply using the *maaya* term itself. The narrator defines the concept as 'spirits' and later clarifies that they are 'souls' of the dead. The clarification that *pixan* means 'soul' expresses how

maaya speakers experience the deceased's presence more precisely than 'spirits.' The latter term's definition overlaps with 'soul', but also extends into connotations of horror that *pixan* does not encompass. When comparing three *maaya*-Spanish dictionaries, definitions vacillate between 'soul' and 'spirit', with 'soul' appearing to be the primary connotation when comparing the three dictionaries.¹⁴⁷ These competing definitions provide grounds for Ceh Moo's Spanish-language clarifications surrounding the Maya cosmology of *pixan*, although the *maaya* term itself embodies the Spanish text's definitive clarification. On the other hand, the explanation in the *maaya* text depends on a descriptive strategy, as the word *pixan* repeats in all instances where the Spanish text uses synonyms. *Maaya*-language readers progressively gather knowledge through descriptive phrases to discover that *pixan* are souls, then souls of the deceased, and then souls that return to the world of the living. While both texts explain to a reader, I believe a bilingual reading that overlays these two techniques provides the clearest understanding of the passage.¹⁴⁸

A few textual references in "Chan sak pepeno'ob" / "Maripositas blancas" do demonstrate moments that move readers toward Maya worldviews and challenge the dominance of linguistic purity. First, neither text explains the Maya holiday *Janal Pixan* (167/171). The absence of an explanation for *Janal Pixan* differs from the textual approach to other cultural references.¹⁴⁹ Second, both texts use the mixed term *péepenitos*, whose *maaya* root *péepen*

¹⁴⁷ Bricker et. al. define the *maaya* term as 'soul' (218), the *Diccionario maya popular* defines it as "alma o espíritu que da vida al cuerpo del hombre" (173), and the *Diccionario Maya Cordemex* includes multiple definitions, including, "alma que da la vida al cuerpo del hombre", "ánima", "espíritu por alma, conciencia por el alma", "espíritu", "alma del ser humano, ánima por alma", "espíritu, esencia, lo medular o lo central de algo" (659).

¹⁴⁸ To translate the *maaya* text, I render each instance of *pixan* as the English 'soul' to remain faithful both to the primary meaning of the term and the repetition of the *maaya* term. However, if I were to translate between the two passages, I would have grounds for using 'spirit' upon a first instance of *pixan* and changing to 'soul' to evoke the connotations in the Spanish text.

¹⁴⁹ A possible explanation for this difference in approach is that information about *Janal Pixan* is readily available, unlike other references that would require a *maaya*-language dictionary in the absence of in-text explanations.

[butterfly] concludes with the Spanish diminutive suffix *-itos*. Mirroring Ceh Moo's approach to loan words, in which she modifies the term's spelling in each text to reflect pronunciation in their respective linguistic systems, the *maaya* text adds the additional *maaya* suffix *-o'ob*, the plural marker. This hybridity provides a case against linguistic purism, as the text's attribution of this hybrid term to the older generation, considered those who most closely adhere to traditional Maya ways of living and speaking, demonstrates the mixed nature of contemporary spoken *maayat'aan*. The text privileges the wisdom of this demographic, so placing this hybrid term in their speech legitimizes the linguistic mixing characteristic of expression on the peninsula.

Author Stance: Transmitting maayat'aan in Spanish

Whereas the examples I discuss from Ceh Moo's narrative demonstrate the in-text assistance she provides to Spanish-language (or even *maaya*-language) readers unfamiliar with the Maya context, some of Carrillo Can's poems exemplify texts that prioritize *maaya* linguistic and poetic possibilities and transmit them even in the corresponding Spanish poems. Carrillo Can's circumlocution and descriptive strategies preserve an aspect of foreignness that points to how the *maaya* poem functions. In his poems "Bolon" / "Nueve" (*Kuxa'an t'aan* 198), the anaphora of the number nine is the mechanism that drives the poems' rhythm, musicality, and themes. The poetic voices narrate a list of natural circumstances and cultural practices in which the Maya find significance in the number nine. In the last three verses, the narrator reveals himself to be a nine-year-old boy and observes that it has been raining for nine days. This statement suggests the young boy understands the accumulation of nine-centered events as a type of prophetic sign. Whereas Maya readers are familiar with the ritual significance of the number nine in Maya culture, the poems only suggest, but do not explain, this fact to readers unfamiliar

with the Maya context. Carrillo Can's bilingual writing in "Bolon" / "Nueve," then, creates an experience in which readers must adapt their expectations to Maya beliefs and realities instead of the other way around. As Michael D. Coe discusses, numbers and calendrics organize Maya rituals, and the numbers 4, 9, and 13 were of significance (229-30). Nine plays a role in how the Maya understand the physical universe, as there are nine levels to the underworld, Xibalbá (226).¹⁵⁰

The Spanish-language poetic voice's explanation of one aspect of Maya culture gives pause, as an unfamiliar and only partially explained custom gestures to the *maaya* text and both poems' cultural underpinnings. The example deals with the *jéets méek'* ceremony, which, as I discuss in Chapter 3, prepares infants for their gendered futures as either Maya men or Maya women. While a *maaya* verse specifically names this ceremony, the corresponding Spanish verse eliminates the term *jéets méek'* and uses circumlocution to partially describe it:

bolontéen ku su'utul paal ti' mayak tu jéets'méek'il,	nueve vueltas se le da a un niño en la mesa cuando se le carga por primera vez en las caderas,
--	--

[nine times a child is revolved around a table in his/her
*jéets méek'*¹⁵¹]

The Spanish text obscures more than clarifies the *maaya* reference and introduces more ambiguity into "Nueve" than exists in "Bolon". Whereas Spanish-language readers familiar with the Maya context will understand the allusion to *jéets méek'* even through the partial explanation ("cuando se le carga por primera vez en las caderas"), the absence of the ceremony name in the

¹⁵⁰ Beyond the semantic level, the repetition of *bolon* and *nueve* provide different but equivalent aesthetic effects in each poem. Although their sounds are different, their repetition produces similar alliterative effects and establishes the concept of 'nine' as the central signifier in the text. One aesthetic difference in translation is that *maaya* grammar allows "bolon" to initiate each verse in which it appears, whereas Carrillo Can must make modifications according to Spanish grammar norms that displace "nueve" from verse-start position in some instances.

¹⁵¹ In my English translation and ensuing discussion, I differ from Carrillo Can and follow the orthography for *jéets méek'* in the Academia de la Lengua Maya de Yucatán's *Diccionario Maya Popular*. The same orthography appears in Bricker et. al. with the exception of the first letter, which the latter depicts as an 'h'.

Spanish text will be unrecognizable for other readers. The specification of the number of times the child is carried around a table suggests this event has ritual significance. However, the poem's language does not explicitly characterize the ceremonial nature of this carrying for readers who consider holding a child on the hip for the first time to be just another quotidian moment. As the narrator focuses on events surrounding birth and death, understanding that the *jéets méek'* instills gender norms and social bonds in babies takes on new significance. The poem's concise aesthetic does not permit a lengthy discussion of the ritual for Spanish-language readers, but the chosen circumlocution strategy elides information about the ceremony's purpose, gendered nature, and function of preparing a baby for participation in a gendered social network (Rosales Mendoza 55-56, Loewe 71). Furthermore, the absence of the term *jéets méek'* in the Spanish poem leaves the curious reader with little recourse for further research. This strategy, then, bends the Spanish language to Maya concepts and creates a text that prioritizes Maya practices instead of adjusting the *maaya* text to terms familiar for Spanish-speaking readers. While Carrillo Can's descriptive translation strategy produces an extensive Spanish-language verse that contrasts with the more concise *maaya* verse, the poems' free verse form accommodates verse length variation while maintaining flow.

In another of Carrillo Can's poems that centers on quantity, "Buka'aj" / "Cuánto" (*Kuxa'an t'aan* 181), the poet foreignizes the Spanish poem by extending its use to express *maaya* grammatical categories absent in Spanish. In a context where *maaya* is often considered a deficient language that is more limited in communicative functions than Spanish, "Buka'aj" challenges these perceptions by highlighting a case in which the Spanish language lacks the grammatical category necessary to render the complexities of the *maaya* poem. In *maaya*, numbers must pair with classifiers that describe the type of object being counted. For example, in

a discussion about two people, a *maaya* speaker refers to *ka'atúul máak*. Between the two elements represented in Spanish or English headcounts, *ka'a-* [two] and *máak* [people], *maaya* requires the numerical classifier *-túul*, which conveys the animate nature of the noun being counted: people. The Jakobsonian idea that languages differ in what they must convey is pertinent here, as this required *maaya* grammar category does not exist in Spanish, making translation difficult or impossible.¹⁵² The plethora of *maaya* numerical classifiers allows speakers to explain their environment with impressive levels of specificity and description. For instance, other classifiers describe if a topic is inanimate (*p'éeł*), a plant (*kúul*), round (*wóol*), long and skinny (*ts'it*), a number of times (*téen* and others), a type of measurement (many terms), and more.

In “Buka’aj” / “Cuánto”, the poetic voice attempts the impossible feat of measuring love in quantities and volumes, but keeps the topic being measured a secret until the final verse:

Jayp'éeł, jaytúul, jaytéen,	¿Cuántos sin vida?
Jayts'it, jayxéet', jaywáal,	¿Cuántos con vida? ¿Cuántas veces?
Jaykúul,	¿Cuántas piezas?
Ma' táan ka'a in suut in k'áat tech buka'aj,	¿Cuántos pedazos? ¿Cuántas hojas?
Chéen a'al ten wáaj yaan tech:	¿Cuántas plantas?
A yaabilmajen wáaj.	No te preguntaré más por cuánto,
	Sólo dime si lo tienes:
	¿Me amas?

In the final verse, the non-gendered poetic voice reveals that the ambiguous quantity questions were attempts to measure the depth of love the interlocutor has for him or her through tangible

¹⁵² Roman Jakobson asserts, “Languages differ essentially in what they *must* convey and not in what they *may* convey” (149, italics from Jakobson). Despite differences in grammatical categories languages may or may not feature, Jakobson advises that translators have strategies to evoke similar meanings: “terminology may be qualified and amplified by loanwords or loan-translations, neologisms or semantic shifts, and finally, by circumlocutions” (147). However, Jakobson is pessimistic about translating poetry (151), in which aesthetic elements such as sound, rhythm, and versification play a heightened role in signifying meaning and emotion than in most prose pieces.

means. Language perhaps necessarily falls short of the narrator's task, and the narrator's questions go unanswered. In the final two verses, the poetic voice discards the unanswered quantity questions and attempts to find an answer by posing a yes/no question about if the interlocutor loves the speaker at all: "A yaabilmajen wáaj" / "¿Me amas?". The indirect line of previous questioning suggests the speaker's anxiety prevents him or her from asking this more answerable yes/no question. The poem is open ended, as readers never find out how or if the interlocutor will respond. The poem posits the questions: How *is* love measured? What *maaya* numerical classifier can describe love?

In "Cuánto", Carrillo Can privileges *maaya* linguistic capabilities, rendering them even in Spanish through alternative descriptive methods. The poem poses difficulties in translation because *maaya* ways of expressing quantity allow the poetic voice to keep readers in suspense about the poem's topic until the final verse mentions love. For example, the *maaya*-language question *jays'it* maintains topical ambiguity because it asks about the quantity of a specific type of noun ('How many long, skinny items?'), but does not specify what the noun is (long, skinny items could be, for example, pencils, sticks, or candles). However, Spanish questions about quantity pair the '¿cuánto?' interrogative with the noun to be counted or measured (i.e. 'How many pencils?', for example). These norms would force the poetic voice to reveal the topic of love immediately and eliminate the suspense that characterizes the *maaya* poem.

Therefore, in "Cuánto", Carrillo Can's Spanish represents the *maaya* classifier without representing the typically communicated noun of measurement. Just as with his treatment of *jéets méek'*, Carrillo Can renders the untranslatable numerical classifiers to Spanish through circumlocution. As such, he explains the information embedded in the classifier and eliminates the noun to be measured. In the first verse, this involves describing the inanimate objects that –

p'éeel classifies through the phrase “sin vida”. In this way, the questions in both poems are simultaneously precise and ambiguous; precise, as the questions each address a specific category of countable or measurable things, and ambiguous, because the countable topic is not named, leaving readers wondering the purpose of the questions.

Carrillo Can's translation prioritizes *maaya* ways of expression, which highlights the poem's Maya origin and preserves foreignness for his Spanish-language readership through unusual Spanish-language questions. The questions that best express the *maaya* grammar and adapt Spanish-language norms to *maaya* norms are the first two, “Cuántos sin vida? Cuántos con vida?”, as the description of the classifiers is present without naming a specific item. The rest of the Spanish-language questions appear more typical and concrete, as “piezas”, “pedazos”, “hojas” and “plantas” seem to embody the item in question, when the *maaya* poem presents them only as categorical descriptors the narrator uses in an attempt to measure another's love. However, these moments of foreignness allude to the subtleties of the *maaya* poem that are only suggested in the Spanish-language poem.

The Spanish poem's lengthier questions are at times both less specific than the *maaya* phrases and more concrete. For example the classifier *-ts'it* refers only to long, skinny nouns, whereas *piezas* can refer to a ‘piece’ of any shape. The *maaya* classifier *-xéet'* is just one of multiple classifiers that can describe the Spanish *pedazos*, because for *maaya* speakers, the method of creating the *pedazo* determines the item's classification as *-xéet'* [something torn] versus something cut with a knife, bitten, broken, halved, etc., which each have their own unique classifiers. While translated as “hojas” in the Spanish poem, the classifier *-wáal* refers to flat nouns, and the Spanish, then, interprets that the specific kind of flat item in question is a piece of paper or a leaf. The classifier *-kúul*, while described as a plant in the poem, is the classifier for

any plant, including trees. *Maaya*-language readers recognize these nuances, while Spanish-language readers only gain a sense through the foreignized Spanish that the *maaya* text works on a different system.¹⁵³

The foreignness that Carrillo Can incorporates into some of the Spanish poem's questions also appears in the clumsy transition between the final two Spanish verses, providing another example of how Carrillo Can allows *maaya*-language norms to disrupt Spanish-language norms. The Spanish-language narrator asks the interlocutor, "dime si lo tienes", in an indirect yes/no question, but the follow-up question in the last verse does not specify the direct object represented by the pronoun "lo" in the previous verse. The more grammatically logical follow-up would be, '¿Me tienes amor?', but Carrillo Can uses the more natural question, "¿Me amas?" Despite the logical leap between the last two Spanish verses, asking the indirect question, "dime si lo tienes", allows the poetic voice to maintain the *maaya* poem's ambiguity through the direct object pronoun "lo". Whereas readers of the *maaya* poem have a fluid reading experience that delights in *maaya* descriptive capacities, Spanish-language readers encounter the foreignization that appreciates and signifies Maya cultural difference.

Author Stance: Onomatopoeias Resist Translation

The example of Carrillo Can's foreignization of his Spanish poem "Cuánto" resists methods of fluid translation that open the possibility for readers to overlook the context in which the original work is produced. His use of onomatopoeias is another effect that foreignizes his texts, as the representation of sounds resists language and translation and reveals a Maya way of

¹⁵³ A handout on numerical classifiers prepared by Briceño Chel for the Level II program of the Yucatec Maya Summer Institute sponsored by the Consortium in Latin American and Caribbean Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Duke University was immensely helpful in my thinking about this poem.

hearing the world. Carrillo Can evokes the sound of falling rain through the repetition of “ch’aj” in the poems “Cháak” / “Lluvia” (*Kuxa’an t’aan* 194). Additionally, the voice of the cicada that announces the rain in “K’a’aytaj” / “Anuncio” says, “tsiriiiiiiiiin” (197). Sounds inscribe a specifically Maya character to these works. As Miguel Güémez Pineda explains: “Las onomatopeyas son voces dotadas de una gran carga cultural, representan la manera de pensar de cada pueblo y determinan el modo de interpretar los sonidos (“Onomatopeyas 2”). In the case of *maayat’aan*, Güémez Pineda affirms that *maaya* names for many creatures from the animal, insect, and reptilian worlds are based on the sounds they make, and onomatopoeias are often used as stylistic resources in *maaya*-language storytelling (“Onomatopeyas 2”). Although the varied onomatopoeias in different languages reveal how different linguistic and cultural codes conceive of natural sounds in distinct ways (“Onomatopeyas 1”), onomatopoeias in Carrillo Can’s bilingual writing occur in normal typeface, which suggests that the sounds are natural to both languages and worldviews. As monolingual Spanish speakers may not know *maaya*-language conceptions of sound, treating *maaya*-language onomatopoeias in regular typeface in Spanish texts privileges how Maya culture interprets sounds over how Spanish-language culture does so. As such, Spanish-language readers must adopt a Maya perspective through sound, a perspective normalized through the typeface.

Like Carrillo Can, Martínez Huchim also uses frequent onomatopoeia in her texts. For example, *U yóol xkaambal jaw xíiw* / *Contrayerba* opens with the sound of a light rain, interpreted as “churum, churum, churum” in both languages (15 / 75). Three more sounds, two for varieties of frog sounds (“¡leek, leek, leek!” and “¡wóoj, wóoj, wóoj!”) and one representative of dogs barking (“¡jau, jauu, jauuu!”) round out the bilingual nighttime chorus that sets the stage for the entire work, as the elderly Soledad Cahum Dzib observes a series of spirits of women

pass by her house. The rest of the short story collection pays homage to these women's lives by recounting their stories. Differing from the sounds that Carrillo Can's poems represent in standard typeface, Martínez Huchim's *maaya* and Spanish texts represent these onomatopoeic words in italics, suggesting the sounds are extralinguistic to both languages.

Author Stance: Resistant Self-Translation

While onomatopoeias resist translation, authors at times preserve *maaya* words in their Spanish texts, marking a specific Maya concept as untranslatable and resisting a complete translation to the target language. As one such author, Villegas preserves various *maaya* words in his Spanish poems in his collection *U k'aay ch'i'ibal / El canto de la estirpe* (2009). For example, he maintains the *maaya* word *sakab* in various orthographies in four Spanish poems.¹⁵⁴ *Sakab* is a ceremonial drink made with a base of ground corn; its special preparation without the compound lime makes it a pure drink of ritual significance, unique among other types of Maya corn-based drinks for quotidian consumption (*Diccionario Maya Popular* 187). Preserving the *maaya* loan word, then, reinforces the ritual language and ceremony of each of these poems. Its unexplained reference suggests that Villegas' primary goal is not to provide information about Maya culture for non-Maya readers but rather to enunciate a Maya worldview. Villegas' Spanish-language poems presuppose a reader familiar with Maya cultural references, as his text lacks footnotes, glossaries, and cultural explanations to orient Spanish-language readers.

However, the unexplained *maaya* references make it probable that the monolingual Spanish-language reader unfamiliar with Maya culture will understand less of the poem than the *maaya*-language reader or a Spanish-language reader steeped in Maya culture. The meaning of

¹⁵⁴ See "Resplandece la huella", "Reverencias", "Ofrenda de la sed" and "Alux".

some *maaya* words can be gleaned from the Spanish-language poem's context, as in the case of *sakab*. As Villegas describes *sakab* in a *jícara* gourd in most of the references, the poems suggest to readers that *sakab* is a type of drink. The fact that the reference appears in poems that feature ritual language suggests its ceremonial importance. Other untranslated words in Villegas' collection also refer to ceremonial objects: the Maya drum *túunk'ul*¹⁵⁵, which is horizontal and made from a hollow log (*Diccionario Maya Popular* 214) and the sacred licor *báalche*¹⁵⁶, which is consumed in agricultural rituals (20). However, some *maaya* loan words lack context, as when a *túunk'ul* drum reference opens the Spanish poem "Ofrenda de la sed" (124). While readers will understand that the *túunk'ul* signals a call to ritual action, without further description, it is plausible to imagine it as a bell or some other type of noisemaker just as much as the drum the term evokes. Therefore, Villegas' bilingual writing shows he prizes the cultural significance of an example like the *túunk'ul* drum. The more general term *tambor* in Spanish, for instance, lacks the cultural specificity of the Maya *túunk'ul*. As such, this bilingual method obligates a Spanish-language reader to encounter a Maya context on Villegas' terms.

Martínez Huchim takes preservation of *maaya* terms into the most resistant translations I have seen among Maya authors. The writer, collector of oral *tsikbalo'ob*, anthropologist, and international educator preserves many *maaya*-language expressions in her Spanish-language texts, but provides Spanish-language readers with the necessary tools for understanding. Martínez Huchim demonstrates her commitment to education as her texts teach active readers about Maya culture and *maaya* language. Via Facebook Messenger in 2017, Martínez Huchim explained that she preserves *maaya* loan words in her Spanish texts because it reflects how Yucatecans speak Spanish and therefore makes her characters more realistic. In this endeavor,

¹⁵⁵ See "Ofrenda de sed" and "Aguaselva".

¹⁵⁶ See "Resplandece la huella" and "Ofrenda de la sed".

Martínez Huchim also employs common Spanish loan words in her *maaya* texts, rejecting linguistic purism in order to represent the hybrid linguistic expression on the peninsula.

Some of Martínez Huchim's Spanish texts are comprised of a significant amount of *maayat'aan*. For example, in two of eight Spanish-language *tsikbal* 'ob in her collection *U yool xkaambal jaw xiiw / Contrayerba* (2013), Martínez Huchim uses *maaya*-language dialogue in the body of the text and locates the Spanish translation in footnotes. This method resists translation in moments when characters would plausibly speak *maayat'aan* instead of Spanish, causing Spanish-language readers to experience the language barrier that would occur in real life if they witnessed a *maaya* conversation. While most approaches to translation seek an equivalent textual effect in the target language, sustained dialogue in another language maintains Martínez Huchim's Spanish-language reader on the periphery and insists upon the vital role that *maayat'aan* plays in shaping the characters' lives and communication. Only when non-*maaya*-literate readers interrupt their in-text reading to consult footnotes does the *maaya* dialogue become accessible. For example, in "La recompensa de Concepción Yah Sihil" (91),¹⁵⁷ Martínez Huchim preserves the midwife Doña Concepción's *maaya* dialogue three times, twice when she addresses a woman in labor, who is presumably a native *maaya* speaker, and once in an interior monologue. Doña Concepción's last monologue in *maaya* is vital to understanding her reaction to the challenges of midwifery. Most of the *tsikbal* relates difficult situations she has faced, such as middle-of-the-night deliveries, interruptive observers, a society with preference for male babies, and treatment as though she as midwife were the determining factor in the baby's sex. However, in her final *maaya*-language monologue, Doña Concepción expresses that her profession is worth the difficulty when she can garner strength and health from the mothers'

¹⁵⁷ This is the Spanish text that corresponds to the *maaya tsikbal* "U bo'ol Concepción Yah Sihil" (31).

placentas. I here reproduce the monologue in the formatting from the Spanish-language text, including the footnoted translation: “*¡Ba’ax in k’áat ti’!, kex yaan in máan ich áak’aabe’, kex min wenele’, kex tsu’utsukt’anta’aken, kex min náajaltik taak’ine’; in bo’olale’ in ch’aik in muuk’ ti’ le yaala’ táabil tuuche’ utia’al u ya’abtal in toj óolal yóok’ol kaab*”¹⁵⁸ (93). Spanish-language readers can either take the extra step to read the footnote or skip over the monologue entirely. As the monologue remits readers back to the title’s promise to share Doña Concepción’s recompense and provides a satisfying ending in the latter case, readers will conclude that the midwife’s view of her work is generally pessimistic because the Spanish mostly describes the protagonist’s challenges. They might interpret the title’s allusion to the midwife’s ‘recompense’ more ironically than literally. Additionally, these readers will not learn about the cultural importance of the placenta among the Maya, which the monologue evokes. Güémez Pineda explains contemporary Maya beliefs surrounding the placenta:

La placenta entre los mayas yucatecos es considerada como una cuestión personal e íntima que amerita una atención particular. La manera en que se dispone de ella influencia no solo el destino del recién nacido sino también la fecundidad futura de la madre. Así pues, es comprensible que los mayas encuentren inadmisibles tirarla en la cubeta de un hospital. (“La concepción”)

In Martínez Huchim’s text, the midwife is able to garner health from the placenta by placing it over her face when the mother does not accept such a procedure. The text, then, articulates differences in practices relating to birth that active readers from dominant culture must adapt to in the reading experience. Regardless of whether readers gloss over the *maaya*-language

¹⁵⁸ “¡Qué me importa!, aunque ande de noche, aunque no duerma, aunque me insulten, aunque no gane dinero, mi pago es tomar fuerza de la placenta para tener más salud sobre la tierra” (93, n. 12).

dialogue or read the footnote translation, they experience the Maya character of both of Martínez Huchim's texts despite only having read the Spanish-language version.

Martínez Huchim's "foreignization" of her Spanish text is even more pronounced in "La mendicidad de Caridad Tah Otzil" (109).¹⁵⁹ The *tsikbal* opens by identifying the elderly protagonist as a *maaya* speaker: "la mayera doña Caridad" (109).¹⁶⁰ Martínez Huchim's decision to render all of Doña Caridad's direct quotations in *maaya* even in the Spanish text realistically portrays the language barrier between monolingual *maaya* and Spanish speakers and also ensures that both *maaya*- and Spanish-language readerships encounter the protagonist's primary linguistic and cultural identity. In the Spanish text, there are thirteen footnotes with translations of Doña Caridad's speech, causing *maaya*-illiterate readers to constantly interrupt their reading of the main text to seek understanding in the footnotes. Alternatively, readers can experience the *maaya*-speaking world as a non-*maaya* speaker and "hear" but not understand the elderly woman.

Beyond how these transcriptions of *maaya*-language text in the Spanish create realistic characters, they also literally resist the parameters of translation and bilingualism, challenging the dominance of the Spanish language over indigenous languages and reminding Spanish-language readers of the relevance and communicative function of *maayat'aan*. Her decision to translate to a Yucatecan variety of Spanish instead of standard Spanish also contributes to her emphasis on the Yucatecan and Maya character of her texts. Reading in this dialect inserts the Spanish-language reader into a Maya and hybrid context. In a consideration of post-colonial writing methods that can apply to translation, Tymoczko finds that preserving instances of a

¹⁵⁹ The corresponding *maaya*-language text is "U máatan Caridad Tah Otzil" from the collection *U yóol xkaambal jaw xíiw / Contrayerba* (53).

¹⁶⁰ "xmaaya t'aan Caridad" (53)

minority language in dominant-language texts can invert cultural and linguistic hierarchies: “By defamiliarizing the language, post-colonial writers can bring readers face to face with the reality of difference, and call into question the supremacy of the standard language” (Bassnet and Trivedi 14). In her translations, Martínez Huchim similarly defamiliarizes the dominant Spanish language; like the effects Tymoczko discusses, Martínez Huchim’s translations also become subversive acts that question the authority of the dominant language and maintain an indigenous language at center stage.

As both of Martínez Huchim’s original short story collections feature a glossary at the end of the texts, her writing suggests that she anticipates that readers will be unfamiliar with the Yucatecan vocabulary and word usage she employs. Her glossary provides a lifeline to readers unfamiliar with Yucatan, as it explains cultural beliefs necessary for comprehending the texts. She defines both *maaya* and Spanish loan words, and non-standard Spanish terms. For example, in her glossary for *U k’a’ajajil u ts’u’ noj k’áax / Recuerdos*, Martínez Huchim organizes terms and their definitions in the following sections: “Español yucateco”, “Hibridismos maya-castellanos”, “Onomatopeyas”, “Préstamos del castellano”, and “Préstamos del maya”. Martínez Huchim’s use of “español yucateco” signals the dialect, while “castellano” denotes a standard variety of Spanish. In many cases, her glossary shows how standard meanings of Spanish words are superseded by alternative meanings in the context of the Yucatan Peninsula. While the glossary is a useful and necessary tool, its placement at the end of the text means that readers must interrupt their progress in order to understand the text as they go. Compared to most literary works originally written in Spanish, this creates a laborious reading experience, but I view the demands it places on readers as the most fruitful for insisting upon the contemporary relevance of Maya language and culture. Martínez Huchim’s texts oblige readers to gain knowledge of the

Maya context and challenge perceptions that languages with fewer speakers must shift towards or mediate through dominant languages. As with Martínez Huchim's footnote translations, readers have the option to skim over the *maaya* words and passages or to make the effort to consult the glossary in the publication's final pages. Either way, they experience the Maya character of both the original text and its translation.

The most remarkable "translation" of cultural material I have encountered is when Martínez Huchim translates a *maaya* cultural term into a different *maaya* word in the corresponding Spanish text, privileging the Maya worldview in both texts in different ways. In the *tsikbal* about the midwife Concepción, "U bo'ol Concepción Yah Sihil" (31) / "La recompensa de Concepción Yah Sihil" (91), the omniscient narrator comments that new mothers review their babies for markers of Maya identity such as common birthmarks and hair type. The midwife has overheard mothers, when their babies do not show these typical characteristics, say:

"Ma' jach máasewal in chaampali', chéen jump'it yaanikil u maakal" (32). (My

baby isn't very Maya. He/she has just a little bit of a *maakal* [tuber].)¹⁶¹

"No es tan indio, apenas se le ve el *waaj*" (92). [tortilla]

In both texts, Martínez Huchim uses *maaya* terms to discuss what could be considered newborns' ethnic markers as she moves from the word "maakal" in the *maaya* text to "waaj" in the Spanish text. In contrast with Ceh Moo's fashioning of both texts for foreign readers, the presence of "waaj" but absence of *maakal* in Martínez Huchim's glossary demonstrates that Martínez Huchim's work defines cultural terms only for a Spanish-speaking readership. Martínez Huchim's glossary defines *waaj* for Spanish-language readers as "mancha mongólica" (123). A

¹⁶¹ My traduction as "tuber" emphasizes Maya metaphoric usage of the term *maakal* to describe the Mongolian spot, which I explain in my discussion. This figurative usage alludes to a plant. The *Diccionario maya popular* defines "makal" as "ñame, *Xanthosoma yucatenense* Engler; *Colocasia esculenta*, Schott" (133). Listing the same scientific name, Bricker et. al. also defines the term as the elephant ears plant, which has an edible root (178).

Mongolian spot is a temporary birthmark that appears on dark-skinned babies. In the context of the Yucatan Peninsula's two dominant heritages, a Mongolian spot would code a baby as having Maya rather than European heritage.

According to Martínez Huchim over Facebook Messenger in 2017, the overlay of these two *maaya* terms reflects two of the many terms that speakers use to refer metaphorically to the Mongolian spot. The term in the *maaya*-language text, *maakal*, refers to a type of tuber that shares the spot's purple color. On the other hand, she explains that the spot's shape is round like the tortilla, which is the primary meaning of *waaj* in *maaya*. The Bricker et. al. dictionary definitions of *waaj* ("wàah" in its orthography) demonstrate the way this particular metaphor for the Mongolian spot has crystallized into a common *maaya*-language description: the meanings listed are "tortilla, bread; Mongolian spot" (298). Martínez Huchim asserts that the expression is part of Yucatecan Spanish. Translating between two different *maaya* words instead of preserving the original *maaya* word in translation allows Martínez Huchim to insist on a specifically Maya perspective in both texts, or to depict the hybrid nature of linguistics and culture in the region. "Mis traducciones no son literales. Me gusta jugar con el lenguaje", she wrote to me over Facebook Messenger in 2017. Just as in other instances with Martínez Huchim's work, Spanish-speaking readers must rely on the glossary in order to understand the translation.

This passage, considered bilingually, frames a debate about identity. The mothers in the *maakal/waaj* passage refer to social norms that use physical appearance to determine identity. The mothers' searching for visible indicators of shared origin on their newborns demonstrates the cross-cultural interest in babies' familial resemblance. On another level, as this scene follows an anecdote that relates a father's worries about the social suffering that awaits his child with a cleft lip, articulating the absence of a Mongolian spot points to mothers' conception that their

child will be able to navigate dominant culture. When Maya people are often the subjects of discrimination for their appearances and language in contemporary Yucatan, the mothers' positioning of their children in schemas of Maya or non-Maya appearance suggests they are evaluating the level of their child's future acceptance in a society often indifferent to the realities of contemporary Maya people. The mothers' awareness of social hierarchies that put indigenous peoples at a disadvantage in Yucatan is more clear in the Spanish version, as they assert that their babies are not "indios", a term that, according to Worley, is almost universally considered disrespectful in Yucatan for portraying indigenous peoples as passive and backward ("Máseual" 12-13). Despite the mothers' comments that their children do not have the physical mark of indigenous identity, the omniscient narrator in both texts reaffirms the baby's Maya identity by revealing that even in babies without the *maakal/waaj*, other birthmarks common to Maya babies appear when the babies cry. This reaffirmation proclaims pride in a Maya identity that the text suggests will always be part of an individual who is born into it.

Author Stance: A Monolingual Project in maayat'aan

Unlike the previously discussed authors, Ismael May May defies expectations that *maaya*-language writers must necessarily be translators.¹⁶² In a conversation with me in 2015, May May stated that he writes only in *maayat'aan*, and seeks to write *maaya* that speakers will understand without a translation. May May's literary activities, then, are focused on a *maaya* worldview and advocate for *maaya* language use more than for literary recognition outside of the peninsula. He seeks to build his merit specifically upon his *maaya*-language work, and enters

¹⁶² Luz María Lepe Lira discusses how writers in literary workshops in the state of Quintana Roo have insisted upon monolingual *maaya*-language publication of their work through the Dirección General de Culturas Populares de Quintana Roo. While I do not have access to their works for this project, their stance creates a demand for scholars and critics with a knowledge of *maayat'aan*.

contests for indigenous-language writing only when judging is based on the indigenous language. Such is the case with the Juegos Literarios Nacionales Universitarios competition, which he won in 2013 with the short story, “U ja’il Cháak,” which depicts the local henequen industry that led to Yucatan’s prosperity in the nineteenth century. The text suggests that commercialized globalization contaminates Yucatecan traditions and oppresses local Maya people. The young protagonist, named “chan j Gaas”¹⁶³ or Gasparcito, is raised by his grandparents, because after his mother dies in childbirth, his father resorts to alcoholism to cope. While his grandfather has always taught *chan* Jgass that drinking rain water is sustenance, the opening portrays him warning the child not to drink the water pooled on a henequen plant. The narrator later relates that politicians have instated the use of pesticides in the industry. The text critiques the hegemonic economic and social structures implanted by the henequen industry and propagated by politicians, as these structures culminate in the protagonist’s illness and his father’s tragic death, thereby demonstrating the Maya human cost of this booming economic system. May May depicts a dominant Spanish-speaking society that contrasts with *maaya* speakers, many of whom work on the henequen plantations even accompanied by young children. These *maaya* speakers suffer the consequences of decisions made at upper levels. This hierarchy is constructed through references to the *ts’uulo’ob*¹⁶⁴ employers’ Spanish language that *chan* Jgaas’ grandfather struggles to speak, a school named after José Vasconcelos (proponent of a national *mestizo* identity), and political intervention in the henequen industry that ignores worker and community safety. One character acts as a bridge between these two social strata in the text. A Maya man, identified as such by his *maaya* last names, owns a henequen plantation that employs *chan* Jgaas’ grandfather and classmates’ fathers. While this bridge character is

¹⁶³ “Chan” means ‘little’, and functions similarly to the Spanish *-ito* diminutive.

¹⁶⁴ See chapter 2 for a discussion of the term *ts’uul*.

therefore implicated in the text's criticism of Maya oppression, his own son's headaches, presumably a result of his exposure to henequen pesticides, signal that he simultaneously suffers from the same dangers that plague the other working class Maya families.

Although the aesthetic is distinct from oral storytelling tropes, the work's plot events are likely to resonate with the community, as they portray an economic system through its effects on Maya individuals and families. Historically, the short story discusses an industry that socially and economically transformed the peninsula. In contemporary terms, and similar to Ceh Moo's short story, it demonstrates the devastation families suffer because of alcoholism. Additionally, May May's dialogue captures spoken *maaya*. For example, instead of the standard orthography 'bik a wuk' le ja'o'' [don't drink the water], May May's dialogue shows how the particle "le" contracts with the preceding verb in real-time speech and reads, "bik a wuk'e ja'o'" (73). On the other hand, his descriptive prose uses a standardized *maaya* that follows orthographies promoted by leading *maaya* educators and avoids the contractions common to spoken *maaya*.

As the Juegos Literarios Nacionales Universitarios competition requires that the winning *maaya* narrative manuscript be translated to Spanish, Martínez Huchim completed the Spanish-language translation, "Agua de lluvia (U ja'il Cháak)", in collaboration with I. May May. The translation demonstrates an integrity to the original *maaya*. As a translator, Martínez Huchim reproduces the original sentence structures and literary tone, as in the following description of rainwater on the henequen crop:

"Tu láaj báa'pachtaj le junkúul kijo', tuláakal" (73).

"Rodeó toda la mata de henequén, toda" (89).

The Spanish translation demonstrates the writing style and detail with which the original text describes the rainwater. The original *maaya* text emphasizes the abundance of rain through "láaj"

[‘all’, adjective] and “tuláakal” [‘all’, noun] in a clause separated by a comma, which shows that this descriptor adds aesthetic effect. It emphasizes water as a central motif for portraying Maya pain through nostalgia for fresh rainwater, realities of contaminated rainwater, and tears as the grandparents face the ravages of the henequen industry on their family. The translation expresses the same style with the repetition of the word ‘toda’, following the structure of May May’s original while using the resources of the Spanish language. The reminders of the *maaya* text involve a handful of onomatopoeias, last names and place names that reflect the region’s Maya heritage, and *maaya*-language bird names. Compared to Martínez Huchim’s own Spanish-language texts, which often preserve extensive use of *maayat’aan* and Yucatecan culture, her Spanish-language translation of I. May May’s work to a more standard Spanish suggests that as a translator, she perceives her responsibilities differently than for her own bilingual work.

Conclusion: Contribution of Bilingual Writing to Maya Linguistic and Cultural Revalorization

Producing literature in two languages is a challenge that the majority of writers in dominant languages do not take up and are not expected to take up. Asymmetrical norms that effectively obligate indigenous-language authors in Mexico (and beyond) to produce bilingual texts and adapt their language and culture for consumption in the dominant language demonstrate the linguistic hegemony of Spanish in Mexico and the hollow nature of the country’s official commitment to a plurilingual, pluricultural national identity as declared in the 2003 General Law on Linguistic Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In this context, any writer who publishes in *maayat’aan* manifests the plurilingual and pluricultural identity that Mexico officially claims for itself in the 2003 Law and insists upon the necessity and relevance of this

commitment. However, when the majority of readers of *maaya*-language writers' texts currently access them through the Spanish language, the way that writers represent their culture and language in the Spanish texts to a large extent determines the perceptions that readers will have of the other half of their bilingual work. Using a bilingual reading to analyze how writers' Spanish texts obscure, explain, or highlight what their *maaya*-language texts contain provides insight into how authors design reading experiences that present their culture to the diverse cultural profiles that Spanish-language readers might have, including a profile that is unfamiliar with contemporary or historical Maya realities.

When bilingual publications offer readers the option to skip the *maaya* texts and potentially claim the works as part of a wider Spanish-speaking heritage that eclipses their Maya underpinnings, some authors' Spanish-language creations better signal the existence of the *maaya* text. *Maaya* manifested in Spanish works disrupts perceptions of *maayat'aan* and other indigenous languages as pre-Hispanic relics or as minimally important due to speakers' comparably small demographics within nations and regions. For example, while many of Ceh Moo's texts challenge stereotypes that depict Maya people as unmodern or Maya women as docile, her bilingual practice creates literary uses of *maayat'aan* that appeal to readers outside the peninsula. Her production of Spanish-language literary expression and intertextuality with canonical works in colonial-language literatures in many cases calls less attention to the accompanying *maaya* text than do other writers' translations. Ceh Moo does preserve a few *maaya* loan words in some of her texts, an element of her bilingual practice that does call attention to her *maaya* texts. However, writers like Villegas, Carrillo Can, and Martínez Huchim demonstrate even more resistant strategies in how they fashion their Spanish-language texts. These foreignizing translations dialogue with Maya culture without explanation, subordinate

Spanish norms to *maaya* linguistic and cultural expression, portray the linguistically hybrid realities of the Yucatan peninsula, and even refuse translation to Spanish. Their Spanish-language writing reminds readers that beneath this surface is another textual world in *maaya* that completes the publication.

Institutional parameters are able to shape or even determine what effects writers' positions in debates on bilingualism, linguistic purity, and cultural revitalization may have. For example, despite I. May May's provocative refusal to engage in self-translation to Spanish, institutional norms reduce his stance to a personal versus political one when readers still encounter the same bilingual publications as those published by authors who work bilingually from the start. The works analyzed in this chapter demonstrate that self-translating or bilingual authors may even have more strategies at their disposal to render their *maaya* work apparent within their Spanish texts. This is certainly the case when Martínez Huchim, the bilingual writer whose Spanish texts most strongly resist obscuring her *maaya* work, creates a translation of May May's "U ja'il Cháak" that renders equivalency in the Spanish target language. Regular translators aim to represent another's text in a different language, whereas the resistant strategies I have discussed among bilingual writers question practices of translation and boundaries between *maaya* and Spanish on the peninsula. As Ceh Moo suggests, self-translation is the most faithful method of translation because she as the source-text author knows her work better than third party translators. The bilingual practices of these authors suggest in many cases that their priorities are different from translation theory's traditional, although hotly contested, ideals such as equivalency, fidelity, and fluidity between two languages and texts.

If readers respond to the invitations in bilingual texts to acknowledge and consume the *maaya* texts, if scholars and critics engage the *maaya*-language texts or the bilingual nature of

these publications, then they participate in delineating the boundary between Spanish as a tool for diffusion of this literature and Spanish as a hegemonic force that obscures the indigenous-language half of these texts. In a local peninsular context, reading texts in this way challenges dominant linguistic and social hierarchies, holding Yucatecans accountable to the pride that Yucatecans of all backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses frequently express for a regional exceptionalism based on Maya heritage. Bilingual readings of contemporary bilingual texts also resist the prominence of Maya heritage in museum exhibits and archaeological sites that fail to gesture to today's thriving Maya culture and language. In the national Mexican context, bilingual reading and critical practices engage readers in social and political protest that exposes how State linguistic and educational policies silence or marginalize speakers of indigenous languages and fail to enforce official stances of plurilingual, pluricultural identity as a compelling aspect of Mexican national identity. Internationally, bilingual practices reaffirm indigenous people's rights to express themselves in their mother tongues. Finally, in scholarly realms, these reading practices challenge literary studies' focus on texts in dominant languages to the near exclusion of literatures in less common languages. Through these conversations, we will evaluate the ways in which our reading and scholarly practices respond (or not) to perceptions that marginalize indigenous peoples and intentionally create more space for the study of lesser studied literatures in our institutions and disciplinary norms.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ I do not mean to impose monolingual *maaya*-language readings or bilingual readings on all readers or scholars who encounter these texts. However, it is imperative for the strength of indigenous languages and for the strength of literary and cultural studies that scholarly conversations examine all possible reading options these texts offer.

Chapter 5. Transnationalization of a ‘Local’ Language: Future Outlook for *maayat’aan* in New Contemporary Realities and Media

*En las entrevistas nos dicen que ‘los mayas colapsaron’,
lo cual es una mentira porque los mayas estamos aquí,
sólo que evolucionados y haciendo cosas nuevas.*
—Pat Boy

In the past four chapters, I have contemplated mostly literary examples of the ongoing language and cultural revalorization phenomenon in Yucatan. However, this revalorization is not limited to literature. Maya intellectuals, cultural promoters, and increasingly, youth are committed to strengthening their language and culture and to diminishing *maaya* speakers’ language shift to Spanish. In addition to writers, others such as linguists, historians, anthropologists, educators, Maya intellectuals, artists, musicians, journalists, and traditional healers seek to promote the valorization of Maya culture and language in Yucatan. In his study of efforts to strengthen *maayat’aan*, Cru describes it as a “piecemeal sociocultural process” (*From* 226-27), as it depends mostly on individual agents and often uncoordinated efforts (194). While Cru’s assessment is that the movement “is not fundamentally challenging the socioeconomic and political subordination of most Maya speakers” (227), he recognizes that gains have been made: “revalorisation efforts are working for the social recognition of Maya and are having a positive impact on language attitudes. This is not a small feat considering decades of downright stigmatisation of the Maya language and culture” (227). In the midst of these multiple mediums of cultural and linguistic promotion, what role does *maaya*-language literature have now? What role might it have in the future? How does the literary facet of the revitalization movement intersect with other facets of cultural production and promotion involved?

Maya Language and Cultural Revalorization in Yucatan: Current Status and Challenges

There are ongoing debates about the vitality and future of *maayat'aan*. Many believe that the language's future is bleak, including *maaya*-language singer and radio voice Yasmín Novelo. She attributes her motivation to become involved in strengthening her own mother tongue to a course about language loss that she took in Basque Country:

Me movió mucho saber que la lengua maya, según el diagnóstico de la Unesco, está gravemente en peligro. Pensamos que como tiene un montón de hablantes, se habla en comunidades, hay un programa de educación indígena no se va a perder; pero ya no tiene los espacios de uso que antes tenía. Hay lugares donde hay mucha vitalidad de la lengua, pero en general ya no se está transmitiendo. (Boeta Madera)

Many others share Novelo's opinion, especially if efforts are unsuccessful in stemming language loss and promoting the language among youth.

Some linguists, analyzing the language's worst option, total language abandonment, assert that *maayat'aan* is not in danger of extinction. Ramón Arzápalo Marín asserts that globalization "no representa ningún riesgo para esa lengua". His reasons for this evaluation include *maaya*'s extensive vocabulary, syntax, semantic structure, and logic, along with its various expressive styles and literary genres. In contrast to those who demand "authenticity" or "purity" across historical time of *maayat'aan* and Maya culture, the scholar applauds the language's ability to develop, evolve, and borrow from other languages to continue to survive. He argues that cultural transformation is natural in all societies: "Es indispensable entender que todos los conjuntos, incluyendo a las etnias, viven intercambios, y los grupos indígenas no sólo de Yucatán sino de toda América Latina han nutrido de numerosos elementos culturales y

lingüísticos al resto de la sociedad” (“Revitalizada”). Briceño Chel declares that “el caso nuestro no es tan preocupante”. He reasons that the group of *maaya* speakers is quite large. Additionally, *maaya* speakers are increasing in number, even if the percentage of the population who speaks the language is decreasing. Briceño Chel does mention that decreasing numbers of monolingual speakers is worrying (“Los (nuevos)” 93-94).

Maayat’aan has been protected under Mexican law since 2003. The Ley General de los Derechos Lingüísticos de los Pueblos Indígenas, passed during the presidency of Vicente Fox Quesada, recognizes Mexican indigenous languages as languages (as opposed to dialects) and considers them to be equal with Spanish. Among other things, the law protects the rights of speakers of Mexican indigenous languages to communicate in their languages in both public and private spheres and to have access to bilingual intercultural education (Briceño Chel “Los (nuevos)” 90-91). These protections offer the means to create Mexico into a true multilingual State as opposed to a Spanish-dominant nation. The law’s protections guarantee that speakers can legally demand services and information in their languages, when official business in Mexico usually takes place in Spanish. These rights span both written and oral communication and all spheres of life. If enforced, the law would create conditions that debunk stereotypes that relegate indigenous languages to oral communication in the home.

Five years after the law went into effect, Briceño Chel published a call for action addressed to *maaya* speakers: “Hagamos entonces valer la ley, pues de nada nos sirve una ley si no la usamos, si no la exigimos y la hacemos respetar, obedecer y cumplir, pues en cada uno de nosotros recae el ser defensores y difusores de ésta, para lograr de nuevo el engrandecimiento de nuestra lengua maya” (92). He asserts that three steps toward this goal include “revitalización” (speakers use *maayat’aan* in all the same spheres as Spanish and other languages),

“reforzamiento” (speakers reject feeling ashamed of *maayat’aan* and learn to take pride in their language), and “revalorización” (*maayat’aan* becomes incorporated into the linguistic and cultural life of Yucatan, Mexico, and the global community) (93-96).¹⁶⁶ To these ends, Briceño Chel calls for speakers to demand that indigenous languages be available in public services, justice, media, and education to better achieve symmetry with other languages (97). He argues that *maaya* language and cultural education is not just a ‘Maya’ topic in Yucatan: “hay que crear verdaderos programas de educación que integren a los mayas al desarrollo, al conocimiento y hacer que los otros aprendan también de lo nuestro, sólo así se puede lograr una verdadera interculturalidad y un respeto a nuestros derechos y obligaciones con nuestro pueblo maya” (96). In this way, he challenges current education systems by asserting that intercultural education does not involve one-way transmission of knowledge from Spanish to *maaya* but implies an even exchange. This perspective evokes how the region’s Maya heritage brings much to bear on the realities of all Yucatecans.

Many scholars have noted that the law’s effects are mostly limited to unfulfilled discursive promises of a multilingual society and have not led to political action (Güémez Pineda, Herrera Alcocer and Canché Xool; Pech Dzib 29-30; Worley “Máseual”1-2). In fact, Briceño Chel’s statements, while optimistic on the surface, reveal notes of wariness. He published his statements in 2008, five years after the law went into effect, which suggests that the law’s enforcement was minimal even at its inception. Briceño Chel’s calls for action also suggest that grassroots demands by speakers, rather than officials’ accountability before the law, provide the greatest hope of the law’s fulfillment. Many challenges still remain legally, socially,

¹⁶⁶ Cru’s use of the term ‘revalorization’ seems to bridge Briceño Chel’s second and third categories, as it similarly refers to new ideological positioning of Maya language as opposed to the more tangible measure of ‘revitalization’ in both scholars’ frameworks.

economically, and politically for *maaya* speakers and their allies who seek equal respect between *maayat'aan* and Spanish before the law.

Underneath the State level, ambivalencies in revalorization leaders' approaches affect and at times impede revitalization. Cru identifies tensions in participants' ideological underpinnings and perceptions about the best ways to strengthen the language: "Collaboration and networking are, therefore, key strategies for language promotion, but this may even be more necessary in the Yucatecan context where there is a lack of cohesion and even cooperation among several activists that work for the promotion of Maya" (*From* 194). He asserts that activists differ in opinion on the effectiveness of institutionalized or grassroots methods, and whether hot-button issues such as language standardization and linguistic purism legitimize *maaya* or impede its use by separating elite and community speakers (228-31). Older and younger activists often have different perceptions and methods, with the older activists promoting purism and younger activists utilizing grassroots methods that are not associated with State or institutional initiatives. Younger activists also utilize plurilingual expression as opposed to trying to adopt a pure or standard form of *maaya* (13-14, 213). Cru notes that revalorization benefits leaders but has not led to community-level changes: "The current process of revalorisation of Maya is led by a group of educated urban based activists who have capitalised on their indigenous identity and their competence in that language. It is unclear, however, whether this process will ultimately reach out to the everyday practices of marginalised Maya speakers who live in rural areas or who have recently settled in the outskirts of large cities such as Mérida and Cancún" (228). A final ambivalency Cru notes is a gap in leaders' discourse and actions. Despite activists' message of *maaya* revalorization, he says, "their actual sociolinguistic practices effectively work towards its abandonment" (228). For instance, many revalorization

activists do not transmit *maayat'aan* to their children (155-56). These multiple situations highlight the debates, tensions, contradictions, and at times, divisions and conflicts, among revalorization activists that create additional challenges for revitalization.

Educational opportunities are and will be a significant factor that affects the strength of *maayat'aan*, as education transmits both knowledge and values to new generations of citizens. Cru asserts that *maaya*-speaking parents often consider schools, not the home, to be the place where children learn *maaya*. He considers that this perception has the potential to create additional language abandonment (*From* 155). *Maaya*-speaking children are disproportionately underrepresented in educational settings of any language; an article in *Milenario Novedades* reported in 2015 that two-thirds of Mexican children between six and fourteen years of age who do not attend school are indigenous. According to the article, Miguel Cocom Mayén of the Secretaría de Educación de Yucatán (SEGEY) asserts that the SEGEY implements training programs for bilingual instructors to increase attendance of *maaya*-speaking children in schools through the affirmation of Maya perspectives in the classroom (Euán). However, many scholars assert that bilingual education in Yucatan does not fulfill the rights of *maaya*-language speakers to education in their mother tongue. Five years after the 2003 law on indigenous language speakers' linguistic rights, Miguel Güemez Pineda, Gaudencio Herrera Alcocer, and Abelardo Canché Xool declare: "Cabe aclarar que ningún programa oficial de educación preescolar o primaria contempla de manera obligatoria el estudio de las lenguas indígenas". Discussing "escuelas indígenas", a common name in Yucatan for Spanish-*maaya* bilingual schools, they assert that there is a lack of bilingual schools in regions with large *maaya*-speaking populations ("El triple"). Briceño Chel also points out that bilingual curriculums are only created for

elementary education in indigenous zones, and are not available at middle school and high school levels (“Los (nuevos)” 92).

Beyond the insufficient quantity of bilingual schools, Güemez Pineda et. al. question the effectiveness of these schools. They conclude, “queda mucho para conseguir que las escuelas indígenas en México preparen individuos bilingües”. They cite multiple problems that “escuelas indígenas” face, including the difficulty of teaching bilingualism while also imparting the Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP)-mandated academic curriculum; teachers with insufficient preparation in pedagogy and *maayat’aan*; teachers’ inherited biases against indigenous languages; and language discrimination that causes even *maaya*-speaking parents to oppose educating their children in *maaya* (“El triple”). To the list of challenges facing Yucatecan bilingual and intercultural education, Salvador Sigüenza Orozco adds poor student-to-teacher ratio, as one teacher might be in charge of an entire school or multiple grade levels; poor school conditions, insufficient materials, high failure rates, low retention levels, student resistance to learning *maayat’aan*, language barriers between teachers and monolingual *maaya* parents, the advanced age of many instructors, lack of didactic materials, and lack of specialized instructors for classes such as art, physical education, or special education (184-85). Castañeda further points out that *maaya* also competes with English. In an account of the Chichén Itzá archeological zone, a common tourist destination, he notes, “Spanish, English, and Maya are almost ‘equally’ used, although in different spheres,” and he relates that community members often approached him about the possibility of him organizing English classes for community members as he worked as an anthropologist in the nearby town of Pisté (*In the Museum* 240). Similarly, *UNIÓN* reported that some universities in Quintana Roo opted to begin offering English-Spanish bilingual education in 2016. The article mentions that Mexican President

Enrique Peña Nieto and the SEP supported the initiative (“Universidades”), which demonstrates that political support brings concrete results even as *maaya* has not been able to achieve the same political protection.

Similar obstacles are involved in the professionalization of bilingual teachers. In an interview, Castillo Tzec, an Indemaya educator who trains bilingual teachers, commented that even individuals aspiring to bilingual education show disdain for *maaya* in his *maaya* immersion classes, pretending not to understand *maayat’aan* when he knows they do. Other challenges he mentioned are that approximately one-third of teachers do not speak *maayat’aan* when they start training. Despite the difficulties, Castillo Tzec believes in the importance of *maaya*-language education and describes efforts for its fomentation through the metaphor of planting seeds that will be reaped with increased literacy and readership in the future (Personal Interview).

Perhaps more troubling than the lack of resources and human capital are studies that show that bilingual aims are actually subverted in bilingual curriculums. In a case study published in 2006, Barbara Pfeiler and Lenka Zámešová found that one governmentally sponsored bilingual *maayat’aan*-Spanish program, Indigenous Intercultural Bilingual Education, sponsored by the Dirección General de Educación Indígena (DGEI), actually promoted Hispanicization in practice (292). In 2008, Juan Carlos Mijangos-Noh and Fabiola Romero Gamboa conducted a study of nine elementary bilingual classrooms in Yucatan and analyzed when teachers and students used *maayat’aan* versus Spanish to accomplish various types of speech acts in the classroom. They found that *maayat’aan* was the language most used for oral communication and classroom discipline, whereas Spanish was the language most used for reading and writing tasks (9-10). They concluded that teachers use *maayat’aan* as a “lingua franca to enable communication with the children” but that “mainly the educational process at

school is focused on Spanish literacy” (10). Briceño Chel calls the system “la llamada educación bilingüe”. He calls for a curriculum that promotes true bilingualism instead of supporting Spanish over indigenous languages (“Los (nuevos)” 92).

Sigüenza Orozco asserts that applying the name “educación indígena” to an educational system reproduces current social hierarchies: “la educación ha generado una sociedad jerárquica. ¿No acaso el sistema educativo dirigido a los indios se llama indígena y el “otro” recibe el calificativo de formal? Así, el lenguaje es uno de los primeros elementos que transmite y genera desigualdad” (185). Sigüenza Orozco’s comments show that calling bilingual intercultural education by the name “indigenous education” suggests that only indigenous students need learn *maayat’aan*, whereas it is a given that every student in every school in Yucatan will use Spanish. By its own name, then, the very system that purports to teach *maayat’aan* reinforces conceptions of *maaya* inferiority. It seems that not until bilingual education is considered important for all students on the peninsula and promoted under a State educational policy will it be able to consistently produce individuals prepared to navigate and appreciate the bilingual and bicultural peninsula, regardless of students’ mother tongues.

Complementary efforts beyond State-sponsored educational policy and curriculum provide more hope for improving, normalizing, and increasing *maaya*-language education in Yucatan. To facilitate instruction using the 2014 *Normas de escritura para la lengua maya*, the SEGEY provided preschools and elementary schools with 11,000 copies of the *Diccionario maya popular* that same year (“Fomento”). Educational experts and institutions also propose new methodologies for *maaya*-Spanish bilingual or even *maaya*-Spanish-English trilingual classrooms on the peninsula, given the need for English in the context of the peninsula’s tourism industry (Bokel, Chan Cervantes). While Mexican language policy favors indigenous-language

standardization, a goal also held by most older generation revalorization participants (Cru *From* 7-8), some non-Maya voices suggest rejecting policies of linguistic purity to offer students the freedom to use multiple languages in a way that more closely reflects daily speech practices (Bokel, Cru *From* 230). In addition to recommending pedagogical methods, experts also discuss how to improve instructors' effectiveness. There are efforts to improve and ensure instructor preparation through degree programs and competency tests (Güemez Pineda et. al. "El triple"), and to encourage instructors to embrace intercultural educational values despite their negative perceptions of students affected by migration (Chan Cervantes, Lyman et. al.). Researchers are also evaluating current classroom practices to provide a foundation for making future improvements (Pfeiler and Zámešová, Tapia Uribe).

Additionally, similarly to how Briceño Chel's call for grassroots support to hold officials accountable for the 2003 law on linguistic rights, I. May May asserts that individuals take the initiative to speak and write *maayat'aan* through digital communication. He declares that grassroots actions render official linguistic policy unnecessary ("El maya escrito" 230). As these comments suggest, education is certainly not the only factor affecting the strength of *maayat'aan*. Considering ineffective bilingual education policy, other factors demonstrate more promise for revitalization.

The Maya in a Globalized World

Globalization involves the possibility—the certainty even—of creating transnational spaces as part of everyday life. The changes it has effected in contemporary realities in Yucatan affect both messages transmitted by the revitalization movement and the means available for strengthening the language and culture. These realities expand the presence of *maayat'aan*

beyond oral narrative and historical museums where it is expected to be found. While *maayat'aan* is often pigeon-holed as a localized phenomenon, speakers' language use demonstrates its participation in a global community. In this section, I discuss two ways in which *maaya* speakers participate in the contemporary globalized world: through virtual transnational space (by means of media and the Internet) and physical transnational space (by means of tourism and migration).

Virtual transnational space demonstrates *maaya* presence on platforms such as Facebook, podcasts, blogs, and other social media. I. May May illustrates how growing access to Internet and media in Maya communities has transformed ways of living ("El maya escrito" 214-17), and considers that the popularity of electronic platforms for communication offers opportunities to preserve and adapt *maayat'aan* for a contemporary world in a way that motivates *maaya* speakers to use their language (230, 233). Contrary to ideas that globalization homogenizes cultures through spreading the influence of dominant cultures, May May considers globalization to be an opportunity for technology users of varied demographic groups to exert cultural control as they choose their language and expression in electronic communication (230). May May asserts that new technologies offer more opportunities not only for oral communication but also for written expression in *maayat'aan*, which he hypothesizes will contribute to preservation of the language (221). Despite low levels of *maaya* written literacy (213), May May demonstrates that *maaya* speakers with varying levels of *maaya*-language education choose *maayat'aan* to communicate in text messaging, emailing, and chatting. Globalization is evident in many of the messages May May analyzes, as individuals adopt linguistic mixing of *maayat'aan* with other languages like Spanish and English (227-28).

In physical transnational space inhabited by *maaya* speakers, their migration, especially to other areas of Mexico and the United States, has increased in past decades. A growing thread of investigation since the late 1990s explores the Yucatec Maya migrant experience and how it affects those at home and abroad (Lewin Fischer 45). Internal migration within the peninsula to tourist zones in Quintana Roo has been commonplace since the final decades of the last century (28-32).¹⁶⁷ However, international Maya migration is a recent phenomenon.¹⁶⁸ The average profile of the Yucatecan migrant to the United States is a 36-year-old male, married, with three children, as Alpha Martell et. al. find in their research of migrants from Tunkás, Yucatan (82-83).

According to Martell et. al., factors that contribute to Tunkás residents' international migration include higher salaries in the US, underemployment in Yucatan compared to steady work in the US,¹⁶⁹ and economic goals like building a house, paying off debts, or starting a business (83-87). Many also migrate to reunite with family members who migrated first (84). Once in the United States, Yucatecan migrants tend to participate in the service industry,

¹⁶⁷ Pedro Lewin Fischer discusses how, with the decline of the monocrop henequen industry in Yucatan and the rise of the tourist industry in Cancun in Quintana Roo in the 1970s, many people from the state of Yucatan migrated to the state of Quintana Roo looking for better economic opportunities (29, 33, 37). Lewin Fischer asserts salaries in Quintana Roo are double Yucatecan salaries, and that it is common for Yucatecan families to have at least one relative working in Quintana Roo. He emphasizes, "Hay muchos municipios que han perdido a la mayor parte de su población y que ahora se encuentra en Cancún o Cozumel" (31). When studying motives that cause migrants from the peninsula to choose internal or international migration, Andrea Rodríguez et. al. find that migrants to Cancun have higher rates of subsequent international migration (123-24). Lewin Fischer explains that experiences in Cancun act as stepping stones for gaining skills and language experience both useful and necessary for undertaking such international migration (39).

¹⁶⁸ Lewin Fischer explains that Yucatecans began migrating to the United States towards the end of the Braceros Program, which created opportunities for Mexicans to work in agriculture in the United States between 1942 and 1964. However, few Yucatecans participated compared to migrants from other Mexican states. While Braceros migrants formed a network of contacts that spurred additional migration from most regions of Mexico even after the end of the program, Lewin Fischer sustains that these contacts had less of an impact on subsequent migration from Yucatan because the booming local tourism industry in the 1970s provided a closer attractive option for economic benefit (38-39). For most Yucatecan towns, international migration started in the 1980s but became noticeable in the 1990s (40). In fact, southern Mexico, the area with the country's highest concentrations of Indigenous population, is the newest Mexican region featuring migration to the United States (27).

¹⁶⁹ Underemployment refers to jobs that provide work only a few days a week.

especially at car washes and as restaurant cooks, dishwashers, and occasionally, servers. Few hold agricultural jobs (97-98). Yucatecan job profiles in the US are similar to those of other Mexican migrants, except that Yucatecans are comparatively underrepresented in the construction industry (106). The researchers posit that this results because new Yucatecan migrants tend to search for employment by activating social networks of family and friends who are already established in the new country (99). In fact, Rodríguez et. al. find that, besides perceived risks surrounding clandestine border crossing, a lack of connections in the US deters individuals from international migration (124).

The transnational character of Yucatecan migration is evident from the interaction between migrants and their hometowns, as migration does not only affect the migrant. Martell et. al. show that migration has created a transnational space in which both communities of origin and destination form integral roles in the lives of migrants and members of their hometowns (99). In their discussion of Yucatec Maya organizations in San Francisco, California, Shannan L. Mattiace and Patricia Fortuny Loret de Mola declare that migrants' hometown associations pool resources to complete public works projects in their Yucatecan communities of origin (206). Another example of living and working in a transnational space is a 50-year-old US permanent resident named Olivia, who started businesses on both sides of the border and travels frequently to Yucatan to stock up on food supplies (Martell et. al. 101).

In Yucatan, transnationalism has caused both economic and social transformations. In the economic sphere, Lewin Fischer writes that many homes depend almost exclusively on migrant incomes (43). In the social sphere, Blair Lyman et. al. describe clashes between Tunkás migrants and Tunkás residents, even as the community seeks to maintain solidarity. A Tunkás schoolteacher reports that children in Tunkás who have migrant parents may have more material

wealth but also demonstrate emotional instability and disrespectful or aggressive behavior in school, as in the case of one young boy who said he had no one in his life who loved him. Another teacher suggests migrants are a bad influence on young people who in turn show behavioral problems in school. Differences in returning migrants' speech and dress also cause tensions in the town, and one community member expressed concern that some migrants imitate gang dress from California. The local doctor views connections between migration and higher rates of alcoholism (239-41).

What impact might the recent migratory phenomenon have on Maya language and cultural revitalization? Lyman et. al. predict that within Yucatan, the linguistic and cultural effects of migration on towns like Tunkás will be minimal, as *maaya*-speaking migrants with strong connections to their culture and language are more likely to choose to return to Tunkás (254), even as monolingual Spanish-speaking migrants are more likely to remain in the US (246).¹⁷⁰ Among *maaya* speakers, Lyman et. al. discuss ways in which migration both weakens and strengthens the use of *maayat'aan*. As for weakening the language, while Lyman et. al. assert that migration is not the only factor to blame for language loss,¹⁷¹ they suggest that Tunkás migrants prefer Spanish in the US because it provides more economic opportunities and facilitates their integration into a wider migrant community when they do not perceive a discriminatory threat that would motivate them to form an exclusive Yucatec community (248, 251). In fact, the researchers observe that some *maaya*-speaking migrants who return to Tunkás avoid *maayat'aan* even in Yucatan and only minimally used the language in the US (245-46).

¹⁷⁰ For migrants who choose to stay in the United States, Lyman et. al. forecast that they will integrate into a wider Mexican migrant community without emphasizing their cultural difference as Yucatecans or Mayas (254).

¹⁷¹ Even in Tunkás, many parents of low socioeconomic status are reluctant for their children to learn *maaya*, as they associate the language with lack of education and economic opportunities, especially with the growing likelihood that their children will migrate and be better served by Spanish or English than *maaya* (Lyman et. al. 237-39).

One *maaya*-speaking migrant interviewed by Lyman et. al. lamented that some of his fellow migrants eschew their Yucatecan origins and language while abroad, and commented that this puts them in an identity limbo, not wanting to be Yucatecans but not being Americans, either (245-47).

However, researchers find that other migrants speak *maayat'aan* frequently, both upon returning to Tunkás and while in the United States. Returning migrants, according to Lyman et. al., use *maayat'aan* as a strategy for reincorporation into their hometowns (239), which allows them to reclaim and proclaim their local identity despite their international experience. Mattiace and Loret de Mola discuss that *maayat'aan* can also be a strategy of cultural assertion from the US. Despite living abroad, Yucatecan migrants' hometown associations hold meetings in *maaya* and fund development projects in their hometowns (206-08). Mattiace and Loret de Mola report that members of hometown associations tend to be first-generation migrants who maintain strong ties to their Yucatecan towns of origin (202-03). They suggest that subsequent generations of migrants feel less connection to a Yucatecan regional identity and conceive of themselves through the multicultural discourses prevalent in the United States (203).¹⁷²

Literature suggests that migration does more to strengthen Maya culture and language than to harm it. Castillo Tzec's 2007 short story "Tàanxal kaajile' ku chiimpoltaj maaya kaaj, ma' je'ex tu lu'umile' / "La cultura maya es respetada en otros lugares, no como en la nuestra [sic]" tells the story of the migrant Chucho who suffers discrimination and ridicule in Yucatan as a rural *maaya* speaker. However, upon arriving in the United States, a restaurant owner hires

¹⁷² Mattiace and Loret de Mola demonstrate that Yucatecan migrants' generational differences can have a large impact on their self-identity and how they experience the US. They assert that while members of Yucatecan hometown associations generally conceive of themselves as a unified group of 'Yucatecans' without identifying as 'Mayas' or any other Yucatecan subcategory of identity (206-08), the members of migrant service organizations, another type of Yucatecan migrant organization in the United States, posit an ethnic Maya identity that appeals to subsequent generations of migrants in the context of the multicultural discourses prevalent in the US (203).

Chucho specifically because of his Maya heritage, which the owner values as a legacy of wisdom. His new boss requests that Chucho teach him about the Maya. At first, Chucho believes he knows little about the Maya, but then he remembers his grandfather's stories and begins recounting them at work. In an environment that embraces Maya culture, Chucho learns to value his cultural origin: "Te nach kaajila' k'éex u tuukul Chucho' p'áate' ki'imak yóol yéetel u ch'i'ibal, ku ya'alike' leken suunaken tin kaajale', maaya kin t'aan je'e tu'uxak ka xi'ikene', ba'ax in k'aajti' wáa ti' paktaj, ma' ti' ch'aik su'tal je'ex ka'achile'" (107). / "En el extranjero, Chucho cambió su forma de pensar acerca de su origen; entonces, pensaba que cuando regresara a su pueblo hablaría en maya a donde quiera que fuese, 'a pesar de que todos se me queden viendo, ya no voy a sentir pena'" (124). Upon returning to his hometown, he maintains his Maya customs despite the new social mobility his US earnings provide. This narrative, winner of the Premio "Alfredo Barrera Vásquez" of the UADY-sponsored Quintos Juegos Literarios Universitarios, demonstrates how a perspective from outside Yucatan can change the protagonist's insider perception of his own origin. It demonstrates a purely optimistic view of migration to the US. For Castillo Tzec, migration is capable of transforming linguistic and cultural hierarchies in Yucatan through transnationalism one individual at a time.

Maaya-Language Literature in Revitalization Efforts

Briceño Chel speaks of literature's importance for the strength of a language: "[T]enemos que pasar del simple proceso de plasmar en el papel la forma hablada, de la literatura oral. Y ahí tenemos excelentes ejemplos surgidos de los diversos talleres de los escritores en lengua maya de la península, quienes se han convertido en creadores: poetas, narradores, dramaturgos, cantautores, etcétera, que han empezado a emerger como los impulsores de la lengua y la cultura

mayas, tanto local como nacionalmente y algunos incluso internacionalmente” (“Los (nuevos)” 92). Literary writers generate new uses of the language and stretch the limits and creativity of expression. While speakers may perceive the *jach maaya* [true *maaya* (in the sense of ‘pure’)] that most writers use in literature as strange, forging a written and literary register that differs from colloquial speech is part of many writers’ strategies to legitimize the language and demonstrate the language as complete and capable of different forms of expression.

The current influence of *maaya*-language literature is more ideological than tangible, as a minimal *maaya*-language readership limits literature’s potential as a revitalization tool. In a revalorization sense, though, the untiring efforts of many *maaya*-language writers make literature a flourishing and active component of strategies to increase positive perceptions surrounding Maya language and culture. Regardless of whether an individual can read *maaya* or not, *maaya*-language literature can serve as a powerful rebuttal of stereotypes that conceive of *maayat’aan* as a household oral language oriented toward the past. These stereotypes are important to topple because they are prevalent among monolingual Spanish speakers in Yucatan as well as *maaya* speakers and their children. Despite bilingual publication, *maaya* presence in print editions of both collected oral stories and original literature increases the visibility of the language from non-Maya perspectives as it demonstrates its capacity to be written and read as well as spoken and heard. Literary publications in *maayat’aan* promote language equality by affirming elite and artistic usages of the language comparable to the diverse usages of the Spanish language. Books as a marketable product available for international consumption situate *maaya* in economic systems. For readers and non-readers of *maaya* alike, national and local literary awards, along with book presentations and events in which authors read their works also increase the visibility and prestige of *maayat’aan*.

The ideal reader of *maaya*-language literature is bilingual like the publications. However, some publications seem to orient themselves toward one linguistic readership over the other. While Ceh Moo orients her work for an international audience, Martínez Huchim aims for her publications to reach Maya communities (“De la recopilación”). Accordingly, she seeks to design book projects that *maaya* speakers and Maya communities will use and value, and her success in these endeavors demonstrates that *maayat’aan* is not just symbolic despite its minimal readership. For example, Martínez Huchim plans to include childrens’ illustrations of book characters in future editions of one of her compilations of oral *tsikbalo’ob* (“De la recopilación”). Community participation in the creation of written texts reflects Maya values and increases community investment in literacy projects. Books designed in collaboration with communities can provide incentive to increase a culture of reading, as communities perceive the texts as reflections of themselves, their culture, and their stories. Later, I discuss the audio component of Martínez Huchim’s anthology of *tsikbalo’ob*, which expands access to *maaya* speakers who do not read the language. Her method seems to be effective for increasing community access to literature and reading materials. Martínez Huchim recounts that she saw one of her books in a *jéets méek*¹⁷³ ritual (“De la recopilación”).

Multiple factors suggest that written *maaya* literature could more significantly enact language revalorization and revitalization in future years. In support of written *maayat’aan*, there is an active and energetic Maya intellectual elite dedicated to producing and promoting *maaya*-language texts and scholarship about the Maya, along with encouraging and educating future generations of thinkers and speakers to continue expanding revitalization. In the following sections, I discuss revalorization efforts that support both production and consumption of written

¹⁷³ See Chapter 3 of this dissertation for a description of the *jéets’ méek*’ ceremony and its ritualization of male and female gender practices.

maaya-language literature. These supporting spheres may increase the influence of written *maaya* literature.

Oral Literature

While there is not widespread interest in written *maaya*-language literature across all regions, linguistic groups, socioeconomic classes, and educational levels in Yucatan, oral literature is alive and well (Briceño Chel “A viva” 57, Preuss, Worley *Telling*). There are many efforts to compile and publish oral *tsikbalo’ob* and *k’aay t’aan*. At the forefront of these efforts are Manuel J. Andrade, Dzul Poot, Martínez Huchim, and Hilaria Máas Collí. Their efforts affirm ways of life in rural areas, where oral tradition reigns. Publishing written versions of oral stories told by narrators in communities can foment interest in written texts as an opportunity to see one’s narrative on the page. Rather than suggest an evolutionary process leading from oral literature to written literature, I wish to posit that capitalizing on dominant stereotypes that the written word carries more permanence than oral speech may help create ideological equality between *maayat’aan* and Spanish among Yucatecans of both languages, as exposure increases to the languages’ coexistence in both oral and written domains.

Theater

Theater is a popular genre in Yucatan (Montemayor and Frishmann *Words: Theater* 3, Tuyub 98). Montemayor reports that pre-Hispanic Maya people enjoyed theater, which formed part of feast-day celebrations. He affirms that at in pre-Hispanic times, “theater and dance were inseparable” (*Words: Theater* 2). Carrillo Can portrays this type of dance-theater in his contemporary novel *U yóok’itilo’ob áak’ab / Danzas de la noche*, which features a protagonist

dancer who recognizes that the performances she designs transmit values and serve as a didactic cultural tool. Montemayor discusses that plays are written collectively in Yucatan, with an “author” transcribing the final version (3). However, it is also becoming more common for individual playwrights to write scripts for the stage. Frischmann declares that Sánchez Chan and Carlos Armando Dzul Ek are “two of the most representative figures in contemporary Yucatec Mayan theater” (23). Dzul Ek utilized theater during thirty-eight years in education (26), and he also founded the Sak Nicté theater group, which has been active for decades (99).

Theater provides a bridge between oral and written transmission of Maya values in the realm of *maaya*-language literature, allowing the participation of all *maaya* speakers. Performances provide access to speakers who may or may not read *maaya*, and recent publication of scripts written by individual playwrights allows theater to be enjoyed as literature or used in classrooms. As theater functions independently of cultural and governmental organizations in Yucatan, Maya people have self-determination in this sphere. Cru similarly argues that grassroots efforts are the best source of revitalization efforts in Yucatan, as institutions have not proven to be dependable sources of results-based support (*From* 109). Indigenous-language theater in Mexico, states Frischmann, “remains a mass medium through which community actors are able to recognize their historic roots and seek continuity for a distinct cultural and linguistic heritage. Their work runs contrary to the Western forces that relentlessly continue to challenge indigenous peoples’ right to self-determination” (19). Harnessing the popular appeal of theater in the written realm can perhaps increase positive perceptions surrounding written literature. Gilma Tuyub evaluates the history and status of regional Yucatecan theater, which she defines as having a focus on the average Yucatecan and/or Maya (6), and asserts that there is a lack of playwrights (98). Many of the literary authors I

discuss throughout the dissertation have also written scripts and helped stage performances, which demonstrates the strong connection and overlap between literature and theater. Carrillo Can, Martínez Huchim, and of course, Sánchez Chan are examples of authors who have been involved in theater.

Fomenting maaya-Language Readership through Language Education

The revitalization movement has a vested interest in promoting truly bilingual education and raising literacy rates among *maaya* speakers (Briceño Chel “Los (nuevos)” 92). Whereas in both prehispanic and contemporary Yucatan, only Maya elites read and write, today’s literacy campaigns seek to spread literacy throughout the population (92). Pfeiler and Zámešová demonstrate that bilingual education does have success in certain contexts. Unlike the failed DGEI intercultural bilingual education curriculums, their evaluation found that the Program of Educational Assistance to the Indigenous Population, sponsored by the Consejo Nacional del Fomento Educativo (CONAFE), successfully fomented the persistence of *maayat’aan* by promoting “a conscious bilingualism” (Pfeiler and Zámešová).

Emphasis on *maaya*-language children’s literature demonstrates educators’ and intellectuals’ belief that *maaya*-language literature bolsters *maaya*-language education. Denis A. Pech Dzib suggests that *maaya*-language literature itself can foment readership by serving as didactic and cultural material for classroom use (45). He analyzes published bilingual texts, including both oral story compilations and original literary works, for their pedagogical merit in teaching values, cultural cosmology, and language(s) in the classroom (35-44). Pech Dzib takes into account children’s literature written for both *maaya*- and/or Spanish-speaking children, as he affirms, “pues no lograría ser efectivamente intercultural si no se tomaran en cuenta ambos

criterios” (32). His method allows for immediate implementation of available literature in pedagogy and offers instructors concrete recommendations on texts.

Proposed educational methods such as Pech Dzib’s must stand the test of producing results in the classroom and of entering teachers’ repertoire of methods in order to be successful. The many efforts to create didactic materials and children’s literature demonstrate the value placed on young people in revitalization efforts. Children’s books produced include books of Maya riddles,¹⁷⁴ Maya tongue twisters,¹⁷⁵ *maaya* numbers and counting,¹⁷⁶ a Maya ritual associated with the tourist destination of Xcaret,¹⁷⁷ and compilations of *tsikbalo’ob*.¹⁷⁸ Each one is *maaya*-Spanish bilingual or even multilingual,¹⁷⁹ and are so in compliance with SEP values of intercultural education. Many of these books, while directed towards young audiences through illustrations, have the potential to appeal to readers of all ages. Castillo Tzec’s bilingual vocabulary also presents each new word as an illustration with captions in both *maaya* and Spanish, making it an excellent didactic tool for teaching literacy at any age.¹⁸⁰

The effectiveness of education in fomenting a wider readership of *maayat’aan* depends on distribution and availability of books in schools and also teacher or institutional integration of books into the curriculum. Efforts such as a multidisciplinary project to create digital support

¹⁷⁴ See Briceño Chel, compilador. *Adivinanzas*.

¹⁷⁵ See Flores Farfán, coordinador. *K’ak’alt’aano’ob*.

¹⁷⁶ See Takeuchi.

¹⁷⁷ See Flores Farfán. *La travesía*.

¹⁷⁸ See Dzul Poot, who published numerous collections of oral stories; Martínez Huchim recreadora, *Tsímin tuunich*, an anthology of three tales told by Martínez Huchim’s late father; I. May May, *Ka’aj máanen te’elo’*; and U *tsikbal tuusilo’ob*, which presents oral stories and riddles about the Sian Ka’an biosphere reserve near Tulum, Quintana Roo. The latter project was specifically created for classroom use, and multiple national and international institutions provided financial support, including Mayáon, A.C., the Programa de Pequeñas Donaciones del Fondo para el Medio Ambiente Mundial PPD-FMAM, the Programa de Participación Comunitaria en la Conversación de Sian Ka’an, and the Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo.

¹⁷⁹ Briceño Chel, compilador. *Adivinanzas* presents Maya riddles translated into six languages: Spanish, *maayat’aan*, English, Maya Tzotzil, and French. Martínez Huchim. *Tsímin tuunich* presents *tsikbalo’ob* in three languages: *maayat’aan*, Spanish, and English.

¹⁸⁰ See Castillo Tzec. *T’aano’ob*.

materials for university-level study of *maaya*-language literature, reported by Marta Aracely Ucán-Piña and Juan Carlos Mijangos-Noh, facilitate *maaya* presence in classrooms (916). Their proposal offers resources for integrating *maaya*-language literature into two related majors at two Yucatecan universities that have previously excluded *maaya*-language literature (915, 919-22). Resources include a DVD of *maaya*-Spanish bilingual interviews with four *maaya*-language authors (923-25, 928).¹⁸¹

Similarly, technology offers opportunities for grassroots educational efforts in the context of an indifferent State. Online language instruction is becoming more frequent, and *maayat'aan* is no exception. Unlike the efforts targeted at public education, these digitalized courses are aimed at an adult audience with access to smartphones and Internet, and depend not on a mandated course of study but rather a students' will to invest their resources and time in the language. The online Radio Yúuyum project offers a weekly segment to promote *maaya* language acquisition that is available to any individual with Internet access through streaming or podcasts. Other courses facilitate more direct interaction between student and instructor. José Natividad Ic Xec, known as El Chilam Balam, launched a *maaya*-language course through the cell phone application WhatsApp. This application, which is commonly used in Latin America, provides phone and messaging services through cell phone data or wi-fi. The MayaWhatsApp course was comprised of 16 short videos, one sent to students each Monday and Thursday in February and March 2017, for a cost of 500 Mexican Pesos. The creators assert that the WhatsApp platform allows students to access and use the materials wherever and whenever they wish. By using videos, students listen, watch, and speak the language. Finally, instructors and

¹⁸¹ They hypothesize that the videos have multiple uses even beyond university-level literary studies, and suggest adaptation for middle or high school classrooms, language acquisition, and research. They also plan to create materials to help instructors successfully utilize the videos for different types of activities that complement the study of literature (916, 929).

teachers communicate through voice calls or messages. The article states that the course, designed to fit into people's busy and mobile lives, seeks to eliminate common excuses people have for not taking the initiative to learn *maaya* ("Initiate").¹⁸² *Maaya*-language prose writer Felipe Castillo Tzec reported in an interview with El Chilam Balam that he is contemplating the launch of language learning opportunities on Facebook when he finishes his master's degree ("Felipe Castillo Tzec, escritor"). The *maaya*-language digital radio station Radio Yúuyum, which I discuss shortly, offers the weekly language acquisition program "Ti' u t'aanil maaya" ('Desde la lengua maya') for streaming on Monday evenings or as a podcast.

Fomenting a Reading Culture in Yucatan

Beyond efforts to publish *maaya*-language children's literature and increase *maaya*-language literacy at all ages, the annual Feria Internacional de la Lectura (Filey) promotes a reading culture in Yucatan on a large scale. Organized by the Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán (UADY) since 2012, this annual event draws industry leaders and book lovers of all ages. In 2016, the Filey attracted over 180,000 attendees in nine days. Given that the Filey is polylingual, director Rafael Morcillo López adequately describes the event in linguistic terms: "es una amable Babel en la que paradójicamente todos hablamos el mismo idioma: el amor a la lectura" ("Más de 180"). A component of the 2016 festival called "Voces del Mayab" featured *maaya*-language writers and books. The high-profile festival provides the opportunity to purchase books and share a love of the written word, besides bringing visibility and prestige to a culture of reading on the peninsula.

¹⁸² An article on the *Mayapolitikon* website states the reason for designing this easily accessible *maaya*-language course: "No censuramos, sólo señalamos: 'Muchos quieren aprender maya pero muchos (ni siquiera los que parece debieran de saber) ni siquiera lo intentan. Notemos, por ejemplo, cuántos especialistas en la cultura maya no hablan la lengua'" ("Iníciate").

The Use of Audio to Increase Access to maaya-Language Texts

Including audio in print publications increases access to written texts by erasing divides between written and oral literacies. Martínez Huchim's view considers audio to be vital for ensuring that Maya communities have access to texts in their language. "Eso sí, llega al pueblo," she asserts. "Si escribes, ¿quién te va a leer?" ("De la recopilación"). Beyond *maaya*-speaking communities, audio obliges non-speakers to confront the existence of *maayat'aan* as a communicative language and allows them to experience the language's contemporary sounds. While they may not understand the recordings' content, non *maaya*-speakers can appreciate the textual tone and the cadence of the language.

Both *maaya*-language literary authors and oral story compilers have packaged audio CDs with *maaya*-language books. In the literary realm, the *Kuxa'an t'aan* anthology, which features five of the most well-known contemporary Maya poets, includes five audio discs in which authors read their work in both *maayat'aan* and Spanish. In oral compilations, audio commonly accompanies picture books most likely created for children but that can appeal to adults as well. For example, José Antonio Flores Farfán's edited book of Maya tongue twisters entitled *K'ak'alt'aano'ob o K'alk'alak t'aano'ob / Trabalenguas mayas* (2010, 2013) includes an audio disc recorded by Flor Canché Teh that allows readers to hear how *maaya* sounds flow together in tongue twisters. As listeners hear each tongue twister in two speeds on the recording, they can appreciate the phonological capabilities and rhythms of *maayat'aan* today.¹⁸³ An example of children's literature distributed strictly in audio format is the series of six CDs entitled *Un cuento*

¹⁸³ Another example that bridges written and oral literacies in children's literature is the trilingual book, edited by Martínez Huchim, entitled *Ts'imin tuunich / El caballo de piedra / The Horse of Stone* (2015). The book includes an audio CD with Novelo's voice, along with music and sound effects by Adam Rossi.

para ti / Jump'éeł tsikbal tuus a ti'al, for which Amedée Colli Colli wrote twelve bilingual story scripts and produced the audio with support from multiple institutions and a team of voice actors and musicians. Radio provides another bridge between oral and written literacies. The weekly segment *Ki'ichkelem t'aan* [beautiful language], available through the online Radio Yúuyum project, offers bilingual readings and explication of *maaya*-language literary selections conducted by El Chilam Balam and other hosts.

Alternative Means of Publication: Digitalization, Blogs, and Social Media

Considering the limited means of publication and distribution for *maaya*-language texts, which I discuss in Chapter 1, *maaya*-language authors and their readers and translators also use alternative publication methods to share these bilingual works and reach new audiences. As the El Chilam Balam blog quotes Martínez Huchim, “Hay que tomar los medios para dar a conocer las obras, sean los que sean. Ahora están de moda las redes sociales y es momento que nosotros las usemos. Si queremos difundir, hay que tomar los medios de comunicación” (Góngora). Indeed, writers, readers, and translators of *maaya*-language literature have made extensive use of digital magazines, literary and cultural blogs, and social media as publication platforms. In the El Chilam Balam blog, Sánchez Chan expresses his view that digital publication can foment a global and multilingual readership for locally produced *maaya*-language texts. Texts' availability on online platforms increase possibilities for individuals across the globe to translate and share the work (Góngora). Examining print publication and promotion would tell only part of the story of *maaya*-language literature. Below, I provide several examples of digital publication methods, along with an analysis of their strengths and shortcomings in promoting *maaya*-language literature.

The multilingual digital magazine *K'aaylay. El canto de la memoria*, which ran from 2006-2010 under Martínez Huchim's direction, was an important contribution to publishing the voices of contemporary Maya culture. Martínez Huchim explains that the title *K'aaylay* is a compound of *k'a'ajs* (recordar) and *k'aay* (canto) (*K'aaylay* 138). The magazine collected submissions from oral narrators, *maaya*-language writers and professors, and non-Maya contributors respectful of the Maya. Unlike the *indigenista* literary magazines I mention in Chapter 1, *K'aaylay* used a distinctly Maya framework, in keeping with Martínez Huchim's other work. Magazine distribution was based on the twenty-day Maya month (*winal*) (139), instead of the Gregorian calendar. Additionally, *K'aaylay*'s inaugural edition observed an anniversary in Maya history. Its date, July 26, 2006, marked over one hundred fifty years since one of the events leading up to the Caste War: the execution of Maya leader Manuel Antonio Ay Tec in 1847 (137).

When speaking of the *K'aaylay* project, Martínez Huchim draws similarities with the colonial-era *Libros de Chilam Balam*, which were written by and for Mayas and circulated outside of Spanish control. In the same way, *K'aaylay* sought to be an unofficial forum for the contemporary Maya to represent their culture and remember their heritage on their own terms. For instance, the magazine allowed Spanish loan words and therefore exemplified “la cualidad dinámica y heterogénea del *maaya t'aan* actual” (*K'aaylay* 138). Martínez Huchim affirms, “Los mayas de hoy estamos conscientes de que la tarea de continuidad y fortalecimiento de nuestro pueblo y cultura está en nuestras manos” (138). Through this magazine, contributors, editors, and readers who sent in comments worked in collaboration to show and shape the vivacity of contemporary Maya culture.

New advances in technology and what Martínez Huchim calls “la importante digitilización de la voz maya” provided for *K’aaylay*’s delivery to 200 email addresses, including the listserve of the SEP’s Red Nacional de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe, foreign universities, and individuals on the peninsula and in Chiapas, San Francisco (California), Belize, and Guatemala. Other websites also posted the magazine, such as the Friends of the Mayas, Inc., the Casa de Cultura Popolnáj Máximo Huchin, A.C., and Asociación Mayab, the webpage of Yucatecan migrants to San Francisco, California. Selections also appear on the UADY website under “Identidad y cultura” (*K’aaylay* 139).

Another alternative means of publication are blogs, through which readers and writers publish selections of authors’ works online for a global readership, without the limits of accessibility associated with print forms. In readers’ blogs, for example, Cuevas Cob’s and Villegas’ work frequently appears. The poet, playwright, and cultural promotor Sánchez Chan maintained the blog *Literatura Maya (Káan Ik’ti’ilil)* from 2012-2015, in which he published selections of his own work and news items and interviews related to *maaya*-language literature. The blog was also a platform for promoting transnational events, such as a poetry reading in 2014 of *maaya*-language poems and their translations into Czech and Spanish. Sánchez Chan and Arabic poet Lamia el Amrani also performed a joint poetry reading and translation of each other’s work in 2013.

The El Chilam Balam blog forms one of the best sources of current information on *maaya*-language literature and Maya culture on the Yucatan Peninsula. Coordinated by José Natividad Ic Xec, a *maaya* speaker from Peto, Yucatan, the blog is featured on the online network *Lenguas Indígenas: Una Red de Activistas Digitales en América Latina*. In a case study of El Chilam Balam, this site reports that the El Chilam Balam project began in 2011 on Twitter,

and expanded to maintain a WordPress blog and other social media accounts. Ic Xec coordinates both the El Chilam Balam site about Maya culture and language in Yucatan, and the Mayapolitikon site that addresses politics and social situations affecting the Maya in Yucatan. The El Chilam Balam Project distributes content on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Soundcloud, and Instagram, and uses Adobe Photoshop to edit images, Audacity to edit sound, and iMovie to edit video. Its blog attracts readers of all ages, although young readers have the highest rate of access to digital technologies. Readers of the blog tend to live outside of Yucatan, which the *Lenguas Indígenas* site attributes to reduced Internet access from within Maya communities. In its analysis of the El Chilam Balam project, the site notes that El Chilam Balam produces *maaya*-Spanish bilingual content and that readers actively follow the project's publications and participate through comments in both languages. The site affirms that the Chilam Balam team is self-taught in the use digital platforms. *Lenguas Indígenas* suggests that areas for future growth for Chilam Balam include further training in digital platforms and technologies, especially photography and digital design to attract readers through visual means, securing funding that will permit the development of long-term objectives, and acquiring more technological equipment along with a physical space for a headquarters ("El Chilam Balam").

Maaya-language writers are featured in locally created blogs but also appear in foreign blogs that create transnational literary forums. As a participant in the 2002 Poetry International Rotterdam festival in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, Cuevas Cob earned a profile listing on the festival website (Sabarte Belacortu). The website states that the event "aims to present quality poetry from the Netherlands and worldwide to an international readership, encouraging poetry translation, stimulating the international exchange of knowledge about poetry, and facilitating an international community of poetry readers" ("About Us"). Cuevas Cob is the only indigenous

Mexican poet among the four Mexican poets¹⁸⁴ who have participated in the Festival and are promoted to the site's international community of poetry readers ("Mexico"). The poet's attendance at an international poetry festivals brings her into the transcultural and global literary world. Cuevas Cob is also featured on the selective *Words without Borders* website, which describes itself as a site that "opens doors to international exchange through translation, publication, and promotion of the best international literature." The site publishes what it denominates as "select prose and poetry" monthly, and is involved in creating print anthologies and educator support materials for using translations in the classroom, planning author events, and archiving global writing. As English-language readers form the target audience, their website features two of Cuevas Cob's poems in English-language translation ("Briceida"). Another anthologizing blog, *Zócalo Poets* is an online forum configured in a very transnational way. The editors are based in Toronto, Canada, but have designed the site as a platform for multilingual poetry that evokes the Mexico City *zócalo*, which the editors describe as "un majestuoso lugar que tiene espacio para *TODO*" ("Sobre"). Maya poets Gerardo Can Pat and Cuevas Cob were both chosen by the site editor for feature on the website. These two poets, along with Sánchez Chan and Villegas Carrillo, are also featured on a blog edited by Fernando Sabido Sánchez called *Poetas Siglo XX: Antología de Poesía Mundial*, which features just under 19,000 poets from all over the globe (*Poetas Siglo*).

As far as social media, *maaya*-language writers and cultural promoters have a very active presence on Facebook. As the El Chilam Balam blog states, "A más de 10 años de la creación del Facebook, un colectivo de escritores en lengua maya en Yucatán recientemente ha hecho uso de esta plataforma para compartir experiencias, textos, presentaciones de libros y actividades

¹⁸⁴ Her fellow Mexican poets include Homero Aridjis, Dolores Dorantes, and Jaime Sabines ("Mexico").

artísticas a nivel local, sin que eso signifique que personas no presentes en el Estado no se enteren de ello” (Góngora). Ceh Moo, Martínez Huchim, Sánchez Chan, and Villegas, for example, utilize Facebook as a professional tool. Besides self-promotion, Facebook is a means of local and international promotion of literature and culture in general.

Despite the increased distribution and promotion of *maaya*-language literature that these numerous digital publication methods facilitate, a disadvantage of electronic platforms maintained by individuals is their lack of continuity. Many individuals’ blogs are no longer maintained, and therefore are not a source of the most current information surrounding ongoing literary and related activity on the peninsula. As platforms rise and fall in popularity, *maaya* digital activists similarly take advantage of the opportunities of the moment. For example, Sánchez Chan actively promotes *maaya* culture and language on Facebook even though he has not posted on his blog since 2015. Sites that depend on a production team, like El Chilam Balam, continue to publish frequently on news and cultural items from Yucatan, suggesting their increased potential for continuity as compared to individually managed sites. I also hypothesize that websites with an institutional backing are more likely to result in regular publication and posting, as long as the institution continually fills a website developer position.

Another factor of digital literary distribution is that digital anthology blogs disproportionately represent poetry over narrative genres. Poetry, which tends to be brief in nature, lends itself well to the blog format, and *maaya*-language poets are present on many blogs that identify themselves as anthologies of international poets. On the other hand, the length of narrative can perhaps deter both blogger and readers who seek material for consumption in the few moments between other obligations. Prose writers seem to be less prevalent on blogs and

receive less grassroots and digital attention. The overrepresentation of poetry may also have to do with the prestige that poetry enjoys among literary genres.

The presence of authors in digital, online, and social media publications and postings certainly creates international visibility for *maaya*-language authors. In a field in which success often depends on prestige, the fact that many *maaya*-language writers are internationally known is sure to increase the impact of their literary work both at home and abroad. Edgar Rodríguez Címé, writing of interviews he did for his forthcoming book *Pensadores mayas contemporáneos*, asserts: “uno de los rasgos sobresalientes, pero generalmente ignorados, resulta ser el nivel internacional de la gran mayoría de los pensadores mayas que aparecen en el libro de entrevistas, sea como participantes en foros literarios extranjeros, en la producción de sus obras en otros países, o como docentes de idiomas” (“Escritores”). In fact, his motive for writing the book was that while *maaya*-language literature is read in Germany, the UK, and the US, he says, on the peninsula, even other artists or members of university communities know little about the most internationally well-known Maya creators.¹⁸⁵ Virtual transnationalism provides the opportunity for authors to represent themselves and their culture both to their local context and the wider globe.

Transnational Literary Exchange through Translation

Translation itself is also a tool by which *maayat'aan* transcends national or regional cultures and languages and secures a wider readership. While translation of *maaya* works to other languages increases the visibility of *maaya*-language literature, translation of works in other languages to *maaya* reverses the typical flow of transmission from lesser spoken languages

¹⁸⁵ Writing in Mérida, Yucatan, Rodríguez Címé asserts, “[L]ocalmente tanto artistas o académicos como intelectuales y universitarios desconocen las trayectorias de los creadores decanos” (“¿Fin?”).

to dominant languages and insists upon *maaya* communicative value. I do not provide an exhaustive list of literary translations but share a few notable examples. From other languages to *maaya*, Villegas has translated Spanish-language works written by his UIMQRoo colleagues, including María Magdalena Vázquez González' illustrated didactic book for children, *Por el suelo y sin zapatos*, about Sian Ka'an, and the award-winning poet Javier España Novelo's *La suerte cambia la vida* to *K'intaje' ku k'exik kuxtal* ("Wildernain Villegas Carrillo"). Additionally, *K'aaylay* published contributor Germán Aké Ek's *maaya* translations of languages outside of Mexico, such as the work of Lebanese-American writer Kahlil Gibran (Martínez Huchim. *K'aaylay* 150). World classics have also been translated into *maayat'aan*. Briceño Chel and Rubén Reyes Ramírez coordinated a 2012 translation of the *Popol vuh* from the Guatemalan K'iche' Maya tradition into *maayat'aan* as *Póopol Wuuj (Póopol)*. Amedée Collí Collí collaborated on a project sponsored by the University of Bremen in Germany to translate and publish Antoine de Saint Exupéry's French classic *Le Petit Prince* in *maayat'aan* as *Chan Ajau (Chan)*.

The reverse phenomenon, *maaya*-language works translated to other languages, is also thriving. Many anthologies feature English-language translations, including *Words of the True Peoples* (2004) and *U túumben k'aayilo'ob x-ya'axche'* (2009), both co-edited by Carlos Montemayor and Donald H. Frischmann. Translations from *maayat'aan* can also be found online. For example, Jonathan Harrington has translated poems by Sánchez Chan and Cuevas Cob in magazines published in print and online such as *World Literature Today*, and his translation, *Seven Dreams*, of Sánchez Chan's *Uk'péel wayak' / Siete sueños* appears in book format from a publisher in North Carolina, New Native Press ("Seven").

Continuing Professionalization of Authors

Professionalization opportunities place authors in a literary community that challenges them to improve their work. Since 2011, the Escuela de Creación Literaria del Centro Estatal de Bellas Artes (CEBA) offers three-year programs of *maaya*-language creative writing courses under CEBA and SEGEY sponsorship. CEBA director Rita Castro Gamboa affirmed in 2015 that Yucatan is the only Mexican State that offers creative writing classes in indigenous languages (“Inician”). Sánchez Chan recounts his role in founding the *maaya*-language curriculum to complement the school’s ongoing Spanish-language curriculum (“Escritura” 182). Carrillo Can, the most notable CEBA graduate, asserts that the school “ha logrado una primera generación con la visión de fomentar el uso creativo, crítico y responsable de la lengua” (“Perspectiva” 160-61). As such, curriculum activities are varied. For example, the Facebook page¹⁸⁶ posted a video in 2016 of a public reading of students’ *maaya*-language translations of Rubén Darío’s poetry in honor of the centennial of his death. Escuela students distribute their work through *maaya*-language anthologies and literary magazines, which are available on the Escuela blog and online¹⁸⁷ (“Escuela”).

Fomenting a Body of Literary Criticism

Literary corpuses and Literary Studies mutually benefit each other, as literature nourishes the field of Literary Studies and the analytical commentary of Literary Studies brings literature into new discussions and domains. In his discussion of North American Indian literature, Parker traces the history of how criticism about these works has matured beyond discussions of

¹⁸⁶ The Facebook page is titled Escuela de Creación Literaria Ceba.

¹⁸⁷ This publication, *T’aan: Narrativa, Poesía y Dramaturgia*, is organized into sections by genre as expressed in both Spanish and *maayat’aan* and features selections in the language of the graduates’ choice (“Escuela”).

stereotypes about Indians and their writing to help establish the discipline of Native American literary studies, which he asserts, “is increasingly contributing to the theoretical debates raging across the international study of literature and the humanities” (1051). Similarly, *maaya*-language texts are quickly becoming the subject of numerous articles and monographs. This criticism strengthens the awareness and consumption of *maaya*-language literature. Additionally, producing critical works about *maaya*-language literature and other indigenous-language literatures enriches the field of literary studies and exemplifies a more complete picture of the diversity of contemporary aesthetics.

I support scholarly methods that foment dialogue between Maya and non-Maya critics. Due to the *maaya*-Spanish bilingual and sometimes multilingual nature of the corpus, I believe that criticism would ideally operate in both languages, in addition to others. To my knowledge, written *maaya*-language literary criticism and literary histories about *maaya*-language literature does not exist, although there are *maaya*-language essays about historical events and cultural terms.¹⁸⁸ From a revitalization standpoint, *maaya*-language criticism would demonstrate the language’s analytical and academic expression, and create demand for *maaya* readers in another sphere.

Fomenting criticism that recognizes and demonstrates Latin America’s plurilingual nature is currently complicated by the ambiguous place for the study of literatures written in minoritized languages. As literary scholars study indigenous-language literatures, current departmental organizations leave these scholars without clear institutional homes. Are linguistic designations useful as an organizing structure when they effectively erase some literary traditions

¹⁸⁸ For example, see Domínguez Aké’s selections in Montemayor-edited anthologies *La voz profunda* and *U túumben k’aayilo’ob x-ya’axche’* for explanations of the *alux* and corn sowing. See Llanes Ortiz for an explanation of the term *cha’anil*.

from study? Deleuze and Guattari conceive of “minor literature” as revolutionary. When some literary manifestations challenge the dominance of colonial-language canonical literary aesthetics, is it not another form of colonization to integrate them into colonial-language departments? Would alternative organizational structures more effectively produce scholarship able to describe contemporary global literatures? With the caveat that all categories are constructions, would area studies (i.e. American, African, European literatures) or language families (i.e. Romance languages, Mayan languages, Indo-European languages, etc.) form more useful organizational structures? Could it ever be feasible in the academy to organize around one lesser-studied language (i.e. Department of *maaya*-Language Literature)? Alternatively, will minoritized-language literatures always be considered either complementary to the study of a dominant-language literary tradition or the domain of anthropology? Are the canons that literary professors teach to students, the next generation of scholars, reflective of the diverse literary proposals in plurilingual, pluricultural regions? These are important questions for scholars to consider if criticism is to reflect the varied literature that exists. Studies of indigenous-language literatures draw attention to the ways in which academic study may reinforce structures of oppression and silencing that are inconsistent with Postcolonial values of recognizing and eschewing oppression.

Role of Non-Literary Cultural Production in Language Revitalization: Intersectionality

Maaya-Language Journalism

Perhaps the most closely related phenomenon to literary revitalization efforts involves *maaya*-language journalism. Both fields share similar objectives of augmenting space for written *maayat’aan* and using *maayat’aan* in new domains. *Maaya*-language journalism proves the

language can inform about social, political and economic spheres as well as cultural ones. Since July 2015, the daily Yucatecan print and digital newspaper *La Jornada Maya*, a franchise of the national Mexican newspaper *La Jornada*, includes a *maaya*-language section called *K'iintsil*, which means “un día de trabajo honorable, único” (Whaley). Alejandra Sasil Sánchez Chan is the director and editor, in coordination with editorial board members Briceño Chel, Cocom Pech, and F. Sánchez Chan. *K'iintsil* has been the subject of debates such as what topics should be published in *maayat'aan* and if monolingual *maaya*-language articles are wasted journalistic space. However, A. S. Sánchez Chan is optimistic, expressing, “Hemos roto un paradigma”. She affirms that the impact of *K'iintsil* is high among young people, who she says, many times read *maaya* even if they cannot speak it. *K'iintsil* has readers in Los Angeles, California, as well (Whaley). Besides being printed on the *La Jornada Maya* news site, *K'iintsil* is also promoted on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.

When creative texts are almost exclusively bilingual, the presence of monolingual *maaya*-language journalism is striking. The space allotted to *maaya* in the overall publication remains small, at one page that consists of one article. However, daily monolingual *maaya* in print form creates a demand for *maaya* written literacy in order to consume information. Topics are wide-ranging, from local news about Maya people, to news from other regions of Mexico, or international topics. Almost any topic imaginable can be found, including sports, literature, music, social issues relating to women and Maya or other indigenous cultures, movies, geography and travel, health, and more. While the size of the readership will determine the extent to which *K'iintsil* foments *maaya*-language use, its monolingual character disrupts expectations of indigenous bilingualism and adapts linguistic hierarchies to *maaya* norms. The

ratio of the *Jornada Maya* devoted to Spanish and *maaya*, along with overlap between the topics they report, will also affect how much the publication disrupts current language hierarchies.

Maya Rap and Hip Hop

Musical production in *maayat'aan*, especially in the form of rap and hip hop, is an extremely popular manifestation of linguistic and cultural revitalization on the peninsula that has achieved positive results among people of all ages. Bernardo Caamal Itzá, on his blog *Aruxcat*, asserts that rappers come from multiple towns on the peninsula and also that the music has mobilized young people, participants coveted by the revitalization movement, in efforts to promote Maya culture. Young people are both musicians and one part of the fan base. Caamal Itzá declares: “De esa forma en el Mayab no solo se visibiliza una nueva corriente juvenil sino **resurge una nueva generación de jóvenes que se suman a este movimiento maya** donde la historia de los pueblos se construyen y se comparten” (Caamal Itzá, bold in the original).

The artist Pat Boy, born in 1991 as Jesús Cristóbal Pat Chablé, is the founder of the concept of *maaya*-language rap in Yucatan and perhaps the most well-known face of this movement. In an interview published on the El Chilam Balam blog, Pat Boy declares his commitment to showcasing *maayat'aan* and reducing the shame many speakers have of their language: “**Con la música enaltecemos nuestra cultura, nuestra stirpe... Muchos podemos hacerlo, pero pocos nos atrevemos**” (“Pat Boy apunta,” bold in the original). He recounts that in the city of Felipe Carrillo Puerto, community members from his rural hometown of Pino Suárez, Quintana Roo, would respond to his *maaya* in Spanish. He asserts, “¿Pues cómo, me preguntaba, acaso no provenimos de la misma comunidad. Acaso no hablamos maya? [sic] Pero aquí se avergüenzan” (“Pat Boy apunta”). The rapper certainly does draw attention to his native

tongue; his urban style of music mixed with rural themes is an example of the new productions that mark Maya culture in the twenty-first century. In an interview with *Revista Tierra Adentro*, Pat Boy frames his music as part of wider revitalization efforts: “Considero de enorme vitalidad hablar en mis letras de la vida cotidiana y de la sociedad maya al componer canciones románticas o bailables, al hacer música con conciencia combativa. Me enfoco en el rescate de la lengua maya para difundirla con los jóvenes” (“Pat Boy: Sangre”).

In Cru’s study of how Pat Boy and other young *maaya*-language rappers activate their bilingualism in their songs, Pat Boy asserts that rapping in *maayat’aan* is more natural for him and that he prefers the rhythms and sounds of short *maaya* words in rap to Spanish-language rap. The rapper El Maya, from Peto, agrees that *maaya* offers an innovative rhythm to work with (“Bilingual” 6). Besides rapping purely in *maaya*, however, Cru finds that rappers’ songs are often bilingual, with Spanish used as a way to appeal to a wider listener base (7). Cru notes that the youth do not mix linguistic codes as is common in quotidian *maaya* speech known as *xe’ek’* [mixture]. Instead, the rappers use a symmetrical bilingualism that juxtaposes the *jach maaya* promoted in most *maaya*-language education and revitalization efforts alongside Spanish. Cru asserts that this separated bilingualism also differs from ways in which rap and hip hop artists from around the globe commonly blur boundaries between languages and mimic colloquial ways of speaking (8). He argues that the fact that the rappers’ bilingualism uses “pure” or “authentic” forms of *maaya* and Spanish marks an attempt to legitimize *maayat’aan* in the context of discourses that proclaim the language to be unmodern, not useful, incomplete, or backward (4, 8-9). He determines that the rappers adopt an essentialist view of *maayat’aan* and Maya culture in the name of giving the language more prestige (8-9).

Explaining his beginnings as an artist, Pat Boy explains that he was introduced to rap when his brother, who studied in Felipe Carrillo Puerto, brought back discs of Mexican rappers, like Kinto Sol and Akwid, and U.S. rappers, such as 50 Cent and Lil Wayne (Higareda). He started singing in a band when he was thirteen years old, but he launched his solo career in 2009, when he released the first *maaya*-language rap (“Pat Boy apunta”). At first, townspeople teased Pat Boy and maintained that he would never make it as a rapper. However, after the release of his first album, *In ya’ax xin baal / Mis primeros pasos*, Pat Boy said, people began to see the merit of his efforts, and they even identified with his first song, “U kuxtáal mayaoob” / “Vidas mayas”. In the song, Pat Boy raps in monolingual *maayat’aan*, but he publishes both a transcription of the *maaya* lyrics and a Spanish-language translation along with his music video on Youtube. The first two verses of the five total are:

SON BIEN TRABAJADORES QUIENES SON LOS MEROS MAYAS
LOS QUE VIVEN EN EL SURESTE Y EN MEXICO SE AYAN
REPRESENTANDO EL ESTADO Y LO HAGO CON MI CANTO
SOY DE NACIMIENTO 100 POR CIENTO MEXICANO

ASER QUENSE TODOS PARA QUE TODOS CANTEMOS
ESTE SONIDO NOSE ACABA QUIERO QUE TODOS LO BRINQUEMOS
LOS JOVENES Y LOS ABUELOS TODA LA GENTE DE ESTE PUEBLO
FELISEZ Y CONTENTOS UNIDOS EN EL CENTRO

...

Utsi sa’ak’óolo’ob meyaj, leeti’obe’ maayao’ob,
Ku taalo’ob te’e noojol lak’in tu noj kaajil México,
Teen chíikbesik u k’áaxo’obo’, bejla’ake’ yéetel k’aaya’,
Men teene’ sijnáalen, u k’i’ik’el ch’i’ibal yaanten.

Much’abae’ex, ko’one’ex k’aay tuláaklile’ex,
Le paaxa’ ma’ach u je’elel, síit’nene’ex,
Nukuch wíinik yéetel paalal wíinik,
Ki’imak u yóolo’ob, jok’a’ano’ob k’íiwik. (Pat Boy Rap Maya. “Vidas”)

These lyrics describe the hardworking nature of the Maya people, the importance of family and community as they gather in the *plaza*, and also a double local identity as both Maya and Mexican. Unlike discourses of *mestizaje* that consider all Mexican subjects as having a shared heritage of cultural mixing, Pat Boy's song evokes the nation as a heterogeneous cultural conglomerate as he expresses his Mexicanness through Maya cultural and linguistic difference.¹⁸⁹ The rhetorical beckoning to all Maya listeners reinforces the idea that his music can be a unifying force around which people of all ages can take pride, and portrays the Maya as happy, social, and hardworking people. The images in the song's music video, made by ADN Maya, a production company co-founded by Pat Boy and Tania Jiménez, are scenes of daily life in Pat Boy's hometown. They feature *milperos* biking to work with their tools, mothers holding children, families taking cover from the rain inside traditional Maya homes, and common sights in rural towns like *mototaxis* and stray dogs. At the forefront of these scenes is Pat Boy, dressed in a flat-brimmed baseball cap, t-shirt, and large shorts in the style of American rappers and hip hop artists, with a group of young boys around him who are imitating his rapping gestures (Pat Boy Rap Maya. "Vidas"). The music video, then, demonstrates the syncretism in Yucatecan towns. The presence of youth suggests that future generations will continue to preserve Maya culture.

¹⁸⁹ The Mexican identity emphasized in the Spanish text is not as strong in the *maaya* rap, although the assertion of double identity is still clear, as the second verse asserts that the Maya are from Mexico. However, the third Spanish-language verse, which references the State, becomes a natural image in *maaya* [I represent its forests, today with this song]. The assurance in the final Spanish-language verse that the rapper is completely Mexican as a Maya becomes a more ambiguous reference to lineage in the *maaya* song, as the type of lineage is not specified [I'm an inheritor, I have the blood of lineage.]



(Pat Boy Rap Maya. “Vidas”)



(Pat Boy Rap Maya. “Vidas”)



(Pat Boy Rap Maya. “Vidas”)

Cru discusses that while there is institutional support for *maaya*-language music production and composition, rappers like Pat Boy prefer to work independently (“Bilingual” 11-12). The rappers’ approach, as embodied in the Youtube lyrics published with the “U kuxtáal mayaoob” / “Vidas mayas” video, is distinct from the standardization advocated in institutional revitalization efforts that are often literacy-based. The Spanish translation is rendered in capital letters and uses non-standard orthography, which Cru notes is common in Youtube’s informal context (7). However, the *maaya* transcription of the lyrics Pat Boy sings is more standardized. Cru notes that in the case of another song by Pat Boy, the *maaya* lyrics published on Youtube are written with a standardized orthography, and reveals that the revitalization activist El Chilam Balam works closely with the young rappers and created the *maaya* transcription (8). Pat Boy, then, demonstrates the capability that one individual has to instill pride in *maayatl’aan* even without institutional support.

Pat Boy, who has released several albums and singles, says the content of his songs is diverse. He lists topics relating to Maya life, such as Maya communities and technology, pollution, transculturation, rural work, and seeking alternative work. Other songs' lyrics deal less explicitly with Maya identity and tackle more universal themes, such as the more recent song, "In watech tu lakal" / "Decirte todo", a 2014 collaboration with Pat Boy and the artists El Maya, El Poeta, and Residente Sabán that features a Spanish-language chorus with *maaya*-language rap breaks¹⁹⁰ (Pat Boy Rap Maya. "Decirte"). Above all, Pat Boy's message is one of encouragement, positivity, and pride in his heritage:

También canto sobre las fiestas, las costumbres de cada pueblo, siempre animando a los jóvenes a que hagan algo positivo. Decirles que todos podemos lograr lo que queramos siempre y cuando trabajemos y mantengamos la humildad, el respeto y la paz. A cualquier lugar que vayas no debes olvidarte de dónde vienes, de tu gente y de la sangre que llevas en las venas. (Higareda)

Pat Boy promotes his songs on Facebook, the Youtube channel *Pat Boy Rap Maya*, and Soundcloud. Pat Boy has seen a lot of success for his young age. He was featured in a 2014 edition of *Revista Tierra Adentro* that highlighted "32 futuras geografías," or 32 up-and-coming young Mexican artists of all mediums ("Pat Boy: Sangre Maya"). The rapper has also made guest appearances on the local online station Radio Yúuyum besides being interviewed by local, national, and international television news stations and making guest appearances in Mexico and abroad. Pat Boy's example provides youth and adults alike with a model for proudly defending and promoting their culture and language in a twenty-first century world.¹⁹¹

¹⁹⁰ Caamal Itzá publically announces the song's release on *maaya*-language radio station Radio Xepet, from Peto, Yucatan, which is shown in the music video (patboy maya. "Decirte").

¹⁹¹ Despite his local, national, and even international success, Pat Boy remains tied to his roots and his humble beginnings. The second of seven children, Pat Boy works at household chores, including collecting firewood and

Musical revitalization efforts are strong and ongoing as established talents support newer ones. For example, Pat Boy and Jiménez' production company, ADN Maya Producciones, have produced videos and songs of bilingual musicians like Pat Boy and Tihorappers Crew ("Rapean"). According to the YouTube channel ADN Maya Films, the group's objective is "impulsar nuevos talentos que canten en maya o sea [sic] bilingüe (Maya - Español)". In a *K'intsil* article, Pat Boy explains the significance of the company's name: "u k'aaba' le meyaja' j-pa'at beey ADN tumen noj ba'al ba'ax ku ya'alik; u chíikulal k-ch'íibal p'aatal ti' to'on. Maaya ch'i'ibale', ma' chéen tin wíinkilal kuxa'an, ti' ya'ab máak p'aatal tumen bejla'e kupáajtal k-a'alik: ¡tene' ADN Maayaen!"¹⁹² (Chablé Medina). The Youtube channel page asserts that the company officially began in 2015 and has found twenty artists, seven of which have already produced videos with the company. Pat Boy has often collaborated with other *maaya*-language rappers, including his brother, *ap-c el aldeano*, Príncipe Maya, El Poeta, the late Cima Atté, and international artists, too, from Honduras and Belize ("Pat Boy: Sangre"). Tihorappers Crew, from Tihosuco, Quintana Roo, mentioned earlier as a collaborator with ADN Maya Films, is another popular rap group. They have been active for years and are comprised of students between sixteen and twenty-one years old. Their video "Estoy contento / Kiimak in wóol," posted on Youtube on May 4, 2016, had 2,500,000 views by the last day of the month ("Rapean"). This group was also featured on the US-based international news program *Al Rojo Vivo con María Celeste* in June 2016 ("Raperos").

helping his mother, who sells *chakwaj* tamales in Carrillo Puerto. He comments, "pues de alguna manera hay que costear los estudios de mis hermanitos". To make a living, Pat Boy performs, records, and sells t-shirts with his logo and his music. "Hay que ver cómo sobrevivir", he shares. "Nuestro trabajo vale la pena y merece una remuneración" ("Pat Boy apunta").

¹⁹² [The name of this effort was formed as DNA because what that means is really significant; it's a sign of the lineage we inherited. Maya lineage is not just in me. It was left to many people, because today we can say, "I have Maya DNA!"] (my translation).

Cru signals that using *maaya* in rap and hip hop is successful as a tool for language revitalization, because rap depends on the orality that is already an important characteristic of *maaya* language use on the peninsula, as opposed to literacy-focused revitalization efforts (“Bilingual” 4). In addition, utilizing *maaya* in rap associates the language with valued contemporary popular culture (12), *maaya* makes the rappers original when success in Spanish in a much wider field of rappers would be more difficult (10), and rappers’ bilingualism equalizes *maaya* and Spanish (9). *Maaya* is strengthened as community members observe rappers gaining opportunities for social mobility and international experiences through *maaya* language use (10-11). A final advantage of rap for revitalization efforts is that the music provides creative license for the rappers to express their emotions, a personal connection to language that Cru finds missing in institutionalized revitalization efforts (6, 12).

In his assessment of the present effects of *maaya*-language and bilingual rapping by young people on the peninsula, Cru concludes, “The introduction of Maya in domains associated with new technologies and ‘cool’ cultural trends such as Hip Hop is influencing a process of language revalorisation among some young people of the Yucatán Peninsula” (“Bilingual” 12). He emphasizes that the musical movement has great potential for strengthening *maaya* language use in the future (12). Cru suggests that more research is needed on how the rappers’ music affects listeners’ language ideologies (5-6) and whether mixed *xe’ek’* ways of speaking *maaya* will be legitimized in current methods of language revitalization (12).

Other Contemporary maaya-Language Music

As a voice on *maaya*-language radio, a *maaya*-language singer, and a background in sociolinguistics, Yazmín Novelo, from Peto, Yucatan, is another prominent force of

revitalization efforts. Novelo declares that music and song are important because “ku líik’sik u yóol máak” [it raises people’s spirits]. Novelo affirms that dominant discourses of *mestizaje* have limited Maya creation to the concept of “el maya permitido”. She argues, “No se permite que se muestre el trabajo de los mayas hoy”, and cites that people know Maya music to be nothing but the *jarana*. She calls her songs “túumben maaya paax” [new *maaya* music] (Novelo). Similarly to how the project of *maaya*-language rap places *maayatl’aan* in a valued contemporary musical genre not normally associated with the language, Novelo uses *maayatl’aan* as she performs contemporary popular music. Novelo writes her own songs and also performs covers, including songs originally in *maayatl’aan* or translations to *maayatl’aan* (Boeta Madera).

In Novelo’s view, contemporary Maya music allows *maaya* speakers to enjoy their mother tongue and engage in creative expression. At the same time, it leads non-*maaya* speakers to encounter a different Maya people than they might have expected (Novelo). Novelo grew up hearing *maayatl’aan* at home, but affirms that her parents and grandparents did not speak the language with her. She started speaking *maaya* herself at age 24, when she interned with the *maaya*-language radio station Yóol lík’ and needed to learn it. Motivation for her revitalization efforts comes from her studies in both Basque Country, where she first became aware of language loss affecting her mother tongue and indigenous languages across the globe, and Bolivia, where she earned her Master’s degree in Sociolinguistics studying systemic causes of language loss. Novelo fights to increase *maaya* presence and Maya culture, especially in urban contexts where it is often overlooked and obscured when dominant conceptions assume all Maya people are rural farmers (Boeta Madera). An award-winning musician, Novelo has performed at the Filey since 2016. She is part of Sedeculta’s Caravana Artística, which promotes rising musical talent through tours in the state of Yucatan. Novelo and David Escalante taught two of

Miguel Bosé's songs in *maaya* translation to a children's choir,¹⁹³ which they performed for the Spanish singer himself in February 2017 (Boeta Madera).

In a musical call to action, Novelo and Pat Boy collaborated in the *maaya*-language song “Xiimbal kaaj” [A Walk through the Maya Area], produced by 4 Mayan Seasons in May 2017. The lyrics both express the work that lies ahead in strengthening Maya culture and assure the task will be completed through the strength that already exists in Maya individuals. As in *maaya*-language literature I examine in Chapter 3, youth, here of both genders, play a central role in how the song conceptualizes the revitalization work that must be done. While the artists sing in monolingual *maaya*, subtitles are in English, and the *maaya* lyrics and a Spanish-language translation are published on Youtube along with the video.

(Yazmín - CORO)

Aj-ximbalo'on way yóok'ol kaab
 Jóok'en a wiil, yaanto'on meyaj
 Yaan to'on muuk' yaan u páajtal
 Teech yéetel teen, mixmáak ulaak'
 Ti' u ch'i'ibalo'on k-kaaj
 Ti' u motsil maaya kaaj

(Yazmín - CORO)

Somos caminantes en esta tierra
 Sal a ver, tenemos mucho por hacer
 Tenemos fuerza, se volverá realidad
 Tú y yo, nadie más
 Somos la raíz de nuestro pueblo
 De la raíz del pueblo maya

(Pat Boy - RAP)

Ko'one'ex te'e lak'iin
 Tu'ux ku t'u'ubul k'iin
 Way tu kaajil maaya wíinik
 Ko'ox tu jáalk'aab naab
 Ko'ox a wiil tuláakal le ba'al yano'
 Yéetel ki'imak óolal
 Táan in bin in xíimbal
 Tuláakal u kaajil máasewáal kaaj
 Way tu petenil Yucatán
 Tu'ux ku t'aanal le maaya t'aan
 Teech paal wíinik u'uy le paaxa'
 Ko'one'ex kanik le maaya

(Pat Boy - RAP)

Vamos al oriente
 donde sale el sol¹⁹⁴
 En esta tierra del hombre maya
 Vamos al mar
 Vamos a ver todo lo que hay
 Con alegría
 estoy caminando
 Por todos los lugares de nuestro pueblo originario
 Aquí en la península de Yucatán
 Donde se habla la lengua maya
 Tú de corazón de niño, escucha esta canción
 Vamos a aprender maya

¹⁹³ Filemón Ku Che translated Bosé songs “Te amaré” and “Aire soy” (Boeta Madera).

¹⁹⁴ In the Spanish-language lyrics on YouTube, the lyric “Vamos al oriente donde sale el sol” is rendered as one verse (“Xiimbal kaaj”). Here, I separate it into two verses to help the Spanish-language reader better understand the written *maaya* transcription. Other Spanish-language verses that begin with a lower-case also reflect where I separated one verse into two to more closely reflect the *maaya* transcription.

Kin taasik yéetel in puksi'ik'al
 Ko'one'ex ko'one'ex kanik paalale'ex (x2)
 Tuláakale'ex ku bine'ex tu najil xook
 Tu naajil xook, tu naajil xook

(Yazmín - CORO)

(Pat Boy - RAP)
 Beyo' beyo' beyo'
 Li'is a k'aab te'e ka'anal
 Wáaj uts a wu'uyik le paaxa'
 Je'el ku tal le bo'bo'chi' maaya k'aay
 Tu'ux ka bin
 Way tuláakal kin tasik
 Le ba'ax kin betik
 Tia'al a wu'uyik ta xikin
 Teech máasewáal wíinik
 Kuxa'an ak moots

(Yazmín)
 Utia'al u yu'ubal lak [sic] t'aan
 Ko'one'ex áantiko'on meyaj
 Ko'one'ex ko'one'ex paalale'ex
 Ko'one'ex ko'onex muul meyaj
 Utia'al u yu'ubal ak t'aan
 Ko'one'ex áantiko'on meyaj
 Utia'al u yu'ubal ak t'aan
 Ko'one'ex áantiko'on meyaj
 ("Xíimbal kaaj")

Que te traigo con todo mi corazón
 Vamos, vamos niños (x2)
 Todos ustedes los estudiantes
 Los que van a la escuela, los que van a la escuela

(Pat Boy - RAP)
 Así, así, así
 Vamos las manos hacia arriba
 Si te gusta esta canción
 Aquí viene esta canción maya en rap
 Dónde vas
 Aquí todos les traigo
 Lo que hago
 Para que escuches, para tus oídos
 Tú, hombre originario
 Están vivas nuestras raíces

(Yazmín)
 Para que escuchen nuestra voz
 Vamos a ayudarnos a trabajar
 Vamos, vamos niños
 Vamos, vamos, trabajemos juntos
 Para que escuchen nuestra voz
 Vamos a ayudarnos a trabajar
 Para que escuchen nuestra voz
 Vamos a ayudarnos a trabajar
 ("Xíimbal kaaj")

In the music video, Novelo and Pat Boy walk the streets of the Maya town Subinkancab, Yucatan. Their trek is symbolic of how the lyrics invite listeners to journey with the musicians through the *maaya*-speaking area. Likewise, the video shows that a crowd of children accompanies the musicians. A series of invitations encourage Maya people, especially children, to action. Novelo's chorus invites individuals, "Jóok'en a wiil" / "Sal a ver", and in his first rap break, Pat Boy invites Maya people and children to travel throughout the Yucatan Peninsula to view and experience the peninsula's culture. His subsequent invitation is for these young students to learn *maaya* ("Xíimbal kaaj"). The emphasis on children and education demonstrates

how the language's future prospects depend in many ways on children's perceptions and use of *maayat'aan*.

Another emphasized factor is individuals' collaboration and solidarity. The song often addresses individuals (*teech / tú*), which creates a personal connection with listeners, even as it emphasizes that the work is collective. This collectivity appears in the 'we' pronoun posited by the shared characteristic of Maya culture and multiple collective invitations, such as Pat Boy's "Ko'one'ex kanik le maaya" / "Vamos a aprender maya" (and other variations on "Ko'one'ex . . ." / "Vamos a . . ."). The idea of *muul meyaj* [group work] in Novelo's closing lyrics evokes individuals working as a team. The collective 'we' also appears in the chorus lyric, "Teech yéetel teen, mixmáak ulaak" / "Tú y yo, nadie más", a verse that demonstrates Novelo's view that speakers must depend on themselves for defining and living their culture¹⁹⁵ (Boeta Madera). The song is an example of how placing *maayat'aan* in new mediums can change perceptions about the language. While Pat Boy appreciates the language's short words for rapping,¹⁹⁶ Novelo's singing demonstrates the language's ability to be smooth despite its characteristic glottal stops. While the song is sung and rapped only in *maayat'aan*, the published lyrics and subtitles make the Youtube video accessible to viewers in three languages. Because of the simultaneous consumption of *maaya* lyrics and English subtitles in real time while watching the video, the presentation targets English-speaking listeners after the initial *maaya*-speakers. Spanish speakers must search for the translation of the lyrics.

¹⁹⁵ An article in the *Diario de Yucatán* quotes Novelo as she discusses her work in *maaya*-language radio: "Lo importante no es la radio", subraya Yazmín, "sino que este proyecto sirva para generar un movimiento en las comunidades, no rurales, sino en Mérida, en San Francisco (California), por el cual nos demos cuenta de lo que está pasando con nuestra lengua y cultura, y tomemos el destino de nuestro pueblo en nuestras manos" (Boeta Madera).

¹⁹⁶ In an interview with Cru, Pat Boy characterizes his mother tongue as "corto y fluido" in rap music (6).

Media: Radio, Television, and Film

Beyond grassroots and institutional social media spaces, *maayat'aan* also has a presence in forms of mass media, although the gap between *maaya*-language program space and Spanish-language program space on the peninsula is significant. *Radio XEPET* (730 kHz AM), *La Voz de los Mayas*, which broadcasts out of Peto, Yucatan, plays an important role in placing *maayat'aan* in new technological domains and providing an outlet for Maya voices. Ironically, this well-known bilingual AM station started in 1982 to support the integration of indigenous peoples into the Mexican nation through Hispanicization. However, the station's aims changed over time, and the station describes its current mission as "dar cabida a las diversas expresiones culturales de los mayas desde una perspectiva de revalorización" ("XEPET"). Radio XEPET is governmentally maintained, managed by the Sistema de Radiodifusoras Culturales Indigenistas (SRCI) of the Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas (CDI). While government involvement in language policy does not often move beyond discourse into application or results, Antoni Castells-Talens affirms XEPET's success as a government initiative is mostly due to community support:

Radio XEPET differs from other attempts by the Mexican State to reach indigenous populations. Low audience identification of Radio XEPET with the Mexican government, high community participation in station-promoted activities, and close contact of the programming with everyday life indicate that the station has become a part of the community. Unlike other government programs, perceived as paternalistic by critics or as external by indigenous communities, indigenist radio has managed to permeate the social life of the interior of the Yucatan Peninsula Maya. (218)

This evaluation melds with how the station considers itself to be shaped by the community as it responds to the community's needs:

El personal de la XEPET siempre ha puesto interés en la difusión de mensajes en lengua maya y en la participación espontánea de miembros de la comunidad como informantes y promotores de sus manifestaciones artísticas, heredadas de la que es considerada, por muchos, la civilización más deslumbrante de la América precolombina, y dirige sus contenidos hacia los pobladores originarios, sin excluir a la población no indígena que comparte el mismo espacio. ("XEPET")

Today the station reaches ninety municipalities in the three states of the Yucatan Peninsula during the hours of 7am to 7pm. In 2000, the station added digital technology and online diffusion of its programs. Radio XEPET's future goals include strengthening listeners' *maaya*-language use and transitioning to FM and digital radio in order to more effectively reach a young and student population that is "en el proceso de afianzar su identidad cultural" ("XEPET").

The states of Quintana Roo and Campeche also have bilingual or multilingual SRCI radio stations that broadcast in *maayat'aan*. The station *XHNKA: La voz del gran pueblo*, founded in 1999, is based in Felipe Carrillo Puerto, Quintana Roo, and transmits programming in *maayat'aan* and Spanish ("XHNKA"). The station *XEXPUIJ: La voz del corazón de la selva* in Calakmul, Campeche, transmits in *maayat'aan*, the Mayan language Chol that is spoken in the Mexican state of Chiapas, and Spanish. The Campeche station considers itself a source of multicultural exchange because of the great number of migrants from other parts of Mexico and Guatemala that live in the region ("XEXPUIJ"). Castells-Talens notes that these three stations form the only significant representation of *maaya* language in radio on the peninsula, and they are all in rural areas, which leaves cities with little access to *maaya*-language programming (9)

on traditional radio. He asserts that the majority of broadcasting on all three stations is in *maayat'aan*, but that the percentage varies by state¹⁹⁷ (9). Cru discusses that because these three radio stations are federally owned, “actual ownership and control by local indigenous peoples is still non-existent” (*From* 200).

More recently, on February 22, 2016, or Día de las Lenguas Maternas, a digital *maaya*-language radio station launched, called Radio Yúuyum. Its website states a commitment to linguistic revival: “nos proponemos la tarea de fortalecer la cultura poniendo especial énfasis en el idioma, por lo que las transmisiones serán una gran parte en lengua maya: El 80% de nuestra programación estará hablada en lengua maya”. They also orient themselves as “la voz y el acompañamiento de nuestros pueblos” as they seek to encourage community participation and dialogue (“¿Quiénes somos?”). In its manifesto, the Yúuyum team aligns itself with national and international discourses of indigenous rights, citing the Mexican constitution and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, among other laws and declarations, to conclude, “el pueblo maya, como todos los pueblos originarios del país, tiene el derecho de poseer medios de comunicación y tenerlos en su propia lengua”. The manifesto ends with an invitation to collaborate: “Hacemos un llamado a todas las organizaciones sociales e individuos que luchan por los derechos y la justicia, a todas y todos los miembros del pueblo maya de los estados de Yucatán, Campeche y Quintana Roo a involucrarse, solidarizarse y hacer suya nuestra propuesta de Radio” (“Manifiesto”). According to its website, Radio Yúuyum provides online broadcasting of approximately six hours every Monday. The station broadcasts through online streaming, and provides podcasts and videos of the various segments available through several online platforms afterwards (“Radio”).

¹⁹⁷ Castells-Antoni reports that in 2000, Radio XEPET broadcast 56.6% of programming in *maayat'aan*, 26% bilingually, and 17.4% in Spanish (10).



(“Yúuyum Radio”)

In many ways, Radio Yúuyum unifies the diverse but related facets of language revitalization, including through its slogan “U t’aan k-kaaj” [the language of our people] (“Yúuyum Radio”). For instance, there are radio segments that focus on rap, bilingual readings of *maaya*-language literature, *maaya*-language classes, local and national news, and more eclectic talk radio, including a program co-hosted by Novelo. Both Martínez Huchim and Pat Boy have been featured as special guests in radio spots on the station (“Radio”). Online radio, separated from governmental initiatives, has the potential to be an uncensored platform for Maya voices. Its grassroots configuration is less subject to the inconsistency of government initiatives and the high overhead costs and regulations surrounding physical radio stations. Online radio is also more accessible to users anywhere anytime because of its ability to be accessed through cellular phone and wifi without the necessity of having a radio and station signal nearby. Advantageous for revitalization efforts in Yucatan, online radio stations also provide the opportunity to form an online repository of podcasts for promoting and reporting on the continuing efforts of each facet of revitalization.

There are no television channels devoted to Maya voices and perspectives as there are *maaya* radio stations. *Maaya*-language television programs instead occupy a minimal percentage of time on local Spanish-language channels. César David Can Canul notes, “Los espacios para los mayas son muy reducidos”. Perhaps the most well-known and followed *maaya*-language television news anchor is Julia María Chan Xicum, who provides a half-hour news segment summarizing the week’s events each Sunday in *maayat’aan*. This segment is featured on the Yucatecan television channel, Trecevisión Yucatán. Can Canul affirms that many families watch Chan Xicum every Sunday (Can Canul).



(Julia Chan Xicum)

Besides news media, *maayat’aan* was also the language of the 2013 *telenovela* “Baktun,” which was considered the first soap opera in an indigenous language in Mexico (Archibold). The program’s producer, Bruno Cárcamo, created the *telenovela* in order to fulfill a need, as he told the *New York Times*: “Telenovelas are popular in the Mayan communities, too, but they are not

presented in their language or their reality” (Archibold). *Baktun* provided a rare opportunity for *maaya* speakers to enjoy a favorite genre in their own language about their own culture.

Similarly to goals of the digital activists, Cárcamo wanted to increase *maaya* language use in mass media (“Sin un solo beso”) and to confront perceptions that Maya culture is “traditional”: “We wanted to show you could still be proudly Mayan even in this modern world with mass media and digital communication” (Archibold). The series aired on Quintana Roo public television, debuting in August 2013 with thirty episodes. It had joint funding from Quintana Roo State television and Cárcamo (Archibold). Other collaborators included INALI and the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH). INALI bestowed an award on the program for its participation in the diffusion of indigenous languages in Mexico (“Sin un solo beso”). Hilario Chi Canul, a Maya who was the *maaya*-language coach for actors in Mel Gibson’s 2006 *maaya*-language movie *Apocalypto*, also collaborated on *Baktún* with scriptwriting, translation, and the lead acting role (Archibold).

While Cárcamo is not Maya, his vision for *Baktún* was to create a program from a Maya perspective.¹⁹⁸ Therefore, Maya institutions and community members collaborated throughout the writing, acting, filming, and production, which provided Maya people agency to represent their culture in one of the country’s most popular television genres. The title *Baktun* refers to a Maya unit of time, and was chosen for its significance of cyclical time (“Sin un solo beso”). The storyline portrays new realities of contemporary Maya culture; the male lead Jacinto migrates to New York City, where he distances himself from his culture, only to discover its value (Archibold). While abroad, Jacinto faces the challenge of being separated from his family during

¹⁹⁸ As Cárcamo Arvido asserted, “todo el proyecto, lo hicimos no sólo en lengua maya sino desde la lengua maya, por ello en todo el proceso tuvimos por parte del INAH asesoría antropológica y cultural, así como en la parte lingüística por el Inali y un especialista en esta lengua” (“Premian”).

events as dire as an illness that culminates in his father's death ("Sin un solo beso"). Jacinto's sweetheart falls for his brother during Jacinto's absence, a plotline that forms the love story obligatory of the *telenovela* genre. However, producers and screenwriters followed Maya cultural norms and avoided kissing on the lips and other displays of passion typical of the Spanish-language *telenovela* genre (Archibald). Despite *Baktún*'s unconventionality among *telenovelas*, Cárcamo Arvide was committed to producing a series with which the Maya community could identify: "No quisimos hacer un culebrón en español traducido a la maya, sino partimos directamente desde la tradición. Se ha dicho que es el primer culebrón que no tiene besos y es verdad, pues en la tradición y la cultura maya no existe noviazgo, por tanto no puede tener escenas de besos y afecto público" ("Sin un solo beso").

Another element of *Baktún* that separates it from most Spanish-language *telenovelas* and reinforces the genre's adaptation to a Maya cultural and linguistic context is the plotline that confronts struggles for Maya control over communal lands. Upon returning to his hometown, Jacinto realizes politicians are deceiving his brother with intentions of appropriating Maya land ("Sin un solo beso"). While *Baktun* was filmed in the town of Tihosuco in Quintana Roo, surrounding communities, and New York, the actors were mostly residents of Tihosuco without training in acting. For example, the series' ritual healer, or *j-meen*, is an actual *j-meen*, and women who typically work as embroiderers, a common female occupation in Yucatan, became actresses ("Sin un solo beso").

The *telenovela* had a positive reception among the Maya. The *New York Times* reported the experience of 40-year-old María Elena Tuz Kuvil, who after a screening of *Baktun* said, "I could not believe it was in our language. I watch a lot of telenovelas, but none like this." University of Guadalajara communications professor Adrien J. Charlois, an expert in the history

of telenovelas signals the importance of indigenous peoples telling their own stories in documentaries and fiction, saying, “This allows them to see themselves as habitants [sic] of the full media panorama, while making it possible to generate new ways of defining themselves” (Archibold). Upon invitation, *Baktún* was screened in Andean countries to serve as a model for creating telenovelas for indigenous populations in South America (México CNN).

Two other *maaya*-language films, which I do not discuss in detail here because they were created for a mostly non-Maya target audience, provide insight into the challenges of producing *maaya*-language films and the tensions among opinions about effective approaches for revitalization. The *maaya*-language movie *Sáastal: Los hijos de la Santa Gracia* (2004) provides an example of the difficulty that arises from competing ways of speaking *maayat’aan* on the peninsula. Ana Rosa Duarte Duarte, a Maya anthropologist, wrote about her participation in the creation and filming along with the team that included other anthropologists, linguists, scholars of the Maya, and regional theater actors (“Imaginando”). As *Sáastal* was created for use in *maaya* language acquisition classes of the University of North Carolina-Duke Consortium in Latin American and Caribbean Studies (39), the film utilized *jach maaya* in dialogues (40), much as foreign language textbooks for classroom generally feature pure, standardized language variants. However, Duarte Duarte reports that native speakers found the *maaya* dialogue strange when the film was screened in Maya communities (56). Their reaction demonstrates the gap between pure *jach maaya* touted by many educators and activists and mixed *xe’ek’ maaya* that is the current spoken norm. Additionally, Duarte Duarte affirms that the film’s goal of representing a typical Maya family was more complicated than it might have seemed (56). As a Maya anthropologist, the exercise caused her to reflect on what it means to be Maya, to participate in the common situation of Mayas fictionalizing and performing their Maya identity, and to engage

in a film project that simultaneously embodied Maya self-representation and the representation of the Maya by others because of participants' varied backgrounds (46-52). Duarte Duarte concludes that because of the forced language and cultural inconsistencies, “[e]sta ficción resultante de una familia que parece ser culturalmente auténtica, a fin de cuentas no podría existir” (56). This conclusion suggests the responsibility of representing Maya culture in artistic works, especially when the target (foreign) viewer has preconceived ideas about Maya traditionalism. How much of Maya culture is “traditional” and how much of the traditionalism exists in an imaginary?

Differences in Maya responses to Mel Gibson’s *maaya*-language film *Apocalypto* (2006), in which *maaya* speaker Chi Canul trained non-Maya actors in *maaya* language, reinforce the difficulty of creating a production able to appeal to all *maaya* speakers. In a workshop by Chi Canul and Castillo Cocom at Indiana University in 2007, the men confirmed that while the film received heavy criticism for its portrayal of the Maya people, the film placed *maayat’aan* in an international spotlight that had positive effects on Maya people. Castillo Cocom notes that criticisms come from non-Maya intellectuals, and that reception of the film among the Maya was positive. His view was that the only Maya critics of the film were individuals who had been denied participation in the project (“Politics”).

Conclusion

The wide variety of revitalization efforts place *maayat’aan* in domains that are vital and popular in contemporary times. Recent phenomena such as technology and migration, which are heavily influencing *maaya* speakers’ realities at home and abroad, simultaneously facilitate and necessitate the use of *maayat’aan* in all types of media. The presence of contemporary

maayat'aan in multiple cultural, social, and political domains demonstrates to speakers that while their language is not *jach maaya*, it is as complete and useful as dominant languages like Spanish and English that compete with *maaya* in local language ideologies. Positive perceptions surrounding *maayat'aan* can increase the number of speakers who use the language instead of shifting to monolingual Spanish. With the way technology continues to permeate contemporary life, *maaya*-language digital activism and the informal communicative context provided by social media will perhaps be the most significant influences on motivating individuals of all ages and levels of *maaya*-language education to express themselves in *maaya*.

While orality-based efforts like music and radio hold immediate potential for revalorizing *maayat'aan* as they resonate with cultural values of orality and often colloquial speech, written literacy-based efforts such as education and literature face present challenges and are conceived as long-term goals. Without prioritizing written literacies over oral literacies, I consider writing and literature, in conjunction with more quotidian manifestations of the language, to be important for creating more consistent use of diverse *maaya* registers through which speakers can enact tangible measures of language revitalization. As efforts diversify *maaya* language use, it follows that there will be more acknowledgement of, appreciation for, and identification with the ways speakers adapt *maaya* in different contexts to engage in varied tasks through, for example, colloquial *maaya* speech, ritual *maaya* language, informal *maaya* on social media, written *maaya* for professional contexts and public diffusion, and experimental *maaya* for literary, musical, and artistic contexts. Currently, as with *maaya*-language film production, speakers are likely to consider the use of *maayat'aan* in literature to be strange and unrepresentative of their experiences. However, efforts to foment *maaya*-language education,

produce children's literature, and bridge oral-written divides in the presentation of literature create a demand for *maaya*-language literature and foster a readership attuned to its offerings.

With or without official language policy, grassroots revalorization efforts seem to be increasing. The variety and number of current projects to bring *maayat'aan* into digital and online formats available for rapid and international access, along with projects to foment *maaya* language use among youth, suggest that revitalization efforts and *maaya* language use will continue to increase with time. Rather than either/or attitudes that conceive of Maya identity exclusively through ties with an inherited past, inclusive both/and conceptions that consider varied cultural production and identities to be 'Maya' have the most potential to revitalize the language and culture. Activists aim to place *maayat'aan* as a more mainstream component of educational curriculums, literature, journalism, music, radio, and television in Yucatan. Pat Boy and Novelo's musical affirmation, "Yaan to'on muuk' yaan u páajtal" ["Tenemos fuerza, se volverá realidad"] ("Xíimbal kaaj"), certainly describes the optimism surrounding the exciting efforts taking place on the Yucatan Peninsula and beyond.

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