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# The Making of Rigoberta Menchú: Testimonio and Self-Fashioning

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In this essay, I will discuss the identity of Rigoberta Menchú as shaped by the narrative voice that speaks to us from the pages of her testimonio *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* (1983); a first-person narrative of novel length in which Rigoberta, a semiliterate Maya-Quiché from the Guatemalan highlands, tells her life-story to Elizabeth Burgos, a professionally trained ethnographer, who records, transcribes, edits, and finally publishes Rigoberta's oral history in book form. To do so, I will make use of Stephen Greenblatt's theory of self-fashioning by means of which I intend to show that Rigoberta creates in her testimonio a self-generated yet culturally constituted new identity which simultaneously partakes of her past, addresses her present, and projects upon her future an idea of who she needs to be in order to effectively champion the cause of Guatemala's poor and oppressed indigenous peoples.

In 1981 when she was only twenty-three years old, Rigoberta Menchú was forced into exile for having participated in the antiestablishment activities of the *Comité de Unidad Campesina* (CUC) and the *Frente Popular 31 de Enero*. Upon leaving Guatemala, Rigoberta, who had been speaking Spanish for only three years and whose knowledge of the world beyond the borders of her homeland was minimal, travelled to Mexico where she spoke at a gathering of Catholic Bishops thus bearing witness to the atrocities that she and her people had experienced (and continue to experience) at the hands of the Guatemalan military as well as paramilitary groups. At the invitation of

several organizations involved in the Solidarity Movement, she then travelled to Paris where she was introduced to Elizabeth Burgos, originally of Venezuela, whose collaboration in the writing of Rigoberta's testimony had been solicited by friends sympathetic to the plight of the Guatemalan indigenous population. Acutely aware of the politically complex and emotionally sensitive nature of the ethnographer/native informant relationship, Elizabeth Burgos was at first reluctant to interview Rigoberta.<sup>1</sup> However, she eventually agreed to do so; a decision that would forever change the course of Rigoberta's life as well as her own. Henceforth, Rigoberta would be recognized as the "Voice" of the poor and disenfranchised peoples of Latin America while Elizabeth Burgos would be applauded by some, and derided by others, as the individual who gave the world this voice.

As in the case of Rigoberta Menchú and Elizabeth Burgos, the testimonial project typically brings together in collaborative effort individuals with distinct personalities, diverse ethnic origins, and radically different life experiences. Naturally, as a result of the confrontational (in the sense of meeting face to face) nature of this close encounter, both the narrator's and the editor's self-perceptions are subject to change. For example, Elizabeth Burgos writes in the prologue to *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú*: "Sólo me resta agradecer a Rigoberta el haberme concedido el privilegio de este encuentro y haberme confiado su vida. Ella me ha permitido descubrir ese otro yo-misma. Gracias a ella mi yo americano ha

dejado de ser una 'extrañeza inquietante'" (18). As this statement implies, by means of sympathetic and admiring identification with the suffering figure of Rigoberta, Elizabeth Burgos rediscovers herself while discovering her narrator, and consequently, her life will never be the same. However, although her self-perceptions definitely change, Elizabeth Burgos at no time loses her identity as an intellectual, for as John Beverley and Marc Zimmerman observe in *Literature and Politics in the Central American Revolutions*:

Testimonio gives voice in literature to a previously voiceless and anonymous collective popular subject, the *pueblo*, but in such a way that the intellectual [read "editor"] or professional, usually of bourgeois or petty bourgeois origin, is interpolated as being part of, and dependent on, this collective subject without at the same time losing his or her identity as an intellectual. Politically, the question in testimonio is not so much the *difference* of the social situations of the direct narrator and the interlocutor as the possibility of their articulation together in a common program or front. (176-7)

Similarly, though the testimonial encounter may also force the narrator to see him or herself through new eyes, this narrator's sense of personal, cultural, and ethnic identity, which has taken a lifetime to develop, is not automatically obliterated by the mere act of entering into a collaborative literary project with someone radically different from him or herself. Like the editor who identifies with the narrator on a symbolic and ideological level while retaining his or her identity as an intellectual, the narrator of testimonio is quite capable of identifying with intellectuals, and even becoming one

in the process, without forgetting the many ties that bind him or her to a specific community. In fact, the act of bearing witness to an Other can actually strengthen and reconfirm the narrator's sense of identity on both personal and communal levels.

That Rigoberta today wages her war against the Guatemalan ruling class and military from an office in Mexico City equipped with computers and FAX, travels the Solidarity lecture circuit and frequently addresses the United Nations as an activist for international indigenous and human rights is problematic for those like anthropologist David Stoll who believe that Rigoberta's identity as a member of the Guatemalan indigenous population is somehow compromised by her life in exile and association with First World leftist intellectuals. For example, in a paper read at a University of California at Berkeley conference on "Political Correctness" and Cultural Studies (October 20, 1990), Stoll writes:

This brings us to the third problem I have with *I, Rigoberta Menchú*. While most other survivors were forced to come to terms with the Guatemalan army, Rigoberta was whisked into exile and fights on from the international human rights movement. That puts her in the same relation to ordinary Mayan women as, say, our relation to ordinary Mayan women. They're up there in the cold and rain eating tortillas and leaves because they can't afford beans anymore (the complement to corn in the traditional Mesoamerican diet); we're here in La-La land and so is Rigoberta. (8)

Though he later retracts this statement,<sup>2</sup> Stoll's "problem" with *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú*, which stems from the fact that

Rigoberta no longer lives in Guatemala and apparently does not eat leaves, reveals a drastic oversight of the many years that have passed since Rigoberta's flight from Guatemala in 1981. Without a doubt, the Guatemala of which Rigoberta speaks in her testimonio has undergone considerable change in the last decade.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, Rigoberta has experienced remarkable changes in her life and lifestyle as a result of her association with international human rights activists, the publication of her testimonio, and—most recently—receipt of the \$1.2 million 1992 Nobel Peace Prize. However, seeing that *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú* was written soon after she left Guatemala, would David Stoll venture to state that Rigoberta was not in a position in 1982 to speak with authority for those Guatemalans from both the indigenous and ladino sectors who, like her, witnessed and endured acts of extreme violence and oppression?

Yet even more disturbing than Stoll's refusal to place *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú* in its proper historical context, is his implication that Rigoberta's cultural and ethnic identity are determined by mere geographical location and diet. Apparently clinging to the belief that the "Noble Savage" is no longer noble or even savage if "contaminated" by the trappings of Western culture, Stoll implies that Rigoberta's life in exile coupled with her close alliance with international human rights activists somehow makes her less Mayan than she was when death threats forced her to flee Guatemala in 1981.

David Stoll is certainly not alone in his objections to Rigoberta's willingly accepted, if not self-appointed, role as spokesperson for the indigenous peoples of Guatemala. In the Summer of 1992, as the traditionally conservative Guatemalan press reacted to mounting international support for Rigoberta's nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize, articles critical of Rigoberta's associa-

tion with First World leftist intellectuals began to appear. For example, columnist Mario Antonio Sandoval wrote in *Prensa libre* on July 13, 1992:

Como todo político al salir de un exilio prolongado, la señora Menchú perdió parte de su autenticidad con el constante contacto con la clase intelectual marxista europea, donde aún subsisten criterios de la mentalidad conquistadora y de considerar "buenos salvajes o buenos revolucionarios" como decía el venezolano Carlos Rangel. Pero también la perdió por vivir en constantes viajes en hoteles de lujo, ajenos a la realidad hasta de los guatemaltecos ricos. Por aparte, en los últimos años, ha cambiado la comunidad indígena de Guatemala, cuya unidad sólo existe cuando se le considera como un grupo étnico no-ladino. Está al borde de una división aún más dañina y ya hay muestras de divisiones intestinas. Por eso, la señora Menchú tiene el reto de ganarse entre esas etnias—tal vez con excepción de la suya propia— el derecho de representarlo, otorgado sin esfuerzo en Europa por los ya mencionados marxistas. (10)

Though Sandoval's portrayal of Rigoberta as a jet-setting lover of luxury is entirely nonrepresentative of the Rigoberta who Kenya Dworkin and I interviewed in a modest flat located in the traditionally hispanic *barrio* of San Francisco's Mission District,<sup>4</sup> his observation as to the challenges Rigoberta faces in her efforts to speak for the indigenous community of Guatemala is well put, since issues such as land tenure, income, and education, not to men-

tion the linguistic diversity of a population that claims over twenty different dialects, have created ever widening division within this community. However, on July 14, one day after Mr. Sandoval's article appeared in *Prensa libre*, the Guatemalan daily *Siglo veintiuno* published an announcement stating that the *Comisión de Comunidades Indígenas del Congreso* had sent a letter to the Nobel Committee in support of Rigoberta's nomination. Furthermore, the announcement observed that this letter, signed by the six indigenous members of Congress, applauded Rigoberta not only as a "symbol" of the marginalized indigenous women of Guatemala, but also as the incarnation of the "spirit of resistance" of virtually all Native American peoples:

Los congresistas consideran que Rigoberta Menchú es un símbolo de mujer indígena guatemalteca y de América, y de los marginados que luchan por la vida, la paz y la libertad, que surge de la convulsionada historia guatemalteca y de las injusticias sufridas por el pueblo maya . . . [L]os diputados piensan que Menchú Tum representa también la historia de los pueblos indios del continente americano, que han sufrido persecución y discriminación racial y cultural desde hace 500 años. Al mismo tiempo, dicen, encarna la conciencia y el espíritu de resistencia de esos pueblos y su esperanza por alcanzar una vida digna y respeto a sus identidades propias. ("Diputados envían carta" 4)

Such conflicting points of view which, on the one hand, resort to little more than Rigoberta bashing while, on the other, idolize Rigoberta as "the perfect living symbol of all the evil the white race has done in the Americas" (Grenier 10), raise inter-

esting questions as to the very nature of human identity and the ongoing process of identity-formation. What constitutes an individual's perception of the self? What is the relationship between self-identity and cultural or ethnic identity? What relationship exists between self-identity and public perception of the self? What tensions exist between an individual's self-identity and the public persona that he or she creates through speech and/or actions? To answer these questions is beyond the limited scope of this essay. However, I would now like to address the possibility of shaping one's own identity through aesthetic representation of the self.

In his *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (1980), a work that traces the development of human identity in sixteenth-century England, Stephen Greenblatt uses the term "self-fashioning" to refer to the process by means of which Renaissance authors shaped their own identities either through literary representation of themselves or literary creation of fictional characters. Though it reflects the individual's efforts to form a self, the term "self-fashioning" does not solely refer to the realm of the individual. Given the widely accepted view that the human subject is culturally constituted, the process of self-fashioning is necessarily influenced by the interplay of social institutions such as Family, Church, and State that in one way or another govern human behavior. Thus, self-fashioning is both an individual and cultural practice that suggests self-conscious representation of one's nature or intention in speech or actions. In other words, self-fashioning is a manipulable and artful process that involves the individual's ability to impose his or her self-perceptions on the world and the world's ability to impose on the individual a culturally predetermined idea of what the self should be.

Greenblatt's suggestion that the ability to achieve a desired identity involves the act of representation leads him to consider literature as a vehicle for the process of self-

fashioning. His theory that the symbolic structures of literary texts interplay with those perceivable in the careers of their authors and in the larger social world to create a complex process of self-fashioning constitutes an "anthropological" approach to literary criticism by means of which the critic attempts to understand literature as "a part of the system of signs that constitutes a given culture" (4). Stressing that language (itself a system of signs) is a collective construction, Greenblatt urges literary critics to investigate "both the social presence to the world of the literary text and the social presence of the world in the literary text" (5), for literature is undeniably a "sensitive register of the complex struggles and harmonies of culture" (5).

Greenblatt's theory of self-fashioning is truly illuminating when applied to an analysis of testimonial texts whose narrators happen to be Third World subaltern subjects. In contrast to the intellectually constructed and therefore unauthentic subaltern subject,<sup>5</sup> the theory of self-fashioning suggests the possibility of the subaltern subject who, through oral discourse and subsequent transition of this discourse to the written page, secures a self-generated yet culturally constituted public persona representative of the collective self yet reflective of individual endeavor. This new identity, however, is not won without a certain degree of compromise and sacrifice, for as we shall see in the example of Rigoberta Menchú, the self-fashioned identity partakes of both the authority and the alien (Greenblatt 9); that which is to be protected and that which is to be destroyed.

For Rigoberta, that which is to be protected is primarily the indigenous community of Guatemala with which she shares a collective memory, common language, religion, manner of dress, and dietary customs. Although Rigoberta portrays herself in *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú* as representative of a larger community composed of "todos los guatemaltecos pobres" (21),

throughout her testimonio she repeatedly addresses the issue of cultural difference between Mayan Indians, ladinos, and whites, thus erecting definitive barriers between the native community from whence she originates and those peoples, traditionally considered as enemies, with whom she must collaborate in attempts to save the Maya from physical and cultural annihilation. However, although she eagerly complies with Elizabeth Burgos' requests for descriptions of Mayan culture and tradition (birth ceremonies, wedding ceremonies, initiation rites, etc.), Rigoberta is careful never to reveal any information that could possibly be used to the detriment of her native community. In fact, she repeatedly refuses to divulge certain "secrets" that, in her opinion, conceal the very essence of her Mayan identity.<sup>6</sup> For example, in reference to her *nahual* or animal alter ego, Rigoberta states:

Nosotros los indígenas hemos ocultado nuestra identidad, hemos guardado muchos secretos, por eso somos discriminados. Para nosotros es bastante difícil muchas veces decir algo que se relaciona con uno mismo porque uno sabe que tiene que ocultar esto hasta que garantice que va a seguir como una cultura indígena, que nadie nos puede quitar. Por eso, no puedo explicar el nahual pero hay ciertas cosas que puedo decir a grandes rasgos. (41)

Rigoberta's refusal to divulge her secrets takes root from the bitter seeds of betrayal sown by the first Spanish *conquistadores* to arrive in the Americas and nourished by subsequent generations of European imperialists. Since the arrival of Christopher Columbus in 1492, knowledge of Indian custom and belief provided by native informants has been used throughout Latin America by a powerful ruling class intent on

dividing, conquering, and even eliminating entire indigenous communities. Hernán Cortés used to his advantage the Aztec belief that bearded gods would one day come from across the sea to rule the land,<sup>7</sup> and Bernardino de Sahagún, believing the most efficient way to eliminate paganism was to first of all thoroughly understand it, relied on native informants to provide him with information as to indigenous religious practice.<sup>8</sup> Aware of the potential dangers of revealing too much, Rigoberta draws her own limits when questioned by Elizabeth Burgos and *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú* ends with a declaration of the narrator's intention to conceal the essence of her indigenous identity:

Pero, sin embargo, todavía sigo ocultando mi identidad como indígena. Sigo ocultando lo que yo considero que nadie sabe, ni siquiera un antropólogo, ni un intelectual, por más que tenga muchos libros, no saben distinguir todos nuestros secretos. (271)

As Rigoberta reveals in lengthy descriptions of ritual practice and ceremony, Mayan children are taught from the earliest of ages to respect and serve the community in which they live. When only eight days old, a child's hands are bound together in a symbolic gesture emphasizing the sanctity of these hands that will one day work for the community (32). On this child's tenth birthday, an initiation ceremony during which family members remind the initiate of communal responsibility and obligation is performed: "Mi padre me decía: tú tienes mucha responsabilidad, muchas tareas que cumplir con la comunidad. Desde ahora, tienes que asumir un papel a favor de todos . . ." (71). Undoubtedly, when in 1982 Rigoberta is faced with the opportunity to speak out on behalf of the Guatemalan indigenous community, it is this deeply

ingrained sense of communal responsibility that compels her to closely guard the secrets of her indigenous identity. However, in order to save her people and culture from destruction, Rigoberta makes a conscious decision to embrace the alien; she willingly appropriates specific elements of Western culture which not only free her from a past of ignorance and oppression, but also arm her with the proper "weapons" with which to wage an effective battle against hegemony in her homeland.

For example, recognizing linguistic barriers impeding communication not only between the Maya and Guatemala's Spanish-speaking ruling class, but also between Guatemala's twenty-two indigenous groups or *etnias*, Rigoberta empowers herself with Spanish in order to understand her enemies and better communicate with her friends. Also, against her father's wishes, Rigoberta learns to read and write. Similarly, Rigoberta adopts a revolutionary consciousness-raising discourse informed by Marxism and Liberation Theology that openly challenges the beliefs of those more traditional Mayan Indians who, as "good Catholics," accept their life of suffering as divinely preordained: "Para nosotros es como un destino este sufrimiento" (33). And finally, Rigoberta's rejection of traditional Mayan sex roles allows her the freedom to pursue her struggle without the hindrance of wifely and motherly obligations.

Not only does Rigoberta's decision to empower herself with the elements of Western culture that best suit her needs constitute a break with traditional Mayan custom and belief, but her flight into exile also physically distances her from the indigenous community with which she identifies, thus prompting David Stoll to question her authenticity as spokesperson for those Maya who continue to live in Guatemala. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that even as they distance Rigoberta from the anthropologist's ideal of the pristine indig-

enous subject uncorrupted by Western culture, such “compromises” to her indigenous identity are necessary “evils” that bring Rigoberta ever closer to her own idea of who she needs to be in order to effectively promote her cause which encompasses a collective objective.

As previously insinuated, I am of the opinion that aesthetic identification with the narrator is a stratagem by means of which *testimonio* stimulates attitudes in the reader/interlocutor. But for aesthetic identification to take place, there must first be aesthetic representation of the subject of testimonial discourse. Typically, the editor of *testimonio* provides an initial description of the narrator’s personal and sometimes physical attributes.<sup>9</sup> Also, the text’s cover is likely to display a photo or drawing of the narrator. However, the generic conventions of *testimonio* lead us to believe that all other representation of the subject of testimonial discourse is in fact self-representation. Likewise, the generic conventions of *testimonio* lead us to believe that the narrator’s self-configuration will ring true, and consequently, we treat the narrator’s descriptive representations of him or herself as fact, in the historian’s sense of the word, even though self-representation, by its very nature, is self-conscious, artful, and manipulative.

Returning to the question of Rigoberta’s identity as it is portrayed in *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú*, I in no way intend to question the facticity of Rigoberta’s descriptions of herself, for I am not an historian. However, as a student of literature, what interests me about Rigoberta’s descriptions of herself are their factitiousness insofar as they are adapted to a conventional standard and are reproduced by artificial means, i.e., the recording of Rigoberta’s oral discourse and the subsequent transition of this discourse to the written page. Obviously, Rigoberta is not solely responsible for her self-configuration in *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú*. Although her

questions are not included in the text, Elizabeth Burgos does ask Rigoberta a series of fairly specific (or so we assume) questions in regards to her life as a young woman growing up in Guatemala. Later, she rearranges Rigoberta’s answers according to the conventional standard of the ethnographic text. However, the answers do come from Rigoberta and it is interesting to note that, throughout her *testimonio*, Rigoberta—either consciously or subconsciously—portrays herself as if she were in a state of constant metamorphosis which, of course, she is.

That Rigoberta should portray herself as a constantly evolving self should come as no surprise, since *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú* is essentially her autobiography up to and including her meeting with Elizabeth Burgos in 1982. That’s covering a lot of ground. Also, like the prototypical *bildungsroman*, it traces in linear fashion the learning processes by means of which Rigoberta achieves self-awareness. However, in contrast to the prototypical *bildungsroman* that looks to the past to reaffirm or otherwise explain the individual’s present, Rigoberta’s *testimonio* is less concerned with her own past *per se* than it is with her people’s future, since to improve the lives of the poor and oppressed Guatemalan Indians is one of Rigoberta’s primary goals. Consequently, Rigoberta’s narration of the significant events, decisions, and undertakings that influenced her remarkable metamorphosis from a politically unaware and powerless Indian peasant into a politically aware and self-empowered spokesperson for the Guatemalan indigenous community is not meant to simply explain how she ended up in Paris in 1982. Rather, these events, decisions, and undertakings function in *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú* as the many threads with which Rigoberta weaves herself a new identity that simultaneously partakes of her Mayan heritage, addresses the demands of an urgent present situation, and provides an example for fu-

ture generations of Guatemalan Indians to follow. Likewise, this new identity appeals to the readers of *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú* to recognize their own potential to recreate themselves as politically conscious and socially responsible human beings.

Rigoberta's outstanding accomplishments on both political and literary fronts are deeply indebted to the hard work and commitment of countless individuals who have selflessly dedicated their time, skills, and economic resources to the cause of solidarity with the Guatemalan people. However, it cannot be denied that, as an individual, Rigoberta has had a tremendous impact on the way in which First World intellectuals now listen to Third World subaltern subjects who, by the way, have been speaking all along. Nor can it be denied that, as a literary character, the Rigoberta who speaks out from the pages of her *testimonio*, which since 1983 has been translated into at least nine languages, is largely responsible for this change in attitude, since it is with this character—born of necessity and nourished by an unflagging conviction that change is indeed possible—that the reader primarily identifies. Which brings us back to the question of Rigoberta's aesthetic representation of her(self) in *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú*.

Aesthetic representations of Rigoberta which function to gain the reader/interlocutor's admiration and respect abound in *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú*: Rigoberta as loving daughter, Rigoberta as faithful friend, Rigoberta as diligent servant, Rigoberta as valiant rebel, and Rigoberta as self-sacrificing community leader. However, the most striking representation of all, in terms of Rigoberta's attempts to project upon her future an idea of who she needs to be in order to effectively promote her people's cause, is that of Rigoberta as truthful, and hence, believable witness. As she steps forward to pull back the thick curtain of lies

that for centuries has concealed the reality of her people's suffering, Rigoberta invites the reader to believe in her and to believe in the story she has to tell. Whether we do so or not is another matter. However, the image of Rigoberta reciting to Elizabeth Burgos a seemingly endless litany of abuses and humiliations that she and "todos los guatemaltecos pobres" have endured for countless years retains its persuasive power long after the last page of *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú* is turned.

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### Notes

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<sup>1</sup> "No habiendo visto nunca a Rigoberta Menchú, al principio me mostré reticente, por saber hasta qué punto la calidad de la relación entre entrevistador y entrevistado es una condición previa en esta clase de trabajo: la implicación sociológica es muy intensa y la aparición del recuerdo actualiza afectos y zonas de la memoria que se creían olvidadas para siempre, pudiendo provocar situaciones ansiógenas o de *stress*." Rigoberta, Menchú. *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia*, 11-12.

<sup>2</sup> "In the discussion that followed, I retracted this statement. Like ourselves, Rigoberta has the freedom to speak out and is not forced to eat leaves; unlike ourselves, she comes from a Mayan population, speaks the language and lost much of her family and village in the violence" (Stoll 8).

<sup>3</sup> In 1985, the Guatemalan military sponsored fraud-free elections and Vinicio Cerezo, the first civilian President to govern since 1966, was sworn into office. Also, the *Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca* (URNG) and the *Representación Unitaria de la Oposición Guatemalteca* (RUOG), of which Rigoberta Menchú is a director, are currently engaged in a series of talks with representatives of the Guatemalan government aimed at bringing peace

to a country that has faced the hardship of civil war for over thirty years. In addition, the repatriation of Guatemalan Indians living in refugee camps in southern Mexico is currently under way.

<sup>4</sup> Brittin, Alice A., and Kenya Carmen Dworkin. "Entrevista con Rigoberta Menchú." *Lucero* 3 (1992): 1-4. A full-length version of this interview is forthcoming in *Nuevo texto crítico* 11 (1993): 5-20.

<sup>5</sup> For an insightful discussion of the intellectually constructed subaltern subject, see Gayatri Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?"

<sup>6</sup> For a thorough analysis of Rigoberta's "secrets", see Doris Sommer's "Sin secretos."

<sup>7</sup> See Hernán Cortés' "Segunda carta de relación" of October 10, 1520.

<sup>8</sup> Ironically, Sahagún's attempts to eliminate paganism in the New World served to preserve the native culture, for he committed his knowledge of this culture to the written page in his encyclopedic work *Historia general de las cosas de la Nueva España*. (For an informative discussion of Sahagún and his work, see Tzvetan Todorov's *The Conquest of America*, 219-41.)

<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth Burgos' initial description of Rigoberta's "frank" smile and gaze suggests that Rigoberta's story will be equally forthright and sincere: "Lo que me sorprendió a primera vista fue su sonrisa franca y casi infantil. Su cara redonda tenía forma de luna llena. Su mirada franca era la de un niño, con labios siempre dispuestos a sonreír" (12).

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