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**Unsettled Remains: Race, Trauma, and Nationalism in Millennial El
Salvador**

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**Unsettled Remains: Race, Trauma, and Nationalism in Millennial El
Salvador**

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Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
The University of Texas at Austin
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

**The University of Texas at Austin
December, 2005**

Dedication

To the memory of Begoña Aretxaga.

Acknowledgements

It was my pleasure and good fortune to accrue a great many debts in researching and writing this dissertation, debts that emerged within and alongside friendships and commitments. I have tried to live up to those multiple commitments in producing this document, an effort that has created much of what I regard as most fruitful and successful in this work.

In El Salvador, I am deeply thankful to the people of Tacuba who shared with me their town, their rural landscape, and their experiences. I am especially grateful to the people of the three coffee cooperatives who welcomed me into their homes and communities, patiently and with great good humor listened to my endless questions, and shared their experiences and hopes with me. I am equally indebted to the activists who admitted me to their world, sharing with me their everyday practices and their candid sense of the trials and successes of their projects. Amadeo Martínez, Nubia Martínez, Betty Pérez, Guillermo Tesorero, Fidel Flores, Ricardo Maye, Felipe Sánchez, Nelson Pérez, Ricardo Najo, the Alcaldía del Común of Izalco, and the other members of CCNIS all gave generously of themselves.

I thank Ileana Gómez for directing me to Tacuba and introducing me to Ernesto Méndez. I cannot adequately convey in the space here how deeply grateful I am to Ernesto. His generosity of spirit, his intellectual curiosity and acuity, his tireless energy, his deeply compassionate and committed approach to his work, to the rural poor of Central America, to social justice, and to the land that sustains us all inspire me and influenced this project throughout. Thank also to the *mara* in San Salvador: Doribel Herrador, Leopoldo Dimas, Cecilia Carranza, all supported this dissertation project with their intellectual resources, and also supported me with their solidarity and wonderful friendship. Gracias, doctor y doctoras. The Arias and Vásquez families treated me as their kin, for which I am forever grateful. Lito, mil gracias. América Rodríguez, Sajid Herrera Mena, Leda Peretti, Carlos Lara, Santiago and Georgina from El Museo de la Palabra y el Imágen, the helpful people at the Archivo General de la Nación, and everybody in CONCULTURA's Jefatura de Asuntos Indígenas: all gave generously and patiently of their time and knowledge. In Tacuba, I thank Saúl and Tancho, América, Edgardo, Moises, Ciro, don Luigi, Mac, Carlos, and all the others who made staying in their town a pleasure.

I thank my committee, a collection of wonderful scholars whose work and teaching have shaped my intellectual formation. Charlie Hale and Ted Gordon have been teachers and mentors since I began my academic career. They pushed me to bring a realist sense of political commitments into contact with the theoretical challenges I pose to realist modes of understanding and representation in this work. Kathleen Stewart and Richard Flores taught me new ways to understand culture and the political. Suzanna

Hecht's was the first dissertation I ever read, and I am grateful for her participation on this committee, where she generously shared her insights about rural society in El Salvador. Jeff Gould provided guidance and insight with research in El Salvador. His work is a singular influence for this project, as it is for anyone working on *mestizaje* and power in Central America. Finally, I thank Charlie Hale for his engagement and mentorship over the past eight years.

Dan Sharp patiently read early drafts of much of this dissertation. Christine Labuski, Liz Lilliot, and Nick Copeland likewise gave me helpful comments and support along the way. Shannon Speed, Kamran Ali, and John Hartigan all helped me beyond the call of duty. Aldo Lauria-Santiago shared his energetic passion for the history of El Salvador's rural poor with me, and sent me after some absolutely fascinating wild geese. James and Judy Brow have been wonderful friends and supporters. I thank my family: Judith, Anna, Warren, and Chad Peterson, Manuel Vásquez, and Bernard and Wanda Williamson. To Anna Peterson in particular, I am grateful for years of support and guidance from a sister and scholar. Finally, I thank Catherine Rose Williamson, who has endured this dissertation with love and patience and guided me through it with wit and affection.

Unsettled Remains: Race, Trauma, and Nationalism in Millennial El Salvador

Publication No. _____

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2005

Supervisor: Charles R. Hale

This dissertation explores the sudden and unexpected emergence of indigenous activism in El Salvador following the 1992 peace agreement that ended 12 years of civil war. Salvadorans have long seen theirs as the most thoroughly *mestizo* or mixed-race country in Central America, an imaginary unity forged through a history of state violence. They have regarded Indians as a vanished part of the past, and the appearance of more than a dozen indigenous rights groups in a few short years has produced significant cultural and political frictions. The rise of Salvadoran indigenous identity politics is analyzed in relation to wider processes of governmental and economic transformation, with a close focus on the particular conditions in which the Indian in El Salvador has been produced as an absence, or a subject of loss. Rather than ask whether there are “authentic” Indians in El Salvador, this essay addresses what is felt as lost in national discourses of the vanished Indian, and by whom. This ethnography shows that while many of the people indigenous activists regard as Indians today reject indigenous identity, they also experience forms of oppression that cannot be fully addressed without

recourse to concepts of race and racism. The Salvadoran case points to new possibilities for an antiracist politics that challenges the limits imposed by prevailing models of multiculturalism, at the same time it highlights the risks those models pose to historically marginalized peoples. Drawing on theoretical innovations from feminist, postcolonial, and psychoanalytic cultural theory, this work contributes to the ethnography of Central America as well as theories of nationalism, race, and identity politics.

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Introduction: Unsettled Remains

In January 2003 a rumor circulated through Tacuba, a small, rural municipality in western El Salvador. Workers renovating the town plaza had found human bones in their excavation. The news that human remains turned up where they probably should not have been might easily be taken as unremarkable in El Salvador today. After the twelve-year war in which something approaching 100,000 people were killed in a country about the size of Massachusetts, the dead are all over the place. Neither has the post-war period been especially peaceful: kidnappings, domestic violence, robbers armed with M-16s, are routine in El Salvador today.²

Nevertheless, the rumor of bones in the plaza in Tacuba grabbed my attention for two reasons. First, everyone who heard the rumor immediately assumed that the bones in the plaza must be the remains of those killed in 1932, when the army massacred 10,000 poor rural folk in western El Salvador in response to a short-lived rebellion. Second, the bones vanished almost as soon as they appeared. By the time the mayor heard the rumor and arrived from two doors down to investigate, no bones were evident. Some workers claimed none had been found, while others said they must have been animal bones, or perhaps sticks. Work on the plaza was not interrupted.

The uncertain, ephemeral remains unearthed in the excavation of the plaza provide an apt image for the recently re-discovered figure of the Indian in El Salvador. The 1932 massacre, known simply as “la matanza,” appears in national narratives as the Indian’s last moment, the episode that finally pushed Indians out of existence. Indian survivors of the massacre allegedly abandoned every practice, custom, or marker that could identify them as indigenous, and so ceased to be Indian altogether. The massacre

² Ellen Moodie in Zilberg (2003)

stands in retrospect as the point at which El Salvador became a fully mestizo, modern, nation. El Salvador's modern "myth of mestizaje" (Gould 1998) is founded on this moment, which constituted the Salvadoran Indian as a necessary absence, a subject of loss.

The emergence in the early 1990s of multiple organizations dedicated to indigenous rights and cultural activism posed a direct challenge to this myth, asserting Indianness and Indians as concrete subjects of the present. To borrow the language of Latin American revolutionaries: *El indio, ¡presente!* Yet activists are dogged by a central challenge of their own: Many, perhaps most, of the people whom they represent as their political base—as Indians—do not recognize themselves as such. People in places like Tacuba insist that they aren't Indians, but *campesinos*, and at times, that they are *mestizos*. This leaves activists struggling to define the meaning of Salvadoran Indianness and to determine who is, and who is not, an Indian. It also provides ample ammunition for skeptics who doubt whether racism is a significant issue in El Salvador if so few people identify as indigenous.

Divergent positions emerge in response to the apparent paradox of indigenous identity in El Salvador. One understands the myth of *mestizaje* as historically accurate: Indians have disappeared, or declined in numbers to endure only in isolated, remnant populations. A second position challenges this view, asserting that although Indians abandoned the outward markers of their cultural identities after 1932, they secretly maintained a distinctively indigenous worldview and continued to practice indigenous traditions and religion. Another position supporting the presence of Indians argues that

tens of thousands of people in the occidente who today call themselves campesinos do so because they have been deceived as to their true identities.

I contend that none of these positions can adequately address the complex, haunted, racial space of modern El Salvador. Committed to a doggedly realist vision of lo indio, each reproduces a key element in the myth of mestizaje: that in the absence of a positively identified racial other, mestizaje is a racially neutral social field. In order to disrupt the claimed racial neutrality of mestizaje, I step outside the realist framework of these assumptions. My dissertation follows two strategic lines of inquiry. The first addresses the Salvadoran myth of mestizaje. How has the Indian been constituted as an absence? What is felt to have been lost, and by whom? If loss is the central trope in dominant narratives of Salvadoran Indianness, the second line of investigation running through this dissertation asks simply, what remains?

I track these questions through three sites. In the rural cantones or townships of Tacuba I explore historical memories of the 1932 massacre. I also look at forms of political practice and subjectivity among the generation of campesino or peasant activists who came of age during the revolutionary mobilization of the 1970s and 1980s, and who are the children or grandchildren of the generation that suffered in 1932.

The second key location for this study is with indigenous activists, most of them with headquarters in the capital city of San Salvador. I examine the formation of the activist movement and the ways activists negotiate and struggle with the paradox of indigenous identity in El Salvador. I also address the place of the state in the praxis of indigenous rights politics.

The third site through which this dissertation traces the politics of race and nationalism in contemporary El Salvador is the mestizo national imaginary, the immaterial but powerful realm through which images and ideas about Indianness,

mestizaje, and Salvadoran identity circulate. (I elaborate on the concept of the mestizo imaginary below.) Through these three sites I address Indianness not simply as absent, but as an absent presence, as unsettled remains that appear unexpectedly, out of place, only to disappear again from view. I explore the production of this absence and its effects on the political practices and possibilities engaged in by people in Tacuba, as well as the particular complications and predicaments of indigenous activism in El Salvador. The story of the unsettled remains of the Salvadoran experiences of race, nationalism, and violence I tell in this dissertation contributes to the ethnography of Latin American mestizaje, the study of social movements, and theoretical approaches to identity politics.

OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS

Chapter One describes the historical and geographical context of this research: El Salvador as a national and historical space, and the *occidente* and Tacuba within that space. It also locates this dissertation within a broader theoretical terrain whose key coordinates are *mestizaje*, identity politics, and neoliberalism. Together, these two sections provide the frame for the stories I tell in the subsequent chapters.

Those five subsequent chapters are organized in relation to two historical moments: the violence of 1932 known as *la matanza*, and the end of El Salvador's civil war in 1992. The first of these moments announces the Indian's disappearance, while the second sees the return of the Indian. I address *la matanza* as national myth history to make two arguments in Chapter Two. First, I argue that the Indian that was mobilized in the rebellion and the subsequent massacre was the Indian that resides in the fearful fantasies of the elite planters who, for most of the twentieth century, were a key part of the agrarian oligarchy that decisively influenced the course of Salvadoran government. This approach turns the question of the importance of race in the rebellion and massacre

away from the identities of the rebels to look instead at the importance of racial ideology in shaping conflicts within the *mestizo* social field. Second, I argue that the appropriation of Indianness by elite fantasies, and the real violence those fantasies supported, was crucial to the discursive displacement of Indians that retrospectively came to be read as disappearance.

Chapter Three turns to the legacies of the massacre in Tacuba. I argue that one of the chief effects of *la matanza* was to instantiate the state as what Begoña Aretxaga (2000) describes as a “ghostly totality.” Within this totality, the rural poor of Tacuba developed an aesthetic of suspicion and secrecy. In the late 1960s and 1970s, when people began to participate in political work with unions, the progressive Catholic church, and the FMLN, they did so secretly, often keeping their activities from their immediate families as well as their neighbors. The strategy of living a clandestine life was referred to within the FMLN as *doble cara*, literally a double face. Chapter Three explores the complexity of living *doble cara* and the conflicting attachments and contradictory subjectivities it engendered.

Chapter Four bridges the two moments that bracket the dissertation as a whole, the 1930s and the 1990s. In it I describe the ways what I have called here a phantasmatic racism runs through peasant politics in the the 1970s and 1990s. I argue that even in the absence of positive or recognized categories of racial difference, logics of race run through and energize social conflicts. This provides an appraisal of rural politics that does not settle on either term of a binary distinction between class politics and identity politics. It points instead to the work of racism in domination, and the challenges to race that run through subaltern politics, in the mestizo field that asserts the absence of racial difference.

Chapters Five and Six explore the post-civil war return of the Indian. Chapter Five analyzes the emergence of indigenous politics in relation to recent theories of neoliberalism and transnational governmentality. In it I describe how indigenous activists today contend with the figure of the Indian that has been produced by elite fantasies. I argue that the institutions of transnational indigenous rights activism incite activists to work within a conceptual and political frame delimited by the myths and interests of the dominant *mestizo* understandings of Indianness. I suggest that rather than the orderly forms of discipline and regulation that theorists of neoliberal governmentality anticipate, a messier but no less disabling picture emerges that closely resembles what James Ferguson (1994) describes as “anti-politics.”

Chapter Six analyzes the relationship between the end of the civil war and the emergence of indigenous rights. I argue that the indigenous movement is animated in large part by an attachment to the revolutionary dream of the 1980s. In neoliberal El Salvador the means by which peace was achieved, the negotiated settlement in which neither side conclusively won and the root causes of the war remained unaddressed, there is effectively no space in which to articulate the utopian vision of the popular revolutionary movement. Or, perhaps more accurately, articulations of that vision find no purchase in public discourse. In this context the revolutionary dream returns as an unspoken, and at times actively silenced component in the indigenous movement. It is here that I find the particular promise of indigenous activism in El Salvador.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This dissertation is based on fifteen months of research conducted between October of 2001 and January of 2003. I arrived in El Salvador with a contact in Tacuba, an agroecologist named Ernesto Méndez who was conducting his own fieldwork with

small-scale coffee farmers on the ways they managed the forest cover within which they planted their coffee. (I describe my first visit to El Salvador, in 1992, later in this dissertation.) Tacuba seemed an appropriate research site for two reasons. At the beginning of my fieldwork, I imagined that I would be studying not only indigenous political activism but environmentalism, to look at the effects of each of these new discourse of rural peoples and spaces. Tacuba sits on edge of El Salvador's largest National Park, *El Imposible*, and the establishment and administration of the park has provoked protests by small, rural communities including those with whom Ernesto was working. As things turned out, the research on environmentalism never made it into this dissertation. The issues of identity politics and neoliberalism, and the historical questions about race and violence, consumed my research instead, leaving the questions of environmentalism and agrarian transformation for a later research project.

Tacuba also struck me as an appropriate research site because it is regarded as a thoroughly indigenous zone by activists in San Salvador, at least in their public documents, and because it was a major site of the rebellion of 1932 and the horrible violence that followed in the rebellion's wake. In Tacuba, I theorized, I would encounter the subject of the new indigenous movement, and so I did. These same people, most of them small-scale (or peasant) coffee farmers and their families, assured me that they were not, in fact Indians, and that there actually were no Indians in Tacuba. They also told me that the civil war had simply not happened in the west. Uncovering exactly what this meant presented me with a sense of Tacuba as an enormous onion, constantly revealing new layers, each of which bore patterns of the layers above it and below it while establishing shapes of their own. The results of this process led me to do more historical work and more theoretical work than I imagined I would undertake. It is the case, I think,

that this dissertation is better described as an ethnographic venture rather than a traditional ethnography.

In Tacuba I lived in a house at the southern edge of town, near the dirt roads that snake through the forests and up the mountains into the *cafetales* (coffee plantations) and *cantones*. I was lucky to have had introductions from Ernesto to the three coffee cooperatives with which he worked. I presented my research plan to each of the three cooperatives, and asked permission to spend time with them and in their communities. The members of the cooperative that I call here *El Armonía* who were the least receptive to my presence (and who, I now realize, took the greatest joy in the Salvadoran pastime of *fregandome*, giving me a hard time), were to be the people with whom I spent the most time and developed the deepest friendships, along with the Rosales family of the *cantón*³ El Sincuyo. My data collection in Tacuba focused on recording narratives of particular events, like the founding of the cooperative *El Armonía* I describe in Chapter Four, or the recollections of survivors of *la matanza*. Much of the material that would prove most provocative or insightful later arose in everyday conversations, as I sat in the shade of someone's patio in the afternoon, when work in the *finca* had ended. I also attended meetings of the cooperatives, and traveled with *cooperativistas* on business to San Salvador and Ahuachapán. I worked with Ernesto to put the *cooperatives* in touch with projects that might be helpful for them or their communities, and with national and regional indigenous and peasant organizations. I eventually came to serve as the unofficial liaison between *cooperativistas* in Tacuba and CCNIS, the umbrella organization of indigenous groups headquartered in San Salvador. (CCNIS is the *Consejo*

³ A *cantón* is a unit of political geography akin to a township, perhaps, in the United States. Other units discussed in this dissertation include departments (*departamentos*), analogous to states, municipalities (*municipios*), akin to counties and the level immediately above cantones, and *caseríos*, which might be called villages or hamlets in the US.

Coordinador Nacional Indígena Salvadoreña, the Salvadoran National Indigenous Coordinating Council.) This relationship, which was established before I arrived in Tacuba, was the beginning of CCNIS's organizing effort in Tacuba, and when I last visited Tacuba, in early 2004, CCNIS's organizing in the area appeared to be gaining strength. It may well be the case that the rejection of indigenous as a category of identification in Tacuba declines in coming years, a possibility that highlights the fact that the present I describe in Tacuba is in fact a historically bounded moment, as are the other moments I portray, like the period of the massacre in 1932 and the revolutionary mobilization of the 1970s.

The same is, of course, true for my portrayal of Salvadoran indigenous activists, whose movement is quite new and tremendously dynamic. In its first decade, organizations appeared and vanished at a remarkable rate, and personnel, acronyms, and missions changed quickly as well. More recently the indigenous movement appears to have settled in a bit, but it is still a "young" movement, and to judge it by its achievements at this point would be unfair. Salvadoran activists negotiate very challenging terrain, and as I describe in the chapters ahead, it is in the paths that appear in this process that I find cause for both theoretical and political optimism, even if it is somewhat timid.

It was difficult for me to establish a relationship of trust with activists. I focused my work on CCNIS because it is the largest indigenous activists body in the country, bringing together from eight to fifteen different regional and community-based groups, who work together as a coalition in which each organization maintains a fairly high degree of independence. Although I did not know it when I began my research, it turned out that the Santa Ana-based organization that had taken on the task of organizing in Tacuba was a member of CCNIS. In the first months of my research, I regularly visited

CCNIS, where I often waited an hour or more to see the person I'd come to visit. More than once I arrived for an appointment to find that no one was in the office.

In time I was welcomed in the office, however, and I developed close ties with several of the office regulars, including Amadeo Martínez, who is described in Chapter Six. I sat in on meetings of the CCNIS directorate, the *mesa* that brought together the heads of all the member organizations to make decisions through consensus. I joined their meetings with donors and with the state's Department of Indigenous Affairs. As I note above, I eventually came to serve as a conduit for communication between Tacuba and CCNIS, as the latter's organizing efforts in Tacuba began to take hold. These experiences, along with interviews with Amadeo and several other organizational leaders, helped me appreciate the enormous complexity of the tasks CCNIS takes on, and the sacrifices activists make in order to pursue their work. My feeling of commitment and solidarity with the activists of CCNIS pushed me to understand the possibilities their project opens, and to formulate the argument I put forward in Chapter Six. These same feelings of solidarity left me feeling uneasy about the critique I make in Chapter Five. I feel strongly, however, that to pose that critique opens possibilities for an important dialogue on the risks inherent in seeking to define an authentic subject of indigenous politics. Chief among these risks is to reproduce an understanding of Indianness that excludes those subaltern peoples whose lives have been shaped dramatically by the racial ideologies and racist practices of elite *mestizaje*. It is my commitment to those people in Tacuba that drives me to extend the critique I present in Chapter Five.

Much of the analysis in this dissertation is grounded in an anti-realist epistemology, a mode of interpretation that questions the production of historical and political certainty as power-laden moves in themselves. This approach is indebted to psychoanalytic thinking about subjectivity and consciousness, as well as critiques of

essentialism like Edward Said's challenge to what he calls philosophical realism. I argue the advantages of this position throughout the chapters that follow. There are disadvantages with this approach, as well, however. One of these seems to me particularly important, resonating with the political questions that guide the larger project. The mode of critique and analysis I employ here does not lend itself easily to dialogue with realist academic work. This is a problem when the political imperatives of the two kinds of project might be complementary or convergent, for the anti-realist approach undermines the kinds of knowledge that other scholarship creates. The tension implicit in what I label here a disadvantage of my approach appears at various points throughout this dissertation, hinting at a kind of doubleness or *doble cara* in the work itself. In the present work, I am unable to address this question beyond noting it and posing it as a challenge for future work. I leave this project, though, with a sense that the goals for this work as I pursue it will be to bring these two divergent and often contradictory modes of social analysis more explicitly into dialogue with one another, with an eye to the possible forms of cultural and political practice this work might support.

In this dissertation I try not to present Tacuba as though it is representative of something called Indianness in all of El Salvador. I may not always succeed, and so it is worth making the point here. There are a handful of indigenous communities in the central and eastern parts of the country whose historical experiences are different from those of communities in the *occidente*. What I describe here may bear no resemblance to the situations of towns like Cacaopera or Guatajiagua in Morazán. There are also communities in the *occidente* in which significant portions of the population actively identify themselves as Indian. These are often cited in the literature on indigenous culture in El Salvador (Chapin 1990; Marroquín 1975; Montes 1987, 1988), and will appear as

exceptions to generalizations I make at several points in the argument. Panchimalco, Izalco, Nahuizalco, Santo Domingo de Guzmán, Sonzacate, and San Pedro Puxtla all bear mention. Still, in the *occidente*, it is also the case that even in these communities Indianness is more uncertain and ambiguous than those who argue that there is a large and distinctive indigenous population in El Salvador suggest. My project in this dissertation is to address that ambiguity as an artifact of racial processes, and not simply evidence of the decline or disappearance of racialization. I have tried to turn the question away from where the Indians *really* are to the operations of *mestizaje* as a racial field. I believe that this approach can contribute to both political and analytical strategies that address the complexities of who people say they are, and how they live that out, and do not simply focus on the ways either categories or people do not quite fit.

Chapter One: Production and the Spaces of Salvadoran Nationalism

The drive from San Salvador, El Salvador's capital city of 1.7 million⁴, to Tacuba on the western border with Guatemala, is a lesson in Salvadoran history. Leaving San Salvador, one passes first through Santa Tecla, or Nueva San Salvador. Santa Tecla was once a city of its own, home to the planters who reaped coffee from the plantations in the surrounding hills in the late 19th century. Before the coffee boom Santa Tecla was the center of indigo production, and it was also central to the balsam trade that created wealth in El Salvador from colonial times to the beginning of the 20th century. Over the last few decades San Salvador has spread westward up the hills so that today Santa Tecla is home to some of the capital city's newest housing developments. One of these became tragically famous on January 13, 2001, when the first of two major earthquakes shook the country. Tons of earth from the hills above Santa Tecla broke free and slid downwards. Residents in the working class neighborhood at the foot of the hill had repeatedly complained to government officials that the construction of luxury housing on the side of the volcano above their homes was reckless and poorly engineered, putting their homes at risk. They were proven to have been prophetically correct: hundreds of residents died in the first earthquake and the subsequent slides.

Once out of Santa Tecla and through the recently rebuilt road cut that was obliterated in the quake, one passes the *maquiladoras*, large, foreign-owned factories in neat compounds set back from the roads. At shift change time the myriad bamboo and tin shacks by the road come to life, selling tortillas, mango slices, soda in plastic bags, and lottery tickets. Shortly past the *zona franca* of the *maquilas* lies the base of the Army's Mechanized Cavalry division, which sent its troops north and east during the war. The

⁴ This is the US Department of State projection for July, 2005. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2033.htm>

entrance is decorated with a tank and artillery as well as guardhouses ringed with sandbags. Later the road goes by Izalco, then the turn off to Nahuizalco, and through the departmental capital of Sonsonate. Sugar and again, coffee, have been the dominant crops through this region. From the highway the sugar cane around Izalco blankets the fields, overseen by the smokestacks of the refinery of the powerful Regalado-Dueñas family. The mountains above are striated by the deep green lines of wind breaks, borders of trees closely planted to protect the coffee plants from the gusting north wind that typically blows in November and December, as the berries weigh the branches before harvest.

Also from the highway one can see large mounds punctuating the plains between Sonsonate and Santa Ana. These are probably the remnants of pre-Columbian sites of human settlement or temples. Only a handful of dozens, perhaps hundreds, of such sites in El Salvador have been excavated, the most famous of which are San Andrés and Joyas de Cerén. The latter was preserved by the volcanic eruption that killed its inhabitants like Pompeii. Archeologists know relatively little about the early settlers of the territory of El Salvador. The ancestors of the people the Spaniards encountered in the 16th century, labeled *Nahua-Pipiles* by archeologists, appear to have arrived to the region from what is today central Mexico between CE 900- 1300.⁵ Funding for research is scarce today, although interest in the tourist potential of archeological sites has grown since the end of the civil war⁶. Joyas de Cerén is a popular tourist destination, attracting Salvadorans from the cities as well as visiting Salvadoran expatriates, most of whom have settled in the United States.

Beyond Santa Ana the road for Ahuachapán branches off to a long, straight , stretch of highway shadowed by the Guatemalan volcano *Cerro Chingo*, eventually

⁵ Fowler, Cultural Evolution of Ancient Nahua Civilizations

⁶ Cite the somewhat confused “Mundo Maya” campaign.

forking again to present drivers with a choice between the Guatemalan border or Ahuachapán. Once on the left fork, twenty minutes or so of climbing, winding road leads to the city of Ahuachapán, signaled first by roadside auto shops, then by the sign for “Biggest,” El Salvador’s national fast-food hamburger chain. Despite this greeting, Ahuachapán appears to have changed little in the past three hundred years. The town square fronts the massive colonial church, recently renovated and painted glistening white, and throughout the center of the city the buildings proclaim their origins in earlier centuries. Cobbled streets and high sidewalks trace an orderly grid beneath the Army barracks, high on a hill on the east end of town. Ahuachapán is densely populated, its 326,000 inhabitants staying primarily in the city or the cantones immediately surrounding it. The city’s colonial appearance belies its experience of modern urban difficulties. As in other Salvadoran cities, homicide rates and other crime statistics (notably, drug trafficking and kidnapping) have risen significantly in the last decade. The sight of teenagers with heavily tattooed faces, almost always a sign of gang membership, reminds visitors that Ahuachapán has experienced the worst of recent changes in Salvadoran society, even as it has not reaped much of the best.

Still, a mid-morning trip through the city suggests the setting of García Márquez’s *Love in the Time of Cholera* rather than *News of a Kidnapping*. Shopkeepers sweep sections of sidewalk and erect display stands in front of their shops, while women in *comedores*, lunchtime cafés, laugh as they make tortillas. Wild looking dogs, ubiquitous in Central America, trot quickly down the streets as though late for a meeting. Old men sit on the benches ringing the bandstand at the center of the plaza, where they can watch the comings and goings at City Hall and the offices of Telecom, the phone company. From the plaza, one can also see the regular buses and occasional cars that head towards Tacuba on the road out of town, running downhill from the southern side of the plaza and

into the dense green hills covered in citrus, corn, and above all – literally and symbolically – coffee.

“THE GOLDEN BEAN”

Coffee has shaped El Salvador’s modern landscapes both social and geographical. The crop was introduced in the early 19th century, with records showing exports beginning in 1825, only four years after the establishment of the Central American Republic, independent of Spanish rule.⁷ By the time the winds of independence began to blow full-force across Central and South America in the second decade of the 1800s, El Salvador was firmly committed to the production of indigo for international markets, in which activity it far outdistanced its Central American neighbors. Indigo is cultivated on extensive areas of cleared land in a shifting pattern every three years or so, and the rise in its economic importance was attended by rising encroachment on indigenous communal lands (Browning 1971:71-77). By the middle of the 19th century the development of chemical dyes that greatly reduced indigo’s value renewed concerns over the country’s nearly complete dependence on a single crop and international markets (which had been expressed regularly for more than a century by then), prompting efforts to encourage diversification of crops. This effort foundered on the success of one among the proposed new crops: once coffee took hold, any thoughts of diversification or efforts to avoid reliance on monoculture were abandoned. Economically, coffee effectively took indigo’s place beginning in the 1870s.

David Browning’s 1971 *El Salvador: Landscape and Society* has long been the authoritative source on Salvadoran social geography. Narrating the emergence of coffee

⁷ El Salvador’s nationhood came in 1839 when the Central American Federation fell apart.

and the displacement of indigo, Browning identifies four fundamental areas difference between indigo and coffee cultivation that reshaped El Salvador's social and physical landscapes: "the different ways the two plants were introduced; the different methods of cultivation involved; the different labor requirements; and the different locations of the two crops" (1971:166). Where indigo was introduced gradually and expanded with a relatively slow-growing world market, coffee was introduced suddenly and so made sudden demands on land use patterns, tenure systems, and infrastructure. Roads, railways, and ports were built quickly, and the shade trees that constitute El Salvador's primary forest cover today took over the hills of the *occidente*.

Browning argues that coffee cultivation strained existing social relations of production. "The very speed and scale of the development of commercial coffee production meant that the intricate relationship between commercial and subsistence agriculture, that had been tolerated over previous centuries, was now brought abruptly into focus and examined" (1971:166). According to Browning, coffee disrupted existing structures of agrarian organization in several ways. Where indigo was produced in shifting cultivation, coffee plantations were permanent; where indigo grew in a wide variety of terrains, coffee required altitude (700-800 meters and higher). Where small-scale farmers could produce indigo, coffee demanded greater resources than they could muster and so contributed greatly to the creation and ascendance of the oligarchy that would dominate the country's 20th century.

Published regularly since the late 1970s in Spanish as *El Salvador: Tierra y Hombre* (1998), Browning's book has been a primary source of historical knowledge both within and without El Salvador, and the story Browning tells of the intertwined rise of coffee and a landowning elite that owned the vast majority of the country's productive land was especially influential among foreign supporters of the opposition in the 1970s

and 1980s. Aldo Lauria-Santiago (1999) has recently argued that Browning overstates the homogenizing and wealth-concentrating effects of the introduction of coffee production. Lauria-Santiago shows that while the growth in coffee cultivation certainly created a new economic elite, it also benefited “countless peasants, farmers, and merchants” (Lauria-Santiago 1999:132). Contrary to commonly held beliefs, Lauria-Santiago finds that large-scale plantations were rare in the early decades of Salvadoran coffee production, and that “in many areas peasant plots and modest farms predominated over larger farms and haciendas” (Lauria-Santiago 1999:133).

The first coffee farms were in fact established on *ejidal* or Indian communal lands in a few western towns, including Izalco. The privatization of those lands following the decree abolishing *ejidal* and communal land of 1881, while a hardship for many, especially in the indigenous communities, was not the bloody land grab that is typically narrated in the literature. Lauria-Santiago makes two crucial points regarding the abolition of communal lands. First, he argues against the standard thesis that violence against indigenous and peasant communities during the period of privatization is the main reason for the absence peasant and Indian revolts after the 1890s. Instead, Lauria-Santiago asserts that the linked decline of communal institutions and the consolidation of a landowning peasantry are the root causes of the relative absence of rural revolts before 1932 (1999:220). Second, he asserts that rather than result in a uniform decline in the solidarity and durability of indigenous communities and institutions, the abolition of communal and *ejidal* landholdings had uneven effects across the indigenous communities. In communities where village-based ties were more important than indigenous identity, the abolition of the institution of communal landholding weakened what remained of a coherent indigenous identity. In other places, where indigenous identity “transcended the nineteenth-century institution” of communal land, the reforms

did not necessarily weaken indigenous identity. They did, however, transform indigenous subjectivity, producing Indianness as “a hardened oppositional identity” (1999:219)

Lauria-Santiago’s findings are an important corrective to the picture of a beaten and docile rural population in El Salvador by the end of the 19th century. On the contrary, Lauria-Santiago’s research shows that peasant and indigenous communities were important actors in contests over local and national politics. These conclusions are significant for the present study. They portray a dynamic pattern of land tenure and change in the years before the 1932 massacre that was characterized by significant geographical variations. They also point to a history of peasants’ involvement in economic and political matters that involved a much higher degree of agency and power than is typically recognized, a finding that is supported by family histories in Tacuba that extend back in time to a period before the most of the rural poor were tied to large estates as *colonos*. Furthermore, they support Lauria-Santiago’s contention that Salvadoran peasants have a long experience of episodically owning and working small plots and producing for international markets. This conclusion, which Lauria-Santiago suggests applies to peasant and Indian producers going back to the time of Spanish rule, challenges portrayals of the Salvadoran peasantry – especially in the indigenous areas – as committed to a long tradition of subsistence agriculture and a suspicion of market production. Lauria-Santiago’s findings shift the timing of the question of land concentration from the late 19th century to the middle of the 20th century, although it is clear by all accounts that by the 1960s land in the *occidente* was held by a very few property-owning families. Finally, Lauria-Santiago’s identification of the production of Indianness as an oppositional identity that became “in some respects... independent of material forces” (1999:219) is key to understanding the history of Indianness in El Salvador’s twentieth century and its return in the new millennium.

THE END OF THE AGRICULTURAL EXPORT ECONOMY

In 1976 El Salvador's military government proposed an extremely limited land reform that would redistribute less than three percent of the agricultural land. When the *Partido Demócrata Cristiano* (Christian Democratic Party) – one of the opposition parties that had pressured for the 1976 reform – joined the ruling government, land reform was undertaken in earnest. Certainly in the intervening years the importance of responding to growing rural opposition and political mobilization had become clear to the government and the oligarchy, although as a measure to defuse revolutionary mobilization the agrarian reforms were, of course, a failure.

The reforms were to be implemented in three phases, although the second phase, which would have addressed landholdings of 100 to 500 hectares in area and affected 25 percent of agricultural land, roused such opposition among landed elites (particularly in the coffee sector) that it was delayed and ultimately never undertaken. In the first phase properties 500 hectares and larger were expropriated and turned over as cooperatives (to have at least 25 members) to the estate's permanent workers. Three hundred twenty-nine cooperatives were formed, benefiting 35,000 families. The Institute for Agrarian Transformation supervised this phase of the reforms and provided credit, technical assistance and training, and supplies. Wim Pelupessy observes that "the high degree of state control made the cooperatives comparable to state farms" (Pelupessy 1997). The military coordinated and supervised the establishment of the cooperatives. Pelupessy reports that with the establishment of the reform-sector cooperatives, members or supporters of independent peasant unions on the estates to be cooperativized were "arrested, murdered, or expelled." The first phase of land reforms gave thousands of peasants a new kind of access to land and control over the products of their labor, but it also burdened them with significant debts, a new bureaucracy to negotiate, and the

difficulties of managing large productive entities. Independent peasant organizations opposed the reforms because of their top-down character, the role of the military and the political repression associated with the formation of the cooperatives, and the limited numbers of beneficiaries, while the leftist opposition movement that was just embarking on its war against the government dismissed the reforms as a simple effort to co-opt peasant opposition without any real change.

The second phase of the reforms under Article 207 of the agrarian code allowed small tenants to purchase land from large estates (up to seven hectares) with state financing. Tenants had to apply through the National Office for Agricultural Finance (FINANTA) and put a claim in on a particular plot, typically land they rented for *milpa* or subsistence production. If the earlier reforms were clearly designed to co-opt some sectors of the peasantry, the third phase (referred to in the countryside simply as “*Artículo 207*”) established Duarte as a hero among beneficiaries, in the *occidente*, at least to the extent that Tacuba can be considered representative. People there recall Duarte as a good man who was on the side of the poor. Mentions of his name are typically accompanied by a parenthetical “may he rest in peace.” In the heavily conflicted northern and eastern parts of the country Duarte is recalled as the leader who presided over the rise of the death squads, the militarization of the countryside, the dramatic rise in US involvement in the region, and some of the worst of the Salvadoran Army’s human rights violations in the first years of the war.

Land reforms in El Salvador, as elsewhere in Central America, marked a significant change within the agricultural export model insofar as they called for state intervention to correct presumed rural land “market failures” and highly concentrated land distribution . The multiple objectives of land reforms – more equitable distribution of resources, improvements in the functioning of rural markets diversification of crops,

reduction of the political power of a traditional elite, or the reduction of rural political opposition – all took place within the general context of an agricultural export-based economic model. As it happened, however, at the same time El Salvador undertook their first land reforms, the overall structure of its economy was beginning to shift dramatically, a shift that Salvadoran economist Alex Segovia calls the end of the agro-export model (Segovia 2002).

In 1978, traditional agricultural exports accounted for 81% of El Salvador's foreign exchange; by 2000 only 11% of foreign exchange came from agricultural exports. In 1991 "non-traditional" exports overtook traditional (agricultural) exports⁸ for the first time in the nation's history (PNUD 2003:119). According to Segovia, traditional agriculture and related activities (primarily fishing and forestry) declined from 39% of GDP (gross domestic product) in 1970 to 9.6% of GDP at the beginning of the 21st century (Segovia 2002, anexo 3). Agriculture accounted for 61% of rural employment in 1980 down to 47% of rural employment by 2000 (Kandel 2002). This decline appears more drastic when we take into account the rural-to-urban migration that has taken place in the same time period, decreasing countryside's share of total population. In the mid 1990s El Salvador's urban population outstripped the rural population for the first time in the country's history. In 2002, almost 59% of the population lived in cities (Kandel 2002).

The general downward trend in the agrarian economy turned into a freefall after 1997, when international coffee prices began to dive. The international market paid an average of USD 133.91 per quintal, or 100lbs of coffee. By 1999 the price had dropped to

⁸ Traditional exports are agricultural products, primarily coffee. Feldgling efforts to export non-traditional agricultural products including honey, broccoli, watermelons, and balsam, have had little effect: more than 90% of the non-traditional exports between 1990 and 2002 were manufactured (ie *maquiladora*-produced) goods (PNUD IDH 119).

85.72/qq; in 2001 the price bottomed out at 45.60/qq, rising only two dollars in 2002 (Rivera Magaña 2003:47). The worldwide decline in coffee prices hit El Salvador's rural poor especially hard because Salvadoran coffee production remains highly labor intensive. While major coffee producing nations like Costa Rica and Colombia invested heavily in new technologies in the 1970s, the war in El Salvador discouraged capital investment. El Salvador's coffee is shade-grown, meaning that the varieties of coffee planted there require a leafy canopy overhead to filter sunlight. Much of Costa Rican and Brazilian coffee, by contrast, comes from newer varieties that do not require shade. For anyone accustomed to coffee plantations in El Salvador, highland Guatemala, or the mountains of southern Mexico, the sight of rows of uniformly tall coffee plants standing alone in a Costa Rican field is bizarre. Although shade-grown coffee is lauded for its ecological benefits, and many argue that the best quality coffee varieties can only be grown under shade, the advantages of the newer, sun-tolerant varieties to growers are clear for large-scale growers. Flat plantations uncluttered by forest require far less labor to tend and harvest, and machines can do much of the labor that formerly required human hands. (For small-scale producers like those I describe in this thesis, in contrast, shade-grown coffee has the advantages of having lower capital costs after start-up and of providing ancillary benefits of the shade forest, including firewood and building timber, fruits and medicinal plants, and game, although virtually all game species in El Salvador are endangered and protected. See Méndez (cite Neto)).

In places like Tacuba, where the coffee harvest is the main economic activity, the human costs of the crash in coffee prices is higher than in places where a shift away from human labor in coffee production has taken place gradually during the past two decades. A 2002 survey by the Salvadoran National Fund for Development (FUNDE) found that 47% of the children in rural parts of Tacuba were malnourished, slightly more than the

average across a sample of seven rural coffee growing *municipios*. In 2002, Tacuba was one of the three poorest municipalities in the country (find cite), a dramatic change from the decades of the 1970s and 1980s when the coffee regions of the west had relatively stable employment and the poorest rural Salvadorans were found in the northern and eastern departments of Chalatenango, Usulután, Cabañas, and Morazán. As the 21st century got underway, children were dying of malnutrition in the rural parts of the *occidente*. In Tacuba, older people told me that this was the first time in their lives they could recall anyone actually dying of hunger.

GLOBALIZATION

The diminishing importance of agricultural exports in Central America is part and parcel of economic globalization, which William Robinson characterizes as the shift from a “world economy” in which goods and services were traded by nations on a global scale to a “global economy.” Transnational integration of economic process has disconnected production from specifically national spaces that were connected through an international (world) system. Global capital, writes Robinson, has dismantled national production systems and seen “their reactivation as constituent elements of an integral world production system” (Robinson 2003:16) so that “transnational or global space is coming to supplant national space (Robinson 2003:16). Economic globalization, in Robinson’s conceptualization, must be understood then as one aspect – both an effect of and a necessary condition for – neoliberalism.

I use the word “neoliberalism” here to signal the ideologies – cultural, political, economic, etc. – attending the multiple transformations of patterns of accumulation, production, and consumption at transnational levels that have transformed the world in the last three decades. In Latin America, neoliberalism has a specific genealogy dating to

the US-backed overthrow of Salvador Allende in Chile in 1973 and the subsequent dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. The ideas of a handful of economists associated with the University of Chicago, including most famously Milton Friedman, underwrote the radical transformation of not only Chile's economy but its society as well. Neoliberalism's discourse is characterized by an ideological insistence on the power of the market to solve social problems that would earlier have been the purview of state intervention. Free markets, unrestricted mobility of capital and labor, reduced state responsibility for social welfare provision, all woven together with the language of responsibility, growth, and the individual, are the hallmarks of neoliberalism.

One feature of Latin American neoliberalism has been the reversal or abandonment of agrarian reform measures of the 1970s and 1980s, aptly labeled by Deere and León (Deere and León de Leal 1997) as a counter-reform. In El Salvador in 1991 the government began to dismantle the reforms of the 1980s by enabling reform sector cooperatives to sell and to rent collective land. In the years since, much of the land distributed to cooperatives under the 1980 agrarian reform has been privatized or parcelized and rented; in the first three years of the new system 28,428 land titles were distributed on 417 cooperatives (Deere and León 164.) The succession of national governments of the right-wing Nationalist Republican Alliance Party (ARENA), which has ruled the country since 1989, has privatized banking, telecommunications, public pensions, and utilities. They have embraced neoliberal principals and lowered import tariffs, eliminated most price controls and supports, and invested in "free trade zones" as incentives to foreign direct investment (Towers and Borzutzky 2004:30). The effects of these policies are evident in the rapid increase of *maquiladoras*, assembly plants mostly dedicated to garment production. El Salvador's manufacturing exports have soared in this period, and today the country's exports to the US – primarily products from the *maquilas*

total more than 1.6 billion dollars. Still, the country imports total nearly 3 billion dollars, leaving a large deficit.

Access to dollars for El Salvador comes not from exports, but from remittances, the money Salvadorans in the US send home to their families. *Remesas* or remittances in 2001 totaled almost 2 billion dollars, or 15% of the GDP. As many as 2.5 million Salvadorans live outside of El Salvador; between 1.5 and 2 million of those people are in the US, a number equivalent to a quarter or more of the number of Salvadorans in El Salvador (Towers and Borzutzky 2004:31).

The department of La Unión in the southeast has the highest rate of migration, with 33% of its residents living outside of the country at any given time. Cabañas and Morazán each send roughly on-quarter of their residents out of El Salvador, and no department has a migration rate of less than 13% (Kandel 2002:6). For reasons that are not entirely clear, the *occidente* generally and the far-western municipalities like Tacuba and Apaneca in particular have seen less migration to the US than other parts of the country, and as a result see far less income from *remesas*. Ahuachapán and Sonsonate have the lowest percentages of households receiving remittances, at 14% and 13% respectively, compared with 41% in La Unión, 30% in Morazán, and 21% in Santa Ana, for example (Kandel 2002:10). One reason for the low levels of migration from Sonsonate and Ahuachapán may be that until recently people could count on coffee to provide a living, even if a meager one, whereas economic conditions in the former conflict zones have been miserable for decades.

TACUBA

When I first arrived in Tacuba in November of 2001, the damage from the January 13 earthquake was evident everywhere, even after ten months of rebuilding. Hot

and dusty at the beginning of the dry season, Tacuba called to mind Comala, the town in Juan Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo* that was so infernally hot that "those that there died, upon arriving in hell turned around for their blankets" (Rulfo 2000:66). My initial impression of Tacuba was certainly influenced by the earthquake's toll of crumbled walls and roofless homes, and perhaps even more by the trip from Ahuachapán on what I would learn was an infamous stretch of road.

Only fourteen kilometers long, it can take between thirty minutes and an hour to travel in a four-wheel drive vehicle, depending on the time of year. The bus takes a minimum of an hour. Three kilometers on each end are paved, in a manner of speaking. The eight kilometers in the middle give the road its local infamy. Coated in a deep layer of fine, choking dust that hides a brutal minefield of potholes in the dry season, the road becomes a river of mud during the rainy season. Buses run a slow-motion slalom around obstacles and require passengers to close the windows during the dry season to keep out the clouds of dust, turning the inside of the bus into an aromatic sauna. On January 15, 2002, a bus that had just begun the paved section entering Tacuba lost its brakes descending the final valley before the climb up to Tacuba. The driver lost control, ramming the concrete barrier on the side of the bridge before launching into the *Río Guayapa* and landing upside down. Twenty-six people (including the driver) died on the spot, while two others died shortly thereafter from their injuries. Nine siblings were left orphaned and in the care of the eldest child, a fifteen year-old girl. The owner of the bus line, when charged with failing to maintain his buses, loudly complained that the road so damaged his vehicles that maintenance costs were breaking his business. Residents of Tacuba were disgusted not with the owner of the bus but with the government. According to local legend, the road appears as "paved" on the books of at least two previous municipal administrations, whose mayors and council members allegedly pocketed the

funds. Whatever the truth in those reports, the 2002 tragedy, which was national news, finally prompted the national government to heed longstanding requests to pave the road. When I left in early 2003 survey work had begun, and it has finally been paved.

From the bridge where the bus crashed the road turns upwards a final time as it enters Tacuba. After a sharp S-curve, one sees the first glimpses of Tacuba: a series of signs proclaiming the various development projects undertaken in the municipality and the agencies sponsoring them; and the bright blue and yellow headstones and crypts of the town cemetery. Once beyond the final curve, the main road through town runs a straight line to pass the town plaza, the Catholic church (the “new” one; the ruins of the Colonial-era church are behind the plaza), the town hall, and the tiny open air market that appears a couple of times a week. At the opposite end of town lies the lone health clinic in this *municipio* of nearly 24,000 people.⁹ From the clinic the road through town – mostly cobbled, in places paved – reverts to dirt and heads through the southern *cantones* of Las Colinas and El Sincuyo, the rural areas inhabited by the small-scale coffee farmers, typically called peasants, who comprise a central focus of this dissertation.

MONUMENTS TO ABSENCE

The signs announcing the presence of various development efforts and are fitting emblems for Tacuba – predictable, now ubiquitous in rural Central America, but fitting nonetheless. The signs mark Tacuba as a space of underdevelopment, defined by its failures, inevitably wanting. “Development projects” abound in Tacuba. During my time there these included various projects to build housing to make up for earthquake damage, funding for basic services infrastructure in the town of Tacuba proper, funding for primary education, and support for rural health providers. Like the placards that greet all

⁹ *Censo hecho por la Unidad de Salud, Tacuba: 2001*

upon arrival in Tacuba, the blue and white tarpaulin relief houses, the neighborhood built by Spain's international development agency, and the offices of CARE international in town all stand as monuments signaling the absence of times of relative prosperity and security, imagined by many and, perhaps, even remembered by some. In the place of this long-lost image of stability people in the countryside live in the midst of what they call *la crisis*. At times "the crisis" refers to specific difficulties like the fall of coffee prices; more often it designates a general state of being of the nation, a period of history understood as anomalous despite its longevity and generalized character.

In the *cantones* of Tacuba development initiatives are called simply *proyectos*, projects, perhaps unintentionally but certainly accurately capturing the hollowness of the concept of "development" as it emerges in practice. People in Tacuba talk of the 2001 earthquake as a boon: "what we need here in Tacuba is an earthquake like that every couple of years," one Tacubense told me. The flow of basic supplies, including food, roofing tin, concrete, and lumber, as well as money, fueled local economies legitimately and illegitimately for more than a year after the quakes themselves. Increasingly, people in rural areas see *proyectos* as the only way to improve their material conditions, yet in my experience both the expectations and the possibilities address only the short-term alleviation of misery that *proyectos* can provide.

Agrarian decline has affected different parts of the country at different rates. The central and northern regions, including Morazán and Chalatenango, have thin, acidic soils that showed signs of strain by the end of the 19th century, when the coffee boom of the south and west left the poor growing regions of northern highlands behind. A 1965 newspaper article referred to these territories as *tierra olvidada*, "forgotten lands" (Browning 1971:163). These would be the most heavily conflicted zones in the civil war that lasted from 1979 through 1991, as peasants who found themselves with almost

nothing to lose took up arms to wage one of the most intense and by many measures successful revolutionary struggles in Latin America.

Since the end of the war, the *tierra olvidada* of Chalatenango and Morazán has become the chosen land for many development organizations, especially the international aid agencies of European governments. Building upon the institutional, social, and political infrastructures created during the war and the de-facto government of these zones by the FMLN (Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional, Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front) guerrilla movement, European development agencies moved into the former conflict zones relatively quickly. In contrast, development initiatives have been fewer and slower to arrive in the *occidente* (again, data!). Unlike the northern and northeastern zones of the country, the *occidente*, as the west is called, was relatively untouched by the war, at least in the sense that there was never a major battle front in the *occidente*. The FMLN was unable to rouse the support for their revolutionary program in much of the *occidente* for a variety of reasons, some of which are discussed at length in Chapter Three below. Certainly among the reasons for peasants in west not to participate in the revolution was the fact that they had relatively consistent employment and relatively high wages in the coffee economy during the 1970s and 1980s, when prices in the international market were good. Compared with the relative post-civil war prosperity and opportunities available in the former conflict zones of the north and east, the western coffee regions today could well be considered El Salvador's *tierra olvidada*.

AN ABSENT MONUMENT

If the signs announcing the presence of myriad development projects at the entrance to Tacuba stand as monuments to absence and failure, the other landmark that so well symbolizes the issues of this dissertation is itself absent, a multiple testament to loss.

In the cemetery, whose entrance is flanked by the development placards, there is a spot where, until sometime in the 1970s, an enormous ceiba tree stood. This tree is a powerful symbol in local memories. It was before this tree that the army forced local men to stand when, in January of 1932, the troops opened fire on them with a horse-drawn machine gun. Wave after wave of peasants were executed this way, their bodies dumped into a mass grave they themselves had dug. The troops had spread out across the west in response to a rebellion that overtook several key towns, including Izalco, Sonsonate, Nahuizalco, Ahuachapán, Tacuba, and Juayúa, and fincas around San Salvador and Santa Tecla. And so the drive to Tacuba is a lesson in this history as well.

Those in Tacuba old enough to recall the killing in 1932, known simply as *la matanza*, “the massacre,” say the machine gun fired all through the day and the following night, as well. Don Toribio, whose grandfather was killed in the massacre, took me to see the spot where the ceiba had stood. It was a hot, dry afternoon, and the cemetery was overgrown with weeds turned brown in the dry season. We passed a handful of brightly colored crypts, some adorned with gang graffiti, and headstones honored with plastic flowers, until we came to a slightly open space. “It was right over there,” said Toribio, pointing to a barely distinguishable mound the ceiba stood, where the men were placed before the soldiers and their wheeled machine gun. Somewhere nearby must be the mass grave the men dug for themselves before they were killed, although if it is, no one mentions it. It is an unremarkable spot today simply to see it, a slight mound into which graves have since been sunk, although there remains a vaguely circular area which, if it was covered by the ceiba’s trunk, indicates that the tree was truly enormous. This spot, this space of absence and the tree that once stood here, are central touchstones for local memories of *la matanza*. The ceiba itself is the center of local stories of Tacuba’s past, which always report the tree’s death: how the great tree, which had been in the cemetery

as long as anyone could recall, finally succumbed to the countless bullets fired in the massacre. Toribio's grandmother, Niña Meche, tells me that "the ceiba tree in the cemetery, that's how they killed it, because that's where they stood the poor men they were shooting. It was an enormous tree that was there in the cemetery and that was when they killed it, so many bullets entered it..." The tree lives now only in memory, killed by the episode that immortalized it. It is by its absence, and the manner of its demise, that the ceiba "stands" today as a powerful symbol, a trigger for social memories of violence, loss, and injustice in Tacuba.

MESTIZAJE, LOSS, AND INDIANS IN THE NATIONAL IMAGINARY

The place of the Indian in the Salvadoran nationalisms parallels that of the ceiba in Tacuba. The stories Salvadorans tell about their nation have long narrated the disappearance of Indians. They have chronicled the transformation of Indians into Salvadorans through the magic of *mestizaje*, the fantasy of blending and coupling that proclaims the birth of the new, hybrid but unique Latin American modern subject. The state violence of 1932, discussed in chapters two and three, figures in these narratives as the final moment of the Indians. After 1932, according to national myths and fantasies, the last of the Indians vanished, blending into the national collectivity through *mestizaje* or simply killed outright in the terror of the massacre. Those people and places who have continued to recognize themselves publicly as indigenous since then have typically been isolated as remnants, vestiges of a dead past or the ashes of a saint in a reliquary, or they have been isolated as folkloric symbols of the national essence, relics again but living, and so in need of protection from the nation-state. In both cases the dominant themes are those of disappearance, absence, and loss within an overall frame that incorporates indigenous culture as fundamentally national culture. María de Baratta published in 1952

a study of traditional popular dance and songs that she considered to be the heritage of “our Indians,” and which, she wrote, were still in evidence among the indigenous peoples of El Salvador of her time.

[In] the midst of all [the Indians’] misfortunes, the only thing left to them, as consolation and relief: to take refuge in the musical heritage of their ancestors, dance their dances, repeat their verses with the constant yearning to perpetuate the link of spiritual light that continues to bond them closely with the past of their race.” Baratta, *Esilizaciones Folklóricas*

Both the articulation of Indianness as a tenuous connection with a distant past and the rather pitying tone in which it is pronounced characterize one facet of the Indian’s place in Salvadoran modernity. This is the representation of Indians that takes them as gentle victims of historical inevitability, the Janus-face of the other crucial portrayal of Indians as obstacle to modernity and savage threat to the nation’s civilized, the *gente decente*. As I will show in this dissertation, these two faces of the Indian became, by the middle of the 20th century, the poles between which ideas of the Indian as a recognizable social subject oscillated in the public sphere.

Richard Adams’s *Cultural Surveys* (1957) posed the question of loss vis-à-vis Salvadoran Indians in terms of “ladinoization,” the process by which Indians are assimilated into a *ladino* population by losing those characteristics that made them Indian. “Salvadoreans (*sic*) will generally agree that there are Indians with a distinct culture still living in their country; the costumes and crafts of Panchimalco, Nahuizalco, and Izalco are obvious evidence of this,” he wrote (Adams 1957:485). “There remains a problem to be solved,” he continued, “because it is obvious that there are other communities which share in this Indian culture, although in a highly modified degree. They are much more ladinoized than are the three towns just mentioned” (Adams 1957:485).

Adams devotes considerable attention to establishing a definition of what it means to be Indians. His definition is based on a list of traits emphasizing language and clothing that leads him to distinguish between three degrees of Indian culture: *Traditional Indian*, in communities that show “considerable monolingualism” and retain high levels of traditional clothing use; *Modified Indian*, among communities that are mostly bilingual and in which women, but not men, wear traditional dress; and *Ladinoized Indian*, where both indigenous language use and traditional dress are absent or nearly so (Adams 1957:490).

In the course of visiting these communities, it became amply clear that the degree to which a distinctive culture had been retained varied greatly between one and another. In Jayaque and Ataco, for example, there was no distinctive clothes seen; everyone dressed in the same general style. Whereas in all the other towns there was some difference, if even in only a small part of the population. In some of the towns, an Indian language was still spoken among at least some of the older inhabitants, whereas in others it was reported that the last use of an Indian language disappeared over 50 years ago. And there were other difference, as will be related shortly. But in all these towns the informants said that there was a portion of the population which was Indian.(Adams 1957:486-487).

Adams’s category of *ladinoized Indian* captures magnificently the construction of the Indian as a subject of loss, one that can exist somehow despite the absences that define its being. Adams’s typology in this early work, and his thinking on “ladinoization” more generally, have been roundly and rightly criticized (by Adams himself among others) for the presumed uni-directionality and irreversibility of “ladinoization” and the validity of using observable traits in deciding who is and is not an Indian (Hale 1996:45). It is important to recognize here the extent to which these understandings of ladinoization accurately reflect nationalist common-sense understandings of the Indian. The notion that assimilation is not only beneficial but necessary and inevitable is a cornerstone of dominant strains of mestizo nationalism – that is, ideas and ideals of national identity

based on *mestizaje* as “mixing.” Furthermore, while Adams is careful to insist that his understanding of categories including *ladino*, *mestizo*, and Indian is entirely cultural, the commonsense understandings of *mestizaje* conflate cultural shifts in identity and *mestizaje* as biology.

Carol Smith (1996:151) suggests that those elements of *mestizaje* that lay claim to biological processes, and so produce not only a language of race but sensibilities, including understandings of self, family, community, and nation, that are grounded in racial logics, are especially important to the cultural politics of nationalism.

It appears that political leaders emphasizing racial union are attempting to assert an already-existing *natural* basis for the nation to distinguish it from and position it against others...; or they are trying to diffuse major internal divisions based on class or cultural differences so great they cannot be papered over... But perhaps, more importantly, they are arguing that national culture will exist only when people who *recognize their common blood and interests* work together to produce it (Smith 1996:151, emphasis added).

Smith goes on to observe that the promise of *mestizaje* to eradicate racial distinctions within the nation confronts the strange contradiction that racial distinctions – that is, perceived or imagined differences explained in terms of biology and appearance – seem to endure “longer in Latin American nations than ‘ethnic’ distinctions based on pre-Columbian cultural traditions” (152). While Smith does not develop this aside, it points to the kind of phantom racism I contend inheres in mestizo nationalism, a racism that identifies its targets through a “non-visual” imagery (Taussig 1993) that works through vision as imagination and fantasy rather than vision as simple sight, the perception of an objective real world.

Jeff Gould (1998) argues that anthropological analysis of race in Central America has problematized the notion of an essential Indian in recent years, yet has failed to take as close a look at the historical conditions under which *mestizaje* has been produced as a

national myth and a subject category. Gould's point is critical, particularly in the case of western Nicaragua and El Salvador, where questions of identity and identity politics take on a rich complexity when *mestizaje*, rather than Indianness, is posed as the problem. Gould traces the ways a discourse of *mestizaje*, as the overarching frame through which to articulate ideas of nation and citizenship, was inextricably linked to the material destruction of indigenous communities and institutions. Gould reveals *mestizaje* as "one of the elite's most enduring hegemonic achievements" in Central America (Gould 1996:5), and his careful analysis of the imbrication of material and discursive processes demystifies and denaturalizes *mestizaje*. In the end, however, Gould's work reinscribes an essentialized Indian—perhaps an unavoidable result of his effort to retain an understanding of "culture loss" (Gould 1998).

Like Gould, I am interested in questions of loss in the historical constitution of *mestizaje* nationalism, and in the Salvadoran case questions of race or indigenous identity cannot proceed without making *mestizaje* a central analytical problem. Yet the questions cannot simply sit with an appraisal of *mestizaje* as the agent of the disappearance of Indianness. This is to lose sight of Gramsci's crucial insight that hegemony constitutes a field through which resistance, and not only domination, takes place. The idea, for example, that adoption of western dress is felt as culture loss for the people who actually change reproduces the flaws of Adams's early thinking on *ladinoization*. What if the adoption of western dress, for example, *feel* like progress, like something positive and not *only* loss, to those who change what they wear (and we should note that it is the "loss" of women's dress, and not men's that is most typically cited as "culture loss")? To take an example from Tacuba: in the 1970s, the local priest mounted a campaign to eradicate the traditions of the local *cofradías*, fraternities dedicated to the celebration of saints' days that have historically been central institutions in post-conquest mesoamerican indigenous

communities. What if the eradication of *cofradías* is not felt universally as a loss, but in fact registers for many, especially women, as a positive step away from traditions that involved costly household expenditures and days of heavy drinking by men, as was the case in Tacuba? The question, as posed in a recent collection of essays on loss as a cultural process, is not simply what is lost, but what remains (Eng and Kazanjian 2003b).

It may be the case, in fact, that the sense of loss – *culture* loss – is felt most acutely by later generations, or by *mestizo* subjects who feel an attachment to an idealized Indian. As Freud writes of the melancholic subject, she may well know that something has been lost, but not know *what has been lost to her* (Freud 1986:245). This observation transforms questions of culture loss, and of loss more generally, by opening up to the possibilities of substitution and multiplicity at work in loss, apparent when we recognize that the feeling of loss does not necessarily correspond to the object that is identified as lost. The Indian is at the core of *mestizaje* not only as a progenitor of the nation, but as a figure of constitutive loss. Any evaluation of culture loss in a given moment has to take seriously the position of the Indian within *mestizaje* myths as always-already lost.

To do this is to address the Indian as a mythical figure, a social category, and a discursive figure. This strategy is well established in the anthropology of Latin American identity politics and *mestizaje*, staked out especially clearly by Fernando Mires in his essay *El Discurso de la Indianidad (The Discourse of Indianness)* (1991). Mires argues that the Indian is a product of European fantasies and discourses of the other, which has been projected onto the diverse peoples and contexts of the Americas continuously through the processes of colonialism, imperialism, *mestizaje*, and nationalism. As Mires observes, this Indian must be understood as distinct from those peoples who are recognized as Indians, who inhabit the category, are slotted within it, or, as in the Salvadoran case, position themselves through a rejection of that category. The distinction between the

category of collective abstractions we talk about as representations, discourses, myths, and fantasies, on the one hand, and actual racialized subjects, on the other, should be central to the study of indigenous politics, of *mestizaje* and nationalism in Central America, and of racism and antiracism. All too often, however, we academics and other analysts switch between the two objects of analysis unreflexively. We approach real people as though their practices had to make sense within the categories set out by dominant narratives like *mestizaje* nationalism. Conversely, we talk about the Indian as a social category, a product of discourse and collective fantasy, were a historical agent on its own, unmoored from the particular contexts in which it is produced. In this dissertation I try to maintain a clear sense of this distinction by addressing the Indian as a figure of fantasy and myth, and addressing real people as they are positioned within the social fields whose coordinates include Indianness.

Mestizaje is not a myth in the sense of being something false, but rather as a social story that produces the domains through which people live, and in particular through which the nation is experienced (Anderson 1983; Obeyesekere 1990). As such, mestizaje is more than a way to characterize histories, more than an explicit discourse of the social; it becomes a national imaginary. A fairly concise approximation of the concept of “imaginary” I use here comes from Dipesh Gaonkar’s definition of social imaginaries as

ways of understanding the social that become social entities themselves, mediating collective life. ... They are imaginary in a double sense: they exist by virtue of representation or implicit understandings, even when they acquire immense institutional force; and they are means by which individuals understand their identities and their place in the world (Gaonkar 2002).

Most important here is the point that an imaginary becomes a social force in itself, and that imaginaries “mediate collective life,” echoing Althusser’s notion of ideology as a

representation of the “imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (Althusser 1971:162).

While these approaches take the important step of posing the question of mediation at levels that exceed or elude consciousness, they fall short by insisting that ideology is an imaginary relationship with a really real that is ultimately not mediated. The power of the concept of the imaginary, and what distinguishes it from other structuralist accounts of collective modes of understanding the world, like Bourdieu’s habitus or “culture” more generally, is its genealogy in psychoanalytic theory. This heritage refuses a clear analytical separation between fantasy and the world of the social, and instead turns to the ways fantasy is constitutive of social realities, making histories, places, and subjects that are real presences.

Fantasy is a mode of representation *and instantiation* characteristic of the unconscious, which is in turn a concept central to questions of realism and representation. The unconscious, says Lacan, “forces us to posit what Freud calls ... the idea of another locality, another space, another scene, the between perception and consciousness” (Lacan 1981). Rooted in the unconscious, a space of “transactions between public and private realms, fantasy is the process through which desire is articulated, worked upon, and instantiated through this transactional space” (Wright 1992:84). Desire in this context must be understood as desire for a fantasy, the “traces of a lost object,” yet fantasy “is not to be defined simply as the mental image of a desired object; it involves the total context and activity in and through which the object may be attained” (Wright 1992:84). As conceived here, fantasy “is not simply a matter of summoning imaginary objects, it is a matter of staging” (Wright 1992:85).

WHY RACE?

Throughout this dissertation I will use “race” and associated concepts like racialization, racial formation, and racism to talk about the politics of indigenous identity and mestizaje in El Salvador. This approach contrasts sharply with the more typical usage of “ethnicity” and “culture” in the study of Indians and non-Indians in Central America, and deserves some explanation. Peter Wade asserts that the concept of race has historically been used in Latin America to describe Afro-descended peoples, while ethnicity has been applied to indigenous peoples, reflecting a presumed distinction between “natural” racial differences inhering in Afro-descended peoples and ethnic differences based on locality, custom, language, etc. in the case of Indians (Wade 1997).

I do not use “race” because it describes an empirical, biological reality that “ethnicity” does not, but because the supposed distinction between race and ethnicity elides the production of each – as subject categories and modes of deploying power – in histories of contention and struggle as well as desire and intimacy. “Race” is no less a product of history, of those struggles and operations of power that constitute social history and produce cultural constructions, than is “ethnicity” or the ever-mobile, expansive “culture.” Unlike the last two concepts, though, “race” carries with it intimations of something beyond the realm of social constructions that is lost if we think of the socially constructed as a realm of mere inventions that are somehow, in the end, simple fictions that can be undone intellectually. Precisely by its reference to biology and the mysterious, dangerous and tantalizing world of sex, race is a social construction that exceeds the realm of culture or the social. This excess is critical for approaching race and racism, especially in a case like El Salvador, where the hegemonic national subject is imagined as a product of “race mixing”, and, as I will argue, racism can continue to exist

even in the absence of subjects who are recognizably “other” by the criteria of theories of cultural or ethnic difference.

In other words, race as I understand it in this thesis opens to possibilities for understanding a certain mode of power, of oppression and stratification that obtains even as the conscious recognition of difference is obliterated, negated, or forgotten. Race emerges as a highly mobile, dynamic social thing rooted in the myths of a national imaginary, that can energize forms of oppression without necessarily presuming coherent racialized social identities. By questioning the binary frame in which racial analyses typically locate themselves, this approach raises particularly pointed questions about an identity politics that would challenge racism by organizing in the name of a racialized subject and deploying the tropes of racialization against its negative effects.

As Anne Anlin Cheng (2001:24) observes, “to question the grounds of identity can be seen as either a luxury, or worse, irresponsible,” a legacy of the activist origins of US race and ethnic studies. Yet the conventions and convictions of that legacy may well limit our theoretical and political understandings of the complexity of race, power, and subjectivity rather than advance them. Cheng suggests that

The next generation of race scholars has to address the fundamental paradox at the heart of minority discourse: how to proceed once we acknowledge, as we must, that “identity” is the very ground upon which both progress and discrimination are made. What may be uneasy for some to entertain is the possibility that the future of ethnic studies may take a form very different from its original inception. New lines of inquiry may even appear antagonistic to (even as they are indebted to) the political activism that founded ethnic studies (2001:24).

Among those lines of inquiry that might seem antagonistic to traditions of activism that shape race studies we could certainly count two of the main preoccupations of the present work. The first is the insistence on understanding racialized subjects as constituted through their relations with one another in the realm of the imaginary, through discourse

and fantasy. Race studies, notes Cheng, has been marked by “an abiding attachment to the notion that we have to talk about racial subjects as ‘real’ subjects.” While this is an understandable commitment to counter racist dehumanization of “others,” the problem “is that in trying to compensate for that history, we often sacrifice discussions of all the immaterial, pressing, unquantifiable elements that go into the making of ‘reality’” (Cheng 2001:25).

The challenge, then, is to explore new ways to understand race as it is articulated in both subaltern and dominant discourses, and the effects of race in collective and individual subjects. My approach in this dissertation is to maintain an analytic focus on race that takes the instability of racial categories, and their connections to the realm of fantasy, as given – a necessity for addressing race in a context dominated by a *mestizo* political imaginary. This means paying attention to the clear racialized subjects imagined and represented by both hegemonic and counterhegemonic discourses of race and nation in El Salvador, and to the forms of resistance and constraint those discourses produce. It also demands an analysis of the phantasmatic forms in which race appears as an undeclared, elusive mode of power that operates beyond the boundaries of race as it is understood in conventional discourses of race, identity, and resistance.

The second aspect of my approach to race that may seem antagonistic to the dominant traditions of politically grounded race studies is a concern with the ways identity politics is enmeshed with forms of power Foucault conceived of with his concepts of governmentality and biopower. Broadly conceived, governmentality describes modes of rule focused on questions of the conduct of subjects, or what Foucault called “the conduct of conduct.” In El Salvador, I argue that the end of the civil war and the revolutionary project provoked a reconfiguration of forms of rule and resistance in which questions of governmentality and forms of self-rule took the place of the previous

struggle over the public institutions of state power and authority. One key aspect of this reconfiguration is a transformation of the relations between political subjects and the state. Indigenous political activism has emerged in the same period, and I will argue in this dissertation that the return of the Indian to post-civil war El Salvador is deeply implicated in rearticulating relations between the rural poor and the state. Previously the protagonists of a revolutionary struggle to take over and transform the state, indigenous discourses render peasants in the *occidente* as indigenous peoples, bearers of cultural difference who need recognition by, and perhaps the protection of, the state.

CULTURES OF NEOLIBERALISM/ “CULTURE” IN NEOLIBERAL TIMES

The emergence of a politics of indigenous rights, the decline in the agricultural export economies of Central America, the end of revolutionary projects in Nicaragua, Guatemala, and El Salvador, all coincide with the historical ascendancy of neoliberalism in the Americas. Neoliberalism might be thought of the politico-ideological wing of economic globalization. At once a set of policy prescriptions and a vision of the world that seeks to justify and naturalize those policies, neoliberalism is the dominant ideology of rule in Central America today. As economic theory, neoliberalism calls for the smoothing of any obstacles to the operation of “the market.” A belief in the divine power of the market to shape our world into the best of all possible worlds stands as a facetious but largely accurate of the economic assumptions of neoliberalism. As policy, neoliberalism calls for the elimination of national or regional trade barriers, subsidies to industry, the reduction of taxes in the name of investment, unrestricted mobility of capital and labor, and in general the reduction of state regulation of economies (although the state, far from disappearing, has in fact been transformed¹⁰). These policies have followed

¹⁰ See Robinson (2003), Trouillot (2001)

transformations in both the technologies and social relations of production as much as they have produced them, but there can be no doubt but that their enshrinement as the reigning orthodoxy has enabled capitalism's expansion and transformation in the epoch of globalization.

As theology, or a cultural form, neoliberalism imagines a world of individuals, each an economic actor – a consumer – above all else, guided by a rational decision making process: neoclassical microeconomics as a theory of the subject; democracy as a market; consumption no longer the wasting disease of industrial workers but the “moving spirit” of the age (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001:12). At the same time, neoliberalism has seen an “explosion in discourses of civil society”(Comaroff and Comaroff 2001:3) of which indigenous rights, and identity politics or the Latin American “new social movements” (Escobar and Alvarez 1992) are a key component.

As Charles Hale (2002) observes, the notion that neoliberal ideologies and indigenous peoples' movements stand in opposition to one another deserves close scrutiny. There are certainly many cases in which indigenous peoples have resisted neoliberal policies; in Central America and Mexico we need look no further than widespread protests to free trade initiatives or to the Plan Puebla-Panamá and the linked Mesoamerican Biological Corridor. Yet other aspects of the neoliberal transformation in Latin America are unchallenged and in some instances the interests of neoliberal states or agencies like the World Bank and indigenous groups appear to converge. In particular, certain demands framed in terms of identity and cultural difference are easily articulated within a language of rights and recognition – both typically limited, especially regarding resources – that is entirely in line with neoliberal ideology and agendas. Hale designates this point of articulation “neoliberal multiculturalism,” which makes its agenda the public

recognition of “cultural difference” and support for claims made in the name of rights, and which sets clear limits on how far those claims might go.

In El Salvador – and certainly in many other instances – “recognition” is far trickier business than the language of rights and recognition would suppose. Neoliberal multiculturalism’s language of rights and recognition suggests that what’s there (the racialized other) has been there all along and the problems of political recognition are essentially parallel to a purely, mechanically visual kind of recognition – as Anthony Appiah puts it, the task is seen as one of simply finding “the real self buried in there” (Appiah 1994). Real selves change, however. The assumption that the real self in there is most importantly an *Indian* self neglects the complexity of both individual and collective subjectivities. It ignores the aspects of *mestizaje* or “ladinoization” that may, in fact, have been empowering, and the ways those aspects might coexist with a sense of loss, and more generally the ways identities, selves, and consciousness always produce and are produced by contradictions (Gordon 1997; Hale 1994). Furthermore, the idea that people in places like Tacuba are really Indians who simply fail to recognize this fact themselves casts the selves through which they live their lives as somehow not enough. Once again, they become subjects constituted by absence.

CONCLUSION

This background of disruptions and displacements – the process Deleuze and Guattari call “deterritorialization,” in which the attachments, investments, and desires that characterize a given historical subject or period in a particular space are sundered – is crucial to understanding the emergence of indigenous identity politics in El Salvador. Indianness became a central concern not only of a group of committed activists but of the state, the transnational regulatory, finance, and development institutions working to guide

a new phase of Salvadoran modernity in the wake of the civil war and the ascendancy of neoliberalism in the Americas. We cannot understand indigenous politics in El Salvador without taking seriously the legacy of the war as an unfinished revolutionary project and the growing hegemony of neoliberal institutions, discourses, and, as the Comaroffs have it, culture. Following the Comaroffs, my contention in this thesis is that, likewise, we can not understand neoliberalism without taking seriously the transformations of political subjectivity that accompany it.

Images of loss dominate representations of Indians in El Salvador. Activists portray an Indian whose history of suffering is brought into focus through a narrative of culture loss, and so (inadvertently, I believe) reproduce an Indian that is consonant with the representations of indigenous peoples in the dominant national imaginary. The form is the same, and the contention turns to questions of the “content” of Indianness and the extent of and responsibility for loss. The putative material markers of Indianness are made fetishes, and the Indian as an oppositional figure is diluted. My strategy in this dissertation is to look at what remains, and what is produced, and not only what is lost with regard to Indianness at key moments in El Salvador’s recent history.

Chapter Two: Blood, Terror, and Fire: Narrating the Real

The capital was filled with contradictory versions. Some foreign journals were surprised by inexact reports. And here, just as outside the country, the true magnitude of the devastation wrought by the indigenous masses, excited by the communist agitators, could not be appreciated. [...] This book is something like a panoramic view of the affected area, or what is the same: a report based on the data collected in the place where the events took place. The reports appear in the order in which they were collected, without commentary. What for...? It will not attempt to tell a history of causes or determine possible effects. It will offer the lived reality, as the victims describe it. With its traces of blood, of terror and fire.¹¹

San Salvador, 1932

This is the preface to Joaquín Méndez's account of the rural uprising in western El Salvador of late January, 1932. On the 22nd of that month several thousand rebels—almost all peasants and most of them also *indios* by the fluid definitions of the day—took over a handful of towns in the *occidente*, the western and southwestern coffee growing regions. Organized by the Salvadoran Communist Party and its mutual aid auxiliary, the *Socorro Rojo*, the rebellion ignited after months of strikes, demonstrations, and political turmoil. Tragically for the rebels, their plans were known to the military of President General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez in advance, and the military response to the rebellion was quick, enormous, and ultimately brutal. The troops, aided by planters and the civil patrols they organized, swept through the zones of conflict

¹¹ La capital se llenaba de versiones contradictorias. Algunos periódicos del exterior eran sorprendidos con noticias inexactas. Y tanto aquí, como en el extranjero, no podía apreciarse en su justa magnitud la obra devastadora que realizó la masa indígena excitada por los agitadores comunistas. [...] Este libro es algo así como una vista panorámica del sector afectado. O lo que es lo mismo: un reportaje ajustado a los datos recogidos en el propio lugar de los acontecimientos. Las noticias aparecerán en el orden en que fueron obtenidas. Sin comentarios. ¿Para qué...? No se tratará de historiar causas ni determinar posibles efectos. Se ofrecerá la realidad viva, tal como la describen las víctimas. Con sus huellas de sangre, de terror y de fuego. Méndez (1932)

where they killed ten thousand people¹² in a matter of weeks in the violence that came to be known simply as *la matanza*, the massacre. This in a country of 1.5 million, and an area with a population of slightly more than one hundred thousand.

Méndez's book, *Los Sucesos Comunistas en El Salvador* (The Communist Events in El Salvador), was the first comprehensive report on the rebellion and massacre to appear, published in the same year as the events it reports. Unlike the newspaper reporting of the events as a series of episodes, Méndez's book seeks to chronicle the uprising as a single event—one that occurred unevenly in time and across multiple locations, but a single event all the same. Méndez traveled by train throughout what he calls the affected area, interviewing witnesses and survivors in the key towns in the departments of Sonsonate, Ahuachapán, Santa Ana, and La Libertad.

No se tratará de historiar causas. I have translated this phrase from Méndez's frontispiece as "it will not attempt to tell a history of causes," yet I could just have accurately settled on "it will not attempt to tell a story of causes." The unstable line between history and story points to the mythico-historical¹³ character of *la matanza* in Salvadoran nationalism. This chapter addresses the mythico-historical understandings of *la matanza*, which has taken a central place in narratives of El Salvador's experiences of nationhood and modernity. *La matanza* has become a powerful story of origins for different inflections of Salvadoran nationalism. It is at once the beginning of the revolutionary movement (for the left) and of the nationalist struggle to contain the communist threat (for the right). It is also the story of the end of Indians and indigenous culture, a story of originary unity as well as collective loss in a national imaginary, for

¹² The number of dead is often reported as approaching thirty thousand (Chapin). Most of the recent, careful historical research on the massacre supports the figure of ten thousand, and, as Carlos Henríquez Consalvi noted at the conference "1932 in El Salvador," this number, in a country with El Salvador's population at the time, stands as a measure of extraordinary, cataclysmic horror on its own.

¹³ Malkkiii, Benjamin

stories of *la matanza* have long contended that those Indians who survived the actual killing shed all indicators of their indigenous identities, and so effectively ceased to be Indians. Today, the myth-history of *la matanza* is a powerful means to convey the suffering and victimization of indigenous Salvadorans.

In this chapter I look at the in the ways that narratives of the massacre produced or shaped key understandings of Indianness and national identity that influence the contemporary politics of indigenous identity and nationalism. I also examine the ways certain ideas, best characterized in terms of fantasy and fiction and evident in narrative production, charted the path to the extraordinary state violence of *la matanza*. I consider the massacre as a moment of production rather than of straightforward loss, with effects that are at once discursive and concrete. These effects resonate within a national imaginary, the psychic repository of images, ideas, and knowledge of the social that enable individuals to imagine shared subjective connections and a collective identity beyond the known social space of the local and the everyday.¹⁴ The effects of the massacre are felt at the level of territories, bodies, sensibilities, and subjects. If in Tacuba, the effects of the massacre were immediate and horribly concrete—destroying bodies, homes, and families—I want to direct attention in this chapter to what *la matanza* created, particularly for subjects outside of the “affected area” whose connections to the rebellion and the massacre—and its victims—were so thoroughly mediated by imaginary understandings of the nation and a collective national subject. I turn to what remains from the massacre, “for what is lost is known only by what remains of it, by how these remains are produced, read, and sustained” (Eng and Kazanjian 2003a:2).

¹⁴ A fairly concise approximation of the concept of “imaginary” I use here comes from Dipesh Gaonkar’s definition of social imaginaries as “ways of understanding the social that become social entities themselves, mediating collective life. ... They are imaginary in a double sense: they exist by virtue of representation or implicit understandings, even when they acquire immense institutional force; and they are means by which individuals understand their identities and their place in the world”

In the case of *la matanza*, remains have been produced, read, and sustained through national myth-histories. To address history as myth is to see history in the ephemeral, in-between realm where what is *felt-as-real* takes on the kind of weight historians usually reserve for those events and artifacts that claim for themselves an objective reality. It is to consider what Begoña Aretxaga called “fictional realities, the narrative articulation of fantasy and the real embodied in particular social subjects. These articulations in narrative make sense of and more fundamentally make possible actions themselves.”

Realist approaches to history seek to settle questions of meaning, effectively containing history in a static explanatory frame, yet violence on the order of *La Matanza* exceeds these strategies of containment. As Aretxaga puts it, “[no] amount of political, economic, and social causality, of rational aims, goals, and interests can explain that surplus of meaning in state violence” (Aretxaga 2000:53). Efforts to explain mass violence risk slipping from “explaining” to “explaining away,” to channeling the event into the flow of what Michael Taussig calls “the irregular rhythm of numbing and shock that constitutes the apparent normality of the abnormal” and so normalizing terror (Taussig 1992:13). It is this surplus of meaning to which Aretxaga points that burdens the living, that challenges efforts at sense-making and trips up narratives of explanation. The surplus defies the closure that realist historiography strives for. Instead, *la matanza* calls for us to consider the ways a “phantasmatic reality... [constitutes] political reality and political experience and [produces] concrete effects” (Aretxaga 2000:53).

Official historical discourse relies on conventions of empirical evidence to legitimize and authorize stories of what happened in the past. Yet history takes on weight in social worlds, and is woven into collective identities, as cultural memory (Flores 2002:16-18). It is in the space between the poles of “what happened” and the production

of stories *about* what happened that meaning is made in the present through historical narratives—those imprints of social imaginaries that assume the stance of fact—often through publication in newspapers and books. In his analysis of the Haitian Revolution Trouillot (1995) shows how this space between event and narrative is implicated in producing and transforming what is thinkable in a given time; struggles over historical meaning are an important site of agency. As Aretxaga puts it,

Subjectivity is always grounded in history, a history that is as much personal as collective, a history that includes not only conscious narratives but also forgotten episodes and hidden discourses. This conception of subjectivity is critical for the cultural analysis of politics because it leads our attention to what is either obscured or taken for granted in relations of power (Aretxaga 1997: 18).

The importance of history in the formation of collective and individual identities points to an understanding of history as myth, again, focusing on the productive power of myth rather than merely understanding it as a form of mystification, obscuring the real or the truth. It is in this sense that I describe *la matanza* as myth.¹⁵

NARRATING LA MATANZA

How does a story become powerfully rooted in individual memories and the collective unconscious, as *la matanza* has in El Salvador? Benedict Anderson argues that the creation and reproduction of such national myths depends on print-capitalism, the production and circulation of print media as commodities. Mass circulation of books and newspapers, the latter of which Anderson characterizes as serial books, magical in that they are obsolete in a day, is a necessary social and technological transformation in the emergence of modern nations. Anderson shows that it is through the dissemination of

¹⁵ Gould'sGould (1998) arguments concerning "the myth of mestizaje" tack between understanding myth as a form of productive cultural production and as a form of mystification. His arguments are most compelling, I suggest, when the first sense is kept in view. For more on myth as history in the production of identities and particularly with reference to collective violence, see Malkki (1995)

these forms that presume a particular *national* audience as European modernity emerges that a national subject, “the people,” is constituted, becoming itself a crucial form of social imaginary. It is through naturalizing this subject as the nation’s key interlocutor, as audience for and producer of a national thing as well as its substance, that the imagined community comes into being and is felt as real.

Historical and literary work on *La Matanza* can usefully be located in terms of three basic periods of its production, roughly corresponding to three distinct historical moments: the aftermath of the massacre; the late 1960s and 1970s; and in the period following the civil war of the 1980s.¹⁶ The rebellion and massacre have been addressed at other times, as in the brief but important section of Adams’s 1957 *Cultural Surveys of Panama, Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras*, and the important work of Kincaid and Montes in the middle of the civil war. The latter two pieces were articles in academic journals that did not circulate widely, and have had little influence or circulation up to the present, when they are being revisited in the new efforts to revisit the events of 1932. A key assertion by Adams regarding the shift in practices among indigenous people after the massacre is taken up by Anderson’s 1971 *Matanza*, which remains the most complete and likely the most influential account, and so Adams reappears in the second moment.

Jorge Schlesinger’s *Revolución Comunista* of 1946 likewise falls out of the periodization I present, and is a crucial work in establishing key elements of the mythico-historical account of the massacre. In the case of Schlesinger, a Guatemalan writer, I would locate him conceptually with the first moment, marked by the elaboration of an anticommunist version that focused on the organization of the uprising by communist

¹⁶ I am referring here to works that addressed a public audience, and so do not include the reports produced by the US Legation or the Canadian commander in charge of vessels sent to El Salvador at the behest of the British consulate.

leaders and the destruction wrought by the rebels while letting the massacre itself fall from view. Schlesinger's work is linked to the first moment by his genealogy as well, for Jorge was the son of Alfredo, whose *La Verdad Sobre el Comunismo* (The Truth About Communism) was published in its second edition in 1932.

So, in spite of the scattered works produced outside of the three main periods I outline here, I believe that these three moments and the kinds of stories about *La Matanza* they produced deserve close attention. It is not my intention, however, to make a thorough study of the particular conjuncture that produced each wave of intellectual work on the massacre, or of the works themselves, but briefly to outline them in anticipation of my arguments about the ways these narratives reflected and constituted particular ideas and sensibilities about Indians, the nation, and the state. In the following section I address the first two waves of production, which most clearly define the story of 1932 as a hegemonic mythico-history. I turn to contemporary work that seeks to revise this version later in this chapter.

FIRST WAVE: DEFINING THE STORY

The earliest accounts of the massacre, outside of newspapers, were Méndez's book in 1932 and Jorge Schlesinger's *Revolución Comunista* of 1946. Their efforts to produce coherent narratives and draw the scattered local events of the uprising and repression into a single story distinguish these works from the accumulated newspaper articles that chronicled events as they unfolded—despite Méndez's claims to pure reportage. They are also marked by their unabashed loathing for communists (and arguably the rural poor in general), their focus on the uprising, its leaders and victims, with almost no attention to the subsequent massacre.

In either case, Méndez's claim is disingenuous, for he is concerned throughout to support a particular interpretation of the causes and effects of the rebellion. His interest in the massacre is secondary, for he sees it as a result of the rebellion, necessary if perhaps regrettable, brought on by the rebels and their wickedness. There is little mystery to the timing of Méndez's writing; as he indicates in his preface, his goal was to collect information from eye-witnesses that might correct the poor quality of the reports in the capital and the foreign press. *Los Sucesos Comunistas* is a mix of travelogue and investigative journalism. Each chapter reports on the author's visit to a given town: Sonsonate, Izalco, Nahuizalco, etc., detailing Méndez's travels through ten towns. With the exception of Juayúa the chapters are brief, all under twenty pages, with seven pages given over to Izalco, six to Ahuachapán, and five to Santa Tecla, while Tacuba occupies seventeen pages. The first chapter's opening lines display the journalistic sensibility that runs throughout: "From San Salvador to Sonsonate, in three hours, by train, without suffering any type of troubles on the way. As soon as you step off the train, it is evident that you're dealing with a city of import by the incessant traffic of pedestrians and vehicles. It is intensely hot." And so on.

Along the way Méndez collects important interviews and documents, his choice of interview subject and the focus of his queries clearly displaying his sympathies for those targeted by the rebels rather than the victims of the state. The long chapter on Juayúa, for example, tells the story of Emilio Redaelli, a wealthy immigrant and owner of Juayúa's largest shop who was murdered by one of the rebels, Benjamín Herrera. Accompanied by Dr. Jeréz, whose house, Méndez tells us, is "richly furnished, with the exquisite taste of a person who has traveled a lot," (1932:60) Méndez tours the ruins of Redaelli, noting the high quality of the porcelain that lies shattered amid the debris. Don Emilio, it turns out, likewise had good taste. According to Dr. Jerez and Méndez's other

informant, don Gabino Mata, Redaelli was a great man: “despite his foreign nationality, he loved El Salvador as much as any Salvadoran patriot, or more... Who would have thought such a good man would come to an end like this!” (1932:57-58).

Much of the chapter on Juayúa, as throughout the book, chronicles the damages wrought by the communists. “Immediately after setting fire to señor Redaelli’s house, the reds set out for the store of Leopoldo Chong, Chinese merchant, [which they] left looted and almost destroyed” (1932:83-84). Méndez describes the destruction of the telegraph office, its furnishings broken with machetes as the mob shouted “¡viva el comunismo!”. In the town hall they ruined the files, books, and other objects before moving on to light the Redaelli house on fire.

The reds Méndez describes are parodic inversions of the upright citizens they attack. At one moment they are savages destroying fine things in a blind rage, at the next they are pompous fools, drunk with power. At noon on Saturday, according to Méndez, the rebel leader, Francisco Sánchez, imperiously ordered the municipal band to perform: “The band shall play.” The communists would not let the musicians rest, leaving some ill and with swollen lips. When two townspeople asked Sánchez if Redaelli and other wounded might be released, Sánchez told them that he himself could not make such a decision; it would be in the hands of the council” (1932:89). Neither Méndez nor his informants believe that Sánchez was serious, implying that his refusal to release the wounded was smug and spiteful.

In similarly disdainful fashion Méndez reports the description of Timoteo Lúe provided by Gabino Mata, a bourgeois of Juayúa:

Little has been said of Timoteo Lúe, who was the magnate of the cantón El Chaparrón. This individual, who in the beginning possessed very little, found his way to obliging his neighbors to sell to him their water sources and the plots that interested him, at the price he chose. In order to achieve this he made good use of

threats. Well, then: Timoteo Lúe was an *indio*, owner of good parcels of land, with investment funds (*capital regular*), with which he ostentatiously put on airs of superiority among his neighbors, whom he made respect him as a lord. He dressed in a flashy, gaudy manner, in a riot of colors and showy garments. He used the best saddle. Having such a good economic position, and being so envied and feared by his neighbors, it is inconceivable that he would become a communist.¹⁷

To say that Lúe was the “magnate of the cantón El Chaparrón” is perhaps akin to calling someone the “king of the trailer park.” That he was an *indio* who used his money to put on airs, dressing in lurid colors and gaudy clothes indicates his distance from Gabina Mata’s world of the civilized townsfolk or *vecinos* of Juayúa. Although Gabina Mata reports that Lúe’s communism should be inconceivable given his wealth and status, the chronicle of Lúe’s strangeness, expressed in his style, suggests instead that communism was simply an extension of Lúe’s disruptive existence. Gabina Mata’s account suggests an uncomfortable and uncanny sense of order disrupted by a subject who does not know his place, or who refuses it and threatens to take the place of the other.

This concern with the disruption of an established order marks this first wave of intellectual production around the massacre, evident in Schlesinger’s *Revolución Comunista* as well as *Los Sucesos*. Schlesinger describes his book as a warning to the people and governments of Central America about what he saw as renewed dangers of an uprising like the Salvadoran one. Schlesinger’s work echoes his father’s writing of the early 1930’s, *La Verdad Sobre El Comunismo*. Alfredo Schlesinger, Jorge’s father, wrote

¹⁷ Poco se ha dicho de Timoteo Lúe, que era el magnate del cantón El Chaparrón. Este individuo, que al principio no poseyera sino muy poco, fue obligando a sus vecinos que le vendieran sus fuentes de agua y los terrenos que le podían interesar, al precio que a él se le antojaba. Para lograrlo, se valía de amenazas. Pues bien; Timoteo Lúe, era un indio, dueño de buenos terrenos; poseía un capital regular, del cual hacía ostentación para darse aires de superioridad entre sus conterráneos, de quienes se hacía respetar como un amo. Vestía de un modo llamativo, haciendo gala de colores chillantes y prendas demasiado vistosas. Usaba una montura de lo mejor. Teniendo tan buena posición económica, siendo tan temido y envidiado por sus vecinos, resulta inexplicable que se haya hecho comunista Méndez (1932).

at the dawn of the Ubico dictatorship, a law-and-order regime in Guatemala lasting from 1931 to 1944 that used the 1932 rebellion in El Salvador to justify its execution of opponents (Dunkerley 1988). Jorge's *Revolución Comunista* appeared in 1946, two years after Ubico's fall. Instability following the end of the Ubico regime was fueled by uncertainty over global politics and markets resulting from the war in Europe. This instability in Guatemala included labor unrest in both the city and countryside, which may have contributed to the timing of Schlesinger's work.

Schlesinger opens with an epigraph taken from a "worker's journal," *Nuestra Voz*, published in Guatemala in 1945. "We the workers are the only ones called upon to resolve our conflicts," it begins, calling on better educated workers to

watch over the intellectually disoriented masses... and not permit non-Guatemalan elements to bring unnecessary doctrines to the country, which produce the fruits that were given to El Salvador in 1932 when Martínez's machine guns took the lives of 17,000 rural workers, drawn into communism by elements that inhumanely poisoned the weak and simple minds of the Salvadoran peasant. We lived through those times and know the pain of that people, who suffered BEFORE THE ENRAGED MASSES WHO, MACHETES IN HAND, RAZED JUAYUA, COLON AND OTHER TOWNS ADJACENT TO THE CAPITAL, WHICH WAS ALSO THREATENED, MURDERING SOCIETY AND THE MIDDLE CLASS. For its part the state, obliged to take drastic measures, pointed its machine guns without discrimination, the honest people being the only victim of the outrages of the ungrateful propagators of exotic doctrines... (Schlesinger 1946).

This selection, on the first page of the book, lays out concisely and dramatically the conspiracy theory that lies at the heart of the dominant right-wing account, asserting that the peasants (weak and simple minded) who rebelled had been brainwashed by the evil of "exotic doctrines." The apology for the massacre, the notion that mass execution

was effectively forced upon the state by the rebels and their actions, is another central element of the dominant myth.

Where Méndez claims merely to report the events of 1932, Schlesinger organizes his work as a study of the massacre, a history of causes and effects in which the rebellion is the climactic product of historical conditions and the work of a group of political agitators. In this respect, Schlesinger is singularly important in establishing a teleological narrative of communist infection and bad faith deception of the peasants, exciting atavistic racial hatreds and leading to the moment when the state “was obliged to drown the communist movement in blood” (1946:4). Like his predecessor, Joaquín Méndez, Schlesinger lays the blame for the terrible repression—to which he dedicates the scant four final pages—at the feet of the rebels themselves. In doing so he excises local support for the rebellion from the narrative and virtually writes the state out of the story at the moment it takes on its most concrete, total, form. Schlesinger’s version remains a powerfully resonant commonsense understanding of the massacre to this day.

**THE SECOND WAVE: 1932 AS SEEN FROM THE TUMULTUOUS HINTERLANDS
OF THE COLD WAR.**

Revolución Comunista, with its impressive collection of interviews and documents, has been an essential source for subsequent studies, notably Anderson’s 1971 *Matanza* and a series of weekly articles in the national daily *El Dario de Hoy*. If Méndez and Schlesinger were concerned primarily with establishing the culpability of the communists and the folly of the rebellion—and Schlesinger, I should note, was by no means supportive of Martínez, but his loathing for communism overwhelms his critique of the dictator—the second wave of writing was, for the most part, much more sympathetic to the peasants if not the leaders of the rebellion themselves.

Among the important works published around 1970 were Anderson's *Matanza*, published in English in 1971 and in Spanish in 1976, Roque Dalton's record of Miguel Mármol's recollections in *Miguel Mármol* of 1972, David Browning's *El Salvador: Landscape and Society*, published in English in 1971 and in Spanish in 1975,¹⁸ and the Sunday newspaper series in 1967 by Gustavo Pineda and others in *El Diario de Hoy*, "La Tragedia Comunista de 1932." Another important contribution to the ways Salvadorans understood the events of 1932 came from the famous and widely-read novel by Claribel Alegria and her North American husband, Darwin Flakoll, *Cenizas de Izalco*, first published in 1966, again in 1976, and at least eleven times since. Besides being one of the most important novels in Central American literature, *Cenizas de Izalco* was the principal written source for knowledge of *La Matanza* for generations of Salvadoran intellectuals.

Two features of this second wave of writing deserve special attention. First, with the exception of Flakoll and Alegria, these accounts, written in the fifteen years following the Cuban Revolution and the full-scale development of Latin America as a major front in the Cold War, focus on matters of class conflict and economic conditions and generally exclude a sociological or historical consideration of race. Anderson and Dalton share with Schlesinger a focus on class conflict and the conditions that sparked the rebellion, although from different political positions. Although the rebellion was mobilized in areas that were historically indigenous, this was seen as secondary, if not coincidental.

¹⁸ Browning's work, a study of agricultural history that examines key periods in Salvadoran history in terms of types of production, only touches on the massacre in passing, but I include it here because its Spanish translation has been one of the single most influential texts in Salvadoran historiography, along with, I suggest, Barón Castro and Instituto Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo. (1942)

Second, these texts—most notably Anderson—assert that the massacre of 1932 was directly responsible for the final disappearance of indigenous culture and identity in El Salvador.

Despite its title in English (the Spanish version is simply *El Salvador 1932*), Anderson's *Matanza: The massacre that traumatized a nation* is much less a story of the massacre than it is a political-economy narrative of the ways economic conditions influenced the actions of leaders, both rebel and dictator, to come together in the rebellion and the reprisal. The book sees itself as explanatory background to the history of twentieth-century military governments, the power of the agricultural elite, particularly the coffee families, state repression of peasants, and the revolutionary movement. It is inevitably a story for Americans about why Communism, at the time Anderson is writing, is spreading across Latin America. In sum, the book is a narrative of the emergence and development of the conditions Anderson saw in El Salvador of the late 1960s, and this explanatory focus shapes Anderson's account. "As for El Salvador itself," writes Anderson in the 1991 preface to the second edition of *Matanza* in English,

My impression when I first went there for research in 1969 was that the country desperately needed a revolution. The outrageous poverty, the arrogance of the wealthy, the ubiquitous armed repression all seemed to point to revolution. I have not changed my mind. (1992:10).

Anderson's account emphasizes the creation of the repressive military state, guided by an arrogant elite in defense of the extraordinary inequality that the country's coffee-dependent economy fosters. His next sentence tells us what else was created in 1932: "The memory of 1932 for a long time frightened the populace into docility," which only began to change in the 1970s as armed revolutionary groups appeared and the hopes for peaceful change dwindled. In these brief lines Anderson sums up the key elements of

the creative power of the massacre: it consolidated the power of the elites and their alliance with the military state in defense of order and the maintenance of the wildly exploitative coffee economy, and it terrified the masses, especially in the west, to such an extent that they avoided any political organization or resistance.

On the question of race as it figures in the rebellion and massacre, Anderson's account is ambivalent. He defers to Salvadoran authorities on this. On the one hand, he writes,

J. Hugo Granadino, the distinguished Sonsonate historian, sees in the 1932 outbreak definite overtones of race war, while 'Quino Caso,' the well-known Salvadorean writer, told me that he felt the revolt was definitely related to Anastasio Aquino's revolt of almost exactly a century before (Anderson 1992:31).

On the same page, however, in a footnote to the preceding quotation, Anderson qualifies this:

I must add that many equally well informed persons disagree. Abel Cuenca, when I interviewed him in 1969, told me that there was no Indian-Ladino split in Tacuba where he led the revolt (Anderson 1992:31 n.28).

Later in the same chapter Anderson asserts that questions of conflict between Indians and Ladinos were only significant in Izalco and Nahuizalco, and could not be taken as a universal characteristic of the rebellion:

In Tacuba, Ahuachapán, and other far western areas, in Soyapango just east of the capital, and in the Colón-Santa Tecla region just west of the capital, the factor of cultural conflict was not important, and yet the revolt of 1932 occurred in all these areas (Anderson 1992:36).

Anderson's ambivalence and uncertainty about the "factor of cultural conflict" in the constitution of the rebellion is, I suggest, not a symptom of inattention or poor research, but an accurate reflection of the possibilities for answering the question. Efforts

to make sense of the meaning and weight of Indianness as a factor contributing to the development of the rebellion necessarily wind up grappling with the tremendously mobile meanings of Indianness in the first three decades of the 20th century, up until the massacre itself, which radically shifted those meanings. I want to suggest that pinning down the meanings of indigenous identity and Anderson's "factor of cultural conflict" in the rebellion is misguided because the meanings and motivations for the rebellion were only partially and sporadically articulated in these terms. It is in the state's response, the massacre, and not the rebellion itself, that race becomes such an important factor.

Consider Anderson on the inevitability of the rebellion:

The 1932 revolt, of course, caused strong measures to be taken against Indian culture. There was a noticeable drop in the number of persons adhering to Indian dress, customs, or language after 1932. This was due in large measure to the great massacre, but as time went on the chief impetus to change appears to have been the desire to slough off the characteristics of a despised group. A Salvadorean Indian could cease to be one by moving "a few kilometers," as one of them put it, adapting "western" dress for his wife, and taking care to speak reasonably good Spanish (Anderson 1992:33).

Anderson here reports one of the central points of the mythico-historical weight of *la matanza*: that the massacre, "a strong measure" taken against Indian culture, had the effect of making Indians abandon those markers of cultural difference that made them visibly different than mestizos around them. This point sedimented into common-sense, popular narratives of the massacre to the extent that people reported legal prohibitions imposed by Martínez on Indian dress or the use of Nahuatl after the massacre, laws that never existed outside of the fantasy space of the narrative. It has been reproduced endlessly. In his 1988 article, "¿Es El Salvador una nación sin indios?" Segundo Montes (who would be killed by government troops in 1989 along with six other Jesuits, their housekeeper, and her daughter) states that after the massacre many people fled the region.

“Those who stayed in the zone were considered suspicious and were persecuted. Since even the smallest sign of indigenous identity was fatal for them, they had to renounce their clothing, their language, their traditions, their culture, and their social organization” (Montes 1988: 45). Tommie Sue Montgomery felt no need to cite a source when, in her comprehensive account of the civil war she reported that during the massacre of 1932 “anyone in Indian dress or anyone running from the security forces was fair game” (Montgomery 1995:37).

Anderson acknowledges the ambiguity of the category “*indio*” in El Salvador, although he seconds Richard Adams in concluding that the events of 1932 were instrumental in the disappearance of Indianness, or “as an Indian does.” In citing Adams, however, Anderson makes this appraisal seem much more certain than Adams’s presentation. In his 1957 *Cultural Surveys of Panama, Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras* he cautions readers that the terms “Indian” and “Ladino” are used only in a strictly cultural sense, referring to “behavior, socially shared habits and ways of life” rather than any notion of biological or genetic classification. Thus, *ladinoization* refers to “the degree to which a given community or individual has taken over the habit patterns of the Salvadorean Spanish-American culture” (Adams 1957:485-486). Regarding *la matanza* and its impacts on the practices and customs of indigenous people, Adams has this to say:

One informant reported that following the termination of the [rebel] movement he noticed an overt effort on the part of the Indians to take over Ladino ways. Previously, when migrants came to the fincas during coffee harvest, they manifested the usual Indian customs with respect to language and dress. Following the movement, the same people began to appear in Ladino dress and Spanish was used more frequently. This report, of course, warrants further investigation to determine to what degree it is true (504).

Adams's account was tentative, and in turn forms the basis for Anderson's later tentative affirmation that the massacre was, indeed, instrumental in the disappearance of Indianness because it made Indians want to abandon their identities and the performative aspects of their daily lives that marked their difference.

Anderson, for his part, contends that Salvadoran Indians were, by 1932, "ladinoized" to such an extent that little coherent sense of shared identity and interests transcended the local level. Yet he asserts at key moments that Indian resentment of their exploitation by ladinos was fundamental to the uprising. His effort to contain what it meant to be Indian in El Salvador in 1932 is instructive by its constant uncertainty, by his inability to settle on any answer. The question that Anderson poses as inevitable—"of course"—is the question that most begs some kind of understanding: why did the state's response to a rebellion articulated within an imaginary of class politics take the form of a massacre guided by an explicitly racist logic in a context of ambiguous identities?

THE THIRD WAVE: READING 1932 AS RACIAL CONFLICT

In the most recent writing, the long-term impact of the massacre on indigenous identity has been called into question by scholars who marshal empirical evidence that suggests that Indians not only did not cease to exist after the massacre, they did not abandon outward symbols of their identity so readily, or in response to the terror or *la matanza*. Ching and Tilley (1998) find instances of the military and the Martínez government supporting indigenous communal claims against ladinos and recognizing Indians through the creation of an "Indian School." They also cite evidence that indigenous communities did not abandon all markers of Indian identity abruptly in the years after the massacre. Older women in many of the towns that suffered the violence of 1932 still wear the traditional skirt, or *refajo*, that is so consistently regarded as a sign of

authentic Indianness, and this is true despite the fact that it is difficult to obtain and substantially more expensive than conventional dresses. Likewise, there are still people who speak some Nahuatl, many of whom were small children at the time of the massacre or born in the years immediately following. They suggest that in many areas Nahuatl was heavily in decline well before the massacre.

Chapin and Ching and Tilley convey a solid certainty about who was an Indian and subsequently what race meant in the events of 1932. To various degrees, the work of these scholars (Chapin 1990; Ching and Tilley 1998; Tilley 1997; 2002) finds clear distinctions between peasant and Indian that were certainly less important to observers in the thirties and forties, and may in fact have been no more clear then than they are today. This is perhaps unsurprising in Chapin's work, which is committed to demonstrating the existence of an indigenous population of half a million. Chapin argues the presence of Indians in El Salvador in order to support cultural rights activism, and his support has been critically important for activists in El Salvador today. Hence, Chapin looks for a scientifically demonstrable indigenous population; his project is to make this population visible.

Yet Chapin's approach to the question "What is an 'Indian' in El Salvador?" is full of rather mystifying statements, such as "there is little obvious coherence among the indigenous community, even in cases where Indians form the majority of the population."¹⁹ Indians live in semi-isolation, he goes on, marginalized residents of towns and cities, the poorest of the poor in the rural areas. "If they happen to form the majority in a zone, they are without exception excluded from land ownership, political power, and

¹⁹ Chapin, 21

from the economic base of the community. They have no voice. They are physically present, but they are incorporeal, like ghosts.”²⁰

The data of empirical social science do not support these claims, or if they do in some cases, the claims are contradicted in many others. If we begin by accepting Chapin’s premise that hundreds of thousands of rural poor people in the west and southwest should properly be defined as Indians (even if they themselves contend otherwise, or simply regard the issue as meaningless), the claims Chapin makes about the marginalization and poverty of these Indians remain contentious. In major cities like Sonsonate, Santa Ana, and San Salvador, the poorest residents are not necessarily first-generation immigrants from the countryside, particularly as migration to the US has become such a regular option for rural folk. Still, the question of whether the poorest in the cities are, in fact, Indians, is one that cannot be answered (nor simply should be taken on faith) given the impossibility of settling upon a fixed definition of who, exactly, is an Indian.

The assertion that even in areas that are majority indigenous, Indians are “without exception” denied economic or political power is easier to disprove. Recent ethnographies of Santo Domingo de Guzmán (Ronsbo forthcoming), Izalco and Cacaopera (Rodriguez and Lara Martínez 2000), as well as historical work by Jeff Gould and Aldo Lauria-Santiago (Gould and Lauria-Santiago 2004; Lauria-Santiago 1999) all show a much more complicated picture of the overlapping lines of class, gender, and “ethnicity,” and their relations to economic and political power. In Izalco, for example, Rodríguez shows how their historical knowledge and control of irrigation systems helped indigenous families negotiate with ladinos well into the 20th century and shaped a complex pattern of social stratification in the mid-20th century in which Indians could not

²⁰ *ibid.* 22

be said categorically to have been excluded from either political or economic power. Likewise, the claim that Indians are the poorest of the poor at the national level fails to hold up. Indigenous communities in the west had greater and more stable access to wage labor than did peasants in Chalatenango, Morazán, and Usulután. This is in part because the coffee economy in the *occidente* was relatively more stable and lucrative than cotton (in Usulután and Chalatenango), and because the west had more productive, less exhausted soils. Until the coffee bust of the last five to eight years, when Tacuba became one of the poorest *municipios* in the country, the rural poor of the *occidente* were relatively better off economically than their counterparts in other parts of the country.

In the last of Chapin's statements cited above, comparing El Salvador's Indians to ghosts, Chapin is probably closer to the heart of the matter than he realizes, although he has inverted the key subjects. Where he is concerned with how real Indians are transformed into incorporeal ghosts, the better questions are, first, how are Indians, as ghostly apparitions, made real, as in the massacre?; and second, how are real people in the countryside made ghostly as the fetish of the Indian comes to demand a social space in which those real social subjects might have had a voice less encumbered by the contradictory demands of Indianness in the national imaginary? The fluidity of categories evidenced in questions of "identity" in rural El Salvador becomes a problem only when they are fixed and pressed into service in order to contain and define a particular group, as in *la matanza*; and again as in contemporary efforts to identify the indigenous of El Salvador, described below in Chapters 5 and 6.

As with Chapin, Ching and Tilley are concerned to challenge the notion that there are no Indians in El Salvador and to make visible those Indians who continue to exist. They assert not only a continuous indigenous presence, but one that is both visible and in some cases actually supported or promoted by the military and the state, the institutions

that were, according to the popular myth around *la matanza*, engaged in concerted efforts sanctioned by law to eradicate Indians. These revisions undermine the popular belief that there was a formal, legally-based effort to eradicate Indians or Indianness after 1932. There is other evidence demonstrating that indigenous communities did not abandon all markers of Indian identity abruptly in the years after the massacre. Older women in many of the towns that suffered the violence of 1932 still wear the traditional skirt, or *refajo*, that is so consistently regarded as a sign of authentic Indianness, and this is true despite the fact that it is difficult to obtain and substantially more expensive than conventional dresses. Likewise, there are still people who speak some Nahuatl, many of whom were small children at the time of the massacre or born in the years immediately following. Other evidence suggests that in some areas, including Tacuba, Nahuatl was heavily in decline well before the massacre.

Like Chapin, Ching and Tilley are concerned to examine the rebellion and massacre anew as an historical episode that was primarily about racial conflict. In their efforts to privilege race as a historical fact, these authors all reify an idea of an empirically real Indianness that can be measured. For Chapin this venture leads to an impossibly contradictory list of characteristics of the Salvadoran Indian that fail to distinguish the Indian from non-Indian peasants and fail to explicate the complexities of the politics of difference in El Salvador. Instead, Chapin maps a generic model of ladino-Indian conflict onto the historical terrain of Salvadoran political and agrarian conflict.

Ching and Tilley, drawing on a section of Tilley's earlier work, find an indicator at least as spurious as any of Chapin's to show that the Indian population did not decline in the decade following the massacre: they turn to the town registrar's record of whether an individual child was "indio," "ladino," or "mestizo." Why is this such an implausible indicator? In the context of fluidity and ambiguity that surrounded Indianness long before

the 1940s, the time period on which Tilley focuses, the remarks of a town registrar should not be taken as positivist evidence of an individual's "race." At best, a registrar's evaluation will reflect prevailing understandings of race, but only in cases where an explicit, general agreement about who is and is not Indian obtains. In those cases where racial understandings are tacit and contested, what does the appraisal of a town registrar of an infant tell us? Will the registrar judge on skin color? The *barrio* of the parents? Their marital status or occupation? What are we to make of Thomas Anderson's claim that "*natural*," a local term often regarded as synonymous with "*indio*," referred to illegitimate birth? Or what of cases like that of my friend Paca's father, born in the late 1930s in Izalco? His birth record labels him "*indio*," while his nearest brothers are both "*mestizo*." The notion that there was a categorically coherent, stable meaning to "*indio*" across large areas of El Salvador at the time of the massacre appears unlikely. More unlikely still is that the category stood as a positive kernel of identification, that is, as a singularly important mode of self identification. Instead, "*indio*" was a fluid and labile term overdetermined by dominant mestizo fantasies about Indians. The projects of Ching and Tilley and Chapin, grounded in a realist account of Indians and their relative visibility or presence, struggle mightily against the ambiguity and uncertainty that surrounds the category of Indian. Yet ambiguity and uncertainty seem, in fact, to be of a piece with the modern experience of Indianness in El Salvador.

FICTIONAL REALITIES: NARRATIVES WITHIN THE MASSACRE

Perhaps the problem stems from the assumption that there must exist some kind of stable Indianness that existed before, during, and after the rebellion and massacre of 1932. As mentioned above, there are good reasons not to look for Indianness, or "the factor of cultural conflict," in Anderson's words, as a primary feature of the coherence,

energy, or ideological formation of the rebellion. Recent work by Gould and Lauria-Santiago (2004) supports this position. They conclude that the rebellion should be regarded as truly revolutionary, arguing that a revolutionary consciousness brought together and superseded the multiple local grievances, demands, axis of conflict, and identities of the rebels. Taking this conclusion seriously suggests that we approach the question anew. If conflict in the form of “ethnic differences,” (a sense of being discriminated against as a racial or cultural “other”), or atavistic hatreds as Schlesinger would have it, were important in a few of the areas that rebelled, but were neither a unifying nor an overarching aspect of the rebellion as a whole, or of the consciousness of the rebels—what can we gain by continuing to approach *la matanza* through an analysis of race? Must race have been important to the rebellion in order for it to have been meaningful in the massacre?

No. It is in the massacre itself, rather than the rebellion, that race becomes a central issue, and it does so not because of the given identities of the victims as Indians—but because of the fantasies of race and nation that energized and perhaps guided the perpetrators of the violence. Again, with this language I mean to indicate fantasies and fictions that have generative, productive capacities and concrete effects on reality. *La matanza* has come to be held as the explanation for the demise of Indianness retrospectively, and the primary tenets of this explanation—that the dictatorship imposed legal prohibitions against “Indian culture;” that women abandoned the *refajo* in the first generation after the massacre; and that people stopped speaking Nahuatl out of fear of being punished—have all been placed seriously into question by recent research.

Rather than constitute an end to Indianness, *la matanza* produced Indianness of a sort that has come to dominate the space of the Indian in the national imaginary. The crucial and difficult issue is that the massacre produced a contained, comprehensible

version of Indianness *as a loss, as an absence*, rather than the kind of presence that realist historiographies of ethnicity in El Salvador have sought. The powerful effect of the massacre was to produce the figure of the Indian, a crucial element of the dominant national Imaginary, as an absence. In considering the massacre as a national trauma (see Chapter Three) it is crucial to distinguish between types of trauma and the subjects upon whom those traumas register. The loss produced by the massacre as the absence of the Indian is a trauma in the register of the national imaginary. It is a trauma for a national subject, one who identifies herself through hegemonic or directly counterhegemonic imaginaries of the nation and its time space. On the other hand, the immediate, material losses produced by the massacre—the bodies, families, individuals killed, and communities broken apart—these are traumas that register in local spaces, for individuals and localized collectivities that experienced the massacre as an immediate event rather than a narrative distanced spatially and temporally from the sound of the guns and the smell of blood. Key to the story of *la matanza* are the ways that ideas experienced in, or generated in, the first realm of the national imaginary interact with, and at times materialize in, the second register of local effects.

The Indian of the national imaginary in Latin American nationalisms is comprised of multiple, at times contradictory elements. Constituted initially as the non-European other, “*el otro más allá de los mares*,” the Indian is the object of those who believed themselves discoverers of a New World.²¹ The Indian is also an ancestor for mestizo nationalisms, both in the sense of a prior “great civilization” in the Maya, the Aztecs, and the Incas, and in the intimate, sexual union at the heart of mestizaje’s claims to biological foundations, a union that is reproduced in El Salvador today in oft-repeated stories of

²¹ Mires (1991)

Spanish grandfathers and *abuelas indígenas*, indigenous grandmothers (the Indian always the feminine half of this fantasy).

The goals of sameness running through the assimilationist dreams of *mestizaje* are always underwritten by desires attached to ideal difference, the longing of the dominant for what is understood to constitute distinction—for otherness itself. This desire to assume the unique difference of the other easily slips into the consuming drives of mixing and assimilation, whose *mestizaje* incarnation is aptly labeled “ethnophagy” by Héctor Díaz-Polanco (1991). The longing to acquire the characteristics that distinguish the other is inescapably bound up with what Walter Benjamin (1986) labeled the mimetic faculty, the human capacity for productive imitation. “A human being becomes human at all by imitating other human beings,” wrote Adorno (Adorno 1978:154). Its generative power is what distinguishes mimesis from straightforward imitation, making mimesis uniquely human, a powerful kind of sympathetic magic (Mauss 1972; Taussig 1993). While the impulse to mimesis appears in operation as an acquisitive process²² of taking from the other, it is in fact productive, a creative dialectic of difference and repetition, of producing anew while yielding to the already-there.

As an effort to become another and to take on the qualities of that other, and also a relaxation of the hold on the present so as to “sink back into nature” (Adorno and Horkheimer, cited in Taussig 1993:46) mimesis is an act of making and taking power: typically, the power attributed to the image which is to be copied. It is the curious ability of the copy to take on the power of the original in rites and magical practice with the object of warding off the threat posed by the same original. This is a form of magical practice, as Taussig notes, one that folds together Frazer’s Law of Similarity and the Law of Contagion or Contact as principles of how magic works to manipulate the world. In the

²² See René Girard (1977) on “acquisitive mimesis”

context of colonial violence and state power, this plays out as the performance of the threat (real or imagined, it is the same) posed by the other, the original.²³ Writing of the brutality with which colonial rubber planters and their agents treated the indigenous people of the Putumayo region of Colombia, Michael Taussig shows that “the terror and tortures they devised mirrored the horror of the savagery they both feared and fictionalized” (Taussig 1986:133).

And so it was with the fears that excited the urban bourgeoisie in the weeks before the rebellion in western El Salvador. As Sheila Candelario notes, in December 1931 and the beginning of January 1932 the press was rife with stories that portrayed communists as a menace contaminating the nation (calling up Frazer’s magical Law of Contagion). The fear of the danger posed by communists and the masses more generally took hold throughout the nation. General José Tomás Calderón, who would later be charged with suppressing the rebellion in Sonsonate, reported in the weeks before January 22 that

In Sonsonate and Izalco...there is much restlessness because of the fear of the communist reaction. They fear pillage and murder, but this is not universal because some of the leading citizens of the said cities say that, as the punishment has been severe, there may not be a revolt, but they allow that the Indians are very tenacious in their ideas (Anderson 1992:104).²⁴

²³ Taussig points out that mimesis as a social process finally must trouble any notion of the original and the copy: Noting that theories of magic suggest that a material connection between original and copy, through Frazer’s magical Law of Contact or Contagion, that the copy becomes powerful, Taussig writes “Thus does the magic of Similarity become but an instance of the magic of Contact – and what I take to be fundamentally important is not just that little bit of Contact makes up for lack of Similarity, or that some smattering of real substances makes up for a deficiency in the likeness of the visual image, but rather that all these examples (magical realism) in which image and contact interpenetrate must have the effect of making us reconsider our very notion of what it is to be an image of some thing, most especially if we wish not only to express but to manipulate reality by means of its image (1993: 57). The insistence here on the importance of contact or contagion suggests the importance of sexuality and gender in the colonial encounter as a terrain in which feared others are constituted and so reality is manipulated.

²⁴ As Anderson points out, the use of the word “Indians” is notable here, particularly since General Calderón was in charge of the military response to the 1932 rebellion.

A market woman in Sonsonate recalled, “when we heard the first shots we thought that our hour had come. The coming of the communist assault had been announced for several days, and we thought that when it happened no one over seven years of age would be left alive. They would kill us and burn our houses” (Méndez 1932:11-12).

Most dramatically, as Schlesinger asserts in *Revolución Comunista*, the rumor circulated that Farabundo Martí had given the following orders to the rebels a week before the uprising:

4. The revolutionary action against the bourgeoisie ought to be as forceful as possible, in order that in a few hours of merciless terror they will be reduced to the most complete impotence. USE AGAINST THEM THE MOST OPPORTUNE MEANS, THAT IS TO SAY SHOOT IMMEDIATELY OR KILL THEM IN SOME OTHER WAY WITHOUT DELAY.

5. ...DO AWAY WITH ALL OF THEM, SAVING ONLY THE LIVES OF CHILDREN (Schlesinger 1946:121-122).²⁵

These orders approximate the savagery of the soldiers and vigilantes who killed thousands—much more than the actions of the rebels who killed dozens. The fears expressed in these examples charted the path through fantasy to the mimetic appropriation by elites and the state of the powers they attributed to the rebels. That power is turned on the peasants themselves: do away with all of them, saving only the lives of children.

The massacre re-energizes collective representations of Indians and Indianness. In the response of the dominant class and the state, a savage is created as a threat to the

²⁵Anderson speculates that these orders were authentic, although he does not explain this confidence in Schlesinger. Again, however, the authenticity of the document is less important for the massacre than the fact the script of the elite imaginary virtually called for such a document.

national body, made visible in the gaze of the soldiers and vigilantes and materialized in the bodies they destroyed. Thus the state conjures and materializes its enemies through what Aretxaga, in her analysis of the engagement of the Spanish state with the figure of the Basque terrorist, calls “disorganized mimesis”

What is copied then is not terrorism but a fantasy of terrorism, as indeed the terrorist can only exist—like the savage—in a fantastic form, as a collective representation. What is produced in this mimetic engagement of the state (as a fictional entity) with the representation of the terrorist is exactly terrorism—dead bodies, material effects, but also affective states (exhilaration, anger, fear). And not only state terrorism but the state itself is produced in the act of producing terrorism—a nervous state subject to uncontrolled excitement (Aretxaga 2000:60-61).²⁶

Aretxaga’s argument that the terrorist, like the savage, can only exist in fantastic form should not be taken to mean that the Indian is a subject *only* of discourse, that the subaltern cannot speak. Aretxaga’s insight that the mimetic construction/appropriation of the other by the dominant also produces affective states, an “uncontrolled excitement,” suggests that the question should not be whether the subaltern can speak, but *what* in the subaltern is speaking when the Indian, overdetermined by mestizo desires, fears, and fantasies, is invoked. Something in Indianness, or indexed by Indianness, exceeds the power of dominant discourse to contain and direct the meanings of Indianness.

Here it is important to recall that mimesis is not simply discursive, but also material; not merely imaginary, but also bodily. It is in the act of killing those imagined as savage others, of embodying their savagery and dismembering their bodies, that the horrible power of mimesis is unleashed. “Action puts forth its own image,” writes Taussig, suggesting that the imagery of mimesis—both the copy and the copied—is not only visual but also registered by the other senses. The retroactive insistence that visual

²⁶ The language of creation and production here refers both to founding, to a moment of unique origin, and crucially to repetition in so far as these are instances of re-creation and reproduction.

markers of Indianness guided the killers to their targets is difficult to sustain when so much of the killing took place in Juayúa and Tacuba, two towns where those markers of Indianness were not evident in most of the rural population. We might make more sense of it if we think of the ways Taussig's "nonvisual imagery" might have worked to create a knowledge of who to kill. This is particularly so if we understand the realm of the nonvisual image to include the fantasy image, one that registers neither as a visually coherent nor an explicitly conscious form of recognition, but instead registers recognition as a feeling. Adorno, writing on the Holocaust, remarked on this kind of recognition that runs through mass violence:

The familiar argument of tolerance, that all people and races are equal, is a boomerang. It lays itself open to the simplest refutation of the senses, and the most compelling anthropological proofs that the Jews are not a race will, in the event of a pogrom, scarcely alter the fact that the totalitarians know full well whom they do and whom they do not intend to murder (Adorno and Tiedemann 2003:54).

The recognition at work in *la matanza* was implicated in fantasies of Indians, and as such was a productive recognition in that it matched living subjects to fantasy subjects, real bodies to fantasy bodies, and it made of a couple of thousand real rebels a fantastic threat of contamination that legitimated, at some level, the mass executions of thousands.

In becoming, and so appropriating the savage threat, the state claims ownership of the space of Indianness, the space in which Indians are imagined to reside. Thus the land of the Indian is colonized in the moment it flashes up as a threat, and is again consumed within the mestizo national imaginary. The fragile, imaginary unity of indigenous identity dissolves in the wake of the massacre that produced it, and the Indian is split into two: the first, the bearer of a vanishing culture and ancestor of the nation, a figure of melancholy

and loss available primarily as an absence; and the second, the *indio comunista*,²⁷ savage, backwards, an uncomfortable remainder, and a disease threatening the national body. The blending of *indio* and *comunista* accomplishes the double task of making political opposition less than human and of explicitly racializing class conflict at the level of discourse—a move that renders the state and the *mestizo* national ideal racially unmarked, neutral. The *indio comunista* blends the immediate threat of the political radical with the timeless menace of the savage, the *indio* of national fantasy. *Indio* comes to signify an abject figure, despised as dirty, poor, and uncivilized. Thus the green-eyed, blonde-haired descendants of Spaniards who worked in indigo production in the central and northern parts of the country were called *indios cheles*, “the white-skinned Indians.”²⁸ This is not simply metaphor but evidence of the tremendous fluidity of the term “*indio*.” Certainly by the time of the massacre, “*indio*” is a labile term no longer anchored to specific people or places, perhaps best thought of as a way of looking at society and the complicated grammars of difference and sameness of mestizo nationalism.

Efforts by scholars to reread race into the events of 1932 as a quality inherent in people and places, something settled enough to grasp hold of, inevitably implicate themselves in the (re)production of the Indian I’ve called here the fetish Indian, that figure of myth-history and the national imaginary, whose relation to those subjects in the countryside who have historically suffered as Indians is, again, overdetermined by dominant mestizo ideologies of race and nation. It is this fetish Indian that registers as a loss in accounts of *la matanza* as a national trauma. The (re)production of that Indian is

²⁷ Marroquín (1975) notes that these two figures, the Indian and the Communist, “came to be a single entity” after 1932. This simple but absolutely astute observation goes far in explaining the complexity of an indigenous identity and a politics based on that identity in post-civil war El Salvador.

²⁸ On the “*indios cheles*” see Clara Concepción de Guevara, “El añil de los ‘indios cheles,’” in *América Indígena*, 34:4, 1975.

inextricably susceptible to the ethnophagy of *indigenismo*, aptly defined by Favre as “a current of thought and of ideas that are organized and developed around the image of the Indian... an interrogation of Indian-ness by non-Indians in the service of non-Indian concerns and goals” (Favre cited in Barre 1983:29-30). Ethnophagy is akin to what Freud labeled introjection, the psychic process by which a subject takes into herself the qualities of a lost object, and by consuming it keeps it present in a very unique sense. Recently, a handful of scholars of gender and race have theorized the ways this melancholic introjection contributes to subject formation in its broader sociological senses. Thus Cheng argues that racialized identities, both of subaltern and dominant subjects constructed within a racial imaginary, are constituted in part by losses. “The history of the ego is thus the history of its losses” she writes. “More accurately, melancholia refers not to the loss per se but to the entangled relationship with loss.”

The rendering in national myth of the Indian as an absence, a figure of loss, is made extremely powerful—real—with reference to the massacre, powerful perhaps because the disappearance of the Indian as a result of the massacre makes a kind of sense of the otherwise incomprehensible violence. The year 1932 works as a temporal pivot, marking a before and after, a moment to which is attached a sense of loss as well as of beginnings. Here begins the genesis of the repressive, anticommunist state; the myth of El Salvador as home to a racially unmarked collective subject; and the myth of an indigenous El Salvador outside of the national here and now— myths that so trouble the Indian’s return to the present.

The Indian that is called into being by the dominant myth-history of *la matanza* as the moment of the Indian’s disappearance is what Avery Gordon calls an apparition, felt not by its presence, but by its powers to haunt the present. This disappearance channels the Indian of the national imaginary into spaces that are necessarily not the national here

and now. To insist on the reality of the relation between this Indian and those victims of racism beyond that violence itself risks stripping the complexity, sense of self, and agency from those victims. Posing the questions of loss in terms of what remains, rather than what was (or was not) “really” lost opens new ways to approach questions of race and racializing power that might avoid making an *a priori* analytical problem of the victims of the massacre and their descendants.

Chapter Three: Two Faces Turned Toward the State

Listen, in those days it was terrible. God. That's why, like I tell them, my children, don't go getting mixed up with parties, child, I tell him.²⁹

Mercedes Méndez, Tacuba

I came up suffering... Look, here in El Salvador there have been two wars in the time I grew up: in 32 they killed all the poor, my father died in that one. My mother had my brother and me. I was the oldest, holding my mother's hand as we went walking along, and the other was still nursing, the one that was sitting here that day. Since then we were raised in sadness, in poverty. Food, what was my mother going to find to give us? There was no work. I spent my days when I was little without food.³⁰

Gabriel Méndez, Tacuba

The previous chapter looked at the mutual production of Indians and nation through intertwining narratives of the 1932 massacre known as *la matanza*. In it I argue that the massacre was influenced by mestizo fantasies of Indians and 'pure' or complete national subjects threatened by the savagery of the Indian. The Indian as a savage but integral part of the national subject was linked firmly to the political rebel in the figure of the *indio-comunista*, while another idea of Indians emphasizing an indigenous component of national identity was more firmly and distinctly relegated to an imaginary, fetishized space outside of the national present. These shifts in the production of Indians in the national imaginary were consolidated in the years following the massacre with the production of folkloric representations of Indians, representing those communities

²⁹ *Mire usted, en aquel tiempo fue tremendo. Dios. Por eso que como les digo yo, este a mis hijos, no se anden metiendo en partidos, hijo, le digo.*

³⁰ *Yo vengo de sufrir... Mire, aquí en El Salvador han habido dos guerras en mi época que yo me crié: en el 32 mataron a todos los pobres, allí se fue en la cuenta mi papá. Mi mamá, yo y ese otro mi hermano nos tenía... Yo era el mayor, de la mano me andaba llevando y el otro estaba mamando, ese que estaba sentado aquel día. De allí nosotros nos crecimos en la tristeza, en la pobreza. ¿Alimentos, qué iba alcanzar mi mamá a darnos? No había ni trabajo. Pasé mis días cuando estaba pequeñito sin comer.*

deemed authentically indigenous as lingering, vestigial remains, on the one hand, and the eradication of discursive categories enabling Indianness, most remarkably in the elimination of the census category and the statement endorsing the International Indigenist Institute. *La matanza* also produced the state as a ghostly totality, consolidated through its power to destroy bodies in huge numbers.

This chapter and the next explore the effects of the massacre in Tacuba, asking what it was like to live these legacies of the massacre. In one sense, this chapter is an effort to understand the history of conflict in rural El Salvador as “history in person” (Holland and Lave 2001), asking what it means when Gabriel Méndez says “I came up suffering,” or literally, “I come from suffering.” More particularly, it seeks to understand what kinds of efforts to challenge and correct that suffering people like Gabriel understood as possibilities. This question stems directly from the widely accepted charge that after the massacre of 1932, peasants in the *occidente*, as the western coffee-growing region is called, were so terrified of possible state repression on the order of *la matanza* that they adopted a stance of complete political apathy. This is typically cited as one of the main reasons that the revolutionary FMLN was unable to garner significant support in the *occidente* in the 1970s and 1980s. While this appears to be the case to a certain extent, I argue that the important point is not the abandonment of outwardly political behavior, but the forms of secrecy and ambiguity in everyday practice that arose in its stead, and the effects that this, in turn, had on local social life. As Mariane Ferme illustrates in her ethnography of secrecy and everyday life among the Mende of Sierra Leone, ambiguity becomes not only a strategy in particular circumstances but a sensibility that pervades the social in contexts where communicative ideals of transparency and directness are ineffective in the face of overwhelming violence (Ferme 2001). In Tacuba, such a sensibility or aesthetic of indirectness and ambiguity permeates

social interactions to produce a world in which secondary meanings below the surface are often at work, and in which the practices of *doble cara* – literally, double face – mark styles of everyday as well as explicitly clandestine political practice³¹.

RATIONALISM VERSUS RATIONALIZATION: LEARNING THE LESSONS OF *LA MATANZA*

As Gabriel Méndez recounts, his mother was left a widow with two children after her husband was killed by the soldiers in 1932. Mercedes Méndez, known as Niña Meche, is still alive, living only a few kilometers from the house Gabriel shares with his son and daughter. When I ask Gabriel if it would be possible to visit Meche to hear her account of *la matanza* and life in Tacuba when she was young, Gabriel assures me that we'll go, although he puts me off several times over the course of a few months.

As Gabriel and I walk the footpath through *cafetales* and *milpa* to visit, he explains to me why he's delayed the trip so long. His mother lives with Gabriel's sister and brother-in-law, evangelical Christians who, according to Gabriel, are not fond of visitors, talking about the past or anything that might seem political, or Gabriel himself. It's Sunday morning, and his sister and her husband are visiting a church on the far side of Tacuba, a trip they seldom make.

Arriving at niña Meche's small and very tidy brick home, we're greeted by dogs that bark at me and give Gabriel a wide berth: clearly, he's signaled his impatience with them with well-aimed stones at some point, and these dogs remember the message. Niña Meche walks out to join the greeting. Ninety-two years old in 2002, she is stooped and does not get out much, although her steps as she comes to the garden to meet us are sure.

³¹ I am especially indebted to Elana Zilberg's work on *doble cara* as a sensibility and strategy within the FMLN Zilberg (2003). Also notable here is FMLN documentary on their organizing efforts in the *occidente*, entitled simply "*Doble Cara*", produced by Producciones Radio Venceremos.

She wears her hair in a long braid and is clothed in a sweatshirt and *refajo*, the wrapped woven skirt so strongly associated with indigenous culture in El Salvador.

We sit down inside, the morning sunlight streaming through the dust as it enters the large windows covered in chain-link mesh. As we settle in, niña Meche talks about the difficulty of bringing up her children in those days. There was neither school nor store nearby, she says, and she treated her children's illnesses with plants from the surrounding hills.

These were the remedies for my children. I give thanks. I had eight boys and three girls, but not one of my children died on me past infancy. [...] Today no, I tell you. These people, now, there's all the medicine and lots are dying. [...] No, not us, I tell you, we raised our children just with roots of wild plants. [...] Yes, I tell you mister, before, El Salvador was sad. Here there were only poor people. Working on the land (*trabajado de cuma*), whatever work there was. But there was no school, neither school nor pharmacy. The first pharmacy that they came to establish in the town was the Martínez pharmacy.

This pharmacy, of the Martínez family, was located on the main street in Tacuba where today women from the cantones sell vegetables, tomatoes, cucumber, onions, and squash, much of it grown with irrigation projects from international donors. They sit alongside the vendors from Ahuachapán who display pirated cassette tapes, used clothing, and cheap caps with the logos of Spanish soccer teams. The block in which they set up their wares is marked by a long, dilapidated adobe building at one corner, originally the store of the Cuenca family, whose sons, Abél and Efraín, led the Communist rebels in Tacuba.

I ask Meche if she recalls the Cuenca family. Her response tips her into a well of memories. As she speaks I occasionally murmur my encouragement or ask specific questions, but I think she doesn't hear me. Once she begins talking about la matanza her eyes fill with tears, and her words follow their own course, one that blurs the lines

between characters and does not quite conform to either the temporality or the cast of characters as I have learned the story to date. “What do you remember about the Cuencas?” I ask.

MM: They were the first ones of the store that was there, the Cuencas, the house that belongs to don Felix now, that was the Cuenca’s. But, the sadness of all that is because of these things. They killed many people then. This one’s father (pointing to Gabriel), they killed him for no reason. He wasn’t affiliated, wasn’t affiliated with any party. Because then, then many died. His father... the ceiba in the cemetery, that’s how they dried it up, because that’s where they’d line up the poor men they shot. It was a great tree that was there in the cemetery, and it was then that they killed it. So many bullets went into it... Well, those Cuencas, they say they brought the party of Araujo³². And the ones here had the Araujista party and so everyone died. We lived in another village, and in the night, around midnight the shooting started. And the day dawned that way, we learned that they had taken the town hall. There were some, they were fools! And the troops came from Ahuachapán. And they went to meet them, there near what they call San Juan de Guanacaste. There they met the troops. There they got them... that’s why the war came, why they killed everybody. But there were only a few! And there were a lot of people who weren’t involved, and because they were Salvadoran they killed them. I had two children with the father of this one (again signaling Gabriel), and they killed him.

BP: Where did they kill him?

MM: In Tacuba, at the ceiba. They had killed them in groups of fourteen. The huge troop of soldiers went. Out there in the fincas, of don Alberto Méndez, don William Torres, there were lots of people, they went to get them out of there. [...] Listen, in that time it was terrible. God. That is why I tell them, my children, don’t ge getting mixed up with parties, child, I tell him. I’ve now lived through it, and I’ve seen things. God.

³² Arturo Araujo was the president deposed by the coup that installed Maximiliano Hernández Martínez to power in December of 1931. Araujo’s attempts at political reform legalized the Communist Party of El Salvador as unemployment skyrocketed in the first years of the Depression. Araujo supporters were allied with CP supporters in several areas of the rebellion, although nationally the CP had been outspokenly critical of Araujo and his reforms. Given this it is neither surprising or necessarily inaccurate that Chepa recalls the Tacuba rebels as Araujistas.

Eventually the conversation moves away from the massacre and on to easier topics. We do not return to la matanza.

Meche's account differs from journalistic and historical accounts like Méndez or Anderson both in its singular, localized point of view, and in the ambiguity surrounding events and actors that permeates the explanations she weaves through her account. Most notable is her repeated insistence that her children learn the lesson of the massacre: don't get involved in politics. Blame is laid squarely upon those who became involved with the communists: they brought this suffering upon themselves. Meche insists this is so at the same time her husband, who (according to Meche) was not involved – innocent, in the logic of Meche's argument – was also killed. In fact, her husband was killed while her father-in-law, who was a secretary for the Communist Party in Tacuba, a leader, in her words, was not killed. Her father-in-law had tried repeatedly to recruit his son, but Meche's husband refused, saying he had too much work in the fields. When the troops came, her father-in-law was able to hide in the town of Tacuba and later flee, while her husband, hiding in a wealthy man's coffee fields where he was working, was killed along with hundreds of others who were "not involved."

Meche's memory is uneven, perhaps unreliable after seventy years. Some details are crystalline in her mind's eye, while others are lost to her entirely. The temporality of her recollections likewise follows a path neither direct nor expected, with the appearance of contemporary events and figures alongside those of her terrible experiences of 1932, as when she talks of the soldiers as representatives of the ARENA party, the currently ruling far-right party, founded in 1989 by a death-squad organizer. Meche's recollections display not a straightforward form of forgetting in which collected data of memory fade or disintegrate, but a more complicated process of making and remaking sense. This involves forgetfulness as a labor, not a passive process of attrition. It also involves

incorporating elements of other accounts within the personal memory, accounts that may be contradictory in the sense of presenting logically inconsistent positions as coterminous, but also by literally contradicting the evidence of the senses.

RESPONSES TO COLLECTIVE TRAUMA

As described in the previous chapter, *la matanza* is ubiquitously referred to in popular and scholarly narratives as traumatic, yet typically in ways that do not address what, specifically, makes this worth mentioning. Trauma in these references (“the massacre that traumatized a nation,” “a collective trauma”³³) is taken for granted, and at one level, the massacre of more than ten thousand people in a country of 1.5 million is self-evidently traumatic. Rather than point to a specific approach to history, memory, and subjectivity, the concept of trauma is employed primarily to underscore the extremity of *la matanza*’s violence. This approach tells us little about specific experiences of loss and shock, and the individual and collective dynamics of repression and return that characterize traumatized subjects. They do not help us to understand the experiences of people like niña Meche and others in Tacuba, or they ways the traumatic legacies of 1932 have shaped the experiences of subsequent generations.

A more nuanced approach to collective trauma is indebted to Kai Erikson’s work on collective social responses to disasters, beginning with his 1976 book on a community destroyed by a massive flood. Erikson distinguished individual trauma – “a blow to the psyche that breaks through one’s defenses so suddenly and with such brutal force that one cannot react to it effectively” – from collective trauma: “a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality” (Erikson 1976:153-154). The concept of national trauma,

³³ Anderson (1971), Gould and Consalvi (2002)

registered in the domain of a national imaginary and haunting nationalisms with unbidden images and disruptive, intrusive returns, is an expanded or parallel version of collective trauma that I deploy to characterize the kind of trauma generated by the massacre to which Anderson refers.

A recent effort to sort through the meanings of trauma, culture, and identity suggests that trauma theory has been distorted by powerful, common sense understandings of what trauma is and how it works. In *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (Alexander, et al. 2004), Jeffrey Alexander characterizes these commonsense understandings as “lay trauma theory,” of which he identifies “enlightenment” and “psychoanalytic” versions.

The objects or events that trigger trauma are perceived clearly by actors, their responses are lucid, and the effects of these responses are problem solving and progressive.... The responses to such traumas will be efforts to alter the circumstances that caused them (Alexander, et al. 2004:3).

The clarity of understanding described in this version of trauma theory suggests that any kind of repression resulting from trauma will be comprehensible in terms of some form of instrumental reason available to consciousness. This is a significant departure from psychoanalytic understandings of trauma and repression, which reject such an implicit model of straightforward instrumentality at the level of unconscious responses to psychic trauma.

Alexander’s identification of the enlightenment version of lay trauma theory provides a helpful way to approach the discussions of trauma that have predominated in the myth-history of *la matanza*. It highlights two common features of the lay trauma interpretation of the 1932 massacre. First, the notion that the massacre prompted a largely rational evaluation of perceived risk; and second, that people responded to that risk with calculated behavior that included hiding or shedding signs of Indian identity and

eschewing any political activity for fear of further persecution. These conclusions deserve close attention.

In his work on responses to state terror in Argentina, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala, Manuel Suárez-Orozco (1992; 1990) establishes a methodology and theoretical agenda for the study of collective trauma resulting from political violence. Comparing narratives of young Central American immigrants in the US with research among Argentines reflecting upon the Dirty War, Suárez-Orozco finds that what he calls psychosocial or psychocultural responses to terror follow a consistent, three-part pattern comprised of denial, rationalization, and internalization-elaboration. The denial stage is mostly simply characterized as one in which people refuse to believe that state violence has occurred. This is exemplified by the Argentine parents of a *desaparecido* cited by Suárez-Orozco, who cannot believe this could happen. Denial in the Argentine case also took the form of a refusal that the disappearances took place at all, and attributed reports of disappearances instead to an “anti-Argentina” propaganda campaign. This clearly parallels Holocaust denials, and while it may typically be laden with the political values of fascist nationalism, Suárez-Orozco shows that denial is also a phase in a psychocultural response to the unthinkable, and as such does not necessarily have an *a priori* political value determination³⁴. The political values derived from denial of a process of state terror might well seek to validate the existence of a democratic process and the legitimacy of the state without wholeheartedly affirming the legitimacy of a particular regime.

Suárez-Orozco’s discussion of rationalization as a response to state violence is especially helpful for understanding the cultural and political legacies of *la matanza*. The rationalizations Suárez-Orozco found among his respondents typically took the form of a

³⁴ See also Feitlowitz (1998) on the subjective effects of the Argentina’s dirty war.

belief that those who were killed or disappeared must have been involved in something suspicious or dangerous, and so, more or less, they had it coming. A parallel formation was the belief that staying away from any kind of political activity was the only way to ensure one's safety. One informant from Central America told Suárez-Orozco that he did not like any kind of politics. "There were many murdered without any reason ... I was really afraid. [...] People were killed by both sides, the death squads and the guerrillas. So one cannot be with one group or with the other; the best thing is to be quiet and not be involved in anything" (Suárez-Orozco 1990:364). Another informant said "I was afraid even though there was nothing I was guilty of; I was afraid." (Suárez-Orozco 1990:366).

The key point in these rationalizations is the contradiction between knowing that the killing itself is or was irrational and that one could never assure her safety on the one hand, and the insistence that any behavior that might appear political must be avoided on the other. In spite of the acknowledgement that people who were not involved in political activities, people who were "innocent" by any measure, were nonetheless killed, a kind of irrational rationalization is formed that insists that there is a way to ensure one's safety despite the clear evidence that no one is safe in the end. Thus, *niña Meche* says that they killed everyone even though "there were lots who were not involved." This is why, she explains, she always told her children to stay away from politics and organizations.

This convoluted rationalization should be distinguished from the rationalism that Alexander *et al* see in the enlightenment version of lay trauma theory. While the latter involves evaluating observed facts and deciding to minimize risk by avoiding certain behaviors or characteristics that could mark one as a target, the former involves an ultimately impossible effort to attribute linear reason to the traumatic experience.

THE ALL-PERVASIVE STATE

Don Alfredo, a poor peasant from a village near a coffee mill between Tacuba and Ahuachapán, was thirteen in 1932. At that time he was recruited by the local military commander as a spy because, as Alfredo tells it, the commander “was looking for the person with the most agility, who could move from one place to another.” After the rebellion and the initial invasion of Tacuba by the military, the troops traveled the cantones with lists of accused rebels.

A: President Maximiliano Hernández Martínez, what he did was go and get all the people on the lists. And, he began to get everyone who was marked as a communist. And he told them to look for them in the houses, with the army... And my father, I remember that he wasn't on the list. But the poor souls who were listed, oh God. Where did they go to finish them off? There to the pit in Los Ausoles (a nearby volcanic hot springs in which the water is scalding). Alive, they tossed them in like that. [...] This is what happened in those days of communism. Communism came... well, usually, they didn't come against the poor, they were against the rich.

BGP: Did the communists have much support in the area?

A: Ah, no, they didn't have much support. Because the people were afraid of the guerri—uh, communism. In that time, dear God. I tell you, that General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez, God help me, if he knew that I was marked inside! (que supiera que yo estaba algo manchadito a dentro!) [I'd be] buried. [...] It was terrible. It came to cause great damage to the country, the arrival of communism.

When I ask Alfredo if the communists had much support in Tacuba, his answer brings several times into a single frame. Earlier he has told me that the rebels had support throughout the rural areas of Tacuba, yet when I ask him here he thinks not of the rebellion or the time preceding it, but of the massacre itself, the aftermath of the rebellion, and insists that the rebels were alone, isolated, because, he begins to say, the people were afraid of the *guerrilleros*, catching himself to say the communists. Alfredo has previously made very clear that the word “guerrilleros” refers to the rebels of the

second war, the FMLN militants of the 1980s civil war. In explaining why people did not support the communists in 1932—after previously asserting that, in fact, they did support them—Alfredo instead explains why people did not support the *guerrilleros* of the civil war, a more plausible explanation since, in the 1980s, the example of 1932 stood as a reminder to all of what happened to any who openly organized against the state.

Like Meche, Alfredo blames the rebels for their own fate, yet there is some uncertainty in his assessment of the communists: they were for the poor, against the rich. When he recalls the first encounter between the invading government troops and the rebels near Nejapa, where Alfredo served as a scout or spy for the army, he nearly weeps as he tells of the soldiers opening fire with their machine gun against the rebels, many of them his neighbors, armed with rocks, sticks, and machetes. He understands communism as an evil that came to El Salvador from outside—he points to Guatemala—echoing what was to become a common theme in the right’s anticommunist discourse. Don Alfredo sees the arrival of this infection from without as the force that “causes great damage” to the nation.

This echoes Meche, who says that “the sadness” began with communism. Like Alfredo, who invokes the nation explicitly, Meche brings the nation into the question. “[T]here were a lot of people who weren’t involved,” she says, “and because they were Salvadoran they killed them.” It is the troops who are somehow not of the nation and the rebels who are associated with Salvadoran nationalism. When I ask why so many people did participate with the rebels, she tells me it was “because they were going to win, they say. Who knows how it was? They were going to win. They didn’t want another president to come from over there (*que no querrían que viniera otro presidente de por allí*). The president they wanted should be from El Salvador.”

Some of what appears confusing and contradictory in these accounts involves the relative remoteness of the department of Ahuachapán and especially the municipality of Tacuba, located on the Guatemalan border and separated from San Salvador to this day by mountainous terrain and poor roads. For the rural poor especially, Guatemala is nearer than the Salvadoran capital of San Salvador, which many still call “El Salvador.” Many rural people in Tacuba have relatives in Guatemala, and cross the border for work and commerce. Uncertainty about who and what is Guatemalan reflects, in part, the liminality of the border zone.

It is also the case, I contend, that these accounts reflect *la matanza* as a transformative moment in how people experienced both the state and the nation. For both Alfredo, whose anxiety about political activity appears as anticommunism, and Meche, who rejects “parties” more generally and sees the rebels in Tacuba not as communists but as Araujistas, a national Thing³⁵ is at stake in the rebellion and the massacre. In this sense, again, *la matanza* is foundational, but here it is so in local, particular accounts rather than in a broader national narrative that generalizes these local experiences. In retrospect, Meche and Alfredo turn to the nation as a crucial point in their efforts to make sense of the horrors they experienced. Their identification of this national Thing poses the problem of their relationship to it, and so brings about a form of citizenship inaugurated by violence and saturated with a sense of the nearness and invisibility of the state. Brian Axel argues that torture is one of the postcolonial state’s most important means of becoming real in the lives of its citizens. “Terror becomes a strategy of state affectivity that constitutes the tortured citizen... as *evidence* of the very actuality of the nation-state’s existence” (Axel 2001:135). The massacre is, in this sense, a form of public execution as ritual on a massive scale, whose “aim is not so much to re-establish a balance as to bring

³⁵ Zizek (1989)

into play, as its extreme point, the dissymmetry between the subject who has dared to violate the law and the all-powerful sovereign who displays his strength” (Foucault 1979:48-49).

Meche and Alfredo and other survivors blame the rebels for the massacre in what at first appears as a literal form of blaming the victims. If we recall the contradiction in the rationalization of state terror—whereby survivors decide that involvement in political activity is risky even as they simultaneously observe that the state’s selection of victims is effectively random or follows criteria that defy any reason—we can understand that the rebels and the victims might appear as cleanly separate groups in survivors’ memories.

The soldiers themselves are not actually absolved of guilt or blame but simply are not in a category of agent upon which judgments of blame might be made. The troops appear almost as a force of nature in remembered narratives, endowed with the extraordinary power of the machine guns before which they stood their victims. As Meche states, recounting one of the most deeply etched images from the massacre in the memories of people in Tacuba, the bullets ultimately killed the enormous ceiba tree in the town cemetery. The ceiba lingered, drying and withering for forty years until it was finally cut down in the early 1970s.

If the soldiers appear as an overwhelming force from outside, the state is also interiorized in the survivors. In Alfredo’s account, most strikingly, the dictator Martínez *becomes* the state, omniscient and total, perhaps illustrating Foucault’s claim that “at bottom, despite the differences in epochs and objectives, the representation of power has remained under the spell of monarchy” (Foucault 1978:88). Alfredo identifies himself in relation to this imagined omniscient power, which is able to see inside people to discern if they are marked, or stained, in Alfredo’s words, as communists. Indeed, when Alfredo expresses his fear at what would happen if General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez

knew that he was “marked inside,” it is as though he is speaking of a strict father. The massacre as a performance of the state instantiates a relationship with the state as an imagined thing that is both violent and paternalistic (Aretxaga 2003:406). The dictator is the face and form of Alfredo’s anxieties, which linger as paranoia but are grounded with reference to a state of exception, when normal rules are suspended and neither reason nor knowledge of the familiar could guide one safely through a landscape transformed by bullets and bodies into a space of death.

In this space marked by the power of the state over bare life, what spaces were available for collective organization? Many of the generation that witnessed and survived the massacre of 1932 saw avoidance of anything that could stain one as political as the only possibility. Yet for their children and grandchildren, and indeed for some of those who survived 1932, living in the shadow of an all-pervasive state did not mean abandoning politics, but instead adopting the rules of clandestine organizing as codes of everyday life.

I found that many of the members of the three cooperatives with which I worked in Tacuba, when I asked them what their parents had told them about 1932, distinctly remember the massacre presented as a tale whose lesson was clear: don’t get involved in anything that might mark you as political, a troublemaker, or above all a Communist. This is true not only of those who did eschew politics, but of those, like don Gabriel, Manuel Velásquez, and Ernesto Sánchez, who founded cooperatives, and of grandchildren like Alicia and Toribio Méndez and Leopoldo and Francisco Sánchez who were involved with peasant movements, radical Catholic organizations, and clandestine work with the FMLN.

Concealment as a social style was not produced exclusively by the massacre and the political repression of the early 1930s. Indeed, as Patricia Alvarenga (1996) shows,

practices of secrecy attended what she calls the development of a “culture and ethics of violence” in late 19th Century El Salvador. The massacre of 1932 did, however, make secrecy central to social life in ways that far exceeded the preceding decades and had decisive effects on the practice of community.

TRAUMA AND COMMUNITY

Trauma, Kai Erikson points out, can create community by bringing people together with a shared sense of having been transformed by extraordinary events (Erikson 1995). Traumatic conditions, writes Erikson, “move to the center of one’s being and, in doing so, give victims the feeling that they have been set apart and made special” (Erikson 1995:186). Erikson writes of a couple who survived the Holocaust together and remained together—despite not getting along—because of their shared experience and understanding of trauma. Erikson also cites an American who had been held hostage in Iran, who told a reporter that for those who had been hostages together “It is easy to be together. We don’t have to explain thing. We carry the same pain” (Erikson 1995:186). Notwithstanding these examples, Erikson makes clear that trauma tends more often to have negative effects on community. He points to two ways in which what we think of as a community, an entity distinct from the individuals who make it up, can be said to have been traumatized. The first is relatively straightforward, a kind of collective parallel to the trauma experienced by survivors at the enormous loss created by the sudden deaths of so many loved ones and neighbors. It is this sense of trauma that Anderson evokes, as noted above, when he calls *la matanza* “the massacre that traumatized a nation.” (Anderson 1992; Gould and Consalvi 2002).

Beyond this version of trauma as emotional and physical shock, or literal wound, Erikson argues that collective trauma often opens fissures that previously had been

bridged or sutured, dividing communities and damaging what he calls, quite aptly, a community's texture. So communal trauma, according to Erikson, effects communities in two ways, which may work separately or in combination: "damage to the tissues that hold human groups intact, and the creation of social climates, communal moods, that come to dominate a group's spirit" (Erikson 1995:190). It is this creation of a social climate that, I argue, is evident in Tacuba and has had—and continues to have—important consequences.

"Community," as I take it from Erikson, refers to a localized social world, a place where identities are grounded and are largely taken for granted. Tacuba has been and remains such a place. Identity, in such a context, is less the metacategory contaminated by its colonial heritage³⁶ (although this aspect of identity is always already present in the experience of modernity), but a sense of origins that entails place and kin. People are concretely *from* Tacuba – caserío Ashukema, cantón El Níspero, for example, or barrio El Calvario. People place their neighbors in stories, in historical contexts that include positions in kin networks and relations of production, particular traits or skills (don Eduardo keeps fighting cocks; don Nicolas is a sawyer), and always, where one is from. "That's my cousin's husband's brother," Francisco might explain to me after pausing to talk to someone encountered on the road. "He lives in El Chagüite; we used to cut coffee together in Ataco." There is a concreteness to this kind of sociality and the identifications it makes, the identities that appear as given, and in its immediacy and concreteness it differs from the kinds of community that are constructed in more abstract registers, and often with reference to larger collectivities. National identity works at such abstract levels, and depends upon the abstractions of a social imaginary; in this sense, as Dilip Gaonkar points out, "the national people is a paradigmatic case of modern social

³⁶ On the colonial genealogy of "identity" see Dirks (1992), Fuss (1995), Stoler (1995)

imaginary” (Gaonkar 2002:5). There is a dialectic of deterritorialization and reterritorialization at work here: as the massacre produced a concrete sense of the nation and the state as points of attachment (and instantiated through its violent performativity a national citizenry), it produced feelings of paranoia and suspicion that strained and destabilized local attachments and immediate, small-scale forms of community in particular locales.

DIVISION AND AMBIGUITY IN *LA MATANZA*

Mass violence in the twentieth century has often been marked by the intimacy between actors on opposite sides of the gun. This was so in the case of *la matanza* where not only were *ladinos* pointing fingers at the families of laborers and domestic servants who literally made the living of their wealthy accusers, but at peasants – some landed, some landless; some *ladino*, some indigenous (and many in the indeterminate spaces between these poles) – both pointed fingers and pulled triggers, or wielded machetes against their neighbors.

Militants fled to more remote Tacuba as other areas fell to the advancing army. By the time the military invaded Tacuba the rebel forces converged there, making it effectively the last stand. In preparation for their defense, the rebels passed through the villages east of Tacuba toward Nejapa calling on their members in each village to join their ranks, says Alfredo. As they moved nearer to the large plantation and coffee mill of Nejapa—now, ironically, a cooperatively owned operation—they killed first a finquero named Tobías Salazar and then Juan Fermán, owner of the finca Nejapa. Finally they arrived at the main road on the way to Ahuachapán and approached the place called San Juan de Guanacaste, marked by a huge guanacaste tree.

Recall that don Alfredo was recruited to scout for the local comandante. In this capacity, part of his job was to assist the troops into position for an ambush that Alfredo and Meche both say was the first battle between the rebels and the military, in which hundreds of the former were killed. The troops, hidden with Alfredo in the coffee plantations, waited until the rebels were almost upon them and then broke from the fields firing their weapons. As Alfredo recalls the rebels cut down by the machine gun his voice breaks and he becomes silent. Later he describes how the troops chased the rebels to a place called Las Crucitas, where they cornered them and killed them all, burying them in six enormous common graves.

These were not strangers for don Alfredo, these were neighbors who became communists and then became bodies in mass graves or prisoners carted off to the horror of Los Ausoles. Today Alfredo lives away from Nejapa, on the far side of the city of Ahuachapán. He abandoned the green forests of the coffee lands for a dry and dusty patch on the edge of a dirty pond that he shares with his daughters and their children, away from any other families.

Stories like Alfredo's are not uncommon, even though it is more and more difficult to find survivors of la matanza who are alive and well enough to recall and speak what they saw. More common still are stories among the subsequent generations of people for whom *doble cara* was a way of life. One expression of this duplicity is participation in multiple, seemingly conflicting and contradictory spheres. In some cases these conflicts happen within a family; in many others, within the activities of an individual.

Ernesto Sánchez, one of the few elders in Tacuba who still speaks some Nahuat, lives in caserío Ashukema, more commonly known as La Concordia after the cooperative that owns the fields of coffee that extend northeast from the road through the village. The

Sánchezes are well known here and through the southern end of Tacuba. Ernesto's sons Francisco and Leopoldo are both founders and perennial officers of the cooperative. They were also both activists with the Unión Campesina Salvadoreña (Salvadoran Peasant Union, UCS), and were taught literacy, arithmetic and accounting, and organizing by union and Catholic activists.

One afternoon in Ashukema Ernesto recalls his father, Juan Bautista Sánchez, who was a captain in the army stationed at the base in Ahuachapán in 1932, leaving his wife and children home in Tacuba, in the cantón El Sincuyo. According to Ernesto, his father, as an officer in Ahuachapán, was implicated in the order to send troops to Tacuba. When he returned to Tacuba later, he learned that his father, grandfathers, and uncles had been killed in the fighting. Upon finding his mother, he asked her what happened. His mother said to him:

Look child, say nothing. You yourself are to blame. Remember that you ordered the army to come and fight the people here... your father was looking for work at the mill, your uncles, your grandfather. And they sent them out to find them and kill them. And where did the authorities come from, if not where you were? Where you were in charge?

I suggest to Ernesto's son Manuel that his grandfather might have been unaware of the outcome of his participation. He's doubtful: "Supposedly so, but he must have been plenty involved in lots of things. At the rank of soldier there are ignorant ones, but at the rank of corporal and up no one washes his hands... Everyone knows the ins and outs of what's going to happen." Certainly, if Juan Bautista Sánchez was an officer at the barracks in Ahuachapán he had to know much of what was happening in the area, if not in detail at least in terms of the seriousness of events. The troops in the Ahuachapán barracks were largely sympathetic to the rebels, and many were communists. Anderson (1992) reports that the base commander had most of the troops imprisoned days before

the rebellion, leaving, according to one report, only the regimental band. The forces that invaded Tacuba, at least three days after the uprising, consisted largely of troops coming from Sonsonate who had already fought there and in other western towns.

DOBLE CARA: TWO FACES TURNED TO THE STATE

As I talk with Ernesto, his youngest son Manuel enters, one of the only Sánchezes I've not yet met. He asks if I'm just out visiting, but predictably, once I explain who I am and that I am learning about the history of the area from his father, he realizes he has heard about me. Looking at his father he says, "yes, he's lived a rough life. But at least he'll be able to die in a house that's, let's say, not so bad." He tells me briefly of the battle he and his family underwent to buy the land on which they farm, which they purchased under the terms of the 1980 land reform (see Chapter Four). Manuel calls the struggle with the *finquero*, and especially the overseer or *mandador*, a blood feud. "We live in a country that is really horrible in that, you can ask someone for a stick, and they'll never give it to you. You have to fight first before anyone will give you anything."

This seems a fitting attitude for the younger brother of Francisco and Leopoldo. What I learn later from Francisco comes as a complete surprise, in light not only of his brothers' activities, but especially after hearing Ernesto talk about his father. Manuel was a soldier in a heavy artillery squad during the civil war, stationed at the artillery barracks between San Salvador and Sonsonate and fighting in the east, primarily in Usulután and La Unión. He entered the military in 1988 and left with the Peace Accords in 1992, after training in heavy artillery and special commando skills, after spending months patrolling the skies over the *oriente* as a helicopter gunner. When I ask him why he joined, he stammers a bit, and says that in the end, "I understand that it was maybe not so advisable, because I was defending interests opposed to my own" (*estaba defendiendo derechos*

contrarios). He tells me that initially he joined the “territorial service,” more commonly known as civil defense or civil patrols, the *patrullas civiles*. These were groups of peasants under the command of the local station of the National Guard from the early days of the Martínez dictatorship until the 1992 Peace Accords. Manuel explains that the task of the *patrullas* was to defend the land – the nation, he tells me, not *la comunidad*, the community.

While service as a *patrullero* was not entirely forced, neither could it be said to have been voluntary. Once a *patrullero*, Manuel was at the disposal of the National Guard commander in 1988, when he told the group that ten men would have to present themselves for military service. Effectively, Manuel tells me, he went because nobody else stood up. This is not quite the style of forced recruitment described famously in Manlio Argueta’s novel *Cuscatlán*, in which the military drives a flatbed truck around at the hour the rural schools let out collecting young men and pressing them into military service. Still, while Manuel may not have been forcibly recruited, neither did he seek out his military career. Nevertheless, it seems odd that, even if he would not resist military service, which would have been suicide, it was only long afterwards that he realized that as a soldier he was protecting interests contrary to his own. His older brothers were transporting food and other supplies to the *guerrilleros* of the FMLN at the same time Manuel was wielding the fifty-caliber machine gun of a Salvadoran army helicopter.

Manuel simply had no idea of his brothers’ activities. Leopoldo told me that he kept his clandestine work secret even from his wife and parents. Leopoldo first encountered militants from the FPL faction of the FMLN as a member of the Democratic Peasant Association (ADC). The cooperative was originally affiliated with the ADC, which later became the UCS. Leopoldo felt that he wanted to join with the guerillas, but had serious worries. First, he felt that his obligations as a husband and new father

weighed hard against the risks he would have to take. More practically, he worried about how he would manage his new role since he, too, was a *patrullero* and so in regular contact with the local National Guard officers. In fact, it was his position as a *patrullero* known to the local Guard checkpoints, and his regular travel for the cooperative made him an attractive recruit for the revolutionaries. “Then I had two problems: if I went to the side of the *guerrilleros*, my own companions (in the *patrulla*) would get me; if I went to the other side, they (the guerrillas) would get me.”

The reality of work as *patrulleros* for men like Manuel and Leopoldo usually meant walking all night in the dark, through the rain, armed only with their *corvos* or machetes. They were to report any suspicious activity, and, of course, to be on the lookout for *guerrilleros*. As Leopoldo puts it,

The question was that you were a male head of household, but the government forces came... and they said to you, “you’re going to be a soldier,” like that, mandatory, nothing voluntary about it... “You’re a citizen and you have to work in this field.” And they take you and sign you up in the army, and you’re there as a peasant soldier, a civilian soldier. Do you know what they wanted of you? In the first place, that you serve as one of those dolls that they call scarecrows. So that if the *guerrilleros* came they’d kill us, or we’d confront them with our machetes.

Although Leopoldo took a critical stance toward being a *patrullero* it was a role he performed, and in that performativity lies the Althusserian moment of recognition and interpellation, necessarily creating some degree of identification, however conflicted, with the side of the military state. Leopoldo does not describe his time as a *patrullero* as merely a ruse, as does Toribio Méndez, Meche’s grandson and another *patrullero* who was a union activist and clandestine helper to the FMLN. I suspect that Toribio’s claim is somewhat of an apology for having been a *patrullero*.³⁷ Instead, Leopoldo describes

³⁷ Whether one served as a *patrullero* was not entirely a voluntary matter, but many of the farmers of Toribio and Leopoldo’s generation with whom I spoke never served with the civil patrols.

himself as torn between two competing poles, equally attached and threatened by both, even as he recognizes the nature and acceptability of the threats as different – one, perhaps as his brother Manuel puts it, involving contrary interests; the other a possible means towards goals Leopoldo recognizes as just.³⁸

To claim that Leopoldo and other *patrulleros* formed some kind of identification with the state is neither to claim they sympathized with the state ideologically, nor that their identification with the FMLN, Catholic liberation theology, or other conscious modes of radical thought and practice was incomplete, insincere, or shallow. It is instead to take seriously the power of the state to move through an institution like the *patrullas civiles* and through the nation it conjured as its object and work on and into individual subjects. Leopoldo himself notes an eventual sense of allegiance to the side of the FMLN, at which point his relationship to the *patrullas* was more explicitly posed as a form of masking.

I went around as patrullero so they'd let me come and go, so they'd leave me some freedom, because if they saw me traveling as a peasant even for the cooperative, forget it, I would never have come. I kept up the two roles in order to stay alive. In my house I was political, in the organization (FMLN) I was political, but in the street I was military. That's how it went, that was my policy.

Leopoldo's description here recalls Fanon's famous discussion of the ways in which Algerian women engaged shifting forms of masking during the Algerian Revolution (Fanon 1967). For Fanon, the Algerian women who unveiled and adopted Western dress in order better to deceive French troops signaled the extent to which efforts to "westernize" Algerians had failed, turning a surface representation of assimilation into a mask that hides a new threat. Fanon insists that the Algerian woman imitating a

³⁸ This distinction is crucial, for without it one quickly slides into a realm of spurious moral equivalencies and misguided relativism. [need to note the claims that the FMLN was "just as violent" towards civilians as the state; Stoll;]

Western woman does not identify as or with the latter, that she is aware of the imitation as a dramatic gesture that brings not the westernized woman to light, but the Algerian revolutionary woman: the imitation signals “an intense dramatization, a continuity between the woman and the revolutionary” (Fanon 1967:50). Yet Fanon’s own description of the transformation that the unveiled spies undergo suggests that the transformation carries a great potential to take hold more deeply. He depicts “that young girl, unveiled only yesterday, who walks with sure steps down the streets of the European city teeming with policemen...” “The Algerian woman who walks stark naked into the European city relearns her body, re-establishes it in a totally revolutionary fashion” (Fanon 1967:58-59). As Diana Fuss points out, Fanon’s distinction between imitation as a conscious ruse and mimesis as a path toward or mode of identification is difficult to sustain. While Fuss notes that “to read uncritically the Algerian woman’s dramatization as an act of identification risks trivializing the role that political necessity plays in this performance and minimizing the trauma of the historical event that occasions it”, she also argues that identification is an operation of the unconscious that “repeatedly resists our attempts to govern and control it” (Fuss 1995). Here she brings up the critical point:

[Identification] with the Other is neither a necessary precondition nor an inevitable outcome of imitation. For Fanon it is politically imperative to insist upon an instrumental difference between imitation and identification, because it is precisely politics that emerges in the dislocated space between them.

CONCLUSION

For Leopoldo and others in Tacuba, the space between imitation and identification has been the space of everyday life. Even for those like Toribio, and eventually Leopoldo, who let their immediate families know of their double lives, political life meant a largely solitary world of subterfuge and *doble cara*, and an appreciation of the

value of ambiguity in presentation and an ability to read multiple meanings in the surface representations of others. That one could not trust neighbors or even friends is illustrated by an incident that sent Toribio Méndez into hiding in Guatemala from 1990 until the Peace Accords had been signed. A schoolmate and childhood friend of his sister Alicia fingered Toribio to the local Guard Comandante. It was only because another neighbor overheard Alicia's erstwhile friend make her accusation that Toribio was warned in time. By the time the local Guards, attended by the civil patrol, knocked on the door of the house Toribio shared with his father and sister, he was walking through the fields towards the Guatemalan border.

Both poles of the ambivalent position Leopoldo describes, in-between the military and the FMLN as well as in-between imitation and identification, are charged, fraught with potential disaster precisely because of their relations to the state. While the FMLN positions the state as the object of its military and political struggle, the *patrullas* extend the frontier of the state (Abrahams 1996) into the community. In different ways each side constructs the state in uneven and unpredictable ways. These constructions provide avenues for subversion and, importantly, (re)produce a fragmented *comunidad*, posed, as Manuel Sánchez puts it, in opposition to the nation. Manuel uses the Spanish word *nación*, rather than *pais*, suggesting a formality, perhaps a big N Nation³⁹, rather than “the country.”

I argue throughout this dissertation for a view that approaches the state not as an apparatus or a material entity, but as an effect of certain kinds of discourses and practices. As such the state is created as a feeling, possessed of a “phantasmatic reality” but, as Begoña Aretxaga insists, no less real for it. In fact, as Aretxaga argues, some efforts to

³⁹ Or what Žižek calls the “nation-Thing,” not simply an imagined community or ideological construction, but a source of *jouissance*.

dismiss the state as unreal have portrayed the state as a mask hiding another level of “really real” power relations (Aretxaga 2000:53; Mitchell 1991). To consider the state as a mask raises the question of “how the mask – as mask – works, what universe of beliefs, practices, discourses, events, fears, and desires make possible its powers” (Aretxaga 2000:53). The working of the mask is its magic, springing up precisely in the in-between spaces described above. Thus, don Alfredo, having assisted the military in its invasion and having witnessed the massacre of hundreds of peasant rebels, is terrified that President General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez will see the stain that is inside him, and know him for what he really is – even if Alfredo himself is unsure.

Chapter Four: Children of a Single God

We all have the same worth, and we are all children of a single God. Nobody was born from the air, in heaven or down below. Today, they say that the races are different, and those men call them “Indians” because they were poor. And that wasn’t good. There are still some in town who say “Indian.” And where did they find that, in what book did they find this word “Indian?”⁴⁰

Gabriel Méndez, Tacuba

The violent conflicts that took place in 1932 were accompanied by deep ideological manifestations of a leftist tendency. The battle in defense of order was saturated with anticommunist slogans that had an impact on the indigenous problem: Indian and communism came to be a single thing.⁴¹

Alejandro Marroquín

The above quotes crystallize two related issues central to what Marroquín called the “indigenous problem” in El Salvador. Don Gabriel’s sarcastic indictment of those in Tacuba who call others “indios” points to the widespread rejection of Indianness among people who might, in another context, more readily recognize themselves in terms of concepts of indigenous culture. This phenomenon is a hallmark of the Salvadoran indigenous problem, and one that easily folds into discussions of culture loss. What this view fails to address is the possibility that rejecting Indianness *is* culture. To reject the category of *indio* may not equal quite so neatly the metamorphosis Richard Adams (1957) called “ladinoization,” and the categories of *mestizo* and *ladino* themselves are

⁴⁰ Todos valemos lo mismo y todos somos hijos de un mismo Dios. Nadie fue nacido por el aire, en el cielo y de allá bajó. Hoy según que las razas ya son diferentes y estos hombres decían ellos “indios”, porque eran pobres. Y eso no era bueno. Todavía hay en el pueblo unos que dicen “indios”. ¿Y dónde lo han hallado, en cuál libro han hallado esa palabra de “indio”?

⁴¹ [Los] conflictos violentos que tuvieron lugar en enero de 1932, fueron acompañados por profundas manifestaciones ideológicas de tendencia izquierdista. La lucha en defensa del orden imperante se saturó de consignas anticomunistas que incidieron en el problema indígena: indio y comunismo llegaron a ser una sola cosa.

shot through with conflicts and divisions that draw upon racial ideologies as well as ideologies of class, gender, and other forms of categorical distinction.

Gabriel's comment also indicates the completely and inextricably co-constituted character of racial and class-based categories: "these men called them 'indios' because they were poor," particularly in the minds of those who regarded themselves as neither poor nor *indio*. Alejandro Marroquín's observation that *indio* and *comunista* came to be a single thing in the wake of 1932 highlights the ways elites constructed the "Indian" as a threat, and associated Indianness with communism through a language of contamination, savagery, and irrationality (see Candelario 2003; Marroquín 1975). For Marroquín, writing in 1975, the imagined connection between *indio* and *comunista* is the basis of the habitually "closed attitude" of Salvadoran officials and intellectuals towards any talk of policies to improve conditions for indigenous peoples (1975:751). There is another important aspect to the construction of the "*indio-comunista*" that Marroquín and others fail to address. The category was not simply an ideological trope of the bourgeoisie, but became a subject category with which people like Gabriel Méndez had to contend. In very significant ways, people in places like Tacuba lived their lives in part through the category of the *indio-comunista*.

This chapter describes issues of identity and politics in Tacuba during the 1970s and 1980s, bridging the period of *la matanza*, discussed in the previous two chapters, and the emergence of indigenous activism after the civil war of the 1980s, addressed in the following two chapters. Here, I explore the experiences of *cooperativistas* like Rigoberto, the Méndez family, and Sánchez brothers described in Chapter Three, who all were involved in left peasant unions beginning in the late 1970s and 1980s, the period of mobilization leading to the civil war. I draw on these experiences to show that political identifications and attachments to the revolutionary left—the *comunista* half of

Marroquín's formulation—were neither simply imposed from without nor “self-generated” (Brockett 1988:6). Instead, they emerged through complicated articulations of personal and collective experiences (and their representations), obligations, and desires with political, moral, and religious discourses. People in Tacuba have continued to live the multiple subjectivity of *doble cara* as they negotiate their positions in relation to the state, local elites, and the category of the *indio-comunista*. This line of argument challenges the historical narrative of the apolitical, apathetic *occidente*, which was most pointed during the civil war of the 1980s. It also rejects the “binary semiotics of identity” (Nelson 1996) expressed in the assertion, common in the sphere of Salvadoran indigenous political activism, that an identity grounded in production – *campesino* or peasant – artificially supplanted a deeper, more authentic indigenous identity. I look instead at the multiple and at times conflicting attachments, impulses and commitments through which key members of the current generation of cooperative and rural community leaders in Tacuba have constructed their political selves—how they have positioned themselves in the constellation of contemporary Salvadoran political imaginaries. By exploring political subjectivity as a kind of “complex personhood” (Gordon 1997) I hope to open a space for considering the ways Salvadoran indigenous activist discourse might begin to articulate this complexity and move away from the binary semiotics of identity, which I address critically in subsequent chapters.

The second line of argument I want to follow through the recent history of political practice in Tacuba engages this hope by considering crucial aspects of both identities and politics that are erased by the ways the dominant mestizo imaginary constructs Indianness. Throughout their lives, the forms of coercion, oppression, and subjection that members of the rural cantones have experienced were shaped by (or perhaps attended by) forms of power that cannot be understood without reference to the

concepts of race and racism. This racism operates without requiring a positive racialized *identity* as its target, and so it defies the realist logics of identity politics and essentialisms, strategic or otherwise. Following Omi and Winant's definition of race as "a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflict and interests by referring to different types of bodies" (1986:55), we can understand this process at work in El Salvador with one qualification. This is simply to strip the definition from an unspoken realism, by which "different types of bodies" refers to physical features or traits that are understood to be really different by some measure that pre-exists the social meanings attached to those differences. In the Salvadoran context we must instead speak of *fantasies* of different kinds of bodies in order to begin to understand the ways race operates at the same time the possibility of racial difference has so long been denied within the national imaginary.

Understood this way, race remains a powerful mode of investing social conflicts with profound and highly charged meanings that often break through in situations of crisis, fear, and violence, and it does so by drawing on representations of the *indio-comunista*, images and feelings of contamination and disease, sex and blood, and by calling up the violence of 1932. Understanding the place racism holds in rural political power helps to understand what it is in the term *indio* that Gabriel Méndez regards as an "invention," something that ladinos and mestizos in Tacuba had to learn from a book rather than the reality in which they live. It also reveals the ways peasant politics in a racialized field challenge that racism, and might be viewed as—among other things—an antiracist politics.

THE 1970S: A NEW PHASE IN PEASANT POLITICS

From December 1931 to 1980 a cyclical pattern punctuated and defined the course of Salvadoran national politics, which was dominated by military governments (and the elected leaders they approved) during this time (Montgomery 1995). A struggle over the limits of state control and repression characterized the cyclical upheavals through which one regime supplanted its predecessor. Montgomery describes the basic elements of the political cycle:

- Consolidation of power by [a] new regime
- Growing intolerance of dissent and increasing repression
- Reaction from two quarters: the public and a progressive faction within the army officer corps, culminating ultimately in a
- Coup d'état, led by progressive officers, that when successful led to
- Promulgation of various reforms
- Reemergence within the army of the most conservative faction, and
- Consolidation of that power once more (Montgomery 1995:38).

Within the spaces and constraints created by this cyclical dynamism emerged forms of political practice that both shaped and reflected the political identities of various groups in Salvadoran society, including the rural poor of the *occidente*.

In the mid-1950s, when most of the key peasant leaders in Tacuba were born, Lieutenant Colonel José María Lemus presided over the country. Lemus was chosen to succeed the reform-minded Oscar Osorio, who was elected shortly after a “revolutionary” military coup in 1948. Osorio instituted economic reforms designed to promote industrialization, based on the model of import-substitution industrialization that prevailed in much of Latin America at the time (Roberts 1995). As Alastair White observes, the ISI model in El Salvador (as elsewhere) “tended to achieve only an expansion of job opportunities for a new salaried middle class... and tended to create a

relatively privileged sector within the working class” (1973:105). By the end of the 1950s the economy was stagnant, and popular resistance had grown to the point that students openly rallied against the government and in support of the Cuban Revolution. In October of 1960, the fourth coup since 1931 brought in yet another progressive military regime, but this one lasted only three months. Under the conservative junta that followed, the close relationship between the Salvadoran military and the US blossomed, as did the specialized Salvadoran military and paramilitary organizations that would grow into the extraordinarily repressive apparatus against which peasant revolutionaries would fight twenty years later.

After the “soccer war” between El Salvador and Honduras in 1969, poor economic conditions worsened (Durham 1979; Montgomery 1995). President General Fidel Sánchez Hernández raised the prospect of agrarian reform by convening a congress of representatives from various sectors of society in January 1970. The entire private sector walked out of the congress, “arguing that agrarian reform was a technical, not a political issue, and that there was therefore no sense surveying national opinion on the question,” which was, of course, the entire point of the congress (Montgomery 1995:61). The remaining delegates argued strongly in favor of land reform. They identified El Salvador’s extremely unequal distribution of land as a barrier to national development, and argued that peasant unions, prohibited for years, were necessary if land reform was ever successfully to take place. National elections shortly after the National Agrarian Reform Congress greatly reduced the political presence of the opposition Christian Democratic Party (PDC), and the question of agrarian reform vanished from national politics for several years. Nevertheless the conclusions of the congress, and even the fact of its existence, legitimated agrarian reform by making it a discursive possibility.

The story of the waves of peasant organization in El Salvador that began in the early 1970s has been told often and exhaustively (see for example, Byrne 1996; Lungo Uclés 1990; Montgomery 1995; Wood 2003). In most of these accounts, the *occidente* is regarded as notable primarily for the extent to which peasants there did not become radicalized sufficiently to provide a solid base of support for the FMLN, as did peasants in the north, central, and eastern parts of the country. In the previous chapter I argue that the typical explanation for the low support for the FMLN in the *occidente*—that *la matanza* effectively shocked people out of political participation—is not especially convincing when scrutinized. It misconstrues both the nature of trauma and its effects, as discussed in the previous chapter, and the experiences of people in the *occidente*. As the case of the Sánchezs in Tacuba shows, beginning in the early 1970s peasants in the zone of the 1932 massacre did engage in radical politics along with peasants from other parts of the country, and they did so for reasons that were generally identical. What appears distinctive are the appraisals peasants in the *occidente* made of both the possibilities and meanings of politics.

In her ethnography of radicalized peasants in Usulután and the department of San Salvador, Elisabeth Wood suggests three motivating factors for “high-risk collective action”: “*participation, defiance, and pleasure in agency*” (Wood 2003:231). Wood’s approach is worth considering here especially because the standard explanations for low levels of collective mobilization in the *occidente* usually suggest that peasants there had a greater aversion to risk than did peasants in other parts of the country.

In Wood’s study, participation emerged as a social practice that people valued in itself, largely through the modes of interpretation, communication, and analysis peasants learned from liberation theology (discussed below). Struggling against injustice and for the construction of reign of God on Earth became necessary because “social justice is the

will of God” (Wood 2003:232). Participation in this struggle was crucial because it brought together high-risk action and deeply-held moral commitments in a spiritually significant political praxis. Participation was unlikely, and not felt to be necessary, in the absence of moral commitment, while moral commitment required action in order to fulfill its spiritual and symbolic potential (Wood 2003:232).

Like participation, defiance created action that reflected radical values and commitments. Where participation operates through a praxis whose logic is that of intentionality—my worldview calls upon me to engage in the struggle for social justice—defiance, in Wood’s formulation, poses a logic of the inevitable or inescapable: my moral outrage leaves me no choice but to fight back. In Wood’s words, “[d]efiance is similar to participation, but their affects are quite different. Defiance is negative, something one does because one must, while participation is pleasurable” (Wood 2003:233). Running alongside both defiance and participation is Wood’s third category of motivation, pleasure in agency, “the pleasure in together changing unjust social structures through intentional action,” distinguished from defiance and participation by the expectation of success (Wood 2003:235).

These three factors emerge in Wood’s work as overlapping frames for articulating political practice, marking out discursive conditions of possibility for radicalization. Whether, and to what extent mobilization occurred depend on other factors as well, not least of which were two key elements:

Mobilization in the 1970s was strongest where liberationist or guerrilla networks were present. Defiance was more powerful where *campesinos* themselves experienced or saw state violence. And a substantial fraction of *campesinos*, those motivated by pleasure in agency, were moved by the prospect of success in insurgent activity, rather than participation or defiance per se, and this depended on their beliefs about what others would do (Wood 2003:237).

Wood's evaluation of the "external" conditions that tended to support or encourage political mobilization provide an important framework for understanding rural political practice during the war in Tacuba. As we will see, all the elements that Wood sees as predicting political mobilization in her study areas were present in Tacuba, yet the outcomes were markedly different.

Beginning in the early 1970s, the people who would become organizers, cooperativistas, representatives of peasant unions, and in some cases clandestine members of the FMLN began to participate in two institutions that profoundly shaped their political sensibilities: liberation theology and national level peasant unions. For both of these institutions, the early 1970s were a watershed, a point at which various social and political currents came together in a kind of temporal bottleneck to produce a moment that would mark beginnings and ends and serve retrospectively as a focal point for understanding the upheaval that followed.

The effects of the Catholic Church's 1968 Conference of Bishops in Medellín, Colombia, known as CELAM II, were felt throughout much of Latin America by 1970. At the Medellín conference the hierarchy of the church in Latin America embraced the spirit of reform articulated in the Second Vatican Council of 1962-1965. Two crucial concepts emerged from the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II). First, the church was understood to be of and in the world, concerned with the worldly lives of its members and not only the spiritual. Gabriel Méndez states the second point concisely in my epigraph: "we are all of equal worth, and we are all children of a single God." The bishops at Medellín called on the church to denounce injustice and defend the oppressed, an approach that came to be known as "the preferential option for the poor" (Peterson 1997).

For Francisco and Leopoldo Sánchez of *cantón* El Níspero at the southern end of Tacuba, as for tens of thousands of peasants throughout El Salvador, the path to political consciousness and activism began with the progressive Catholicism and church-run popular education. Francisco was involved with the church from an early age, first as a youth catechism counselor and later with a youth group linked to the Legion of Mary. When he was twenty, he first went to study in the newly-formed *Escuela de Formación Integral* (School of Integral Education) “*La Divina Providencia*” in Santa Ana. La Providencia was one of seven centers established between 1970 and 1976. The *centros de formación campesina* (“peasant training centers,” also called *universidades campesinas*, “peasant universities) trained the lay religious workers known as *catequistas* and “delegates of the word.” Those sent to study to be *catequistas* were usually elected by the membership of local CEBs, “*comunidades eclesiales de base*” (ecclesial base communities). The formation of CEBs was central to the program adopted following the conference in Medellín. As Montgomery observes, the CEBs made dramatic impacts in four ways. In addition to bringing the new theology to the communities, they brought people together in community organizations of the kind that had been prohibited since 1932; they gave rural folk experience of participatory democracy; and they created a network of grassroots leaders in the countryside (Montgomery 1995:87). While the CEBs were a crucial institution, the importance of *La Divina Providencia* and the other *centros* should not be understated. “The *centros* and *cursillos* [courses] perhaps the single most important for diffusing the ideas, practices, and goals” of liberation theology and the popular church, writes Anna Peterson. While the CEBs may have provided more intense experiences, “no other progressive church program surpassed the *universidades campesinas* in scale” (Peterson 1997:57).

“In this school they trained me as a catechist, to do evangelical work in the communities,” recalls Francisco Sánchez. The integral character of the school, he explains, brought together “political development, economic development, cultural development, community development, and the spiritual.”⁴² “[We] went there to study the Bible and become leaders and *catequistas*,” says Leopoldo Sánchez. Walter Guerra, a Salvadoran priest and one of the leaders of the integral training centers, told Tommie Sue Montgomery that the integral nature of the education they provided was required “because the catechist, among us, is a man who not only worked as a religious person but assumes leadership that is also social, including, at times, political in our rural communities” (Montgomery 1995:87). According to Guerra, a 1978 survey of the work of the *catequistas* in the diocese of Santa Ana found that had a remarkable impact. In a relatively short period of time, he told Montgomery, “the people were changing” (Montgomery 1995:87). Wood describes the effect of catequistas at the beginning of the 1970s in Usulután, where activists recalled that the catechists spoke “in a language you could understand: as human beings, we are of value” (Wood 2003:99).

La Divina Providencia certainly made a great impact on Francisco and Leopoldo Sánchez. As Francisco recalls, “the school awakened my revolutionary spirit.” He goes on:

[The] revolutionary spirit entered because the school, integrally, tried to awaken the marginalized families. Then, the reason for the marginalized families, the success that they sought in '32, the objective they worked for and failed to achieve, there they injected the feeling of wanting to have done something, to have been able to do [something], because we were at the point of organizing.

⁴² En esa escuela me prepararon para catequista, para trabajar en el campo evangélico con comunidades. Es integral en el desarrollo político, desarrollo económico, desarrollo cultural, desarrollo comunitario y en lo espiritual, por eso se le llama integral.

Later, we came to see how the people lived, where the land was, how it was that they forcibly took our land and why it could not return to their hands. Then we began the search for land. The other thing was our salary, that we were giving it away and it was necessary to gather our strength within the organization in the revolutionary spirit and demand fair wages.⁴³

Two points stand out in this brief passage that suggest something distinctive about the discourse of social justice, history, and revolutionary praxis at *La Divina Providencia* as Francisco recalls it. The first is the reference to 1932. Although I cannot say with certainty, I suspect that references to 1932 were common to many of the *universidades campesinas*, for *la matanza* has been a central feature of the discourse of the left in El Salvador since the 1930s. *La Divina Providencia* was unique, however, in being the only *centro* in the *occidente* (later, the smaller *Centro de Promoción Rural* would form in Santa Tecla on the western edge of San Salvador). It is reasonable to imagine that stories of the massacre and the political resistance of the rebels would resonate distinctly for children and grandchildren of rebels, victims, and participants, like the Sánchez brothers, and based on my conversations with the Sánchezs and others who attended the *universidad campesina* I believe that they did. Yet they did not resonate with a sense of contemporary indigenous identity.

Earlier in this conversation with Francisco, before he made his remarks about the awakening of the revolutionary spirit cited above, he briefly raises indigenous identity. “I learned about my previous race (*mi raza anterior*), I learned about my blood, marginalization, exploitation,” he says. Francisco’s mention of race here is significant for

⁴³ El espíritu revolucionario entró porque la escuela, en lo integral, trataba de despertar a las familias marginadas. Entonces, la razón fue de las familias marginadas, el éxito que querían sacar en el 32, el objetivo que llevaban y no lo lograron, ahí le inyectan el sentimiento de querer haber hecho algo, de poder haber podido hacer, pero que estamos a tiempo de organizarnos. Luego después nos hicieron ver cómo vivía la gente, dónde estaba la tierra, cómo fue que les arrebataron la tierra y cómo no podía regresar a manos de ellas. Entonces había una búsqueda de la consiga de la tierra. La otra fue el salario, que lo estábamos regalando y había que levantar en el espíritu revolucionario una fuerza dentro de la organización y meternos a exigir justos salarios. Luego, al exigir justos salarios, que la tierra vuelva a nuestras manos.

several reasons, primarily because of its generality, its connection of “blood” with exploitation, and its location of Indianness in the past, rather than the present. He learned about his “previous race,” “*raza anterior*.” This rings of standard left mestizo nationalism and not an articulation of racism as a factor in contemporary exploitation and suffering.

Francisco’s next sentence suggests that he locates exploitation firmly in the realm of social relations of production: “Then I saw that we were giving away our salary. That’s where I felt the desire to join with another group to set out to do something.”⁴⁴ Francisco cites this explanation for his desire to become politically active—his articulation of outrage at exploitation and unfair wages through the language of liberation theology—as a principal reason for his political awakening here and at several other points in this and other conversations. He mentions indigenous identity only in passing outside of an interview in which I explicitly asked him to tell me about 1932, in which he frames the rebellion and massacre with little reference to “culture” or identity. The discourse of liberationist Catholicism in *La Divina Providencia* provided peasant leaders like Francisco and Leopoldo Sánchez with a means to understand their suffering and motivate a political interpretation of their world, but it did so within a conceptual frame I call the mestizo imaginary, one in which race and Indianness had already been consigned to a realm outside of the here and now.

The second point of note in Francisco’s narrative is the fundamentally reformist character of his stated political objectives. Along with Rigoberto Hernández, the Sánchez brothers successfully fought for the formation of the cooperative *El Armonía*. They worked with peasant unions, local community projects linked to national-level popular organizations, and political parties. At one point Leopoldo served as a *regidor* under a

⁴⁴ Logré entender mi raza anterior, logré entender mi sangre, la marginación, la explotación. Entonces, vi que el salario lo estábamos regalando. Ahí sentí el deseo de estar agrupado a otro grupo para ir haciendo fuerza.

mayor of the PDC, and he subsequently put his name in the hat for the mayoral candidacy, backed by his peasant union and a liberationist priest working in Tacuba. Eventually, through connections in the peasant unions, both Leopoldo and Francisco joined the FPL, clandestinely supporting the FMLN. Yet for the most part, their political objectives, and the actions they pursued “in the revolutionary spirit,” tended to be directed at changes within existing systems.

As cited above, Francisco remarks that after learning about his exploitation, “[t]he other thing was our salary, that we were giving it away and it was necessary to gather our strength within the organization in the revolutionary spirit and demand fair wages.” To demand fair wages was brave, it was risky, and it represented a challenge to the prevailing, highly exploitative, relations of production. It was not revolutionary, however, in the sense of expressing and engaging with the FMLN discourse of the revolutionary transformation of all of society. This is, I contend, an important and overlooked aspect of the supposedly apolitical *occidente*. Instead of engaging in a full-scale revolutionary struggle, the peasants of the west instead looked to incremental, reformist measures.

In the absence of consistent support from the armed insurgents, these measures were highly risky, and at times cost activists dearly. As described in the previous chapter, being marked as a radical forced Clementino Méndez to flee El Salvador for Guatemala. Others were not fortunate enough to escape. The Sánchezs recall the violence suffered by some of the companions in the *universidad campesina*. “There we were in class, and they entered, they tortured them. They took them out in the street and in with the dawn they were in front of the school, dead, with a sign that said “these are the fruits of the school for integral training, and if you continue to be members, this is the path you’ll take.”⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Ahí estábamos en clase, entraron, los torturaron, los sacaban en la calle y en la mañana amanecían enfrente de la escuela muertos y con un letrero que decía: “estos son los frutos de la escuela de formación integral y si vos seguís siendo miembro de esta escuela, este camino llevás”.

Another incident involving a clash between local insurgents and security forces has become an important part of local lore in Tacuba. The insurgents included a young and unmarried uncle of the Sánchezs who studied at *La Divina Providencia*. Informants' reports conflict as to whether the group was officially affiliated with the FMLN, but all agree that they had mobilized in Tacuba and started to infiltrate villages and coffee plantations in the region. At some point in the 1980s this group encountered vigilante landlords, including members of the "Black Shadow" or *Sombra Negra*, Tacuba's death squad, and members of official security forces. In a tragic replay of the events of 1932 the rebels, armed only with machetes and *cumas*, were slaughtered near the bridge at the entrance of the *El Imposible* forest.

In Wood's explanatory frame, the experience of state violence can generate a sense of moral outrage that promotes insurgency within the bounds established by an assessment of costs and benefits, which is itself based on fluid categories of both cost and benefit. People in Tacuba lived with a collective memory of state violence of a scale unprecedented in Spanish America's national period. Working in the east and the paracentral regions, Wood sees the experience of state violence as a potential catalyst for defiant, outraged resistance. In Tacuba, in contrast, we may speculate that mistrust between neighbors, coupled with a sense of the ubiquity and omnipotence of the state, left little room for the formation of outrage that might be voiced, and so contribute to collective action. This is not to say that explicit state repression kept people from expressing outrage. It is to suggest the possibility that the sense of the totality of the state produced in the wake of *la matanza* was hardly an actor against one might feel outrage, and that even if one did, expressing such thoughts publicly would clash with prevailing sensibilities of suspicion and secrecy.

For the politically committed rural folk Wood describes, as for peasants throughout Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s, the liberationist discourse of progressive Catholicism was the key to recognizing naturalized conditions of oppression as historically and socially constructed. Montgomery cites Maryknoll Sister Joan Petrik, who spent seven years working in the western department of La Libertad: “When I first arrived in Tamanique, every time a child died the family would say, ‘It’s the will of God.’ But after the people became involved in the Christian communities, that attitude began to change. [...] After a while, they began to say, ‘The system caused this’” (Montgomery 1995:88).

Perhaps in Tacuba and the other sites of the 1932 massacre, a sense that “the system” was at the heart of much of what was wrong with the world already existed. It was there, after all, that communist organizing and modes of interpretation first found an expression in the Salvadoran countryside. Perhaps, for people who understood the power of the state to be total and inescapable, the revelation that suffering came from the hands of their fellows rather than as God’s will would seem less straightforwardly illuminating than it would for people in places like Morazán or Chalatenango. In any case, the political practice of people like Francisco and Leopoldo Sánchez, once the revolutionary spirit within them had been awakened, differed from that of peasants in other areas. Without the support of a network of activists, or even the possibility of talking with their neighbors, radicalized peasants in Tacuba were forced to move with particular caution. Perhaps this helps to explain why their version of “revolutionary spirit” manifest itself in a contradictory range of political commitments, most tending to goals that would be understood as reformist rather than revolutionary by the strategists and philosophers of the FMLN.

“UN DECRETO QUE SE LLAMA EL 207”

Leopoldo Sánchez describes one of his early meetings with FPL militants, whom he met through a fellow *cooperativista* from Ahuachapán. One day, he says, while he was “walking with hunger,” he saw his friend with a group of men. “I went with them and we started to talk, and they said to me ‘you, being a campesino, what kinds of trips do you make?’ And I was afraid to tell them,” continues Leopoldo, but the discussion of travel led to a conversation about the efforts of Leopoldo and others in *El Nispero* to acquire property under the 1980 land reform. “I have claimed a piece of land,” Leopoldo told them, “and in other words, there are several of us, eight of us who have claimed parcels and we are in a decree called 207.” “Ah, well,” his new companions said. “We have supported this, that is our effort. We’re a peasant organization, were organizations but we also have an army, and this army is a guerrilla army.”⁴⁶

Throughout the 1970s any mention of land reform immediately met the intransigence of the landed elites and their allies. The business sector’s walkout protest of the 1970 National Agrarian Reform Congress was only part of the right’s reaction in that instance. José “Chencho” Alas, a priest with the Archdiocese of San Salvador, presented the Salvadoran church’s arguments in favor of land reform to the 1970 meeting. He was subsequently abducted, beaten, and left naked on the outskirts of San Salvador in the first incident of right-wing violence against church workers that would be a recurring pattern over the coming two decades (Montgomery 1995:81-82). When the church opposed the suspension (before implementation) of a 1976 land reform, violence against priests and other religious workers increased and included the 1977 killing of Rutilio Grande, a

⁴⁶ “Yo he denunciado un pedazo de terreno y en otras palabras estamos varios, como ocho de esa propiedad que hemos denunciado parcelas y estamos en un decreto que se llama 207”, les dije. “Ah, pues eso nosotros lo hemos apoyado, eso es esfuerzo de nosotros, pero nosotros somos una organización campesina, somos organizaciones pero que también tenemos un ejército y ese ejército es un ejército guerrillero.

Jesuit priest working with base communities in Aguilares. Three weeks before Grande's assassination, Oscar Arnulfo Romero assumed the archbishopric of El Salvador. Romero had been selected over the leading liberationist candidate, Bishop Arturo Rivera Damas, largely because Romero was seen as an uncontroversial moderate. Romero's critics feared that he would reverse the new evangelization of liberation theology. Romero, of course, spectacularly failed to meet these expectations. The murder of Rutilio Grande, a long-time friend of Romero's awakened in the latter a passionate commitment to the poor and a relentless mission to denounce injustice, a mission for which Romero was martyred by an army assassin's bullet in 1980 (Montgomery 1995:91-99; Wood 2003).

Despite the reactionary, back-against-the-wall stance of the oligarchy, land reform reached the rural poor in March of 1980. Romero's assassination on March 24 came after three weeks of chaos following the March 6 and 7 implementation of the reforms. There are multiple reasons that land reform was pushed through at this moment, chief of which are the growing US pressure on the Salvadoran government to enact reforms, disagreements within the army, and disagreements between the military and the oligarchy. The reforms included three planned stages. The first called for the expropriation of estates over 500 hectares in size and their conversion to worker cooperatives. The second would expropriate properties from 100 to 500 hectares, which included most of the coffee plantations. (This stage was never put into effect, successfully blocked by the coffee planters. This detail, as I discuss below, likely had as much to do with the general patterns of political practice in the coffee producing *occidente* as did *la matanza*.) The third phase was the "land to the tiller" program: Leopoldo's "decree called 207."

It is no surprise that the reforms themselves, conceived and hastily put into effect in the conflictive and chaotic situation as the country perched on the brink of civil war,

failed on all counts. The army implemented the first phase of the reform by simply driving to the estates to be converted like Las Colinas, calling together the local peasants, and telling them they now owned the property and would have to pay for it. The left roundly rejected the sincerity of the reforms, regarding them as counterinsurgency measures designed to undermine the unity of the peasant opposition and provide the army with a means of identifying peasant organizers. The events following the implementation of the reforms supports this claim, as thousands of peasants fled their homes when paramilitary groups began to harass, disappear, and kill land reform claimants and peasant leaders.

A July 1980 memorandum from the University of Wisconsin Land Tenure Center (institutional home of Roy Prosterman, who designed the Decree 207 reforms) concluded: “In general, this is a very hastily and poorly drafted law. [...] It sets the stage for a top-down land reform process tightly controlled by government, with no significant participation by *campesinos* at any level” (cited in Montgomery 1995:139). Hugh Byrne notes that land reform had little effect on winning support for the regime in the countryside. He writes that “with the exception of the western departments of Sonsonate and Ahuachapán, the rural areas were the most volatile parts of the country during the period 1981-1984.” Byrne concludes that the land reform did nothing to temper peasant radicalism outside of the *occidente*. While the *occidente* was by no means as politically quiet as the truisms of the war would have it, peasants in Tacuba typically regard the land reforms as a victory. Perhaps more significantly, they regard the reforms as a sincere effort to create a more just world, and attribute that effort to the José Napoleon Duarte.

Duarte came to power in November of 1980, seven months after the implementation of the first phase of the land reform, which created peasant cooperatives including Las Colinas in Tacuba and Nejapa, in between Ahuachapán and Tacuba, where

don Alfredo witnessed the fighting between rebels and security forces in 1932. Duarte was the first civilian president since Hernández Martínez took power in 1931, although Duarte was not elected. He was appointed to salvage the remnants of the hope and credibility born of the October, 1979 coup by the young Military (*Juventud Militar*). The short-lived October coup was the final event in Salvadoran politics that followed the cyclical pattern of coup and reaction described above. Engineered by progressive elements within the military, the coup's most important legacy is likely the *Proclama*, a proclamation that stressed the need for reforms throughout society in order to secure the country's future. The growing violence and repression in the country at the same time angered civilian liberals who supported the coup's leaders, and by December most of them had left. Salvador Samayoa, the coup's minister of education, joined the guerrillas shortly after, symbolizing for many the end of liberal hopes for a peaceful resolution to the country's conflict (Peterson 1997:30). With Duarte's election, the leaders of the coup sought to restore a civilian face to the government, even if they had no intention of ceding civilian rule.

Duarte's presidency did not conceive the land reforms, nor did it oversee the first phase of their implementation. It did, however, administer the initial claims of most recipients under Phase III, the land to the tiller program, which is how the Sánchez and Méndez families, along with the majority of the members of the cooperative *El Armonía*, gained titles to the land they now live on. It is also how the members of *El Armonía* got the collective land that belongs to the cooperative, which was not a Phase I land grant.

In a conversation about political parties and the reasons one might or might not belong to a party, Julián Herrera of *El Armonía* presents his criteria. "Since we're political, we support a party that favors us, because one that comes along to destroy you all at once..." he says, letting the sentence hang as he shakes his head. He goes on:

An example, in the case from which Decree 207 emerged. This was Duarte, in his presidency he took up the law that the *campesino* get his lands, for those people who worked it. There, necessarily, one must join with the party, and so we've passed through time and today we are staying in a party that works in favor, and not against, us. That's what I can say.⁴⁷

According to Gabriel Méndez of *cantón* El Sincuyo in Tacuba,

After the [Phase I] agrarian reform, like in Las Colinas, came the decree favoring the poor, because not all of us made it into a cooperative. Then the decree came to give us [land], thank God that there was a president then called Ingeniero Duarte.⁴⁸ He made it so all of us would become owners of the land, according to decree 207, and that's how I came to be the owner here because I worked here [as a colono], and since it was well done they recognized where a person worked. That's why I wound up here.

References like this to Duarte were a regular and consistent feature in narratives of acquiring land. When speaking of Duarte, some would cross themselves and ask God to bless him. "Pobrecito," said one woman referring to Duarte, who died of stomach and liver cancer in 1990. He became the first elected president since Araujo in 1984, and so held the office for most of the civil war. In one interview, Leopoldo Sánchez speaks of "that fine man, may God rest his soul, Ingeniero Duarte, who truly created a PDC (Duarte's party) so that we could eat, and not so they could eat the little guys."⁴⁹

When evaluated in relation to the dissatisfaction with, and rejection of the agrarian reforms in other parts of the country, the support for the reforms and the lionization of Duarte might suggest that peasants in the west were somehow essentially more conservative. I suggest instead that the agrarian reforms have been enshrined in local narratives as the gift of a benevolent Duarte because these narratives fit within the

⁴⁷ Como somos políticos apoyamos a un partido que nos favorezca a nosotros, porque uno que nos venga a terminar de un solo... Un ejemplo, en el caso donde salió el decreto 207 eso fue Duarte, en su período él tomó la ley que el campesino acudiera a sus tierras, para aquellas personas que las trabajaban. Ahí, obligadamente, uno tiene que hacerse del partido y hemos venido pasando los tiempos y hoy en día nos vamos a quedar en un partido que vaya a favor y no en contra de uno. Eso es lo que le puedo decir.

⁴⁸ "Ingeniero," or engineer, is a title accorded to graduates with college degree in the sciences.

⁴⁹ "...aquel finado -Dios lo tenga en descanso- el ingeniero Duarte, pero que él de verdad se entregó como un PDC para que lo comiéramos y no para comer él a los más chiquitos.

pattern of *doble cara* I described in the previous chapter as “two faces turned to the state.” Recall that at the same time they were attending classes at the *universidad campesina*, planning their claims under decree 207, and fighting for the right to organize and get credit to buy the land that became the *El Armonía* cooperative, the Sánchezs were members of the *defensa civil*. The same is true of Rigoberto Hernández of *El Armonía*, Clementino Méndez of El Sincuyo, and José Luis Zaldaña and other officers of the *Las Colinas* cooperative.

In the previous chapter I argued that constant engagement with the state, both as subjects of and agents of its gaze, contributed to a kind of liminal subjectivity, the constitution of selves in-between the state and its rejection in the form of the FMLN. Unlike peasants in the areas of “dual-sovereignty”(Wood 2003) that the FMLN called their controlled zones, those in Tacuba had neither a consistent discourse of an alternative to the state. As potentially radicalizing as the discourse of liberation was, by itself it remained potential. By providing new ways of understanding of the roots of suffering and the meanings of justice, liberation theology created the conditions of possibility for the kind of collective support for insurgency that emerged in Chalatenango, Morazán, and the other central and eastern departments. But as Wood observes, the proximity of the guerrilla forces was a key factor, and this is where the circular quality of her causal explanations reveal themselves. I suggest that one of the main effects of the proximity of armed rebels was to suggest the possibility of the exteriority of the state (Aretxaga 2003). Guerrillas who moved through the mountains freely, engaged the agents of the state in battle, and not only survived but grew in numbers, pointed to the possibility of a world of action beyond the state, a space outside the state from which its vulnerabilities might be visible. While many Tacubenses experienced this through their contact with the FMLN, they did so beyond the boundaries of Tacuba, beyond Ahuachapán, and for the most part

outside of the *occidente*. When they tried to find an exterior to the state in Tacuba, they were slaughtered, facing armed landlords with only their machetes.

EL INDIAL: RACE AND CLASS IN TACUBA

For the Sánchezs and Rigoberto Hernández, the formation of their cooperative was the defining moment of their lives. They put the principles they learned at the *universidad campesina* into action, in the face of threats to their lives. Unlike the cooperative *Las Colinas*, an hour's walk to the southeast, *El Armonía* is not a Phase I cooperative. The army drove in trucks to *Las Colinas* to tell the surprised workers that the plantation, including the coffee processing plant or *beneficio*, was now their property. The founders of *El Armonía*, in contrast, bought a smaller plantation that would have been expropriated under the Phase II reforms had they ever been implemented. The story of their planning of this purchase, their efforts to receive credit, and their bravery and cleverness in the face of threats and tricks by the landowner reveals much about their understanding of collective action and what it means to be an *agricultor* or *campesino*.

For Leopoldo, one result of his engagement with wider church and political networks was his position as *regidor* or town council member in the municipal government of Mayor Carlos Galicia. Galicia was the candidate of the Christian Democratic Party (PDC), the party of Duarte in the 1984 elections and the nearest thing to an opposition party that existed before Duarte was installed by the military in 1980. According to Leopoldo, “when Ingeniero Duarte came to power, Galicia came in on his coattails.” Leopoldo is careful to make sure that I understand that the PDC in those days was not the corrupt party it would become. As cited above, Leopoldo considers the PDC of 1984 to be the party that wanted to ensure that the poor would eat, not the party that wanted to eat the poor. “But now, no, now the PDC is another big fish that grew and now

it's eating up all the little fish, now things are reversed.” His description of the party today as the *pescadón* (big fish) refers not only to the axiom that the big fish always eats the little fish, but also to the symbol of the PDC, the fish Christians use to identify themselves, for which the party is regularly called “*el pescado*,” the fish. In Leopoldo's time with the party, the *pescado* worked for the people.

Their main task, says Leopoldo, was to help people actually get the land titles for which they applied under the reforms. According to Leopoldo, Duarte came and said “‘we're going to help the worst off out there in the *cantones*, in those little corners of the town. We've gotten a decree,’ [Duarte] said, ‘and this decree is going to be called 207. This 207 we're going to call an institution of small farmers, and this institution we'll call National Agricultural Land Finance.’”⁵⁰ (It is, I am sure, clear to the reader that Leopoldo acquired preacherly oratorical style over the course of his studies and work.) Galicia, Leopoldo, and the other council members gathered together the provisional titles of land claimants and went to the Ministry of Agriculture. There, says Leopoldo, “we told them, ‘look how many people we have who need to get the final, legitimate documents that confirm that they are, in fact, the owners of this land.’ And with this small effort, people began getting the titles to their land, and with the titles they felt more secure.” Leopoldo and his companions also helped to protect the property of the *Las Colinas* cooperative from one of the tactics of the landowner in the wake of the reform, which was to send people to claim title to sections of the land. “What we did was go to talk to the [military] base [in Ahuachapán],” says Leopoldo, and ask the commandant if he would please give us soldiers so they could come and guard that place so that the owner could not send

⁵⁰ Él dijo “vamos a ayudarles a aquellos que están más fregados allá en los cantones, en aquellos rincónitos del pueblo, pero saquemos un decreto”, dijo él, “y este decreto se va a llamar 207. Ese 207 le vamos a decir una institución de pequeños agricultores y a esa institución le vamos a llamar Financiera Nacional de Tierras Agrícolas”.

other kinds of people to intimidate this group while they were taking care of the papers.”⁵¹

As Marc Edelman notes in his study of peasant organizations in Costa Rica, state agencies are the main interlocutor for peasant politics, “central points of reference, foci of demands, and sites of struggle” (Edelman 1999:187). The case of peasants participating in armed insurgency or living in a zone controlled by an opposition movement provides a qualified exception to this. In the areas that would become conflict zones and controlled zones in El Salvador, peasants’ engagement with the state was curtailed for a variety of reasons. In the controlled zones, it was simply out of the question. In other conflicted areas, agricultural production virtually ceased. Where land reforms failed utterly, usually because of repression from the right but in some cases due to attacks by the FMLN on reform-sector cooperatives, peasants had little reason to organize in order to demand land titles. In heavily conflicted areas, landlords typically fled and abandoned their properties, which were usually converted to *milpa* to produce maize and other basic foods, or simply left alone.

Similarly, in the Zapatista autonomy zones in Chiapas, Mexico, rejecting any engagement with state agencies is a fundamental part of the project, even though the Zapatista’s stated goals do not include taking control of the state, as the FMLN’s did when it was a revolutionary organization. In both cases, some portion of local people did continue to have contact with state agencies, including those institutions dedicated to agriculture and education, and in both cases this is true not only of those communities or individuals who did not support the rebels. Still, in such contexts the state is radically

⁵¹ Y si fue la gente que estaba agarrando la tierra de las cooperativas del sector reformado lo que hacíamos era ir a hablar al cuartel y decirle allí al comandante que por favor nos dé soldados para que vengan a cuidar a ese lugar para que el dueño no mande a otro tipo de gente a molestar a ese grupo mientras se estaban arreglando los papeles.

redefined. It is no longer the only possible reference, and so it is exposed as partial, vulnerable, and perhaps even escapable. In Tacuba and other parts of El Salvador where the FMLN did not have a significant presence, however, and local landowners did not abandon their properties, without the state there was realistically no where to turn.

The relationship between peasants in Ahuachapán and the state was also constantly reproduced by the regular, everyday forms of engagement initiated by the state. One of the least appreciated of these is that the *occidente* was the zone of the highest recruitment, both voluntary and forced, during the late 1970s and 1980s. The oft-repeated truism that the civil war never really affected the *occidente* not only misreads the effects of repression and overlooks resistance, it also neglects the multiple effects of the relatively high participation of men from the *occidente* in the armed forces. These included not only high rates of female headed households, but also the traumatic residue of the military's training program and of combat against other peasants—"defending interests other than [their] own," as Manuel Sánchez said (Chapter 3).

The state as a totality, an powerful if imaginary entity, was also produced and sustained in Tacuba through the presence of the National Guard and paramilitary groups, as well as the *Sombra Negra*, whose membership was a public secret. These forces were clearly allied with planters, unlike the national army, which by the time of the agrarian reforms was developing an agenda independent of the landlords (Montgomery 1995). While their counterparts in other parts of the country were abandoning properties in the face of the real threats posed by the FMLN forces, landlords in Tacuba were reliving their nightmare fantasies of the *indio-comunista*, and in their conflicts with local peasants they drew upon these fantasies and the threat of reprisals. Through these references, a mestizo elite fantasy of race was projected into the present, creating the *indio* as a category of loathing, terror, and violence.

The story of the *Cooperativa El Armonía* begins with the process of making claims for individual parcels under Phase III of the agrarian reforms. The Sánchezs claimed land in Ashukema that belonged to Colonel Hugo Stanley Orantes. The reform process called for peasants to claim land that they worked, their *huatales*, which were typically sown with maize, squash, and beans, or *milpa*. “In 1980 we went o claim this and that’s where the fight with the colonel began, and those three years were nearly the death of us because the *mandadores* (foremen) were so bitter that I started working here,” says Leopoldo.⁵² Before the title was through, Leopoldo began clearing the land and measuring its dimensions and location. The first time he went to begin clearing a dead cedar tree, the *mandador* came and threatened to kill him. As Leopoldo recalls, “Then I said to him, ‘look, excuse me, I am not taking anything from you,’ I said, ‘nor from anyone else. I am going to pay for this land, but I’ll pay the owner,’ I said. ...The truth is that we had an argument, but I got away.” He continues:

Another time I was up there measuring off some *tareas* (units of land) again, that time with a machete, and another *mandador* came. He arrives and says to me, ‘look, indio, this that and the other. The colonel says for you not to be on this land, because this is his land,’ he said to me.

I told him, ‘look, this land is not anybody’s, we all own it. The land belongs to God, its fruits are ours, but it is God who gives us those fruits.’

‘Don’t talk to me about that crap, that’s not what I’m saying. What I’m telling you is to get back to your house,’ he said to me.

Despite the threats, Leopoldo continued his work and eventually received credit and the title to his huatal in Ashukema, as did Francisco and several others. Many other potential claimants did not pursue their claims, though, for fear of the colonel’s threats, a situation

⁵² En el año 1980 fuimos nosotros a denunciar esto y aquí entró el pleito con el coronel porque esos tres años fue casi la muerte para nosotros, porque los mandadores eran tan ácidos que yo por aquí comenzaba a trabajar.

that took place across the country. The Sánchezs knew that unless the majority of the colonel's land was divided up among the peasants who worked it they would never live in peace. At this point, they called on a friend and fellow organizer, Rigoberto Hernández. As Rigoberto tells the story,

Through 207 plenty of folks declared parcels here. Then... well, this was a really problematic situation, right? Then when *el señor colonel* realized that the land had been subdivided, or that we'd declared the *huatales* under the decree—some people, for sure, not everybody, let's say fifty percent—well, this was a huge problem, even with those who rented and with the *colonos*. Well then, the people saw that they needed to organize themselves, right? And in this organization, not everyone who had declared parcels had the courage to organize themselves. And that was the weakness of the group, and since the weakness of the group was so great, they needed other people to support them. And I was one of those people. That I, without having a *huatal* here, I threw myself into the business of organizing. Without defending anything, my ideology was to get something, right?

Then the colonos said, 'fine, now that you've taken some parcels, I'll give you the *finca*. Buy the *finca* from me. Why would I want these chopped up pieces,' he said. And then, pardon my language, he said, 'if you have the balls to declare the parcels, then have the balls to take the *finca*.' And so that was the pressure.⁵³

Leopoldo reports this challenge as a bluff: "He (Orantes) thought we were not going to have the capacity. He mostly thought we were lazy, maybe for seeing us as little, brown, without money (*por vernos chiquitos, morenos y así sin pisto*)."

⁵³ A través del 207 bastante gente declaró las parcelas de acá. Entonces... pero, este, fue una situación bien problemático, verdad? Entonces, cuando el señor colonel se dio cuenta de que había parcelado, o sea que habían declarado a base del decreto a los guatales—algunos, por cierto, no todos, digamos cincuenta por ciento—este, fue un gran problema, incluso con los que arrendaban tierra y los colonos. Entonces, allí se vieron ellos en la obligación y la necesidad de organizarse, verdad? Entonces en esa organización de hecho no todos que habían declarado las parcelas tenían el coraje de organizarse. Pero allí fue la debilidad del grupo. Entonces, como la debilidad del grupo era tanto, ellos necesitaban a otras personas que los apoyaban. Y una de las esas personas fui yo. Que yo, sin tener guatal acá, me metí en el rollo organizativo. Sin defender nada, mi ideología era obtener algo, verdad? Entonces, como el colonel dijo, "bueno, ya que agarraron algunas parcelas, yo les entrego la finca, comprame la finca. Pa' que voy a querer pedazos retaciados (sic) decía él. Así con estas palabras perdoneme, pero así como "si tuvieron huevos de declarar las parcelas, que tengan huevos de agarrar la finca." Entonces eso era la presión.

Francisco, Leopoldo, Rigoberto, and one other representative of the twenty-five men who had agreed to form the cooperative made their way to the offices of FINATA, the National Agricultural Lands Finance agency in San Salvador, hiding from patrols and leaving before first light to avoid the checkpoints in and around Tacuba, where Leopoldo says the National Guards would strip search peasants to see what they carried. In the FINATA office, they presented their plan:

“*Señores*, we come with a great need. We are *campesinos*, we want to work, we do not have sufficient land, we have family, we’re located in this area, we bring you this proposal to see if you will buy this project, if you’ll lend us money, we want to pay this man.” We went through the whole agreement. And since we were there in the actual capital, in the actual office, they couldn’t say, ‘wait, we’re going to have to talk to others,’ because it was them. They only put us off for a little while.⁵⁴

What they learned from FINATA was that they needed first to list all the people who would be members of the cooperative and obtain legal status an association, *personería jurídica*. So, with the help of the Democratic Peasant Association (ADC) they submitted an application for *personería jurídica*. Some weeks later, Orantes found them and said he would agree to sell them the property, but that he expected all the money at once. At about the same time, they learned that their application for *personería jurídica* had been approved. Armed with the proper documents, they again made the trip to San Salvador. Upon seeing the paperwork, the FINATA officers told them, “yes, sirs, you come prepared. Now we have nothing more to tell you but that yes, we will process your credit application.”

⁵⁴ Llegamos hasta la oficina de San Salvador de FINATA y les dijimos “señores, nosotros traemos una gran necesidad. Somos campesinos, queremos trabajar, la tierra no nos alcanza, tenemos familia, estamos ubicados en tal parte, les traemos esta propuesta a ver si nos compran este proyecto, nos prestan el dinero, le queremos pagar a este señor”. Hicimos todo el convenio. Y como estábamos allí en la mera capital, en la mera oficina, no podían decir ellos “espérense vamos a ir a hablar”, a otras porque eran ellos. Solo nos pusieron un tiempo.

“When they said that,” recalls Leopoldo, “I felt as if my heart had swollen with joy, and I said ‘this is really going to happen.’”⁵⁵ The FINATA agents told Leopoldo and his companions to return a week later to see how the process was coming along, at which point they said that everything was in order. “The only thing you still need, *señores*, is for the owner himself to come and give his consent, if he will sell or not sell.” “And we had been talking with the [owner] just two days before that meeting,” says Leopoldo, “and he had agreed that in five days he would come to that office were we had gone to propose the project. But he had a dark policy (*una política grave*) because he was from the government. It was a dark policy that he was saying “I want to see these men dead.” At this point in our conversation I asked Leopoldo if the colonel had told him this.

Yes, to us. To me and my brother Francisco, we were the ones who faced the situation the most, and also this *compañero* (companion or comrade) Rigoberto. And he said, ‘these men, these *negritos*, I want to see dead,’ said the *patrón*, which he was then, and he stuck his pistol in our chests, and lots of things, things like that, threats. Right here in this little spot, over there, at the *guachipilín* tree that’s in the patio of the [cooperative’s] office could have been our cross. He stood us there and there he raised his pistol to shoot us, but we didn’t feel fear of death, but rather what we felt was the need to have a piece of land and enough for the family to eat.⁵⁶

Leopoldo’s reference to the cross suggests the extent to which Biblical concepts shaped his understanding of his struggle to buy the land for the cooperative, echoing the martyr narratives that were so influential in the Salvadoran popular church, particularly after the

⁵⁵ Entonces dijeron “señores, andan equipados. Ya no tenemos más que decirles que sí les vamos a tramitar el crédito”. Entonces, cuando dijeron eso mire, yo me sentí que se me hinchó el corazón de alegría dije yo “ya va estar esto”.

⁵⁶ Sí, a nosotros. A mí y a mi hermano Francisco y éramos los que más enfrentábamos la situación y este compañero Dagoberto. Y dijo “a estos señores, a estos negritos los quiero ver muertos”, decía el patrón que era entonces y que nos ponía la pistola en el pecho y un montón de cosas, cosas así como amenazando, aquí mismo en este lugarcito, allí. En el palo de guachipilín que está en el patio de la oficina allí podía ser la cruz de nosotros porque allí contra ese palo, allí nos ponía él y allí nos ponía la pistola ya para dispararnos. Pero no sentíamos miedo de morir, si no que lo que sentíamos era necesidad de tener un pedazo de tierra y comer con toda la familia.

death of Archbishop Romero (Peterson 1997). His narrative also shows how pervasive racial ideology was in the landlord's discourse. Throughout *mestizo* Central America "indio" is a pejorative label that expresses the commingled categories of class and race. As Leopoldo observes, the colonel assumed the future *cooperativistas* would be incapable of following through on the process because he saw them as "little, brown and with no money."

These references to bodies, to stature and skin color (*indio*, *moreno*, and *negrito* in Leopoldo's account) are not specific to El Salvador's *occidente*, nor do they correspond to particular external traits, as the language of the "white (or light-skinned) Indians" (*indios cheles*) of Chalatenango shows (de Guevara 1975). What these references do in Tacuba and the rest of the *occidente* is voice the fantasies of racial threat, of contamination and menace, that have so long possessed elites. And so Colonel Hugo Stanley Orantes López threatens the *indios comunistas* that have dared to challenge his authority by forcing them to stand in front of a tree, just as the troops in 1932 lined groups of men before the ceiba in Tacuba's cemetery. Gabriel Méndez recalls a soldier who boasted that he was going to "wipe out that nest of Indians (*indial*) in El Sincuyo." According to Gabriel, the soldier had a list of five alleged subversives that included Gabriel's son Clementino. The plan was to lynch them, again replaying the imagery of *la matanza*.

Race as it emerges here is a complicated mixture of identifications and attachments that transcend "class" and "not class" distinctions. The Barthian concept of a shared object of reference for "ethnicity," in which members of a particular ethnic group recognize themselves as such, and are recognized as such by their outsider neighbors, does not hold up here, as Gabriel's sarcastic dismissal of people who think of *indio* as a real category in Tacuba suggests, a point I take up further in subsequent chapters. Does

all of this mean that the traditional vision of El Salvador as “a nation without Indians” (Montes 1988) is accurate after all? No, for beyond the forms of collective memory, shared and distinctive traditions, and even language use that still mark Indians as different in several parts of the country (Chapin 1990; Montes 1988; Rodriguez and Lara Martínez 2000), the Indian lives on in elite fantasies as the *indio-comunista*. It should not be surprising that people held in the gaze of this fantasy—interpellated as the *indio-comunista*, other than *mestizo*-national but not authentically indigenous—reject this kind of Indianness.

Arturo Saldaña, one of the few in Tacuba who work with an indigenous political organization, speaks of indigenous people in the third person, locating them in a prelapsarian past. He tells me that *la gente de antes*, the people from before, understood how to have a community. Children respected their elders, and everyone looked out for everyone else. People didn’t go hungry. “Before what?” I ask. “Pues, de antes, del pasado,” he says. Just before. Arturo does not include himself in the category Indian. There may be a utopian impulse in his participation with the indigenous movement, and there have been some material benefits, but the subject of representation itself—the Indian—is present neither in Tacuba, as far as Arturo is concerned, nor in the present. This is not simply because representations of Indianness are too narrow, but because Indianness is bound up with the racial ideology of elites and an all-powerful state. That *campesino* visions of the world reject this conceptual apparatus should not be surprising, nor should it be seen an example of false consciousness.

To say that the Indian is a figure of mestizo fantasy, as I do throughout this dissertation, is not to say that Indianness is false, or exclusively the domain of hegemonic representations. It is to clarify the extent to which hegemonic representations shape understandings of what Indianness is and mark off acceptable and unacceptable forms of

being through the boundaries of categories as they are projected onto the world by those who have traditionally held the reins of official power. By locating the problem of “Indian identity” in the realm of mestizo fantasies, *lo indio* can be approached as a compilation of dangerous concepts and themes with which the wealthy and powerful shape their vision of the world, a world in which peasants are constrained to act. It also points to the ways peasants challenge this vision, even as they reject interpellation as the Indian that the dominant gaze is able to see.

Rural folk in Tacuba do not believe that they are the same as landlords or *ladinos* even when they say that everyone in Tacuba is *mestizo*. They recognize divisions and distinctions within this imaginary of unity and likeness. At times they talk of themselves as the *originarios* of Tacuba, the *naturales de este lugar*, natives of this place. To be *natural* is to be poor and poorly educated, to accept to some degree the assumptions of a traditional system of inequality, but people also imbue this sense of their distinctiveness with value. Julián Herrera is another officer and farmer of the cooperative *El Armonía* and a contemporary of Rigoberto Hernández and the Sánchez brothers. On several occasions, Julián had patiently explained to me there were no Indians in Tacuba. One day, though, as I sat with Julián in the patio of his house, which commands a view of the entire *caserío* Ashukema, I asked him what the word *ladino* meant for him. Instead of the sympathy he seemed to feel for my inability to understand the absence of Indians in Tacuba, this question prompted a thoughtful appraisal of the persistence of race.

I think that *ladino* people are another color, they are distinguished a little bit from us in the country. To us they say sometimes, when you’ve got a girlfriend, “and who’s going to want you, you Indian?” They put you down, but with someone from town, these people are *ladinos* like that, because they’re of another category; in other words, they’re more distinguished people. That’s what I think.

BGP: And this word “*natural*,” what does it mean?

J: Because we're more rural, more *naturalitos* because in a system, we're more short on resources, and in color, I think that the *natural*... we already said it; they're a little be more another... they have a different value than we do. Example: the *pollo indio* is different from incubator chickens because the *indio* is another thing, and the incubator chickens, they put other things in so it'll be more valuable...

BGP: But the *pollo indio* is stronger?

J: Yes, for us it could be that we in the country are are better, like the animal, than the ones from town, because we're adapted to all sorts of things, and so is the animal. We're *naturales*, *indios* in other words.

Julián begins his explanation with reference to phenotype, which he repeats, but his comments focus most closely on questions of status, value, and distinction. He gives a strong sense of the painful force of racial interpellation with his example of what a *ladino* might say to a young man with a girlfriend: "and who's going to want you, Indian?" "¿Y quién te va a querer, vos indio?" Julián spits out the last words, "*vos indio*." The familiar form here is the Gabrielgative of *ladinos* speaking to Indians, a prerogative that is not reciprocal, reflecting the Indian's lower position.

And yet Julián imbues the category of *natural* with value, a strength of body and character that comes from being rural, native, *natural*. The chickens in town require additives, costly resources, in order to acquire their value. They are fragile, requiring an incubator, special equipment and feed, while the *pollo indio* survives and thrives eating whatever it can scratch out of the ground. When I suggest to Julián that the *pollo indio* is stronger than its elite counterpart, he responds as if I have asked him about his community. "We in the country are better." And this is the moment when I first hear someone in Tacuba say "we are Indians": when the question is explicitly posed in relation to social conflict and racism, and not simply as a category of identity. The *indio* as *natural*, as the self who struggles against the wealthy, is the Indian that seems able to elude, at least partially, the ideals of "culture" and the past that typically attend ideas of

Indianness, and so conjure up the Indian of mestizo fantasy, which I have called the national fetish-Indian.

In this chapter I have attempted to explore the politics of the poor in Tacuba during the 1970s and 1980s as though people there were not simply with the government or with the FMLN, not simply *campesinos* or *ricos*. I have tried to understand what Avery Gordon calls “complex personhood.” “It has always baffled me,” she writes, “why those most interested in understanding and changing the barbaric domination that characterizes our modernity often—not always— withhold from the very people they are most concerned with the right to complex personhood.”

Complex personhood is the second dimension of the theoretical statement that life is complicated. Complex personhood means that all people (albeit in specific forms whose specificity is sometimes everything) remember and forget, are beset by contradiction, and recognize and misrecognize themselves and others. Complex personhood means that people suffer graciously and selfishly too, get stuck in the symptoms of their troubles, and also transform themselves. Complex personhood means that even those called “Other” are never never that. Complex personhood means that the stories people tell about themselves, about their troubles, about their social worlds, and about their society’s problems are entangled and weave between what is immediately available as a story and what their imaginations are reaching toward (Gordon 1997:4).

Charles R. Hale gets at the same kind of complexity in his formulation of “contradictory consciousness” among Nicaraguan Miskitu. Hale insists that “resistance to subordination generally involves the assimilation of hegemonic ideas” and that analysts must approach apparently bounded categories of identity as “‘impure,’ combined, contradictory” (Hale 1994:202-3). The case of political identifications and practices in Tacuba during the civil war suggest how far this “impurity” and complexity might extend, and the ways in which people might still find grounds for intentional, collective action in the name of a vision of social justice. It also shows the extent to which the polarities we, as analysts and outsiders, see at work in a given setting might differ

radically from the points of attachment the people we study recognize, even as we think we are talking about the same things.

Chapter Five: Recognition, Regulation, and Refusal

On January 16, 1992, representatives of the FMLN and the Government of Alfredo Cristiani signed peace accords in Chapultepec, Mexico City, officially ending the civil war that lasted 12 years and claimed near 100,000 lives. Along with the electoral defeat of Nicaragua's Sandinistas in 1990, the Salvadoran peace accords seemed to signal the end of the Cold War in Central America. Nineteen ninety-two was also a watershed year for indigenous peoples across the Americas, with international events like the campaign of protest against the five hundred year anniversary of Columbus's arrival, Rigoberta Menchú's Nobel Peace Prize, the UN Conference on Environment and Development, and finally the UN declaration of the Year of Indigenous Peoples (1993) and the Decade of Indigenous Peoples (1994-2004). These events, primarily the results of decades of organizing and activism, drew enormous public attention to the indigenous peoples of Latin America and created a greatly expanded international forum in which indigenous peoples could voice their grievances and demands.

In 1993, early in El Salvador's transition to peace, the United Nations Education, Science, and Culture Organization launched its *Programa Cultura de Paz en El Salvador* (Culture of Peace Program in El Salvador). The Program (as its authors called it) was dedicated to fostering "a democratic culture that favors the effective application of human rights and the establishment of a culture of peace" (UNESCO 1993:5). It involved the Salvadoran government and multiple civil society organizations, uniting them in efforts to transform what the Program understood as a deep-rooted culture of violence in Salvadoran society.

Among the notable features of the Cultures of Peace Program was its inclusion of support for the Indigenous Communities in the second of four project areas, *Rescate y*

Fomento de la Identidad Nacional en una Cultura de Paz (Recovery and Promotion of National Identity in a Culture of Peace).⁵⁷ Project 2.9, “Support to the Indigenous Communities of El Salvador” was a three year venture with a budget of US \$478,000 overseen by CONCULTURA and “Indigenous Communities of the Country” (elsewhere the Program specifies the oldest of the Salvadoran indigenous groups, the Salvadoran National Indigenous Association, ANIS, as the representative organization). The project’s main goals were to create and promote “*el indigenismo*”; to provide access to educational and cultural services for indigenous people; to strengthen the country’s indigenous organizations; and “to coordinate with countries that possess advanced stocks of indigenist materials in the area of Mexico, Central, and South America”(UNESCO 1993:90).

To many in El Salvador Project 2.9 may well have seemed bizarre. One observer wrote that the idea of projects for indigenous peoples in El Salvador “strained credibility” (Tilley 1997). Nearly four decades earlier, the document affirming El Salvador’s support of the ILO Convention 107 on indigenous rights began with something of a disclaimer: “Insofar as in our country indigenous populations do not exist...” (Diario Oficial, October 2 1958, cited in Tilley 2002:532 fn 18). This official statement reflected the powerful “myth of *mestizaje*” that achieved the status of commonsense fact for most Salvadorans, and has been one of the most difficult obstacles for indigenous activists to overcome. Indigenous activists created a movement in the early 1990s, forming more than a dozen organizations. For this movement, recognition of indigenous peoples has been the principal demand, the goal towards which much of activist practice has been

⁵⁷ The four areas were 1.) Democratic Citizenship and Human Development; 2.) Recovery and Promotion of National Identity in a Culture of Peace; 3.) Training and Experience of a Culture of Peace; 4.) Associated Projects (*Proyectos Transversales*), including information and communications systems. See UNESCO (1993)

oriented. The historical discourse of the invisibility of the indigenous peoples of El Salvador means that to make indigenous people visible is a fundamental objective and starting point for activists.

Recognition is of a piece with “visibilization”, from the Spanish *visibilizarse*, to make visible. Recognition is also a key term for the politics of multiculturalism or the politics of difference, where, as Charles Taylor writes, “what we are asked to recognize is the unique identity of this individual or group, their distinctness from everyone else” (Taylor 1994:38). The politics of recognition so formulated is based on the understanding or supposition of social collectivities in conflict, that there exists a dominant social collectivity, and that part of the way this dominant collectivity achieves and maintains its dominance is through failing to recognize other collectivities. “[A] person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves” (Taylor 1994:25). As the history of European colonialism shows, visions of colonized peoples that represent them as uncivilized, incompetent, or not fully human have been central discursive supports for practices of exploitation, oppression, and violence.

The demand for recognition then is a demand from subaltern groups that the dominant society abandon such demeaning images and the active structuring of inequality that these images authorize or justify. Here recognition means the juridical recognition of rights, in addition to the more general and sweeping understanding of the recognition of a social-political subject’s distinctness within a larger collectivity. The general difficulty the demand for recognition presents to liberal political theory is the friction between universal norms and rights and particular identities. Wendy Brown argues that this “constitutive paradox of liberalism... stimulates the articulation of politically significant differences on the one hand, and the suppression of them on the

other” (Brown 1995:67). This is the contradiction around which Taylor organizes his discussion of the politics of recognition and strives to resolve with an elaborated notion of respect.

This chapter explores this contradiction in the context of indigenous identity politics in El Salvador. I argue that recognition is more than a matter of seeing, and respecting, difference; it is also a productive social process, and so the demand for recognition is also an incitement to produce an indigenous subject. I address the politics of recognition through the lens of recent theories of governmentality that suggest the ways recognition can become implicated in governmental strategies to map and produce subjects, instantiating new forms of power, discipline, and regulation. I argue that in the Salvadoran case, the logic of governmentality is disrupted by the same contradictions that confound the identification of a stable indigenous subject. The demand for recognition in El Salvador emerges as a demand to recognize the Indian as a national fetish, that Indian that has been discursively separated from the time-space of the national present. In the political practice of activists NGOs, the state, and transnational development organizations, what emerges is not a politics of control but what James Ferguson (Ferguson 1994) calls “anti-politics.”

RECOGNIZING INDIGENOUS SUBJECTS

For indigenous peoples who live in distinct territories, speak indigenous languages, and whose difference from the dominant national people is evident in classic markers of indigeneity like clothing, customs, and phenotype, the question of this general type of recognition may never arise. For indigenous groups like Panama’s Kuna, Amazonian peoples like the Kayapó, Yanomami, and Huaorani, or the Miskitu of Central America’s Atlantic Coast, as well as Afro-descended peoples, their status as others and

their separateness from dominant representations of national subjectivity are not in doubt. Instead, for these lowland peoples, their distinctiveness vis-à-vis dominant national subjects is the basis for their exclusion from citizenship, and in some cases from full humanity. Their political struggles have been characterized by demands for recognition by the state of their belonging within the nation, and of their rights to traditional practices and territories and for respect for their cultural practices. Arguably, lowland forest peoples who lived, or were thought to live, on the margins of national economic, political, and cultural spheres, constituted the paradigmatic case of indigenous peoples for the politics of recognition expressed in indigenous rights discourse. Threats to the territories of lowland Amazonian peoples, when understood to be threats to important natural ecosystems as well, spurred the formation of the environmentalist – indigenous alliances in the 1980s and 1990s, which in turn was enormously important in bringing indigenous issues to international prominence (Brysk 2000; IUCN/Inter-Commission Task Force on Indigenous Peoples. 1997; Palmer, et al. 1991; Schmink and Wood 1992; Stevens and De Lacy 1997).

Given this history, it is not surprising that many of the landmark indigenous rights victories in Latin America have involved lowland peoples, from the establishment of territorial autonomy for the Kuna in 1925 and the Miskitu in 1986 to the recent landmark *Awas Tingni Case in Nicaragua*⁵⁸. The latter is instructive regarding the meanings of recognition in the context of the politics of indigenous identity in Latin America. On August 31, 2001, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights found in favor of *Awas Tingni*, a Mayagna indigenous community in the Atlantic Coast region of Nicaragua. In 1993 the Nicaraguan government granted timber concessions to a Dominican firm on

⁵⁸ In both the Kuna and Miskitu cases the indigenous peoples' struggles against the nation-state (Panama and Nicaragua, respectively) were greatly aided by the US, which had its own reasons for challenging the Panamanian and Nicaraguan states. See Hale (1994), Sherzer and Urban (1991) on the Kuna.

43,000 hectares of land, most of which was land that Awas Tingni claimed as their traditional lands. The international conservation agency World Wildlife Fund convinced the Nicaraguan government to suspend the concession pending an agreement with Awas Tingni. WWF also helped fund and develop the University of Iowa law project that went on successfully to negotiate an agreement, signed in May of 1994, between the Dominican company, the Nicaraguan environment ministry, and Awas Tingni that would title the community's land claims and ensure that the residents of Awas Tingni benefited from the extraction of resources from their lands (Anaya and Grossman 2002:3).

The Nicaraguan government subsequently began negotiations with another international company regarding logging concessions to 63,000 hectares of land adjacent to the land protected under their earlier agreement with Awas Tingni. The government, considering this to be state-owned land, did not respond to Awas Tingni's written complaints and a request to cease development of the logging project pending an investigation and more negotiations. Awas Tingni, again assisted by the Iowa legal project (later joined by lawyers from the Indian Law Resource Center and the University of Arizona), took their concerns to the Organization of American States' Inter-American Court on Human Rights in 1995, finally winning six years later after a tortuous path through national courts as well as the international tribunal. "This is the first legally binding decision by an international tribunal to uphold the collective land and resource rights of indigenous peoples in the face of a state's failure to do so," write two of the lawyers who prosecuted the case on behalf of Awas Tingni (Anaya and Grossman 2002).

In its decision, the court argued that it was not enough for the Nicaraguan government legally to recognize indigenous peoples' rights to land they customarily use, but that Nicaragua must secure the enjoyment of those rights by titling lands. In other words, abstract recognition was insufficient; specific legal recognition of particular

territories was necessary. In arguing the legitimacy of the Awas Tingni claims, prosecutors relied on geographic and ethnographic data collected by Harvard anthropologist Theodore MacDonald and assistants from the community. These data included maps as well as oral accounts of land use and tenure. At this point, anthropological talk of the socially constructed and contingent nature of identities falls away and a more concrete language of places, boundaries, traits, and practices takes over. Without this level of specificity, the kind of recognition that actually allows the community of Awas Tingni to challenge the tides of global capitalism and the commodification of their traditional territories is not possible.

Nicaraguan law recognized indigenous peoples and their rights, including the legitimacy of traditional, customary land tenure. Yet as Charles R. Hale remarks, indigenous rights programs and initiatives “come with clearly articulated limits.”

[T]he concessions and prohibitions of neoliberal multiculturalism structure the spaces that cultural rights activists occupy: defining the language of contention; stating which rights are legitimate, and what forms of political action are appropriate for achieving them; and even, weighing in on basic questions of what it means to be indigenous (Hale 2002:490)

Whether the people of Awas Tingni were Indian, and so eligible to make claims appealing to national and international indigenous laws was not in question in this case. (Mashpee case here – maybe a footnote?). Still, in order to make the law effective – to give the abstract promise of rights concrete meaning – the people of Awas Tingni had to make themselves and their territory legible within the terms of both a regime of government understood as juridical rules and procedures, and also to government through a set of recognized norms and expectations of the proper way to be Indian.

Virginia Tilley (2002) analyzes the production of norms of Indianness by transnational organizations that promote indigenous rights as a “new hegemony.” In her

study of Salvadoran indigenous activist groups, she shows how the gap between these norms and expectations of Indianness on the one hand, and the actual experiences of particular peoples on the other, can be politically debilitating. For Tilley, the political lessons from this are that varied historical experiences demand a more inclusive vision of Indianness, a broader set of expectations, norms, and possible representations. In his analysis of the risks for subaltern peoples attending the politics of recognition, K. Anthony Appiah expresses the limitations of resting at this point:

It is a familiar thought that the bureaucratic categories of identity must come up short before the vagaries of actual people's lives. But it is equally important to bear in mind that a politics of identity can be counted on to transform the identities on whose behalf it ostensibly labors. Between the politics of recognition and the politics of compulsion, there is no bright line (Appiah 1994:163).

Tilley remains within the bounds of liberal practice in her critique, reiterating a variant of the basic contradiction between universalism and the particularism that is intrinsic to liberal political philosophy. Appiah points beyond this to the limits that necessarily inhere in liberal political practice, and that emerge in the production of the categories of identity available to us, or more broadly in the formation of subjects. Another way of putting this might be to say that Tilley's critique addresses a kind of essentialism (which Appiah, echoing Edward Said (Said 1978), calls philosophical realism) that sets fixed coordinates for defining Indianness, but does not address the fact that *any* set of norms, no matter how broadly conceived, will necessarily impose limits in order to define meaningful boundaries for group identity. This second point raises questions about the acceptance by neoliberal governments of the basic, abstract principles of indigenous rights (and of multiculturalism more generally).

The extension of discourses of rights and recognition to groups based on collective, subaltern or minority identities is inextricably tied to the forms of power,

discipline, and subject formation that Foucault analyzed as “governmentality.” In Foucault’s formulation, governmentality describes a rationality of the effective use of power expressed as a concern with populations, territories, and the conduct of subjects individually and collectively. Governmentality as a logic of rule relies on individuals making themselves subjects within particular spatial and social fields through the micropolitics of discipline Foucault called biopolitics (Foucault 1980;, 1991). Rather than a matter of power being deployed by the powerful against the powerless, power works through all subjects in a given social field by guiding “the conduct of conduct” (Foucault, et al. 1991). In this, Foucault’s approach differs from Marxist models of power wielded as coercion and/or ideological consent, as well as from classical liberal contract theories (Danaher, et al. 2000).

The rise in discourses of multiculturalism, pluralism, and identity politics in the Americas (and the rest of the world) has been paralleled by the processes of economic globalization and the ascendance of the ideologies and practices of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is, among other things, a transformation in political rationality. As Nikolas Rose puts it, “the social imperative for government,” once characterized by the Keynesian model of social welfare policies, today is “mutating” (Rose 1999:135). As described in the previous chapter, the transfer of social welfare provisions from the state to non-state entities, particularly NGOs as well as other elements of “civil society” including charitable individuals and family, is one of the principal aspects of this mutation. One effect of this transformation, says Rose, is that “[s]ubjects of government are understood as individuals with ‘identities’ which not only identify them, but do so through their allegiance to a particular set of community values, beliefs, and commitments” (Rose 1999:135). As the Awas Tingni case shows, those beliefs, the community defined as the subject of identity, is necessarily bounded as it is defined.

“Community thus emerges as the ideal territory for the administration of individual and collective existence... Collective existence is made intelligible and calculable... making it amenable to intervention and administration in novel ways” (Rose 1999:136).

Efforts to document indigenous populations and spaces have proliferated alongside indigenous political and cultural activism in post-civil war El Salvador. These include two versions of a National Geographic Society-supported map of the indigenous peoples and environment;⁵⁹ a United Nations Development Project report on the Indians of Sonsonate, which was part of a larger research project into possibilities for tourism development;⁶⁰ and myriad reports put out by CONCULTURA,⁶¹ CCNIS,⁶² and other agencies involved in issues related to indigenous peoples’ concerns, like the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources. These projects certainly aim to make indigenous peoples, their characteristics, communities, histories, and territories visible; some are equally certainly dedicated to making those things intelligible and calculable. The question remains as to how well they succeed, and what else might be produced or achieved in the process. As I show in the following sections, the practice of making indigenous subjects visible and legible in El Salvador tends to call up the fetish-Indian of the *mestizo* national imaginary.

PROFILE OF THE INDIGENOUS OF THE PEOPLES OF EL SALVADOR

In November of 2003, a “multisectoral technical committee” published the *Perfil de los Pueblos Indígenas de El Salvador* (Profile of the Indigenous Peoples of El Salvador). The profile was part of a regional initiative, including Mexico and Central America, begun at the end of the 1990s by the World Bank-RUTA (the Bank’s Regional

⁵⁹ Cite Chapin’s map

⁶⁰ Peretti (2002)

⁶¹ Of these, Chapin (1990) is the most notable. See Chapter Two for a discussion of Chapin.

⁶² For example, CCNIS (1999), CCNIS (2000)

Unit for Technical Assistance). According to the Salvadoran *Perfil*, the goal for indigenous peoples was to produce “a tool” to facilitate their participation in the “everyday life” of the nation as an active member of civil society, and “to make visible and recognize the existing indigenous peoples of El Salvador” (xi). The Costa Rican report more succinctly states that its “thematic focus” is “the analysis of the social and economic problematics of the indigenous peoples” (Resumen ejecutivo, Perfil CR). Even without the report’s title, which echoes so unfortunately “racial profiling,” the racist technology of policing, it is clear that the logic of the *Perfil* shares the rationality of neoliberal governmentality. The parallel objectives of recognizing indigenous peoples by making them visible and of making them legible subjects of rule are inextricably linked (Foucault 1979; Scott 1998).

The main body of the *Perfil* is organized around eight areas or “characteristics”: economic, cultural, organizational, educational, health, environmental health (*higiene ambiental*), access (road and communications infrastructure), and land use and management. Foucault and others following in the tradition of governmentality studies identify all of these areas as primary sites of governmental intervention in the conduct of subjects (e.g., Foucault, et al. 1991; Mitchell 1988; Rose 1999; Scott 1998). Most of these areas are of tremendous concern to the rural poor of El Salvador without regard to identity. The major points of concern in the area of health, for example, include the absence of basic services, air and water pollution, crowded living conditions, poor nutrition, and the lack of access to basic medical care. These echo the concerns of most rural and many urban poor Salvadorans as reported in documents like the UNDP’s report on human development (PNUD 2004), as do the problems reported in the realms of access and environmental health.. The *Perfil*, however, must present data that suggest the particular urgency of these problems for indigenous communities and link them to

discrimination and indigenous cultural identity. The *Perfil* must do this in order to conform to the expectations of a cultural rights program, with its expectations of recognition and so of recognizable difference. It does this primarily through reference to the specificity of cultural traditions and the history of exploitation, violence, and oppression suffered by indigenous peoples in El Salvador.

Hence, the section on education makes no mention of the poor access to school experienced by most rural Salvadoran children (PNUD, find data). Instead, the *Perfil* concentrates on the Ministry of Education's (MINED) lack of interest in "bilingual intercultural education," and reports on the values of the indigenous model of education. The latter is a system of intergenerational, primarily familial and oral, transmission of knowledge "that offers a sustainable form of living life, [and] that can face current challenges generated by globalization." Topics include those subjects that are typically included in doctrines of "*usos y costumbres*" in the context of indigenous rights (as in Chiapas, for example), covering norms of conduct specific to given communities and peoples. The *Perfil* also mentions training in "the secrets of the practical application of [traditional] knowledge" (*los secretos de la aplicación práctica de los saberes*) (*Perfil*, XXII). Both the lack of concrete proposals that might lend themselves to policies and the reference to a vague and mysterious realm of secret indigenous spirituality play into the dismissal of Salvadoran activists as inauthentically indigenous. In turn, this enables a facile dismissal of those critiques leveled by indigenous activists of the politics and policies that contribute to the impoverishment of all rural Salvadorans.

Visions of neoliberal governmentality like Rose's (and Hale's neoliberal multiculturalism) analyze the strategic ways discourses of rights constrain not only politics but the realm of the political and inculcate or encourage other forms of conduct.

As indigenous identity politics emerges as an important axis around which rural politics are contested in El Salvador theories of governmental rationality and subject formation suggest important lines of inquiry. Yet the most clearly evident political effects of the investment in indigenous identity in El Salvador at this point in time are visible not in transformations of subjectivity and conduct (although these are certainly in a heightened state of flux), but in the deflection and deterritorialization of politics and the political. In her appraisal of Australian multiculturalism, Elizabeth Povinelli writes of “multicultural domination,” which she says works “by inspiring subaltern and minority subjects to identify with the impossible object of an authentic self-identity” (Povinelli 2002:6). Povinelli is concerned with the limits of liberal recognition of radical difference, with the point at which a particular cultural belief or practice goes from “being an instance of cultural difference to being repugnant culture,” culture that may be regarded as criminal, immoral, repulsive, or otherwise exceed the possibilities of recognition and “tolerance.” Regarding the Salvadoran case, I am interested in the limits at another edge of recognition, the point at which fantasies of blending and the construction of a fetish Indian beyond the national here and now deny or foreclose recognition (although, as I have argued, do not banish a range of practices, knowledges, and acts of power that rely on a logic of racism). In this case “authentic self-identity” is impossible not because the subject is split between competing and contrasting obligations and sensibilities but because the subject is asked to inhabit and perform an identity that is held to be always-already exterior to the nation. Despite the differences between multicultural politics in El Salvador and Australia, I am drawn to ask with Povinelli “how the real hopes and optimisms invested in a particular form of national association – liberal multiculturalism – divert social energy from other political and social forms and imaginaries” (2002:7).

The making of the *Perfil* in El Salvador was a contentious process. Gloria Gutiérrez, then head of the government's Bureau of Indigenous Affairs and deeply involved in the production of the *Perfil*, told me that there had been problems in the elaboration of the profiles throughout Central America, because there was "significant divorce" between the governments and the indigenous organizations. El Salvador's *Perfil* underwent several early versions before the indigenous activists and the other parties involved—primarily CONCULTURA—could agree on a document to present to RUTA.

Indigenous organizations conducted the majority of the research for the *Perfil*, participating in survey design and collecting data in their communities. Initially, the multisectoral committee—or indigenous activists and representatives of CONCULTURA, who seem to have been the ones most involved in the day-to-day production of the *Perfil*—hoped to involve multiple organizations working in multiple communities. In the end, according to Gutiérrez, they were able to enlist sufficient help with fieldwork only in Cacaopera, a community in the eastern-central department of Morazán,⁶³ and the Alcaldía del Común, an organization of the indigenous *cofradías* from Izalco in the department of Sonsonate. As Gutiérrez told me,

[T]he indigenous [organizations] have done everything. Then, you see, it's a very difficult task, and it can't be well done because it has been a learning process; going to the countryside, we did not make the questionnaire very well, but it has been their job. So it has been a learning process. [...] So they had to go to the field, had to do interviews. I was aware of biases, and some of the interviews seemed really odd to me, as if [the questionnaires] had been filled out by the interviewers themselves. That's how it seemed to me, and I said to myself, "no,

⁶³ Cacaopera has been especially active in the post-civil war indigenous resurgence, and particularly in what could be called cultural activism, focusing on recreating pre-Columbian practices, especially religious rituals. This activity has been energized by the work of Miguel Amaya Amaya, a mestizo activist living and working in Cacopera. See, Tilley (1997), and Lara (cite).

this can't be." So we had to do it again. These things, the results don't seem good, and I'm not satisfied with this *Perfil*, but that's what's been done. Oh well.⁶⁴

In order to rectify the problems that Gutiérrez and others on the government-NGO side of the project saw, they hired outside consultants. CONCULTURA proposed several Salvadoran anthropologists, but the indigenous organizations (and at the level of administration, CCNIS was actively involved) were unsatisfied with the nominees. They proposed instead that Eliseo Orellana, a doctor with whom CCNIS had worked closely, serve as consultant. In the end, Orellana and a European-trained Salvadoran anthropologist, Ramón Rivas, performed the editorial consulting duties. "So now Ramón Rivas is trying to make something coherent [of the document]," Gutiérrez told me. "But I tell you, for me the *Perfil*... I am not satisfied, I don't think it's really a profile."

Rivas's participation brought with it a new set of difficulties. Again, Gloria Gutiérrez:

[You] can know quite a lot, but maybe you do not know this country. You can be a brilliant anthropologist, but if you don't know where you are... And also, the conceptual part was difficult, is difficult. [Rivas] said that there were no indigenous people here, that there were peasants with indigenous traditions. And I was telling him, "no, Ramón, I think it best that we say peasants and indigenous peasants and try to explain what the difference is," and he said "no." Well then, if there are no Indians, then what are we doing? Why are we making a profile of the indigenous peoples?⁶⁵

⁶⁴ [T]odo lo han hecho los indígenas, entonces tú ves que es un trabajo muy difícil, no puede estar bien hecho, porque ha sido un proceso de aprender, de ir al campo, el cuestionario no lo hicimos muy bien, pero ha sido un trabajo de todos ellos. Entonces ha sido un proceso de aprendizaje. [...] Entonces tuvieron que ir a campo, tuvieron que hacer entrevistas, yo me di cuenta de sesgos, me parecían unas entrevistas bien raras, como que si habían llegado y ellos mismos las habían llenado. Así me parecía. Y yo me dije "no, esto no puede ser". Entonces tuvimos que ir otra vez. Esas cosas, los resultados no me parecen, yo no estoy satisfecha con ese perfil, pero es lo que ha salido. Ni modo.

⁶⁵ [P]uedes tú saber bastante pero tal vez desconoces este país. Puede ser una persona brillante como antropólogo pero si no conoces dónde estás. Y también la parte conceptual estaba difícil, está difícil. Él dijo que aquí no habían indígenas, que habían campesinos con tradición indígena. Y yo le decía a él "no, Ramón, yo creo que mejor deberíamos de decir campesinos y campesinos indígenas y tratar de explicar cuál es la diferencia" y él decía "no". Entonces si no hay indígenas entonces, ¿qué estamos haciendo?, ¿para qué estamos haciendo perfil indígena?

Rivas, said Gutiérrez, wanted the document to take an integrationist or assimilationist position vis-à-vis indigenous peoples and cultural difference. While Orellana took a view that was more in line with both anthropological and political approaches to cultural difference over the last three decades, and sympathetic to the goals of the indigenous organizations, he was too busy to contribute much, and so Rivas's was the prominent voice among the consultants. Both CCNIS and CONCULTURA felt the need to revise Rivas's revisions.

The final document bears the marks of this process. The World Bank-RUTA apparently felt that the document was insufficiently rigorous or scientific. Like the ever diplomatic and hopeful Gutiérrez, the RUTA representatives discounted the actual arguments and material presented in the *Perfil* and instead offered their support of the participatory process of its elaboration. Their very brief introduction says that "without pretending to offer scientific knowledge," the *Perfil* is still a useful document in so far as it tells of the experiences of members of indigenous organizations. So the experts discount the scientific credibility of the document at the outset, which can only appear as a blow to the truth claims made by the indigenous researchers, who present their data in the language and style of social science. When Gutiérrez affirms that the participatory process of the *Perfil* has been a positive experience, she says "lesson learned." Among the lessons learned, I suggest, is precisely that process of limiting and controlling political spaces that Hale identifies as a fundamental aspect of support for cultural rights movements in neoliberal Latin America. Salvadoran indigenous organizations were able to influence the content of the *Perfil* strongly, yet in the end, with a few dismissive and sentences, the real experts were able to undermine this achievement and set limits of the discursive production of Indianness.

Both the *Perfil* itself and the conditions under which it was produced display signs of a guiding political rationality, one that fits with models of neoliberal governmentality but also reveal the ways in which the irrationality of the social and of subjects shaped by and inhabiting historically specific contexts and contests produce effects that are not nearly so clear and legible as governmentality theory suggests. As in the Awas Tingni case, we see here that political claims and demands made in the name of a collective indigenous subject are necessarily invested in creating legible subjects, as are state and quasi-state agencies. The basic task follows the logic of intelligibility that is fundamental to neoliberal governmentality, although the end results have not yet settled into the patterns of administration and regulation that governmentality theories would predict. It may well be the case that at some point in the future indigenous Salvadorans are defined—and come to understand themselves—in terms of communities and populations in ways that reflect the kinds of patterns we would expect, based on the historical examples (cite examples from Foucault effect). Presently, however, the effects of projects like the *Perfil* in El Salvador seem primarily to deflect and diffuse political energy, rather than direct it strategically and rationally, as the Foucauldian models suggest.

As Tilley (2002) notes, when Salvadoran activists devote their resources to producing a version of Indianness acceptable to dominant ideas of what an Indian should be, they are unable to invest those resources elsewhere. While Tilley sees this as a failure of indigenous rights politics in a particular case, we might also legitimately ask whether this represents the diversion of political energy from other possibilities that Povinelli anticipates, an example of what Ferguson (1994) calls an “anti-politics machine.” Ferguson asks what kinds of political effects are realized “almost invisibly” as “side effects” of the failure of development projects to accomplish their stated goals. These

side effects might better be understood as what Foucault calls “instrument-effects”: “effects that are at one and the same time instruments of what ‘turns out’ to be an exercise of power” (Ferguson 1994:255; citing Foucault 1979).

In the case of the political work done under the rubric of indigenous rights (on the side of local/national activists), multicultural development (from international development agencies and NGOs both national and transnational, including quasi-governmental entities like the UN and the World Bank), and indigenous affairs (from the state) the issue is not the failure of a particular agenda or project. We might turn instead to the “failure” of Salvadoran indigenous peoples to conform to increasingly institutionalized norms of what Indianness means, or even what Indianness *is*. From this effectively categorical failure stem multiple lines of complexity and conflict that become more than tangents even when they are not the main foci of political work, which they often are. Even without regarding some aspect of the politics of indigenous identity as a failure, however, the lessons Ferguson draws are applicable simply to the conceptual frame that politics establishes. As Ferguson points out,

development discourse typically involves not only special terms, but a distinctive style of reasoning, implicitly (and perhaps unconsciously) reasoning backward from the necessary conclusions – more “development” projects are needed – to the premises required to generate those conclusions. (Ferguson 1994:259-260).

In the realm of neoliberal multiculturalism the “necessary conclusions” include the norms and standards for what is indigenous, as well as the kinds of policies that will best respond to the needs of indigenous peoples, and the institutions and institutional arrangements within which those policies might be formulated and through which they will be implemented. Hence, when PAPICA, the Project to Support the Indigenous Peoples of Central America, mandated that each Central American country should have some kind of coalition or umbrella group to represent indigenous organizations and act as

the organization of reference for the implementation of the PAPICA agenda, it constrained the institutional and political paths available to activists at the same time it enabled them to expand their activities and make significant organizational gains.

This might be thought of as a side effect of the institutionalization or “NGOization” of indigenous identity politics, part and parcel of the contradictions of liberalism considered above. Another such side effect is the production of boundaries to the realm of what is considered legitimately political, and the ways in which identity can be mobilized as political identity. Wendy Brown points out that while politicized identities may well exceed the limits of the liberal principles that incite and shape their production, “liberal discourse itself also continuously recolonizes political identity as political interest” (1995:59). The expression of these interests as critiques of the prevailing order is muted in turn by the normalizing practices attending the production of a recognizable subject or identity. To understand an identity as an agglomeration of interests that can (and must) be addressed within the space of rights that liberalism stakes out obviates a critique of liberalism – in fact, makes such a critique counter-productive.

A related side effect involves the relations between the state and civil society. Clearly antagonistic during the time of the civil war and popular mobilization, the institutional realm of the politics of indigenous identity refigures those relations such that the state is necessarily and integrally included in political practice. This is not quite an expansion of the power of the state, although it certainly provides evidence that the state is not shrinking. This is a central aspect of Ferguson’s “anti-politics machine.” The extension of state power takes place not because the state is an instrument of the ruling class with a singular logic, nor, as Ferguson notes, is the state able to organize the population as Foucault’s biopower model would have it. What happens is simply “that power relations must increasingly be referred through bureaucratic circuits” (Ferguson

1994:274). These bureaucratic circuits are not confined to the national state, but include those quasi-governmental or state-like institutions that have been so influential in the ascendance of neoliberal multiculturalism, which are typically regarded as “non-governmental” institutions.

These side effects of the institutionalization or bureaucratic rationalization of indigenous rights are broadly similar to those seen in other social movements⁶⁶. Another kind of side effect can be seen that is more intimately bound up with the politics of identity and recognition and the antinomies of indigenous identity in El Salvador. Tilley points to another side effect of the when she describes the diffusion of the political energies of activists.

In downplaying the capacity of the Perfil to present an objective assessment of the condition of indigenous Salvadorans, both the World Bank-RUTA and Gutiérrez remark on the document’s presentation of subjective experiences. Gutiérrez told me that the Perfil “talks a lot about subjective perceptions, of the condition of lack. It is only a series of laments, but that is what the people say.”⁶⁷ That Gutiérrez (and the RUTA personnel) would consider a discussion of “subjective perceptions” to be an invalid or less valid kind of knowledge for the Perfil reflects the project’s fundamentally governmental logic. The collection of data on populations and territories appropriate to the Perfil would have followed what Weber called *Zweckrational*, a kind of scientific and technocratic rationality, within which “subjective perceptions” have no place, even when the issue at hand – the rationale for particular applications of law and development – involves identity and social suffering.

⁶⁶ See, for example, Schild (1998) on the contradictory transformation of Chile’s women’s movement in the face of the new discourses of citizenship and the state that attended neoliberalization there.

⁶⁷ Entonces se habla mucho de percepciones subjetivas, de falta de su condición. Es solo como una serie de lamentos, pues es lo que la gente dice. Entonces... yo siento que ha sido una buena experiencia, eso es una ganancia, digamos, lección aprendida.

The Perfil failed to conform to the explicitly articulated expectations and goals of its state and quasi-state sponsors because it did not produce suitably objective knowledge, and instead reflected subjective articulations of suffering. What of the indigenous organizations? To what extent was the Perfil as an expression of the politics of lament a success, and to what extent does it point to another aspect of anti-politics, another side effect, that may attend the politics of recognition? As Taylor insists, identities are produced dialogically. They are constituted through relations with others, and also “through concepts and practices made available” by religion, state, and society (Appiah 1994:154). Brown reminds us (as Taylor and Appiah are aware) that this dialogue is often unfriendly, and that the “concepts and practices” available for constituting identities are often degrading, exploitative, oppressive, and violent. To the extent that social identities are produced through social injury, investment in identity may bear with it an attachment to the wound (or the conditions of wounding) itself. Brown argues that this is symptomatic not only of subaltern subjects, but of “the liberal subject” more generally:

it is their situatedness within power, their production by power, and liberal discourse’s denial of this situatedness and production that cast the liberal subject into failure, the failure to make itself in the context of a discourse in which its self-making is assumed, indeed, is its assumed nature (Brown 1995:67)

This failure, produced by the paradox of liberalism, is felt as suffering, a social wound, and, says Brown, the wounded subject either identifies the source of failure within itself or seeks a an external site or subject upon which to blame its suffering.

In the formation of politicized identities as a protest *against* exclusion, Brown directs our attention to the formation of an attachment *to* this exclusion. This attachment to the social wound is formed because the existence of an identity as politicized identity depends on exclusion for its presence and voice, its very existence (Brown 1995:73). In an analysis that parallels the Freudian understanding of mourning and melancholia (and

especially their part in constituting identities as analyzed by Butler and Cheng), Brown argues that politicized identity is unable to let go of its attachment to the wound. The space created in (neo)liberalism for the articulation of political identities and the demand for recognition of those identities deepens the investment in the wound to the extent that identity announces its presence through the wound. This risks displacing a future-oriented politics of transformation for a politics of recrimination. Brown's charge may sound unsympathetic. Yet when an urban supporter of the indigenous movement stands up at the Fifth Congress on Ethnolinguistics and Second Symposium on the Indigenous People of El Salvador to decry to the presenter "500 years of suffering" I am left wondering what kind of politics will redress this claim. Does her sense of injustice ground a politics of the present that might look to the future and take into account present-day inequality in places like Tacuba, or Izalco? Can it address the phantom racism that seems able to elude, and even thrive upon, the racial realism of identity politics, which I described in Chapter Four? Or does it exemplify "the steady slide of political into therapeutic discourse" against which Brown (1995:75) warns?⁶⁸

Politicized identity thus enunciates itself, makes claims for itself, only by entrenching restating, dramatizing, and inscribing its pain in politics; it can hold out no future – for itself or others – that triumphs over this pain. The loss of historical direction, and with it the loss of futurity characteristic of the late modern age, is thus homologically refigured in the structure of desire of the dominant political expression of the age: identity politics (Brown 1995:74).

Any observer of indigenous politics in El Salvador cannot fail to encounter politicized identities articulated as lament, of a dramatization and declaration of social suffering, of the wound. I suggest that such an articulation is most prominent among urban activists, although not exclusive to them, and is (understandably but notably) most typically expressed in forums with representatives of the state.

⁶⁸ See also Cheng (2001) on the relationship between grief and grievance.

Recall the distinction I have drawn between different modalities of political subjectivity that articulate with and are conjured within the Salvadoran national-historical imaginary in relation to Indianness. In the context of *La Matanza*, I argued that the massacre as a loss registers differently for different kinds of national subjects. For people in what Méndez called the “affected areas,” what was lost in 1932 is relatively unambiguous. Loss was evident in the bodies of loved ones, in the destruction of community and of place – all horrendous traumas, but traumas that might move towards paths of recovery through acknowledgement of loss, the tender rejection of mourning, and a turn toward the present and future. Likewise the wounds inflicted through the racism that energized landlord struggles against peasant land-reform claims in the 1980s, which were treated in the context of the successful battle to gain land; or the wounds inflicted by the prohibition of the *cofradías*, which were treated through the refusal to abandon the *cofradías* totally as well as through an engagement with new religious practices, including evangelical Protestantism and Catholic liberation theology.

Such capacity for tender rejection of the wounded or lost elements of identity appears absent for another kind of national subject. For those Salvadorans who imagine themselves precisely as a *national* subjects, the rural, the agrarian, the indigenous, are spaces elsewhere that are largely symbolic, standing as indexes of something else rather than as here-and-now spaces of life, work, love, conflict, and death. For this subject the Indian is always-already a subject of loss. The Indian is prior to the nation, and/or beyond its borders; its absence is foundational for national subjectivity, for those national subjects who have been formed in and through the institutions of national education and a national public sphere. The Indian they experience as threatened or lost is a fetish whose loss defies the potential resolution provided by mourning. This loss defies mourning because what was lost is ambiguous, and in an uncertain relation to the grieving subject,

already once-removed in the symbolic register. I want to suggest here that for many of the indigenous activists of today—not all, and not evenly, but for many—the Indian for whom they work, around whom they organize, is caught up in the national fetish-logic that produces this version of Indianness. The Indian, for these activists, is at least in part once-removed from the here and now, an index to *something else*.

Consider the vision of one of El Salvador's most active and significant organizers for an indigenous community in the Sonsonate-Izalco area, for which he hopes to acquire land in the future. It would be an opportunity to live traditionally, producing food through subsistence agriculture, living the practice of indigenous spirituality and political and social organization as he envisions pre-Columbian peoples lived. I imagine a kind of Mesoamerican Colonial Williamsburg. When this activist told me of this dream, I suspected that it might have been in part based on what he thought a gringo anthropologist might think he should want to do, an extension of the Nahuatl language training he has supported. In retrospect, I think he was instead articulating a kind of wish-image in which he could withdraw from a present that holds little promise for the future into a timeless past into which the future would not intrude. In effect, what he described to as a kind of multicultural development project would be the real life creation of the national fetish Indian.

Brown counsels neither a return to the large-scale class politics of the past nor a rejection of the legitimacy and importance of identity-based claims, but a politics of “forgetting.” She notes that because “erased histories and historical invisibility are themselves such integral elements of the pain inscribed in most subjugated identities,” to push a strategy of forgetting could easily be “inappropriate if not cruel” (Brown 1995:74). Instead, she suggests that a “more radically democratic and emancipatory political culture” than what we could call actually existing identity politics would involve

a willed release of attachment to the wound, what Brown calls self-overcoming. Brown's politics of forgetting parallels Scribner's characterization of the politics of mourning as tender rejection. The challenge is to lose the pain of the wound without conceding identity to the liberal sphere that seeks to constitute itself as universal.

THE DEMAND FOR SELF-RECOGNITION

The politics of recognition as formulated by liberal theorists like Taylor and Will Kymlicka demands that the state or "the people," the dominant collective subject, recognize the full, legitimate citizenship of minority subjects as well as their difference, opening possibilities for the recognition of particular rights assigned based on that difference. The question of recognition in El Salvador involves another problem that liberal theory fails to address: the problematic of *self*-recognition. Indigenous activists in El Salvador demand recognition from the state and the mestizo national subject; they also demand that Salvadorans in rural areas like Tacuba recognized themselves as indigenous. That rural Salvadorans in historically indigenous areas do not identify as indigenous is regarded by most activists I've spoken with as either a strategy of subterfuge through which indigenous individuals keep their true identities secret from the outside world, or as a form of false consciousness created by the dominance of the category "*campesino*" and furthered by the traumatic effects of the 1932 massacre.

The first line of argument adopts a zero-sum logic: either one accepts that a secret current of self-identified Indianness buzzes beneath the surface of everyday life in a place like Tacuba, but it will not be visible to an outsider; or one is an outsider and so can't see the secret current of Indianness beneath the surface of everyday life. There is no argument that does not engage in the same essentialism (or philosophical realism) this claim presumes. The second claim, that people who are truly Indian have been deceived

into believing themselves *campesinos* or *mestizos*, is likewise essentialist with the additional feature of paternalistically rejecting the autonomy and agency of people who identify themselves as other than Indian.

The conceptual language of rights and recognition is certainly amenable to each of these lines of argument. It suggests the presence of an Indianness that the nation-state and its majority subjects have simply failed to acknowledge, or simply failed to see clearly. When this conceptual language is coupled with the false consciousness explanation, self-recognition becomes a matter of understanding one's true core essence – in Anthony Appiah's words, the task is to find “the real self buried in there” (Appiah 1994). The error inherent in such strategies of unmasking and “dramas of revelation”⁶⁹ is the assumption that the path taken by the figure of the Indian through the world of political fictions – from a presumed presence before 1932, through disappearance and absence, to the plenitude of return – is straightforward and in some way realistically representative of the experiences of those subjects who are interpellated as indigenous in contemporary activist discourse. What, then, of the rejection of indigenous identity among those claimed as the subjects of their struggle by activists?

Take, for example, Rigoberto Hernández, who came by my house to go over a form that would affiliate his cooperative of small-scale coffee farmers with a Central America-wide network of peasant and indigenous organizations. The form asked him to identify his organization as indigenous, peasant, or both. I point out to Rigoberto that he could list his cooperative of small farmers as both *campesino* and indigenous, which might be useful if any programs for indigenous people come down the pike. And in fact, several programs at least nominally directed towards indigenous communities have landed in Tacuba in the last couple of years. Additionally, Rigoberto and several other

⁶⁹ Taussig (1999)

members of his cooperative, *Cooperativa La Armonía*, were involved in peasant organizations alongside the activist affiliated with CCNIS charged with organizing in Tacuba. Some members of *La Armonía* were also associated with ANIS during the civil war. In fact, several older members of the cooperative speak some Nahuatl, and many had family members executed in 1932. By the standards of historical memory and language, the community in which the members of *La Armonía* might easily qualify as “indigenous.”

Nevertheless, Rigoberto was sure that his cooperative should register as *campesinos*, farmers, and not as indigenous. Although I tried to discuss the question further, it was settled as far as Rigoberto was concerned, despite his awareness of the growing political cachet attached to the term *indígena*. “*No es interesante*,” Rigoberto told me, simultaneously refusing the indigenous category and foreclosing further discussion. Rigoberto tells me that he and his neighbors might be the descendants of Indians, but that is a matter of a long-past world. For Rigoberto, Indianness of the kind that might be recognized institutionally is the stuff of that what I regard as a fetish space, the elsewhere that makes possible a here. For Rigoberto, thinking of his cooperative and community and taking seriously his responsibility – being true to his people – calls for a forward looking politics that seeks to address the contemporary conditions of their marginalization and exploitation, of their suffering. The past to which he looks is one in which his parents and grandparents were at the mercy of landlords, reduced to working for a pittance. He looks to the struggles of the 1980s when he and other members of peasant organizations fought to secure the land on which they now live and the collectively owned land of *La Armonía*.

The left in Latin America has been routinely criticized for ignoring or actively repressing efforts to articulate political demands in terms of race, gender, and

sexuality. As Jeff Gould puts it, “revolutionary nationalists fought throughout the [20th] century to create a socially and politically inclusive form of the nation, yet in so doing often silenced its indigenous dimension” (Gould 2001:139). The broad current of Gould’s argument is that by seeking to appropriate the discursive frame of *mestizaje* and reorient it to revolutionary ends, the left in Nicaragua and El Salvador reproduced the assumptions of the inevitable and necessary assimilation of Indians that are *mestizaje*’s foundations. Following Trouillot’s analysis of the Haitian Revolution, Gould notes that the myth of *mestizaje* made the reproduction of Indianness in the absence of “ethnic emblems such as language and dress” unthinkable for mestizo subjects on both left and right. As a characterization of the historical grounds of national subjectivity, this argument seems unassailable, perhaps verging on circular. In effect, subjects constituted through and within a mestizo imaginary displayed the kinds of assumptions about the world we would expect of them. They acted as though they believed Indians had vanished, or that the disappearance of indigenous peoples as a distinct social collectivity was inevitable, necessary, and evolutionary. Perhaps the question then is to what extent revolutionary nationalists’ appraisals of the racial context in which they lived – their consciousness – reflected an emerging orthodoxy, verging on *doxa*, as the allusion to Trouillot suggests, and to what extent we believe instead that revolutionary nationalists actively and intentionally silenced questions of race that they knew to be important.

Gould is ambivalent on this point, perhaps because the structuralist approach borrowed from Bourdieu by way of Trouillot clashes with his own sense of the agency of the powerful. Or perhaps more simply, he projects the logic and values of a contemporary politics of recognition onto a prior moment. “[E]thnic oppression,” he writes, “took the form of ‘invisibility,’ a failure to recognize indigenous people as culturally distinct and autonomous cultural groups.” This seems to reproduce both the basic myth of post-1932

mestizaje in El Salvador and the core claim of multiculturalism as a politics of recognition. The fundamental assumption this carries with it is that “indigenous people as culturally distinct” groups contain or are characterized by some *thing*, a hidden inner core, that persists even as their outer difference is rendered invisible, and that the self suffers from the lack of recognition from the dominant national subject. Gould reproduces here model of subjective recognition that Appiah finds fault with in Taylor’s version of liberal multiculturalism. To reiterate the problems with this approach: first, it overlooks contradictory elements of subaltern subjectivity, including the potentially empowering aspects of “*ladinoization*”; second, it reproduces a dominant nationalist idea of culture change as loss, constituting subjects who refuse Indianness but might be regarded as not fully mestizo-national – like Rigoberto – as embodiments of failure and victims of false consciousness; third, it crowds out the possibilities for a critique of what I have called phantom racism, that form of social power that calls forth racist fantasies without requiring a direct correspondence between racialized subjects and a positive, recognized indigenous identity. Finally, it leaves little space for analysis of the ways recognition might be productive and generative, just as silencing and “invisibilization” can be.

Gould’s most recent work suggests a far more complicated relationship between Indianness and revolutionary nationalism. A 2004 co-authored article argues against characterizations the mobilization of 1932 as a somewhat ad-hoc movement whose participants were motivated primarily by diverse and divergent local concerns, including racism, rather than a larger vision of radical change. “Any attempt to view the mobilization and revolt as ethnic conflict tout court misses far more than it captures,” write Gould and Lauria-Santiago. “Although ethnicity as an analytical tool is essential to

understanding the movement, ethnic ideologies were not the sole, or even principal, motivation of most actors” (2004:195).

The a priori assumption that the consolidation of a revolutionary class identity necessarily silences, marginalizes, or belittles other forms of identification is, I suggest, a reflection of certain modes of social analysis more than of some kind of law of class politics. This is not to say that particular class movements have not reproduced racisms and sexism, nor that they have not actively silenced efforts to take identity politics seriously within their movements, as the history of North American communists with “the race question” shows. It is simply to say that the cohesion of revolutionary movements does not necessarily depend on denying the recognition of difference. Furthermore, the argument that the FMLN in the 1980s actively suppressed efforts at indigenous identity politics as they did with feminism would be difficult to sustain. First, ANIS, the largest and most active indigenous organization in the country, emerged in the 1980s as a revolutionary organization that could take into account – indeed, be founded upon – a particular identity. Second, by the 1980s it seems clear that relatively few people identified themselves as indigenous. To ask that the FMLN recognize them as such exceeds a critique of the left’s active suppression of identity politics to move into a realm of ahistorical dreams of the redemptive power of multiculturalism.

And what of the relations between the decline of class politics and the rise of identity politics today? Wendy Brown argues that “new identity claims” concerned with race, gender and sexuality are not simply an expansion of categories of emancipation and oppression that supplements class politics, but are also “tethered to a formulation of justice” that reinscribes and legitimates the fundamental logics of capitalist domination and exclusion even as it challenges particular exclusions. By staking identity in terms of exclusions from a bourgeois norm and demanding redress through some kind of inclusion

within the sphere marked out by those norms, says Brown, “the political purchase of contemporary American identity politics would seem to be achieved in part *through* a certain renaturalization of capitalism” (Brown 1995:60). These challenging insights add depth to an analysis of the foreclosure of the space for political possibilities in the shadow of ascendant neoliberalism. They point to the sudden emergence of identity politics in a post-revolutionary situation, as in El Salvador, as not simply a response to new political openings, but also, and perhaps more significantly, as linked directly to the suppression or disappearance of class politics. For Brown, expressions of politicized identities “through race, gender, and sexuality may require – rather than incidentally produce – a limited identification through class” (Brown 1995:60). Politicized identities not only operate within the sphere liberal capitalism recognizes as political; they also construct themselves in relation to bourgeois liberal norms of self, identity, citizenship, and inclusion. This relationship undermines a critique of those norms. The process of “[structuring] the spaces that cultural rights activists occupy [and] defining the language of contention” (Hale 2002) is part of a broader process that exceeds the realm of the explicitly political to reconfigure a social world in which the norms of capitalism are ever more firmly entrenched as natural and inevitable. Brown argues that if these politicized identities require the bourgeois ideal subject in order to articulate their claims, “we might ask to what extent a critique of capitalism is foreclosed by the current configuration of oppositional politics, and not simply by the ‘loss of the socialist alternative’ (Brown 1995:61).

An earlier phase of academic analysis of identity politics presented a rather uncritical celebration of the so-called “new social movements” and posed them as a response to – and at least implicitly as an improvement over – the presumed failures of revolutionary socialism (Castañeda 1993; Escobar and Alvarez 1992). Champions of

Marxism, on the other hand, saw in the new social movements and identity politics a bourgeois impulse that cloaked the realities of class power behind multiple identities with apparently particular interests (Aijaz 1992). Brown is, I contend, rethinking rather than recapitulating this debate. She does not reject identity politics wholesale, nor does she argue that a politics directed at particular forms of oppression articulated through race, sexuality, and gender should instead be directed at a more authentic or important class power. She does, however, present a troubling challenge to movements of identity politics that engage and proclaim broader visions of social justice and political change, by positing a *structural* connection between the decline of critical, anticapitalist politics and the construction of contemporary forms of politicized identity, rather than an “*agentive*” connection between the two. It is not necessary for activists and academics invested in politicized identities intentionally to neglect or reject a critique of class power in order for identity politics to contribute to the invisibilization of class exploitation. Instead, the conditions of possibility for the ascendance of a certain mode of identity politics require the negation of class politics. This is the identity politics with which institutions of governmental power are most likely to find acceptable – the kinds of identity politics that neoliberal multiculturalism is most likely to articulate.

CONCLUSION

Recent writing on politicized identities has emphasized the articulations between the demands of particular subjects for rights and recognition and neoliberal forms of governmental power. As Hale’s assessment of neoliberal multiculturalism frames the matter, the key issues here involve the ways that subjects conceived of (and constructed) in terms of particular cultural identities are more easily managed and accommodated within a hegemonic social order. This chapter has expanded this mode of analysis. First,

it has shown how the political practices demanded by neoliberal multiculturalism work as an “anti-politics machine” that can undermine critiques of the prevailing neoliberal order without needing to achieve the more dramatic ends of subject formation envisioned by governmentality theorists. The engagement with institutionalized identity politics deflects and dilutes political opposition by simply preoccupying activists with the expectations and norms of the identity category in which they ground their claims. It also reifies and legitimates the neoliberal state by constructing the national state as the main interlocutor for political practice. In other words, it reinscribes a distinct separation of the state and civil society in which the state is properly the realm of the political, thus obscuring the extent to which social relations beyond the realm of the explicitly political are, in fact, implicated in relations of domination and inequality.

Second, I have argued that a strong current within Salvadoran indigenous politics emerges as a politics of lament that threatens to abandon a forward-looking critical politics for a politics of recrimination for past wounds. This backwards-focused gaze – what Brown describes as politicized identity’s attachment to the wounds of its own exclusions and other injuries – articulates with what I have called the fetish Indian, the *indio* that is felt as always-already lost through the dominant mestizo imaginary. For some activists and their supporters, attachment to the wound constitutes a kind of truncated mourning, a refusal to mourn the losses of an earlier time. This attachment reproduces dominant *mestizo* understandings of Indianness, particularly the separation of the fetish Indian and the despised, living *indio* as an incomplete national subject. Closely related to this is my third argument regarding the politics of recognition in El Salvador. I suggest that when the politics of recognition generates a demand for self-recognition among the rural poor in Tacuba and other parts of the *occidente* it concedes the definition of both Indian and national identities to the dominant mestizo imaginary.

In light of these arguments, and Brown's analysis of the structural blindness to class power that seems to be a necessary condition for the emergence of politicized identities in liberal capitalism, we might reconsider Rigoberto's refusal to commit to Indianness as a political identity. He does not reject either his own (or most of his neighbors') indigenous ancestry or his positioning in the field of contemporary racism in El Salvador. As the narratives of the founding of *La Armonía* recounted in Chapter Four show, Rigoberto and his colleagues clearly recall the points at which the coercive efforts of the landowner drew on racism. What, then, does Rigoberto refuse when he insists on applying only the category "*campesino*" to his cooperative? I want to suggest that he rejects the fetish Indian fashioned by and recognized within the national imaginary, the *indio* constituted doubly in terms of absence: first, the lack of civilization or development that characterizes *indio* as a despised subject; and second, the absence of the authentically indigenous subject that is understood to exist in other spaces and times.

Perhaps for Rigoberto to insist on the category "*campesino*" for his cooperative, keeping in focus their position as workers while also recalling the revolutionary discourse in which their understanding of themselves as political subjects was forged, is less a matter of rejecting "indigenous" as a politicized identity than it is of living Indianness as he knows it. It is easy – too easy – to see his choice as a refusal of Indianness, or a misrecognition of his true self. What if we see in it instead an implicit acknowledgement of the political limits of Indianness as a political category and recognition as a political demand. For people in Tacuba and many other parts of El Salvador, political agency has involved technologies of secrecy, "*doble cara*" – efforts to avoid recognition by the state. Recall don Lorenzo, whose terror at the thought of falling under the gaze of General Martínez stayed with him seventy years after *La Matanza*. For the rural poor of the

occidente there may be a terrible irony in the demand today that the state recognize them as Indians: the last time the state did so, it massacred ten thousand of them.

The demand for recognition formulates an Indian that is always-already there, and simply needs to be properly visualized. Yet for people in Tacuba, the demand that they recognize themselves as Indians becomes a demand that they forsake or reject the attachments through which they live their lives. Can we instead understand the unwillingness of people in Tacuba to recognize themselves as Indians as an acknowledgement of the impossible polarization of the Indian as split between either an abject subject of lack or an impossible subject of loss and longing?

Recall Arturo Saldaña, described in Chapter Four. Arturo works with an indigenous political organization, yet speaks of indigenous people in the third person and locates them in a prelapsarian past. He speaks of *la gente de antes*, the people from before, and when I ask him before *what*, he simply says, “before, from the past.” For Arturo and others in Tacuba, the displacement of the Indian does not invite easy return, and so the Indian as the return of the repressed—he rediscovered “real self in there”—remains inaccessible to the present in Tacuba. Instead, Arturo, Rigoberto, and others in Tacuba mobilize a political practice that displays an ambiguous, uncertain relationship to Indianness. Perhaps for people in this community that has buried and mourned its losses, this ambiguity is the truest possible response.

And what of the urban intellectuals I have posed as forming different kinds of relationships to a different kind of Indianness? If the demand for recognition is prompted for intellectuals by the forced deterritorialization of earlier modes of identification then we might suspect that their investment in the Indian is a search for a ground for political identification, one that turns to the Indian as a subject of *loss*, rather than presence, a sacred form that bears with it a kind of moral certainty.

Chapter Six: Consuming Histories: The Return of the Indian in Millennial El Salvador

Might not [the] uncanny persistence of the past work to resist the entrenchment of the “posthistorical”? Perhaps it harbors a latent utopian desire, a refusal to accept the fait accompli of late capitalism as the only imaginable frame of our world.

Charity Scribner⁷⁰

The amnesiac quality of Cold War terror... was aimed not only at repressing political opposition but at obliterating political alternatives as well...

Greg Grandin⁷¹

Where the previous chapter analyzed indigenous political activism in El Salvador in relation to the state, new forms of rule, and the decline of class politics, this chapter addresses the positions of indigenous activists themselves. Two prevailing explanations for the rise of indigenous activism since the peace accords circulate in scholarly accounts, each of which minimizes the subjectivities of the activists themselves. The first emphasizes the resurgence of a timeless indigenous culture, while the second looks to the power of transnational organizations to produce political subjects. The explanation I pose here rejects the first of these, for reasons that should be familiar to the reader at this point. The second explanation provides an important part of the overall picture by drawing attention to the ways conditions and agendas developed outside of El Salvador have shaped and constrained Salvadoran activism. I provide other parts of the picture in this chapter. By looking closely at the experiences and practices and activists, and the relations between the war as an unrealized collective dream of a new society and the rise of indigenous activism, I present a picture that looks substantially different than the one

⁷⁰ “Left Melancholy.” In *Loss*, ed. D. L. Eng and D. Kazanjian. Berkeley: University of California Press, p 316.

⁷¹ Grandin, Greg. 2000. *The Blood of Guatemala: A History of Race and Nation*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, p. 170.

we get if rest with the second explanation posed above. Most importantly, a crucial element of indigenous activism as a legacy of the revolutionary movement emerges, which might potentially articulate with the aspirations and political subjectivities of those in Tacuba, who otherwise appear only as insufficiently indigenous.

REVOLUTIONARY DREAMS, POST-WAR NIGHTMARES

I begin this chapter with a detour through the space of revolutionary dreams that I encountered on my first trip to El Salvador, in May of 1992. On that first visit I spent three months in Guarjila, a small town in the northern department of Chalatenango, where I worked as an instructor in the community's cooperative woodworking shop. A German solidarity group sponsored the shop, dedicated to building furniture. Around twelve residents of Guarjila, including older men and adolescent boys and girls, worked alternating days in the workshop producing (somewhat erratically) chairs, tables, and other furniture that was used primarily in similar cooperative ventures: long tables and benches for the school in a neighboring community, chairs for a sewing workshop, a Formica covered table for the medical clinic.

That Guarjila was not just any poor town in need of development would have been apparent even to one who did not recognize the significance of Chalatenango at the end of the civil war by the huge wooden sign at the town's entrance: "Welcome to our controlled zone! FPL – FMLN – END" it announced in bold red letters bordered by silhouetted figures in combat fatigues holding upraised fists and automatic rifles. Guarjila was both the portal to the large northern conflict zone of Chalatenango, controlled by the FPL (*Fuerzas Populares de Liberación*, Popular Liberation Forces, often known as "*las F*"), and the public face of their government of that territory. The FPL established local popular councils called PPLs for *poder popular local*, local popular power, in 1981-1982.

One observer explains the PPLs as “an experiment in popular democracy and political participation” that had their roots in the liberation theology base communities (Pearce 1986:242).

Guarjila was a model of this local, democratic rule in the controlled zones. The town was a *reoblación*, a repopulation. At the beginning of the war when the Salvadoran government began aerial bombardment of the most serious conflict zones in Chalatenango, Morazán, and Usulután, whole towns were left entirely vacant as the residents fled in a night march or *guinda*. Those in Chalate most often crossed the *Río Sumpul* into Honduras, where they lived in refugee camps like Mesa Grande. Beginning in 1988, refugees began to return to their country in large groups organized by the FMLN with the help of international solidarity groups. The importance of the repopulations to the FMLN cannot be overstated. They showed the world the revolutionaries as community organizers and defenders and gave a face to the FMLN supporters, contradicting the US and Salvadoran governments’ insistence that the guerrillas had no significant support among the rural poor. They also provided the FMLN combatants with bases in civilian populations, allowing the revolutionaries “to move among the people as a fish swims in the sea,” in the words of Mao, and foiling the government’s strategy of draining that water.

Everyday life in Guarjila was bustling in those days with meetings of various committees planning workshops, adult literacy groups, and other projects looking toward a future beyond the war. Many of these projects were funded by European organizations whose representatives passed through Guarjila regularly. Besides Ann Manganera, the US nun and doctor who spent most of the war in Guarjila running the medical clinic, and myself, foreign residents of Guarjila included a German medical student and a pair of Basque medical workers, all volunteers in the health clinic. We often saw international

visitors coming through with brigades from churches and political organizations. I would venture to say that most of us were, in some way, undertaking a kind of tourism to experience a revolutionary project that felt utterly unattainable in our home countries, and Chalatenango in that moment was an amazing destination. The sense of optimism among residents and the demobilized combatants was enormous, palpable in the frequent community celebrations, the easy flirting between male combatants (most of them in their teens or early twenties) and girls in the village, and the triumphant murals and graffiti: “¡Ganamos la paz!” (We won peace!).

Although I returned to El Salvador during the intervening years, I did not make it back to Guarjila until ten years had passed. I found the place transformed. Roads were paved, and the journey from San Salvador had been cut from close to four hours to less than two. Electricity had arrived, and most people had refrigerators and television sets. More noticeable still was the relatively large number of cars in a town where previously the foreign head of health clinic had the only permanent passenger vehicle in town. The wood shop, under the tutelage of a member of the German solidarity group that funded the project who came in as I left ten years ago and stayed for several years, was producing much higher quality furniture. It was still struggling to break even, however, threatened by cheaper prices in the city of Chalatenango, now easily accessible by bus or car, and by a rival, privately held wood shop started by a former member of the cooperative. It continued to rely on the support of the Germans to survive. Development projects like the furniture shop had proliferated in Guarjila to include a bakery, a greatly improved cafeteria or *comedor*, and a solar-powered fruit drying operation. Most of these shared with the wood shop the difficulty of breaking even without regular injections of financial support from international donors.

Despite these fairly dramatic improvements in material conditions for most of the residents of Guarjila, there is a strong sense among many there that life has not, in fact, improved in the ways they hoped it would since the end of the war. The celebratory sense that “we won the peace!” has been revealed as the pretty, public face of the ugly sense that the war for a radically different society based on economic and social justice has been lost. People in Guarjila, like many who supported the FMLN throughout the country, feel that the post-war period has been, in large part, a series of failures. Today in Guarjila the optimism about the future and the possibilities of politics that dominated the atmosphere in 1992 seems a distant memory.

There are multiple reasons for the sense of disillusionment that people in the repopulations feel today. The FMLN has struggled with its existence as a political party in a neoliberal democracy. While the *Frente* has won many elections since the war’s end, primarily at municipal and regional levels, these victories have too often been pyrrhic. The FMLN has taken over long-corrupt offices and with insufficient funds, failing infrastructure and public services, and a well-organized and experienced rival. FMLN politicians have fallen into their own embarrassing traps of corruption, and have shown remarkable incompetence in some cases. They have been unable to win the presidency despite polling well in the elections of 2004 and 1998.

More troubling than the ups and downs of the FMLN for many has been the fate of the large, well-coordinated, and unified opposition of the 1980s, which collapsed inward on the emptiness left by the failure of the revolutionary movement.

Like the rest of the country, Guarjila in the 1990s experienced extraordinarily rapid growth in gang activity, and today graffiti of the *mara salvatrucha 18* and the *mara negra* overwhelm the murals and slogans of the FMLN on the walls. Petty crime as well as serious offenses including murder and kidnapping are all too common. Some people

express an almost nostalgic sense of the relative certainty of the patterns of violence during the war, and of its place in a struggle for a better world, in contrast with the seemingly random and senseless violence of the present.

Major purchases like refrigerators and cars signal not the vigor of the local economy, which is in fact stagnant, but instead point to the largest transformation of social life in Guarjila since the end of the war itself: labor migration and the *remesas* it provided. There are virtually no jobs in Guarjila beyond subsistence agriculture and the development projects in town, which pay poorly and unevenly. Migration to the US has saved rural Chalatenango as it has much of El Salvador. In some *cantones*, the majority of the adult population spends most of the year in the US, and in Long Island, New Jersey, and Virginia—the most common destinations for people from this part of Chalate—whole neighborhoods appear to have been transposed from the countryside of Chalatenango to the apartment buildings of the city. That migration to the US is a vital escape valve allowing the state largely to ignore the quick decline of the agricultural economy and the resulting social costs is crystal clear in Chalatenango now.

Lotti Silber (2000; 2004) documents the postwar experience of Chalatenango's repopulated zone. Her informants in a *municipio* near Guarjila describe what Silber characterizes as a sense of “disillusionment and deception” (Silber 2000:290), often expressing their belief that life is no better today than during the war. “In conversations of daily life, when people visit their neighbors and kin, ride the bus, sit at local *tiendas*, or participate in events, it is not rare to hear discussions on how they have received nothing but sadness and loss from their wartime participation” (289). A representative of the CCR (born as the *Comité de Comunidades de Repoblaciones*, called today the *Comité de Comunidades en Desarrollo*, the group through whom I went to Guarjila in 1992) explains the unhappiness today, and the negative comparison between past struggle and

present “rewards,” as a direct result of the negotiated settlement of the war. Writes Silber, “he reflects that ultimately it is because folks did not join or support an armed struggle for a negotiated peace. They participated in order to overthrow institutionalized power and put in place a socialist project” (291).

Further explanation for the feeling of disillusionment and deception in post-revolutionary Chalatenango comes from the experience of the community development projects that proliferated the former conflict zone. Silber identifies a “post-conflict reconstruction paradox”:

In a formerly revolutionized population characterized by high organizational capacity, and in an area targeted with various reconstruction projects that emphasize participation as necessary for sustainable development, there is a decline in participation – particularly by women – and a stagnation of development work (83).

The concessions that made the peace accords possible—the concession to political democracy by the government and elites, on the one hand, and the concession to a neoliberal market economy by the FMLN on the other—not only failed to address the economic demands of the poor, but entrenched an order that makes achieving those demands nearly impossible (Silber, p. 83; Wood *Democracy from Below*). NGOs and development agencies incorrectly blame residents of rural communities for the twin failures of development projects: their failure to blossom into sustainable means for the improvement of material conditions, and their failure to produce a strong, cohesive sense of community. One effect of this is the production of a leadership and NGO discourse that represents community residents as not revolutionary enough, as losing their commitment to social change, while simultaneously chastising them for not being successful entrepreneurs (4). “I suggest that the very spaces of grassroots participation are problematic,” writes Silber, “when survivors are blamed for the degree of their

consciousness, for having come to depend on external assistance, for not wanting to work for change..." In this picture, survivors are blamed for the shortcomings of the negotiated settlement with reference to *their* failure to be sufficiently revolutionary, when in fact, as Silber's account suggests, the difficulties of post-war period feel to those survivors to be the result of the peace accords as the failure of the revolution.

The sudden and dramatic proliferation of development projects in Guarjila and "El Rancho," Silber's pseudonymous research site in the *municipio* of Las Vueltas exemplifies the transformation of Salvadoran civil society and popular politics nationally. After the signing of the peace accords, the relatively high level of cohesion among the popular organizations that backed the FMLN and the revolutionary struggle faded, and new organizations rapidly emerged. Many of these new social movements dedicated themselves to political identities that were secondary or unrecognized by the dominant revolutionary ideology, and so appeared to follow the classic pattern of "new social movements" throughout Latin America (Escobar and Alvarez 1992). Women's organizations, environmentalists, Lesbians and gays, youth, people with disabilities, people with AIDs, and indigenous peoples all began to make claims on the state. Many of these groups found significant support from international organizations, including major development agencies.

The appearance of social movements dedicated to a host of identities or to particular, reform oriented projects like environmental protection would seem to support the thesis that the "new social movements" in Latin America arise in response to the manifest failure of the Marxist-Leninist projects that came before, and in a more clearly sequential pattern than anywhere else.⁷² Whatever their immediate relation to the failings, real and imagined, of the radical left and the philosophies underwriting the revolutionary

⁷² See Castañeda (1993), Edelman (2001), Escobar and Alvarez (1992), Hale (1997) on this question.

project, the new social movements like indigenous politics bear within them a sense of loss. Understanding how this past haunts the present is central to understanding the character of indigenous politics in El Salvador.

As described earlier, by the second half of the 20th century the belief that there were virtually no Indians in El Salvador was hegemonic. Those communities still recognized as distinctly indigenous were regarded as vestigial holdouts of a culture whose disappearance was inevitable. The state of indigenous political organizing before the war's end would seem to support this sense the near non-existence of indigenous communities, and the unimportance of racism and cultural rights issues in national politics. Until 1989 only one group, the Salvadoran National Indigenous Association (ANIS), operated as a national level organization representing indigenous peoples. ANIS had existed for decades, and clearly paved the way for later groups, several of which were formed by former ANIS leaders. A few of these organized before the war's end. Not until after the signing of the peace accords in January, 1992, however, did indigenous organizations truly flourish. The first three years after the war saw the formation of as many as eighteen groups,⁷³ and it was not until after the war that indigenous organizations truly found both a voice and an audience in Salvadoran national politics.

Why did indigenous activism emerge so suddenly, and grow so quickly, in what most thought would have been the unpropitious, deeply *mestizo* terrain of El Salvador? This has been a guiding question for research on the Salvadoran indigenous movement. The main explanations offered to date focus on the political openings created by the end of the war. I offer an alternative in this chapter that focuses instead on the postwar sense of disillusionment and the failure of the revolution that I found not only in Guarjila, but

⁷³ Virginia Tilley, *New Hope* p 539, lists 18 organizations, although several of those existed only briefly during the period of the most rapid growth of indigenous organizations.

also among former revolutionaries in San Salvador and in the *occidente* who are involved in indigenous politics today. I argue that for people who committed themselves to the revolutionary project and felt betrayed by the peace accords, the Indian stands as a subject that can express both the wound of the failed revolution and the utopian dreams that fueled revolutionary optimism. This focus on the negative aspects of the post-revolutionary experience opens the way to an analysis of the connections between indigenous activism and the culture – and cultural politics of – neoliberalism in Latin America.

THE PEACE ACCORDS AND THE EMERGENCE OF INDIGENOUS ACTIVISM

There are two prevalent explanations offered for the sudden growth of the Salvadoran indigenous movement. The first suggests that peace accords opened a space for Salvadoran Indians, long the victims of oppression, exploitation, and repression by the state through material and discursive forms of violence, to speak their voice. This cultural resurgence theory is expressed by Mac Chapin in his monograph *La Población Indígena de El Salvador* (published by the state Council on Culture and the Arts in 1990) as well as by indigenous activists. This position focuses on the historical experiences of Salvadoran indigenous peoples and the continuity of indigenous identity. The second explanation points instead to the influence of transnational discourses about indigeneity in the Americas and international actors including development NGOs, indigenous rights groups, and the United Nations. In El Salvador the peace accords opened multiple spaces for new forms of political organizing both by ending the war and by calling for support of new civil society actors. The close link between the two—the opening of political space in El Salvador and the international interest in indigenous peoples and their rights claims—is seen in the UNESCO Cultures of Peace Program for El Salvador. That

document listed indigenous peoples as one of four priority areas for postwar development along with youth, women, and the environment. According to the cultural resurgence position, the UNESCO program provided political space for El Salvador's long silenced indigenous peoples, while the position that emphasizes the interpellation of subjects by transnational discourses and institutions would see UNESCO as implicated in producing indigenous subjects.

Indigenous activists assert straightforwardly that the peace accords and the relatively high support for indigenous peoples' rights in the early 1990s allowed them to express both a cultural identity and a political agenda that had been suppressed in the preceding six decades by state terrorism and the racism of both left and right. Their position parallels that expressed in Chapin's 1992 "Los Pueblos Indígenas de El Salvador," discussed in Chapter Two. According to this position, indigenous people hid themselves. As one CCNIS document puts it,

[We] have found ourselves needing to preserve our culture within our own communities and to hide many elements of the indigenous peoples. [...] In the decades following [the 1932 *matanza*] we indigenous peoples in El Salvador hid ourselves, hiding our existence and our culture [and] identity (CCNIS 1999:11, 23)

There are several communities that have preserved indigenous cultural practices including public ceremonies, as in the active indigenous *cofradías* of Panchimalco, Izalco, and Nahuizalco, and to a lesser degree Nahuatl, as in parts of Nahuizalco and Santo Domingo de Guzmán. The notion that indigenous people hid themselves and the particular practices that marked them as indigenous becomes important to activists because these few communities represent a miniscule population. In order to support Chapin's claim that indigenous Salvadorans make up ten percent of the population, about 600,000 people, many more communities need to be listed as home to large indigenous

populations. (Chapin's figures are widely cited in indigenous organizations' literature, and perhaps surprisingly in the publications of the CONCULTURA's Bureau of Indigenous Affairs.)

As discussed in Chapter Two, this argument does not stand up well to scrutiny if self-identification is the measure of Indian identity, and holds up still worse if criteria include distinct characteristics like religion, dress, language, "customs", and so on. Activists tend to rely on a notion of *autoidentificación*, self-identification, based on a Barthian understanding of identification and recognition as well as the language of self determination found in ILO Document 169. Faced with the fact that even by this standard many communities they consider indigenous do not accept the designation, Chapin and many activists assert that residents of those communities simply deny their identity to outsiders, or that their denial is a matter of false consciousness, a failure to recognize their true identities caused by the history of racist El Salvador.

Further difficulties, and perhaps more troubling ones, involve the insistence that for indigenous peoples historically to have abandoned certain practices can only constitute a negative move. This view, grounded in long traditions of anthropological writing on culture loss, diminishes the extent to which "ladinoization" as the active abandonment of indigenous identity is not only loss, but also constitutes a productive move, the formation of new kinds of subjectivity and consciousness. As the analysis of *doble cara* in the previous chapter shows, contradictory consciousness or complex personhood are better able to take account of the identities through which people act, and the narratives they provide of their own selves and communities. Emphasizing cultural singularity and a vision of indigenous peoples as traditional peoples living in bounded communities, this approach conflates the loss of cultural practices with a loss of agency.

In contrast to this vision of a transhistorical indigenous subject, another position stresses the contemporary construction of Indianness. Virginia Tilley (1997; 2002) shows how, by the late 1980s, a relatively singular notion of the political meaning of indigenous identity became institutionalized in the practices and discourses of transnational indigenous activist groups and the non-governmental or quasi-governmental agencies, like the UN, that provided indigenous groups with funding and juridical claims to legitimacy. Indigenous groups that wanted to be part of the network that would provide them access to funding and other resources found a strong incentive to “be Indian” according to what Tilley describes as a narrow and dominant model of indigeness, constituting for her a “new hegemony.” Critically for Tilley, this model was imposed from outside and above: outside of the particular context of Salvadoran experiences of indigenous identity, and above in the sense that authority over decisions, agendas, and resources, was in the hands of non-indigenous international and transnational agencies. Tilley (2002) points to projects sponsored by UNESCO and the European Union, respectively.

Tilley’s focus on the poor fit between the particularities of the Salvadoran racial experience and universal representations of authentic Indians presents the situation for Salvadoran activists as a double bind. Indigenous movement activists must conform to international standards (Tilley’s “new hegemony”) in order to claim their Indianness. When they do so they appear untrue to the realities of Salvadoran history and their own experience, and so inadvertently sabotage the only clearly available path to making their claims. Tilley’s analysis points to some of the ways that neoliberal multiculturalism, in Charles R. Hale’s phrase, “menaces” those subjects it purports to represent and protect (Hale 2002). This critical look at the relation between neoliberalism and the rise of

indigenous rights activism in Latin America in the 1990s is completely absent in the cultural resurgence position offered by activists and some anthropologists.

My own position is broadly in line with Tilley's, concerned with questions of subject formation and the influence of neoliberalism and institutions of transnational governmentality (Ferguson and Gupta 2002). My criticism of Tilley's argument stems from the one-dimensional representation of activists themselves, as responding primarily to the conditions produced by external agents. Not only is this portrayal insufficient, by focusing on the ways activists have struggled to "fit" with external models, it risks portraying them as merely opportunists whose political aspirations are insincere and superficial. For readers in El Salvador, Tilley's analysis might easily support the assertion that activists are frauds trying to cash in on the resources and opportunities created by the international interest in supporting indigenous peoples.

In this chapter I pose an alternative explanation for investments and attachments of activists. I argue here that an unspoken element of the indigenous movement lies in its connections to the civil war, the revolutionary dream that animated the war, and the feelings of loss and disappointment that have surfaced in the wake of the peace agreement. In addition to being caught in the bind that Tilley details, I contend that indigenous activism in El Salvador is charged with legacies from the war and its unsettled end in ways that have gone unexamined, and that are directly relevant to analyses of the relations between indigenous activist groups, transnational NGOs, and the Salvadoran state. The return of the Indian in the cultural resurgence thesis is read as a relatively straightforward case of the return of the repressed, in which the massacre of 1932 is regarded as the traumatic moment at which indigenous culture was repressed by the state as well as by indigenous people themselves. I want to bring the civil war of the 1980s into this analytical frame, pointing to the ways in which the war as a utopian, forward

looking unified struggle has been repressed, and so opening space for an understanding of the return of the Indian as the return of this more recently repressed episode of trauma. This understanding of the energy and commitment that supports the activist movement suggest ways to articulate that movement with the political subjectivities of people like those in Tacuba.

THE WAR AND INDIGENOUS ACTIVISM

One set of relations between the popular movement and the indigenous movement is readily apparent in the connections between indigenous groups today and their peasant union and popular organization predecessors, as well as in the presence of so many former revolutionaries in the indigenous movement.⁷⁴ ANIS, the first and longest lived of the Salvadoran indigenous organizations, was closely tied to union activism before and throughout the war. On February 22, 1983 more than 70 members of ANIS were killed by the Salvadoran military and members of the local patrulla of the defensa civil. The report on the case by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights states that the murders stemmed from a land dispute, and that the other disputant, Alfonso Aráuz, had close ties to the defensa civil and the military (1993). As the war continued through the 1980s, ANIS increased its involvement with the opposition to provide logistical support for the FMLN. Consuelo Roque, a retired professor of literature and language at the UES, recalls traveling during the war with members of ANIS from Sonsonate to Perquín, in the northeastern combat zone of Morazán (and home today to the Museum of the Revolution). The members of ANIS were going to Perquín to participate in a folklore

⁷⁴ Former revolutionaries are central to indigenous movements throughout Central America, as shown by Gould's *Myth of Mestizaje* and Grandin, p 193, as well as Amadeo's remarks on the presence of former revolutionary comrades in international indigenous meetings. This alone suggests that the separation so many early scholars of new social movements saw between an old, class-based left and the identity politics of new social movements was never as distinct as they portrayed it.

festival in which they would celebrate their indigenous culture. The leaders of ANIS asked that combatants from both sides leave Perquín, claiming their own neutrality, and their truck passed all the Armed Forces checkpoints on the road to Perquín, where they arrived at nightfall. The next morning, according to Roque, the truck's cargo – ostensibly props and other gear for the festival – was less by half. There were government troops in town, so members of ANIS decided to turn around immediately and head straight back to Sonsonate. Roque suggests that the truck had in fact carried supplies to the FMLN combatants who controlled the hills around Perquín, and that once that mission was accomplished they had no reason to stay in Perquín.

The links between the FMLN and Indian rights groups today is strong, as many contemporary activists entered the world of politics as FMLN militants. These connections are denied by some indigenous activists, in part because they feel that any link to campesino organizing dilutes their claims to Indianness today. Santiago Pérez González (pseudonym) is the leader of one of CCNIS's member organizations, responsible for parts of Santa Ana and Tacuba in Ahuachapán. When the coffee farmers of Tacuba began to tell me of their participation with an indigenous organization, they spoke of Pérez and his group.

I first met Pérez when he made a presentation to the doctors and health promoters of Tacuba's clinic and members of NGOs operating in Tacuba. His presentation was a well-argued call for recognition of the validity of traditional remedies and support for natural medicine within the clinic. For people with little money who live several hours' walk from the clinic, training in herbal and other traditional remedies could fill an important need for accessible health care. He also spoke of plans for a latrine project he was working on with a development agency, which, last I checked, had never actually materialized. A striking aspect of this presentation was that Pérez stressed that his

organization was not political, disavowing affiliation with any particular party or political perspective. Why, I wondered, did Pérez feel it so necessary to disavow the political? In part I believe this was an effort to appeal to the multiple political affiliations of his audience, and also to assert a freedom from the corruption that is part and parcel of local party politics in El Salvador. As described below, Pérez's history and his reputation as something of a political con-artist may have made his desire to distance himself for the assumed corruption of party politics especially acute.

When I asked Santiago Pérez to describe his history as an activist, he responded with a narrative of his Indianness:

SPG: My path, primarily, my grandparents—I'm going to tell you the story well—my grandparents pointed me on the road of the indigenous people. Of an identity as indigenous peoples. That we recognize our principles, morality, and dignity that belongs to each one of us. That we recognize firstly the values that we have in this country—the principles of food, of clothing, the power to identify oneself with the will of the creator. And when I say this, it's la madre tierra, tata sol, santo aire y... y abuelo fuego. The principal powers that my grandparents, all my life... all my life I have been an indígena.⁷⁵

He soon realized that he had begun to ramble, and pulled himself back: “the question is if I identify myself as indigenous,” he said. In fact, the question was simply “you worked with peasant organizations, right?” For Pérez, a discussion of peasant organizations immediately raised the distinction he felt he needed to sustain between peasants and Indians. In order to be Indian enough by the criteria for authentic Indianness he seems to feel are important – at least in an interview with a foreign researcher – Pérez feels he

⁷⁵ Mi trayecto de camino, primeramente, mis abuelos – le voy a contar bien la historia – mis abuelos me indicaron el camino de un pueblo indígena. De una identidad como pueblos indígenas. Que reconocieramos nuestros principios, moralidad, y dignidad que nos corresponde a cada uno de nosotros. Que reconozcamos primeramente los valores que tenemos en este país. Los principios de comida, los principios de vestimenta, los principios de poder identificarse con los mandatos del creador. Y cuando digo esto, es la madre tierra, tata sol, santo aire y... y abuelo fuego. Los poderes principales que mis abuelos toda la vida... toda la vida he sido un indígena.

must deny his history as a peasant organizer and union activist with strong ties to the FMLN. This denial echoes the historical disavowal of political participation in the *occidente*. It is also the case that the desire to stake a space clearly separate from previous, class-based politics appears in indigenous politics elsewhere in Latin America. In Guatemala, for example, Greg Grandin shows how an historical fear of persecution contributes to the need to renounce political “commitments and emotions” (Grandin 139), which is reinforced by “the deeply entrenched penchant on the part of Ladinos to see all indigenous mobilization as innately violent and provocative” (139).

As it happens, Pérez’s disavowal of peasant organizing in support of the claim always to have been politically active in the name of Indianness are challenged by those who witnessed his transformation in the early 1990s as well as his own admission to have been active with the UTC and other national peasant unions as well as FECOAS. Along with his brother José⁷⁶, Santiago founded COINSAMATA (the Salvadoran Indigenous Council of Mother Earth) in the early 1990s. Around the time he became involved in indigenous politics, Santiago trained in Guatemala as a Maya priest. Padre Miguel, a priest with long ties to liberation theology who worked with Santiago and José Pérez on community development projects, recounts the time Santiago came to him asking for money in order to make the trip to Guatemala, promising Padre Miguel that upon his return to El Salvador as a Maya priest he would be able to perform a divination ceremony that would reveal the whereabouts of a truck that had recently been stolen from one of Miguel’s projects.

⁷⁶ José, who co-founded COINSAMATA (Consejo Indígena Salvadoreño de la Madre Tierra, *pseudonym*) with Santiago features in an FMLN produced documentary about political and guerrilla organizing in the *occidente* called *Doble Cara*. José was a community liaison with the FMLN, again suggesting the extent to which former revolutionaries have turned to indigenous activism.

Those who worked with Santiago in FECOAS in Tacuba recall Pérez as a peasant organizer and *compañero* from the days of the war. While they do not question his identity as indigenous today, some regard his Indianness as foreign, echoing the tendency of many in western El Salvador to point further west to Guatemala when asked where the Indians are. People in Tacuba often refer to Pérez as the “*sacerdote maya*,” the “maya priest,” and that this position carries authority seems accepted. Yet people seem neither to know nor to be particularly interested in what it might mean to be a Maya priest. Peasant farmers in Tacuba, many of whom are the children, grandchildren, or great-grandchildren of Nahuat-speaking victims and survivors of the massacre of 1932, regard talk of indigenous spirituality and particular customs to refer to Indians of long-ago (or far away), not to themselves or their experience. When Pérez invokes his indigenous authenticity, he paradoxically distances himself from those who make up the base of his indigenous organization.

Santiago Pérez’s denial of his experience with the left and his disavowal of the realm of party politics the FMLN acquiesced to with the peace accords points to less direct legacies of the war than the simple presence of many former revolutionaries among the ranks of indigenous activists. These other, less material legacies both haunt and energize contemporary indigenous activism. Unlike that other violent history that the “overall discursive fact” of Indianness in the present has recalled – *la matanza* – the connection between the war as collective trauma and the return of the Indian is largely unremarked and unexamined, standing as an unclaimed legacy. *La matanza* can stand today as a presence: it validates an acutely felt historical victim status of Indians, and it explains (abstractly) their alleged absence from the national scene. For these reasons *la matanza* is claimed today as the moment of repression (and disappearance) from which Indians today return. Today as activists assert Indianness they make the events of 1932

present. *La matanza* acts as an event that fills the space of explanation, and stands in for a sense of loss that might otherwise be dangerously free-floating. The legacy of the war, however, disappears, and comes to be felt as an absence. As a disappeared or repressed history, an event that is lost rather than standing in for loss, the war's legacy involves not only the traumas resulting from the conflict itself, but also the traumatic loss of the revolutionary dreams that the war enabled, and which nourished the revolutionaries through one of the most intense and protracted civil wars in the region.

Amadeo Martínez became involved with indigenous politics early in the postwar period. Today he is one of the most important activists in El Salvador, serving as a council member and lawyer with CCNIS, the *Consejo Coordinador Nacional Indígena Salvadoreño* (National Salvadoran Indigenous Coordinating Council). He is active internationally as well, as a member of the Fondo Indígena, and he has traveled across Latin America and to Europe as a representative of indigenous organizations.. His account of the rise of CCNIS and the issues surrounding the PAPICA process differ slightly but importantly from Virginia Tilley's, particularly as he chronicles the direct links between revolutionary and indigenous organizations. Beyond the detailed content of Amadeo's recollections, however, I am most interested in the depth of his commitment to the revolutionary effort and the sense of loss and disappointment he expresses at the peace accords, which echo the deception and disillusionment Silber finds among former revolutionaries in Chalate. I asked Amadeo to narrate his experiences with political activism for me:

Let's see... I started at the age of twelve in the Christian groups. At fourteen, along with some other personalities (names several prominent figures in politics and development), with them and some others we founded the MERS (the Salvadoran Revolutionary Student Movement), the second revolutionary student movement of that time, in 1975. From that point on I began my political life. In MERS I took part in all the different areas, propaganda, finance, and later we

started to meet secretly in groups. I didn't really understand the object of these groups, where now they started to teach deeper political lessons, about Marxism-Leninism, the class struggle. And what was the objective of this? Well, to develop here a complete process of prolonged popular armed struggle. [...]

I was in charge of the team that took over the Swiss embassy, with Boromeo Najarro, a *compañero* from the UR-19 who they killed, and also with my sister, a sister that, only then we realized that we were both taking over the embassy... We held the Swiss embassy, almost 20 days... until they [freed] political prisoners.

In all that time I was also part of the popular militias, without realizing it, I only knew I was part of the self-defense of the masses but they didn't tell me I was part of the militias that comprised the FPL, they didn't tell us, I simply knew that I was part of the security of the masses. And then, I think I passed a bunch of tests, and they brought me into the clandestine groups. In the clandestine groups they began to go deeper with regard to what our work was, and then they told me that it had to be secret work, and that for clandestine work I had to leave my work with the masses. And that's how it was, they took me out of the popular organizing and many people, *compañeros*, thought, well, that one wimped out, he quit, who knows what. But the revolutionary process was engaging me in a new task. In this new roll I took part of the urban zone of the guerrilla, and I worked in intelligence quite a bit. [...]

I spent time in camps; I was part of houses that were called screens, where I was with families that weren't my family. ... safe houses, right. And... during all this time I was at an intermediate level... I was in charge of various sections also... and from there, I participated actively in the realization of the offensives. [...]

Amadeo's commitment to the revolution was total. He abandoned his studies, at times his family, and he put his life at risk. Like Amadeo, many urban intellectuals who entered the movement as organizers with public roles eventually became involved with some level of militancy and clandestine work, as was apparent in the offensive of November, 1989. The FMLN paralyzed and very nearly took control of San Salvador. Many of the key FMLN combatants were urban commandos, some recently moved to the capital for the operation, others long-term residents awaiting the "final offensive" (the war actually continued for more than two years after the offensive, although the FMLN's

show of strength and resolve is credited with forcing the government to negotiate).⁷⁷ Like Amadeo, these militants were committed entirely to the revolution, no less so than the leadership and the rural fighters and communities that were more consistently at the center of combat. This is a story shared by thousands of Salvadorans, and for many in contemporary NGOs,⁷⁸ in education, and public policy with the government, the shared experience of the revolutionary dream and its end – settlement or failure, depending on your viewpoint – marks their political work in the present. Amadeo continues:

From there, when the peace accords arrived, a lot of us didn't want that, because we knew that we weren't fighting to institutionalize a party but for our objectives, which went beyond just getting to legalize the FMLN. Well then, after the peace accords many of us were left disillusioned. Because really this wasn't our objective. And that's how some of us... in my case, you see, I hadn't finished my studies. I finished my university studies. And I distanced myself from all this, from what was my connection with the party, in '92, '93.

But I always had a relationship with some organizations, right? And that's how I came to know *un hermano* Julio Alfaro, who was the director of MAIS, the Salvadoran Autochthonous Indigenous Movement, and he asked what I was doing, if I was still working with the *Frente*, and I told him no, that I had pulled out because I wanted to finish my studies. He wanted to see, I guess, which path they (the FMLN) were going to take. Because for us it wasn't ... what we talked about (fighting to institutionalize the FMLN). [...] [A]bove all I was in a situation where I felt like, with the war, I'd lost a lot of time for nothing...

Amadeo sees continuity between his revolutionary past and his current activism with the indigenous movement. There is, however, a clear and absolutely crucial rupture in his view: his disappointment with the outcome of the peace accords, and his own sense that the negotiated settlement can no longer be seen as having won the peace, but instead as having lost the war. In this, Amadeo's sense of the futility and failure of the

⁷⁷ See Montgomery, 217-220

⁷⁸ Montgomery notes that the FMLN had recently released political prisoners set up NGOs, which became the focus of intelligence operations, drawing scrutiny away from the urban commandos and their operations.

revolutionary project to which he dedicated so much of his life echoes the sentiments of those I spoke with in Guarjila and Silber's informants in Las Vueltas.⁷⁹ It also rings with the disappointment and despair I heard when I interviewed don Refugio, a leader with ANIS, at the organization's tattered office in Sonsonate in 2000. At that moment ANIS was in worse shape than its dirty and ramshackle rooms on the edge of a public transport yard. The organization's leader, Esquino Lisco, had recently spent six months in jail on charges of embezzlement and fraud, and much of the membership and leadership had defected to the new organizations that joined together to form CCNIS or abandoned the movement altogether. A worn and dispirited don Refugio looked nostalgically to the revolutionary ferment of the 1980s. He felt that ANIS could only hope to survive until the coming of the next revolution, which he saw as the only option for political change in neoliberal El Salvador. In addition to the failed revolution of the 1980s, ANIS had disintegrated in what might have been its time of glory.

LOSS AS A POLITICAL FACTOR

Deborah Jenson (2001) argues that the French Revolution, because of its failure to be fully realized, came to be felt as a social wound, a lesion at the edges of a revolutionary dream of equality – likeness – that manifests as aching feelings of loss when that dream is unfulfilled. Refugio, the residents of the *repoblaciones* and Amadeo all articulate a sense that the utopian hopes of the revolutionary program have come instead to stand as a failure, primarily because the FMLN retreated from its truly revolutionary position through the peace process. For Refugio this loss feeds a nostalgic longing for a return to the past as it was, and for many residents of the former controlled zone of Chalatenango it emerges in frustration of Silber's "post-revolutionary

⁷⁹ Like the people in Chalatenango, Amadeo was a member of the FPL (Popular Liberation Forces) faction of the FMLN.

development paradox” and in massive migration to the US, land of the enemy. For Amadeo and other former revolutionaries who have turned to indigenous activism, I suggest that a deep sense of loss underlies an investment in the figure of the Indian as a new bearer of political hope. As I read this, then, the Indian that returns in El Salvador is something other than the two possibilities offered by the prevalent explanations of indigenous mobilization: neither simply the political “visibilization” and organization of always-already there Indians, nor the creation of transnational discourse, the Indian is both a kind of fetish, standing in for the absence/loss of the revolutionary dream, and a melancholic object energized by a refusal to reject that revolutionary dream.

In his 1915 essay “Mourning and Melancholia” Freud suggests these terms as describing two paths that people typically take to the loss of a loved person or object. The basic distinction involves the fate of the attachment to the loved object after its loss. Mourning is a process of eventually withdrawing the energies that maintained the attachment to the loved object and a parallel acceptance of the object’s loss and nonexistence. Charity Scribner (2003) characterizes mourning as “tender rejection.” Melancholia, in contrast, entails at some moment a refusal to withdraw attachment or libidinal energies from the loved object. The investment in the lost loved one is redirected inward to the ego “[incorporating] that other into the very structure of the ego” (Butler 1990:73). The lost love object or ideal is recreated and sustained in this moment of redirected, inward attachment, established as “an *identification* of the ego with the abandoned object.

Thus the shadow of the object fell upon the ego, and the latter could henceforth be judged by a special agency, as though it were an object, the forsaken object. In this way an object-loss was transformed into an ego-loss and the conflict between the ego and the loved person into a cleavage between the critical activity and the ego and the ego as altered by identification” (Freud 1986:249)

The war itself, with its enormous losses, demanded extensive mourning—a demand that could not always be met. The war’s end – its loss, a symbolic death—went largely unmarked and unmourned, at least publicly, because that loss was inextricably entwined with the putative triumph of the peace itself.. To the extent that such public mourning would recognize and celebrate the dream of revolutionary socialism it was not a position one could take publicly and expect to be heard in the immediate aftermath of the peace accords, when both literal and symbolic demands required the rejection of revolutionary militancy.

In Guarjila, FMLN combatants ringing the community were required to hand their weapons over to the UN verification forces, exemplifying this double disavowal of the revolutionary project. For many of those troops this was a moment of terror as much as celebration. After years of struggle in the name of a popular revolution and educations that included literacy and arithmetic as well as political theory and combat, they were poised to return to tiny hamlets and take up agriculture. Despite its poetry, the notion of beating swords into plowshares sheds no light on the hardships of small-scale agriculture in a place like El Salvador, where the agricultural export model upon which both livelihoods and identifications were based has come to an end

Many FMLN combatants decided not to return to civilian life. Some, like Ovidio Caravantes of Guarjila, joined the new national police force. The peace accords called for the new force, the *Policia Nacional Civil*, to be composed of twenty percent former FMLN troops, twenty percent ex-soldiers from the army, and sixty percent from the civilian population (Montgomery 1995:237). For Ovidio, as a police officer in Chalatenango where support for the FMLN is deep and broad, the loss of the revolutionary possibility may well seem to have been worth the benefits of laying down arms. When I visited Ovidio in 2002 on several occasions, he was thriving in his cinder

block house in Guarjila with a wife and three children, a refrigerator and television, and a small store from which his wife sold snacks and basic goods.

Another young combatant I came to know in Guarjila in 1992 decided that living in the shadow of the failed revolution was unacceptable. I met him one day as I was walking in the hills above Guarjila. He was on guard duty, bored at his post the sapping afternoon heat, and he asked if I'd take his photograph. I took two. The first shows a serious, somber-faced soldier with angular features, a hawk-like nose, and the mix of light eyes and straw-colored hair with copper skin that is called *chele* in El Salvador. The second, snapped a minute later with the punch line of a joke, portrays a laughing and smiling young man whose good humor and sparkling eyes made the AK-47 hanging casually from one shoulder seem out of place. He told me he had decided to move to Cuba and join their military. The peace accords for him were a bitter defeat, and even as he patrolled Guarjila in its moment of celebration, while most people looked forward to a better future that remains unrealized in most respects today, he looked to the only remaining place where the revolutionary dream was still a guiding aspiration.

Freud's evaluation of melancholia as a kind of truncated and redirected mourning opens with the observation that while melancholia may stem from the real loss of a loved person or object, it may also be the result of a "loss of a more ideal kind" (245). In fact, Freud suggests that the melancholic may feel strongly that a loss has been experienced yet be unable to "see clearly what it is that has been lost."

This, indeed, might be so even if the patient is aware of the loss which has given rise to his melancholia, but only in the sense that he knows *whom* he has lost but not *what* he has lost in him. This would suggest that melancholia is in some way related to an object-loss which is withdrawn from consciousness, in contradistinction to mourning, in which there is nothing about the loss that is unconscious.(Freud 1986:245).

To approach Amadeo's sense of the failure with the FMLN and the revolutionary effort as wrapped up with "an object-loss which is withdrawn from consciousness" raises questions about the indigenous movement and its connection to the immediate past, as well as to the more distant past of 1932. Amadeo feels the revolutionary dream of the civil war era as a loss. He also feels the absence of indigenous culture – of the kinds of indigenous practices, beliefs, and traditions that would legitimate Salvadoran Indian culture in accordance with the standards of transnational and elite mestizo ideas about indigenous culture. I want to suggest here that we consider the possibility that Amadeo recognizes this second loss as the loss of the Indian, but, as Freud puts it, he "does not know *what* he has lost in him." What he has lost that is not clearly recognized is the unifying revolutionary dream that died with the peace accords.

The melancholic object as an idealized object-loss—here the figure of the Indian—is capable of expressing multiple losses and taking on multiple meanings, displaying a "palimpsest-like quality" [Eng and Kazanjian]. The processes of mourning and melancholia are easily engaged in another aspect of loss, that of trauma, with its twin dynamics of repression and repetition. If the loss of a loved object is experienced as traumatic, successful mourning may be impeded by the inability of the subject to recognize the traumatic event in its actual occurrence. This, I contend is the kind of case that can shed light on the relations between the peace accords as a loss and the emergence of indigenous activism as a return of the repressed.

To read Indianness in El Salvador today as a return of the repressed dovetails well with more celebratory accounts of the indigenous movement that see it as a literal return of a literally repressed, unrecognized, or ignored subject. The reading I suggest here must be distinguished from this one, for in my reading the repressed subject that returns is the lost dream of revolutionary possibility, not the authentic Indians and Indian culture

alleged to have been hidden or repressed after *la matanza*. The returning Indian becomes an object of attachment for the energies displaced (or deterritorialized, in Deleuze and Guattari's formulation) in the melancholia generated by the unsettled end of the war. The figure of the Indian is ideally suited to take on this attachment – to stand in for the revolutionary ideal. Its place in national myth-history as an idealized progenitor or ancestor and bearer of the essence of national character makes this so. In addition, the events of 1932 and their (differentiated) repetition in the war of the 1980s, and the discourse of the vanished Indian that follows, contributes to the ease with which displaced, melancholic energies might identify the Indian as a new point of attachment.

BGP: You once told me that you found yourself through this process, that you discovered your true identity.

AM: Absolutely. When I started to work with MAIS, I had a different ideology, and my professional training was different... well, I discovered a new world, is one way to say it. And I began to question myself, really, who was I. And I started to see my roots. I began to ask my father and my mother, until I discovered that my grandmother's birth certificate said that she was indigenous. I was born in the oriente, in Santiago de María de Usulután, and that area, that whole region is Lenca. So then, I discovered that I am part of the Lenca peoples. Besides that I have the looks, also, the physical characteristics, so they can't say I am not part of the indigenous peoples. Which is just to say that sometimes people, "that one looks really, damn, in so many words, indigenous." That's how they know me, my colleagues, they say "hey, the Indian lawyer." And I think that yes, I have found, um, I found my true identity. Which many of us, really, have not found. Not long ago I was listening to the radio and it really caught my attention where it said you have to find your real identity, and we're only going to find it when we recognize (*conozcamos*) the indigenous peoples and we protect the indigenous peoples. It really caught my attention because it was the first time in the radio I heard this. And I do believe that when we recognize the real identity of the Salvadoran people, then yes, things maybe are going to change in our country.

In Chapter Two I suggested that the aftermath of the 1932 massacre, *la matanza*, created different kinds of traumatic experience, different kinds of loss, among different sectors of Salvadoran society. I suggested that for the mestizo subject of the national

imaginary, the massacre may have constituted the loss of an idealized Indian that was at once threatening and also a central element in senses of a national *self* to the extent that identity drew upon the ideas of national distinctiveness that nationalist narratives of *mestizaje* supported. This loss was quite different than the losses felt for the rural poor victims of state violence, whose losses were less ideal, more concrete: loved ones, fathers, daughters and sons, brothers, and perhaps a sense of community. These losses were, I contend, able to be mourned. For the idealized mestizo subject, however, the loss of “the Indian” or “Indian culture” registered after the massacre—and most fully narrated nearly forty years later—took the form not of a death whose actuality could be confirmed, and which might be mourned, but of a disappearance. As Avery Gordon notes in her writing on the social effects of disappearances in Argentina’s dirty war, a disappearance, or a vanished object, can only be felt as a haunting. The presence of an absence is only possible through this ghostly effect. As Gordon puts it,

a disappearance is real only when it is apparitional because the ghost or the apparition is the principal form by which something lost or invisible or seemingly not there makes itself known or apparent to use. The ghost makes itself known to us through haunting and pulls us affectively into the structure of feeling of a reality we come to experience as a *recognition* (Gordon 1997:63).

What ghosts haunt this new world Amadeo has discovered, evoking in him recognition? I suggest that the ghost of the revolution haunts Amadeo and the indigenous movement in El Salvador. Revolutionary idealism is transferred to the apparitional space of haunting by the injunction to repudiate a revolutionary mode of desire in the postwar moment. The expectations of a united national commitment to growth and progress—which includes tolerance for and even protection of “other” cultures within the nation according to the peace accords—went far in creating the conditions in which the denied aspirations of revolutionary subjects were attached in part to the Indian as an abstraction.

Mourning demands repudiation; Scribner's "tender rejection" may not always be so tender. Judith Butler points out that some forms of mourning may demand repudiation not just of the loved one, but of the love itself—of the "modality of desire"—and so fall into the dynamic of internalization and melancholic identification (Butler 1990:75). In post-revolutionary El Salvador the peace accords demanded just this type of repudiation in the name of the unity of the nation, the people, and in the name of the future – and most of all, in the name of economic growth. The Accords demanded the repudiation not just of armed struggle, not just of the war effort, but also of revolution as a "modality of desire." This demanded the rejection of one future in the name of another, one in many ways antithetical to the first. As Grandin writes in the quotation I selected as an epigraph to this chapter, the project of Cold War terror in Central America sought not simply to repress opponents of the status quo, but also to destroy political alternatives, and to consolidate the status quo as the only possibility. (170) To the extent that people accept the constraints of politics in the present, one could argue that the Cold War terrorists—dictators, with their armies, planter-elites with their death squads, multinational corporations, and the US government that sometimes turned a blind eye to this terror and other times supported it directly—succeeded. I would argue instead, that the remains of the revolutionary ideal invested in the figure of the Indian represent a potential challenge to neoliberal triumphalism as famously expressed by Margaret Thatcher's claim that there is no alternative.

I have suggested that the trauma of *la matanza* re-fashioned the fetish of the Indian, and in fact consigned the Indian more thoroughly to the space of the fetish. By this I mean to signal the process by which a figure that resides in collective fantasies is embodied, and in which real people are impelled either to inhabit the form of the fantasy or instead to inhabit the mestizo nationalist ideal space of sameness. The return of the

Indian in millennial El Salvador is the work of this fetish, which also opens channels for the ghosts of the past to enter the present. In one complex twist, the fetish Indian who previously was charged with the task of displacing the revolutionary aspirations of the 1932 rebellion is welcomed today, acceptable because the traces of the revolutionary dream it bears within it are either denied outright or are tamed through engagement with neoliberal legal and economic institutions. These denials suggest that the returned Indian may invoke a quiescent, disciplined and regulated colonial subject. The power of the revolutionary dream as an absence that haunts this newly returned Indian evades such explicit efforts to regulate or disavow its presence. The residual revolutionary dream is one way in which “indigenous culture” might exceed the bounds both of dominant mestizo nationalism and neoliberal governmentality.

It also suggests a point at which El Salvador’s indigenous movement might find a shared language and point of articulation with the political aspirations of people in Tacuba. Chapter four described the ways campesino activists challenged the phantom racism deployed by against them in local conflicts, ignoring threats to kill the indios and defying the stereotype of the illiterate, incompetent Indian. People in Tacuba also challenge racism with their appraisal of the value of *lo indio* in the form of *gallina india*, *chuchos indios*, or *melón indio*. And finally, they challenge racism by refusing the category *indio* that has been rendered a tool of the same dominant ideologies that seek to exclude and demean them.

The Salvadoran indigenous movement has invested itself in an Indian that is bound by its history as a figure of elite fantasies, but the legacy of the revolutionary movement pulls this Indian in another direction and pushes against that history. The Indian here carries within it an alternative to neoliberal ideas of freedom precisely by not being quite Indian enough even as it remains contaminated by the constraints

neoliberalism places upon the notion of freedom it will accept. In this case we might think of the Indian as a form of future oriented ideal rather than an authentic, static, image from the past against which something called “indigenous” in the present might be found wanting. In this case, the politics of indigenous rights in El Salvador must be understood in part as a politics of revolutionary mourning and mimesis and not merely as a politics of representation.

In his polemic against “left melancholy” Walter Benjamin contrasts a slothful approach to history he labels *acedia* with a revolutionary melancholy whose backwards glance is charged with a longing that orients itself to the future. If I have optimistically suggested that for Amadeo and many of the indigenous activists in El Salvador today, a melancholic fascination with Indianness is to a large extent consonant with Benjamin’s revolutionary melancholia—a hopeful refusal to kill off the revolutionary dream entirely—I must also acknowledge the pervasiveness of the other, a “feigned melancholy” that reifies a dream of the past as an aestheticized object. The danger for activists is to lose sight of the radical hopes invested in the Indian, and to accept fully the fetish Indian as the real Indian. This is the case when Santiago Pérez González sustains his authority as an authentic Maya priest, trained in Guatemala, and so distances himself from those in whose name he works. Such an “ossifying nostalgia” leaves the nostalgic subject “spellbound by the object’s absence” (Scribner 2003:308), and cedes way to the determination of capital to attach to and commodify not only objects but the past itself. This commodification of the past produces not only things for commerce, but defines identities themselves in a world of consumption (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001:33).

Conclusion: El indígena salvadoreño

On April 19, 2002, I attended a celebration of the American Day of the Indian in San Salvador (El Día Americano del Indígena), commemorating the fifty-year anniversary of the founding of the Interamerican Indigenist Institute. The event, held at the Casa de la Cultura⁸⁰ in the center of downtown San Salvador, was similar in tone and content to other official events involving indigenous issues I had attended. Government officials in suits and ties mingled in the building's courtyard with members of Izalco's *alcaldía del común*, the *cofradía* organization whose members often play traditional music at events. Reporters staked out positions from which to view the podium, while representatives of international organizations including UNESCO, the Italian and Spanish development agencies, and members of local activist groups all settled in to find seats. A young official from CONCULTURA presented a brief introduction, which was simultaneously translated into Nahuatl by an older man from Sonsonate.

Ricardo Maye, a member of CCNIS and an indigenous spiritual guide, said the opening prayer, an invocation to the Great Creator. After thanking CONCULTURA for supporting this event, Maye introduced the musicians of the *alcaldía del común*, who filed in front of the audience in *caites* and *algodones*, the sandals and white cotton pants and shirts considered the traditional dress of indigenous men. As the male musicians played, five women in *refajos* performed a ceremony around an altar arranged before the crowd. An appealing scent of burning incense spread throughout the courtyard as the women passed their hands over the altar five times, in five different directions, guided by the sound of a conch blown by one of the men. Press photographers crowded in. The

⁸⁰ CONCULTURA, the Ministry of Education's Council for Culture and the Arts, operates a network of regional cultural centers called "Casas de la Cultura."

women rose and filed out, throwing flower petals, accompanied by the drummer and followed by the other musicians. Guillermo Bonilla, Director of CONCULTURA's office of Patrimonio Cultural (Cultural Patrimony), started the applause.

Following these performances that emphasize traditional representations of indigenous culture, the remarks of the Salvadoran anthropologist Concepción Clara de Guevara seem out of place. According to de Guevara, the problem of identity is the biggest problem facing El Salvador today, and addressing the "problemática indígena," the indigenous problematic or Indian question, is a crucial step toward resolving the larger problem. "We have to leave stereotypes behind," according to de Guevara, especially stereotypes that "recognize an indigenous person by means of certain traits, or language, or clothing, or folklore." Echoing a position that is often put forward by activists, de Guevara insisted that "the best approach we've found" to recognizing social identities is that of self-identification. This is a strange twist on the language of self-determination that runs through many of the most important statements of indigenous rights, including the International Labor Organizations' influential Decree 169. De Guevara's interpretation of how self-identification works is revealing: "I have every right to say that I am indigenous, as do each of you, too."

Few Salvadorans would agree with de Guevara that identity is the most pressing problem facing their country at present. Her interpretation of auto-identificación seems a greater stretch still. Could de Guevara really say she is indigenous? Could Leda Peretti, the blond Italian anthropologist sitting next to me? Could I? Not if the concept of "indigenous" is to retain any meaning that might be mobilized politically. The raised eyebrows among some of the activists at de Guevara's talk suggest I am not alone in thinking this.

The traits de Guevara says must be discarded as indicators of identity mark the boundaries of cultures-as-things. The debates over identity in El Salvador all too often turn around these questions of particular traits that are felt to define a relatively stable and meaningful field of difference. Ironically, de Guevara's articulation of this apolitical and ahistorical view of identities is intended, I am certain, to support the claims to indigeneity made by activists who lack the characteristics that would, for de Guevara, make them more authentically indigenous. In other words, in her effort to pose an indigenous identity that can include urban activists, de Guevara simultaneously erodes the ground upon which activists erect their challenges to mestizo El Salvador. De Guevara feels adrift without the coordinates of tradition and authenticity, unable to mark clearly the terrain of difference that contemporary multiculturalism demands that she, and all Salvadorans committed to addressing the problemática indígena, must recognize. Her answer to the navigational problems she clearly feels in the absence of these coordinates—physical traits, clothing, language—is to pose identity as a lifestyle available to all. This effort at inclusiveness strips politicized identity of its politics and erases the specificity of its own collective histories of exploitation, oppression, and resistance.

I have attempted to present the complicated terrain of race, nationalism, and identity politics in El Salvador today without ceding closure to either of the poles de Guevara invokes: narrowly defined authenticity on the one hand, Indianness as a free-floating signifier with endlessly open potential meanings on the other. I have approached the narratives of absence and loss that predominate in Salvadoran national myth-histories of the Indian as productive social processes in and of themselves, and not simply representations—true or false—of reality. My contention is that these narratives have produced an Indian that is overwhelmingly the project of dominant mestizo nationalism, and that the rejection of that Indian by subaltern peoples constitutes an anti-racist

sensibility, even as it also represents a capitulation to the demands of that dominant nationalism. Reading discourses of the loss of indigenous culture alongside those in Tacuba who remained gives us a picture not of simple absences, but of complex and contradictory presences: the ghostly totality of the post-matanza state; the fragmented revolutionary sensibilities of Tacubenses living within that totality; the powerful racism that works through the fantasy field of sameness produced as the myth of mestizaje; and the apparitional residue of the revolution within the indigenous movement today.

In this conclusion, I want to pose what I believe are the important connections between those presences, apparitions, and remainders, and outline what I see as the main interventions this dissertation makes in fields both political and academic.

This dissertation follows the narrative trajectory of the Indian in modern Salvadoran nationalism, from disappearance in 1932 to return sixty years later. Like most other observers of indigenous politics in El Salvador today, I regard 1932 as crucial to understanding the present (see, for example, CCNIS 1999; Chapin 1990; Lara Martínez 1991; Tilley 2002). Most recent work on 1932 argues that the massacre itself did not actually do away with the last Indians in the country, which is the central feature of la matanza as national myth. These arguments engage with Indians through a realist epistemology. I argue that 1932 marks the point at which realism ceases absolutely to be a useful approach for understanding questions of race and nationalism in El Salvador. The extraordinary violence of the massacre points to a realm of excess and irrationality; my argument is that we can only begin to account for that excess by recourse to the workings of national fantasy. The massacre of ten thousand real people was energized by fantasies of racial others projected by elites and agents of the state onto their victims. Debates about whether those people were really Indians miss the critical point that race was at work in the violence of 1932 through the fears and fantasies of the planter elite,

not simply as some form of positive data that was taken up in a rational calculus of mass execution. La matanza was not a matter of the disappearance of the Indian, but of appropriation. The Indian became a figure so overdetermined by nationalist fantasies and anxieties that its presence as a real subject was rendered virtually unthinkable. The mistake is to think that this entails a disappearance of real subjects, and to neglect the continuing power to produce concrete effects wielded by those fantasies of Indians and the mestizo nation.

The principal contributions of this work revolve around the term race. To introduce race into a discussion in which identity and culture are the prevailing keywords is to pose a new set of questions for identity politics in Central America. I have insisted on race and related concepts like racism and racialization because they draw attention to the point at which fantasy and the material meet, and are co-produced. As a process, racialization here is not simply the attribution to certain subjects of behaviors stereotypically thought of as “racial.” Racialization speaks to the slotting of subjects into an interpretive frame that makes use of race in its explanations, and that taps into a realm of sensibilities, fantasies, and signification that is not wholly conscious. It is the world of knowledge Adorno (542003) signals when he says that the no matter how completely and rationally one attests to the humanity of Jews, the Nazis know whom to kill, the world of knowledge that is not fundamentally rationalist or positivist in character, but that produces realities.

My understanding of race as a product of collective fantasies is clearly of a piece with social-constructionist approaches that challenge the reification of what nearly a century of anthropological study has shown to be an idea, and not a natural phenomenon. A recent current within social constructionist approaches to race questions the validity of the concept of race as an analytical category as well as an empirical reality (Gilroy 1998;.,

2000). This form of critique draws our attention to the multiplicity and fluidity of subjectivity, and the inadequacy of the race concept in apprehending that fluidity. It poses a strong challenge to any antiracist epistemology that takes race as its organizing concept, whether it be a biological or socially constructionist understanding of race. In Gilroy's words, the critical promise of social constructionist views of race are undermined by the performance of "the pious ritual in which we always agree that 'race' is invented but are then required to defer to its embeddedness in the world and to accept that the demand for justice nevertheless requires us to enter the political arenas that it helps to mark out" (Gilroy 1998:842). As Brett St. Louis puts it, "the idea and reality of race cannot fully escape the (historical) taint of its absolutist and essentialized premises" (2002:653). This dissertation is broadly sympathetic to these concerns, and presents some of the risks that attend these inescapable essentialist underpinnings as they appear in the politics of recognition and identity. At the same time, it rejects the conclusions of post-racial critique and shows that race remains important in social stratification even when it is explicitly rejected in everyday discourses of nation and self. In other words, while I share a critical stance towards the reification of race for an antiracist stance, I argue that we cannot understand the politics of production, stratification, and state violence in El Salvador if we discard race as an analytical category. "That race should be irrelevant is certainly an attractive ideal," writes Charles W. Mills, "but when it has not been irrelevant it is absurd to proceed as if it had been" (1998:41). This dissertation shows that even as dominant narratives in El Salvador assume the irrelevance of race and racism in their country's recent history, race continues to be a relevant feature of social life for subaltern subjects.

While affirming the centrality of race in El Salvador, I have also critically explored dangers, like those that concern Gilroy, that attend identity discourses. Several

difficulties stemming from the reification of race as identity appear in the case of Salvadoran indigenous political activism. The first involves the exclusionary tendency of efforts to define indigenous identity in ways that fit with a juridical rationality. A related issue is that of the displacement of politics—first, of a politics that addresses class, and more generally the displacement of politics by what Ferguson (1994) calls anti-politics. Beyond these issues is the more general concern of neglecting, and so effectively silencing, the particular kinds of identities that the people in question themselves express. In his work on rural politics in Costa Rica, Edelman notes that campesino continues to be an important form of political subjectivity for both the rural poor and peasant movement leaders, who, like indigenous movement leaders are often not of the communities for whom they work. People identify themselves as campesinos, as they do in much of El Salvador, even as the analytical meanings of the category have been so transformed that some writers argue it no longer has much analytical value (most notably Kearney 1996). Edelman points out that “[t]his self-identification alone would argue for taking the term [campesino] seriously, as a significant cultural category, even if it is not a very serviceable analytical one” (1999:191). In multicultural Latin America, the tendency to see culture as something exotic again turns the ostensibly beneficial discourse of multiculturalism and the politics of recognition into exclusionary forms that silence those who have repeatedly been marginalized by mestizo nationalisms.

In the face of these issues, the challenge is to understand political subjectivity, the multiple commitments, attachments, and identifications through which people see themselves in relation to power and act upon the world from a particular social position. In the *occidente* I describe in this dissertation, race as I characterize it above has been a central part of the development of the social position of rural subjects, a “symbolic terrain... of domination and resistance” (Aretxaga 1997:11). To appraise political

subjectivity and historical experience without recourse to race in a place like Tacuba would be to reify one version of a dominant mestizo myth, just as drawing on the Indian of the national imaginary in order to categorize those same people reifies another version of the same myth. One of the main contributions of this dissertation to theories of political identity and the ethnography of Central American collective politics is to theorize and describe the political subjectivity of people who simply will not fit within the categories a dominant society offers them.

I have tried in this work not only to examine the potential risks to subaltern peoples that come with neoliberal multiculturalism, but also to locate a politics of possibility. I find this possibility in the intersections of race and class in the political practices of subjects who explicitly organize their politics in terms of only one or the other of those categories. In Tacuba, those who identify themselves as *agricultores* or *campesinos*, and most certainly not as *indígenas*, nevertheless mobilize against the racism that runs through encounters with landowners and agents of the state, and I have characterized theirs as a politics that is, among other things, anti-racist. Among indigenous activists, the revolutionary universalism of an earlier moment provides a crucial support for their project even as they reject campesino identity as a reflection of a racist ideology that seeks to make Indians invisible.

The optimism I seek out in these examples of the potential for inclusion and alliance in multiplicity echoes Charles R. Hale's invocation of a "mestizaje from below" as a challenge to the menacing aspects of neoliberal multiculturalism (Hale 2002:524). Noting that one of the most important and powerful claims of neoliberalism is its insistence of its own inevitability and its constant efforts to erase utopian imaginaries, Hale suggests the importance of a utopian sensibility while doubting if it is either possible or advisable to imagine what the ends of that utopian impulse might look like. I

certainly share Hale's uncertainty, and in fact, I suggest that such living with uncertainty is in and of itself a politically important strategy. Lessons of the real risks of settling on the meanings of political possibilities abound in the history of El Salvador's twentieth century. It is necessary to be cautious of positions that present themselves as closed while maintaining a vigilant and critical stance towards capital. My intention is certainly not to recapitulate debates about the relative worth or legitimacy of class versus non-class politics. As Michael Watts (2005) contends, the polarization of a "hierarchical versus a heterarchical" left is a battle that history itself has laid to rest, even if intellectuals continue to glean among the corpses: "Long gone surely are the certainties of intensifying class struggle, the 'natural' transition to socialism, and necessity of a (singular) historical trajectory" (651). From this vantage point, Watts suggests that multiple struggles need not be oriented to a singular vision of the future, but must, if left politics is to retain any significance, be oriented towards capital, and a struggle for "the rights and powers of people over productive resources as they are deployed in production" (652).

This fundamentally utopian imaginary represents an effort to regain the revolutionary optimism of an earlier time within a politico-theoretical framework that is skeptical and cautious of the claims of political universality—a chastened universality, perhaps. If nothing else, it is an imaginary that speaks to the political dreams of people in Tacuba, who talk of a politics of the poor and recognize the instability of their communities in the context of rapidly changing social relations of production, and to the revolutionary idealism that I find at work, and transformed, in the politics of indigenous activism in El Salvador.

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I was running late when I left for the celebration of the American Day of the Indian. I didn't know the downtown Casa de la Cultura, so I decided to take a cab instead

of the bus. I gave the address for the Casa de Cultura to the taxi driver, who said he didn't know the place, but that he'd find it. From my home in San Salvador to el centro is a drive of less than ten minutes in normal traffic, and so we were quickly zipping through the narrow downtown streets. The driver's first instincts about the likely location of the Casa de la Cultura proved incorrect, and he began to criss-cross the downtown grid. Still, we had no luck. We stopped on several occasions to ask directions of local shopkeepers; none had heard of the Casa de la Cultura. Eventually, the taxista grew frustrated, and suggested that this was taking more time than he could give up for the rate we'd agreed upon when I first got into his cab. I told him I'd happily pay more if he could actually find my destination. Then I saw a police officer on foot, and asked the cabbie to stop so we could ask directions again. Surely a cop could point us toward the government's newly remodeled Casa de la Cultura.

Actually, it turned out he could not. As I turned back to the cab, hot, frustrated, and starting to think I'd just have to head back home, a young man approached us. "You're looking for the Casa de la Cultura?" he asked. "I know it. It's just over here. Come with me, I'll show you." I paused. The young man bore the marks of a marero, a gang member, his face and arms covered with deep, green-black tattoo ink that seemed to buzz underneath a thick coat of grime, as though he'd gone a long time without a bath. I guessed he lived on the street. The taxista looked at me as I reached into the cab to pay him and retrieve my bag. "Don't follow him," he told me. Unsure of what to do, I turned back to the young man to see the police officer looking at me, shaking his head. The marero, seeing all this, looked at us with disgust. "Shit, man, I'm not going to hurt you. Do you want to find the place or not?" Against the counsel of the taxista and the cop, I followed the marero down the street and around a corner. My guide remained silent until he stopped in front of the large wooden door, propped open, of an enormous colonial

building with fading paint. “Here we are.” I looked inside, where a small announcement stood on a stand in the foyer next to a large vase filled with flowers. “The Salvadoran Indian,” it said.

I could only laugh. I had just enacted in miniature the anthropologist’s frustrating search for the Salvadoran Indian, complete with missed turns and confused locals. In the end, that symbol of post-civil war El Salvador, the youth gang member, was the one who could actually get me to my goal. And of course, the *marero* is who I needed to find, not the afternoon of traditional music and *autoidentificación*. Disgusted but not surprised by the wariness that greeted his offer to help, indelibly marked as other (regardless of how he might choose to identify) and stained by the material conditions of his life, the *marero* today calls up national fears that echo an earlier discourse of the *indio-comunista*. In the 1920s, as Ellen Moodie (2004) has shown, discourses of law and order produced distinctly racialized criminal types. Circulars of photographs designed to teach police officers what criminals looked like blended poverty and race in images of less-than-national subjects, typically young males presented as incorrigible hindrances to national progress.

In 2002 the National Civilian Police posted a lengthy article on its official government website addressing the issue of “social violence” in their country. The indigenous heritage of the people was cited among the report’s explanations for the persistent violence in post-civil war El Salvador. According to the PNC,

El Salvador has a long history of violence, beginning with the fact that the indigenous race that peopled these lands hundreds of years ago possessed violent characteristics. One can suppose that these genes have been passed on from generation to generation, a situation increased through the mixes with other races. Given this, it is not surprising that we currently suffer from these attacks of rage

so common among our population, which in most cases end in violent acts against the self and against the other⁸¹ (PNC 2002).

It is tempting to see this as the repetition of an earlier history, this time as farce, but the issue of gangs and criminality in El Salvador today is hardly a joke, least of all for the state. In October of 2003, the Salvadoran government approved penal reforms under the slogan “*Plan Mano Dura*,” the Iron Fist Plan, targeting youth gangs. The law was found unconstitutional by the Constitutional Division of the Supreme Court of Justice of El Salvador in April of 2004, while the UN regarded it as a violation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In the first year of *Plan Mano Dura* more than seventeen thousand youths were arrested, 84% of whom were released by lower courts who deemed their arrests unconstitutional (Libertad con Dignidad 2004). Amnesty International criticized the law, noting that “the law penalised members of ‘maras’ or gangs simply on the basis of their appearance and social background. The text [of the law] directly referred to tattoos and identity symbols typically used by these groups” (Amnesty International 2004). In light of the parallels between the *marero* in 2004 and the *indio-comunista* in the gaze of the state it is both fitting and disconcerting that the young man with the tattooed face was the only person I could find who was able to lead me to the Salvadoran Indian.

⁸¹ El Salvador posee una larga historia de violencia, partiendo del hecho de que la raza indígena que pobló estas tierras hace cientos de años, poseía características violentas, por lo que es de suponer que esos genes se han heredando de generación en generación, situación acrecentada producto de las mezclas con otras razas, por lo que no es de extrañarse que actualmente suframos de esos arrebatos de cólera tan comunes en nuestra población, los cuales la mayoría de las veces terminan en actos violentos contra uno mismo y contra el prójimo.

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