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Raised on My Mother's Love Alone: A Mayan Theater Collective Confronts Gender Violence

Susannah Daniels

The Foundation Strength of Mayan Women (FOMMA), located in San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico, was founded in 1994 by Petu' de la Cruz Cruz (Tsotsil Maya from Zinacantan) and Isabel Juárez Espinoza (Tseltal Maya from Aguacatenango, Venustiano Carranza). By 1995, these two founders of FOMMA had created the first indigenous women's theater group in Mexico.¹ Currently, five women make up the theater group, including de la Cruz Cruz and Juárez Espinoza. María Pérez Santis (Tsotsil from Chicumtantic, San Juan Chamula) joined the group in 1995, and in 1996 and 2001, respectively, María Francisca Oseguera Cruz (from the Ranchería La Florecilla, San Cristóbal) and Victoria Patishtan Gómez (Tsotsil from K'at'ixtik, San Juan Chamula) also joined. These women, all of whom were born between 1958 and 1973, came of age during a period of social and economic transition in the 1970s and 1980s that marked the beginning of the reorganization of indigenous society in Chiapas.²

Global economic trends, together with government policies of modernization and development, resulted in increasingly monetized local rural economies. These policies were undergirded by the social and political philosophy of *indigenismo*, which, in the interest of forging a national identity, proposes that indigenous people integrate into the dominant society. Development and integration policies have not only severely undermined subsistence and land-based cultural practices, but when combined with the deteriorating economic conditions beginning in the mid- to late-1970s, have also had a significant impact on community and family life. This impact is particularly

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evident in the way in which gender dynamics have changed in recent decades. Mercedes Olivera contends that the increasing monetization of local rural economies has reduced the need for cooperation between men and women in daily life, leading to the erosion of complementary gender roles that persisted in previous periods.³ Increasing male dominance and the deepening of women's subordinate status is a result of the latter's unequal access to money, as well as what Olivera describes as "the cultural change of Indigenous men towards westernization, including the concept of feeling *macho*."⁴

The phenomenon of *machismo* and the subordination of women in indigenous society are central themes in FOMMA's plays. In this article, I will show how the play *Crecí Sólo con el Amor de Mi Madre* (*Raised on My Mother's Love Alone*) advocates the reestablishment of complementary gender roles and, at the same time, questions those cultural and societal norms that prevent women from achieving the independence required to provide for their own needs.⁵ I will also discuss the link between *Crecí* and the life stories of the authors. The social vision projected in their art reflects how they have interpreted individual and collective experiences that are both linked with their specific social location and shaped by the historical context of *indigenismo* and poor economic conditions described above. Before beginning the analysis of *Crecí*, I will provide additional context regarding the socioeconomic changes that characterize the period in which the play is set.

In the indigenous communities of Chiapas, the impact of macroeconomic shifts and policy changes on traditional economies and social and political relationships only made itself felt in the mid- to late-1970s. However, as early as the 1930s the government began modernizing efforts in the communities concurrently with the first indigenist movements that followed in the wake of the Mexican revolution.⁶ In 1948 indigenist policies led to the creation of the National Indigenist Institute (INI), with its first regional offices being opened in the Chiapas Highlands in 1952. The institute's goal was the integration of indigenous communities into the economic, social and political life of the nation. INI trained selected individuals from the indigenous communities as "cultural promoters" to advance its policies in the areas of health, agriculture, artisanal production, and education.⁷

Up until the 1970s, the "traditional" community remained intact as the basic unit of indigenous society in the Highlands. This community model was sustained by men's migrant work in plantations in the lowlands of the Soconusco region of Chiapas. Even though most Tsotsil and Tseltal men earned the majority of their livelihood as migrant workers, they identified as subsistence corn farmers until the decline of the plantation system in the mid-1970s.⁸ This decline coincided with the oil boom of 1976, and for several years plantation jobs were replaced by jobs generated by energy exploitation activities: construction of dams, oil refineries, roads, and bridges that were financed by state, federal, and international agencies.⁹ At the same time, these agencies implemented development projects in agriculture, potable water systems, and school and clinic construction in the indigenous communities. They also facilitated the adoption of new crops and technologies, and, as a result, farmers came to rely on government credit, chemicals, and fertilizers.¹⁰ During this period and into the 1980s, further industrialization of agriculture contributed to increasing monetization

of the indigenous economy, eroding community practices that previously had been based on principles of interdependence and reciprocity.¹¹ Government programs became enmeshed in local politics and helped to consolidate political factions in the communities.¹²

In 1982, in response to austerity measures imposed by the International Monetary Fund and the US Department of Treasury, Mexico's financial system collapsed and the government stopped investing in agriculture and infrastructure. One of the ways in which indigenous communities responded to the financial crisis was to intensify agricultural production on communal lands.¹³ This led to increasing social stratification. According to Jan Rus, "under the new conditions of the 1980s, those who had money began to openly treat communal lands as merchandise. Those with fewer resources however, began to lose the solidarity of their own communities."¹⁴

Beginning in the 1970s and increasing in the 1980s, social stratification and economic adversity forced communities to seek alternative forms of social and political organization. In some cases, this signified a break with the "traditional" corporate community model, to which the government (principally the dominant political party, El Partido Institucional Revolucionaria [PRI]), responded with repression and the cooption of indigenous political leaders. Rus remarks of the political climate in the 1980s that the region had not seen such a high degree of factionalism and inter-community violence since the initial years of the Mexican Revolution.¹⁵ How the political violence of the 1980s directly impacted the lives of FOMMA's founders will be discussed shortly. The violence culminated in the political activities of independent indigenous *campesino* organizations and in 1994, the Zapatista uprising, to which the government responded with the militarization of indigenous territories in Chiapas and the creation of paramilitary groups. Aggravated by political conflict, growing economic adversity during the 1980s and 1990s caused indigenous men to migrate farther from their communities of origin and remain away for longer periods of time.

The processes described here have had a significant impact upon gender relations in indigenous society in Chiapas. Before the 1970s, women were not viewed as being constrained even though all of their activities were carried out within the confines of their home and communal and family lands. When combined with men's economic contributions, these activities allowed families to survive, albeit barely.¹⁶ During the period in the 1970s and 1980s when indigenous male migrant workers began to spend more time away from their homes, women had to accustom themselves to receiving less help from their fathers, spouses, or brothers.¹⁷ Any contributions that migrant workers were able to make to their households often were insufficient to meet basic needs. As women began to seek out alternative ways of providing for their families, they incorporated themselves into the informal sector of the economy by generating income with traditional work.¹⁸ The increase in the number of female heads of household indicates that women are indeed being forced to become self-reliant. Others moved to the urban centers of Chiapas, either alone or with their families.

Such was the case with the women of FOMMA, most of whom relocated as children and young adults to San Cristóbal in the period 1968–1990. Their founding of FOMMA coincided with the uprising of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation

(EZLN) of 1994, which provoked indigenous persons displaced by the war to migrate from the rural communities to the cities. During the second half of the 1990s, FOMMA worked with this population and other women and children of the urban indigenous population. It implemented educational workshops to facilitate indigenous women's adaptation to urban life, helping them develop skills that strengthened their ability to satisfy their basic needs and the needs of their families.¹⁹ The workshops' purpose was to combat social inequalities rooted in indigenous women's lack of access to new technologies, education, and capital. At the same time, FOMMA sought to reaffirm women's sense of cultural belonging. The organization was a place free of the ethnic, racial, and gender discrimination that they confronted on a daily basis—a place where those who participated in its projects could reflect upon the social issues and problems linked to their social condition.

In the 1990s, the women and children who participated in these workshops also participated in the theater, which has always played a fundamental role in FOMMA's work. The theater's purpose is twofold: first, it provides women with a means of self-expression, which contributes to the enhancement of their overall well-being. As FOMMA cofounder Juárez Espinoza says, for the women who currently participate in the group, theater is their "medicine;" and second, the theater raises consciousness regarding relevant social problems at the local, national, and international levels.²⁰

CRECÍ SÓLO CON EL AMOR DE MI MADRE

The creation of theatrical plays in FOMMA is a collective process that begins with selecting a particular social issue (for example, migration), sharing relevant stories and reflections, and then improvising. The group constructs narratives from this material. Various directors and actors have collaborated with FOMMA, in particular working on scriptwriting, including plot development and structuring scenes, as well as dramatic technique.²¹ Doris Difarnecio directed *Crecí Sólo con el Amor de mi Madre*, which was produced in 2000.²² The play addresses the problem of paternal contempt: that is, the attitude taken by men who value their sons more than their daughters, and the concomitant abuse of women and girls within the family. *Crecí Sólo con el Amor de mi Madre* also links alcoholism to loss of community values and practices.

In the first scene of the play, we see Alonso and his *compadres* seated around a table in a cantina, drinking.²³ He is harassing the waitress and placing bets with the other men on his wife's pregnancy, insisting that she is going to have a son, "a *macho* like his father," while his *compadre* bets that she will have a daughter.

In the second scene Juanita is born. Her mother, María, is lying on a *petate*²⁴ on the floor, and is covered with a white sheet. Before the midwife hands Juanita to her mother, she recites a prayer:²⁵

Welcome to this house, to this blessed earth; in her you will pass your youth, until you become a woman. Your heart will be a warrior curious and strong like the *nagual*²⁶ of your birth. You will fly, enjoying everything that surrounds you, lovely butterfly. Your heart is happy. You carry in it the fruit of your womb that flowers like the blossom of corn. You will be like a goddess, full of strength, carried in the



FIGURE 1. *The cantina scene in Crecí Sólo con el Amor de Mi Madre, performed in Huixtán, Chiapas, in 2008. Image courtesy of Genia Blaser.*

footsteps of your handsome *nagual*. Do not allow them to cut your wings: fly over all obstacles and smile in your cherished dreams. Your head held high, you will go forward with steady eyes and firm steps.²⁷

The third scene, called “If it’s a girl, there’s no chicken,” refers to the custom in some Highland communities that, when a boy is born a chicken is killed and cooked in soup, whereas this is not done for a girl. While María is happy that she now has a daughter to keep her company, Alonso is irritated and ashamed, saying that he would have preferred a boy who could have helped him work, presumably in the fields.

A series of vignettes follows, with names such as: “You’re a woman, bear it,” and “When the beans are not ready men hit [women].” In these scenes, Alonso belittles and mistreats María and shows his indifference towards his daughter Juanita, not returning her gestures of affection, for example. Nor does he accept his family responsibilities, which forces María to take on additional work. In one scene, Juanita falls ill and because Alonso will not give María money for medicine, she must buy it on credit from the store owner Don Venancio, who takes advantage of the situation by making sexual advances. At home, Alonso demands that she engage in sexual relations without taking her feelings into consideration. She says, “Why don’t you think just a little; it is

not fair that you do not respect me; please, let's consult with the *consejeros* so that they might intervene. We need help."²⁸

In the last scene Juanita, a woman now, narrates the endings of her story and that of her parents. As she speaks, we see María seated next to the fire while Alonso sleeps on his *petate*.

Now I am grown. I attended school. I am a teacher. I used to think that my father would never change his ways. When I was a child, he tried to sell me [in matrimony]. My mother intervened. He never thought that I would become his keeper. The *consejeros* visited them many times. They spoke to them. My mother listened with her head bowed.²⁹

The *consejeros* (two elders, a man and a woman), enter the scene and the man says to Alonso, "Begin your journey, return to your home, take care of your daughter and wife, do not abuse the sacred *pox*, work, tend your *milpa*, care for the earth."³⁰ Juanita then explains that her father initially did not heed the advice of the *consejeros* until one day he dreamt that someone had robbed his *huaraches*, which he subsequently found in a cave.³¹ A coyote, Alonso's *nagual*, appears in this dream. María interprets his dream to mean that he was about to lose what is most important to him in life: his family. This dream marks the beginning of Alonso's transformation and the end of the play.

ANALYSIS

I now will examine the main problems that the play addresses—paternal contempt, alcoholism, and gender violence—in relation to Olivera's assertion regarding the new tendency of *machismo* and the deepening of women's subordination in indigenous society. Many of the gender norms that women currently find oppressive were devised by communities in the colonial era and later on to protect women. One such measure is the practice of restricting women's movements outside of the domestic realm. Colonial oppression cultivated, in an already patrilineal society, a gender ideology of masculine strength and dominance and feminine weakness and submissiveness.³² Over time, indigenous women have taken on their subordination as part of their ethnic identity.³³ Men's destructive and self-destructive behaviors, such as domestic violence and alcoholism, should be understood as consequences of the abuses that indigenous peoples have endured for five hundred years.³⁴ However, Aura Cumes insists:

Even though patriarchy may be viewed as part of the colonial legacy, from the moment that indigenous men reproduce it, appropriate it and benefit from it, they also sustain it and normalize it. In this respect, perhaps beyond simply denying or affirming the existence of sexual gender-based relations of domination in periods previous to the invasion, it would be useful to understand the form that these relations take on in concrete periods because women's subordination is the product of certain forms of organization and functioning of societies.³⁵

How does *Crecí* reflect the form that sexual gender-based relations of domination have taken in the historical period that is the focus of this study? In order to

answer this question, I return to Olivera's assertion regarding the links between the penetration of indigenist politics, the incorporation of indigenous communities into the market economy, and the cultural change of indigenous men towards westernization, including the concept of feeling *macho*.³⁶ Paternal contempt, the central theme of the play, exemplifies the attitudes that FOMMA seeks to change. I propose that, in part, paternal contempt originates in the undervaluing of the work that women have traditionally carried out; and further, that with the increasing monetization of the indigenous economy, this attitude becomes more prevalent in the community: that is, work that does not generate an income is deemed less important. In the Mesoamerican tradition, women are the bearers of their culture, but as Cumes explains, while indigenous society does value women's functions, these functions are connected "not only to a patriarchal context that denies their contribution, but also to a racist and ethnocentric environment that denigrates indigenous society and with it, women's contributions."³⁷ In this context, she argues, women's functions do not make them free, but are used for the purpose of oppressing them.

Brenda Rosenbaum's findings regarding mid-1980s gender dynamics in a village of the Tsotsil municipality of San Juan Chamula, Chiapas, affirm Cumes' positive correlation between the internalization of the dominant ideology and the devaluation of women. Historically, extending into the 1980s, males had interacted more directly with the dominant society than had women. Rosenbaum explains that while men do indeed "appreciate the efforts of their wives to reproduce the lifestyles of their ancestors," they will often use their greater knowledge of the dominant society to claim superiority over them. However, she argues that men who evoke their worldliness to enhance their status "only add to their already intense, conflictive feelings."³⁸ This conflict is generated by men's proximity to the "temptation of the outer world and the pain of Ladino condescension and contempt. They [men] confront on the one hand, a language and culture they never fully master and, on the other hand, the guilt of their compromise."³⁹ As *Crecí* represents the problem of paternal contempt through the character of Alonso, contempt does not only indicate devaluation of women's traditional role in family life; rather, this and other *machista* attitudes and behaviors are symptoms of the conflict that Rosenbaum describes, which might also be described as an identity conflict.

In a study of the United States farm crisis of the 1980s, Jennifer Sherman explains that in rural societies, the transition from a traditional model of complementary gender roles to new gender models is sometimes characterized by the emergence of reactive and oppositional masculinities, or what Raewyn Connell calls "masculinities of protest."⁴⁰ In the case of Chiapas, changes in local rural economies may in certain respects increase men's power over women, but growing economic adversity resulting in men's inability to provide for their families also undermines their authority. Masculinities of protest are born out of men's need to reaffirm their authority over women. During periods of transition from one gender model to another, men may even attempt to increase their control over women. This leads to conflict, especially when women are forced to defy social convention and seek work outside of their homes.

However, in the context of colonial oppression, masculinities of protest are not determined by economic conditions alone. As Rosenbaum's observation implies, it is not only changes in rural economies and the transition from one gender model to another that generate guilt and anxiety in men, but also the pressure they feel to construct new masculinities in reference to the dominant ideology and the culture of the oppressors. Smith's thesis regarding the gendered and sexualized nature of colonial relationships further complicates our understanding of the power dynamics that have given rise to indigenous men's masculinities of protest.⁴¹ Favre observed that in Chiapas, *ladinos* feminize indigenous men by placing them in a position of social inferiority equivalent to that of a child or woman.⁴² *Machismo*, an exaggeration of virility, could be understood as a response to this feminization. Through the character of María, *Crecí* portrays the counterpart to *machismo's* masculinities of protest: the feminine identity of subordination.

The dynamic between María and Alonso exemplifies the way in which indigenous women's functions in society can be used to oppress them. In those scenes which portray the couple at home, Alonso sits in a chair as if presiding over María, who never stops working. Alonso treats her like a servant and constantly criticizes what he perceives as her failure to fulfill her duties as wife and mother. The movements and gestures of Oseguera Cruz, who acts the part of Alonso, are those of a man who is domineering, impatient, and ill at ease. Those of De la Cruz Cruz, who acts the part of María, express an attitude of submission: not raising her head, not looking others in the eyes, not contradicting, not questioning, all of which are results of the negative emotional patterns of undervaluing, disapproval, and humiliation.⁴³ *Crecí* does not refer to cultural or socioeconomic factors that might contribute to Alonso's alcoholism and his mistreatment of his wife and daughter. But it clearly denounces the erosion of complementary gender relations that Olivera attributes to the domination of the market economy in the indigenous communities and integrationist policy which, in recent decades, was replaced by a policy of neoliberal de-ethnification.⁴⁴

The lack of complementarity in Alonso and María's relationship, as well as his indifference toward his family obligations, is evident in what Alonso does *not* do: help to gather firewood or carry washed clothing back from the river. Nor does he accompany María when she visits her parents' house or show any concern for Juanita when she falls ill. To the contrary, he tells María that curing the child is her job and, furthermore, if the child is sick it is her fault because she is her mother. In addition to obliging María to take on a disproportional amount of work, Alonso does not provide her with sufficient money to cover her and Juanita's basic needs. All of the above problems are exacerbated by, or perhaps stem from, his alcohol abuse. María does not see a way out of this situation, most likely due to the difficulty she would have providing for herself. If she were to leave her husband, only limited kinds of work would be available to her. Furthermore, in the absence of a husband to protect her and represent her in the public sphere of community life, she would be rendered socially vulnerable.

THE LIFE STORIES OF THE PLAYWRIGHTS

The family histories of De la Cruz Cruz, Juárez Espinoza, and Oseguera Cruz and her deceased ex-husband not only provide specific real-life examples of the problems that *Crecí* addresses, but also aid our understanding of the individual experiences that have shaped the social vision of these three artists. Due to the lack of documentation of rates of alcoholism, domestic violence, neglect, and abandonment in the indigenous communities of Chiapas, and the socioeconomic and political factors that determine these patterns, it is hard to say how these women's stories are representative of indigenous women's experiences in Chiapas in general. Although parts of *Crecí* are directly testimonial in nature, the play's representation of domestic conflict is much more mild than its authors' own experience of family relationships, particularly for De la Cruz Cruz and Oseguera Cruz. Perhaps their extreme individual circumstances enabled them to perceive with critical eyes the gender subordination that is the norm within indigenous society.⁴⁵ Certainly, these circumstances compelled them to carve out a path in life that differed greatly from society dictates.

Born in 1965 in Zinacantan center, as the eldest daughter Petu' de la Cruz Cruz carried an inordinate work burden.⁴⁶ She and her mother had to endure the disapproval and violent authoritarianism of her paternal grandmother, in addition to the abuse of her father and older brother.⁴⁷ In the 1970s, her father was first a construction worker and later a driver's assistant for local minibuses that traveled between Zinacantan and San Cristóbal. He often drank and when he did, he became violent with Petu's mother. He lived primarily in San Cristóbal and it is there that he met his second wife.

The aftermath of Zinacantan's 1982 presidential elections was characterized by unprecedented violence in clashes between the dominant Partido Revolucionario Institucional party and the rival Partido Acción Nacional party.⁴⁸ At sixteen, Petu' was kidnapped and raped by her father's political enemies. Petu's father worked closely with leaders of the PRI; prior to his daughter's kidnapping, he had been beaten and jailed. As a result of the rape, Petu' had a child. When her mother subsequently died, not only did her grandmother blame Petu' for this death, but her family also rejected her because Petu' was unwilling to marry her rapist.⁴⁹

In the years following the birth of her son, Petu' had to migrate to search for work in order to support him and herself, but later returned to Zinacantan. She was living and working in the house of an aunt when, in 1989, Sna Jtz'ibajom announced that it was hiring women to participate in its theater group.⁵⁰ Two years later, Petu' wrote her first play, *Una Mujer Desesperada (A Desperate Woman)*, which won the Chiapas Prize for Literature Rosario Castellanos in 1992.⁵¹ Like Juárez Espinoza, as one of the first indigenous women actors and playwrights Petu' endured gender discrimination from several of her male colleagues. But the most violent reaction to her transgression of gender norms came from the people of Zinacantan. As a single mother appearing on stage with an all-male group of actors, she incited the sexual harassment of men and the suspicion of other women. In 1991 these circumstances obligated her to migrate definitively to San Cristóbal.⁵²

At the time fellow FOMMA founder Isabel Juárez Espinoza was born in Aguacatenango center (1958), her father was a cultural promoter for the INI and worked as a male nurse in the institution's San Cristóbal clinic. He spent a lot of time in the cantinas, his money going to alcohol and women. At home he was authoritarian, and often became violent with Isabel's mother and older brothers and sisters. Four years old when her parents separated, Isabel has no memory of how her father abused her mother and siblings; as a child, she even favored her father. When he fled Aguacatenango to live as a plantation worker in the Soconusco region with his second wife, he left her mother with eight children and sold all of the resources (farm animals, land) that she could have used to support these children.⁵³

Due to her family's impoverishment, at the age of seven Isabel had to migrate to San Cristóbal to work as a domestic employee. She first worked in the house of her mother's sister, where she was exploited and abused.⁵⁴ When she returned to Aguacatenango at the age of ten, a man asked for her hand in marriage. At the same time, she was offered domestic work in the house of a family acquaintance. She accepted this offer to avoid marriage and migrated definitively to San Cristóbal, where her employers encouraged and aided her to continue studying.

At the age of seventeen she married a Ch'ol man from Sabanilla, Chiapas. When Isabel was two months pregnant, her husband was murdered over a land dispute in his community of origin. Two years later, in 1983, she worked with La Sociedad Cultural Indígena on writing and recording stories from the Tseltal oral tradition.⁵⁵ Despite the gender discrimination that she had to endure for being a single mother working in an all-male group, in 1987 she returned to work with the society, now called Sna Jtz'ibajom (Tsotsil for "House of the Writer") and started on the path that would establish her as one of the first indigenous women actresses and playwrights in Mexico.

Collective member Francisca Oseguera Cruz was born in the Rancheria La Florecilla in 1959, where she was raised by her grandparents in a family of mixed Tsotsil and mestizo ethnicity. When she was seven years old, her grandmother passed away and two years later she went to live and work in San Cristóbal in the house of an aunt, where she was both discriminated against for her indigenous/peasant origins and exploited. At the age of twelve she went to live with her mother and stepfather in the Rancheria Los Alcanfores, where she also suffered physical and emotional abuse.

At age sixteen, in response to her stepfather's repeated attempts of sexual assault, she ran away, aided by a young man who then became her husband. Her husband's family were Tsotsil immigrants from San Juan Chamula. In the 1980s and 1990s, they moved to one of the outlying barrios of San Cristóbal, La Quinta San Martín. Francisca's husband worked in construction in the city, but he did not give Francisca enough money to cover household expenses. She was thus forced to seek work as a domestic employee, but had to keep this knowledge from her husband because he prohibited her from working outside of their home. She also suffered from domestic violence in her marriage, aggravated by her husband's alcoholism.⁵⁶

She became acquainted with De la Cruz Cruz and Juárez Espinoza through one of her employers, and began working at FOMMA in 1995 as the cook and childcare provider for the organization's daycare facilities. Her decision to join the theater group

in 1996 met with the disapproval of her family, and particularly that of her husband, who assumed that FOMMA was actually a group of prostitutes. In 1999 Francisca left her husband to live with her two daughters. Since this time she has flourished in her work as an actress and educator. From 2006 to 2013 she served as FOMMA's president. She is currently in charge of the organization's outreach efforts and provides orientation for people receiving FOMMA's free psychological and legal services. In recent years she also began working independently, providing counseling and workshops for individuals and families located in San Cristóbal and in La Florencia.

HEALING AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION THROUGH THEATER

How does *Crecí Sólo con el Amor de mi Madre* respond to the problems of paternal contempt, alcoholism, and *machismo*? Wherein lies the transformative power of FOMMA's theater, both for the women of the troupe and its audiences? The play's resolution of Alonso and María's story advocates reestablishing complementary gender roles and re-vindicates the cultural values upon which they are based. It highlights the importance of the *nagual*, and what Chirix Garcia describes as its "positive cultural meaning of facilitating a predisposition towards the search for a more harmonic change."⁵⁷ Alonso's *nagual* facilitates his reformation through dream, calling his attention to his tenuous state and what he risks losing if he continues to drink and neglect his family.⁵⁸ By neglecting his family, he is detracting instead of contributing to the collective well-being, and therefore also weakening his relationship with his community and place of origin. The basis of these relationships is work, and especially working and caring for the earth. In the very last scene of *Crecí*, we see that Alonso has followed the advice of the *consejeros*. He accompanies María to the store of Don Venancio, where he pays off her debt. The baby that María is carrying symbolizes new beginnings.

Since 2000, FOMMA has presented *Crecí* for diverse audiences both locally and internationally. Oseguera Cruz concludes that this play is particularly powerful due to the universal nature of the problems it addresses—in particular that of paternal contempt or gender discrimination in the family.⁵⁹ De la Cruz Cruz's description of a presentation in Georgia in 2004, attended by an organization of Guatemalan Mayan immigrants, illustrates how this particular audience identified with the play: women in the audience cried, some men became defensive, and one man repented.

There are always moments where they take the play as amusement, something to enjoy, but at the same time there are moments that it brings them nostalgia, pain and revives memories. Because you see there are times that the audience remembers its past, relives it in the moment that we are presenting the play . . . if they have a family member, a partner who is experiencing a similar situation, then there are moments I think where they analyze their lives and their family.⁶⁰

In the end, FOMMA's exchange with this Georgia organization of Mayan immigrants inspired the latter to create their own theater group.⁶¹

Indigenous communities in Chiapas also have had diverse reactions to this play. While some men question the correctness of Alonso's behavior, others become defiant,

asserting that they identify with his character and that this is the way a man *should* be. Oseguera Cruz offers an explanation for such responses: “They really identify with [Alonso]. . . this is why it is hurtful for them, they realize . . . that the play is revealing them . . . it is painful for them because they say—this is how I am. On the inside they say, this is how I am.”⁶² Oseguera Cruz’s explanation that the theater “reveals” these behaviors is particularly illustrative of the function that the theater fulfills in such cases. As the quotations above infer, while men’s oppression of women may become normalized, there is recognition at the collective level that these behaviors are not acceptable. Nonetheless, discussion of this problem is relegated to the private sphere, preventing it from being addressed and resolved by the collective. In her analysis of sexual violence in the colonial context and how this manifests itself in indigenous communities, Andrea Smith argues that families’ attempts to deny these problems and their unwillingness to address them debilitates communities by preventing individual and collective growth.⁶³

For the members of FOMMA, telling their individual and collective stories is part of a healing process. Oseguera Cruz plays the part of Alonso, and some of her character’s lines are the same words spoken to her by her ex-husband. Oseguera Cruz describes the liberating effect of the production of *Crecí*:

This play was the one that for me . . . how to say it . . . it unchained my feelings, my being, to speak and say, “this is what I live, this happens to me.” I felt like it freed my heart and my mind, everything that I was carrying inside of me. When I began to tell [my story] and we wrote the play, I felt as if the space around me was opening up, it opened my heart and my mind . . . because this play is a reflection of myself, and I said to myself, “Finally, I was able to say it.”⁶⁴

Doris Difarnecio reflects that for Oseguera Cruz and the other members of the theater group, the liberating effect of telling their individual and collective stories is contingent upon the politicization of these stories, or performing the stories with the objective of provoking audience reflection. Through this process the actresses become the subjects of their stories, and thus counteract the ways in which gender violence objectifies them and other women.⁶⁵

The political nature of FOMMA’s theater resides not only in the stories that it tells, but also in the actresses’ performances of masculinity. Difarnecio emphasizes that by carrying out these performances in public areas of the indigenous communities of Chiapas, which are traditionally male dominated, and by taking on male dramatic roles, the actresses “intervene in” or “shift the narrative of male dominance.”⁶⁶ They undermine the prevailing gender model by showing that they are capable of adopting the movements, gestures, way of speaking, and attitudes that characterize men’s *machismo*—in short, by defying society’s dictates regarding what women are allowed to feel and how they are permitted to express themselves.

While the last scene of *Crecí* presents us with an image of family harmony, the play does not end on an entirely happy note. Juxtaposed with the ideal of gender complementarity is Juanita’s monologue, in which she explains how she became independent despite her father’s neglect—or maybe even because of it. Her story reflects



FIGURE 2. Performance of *Busando Nuevos Caminos* in Acala, Chiapas, in 2012. Image courtesy of Steve Homer.

the experiences of Juárez Espinoza, De la Cruz Cruz, and other women from their generation who have managed to improve their socioeconomic status by migrating to the city and/or obtaining a formal education. While their achievements enable them to provide better lives for their children, they do not change the past. Juárez Espinoza, who plays the part of Juanita, finds it difficult to recite this monologue to this day:

I get a lump in my throat and I remember my father. I remember the rejection. It was not only a rejection in the sense that he didn't love me. It was the rejection of him abandoning all of his children, leaving my mother to raise eight children alone. And I feel this, a nostalgic feeling, I feel resentment, but it also gives me strength to shout it out, to say it. Because the play has a happy ending, I would have liked for my parent's life together to end that way.⁶⁷

Juárez Espinoza's emotions echo the emotions that *Crecí* evoked in the audience of Mayan immigrants in Georgia. The story that *Crecí* tells derives its power from the way it moves between what was, what could have been, what is, and what could be. In the scene of Juanita's birth, the midwife's prayer exemplifies this movement. The purpose of the prayer is to usher Juanita into the world and set her safely on her path in life. For women suffering from the triple oppression that comes with being

indigenous, poor, and female in Chiapas, the prayer acquires special significance in light of what they already know—that being a woman means enduring and persevering. Embedded in the prayer’s life-affirming message of possibility is an implicit acknowledgment of this reality.

Juárez Espinoza, who wrote the poem, explains that while she did not know the actual words that a midwife would use at a birthing ceremony, she and the other members of the theater group wanted to demonstrate that *this* prayer *also* exists. She finds its meaning in metaphors of movement: “[Juanita] has to raise her eyes. She has to move forward as she *is*. And well yes, fly . . . and that nothing may get in her path. She has to jump over stumbling blocks. And like us, as we have jumped over these stumbling blocks, the stumbling blocks that we come across in our lives, on our paths.”⁶⁸ The midwife’s prayer reaffirms that there are elements of their culture and spirituality from which Mayan women derive strength. By naming Juanita’s *nagual* while welcoming her to “this house, this blessed earth,” the midwife is entrusting her to the Earth lord.⁶⁹ Her connection to her place of birth and her *nagual*, a butterfly, make her heart strong. Just as her father Alonso’s renewal of his relationship with the land is the means to his reformation, Juanita’s relationship with the land gives her the strength to break with the pattern of violence that characterized her mother’s life.

CONCLUSION

My analysis of *Crecí Sólo con el Amor de mi Madre* has shown how, in order to transmit a message regarding women’s right to live a dignified life that is free of violence, the authors vindicate certain cultural values and imbue elements from the Mayan cosmivision with new content. FOMMA’s theater contests certain gender dynamics which were already problematic in previous periods, then worsened with the socioeconomic conditions that brought about the reorganization of indigenous society. FOMMA’s position reflects the specific social location of its members at the historical moment that the “traditional” community entered into a state of crisis, opening the way for new ways of thinking about gender roles.

To date, FOMMA is the only all-women indigenous theater troupe in Chiapas producing plays that provide a more intimate look at gender-related issues and how these issues express themselves in the daily lives of indigenous women. Their plays have been the source of some controversy among writers and scholars in Chiapas—particularly the ones that expose domestic violence. Since the 1991 presentation of De la Cruz Cruz’s first individually authored play, *A Desperate Woman*, and extending to the present, this controversy has been about issues of representation. Then and now, there are those who question whether FOMMA’s plays accurately represent gender dynamics in indigenous communities, including other indigenous writers. Only recently have investigations begun to reveal the violence perpetrated by both indigenous and non-indigenous men and others against indigenous women in Chiapas, violence which now has reached epidemic proportions.⁷⁰

As I have argued here, FOMMA’s play *Crecí Sólo con el Amor de mi Madre* serves the purpose of bringing to a public forum problems that are normally considered to be

private matters. This is particularly the case for local indigenous audiences, but non-indigenous audiences, both locally and abroad, also identify with the events depicted in this play. In her collection of essays *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of Spirit*, Leslie Marmon Silko describes how oral tradition functions in the social construction of collective identities, and writes about the importance of telling family stories, even the ones that recount negative experiences:

Family accounts include negative stories, too; perhaps an uncle did something unacceptable. It is very important that one keep track of all of these stories—both positive and not so positive—about one's own family and other families . . . by knowing the stories that originate in other families, one is able to deal with terrible sorts of things that might happen within one's own family. . . . Keeping track of all the stories within the community gives us all a certain distance, a useful perspective, that brings incidents down to a level we can deal with. If others have done it before, it cannot be so terrible. If others have endured, so can we. The stories are always bringing us together, keeping this whole together, keeping this family together, keeping this clan together.⁷¹

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NOTES

1. Harley Erdman, "Gendering Chiapas: Petrona de la Cruz and Isabel J. F. Juárez Espinosa of La Fomma (Fortaleza de la Mujer Maya/Strength of the Mayan Woman)," in *The Color of Theater: Race, Culture and Contemporary Performance*, ed. Roberta Uno, with Lucy Mae San Pablo Burns (London: Continuum, 2002), 159–70; and Tamara L. Underiner, *Contemporary Theater in Mayan Mexico: Death-defying Acts* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), 48–77.

2. Jan Rus, *El Ocaso de las Fincas: y La Transformación de la Sociedad Indígena de Los Altos de Chiapas, 1974–2009* (México: Universidad de Ciencias y Artes de Chiapas, 2012).

3. Emma Gascó, interview with Mercedes Olivera, "El Feminismo Occidental es liberal, individualista," *Pikara Magazine*, November 7, 2012, <http://www.pikaramagazine.com/2012/11/%E2%80%9Ccel-feminismo-occidental-es-liberal-individualista%E2%80%9D-antropologa-y-activista-feminista-en-chiapas/>. Regarding the principle of binary and complementary opposites in the Mesoamerican cosmovision, see A. López Austin, "Sobre el concepto de Cosmovisión," June, 2013 <http://www.iiia.unam.mx/images/difusion/Taller_Signos_de_Mesoamerica/lecturas/Cosmovisi%C3%B3n>. Regarding the significance of this principle in the gender ideology of Mayan communities in the Highlands of Chiapas, see Brenda Rosenbaum, *With Our Heads Bowed: The Dynamics of Gender in a Maya Community* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993). In the Mesoamerican cosmovision, the concept of complementary and binary opposites is a key organizing

principle in gender ideology and in assigning gender roles. According to this conceptualization, the substance that composes all gods, natural forces, and living creatures has dual characteristics: light/dark, masculine/feminine, celestial/earthly, hot/cold, dry/wet, and so on. Opposite qualities predominate in men and women, and it is this knowledge that undergirds the division of labor in both productive activities and ceremonies. While indigenous society in Chiapas is patriarchal, gender relations are ideally characterized as interdependent and reciprocal, with men and women of the same family working together to survive and build the family's status within the community.

4. Emma Gascó, interview with Mercedes Olivera, "El Feminismo Occidental." All quotations taken from texts written in Spanish have been translated by the author.

5. FOMMA, unpublished manuscript of *Crecí Sólo con el Amor de mi Madre* (2000), in author's possession.

6. Mercedes Olivera, "From Integrationist *Indigenismo* to Neoliberal De-Ethnification in Chiapas: Reminiscences," *Latin American Perspectives* 39, no. 5 (2012), doi 10.1177/0094582X12447278; Stephen Lewis, "Indigenista Dreams Meet Sober Realities: The Slow Demise of Federal Indian Policy in Chiapas, Mexico, 1951–1970," *Latin American Perspectives* 39, no. 5 (2012), doi 10.1177/0094582X12447277.

7. Olivera, "From Integrationist *Indigenismo*," 102. Promoters were usually selected from the first generations of indigenous men to graduate from government boarding schools, where they studied on an elementary school level. In the 1960s and 1970s, many indigenous people viewed becoming first a promoter and then a bilingual teacher for the state as the only door to individual progress.

8. Rus, *El Ocaso de las Fincas*, 38.

9. Rus, *El Ocaso de las Fincas*, 41. Infrastructure projects also generated employment for indigenous men as street vendors in construction zones, transportation of cargo and passengers between cities, and construction of housing in urban areas. However, young bilingual men could take advantage of these opportunities whereas this was not the case for older men who could less easily interact with the dominant society.

10. Frank Cancian, *The Decline of Community in Zinacantan: Economy, Public Life and Social Stratification, 1960–1987* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 27–48.

11. Cancian, *The Decline of Community*, 18–19; George A. Collier with Elizabeth Lowery Quaratiello, *Basta! Land and the Zapatista Rebellion in Chiapas*, 3rd ed. (Oakland, CA: Food First Books, 1994), 107–24.

12. Cancian, *The Decline of Community*, 44.

13. Rus, *El Ocaso de las Fincas*, 46–47; Collier, *Basta*, 91–106.

14. Rus, *El Ocaso de las Fincas*, 46–47.

15. *Ibid.*, 47; Collier, *Basta*, 125–35; also see Cancian, *The Decline of Community*, Chapter 8.

16. The traditional model of family organization is based upon subsistence modes that emphasize cooperation and interdependence between men, women, and children. In this model, women's contributions to the household economy are fundamental: preparing food for daily consumption and for festive and ceremonial occasions, weaving to clothe the family, raising farm animals, cultivating fruits and vegetables in backyard plots, cultivating, collecting and applying medicinal plants, and, in some communities, cutting and gathering firewood and agricultural labor (corn farming, horticulture, and coffee-growing, according to the region).

17. George Collier and Daniel Mountjoy, "Adaptándose a la Crisis de los Ochenta: Cambios Socio-económicos en Apás, Zinacantán," INAREMAC: Working documents (1988), cited in Rus, *Ocaso de las Fincas*, 42.

18. Rus, *Ocaso de las Fincas*, 83. The production of handwoven and hand-embroidered textiles for the growing tourist market exemplifies this process. Other examples are raising sheep (to sell the

wool), selling compost, pine needles (used in traditional fiestas to cover floors and altars), and selling firewood and pottery.

19. Literacy workshops in Tsotsil, Tseltal, and Spanish, which also included instruction in basic mathematics, and skills development workshops in sewing and bread making.

20. Isabel Juárez Espinoza, interview with the author, July 25, 2013.

21. Regarding the artistic collaborations that have defined the work of FOMMA's theater group and other contemporary Mayan theater groups in Chiapas and Mexico, see Underiner, *Contemporary Theater in Mayan Mexico*, 45–77.

22. From 1999–2013 actress and director Doris Difarnecio worked with International Arts Relations, Inc., a Latino New York-based organization that develops theater without borders. Between 1997–2001 the directors who worked most regularly with the group were Amy Trompeteer from Barnard College's Theater Department, also a puppeteer with the Bread and Puppet Theater, and her colleague Patricia Hernández.

23. *Compadre* and *comadre* translate as co-father or co-mother (or godparent). Within the institution of *compadrazgo*, nonsanguinous family ties are established between godparents and the parents of the godchild and their respective families. This relationship entails the carrying out of reciprocal acts of social and economic import between families. In the communities of the Chiapas Highlands, there are several life events through which the relationship between godfather/godmother and godchild is forged, principally baptism, school graduation, and matrimony.

24. The woven straw mat that people in the communities of the Chiapas Highlands slept upon before they began using beds in recent decades.

25. Ines Hernández-Ávila, personal communication. Hernández-Ávila suggests the term *cantico* to denote this type of prayer, which is used to “sing into being” a newborn child.

26. Henri Favre, *Cambio y Continuidad entre los Mayas de México: Contribución al Estudio de la Situación Colonialista en América Latina* (México: INI, 1984). The Nahuatl derived terms *nagual* and *tono* (or *tonal*) are commonly used throughout Mesoamerica to refer to a generally shared notion of animal familiars. In Mesoamerican worldviews, every human being is connected to a particular animal by means of a co-essence. This co-essence bequeaths one with a particular way of understanding the world, depending upon certain qualities acquired at birth which this person develops through experience. The fortunes or misfortunes in life of the human are simultaneously those of his or her *nagual*. In the Chiapas highland communities, the animal co-essence of a person is commonly referred to as his or her *chanul*.

27. “Bienvenida a esta casa, a esta bendita tierra, en ella vivirás tu niñez hasta convertirte en mujer. Tu corazón será guerrero, como el nagual de tu nacimiento curiosa y fuerte. Volaras disfrutando todo lo que te rodea. . . Tu corazón está contento. . . llevas en ella el fruto de vientre que florece como la semilla del maíz. Serás como diosa llena de fortaleza llevado por los pasos de tu hermoso nagual. No permites que cortan tus alas. . . Con la frente alta seguirás adelante, con los ojos fijos y pasos firmes.” FOMMA, unpublished manuscript of *Crecí Sólo con el Amor de mi Madre* (2000), in author's possession.

28. FOMMA, *Crecí Sólo*. In the Highland communities, the *consejeros* are a man and a woman who occupy a position of high status in the traditional cargo system. The cargo system is a hierarchical system of a civil-religious nature through which married couples (with the aid of their extended families) provide voluntary service to their communities, specifically in carrying out the celebratory ceremonies or fiestas of the patron saints. Those who achieve the status of *consejeros* therefore have a history of service to the community, and therefore are respected and considered capable of resolving family and community conflicts.

29. *Ibid.*

30. *Pox* is an alcoholic beverage traditionally consumed in ceremonial contexts.

31. *Huaraches* are a type of sandal traditionally used by indigenous people in Chiapas.
32. Rosenbaum, *With Our Heads Bowed*, 29. In an already patrilineal society, colonial oppression cultivated a gender ideology of masculine strength and dominance and feminine weakness and submissiveness.
33. Olivera, "El Feminismo Occidental."
34. Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*, (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2005), 7–17; and Alfred Taiaiake, "Colonialism and State Dependency," *Journal of Aboriginal Health* 43 (2009): 2.
35. Aura Cumes, "Las Mujeres Son 'Más Indias': Género, Multiculturalismo y Mayanización," in *Mayanización y Vida Cotidiana: la Ideología Multicultural en la Sociedad Guatemalteca*, ed. Santiago Bastos and Aura Cumes (Guatemala: FLACSO CIRMA Cholsamja, 2007), 1: 164.
36. Olivera, "El Feminismo Occidental."
37. Cumes, "Las Mujeres Son 'Más Indias,'" 165.
38. Rosenbaum, *With Our Heads Bowed*, 35–36.
39. *Ibid.* *Ladino* is a term used in Chiapas to refer to people whose first language is Spanish and are the bearers of "Mexican national culture," who generally are of a higher socioeconomic status than indigenous members of the population. Pedro Pitarch Ramón, "Un Lugar Difícil: Estereotipos Étnicos y Juegos de Poder," in *Chiapas: Los Rumbos de Otra Historia*, ed. Juan Pedro Viqueira and Mario Humberto Ruz (Mexico: UNAM, 1998), 237–50.
40. Jennifer Sherman, "Bend to Avoid Breaking: Job Loss, Gender Norms and Family Stability in Rural America," *Social Problems* 56 (2009): 601–602; Sherman cites Raewyn Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995) at 602.
41. Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence*, 8.
42. Favre, *Cambio y Continuidad*, 102, cited in Sonia Toledo, "Las Fincas de Simojovel, Chiapas: Relaciones de Género en un Mundo Jerárquico, 1900–1975," *Mesoamerica* 56 (2004): 105.
43. Emma Delfina Chirix García, *Alas y Raíces: Afectividad de las Mujeres Mayas. Rik'in Ruxik'y Ruxé'il: Ronojel Kajoqab'al Ri Mayab' Taq' ixoqi'* (Guatemala: Grupo de Mujeres Mayas Kaqla, 2003), 137. In her study of the affective experience of Mayan women from various regions of Guatemala, Chirix García found that the childhood socialization of many women was characterized by these negative emotional patterns, which she states are the result of the reproduction of the dominant ideology within the family. Of course, the dichotomy of oppressor/oppressed cannot be reduced to a gender division. Boys are also the victims of family violence. Furthermore, women, particularly older women, may exercise their family authority in despotic ways. In general, however, they are expected to accede to men's authority, whether these men are their husbands, grown sons, or brothers.
44. Olivera, "Integrationist *Indigenismo*," 108–109.
45. Jan Rus, personal communication, 2014.
46. Zinacantan center is one name used to designate the *cabecera* or religious and political center of the municipality of Zinacantan. Its Spanish designation is San Lorenzo, after the town's patron saint. The local habitants refer to it as Jtek'lum.
47. Petu' De la Cruz Cruz, interview, February 2014. Petu's mother grew up on her parent's coffee farm in Huixtla, on the coast of Chiapas. Although Petu's maternal grandmother was Tsotsil from Zinacantan, it is likely that her grandfather was of mestizo origin. Due to these circumstances, Petu's mother did not learn Tsotsil as a child, and was not brought up to be a traditional Zinacantecan woman; hence her mother-in-law's disapproval of her.
48. For a detailed analysis of the circumstances surrounding the presidential elections of 1982 in Zinacantan, see Cancian, *The Decline of Community*, 127–50. *Partido de Accion Nacional*, or PAN, is currently the political party of the extreme right in Mexico. The election of PAN president Vicente Fox in 2000 marked the end of the sixty-year reign of the dominant PRI party.

49. For Petu's family, the only way to restore her status in the community after having a child out of wedlock was to marry her to the child's biological father or to an older widowed man. The fact that Petu' was no longer a virgin severely reduced her chances of obtaining a marriage proposal under normal circumstances. While the practice of marrying a woman to her rapist cannot be generalized to Highland communities, it appears to have been a social norm in Zinacantan at the time of the incident.

50. Sna Jtz'ibajom was formerly The Indigenous Cultural Society; see endnote 55.

51. *Una Mujer Desesperada* addresses the issues of women's economic dependence upon men, domestic violence, and incest—in this case on the part of a stepfather. The play's script, along with an analysis, can be found in Petrona de la Cruz Cruz, "A Desperate Woman: A Play in Two Acts," in *Holy Terrors: Latin American Women Perform*, ed. D. Taylor and R. Constatino, trans. Shanna Lorenz (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 291–310; and Teresa Marrero, "Eso Sí Pasa Aquí: Indigenous Women Performing Revolutions in Mayan Chiapas," in *Holy Terrors*, 311–29.

52. P. De la Cruz Cruz, interview, 2005.

53. I. Juárez Espinosa, interview, February 2014.

54. Often in indigenous communities in Chiapas, when a family cannot afford to support a child or send him or her to school, they send him or her to work in the house of some acquaintance in the city. In general these children are not treated as equals in the homes in which they are sent to work. Here, notably, it is Isabel's own *aunt* who discriminates against and abuses her. Furthermore, this aunt did not fulfill her promise to send Isabel to school in exchange for Isabel's service. This illustrates how the power relations that characterize social and economic hierarchies are reproduced within the extended family.

55. Created in 1981, The Indigenous Cultural Society was one of the first indigenous organizations in Chiapas dedicated to the production and diffusion of literature in Mayan languages. In 1983 it changed its name to Sna Jtz'ibajom (House of the Writer) and in 1987 began producing plays based upon stories from the oral tradition as well as original works. For a complete account of the group's trajectory during the 1980s and 1990s, see Francisco Álvarez, "El Teatro Maya: Brevisima Semblanza Histórica, su Situación Actual y Problemática," *Reencuentro: Análisis de Problemas Universitarios*, 2002: 75–89.

56. F. M. Oseguera Cruz, interview, May 2012.

57. Chirix García, *Alas y Raíces*, 12.

58. Alfredo López Austin, *Seminario la Construcción de una Visión del Mundo*, Institute of Anthropological Investigation, UNAM, 2014; and Manuel Bolom, "La Noción del Sueño entre los Tsotsiles y Tsetales de Huixtán, Chiapas, México," *Seminario Globalización, Ciencia y Diversidad Biocultural*, <http://desarrollobiocultural.wikispaces.com/file/links/La+noci%C3%B3n+del+sue%C3%B1o+entre+los+tsotsiles+de+Chiapas,+tabasco.doc>. In the Mesoamerican cosmovision, dreams are the threshold through which gods and other supernatural forces communicate with human beings or stated differently, with what in Tsotsil and Tsetal Mayan is called a person's *ch'ulel* (roughly translated as "spirit"), which leaves the body when he/she sleeps. The illnesses that can be contracted by *ch'ulel* are brought to people's attention in their dreams. For this reason, Alonso's *nagual* warns him of the precarious state of his *ch'ulel* due to his alcoholism and his failure to fulfill his family and community obligations.

59. F. M. Oseguera Cruz, interview, October 5, 2012.

60. P. de la Cruz Cruz, interview, November 6, 2012.

61. Miriam Laughlin, interview, January 12, 2013.

62. F. M. Oseguera Cruz, interview, October 5, 2012.

63. Smith, *Conquest*, 13–17.

64. F. M. Oseguera Cruz, interview, October 5, 2012.

65. D. Difarnecio, interview, September 22, 2013.

66. Ibid.

67. I. Juárez Espinoza, interview, October 25, 2012.

68. Ibid.

69. FOMMA, *Crecí Sólo*. When a person is born, his or her *nagual*, or in the present case, *chanul*, is born inside the mountain. The divine couple that lives inside the mountain, *me'etikal totimal* in Tsotsil, or mother/father, governs the world in order to ensure a harmonic existence. He/she controls the forces of nature and cares for the animals, forests, rivers and fields. The well-being of community members is sustained by the mother/father and the other beings that live under his/her governance.

70. Mercedes Olivera, ed., *Violencia Femicida en Chiapas: Razones Visibles y Ocultas de Nuestras Luchas, Resistencias y Rebeldías* (Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas, México: Colección Selva Negra, UNICACH, 2008).

71. Leslie Marmon Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of Spirit: Essays on Native American Life Today* (New York: Touchtone, 1996), 52.