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Le Maya Q'atzij/Our Maya Word: Poetics of Resistance in Guatemala. By Emil' Keme. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2021. 258 pages.

Emil' Keme's *Le Maya Q'atzij / Our Maya Word: Poetics of Resistance in Guatemala* carries out analyses of literary works produced in what he considers three different stages of a contemporary Maya literary movement. Through the analysis of poetry coupled with other essayistic and historical materials, Keme focuses on how the notion of "resistance literature" reveals specific decolonizing projects in the cultural production of Maya authors, artists, activists, and thinkers. Keme draws from Osage scholars Robert Warrior and Jean Denison respectively to explore how contemporary literary production can be understood as a move toward "intellectual sovereignty" in engaging a multiplicity of Maya realities while revealing, contesting, and being implicated in a host of "colonial entanglements." These entanglements range from the history of European colonization to genocide and civil war in twentieth century Iximulew, and they are enmeshed in a network of hegemonic systems anchored in neoliberalism, extractive capitalism, heteronormativity, and indigenismo. In what follows I give brief overviews of each chapter and end with what in my assessment are the most important contributions of this work.

Keme's Chapter 1 analyzes works by Francisco Morales Santos and Luis de Lión. Keme reads Morales Santos' work as an opening of a Maya literary canon. Santos' poem "Volveremos a ser Kaqchikeles" is presented as "the first political-literary Maya manifesto in Guatemala's contemporary period"(25) and connected to anti-colonial intellectual and social movements. Keme then turns to an analysis of Morales Santos' book of poems *Madre, nosotros también somos historia*, concluding by identifying a pillar of Morales Santos' poetics: "the vindication of the past as a political-discursive exercise to recover lost sovereignty" (39). About Luis de Lión's poetry collection *Poemas del volcán de agua. los poemas míos*, Keme asserts that it can be read as a process of "development of a revolutionary Indigenous consciousness in the narrator" and that it contains a "decolonizing discursive strategy that not only challenges Indigenismo but also issues a revolutionary call to defend and reestablish Indigenous sovereignty" (48). Connecting notions of territorial and intellectual autonomy, Keme blends biographical and political contextual information about the authors with an interpretation of their work that speaks to extractive regimes of land tenure and Indigenous dispossession. Like the potential (and inevitable!) eruption of the volcano, in these authors' work Keme sees the potential for a re-interpretation and dismissal of a nation-state logic, for the benefit of an Indigenous one. "Their literary imaginary," Keme writes, "employs the language of socialism while at the same time develops ways to advance and affirm a Maya nationalism" (65). By connecting this analysis with testimonies and stories of Indigenous women, Keme closes out the chapter highlighting the historical role of women in these political movements. For Keme, Francisco Morales Santos

and Luis de Lión represent an important precedent in anticolonial discourse, literary production, and action, especially through their challenge of Indigenista interpretations of Guatemalan reality.

Chapter 2 focuses on the work of Humberto Ak'abal, Victor Montejo and Gaspar Pedro González. Keme argues that state terrorism and genocide influenced authors belonging to this "second moment of Maya literary insurgency" away from a connection with movements on the Left and further toward a vindication of Maya cultural identity (67-68). First, the author outlines the rampant and violent attacks on Indigenous communities especially during the 1980s, and discusses precedents such as the work of Adrian Inés Chávez, Luis Sam Colop, Calixta Gabriel Xiquín, and Rigoberta Menchú. In the bulk of the chapter, Keme posits that the authors employ a "strategic essentialism" that—while potentially interpretable as absolutist—demonstrates through literature the failure of the Guatemalan state to eliminate Maya people and culture. Keme's study of Ak'abal mainly focuses on the Momostenango poet's collection of poems titled *El animalero (The Animal Gathering)*. Keme argues that the natural world imbued in the collection (and in some of Ak'abal's other work) reveals both a response to politically repressive historical context and a refusal of a state logic of elimination via the (re)connection with what Keme terms the "Maya environmental imagination." By analyzing Gaspar Pedro González's *The Dry Season: Q'anjob'al Maya Poems* (2001) and Victor Montejo's *Sculpted Stones*, along with aspects of their essay production, Keme traces the use of "strategic essentialism" to argue that the authors focus on a rescue or recentering of Maya—and specifically Q'anjob'al and Pop'ti—traditions and worldviews. In the closing section of the chapter, Keme recognizes the importance of the representations as resistance toward political and historical impositions and violences yet simultaneously points to the way that they contradictorily put forth a homogenous notion of what is Maya. In other words, Keme points to the prescriptive conditions of Mayaness that can be gleaned from these authors' work (language, rurality, a relationship of antagonism toward modernization) while affirming their condition as resistance literature in an enduring colonial context.

Chapter 3 focuses on literary production after the signing of the 1996 peace accords, specifically the works of Rosa Chávez, Pablo García, and Sabino Estaban Francisco. For Keme, a third wave of Maya literary production focuses still on the defense of Maya identity and knowledge but puts forth a more heterogenous notion of Mayaness, which includes a reckoning of the experiences forged by *la violencia*. Keme marks a watershed between this wave of writers, enmeshed in urban settings and going "beyond the rural world, racism, and the class struggle to include valorization of the Indigenous feminine body and erotic and queer imagery that were not seriously considered by earlier prominent Maya writers in Iximulew" (119). Titled "Xib'alb'a and Globalism," this chapter begins with an analysis of Kaqchikel/K'iche' author Rosa Chávez's collection *Solitary House*. In it, Keme identifies the plight of urban subjects marginalized by conditions of neoliberalism. Instead of an exclusively

ethnic project, Keme interprets Chavez's political proposal as one that asks whether it is possible to forge projects that resist neoliberalism and a colonial nation state. Pablo García's *Song from the Underworld*, for Keme, draws on the literary couplets and binary complements and oppositions in the *Popol Wuj* to point to darkness imposed by colonialism that nonetheless allows for a resurrection or revival of ancestral values and knowledges. The final section focuses on Esteban Francisco's *Moan of the Footprints*. The poems, written first in Q'anjob'al and then translated to Spanish, blend together an environmentalist political project and an act of witness to the displacement, return, and survival of communities such as the ones in Ixcán. Through an anchoring in the concept of Xib'alb'a as an underworld—in this case representing a "neoliberal condition" (148)—Keme argues that the authors bear witness and point to an indisputable survival of heterogeneous Maya identities and knowledges expressed through literature. Through their work, Keme puts forth, these authors "propose not only to vindicate Maya values but also to extend them to other subjects who under neoliberal globalization suffer oppression, violence, and marginalization similar to that experienced by Indigenous peoples." (149). In this sense they are indicative of what I would refer to as ever more visible trans-hemispheric projects toward decolonization.

Chapter 4, "Maya Feminism and Queer Poetics" focuses on the work of Q'eq'chi writer and activist Maya Cu Choc and K'iche' writer and artist Manuel Tzoc. Keme argues that their works, from an urban and queer locus of enunciation, "challenge the heteronormative and patriarchal hegemonic structures permeating Guatemalan society" (152). Beginning with a close reading of her poem "Ix Tzib" (Woman scribe), Keme puts forth that Cu's poetics refer to a multimodal way of writing, including rescuing of hieroglyphic and weaving and means of memory keeping. Keme argues that the poems centering of womanhood and relegation of marriage and relationships between men and women point to a politic that challenges patriarchal dominant ideals. In Keme's words, "the authority that Cu Choc grants Indigenous women invoked in the poem allegorizes the various and continuous processes of liberation and emancipation in which Indigenous women - our grandmothers, mothers, and daughters - have historically been involved" (161). In her poem "and another zaz!" Cu Choc also takes on historical and contemporary patriarchal violence. Coupled with examples ranging from news headlines to testimony provided by Indigenous women, Keme connects these undeniable violences to the work of contemporary writers such as Aymara activist/intellectual Julieta Paredes and Kaqchikel sociologist Aura Cumes. Keme concludes that "[f]or Cu Choc, there is no doubt that our collective emancipation resides in the vindication of Indigenous women and the eradication

of heteropatriarchal and racist colonial logic" (173). Furthermore, Keme asserts that Cuc Choc joins the voices of contemporary thinkers invested in challenging the patriarchal system resulting not from European colonization "but also of precolonial Indigenous societies characterized by similar systems of domination" (171). Addressing K'iche' poet and artist Manuel Tzoc's *Gay(o)*, Keme argues that Tzoc "articulate[s] and delineate[s] a queer urban cartography permeated by homoeroticism to counteract the hegemonic order that seeks to impose heterosexuality and heteronormativity" (174). Through the exploration of the themes of isolation, romantic gay relations and contempt in homoerotic encounters, and queer pride and affirmation, Tzoc makes 2sLGBTQ+ subjects visible in private and public spheres of queerness, tracing a "queer remapping of the urban sphere" (187). Even while celebrating the transgressive nature of this work, Keme posits that the intersections between queer and Maya struggles against heteropatriarchy and extraction often become compartmentalized, reproducing hegemonic dynamics within certain interest or identity groups. He finishes the chapter with a short reflection on the work of K'iche' sociologist Dorotea Gómez Grijalva, signaling to the convergence points of possibility that efforts toward decolonization and depatriarchalization can forge for liberation movements.

This book will undoubtedly be useful to researchers and students alike at a variety of levels. Firstly, Keme's connection of the literary works he discusses to material and historical developments in Iximulew cement his argument that literary production can bolster collective responses to extractive and violent political conditions. Secondly, Keme's analyses and curation highlights the plight for "intellectual sovereignty" not only in the authors themselves but also through the grounding on the thought of contemporary Maya thinkers (including but not limited to Aura Cumes, Lorena Cabnal, Emma Chirix, Dorotea Gómez Grijalva). Rather than an essentializing or parochial move, this heterogeneity of thought and disciplines grants much clarity to one of the main notions in Keme's book: that "what is Maya" is not a homogenous identity and must be critically expanded beyond traditional notions of rurality, language, dress, etc. to include urbanity, queerness, and other intersections. Finally Keme's book is theoretically grounded on decolonizing thought emerging from Indigenous Studies not only in Abiyala but also in Turtle Island and across continents. While avoiding painting the continent with too broad a brush, *Le May Q'atzij* joins and contributes to an increasingly present trans-hemispheric conversation about indigeneity and decolonization.

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