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Abstract

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is a serious problem in Guatemala. Despite the work civil and governmental organisations work on this topic and a ‘femicide-law’ was enacted in 2008, rates of GBV are high and have continued to rise until recently.

GBV has played an important role in Guatemala’s history. During the civil war (1960-1996) the government chose a military strategy (1981–1983) that specifically targeted indigenous women. The aim was to break their resistance by destroying indigenous communities in the long term. The objectification of female bodies was an essential part of this strategy.

The war and genocide ended in 1996, but GBV did not. Both governmental and non-governmental organisations acknowledge that these crimes target women for their gender, but strategies implemented against GBV—or against the strong impunity that accompanies and supports GBV—so far have not been fruitful.

This thesis consists of two sections. The first part looks at the phenomenon of GBV in Guatemala from a postcolonial perspective. The recent situation is shaped by high rates of violence against women and reflects a patriarchal system that is rooted in its colonial history. Colonialism introduced race and the current gender roles, and still imposes male domination over women.

The second part is occupied with poetry as a strategy of women’s resistance. Poetry writing can be a de-colonial strategy to fight the marginalized female position. It creates space and opportunity for a direct and emotional approach that can have a healing effect on the victim. These unfiltered expressions of painful experiences can be a medium to create solidarity with others sharing this experience, beyond the pressures that normally silence women.

Poetry politicizes the individual inner struggle because it collectivises individual struggle, unearthing the structural nature of the violence at hand. It can create political resistance by using a tool that bypasses patriarchal colonial power structures on an individual level.

List of Abbreviations

AI	Amnesty International
CALDH	Centro para la Acción Legal en Derechos Humanos, Human Rights Action Center
CENADOJ	Centro Nacional de Analisis and Documentation Judicial, National Center for Analysis and Judicial Documentation
CICIG	International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala
CEH	Comisión de Clarificación Histórica, Commission for Historical Clarification
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GHRC	Guatemalan Human Rights Commission
ICCPG	Instituto de Estudios Comparados en Ciencias Penales de Guatemala, Institute of Comparative Studies and Sciences
INE	Instituto nacional de estadística de la república de Guatemala, National Institute of Statistics of Guatemala
ODHAG	Oficina de Derechos Humanos des Arzobispado, Human Rights Office of the Archbishopric
PAC	Patrullas de Autodefensa Civil, Civil Defense Patrols
PBI	Peace Brigades International
PDH	Procurador de Derechos Humanos, Human Rights Attorney
PN	Policia Nacional, National Police
REMHI	Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica, Recuperation of the Historical Memory Project (of the Guatemalan Catholic church)
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council

I Introduction

This paper seeks to draw a connection between the substantial rates of violence against women taking place in Guatemala and the country's colonial history. With a postcolonial viewpoint it aims to give an insight into how global power structures permeate through to, and have a profound impact at, the local and most personal levels of a society. After elaborating the power structures' constitution, poetry as a method of resistance on the local level will be analysed.

The term most frequently found in recent literature and also in this paper for violence against women is Gender Based Violence (GBV). It manifests as harassment, abuse, rape or even murder and refers to the victims' female gender and the social and political implications of such manifestations.

The term GBV refers to a category of social phenomena that stands in a broader context. GBV has its roots in the concept of sexual violence which has been defined by Liz Kelly in 1988¹ as "any physical, visual, verbal or sexual act" experienced by a female involuntarily, both at the time and later. It gives credit to the female experience more than to male intentions because male and female understandings might differ.² The term does not focus on sexual desire but on the male desire for power, dominance, and control. It enables sexual aggression by men to be seen in the context of the overall oppression of women in a patriarchal society, also distant from legal analysis.³ This definition was already a progressive step in direction of acknowledging heterosexuality as a power structure⁴ and the targeting of women as an expression of sexualized power that has implications beyond any single case. Male sexual violence has been identified as a defining characteristic of patriarchal societies.⁵

This first definition was rather progressive for its time but is not sufficient for this paper because it focuses on the female perspective of personal experience, lacking a facet for structural analysis. The latter creates the possibility to criticise violence against women independent from the victims' perspective on it. This could be paternalistic but also creates a chance to understand violence as unjust even when the victims are too suppressed to partake in the analysis of injustice.

¹ Kelly 1988: 41

² Radford/Russell 1992: 3

³ The definition comes from the 80s and was particularly important given the racist, moralistic and heterosexist conservatism. Ibid. 3

⁴ Ibid. 9

⁵ Ibid. 6 (from Kelly and Radford 1987)

In a report from Amnesty International (AI) in 2005, GBV is defined as violence against women or any violence that affects women disproportionately and results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.⁶ This definition again is closely bound up with unequal power relations and the female perception.

The report ‘Por ser mujer’, published by the governmental Institute of Comparative Studies and Legal Sciences of Guatemala (ICCPG) goes very far in terms of dismantling structural violence.⁷ According to them, the definition of GBV has its origin in the analysis of systematic domination that men impose on women, implying that GBV is an instrument of social control to maintain and reinforce the domination of women. The authors claim that if being female necessarily includes being subordinated, the whole process of female socialization is an oppressive one.⁸

Apart from GBV the terms ‘femicide’ and ‘feminicide’ appear regularly in the consulted literature. They are more specific because they point towards one phenomenon within GBV, the killing of women. ‘Femicide’ sees women-killing as an act of terrorism that is connected to power structures, whereas ‘feminicide’ goes further and holds responsible not only the male perpetrators but mostly the state and juridical structures that normalize an inherent misogyny.⁹ Both terms address the same structural aspects as GBV, even though both seem to be used interchangeably, failing to fulfil the analytical distinction. Both terms will connect the single phenomenon to larger global power structures in the course of this paper.

Acknowledging the structural dimension of GBV is essential, so this paper aims to deconstruct the power structures behind the ongoing atrocities. In the context of gender and power, patriarchy as a classic example of power structures is apparent. Patriarchal structures are strengthened by GBV¹⁰ because it reminds and warns women and girls that the only control they have was granted to them by men.¹¹ They are essentially dependent on male protection and do not own this ability themselves, limiting any inherent sense of power.

⁶ AI 2005: 7.

⁷ Svendsen 2007.

⁸ Ibid. 22.

⁹ GHRC 2012: 2; Sanford 2008: 112-113.

¹⁰ Diken 2005: 116.

¹¹ My intention is not to assume gender binaries when I use unmarked pronouns. Unless I am using pronouns in connection with a gendered attribute, I am not referring to any specific gender. Also the order in which I am writing about males or females does not express any hierarchy. By using the neutral pronoun ‘they’ in a singular case I want to emphasize on the variety of genders that exist and address them equally. In Spanish, endings of nouns or adjectives are obviously gendered. This will be obvious in the poetry I will use, because every attribute is necessarily (grammatically) gendered, unlike in English.

Women symbolize the honour of their family and particularly male relatives¹² and are mere objects of male possession. This reproduces a masculine identity for males and protects their masculine position and value as a head of their family.

Further in the paper I will expand on this objectification of the female body as it fits to the case of Guatemala. During the war women were particularly targeted to destroy the respective communities in order to draw away support from guerrilla fighters. This is an example for the systematic use of violence against women.

It can be said that rape and other kinds of violence against women reflect the gender stereotypes that are prevalent in society.¹³ The feminist standpoint claims misogyny and masculine hegemony to be reasons for the violent outcome of these stereotypes.¹⁴ GBV reflects the will of domination: mastery, strength, control and authority are all merged together.¹⁵ That leads to the assumption that GBV is both a consequence of domination and imposed by it.

By looking at the victims of GBV, it becomes obvious how power structures operate in different spheres at the same time. Research indicates that racialized and low class women are more likely to get raped or targeted by GBV because they are seen as less respectable.¹⁶ Their bodies symbolize 'the Other', and are often connected to negative stereotypes of impurity or guilt.¹⁷ These women are not only victims but also revictimized due to their position in society. Violating them is more easily accepted since they are less likely to be seen as credible as victims in courts and in public opinion. Also, through a lack of education that leads to an inequality of speech they are more unlikely to know and exercise their rights.¹⁸

Additionally, the experienced atrocities can inflict shame and alienate them from their communities. Victims of sexual violence are likely to become medically impaired and suffer from long-term psychological illnesses and depression.¹⁹ Their position in society and the consequences crimes committed have on the victims bring women into a silenced position which revictimizes and further traumatizes them, again protecting the perpetrators.

The different definitions of GBV ultimately look to the structural dimension of violence against women because GBV has its origin in unequal power relations: the systematic domination of males over females. This domination facilitates GBV and creates a vicious

¹² Ibid. 3.

¹³ United Nations (UN) 2007: 55.

¹⁴ Goldstein 2003: 371.

¹⁵ UN 2007: 45.

¹⁶ Phipps 2009: 675.

¹⁷ Ibid. 679.

¹⁸ Mackinnon 2006: 73.

¹⁹ Cheldelin 2011: 14.

circle that further silences women again. Seeing it as a systematic and social problem implies responsibility both to the state and to the community in which violence takes place and becomes normalized. Sexual aggression is put into a context of power and domination instead of seeing it as solely individually sexual.

II Problem Statement

GBV is a serious problem in Guatemala. The rates are high even though a range of civil and governmental organisations work on this topic and a ‘Femicide-Law’ has been enacted in 2008.

GBV committed both by soldiers and civilian men has played an important role throughout Guatemala’s history. During the most intense period of war, 1981 to 1983, GBV was prevalent; it targeted indigenous women in order to destroy their communities. Officially, the war ended in 1996, however, rates of GBV were still high and even rising. The notion of ‘femicide’ has been employed by both governmental and non-governmental organisations when talking about the phenomenon of women murdered out of hate for their gender. Neither the passing of laws nor other strategies thus far have been successful countermeasure. In addition, impunity remains a serious problem. It is not clear why the implemented strategies have not reduced the rates of GBV. This paradox remains an important consideration for the topic of this paper.

In order for the rates of GBV to decrease the underlying structures have to be uncovered. I will approach the paradox in two steps: First, what purpose does GBV serve in the specific context of Guatemala? Second, what are the forms of female resistance to GBV, take place and what do they tell us about the suppressive power structures? I employ a postcolonial perspective as it offers promising insights.

1. How is GBV, not only in times of war, but also in the present, connected to colonialism and racism? How did the situation of impunity and high rates of GBV develop in Guatemala, and how does this impose domination on women, as carried out by men?
2. How can women who are victims of GBV, raise their voice about their marginalization? How can expressing personal experiences by writing poetry be a political, even de-colonial or anti-colonial act? Which topics do they raise for that?

III Theories

III.1 Aníbal Quijano: Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America

Quijano's theory "Coloniality of Power"²⁰ is about how recent global power structures have been formed by colonisation. Colonial domination, based on the idea of race and the racial superiority of the colonizers, the rationality of Eurocentrism²¹, and labour division, is composed of intertwined power structures that work in advantage of global capitalism and continuing global hegemonies.²² The concept of 'America' is a European invention based on the ideologies of the colonizers and created for their advantage. Therefore, applying Quijano's theory of the development of colonialism draws a clear line of continuity between the ongoing atrocities in Guatemala and its colonial history.

Through militaristic dominance, European colonizers were able to suppress the indigenous population, but their hegemony had to be made permanent. The proliferation of reason as a dominant ideology served this purpose. Strong binary categories were imposed²³: Descartes' dualism, that is, the separation of reason from subject, mind from body, rendered bodies as inferior objects against the superiority of reason/spirit.²⁴

Indeed, this shift in thinking which started with Descartes was a milestone for the expansion of Eurocentrism and was instrumental to the development of racial categories. That is, the 'uncivilized' races, those seen as closer to nature, were deemed incapable of reason, to not have a soul, which justified colonial and racial domination. The concept of race served to create a new social hierarchy based on phenotypical differences, such as skin color, that demarcated either European or indigenous descent. Where once only geographical connotations differentiated social groups, the idea of different 'races' enforced new notions of superiority and inferiority based on these phenotypical differences. European colonisation, that is, the process of conquering people, destroyed singular identities. This had two major consequences: First, the colonized were dispossessed of their own identities and then 'gained' the new race identity imposed upon them.²⁵ Once the phenotype trait became an emblem of race, hierarchies based on these new identities were established. The race concept gave the colonizers both the right to exploit the population perceived as inferior and the responsibility to 'civilize' them. Another area of influence of the colonizers connected to their ideology

²⁰ Quijano 2000.

²¹ Ibid. 533.

²² Ibid. 546.

²³ Ibid. 542.

²⁴ Ibid. 554-555.

²⁵ Ibid. 551.

were sexual relations and structures of dominance within sexuality, because women in general were perceived as bodies (esp. when also racialized), distinguished from reason which was connoted masculine.

This forced process of changing identities was not as homogeneous as it seems when portrayed theoretically; the irregularities that inevitably took place within the process were adjusted and enclosed through the control of labour-resources-products.²⁶ The European identity which was the foundation of the Eurocentrism that led to the forced shift of identities needed an 'Other' to reflect itself upon. Without the newly constructed American 'Other', the European self-identity would have had nothing to define itself against. This means in reverse that America and Europe mutually produced each other identity-wise.²⁷ Apart from that, Europe's global position and self-conception would not have been possible without America's labour and resources.

The commodification of labour in America²⁸, constructed around the capital-wage-model, is a key concept essential to Quijano's theory. It developed parallel to the idea of race; however, it also manifested racial categories. Different forms of labour were associated with different races: waged labour was reserved for white people, while slave labour was the destiny of indigenous people.²⁹ Importantly, the prevalence of slave labour and the introduction of diseases served as mechanisms for the genocide committed against them.

Europe used its power and established a new order in which all cultural differences and variations were integrated into one system, one global order that supported hegemonic Europe. Only one configuration of values and social practice could reign³⁰ and, therefore, naturalized a coloniality of knowledge. Indigenous people's culture and knowledge production was expropriated from them. Their symbolism, subjectivity, communication, and expression were suppressed. By being forced into a new dominant order their own culture was subsequently replaced. Existing within a foreign framework isolated those who were colonized—socially, politically, and economically. Their ownership of both old and new orders was denied.

The core issues of Quijano's theory (race, modernity, and the capitalist mode of production) are explained by the will for power, however, those explanations are relative and based on facts due to the lack of normative reasons. The problem with Quijano's definition of power is that it is never made explicit. Therefore it remains vague, even though it is the centre

²⁶ Ibid. 553.

²⁷ Ibid. 552.

²⁸ Ibid. 535.

²⁹ Ibid. 537.

³⁰ Ibid. 545.

(and title) of his work. I argue that Quijano consults a marxist perspective to criticize the capitalist suppression of the worker because he lacks other reasoning.

He gives hints on the consequences of power relations. Unequal division of power manifests in hegemonies of knowledge production, the writing of (a unilinear) history and exclusion from it, and a new world order.³¹ The pillars of manifesting and naturalizing this power are to make decisions for others, based on a random explanation of superiority: not only what and how they work, but also what they think, how they see themselves (race and gender) and how they interact with each other. All these levels are tightly interwoven and build a network of power. One single thread of this network alone would not be strong enough. This is why Quijano does not provide a very clear definition of his understanding of power, because isolated from this network it would not explain its consequences on the whole world order, independent from particular cases and the contingent but factual development of history. Power embraces all that has happened and holds it together but does not explain it in the first place. Single developments and actions cannot be explained or evaluated; the whole construct is only causally in itself, not at the starting point.

III.2 Eglá Martínez-Salazar: Global Coloniality of Power in Guatemala: Racism, Genocide, Citizenship

Martínez-Salazar applies Quijano's theory in detail to the Guatemalan context.³² She uses his theoretical foundation to analyze Guatemala's post-colonial history, focussing on the armed conflict and genocide and the power structures rooted in colonisation that shaped the armed conflict. The historical dehumanization of huge parts of the population is connected to the European idea of modernity and contributed to the political preparation of the conflict.³³ Furthermore, these power structures are shaped and informed by the interplay of race, gender, political ideology, and economic interests which aim to achieve and maintain a common goal: European domination.

Martínez-Salazar focuses on the social standing of indigenous people and how their contemporary situation has been shaped by the process of colonisation, particularly by the idea of race which informs labour control. Martínez-Salazar refers to the work of Walter Mignolo, who, in his books "Dispensable and Bare Lives" and "The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference", claims that capitalism relies on racial categorization

³¹ Ibid. 549, 552.

³² Martínez-Salazar 2012.

³³ Ibid. 13.

to justify its will for power and expropriation (land grabbing, slavery as expropriation).³⁴ This is how Eurocentrism creates its hegemonic position because the eradication of other ideologies becomes naturalized. Other ideologies and cultures which do not fit into the capitalist logic of thinking slowly lose their basis of existence as they cannot compete within the capitalist framework. Furthermore, Martínez-Salazar incorporates the Mayan cosmovision into her analysis of cultural survival because it consists of an understanding of gender that is different from the one implemented by colonisation. Here she picks up the inherent connection of race and gender and draws a comparison between the two understandings of gender structures.³⁵ The implementation of a dominant European capitalist ideology dehumanized the Mayan people, their culture, and ways of being. This process of dehumanization justified the violence inflicted against the Maya, and also later targeted them for extinction once they became labelled as ‘Guerillas’ and ‘Communists’.

III.3 Maria Lugones: Coloniality of Gender

Lugones expands on Quijano’s theory of the ‘Global Coloniality of Power’³⁶ and combines it with the concept of intersectionality.³⁷ She takes his foundation for granted and adds another aspect, gender, which is necessarily intertwined with race. Quijano’s theory does not particularly pay attention to this interconnection. Lugones aims to highlight the ways in which the modern colonial gender system exploits both women and men of color, but differently according to their genders.

Within his theory, Quijano offers an explanation for the basic and universal racial classification of people that divides them into superior and inferior racialized groups. One key idea is the assumption that there exists a unidirectional and linear path of history that every group of humans follow. These new social classifications went beyond racial categories and influenced sexual access, labour, collective authority, subjectivity and inter-subjectivity, and the production of knowledge. According to Quijano, the domain of sex and gender is defined by struggles to control sexual access and its resources and products.³⁸ His assumption that sex is only about control limits it to a patriarchal and heteronormative definition. Lugones rightly criticises his understanding of gender as both limited and reproducing the gender binary³⁹ because within his racial discourse, gender becomes naturalized and biologized.⁴⁰ Lugones

³⁴ Ibid. 8.

³⁵ Ibid. 26.

³⁶ Lugones 2008.

³⁷ Ibid. 1.

³⁸ Ibid. 5.

³⁹ Ibid. 6.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 5.

claims that Quijano veils the ways in which non-white colonized women were subjected and disempowered.⁴¹ For Lugones, gender is as much a colonial construct as race, that is, they are both constituted in terms of power relations; it limits and destroys the freedom of people, cosmologies and communities. Colonialism introduced an entirely new gender system that made gender a specific mode of organizing relations of production, property relations, and ontologies.

As Lugones shows with different examples of indigenous groups, including the Maya, biological gender does not need to be an organizational element.⁴² Colonialism introduced gender differences and changed much more than just the modes of reproduction such as the subordination of females. The inferiorization of indigenous women is tightly connected to the destruction of their traditional way of living.⁴³

In an analysis of gender inequality we must go beyond simply focussing on patriarchy; gender needs to be historicised further. Feminism is strongly rooted in a white middle-class tradition within which race as a power structure is often neglected.⁴⁴ Meanwhile, too many studies on race naturalize gender so that the concept of gender which is in use and not further questioned follows racialized lines.⁴⁵

III.4 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: Can the Subaltern Speak?

While Quijano analyzes global power structures on a macro level, Spivak takes the opposite approach, focusing on the micro level.⁴⁶ She does not refer to global structures but rather examines the perspectives and experiences of individuals. However, it is important to note that these occur within a global frame. When the subalterns are not represented by others but represent themselves it comes to basic communication: hearing and speaking. Employing the modes of hearing and speaking brings the whole idea of power structures back to what it is about: the struggle of humans to express themselves and achieve what they want in an unequal world.

Spivak's essay "Can the subaltern speak?" explores the representation and victimisation of Third-world-women, who, as a social group, are generally defined as 'the Other'. Because the people who belong to this group are never subjects they are generally 'the Other'. They are denied the power to create their own self-owned perspective. Instead, it is always those in

⁴¹ Ibid. 1.

⁴² Ibid. 6–7.

⁴³ Ibid. 8.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 13.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 12.

⁴⁶ Spivak 1994.

positions of power and privilege who end up defining them. For instance, activists or any kind of representing actors from the Global North may stand for the rights of the marginalised and suppressed in the Global South or autochthonous patriarchal groups. This representation implies that somebody *speaks for* these women, which denies the subject-position and refers to the concept of subalternity.

This double risk of suppression is at the core of the problem of representation. One group wants to save women from local realities or manifestations of patriarchy, one from risking their honour, they are “caught between tradition and modernization”⁴⁷ which keeps them from representing themselves. The Maya population is forced to locate themselves between the two poles of modernity and primitivity. This fits with Quijano’s idea that rationality and modernity establish a unilinear history that contributes to the expansion of a new world order. Both are inventions of colonialism.

Although the subalterns are situated within the global neo-colonial system, they are relegated outside the hegemonic class system of their own nations. Important to Spivak’s theory is that this social position is made worse by the subalterns’ own ignorance regarding their position and marginalization. Their situation has been normalized due to the fact that they are not aware of the extent they are deprived of rights and freedom—they are incapacitated from participation in the broader society. The situation is worse for females, who additionally suffer from a gendered position; therefore they more often belong to the group of the subaltern.

Neither can (any) other actor speak for them because this would never be transparent in terms of intentions and ontologies, nor can the subaltern masses achieve consciousness and raise their voice themselves. Spivak does not assume a situation in which the necessary conditions are given that would allow the subalterns to speak, which is her general conclusion. This conclusion is rightly criticized. On the one hand Spivak reproduces the passive, silent and non-western subject; on the other hand she pretends to know the real interests of the subalterns, which means she claims to know which is the wrong and which is the right consciousness. Spivak responds to this critique by claiming that it is not about speaking but about being listened to, which is hegemonially structured and denies space for the subaltern to be heard.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Ibid. 102.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 204.

III.5 Correlation of Theories

The theories I have chosen span from macro to micro level, from past to present, from colonial understandings of race to incorporating gender.

Quijano shows how the colonizers sought power. In the beginning they simply had the power of force and then this power needed to be naturalized. Race naturalizes the superiority of the white people. At the same time the capitalist way of production evolves. This division of labour is characterized by racial processes or racial categorizations.

Lugones adds the layer of gender to Quijano and follows his patterns. She does not give or need a final reason for the development of the concept of gender because she embeds it in Quijano's base, the network of power structures that form coloniality. Within this layer of gender suppression I will point out some options for resistance.

Spivak looks at the micro level where the power structures are prevalent. Her theory adds the issues of representation and voice of the subaltern to this thesis. Having the current situation in mind which will be explained later, there simply cannot be space for indigenous women to raise their voice directly. The ongoing femicide demonstrates the structural hierarchies that shape the social context of Mayan women. They do not have a voice but this paper will show that poetry can break through those hierarchies. Poetry can transform this dead-end-street because it facilitates resistance at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Here a transformation can take place that is entirely different and independent from what happens on the higher levels of power. The individual is suppressed, but through its ways of communication, hearing and speaking, power structures can be transformed. This is what the data derived from the poetry I collected will show, but the theoretical top structure is necessary to connect this level to the power structures implemented by colonialism.

Essentially, the theories bring together global power structures and their outcomes on the local level. However, the local level is determined by these hierarchical structures, but also offers additional possibilities of resistance. Those I will explain further in my chapter about poetry.

IV From Ancient Mayan Cultures to Colonisation and the Status Quo in Guatemala

In the following sections I will provide some cultural, historical and political context to Guatemala and the Maya population in particular. I will start with pre-colonial Mayan gender structures and continue with a short summary of Guatemalan history since colonisation. I close the background chapter focussing on the recent situation for women in Guatemala. This

chapter will facilitate the application of the chosen theories and put my approach into a broader context. It must be noted that any attempt to portray or understand complex cultures within the range of a few pages can easily result in an oversimplification of those cultures. This is especially problematic regarding the ancient Maya. With this in mind, the objective of the following section is only to show one perspective that is helpful for the topic of this paper, and is not intended to be taken as a complete overview. Numerous and varying interpretations and readings of Guatemala's (colonial) history and in particular about the war are possible but that would reach beyond the scope of this work.

IV.1 Gender Roles in Ancient Mayan Cultures before Colonisation

In order to make explicit the ways in which Quijano's, Martínez-Salazar's and Lugones' theories about the influence of colonisation are applicable to the ongoing Guatemalan femicide, an overview of pre-colonial Mayan living and particularly gender roles will be helpful. Achieving this overview bears the risk of universalizing and generalizing the Mayan culture and their ideas regarding gender and sexuality. There is not one sexual ontology, rather many understandings of sexuality and gender exist which have shifted over time and space, between class configurations, occupations, and varying social spheres of life.⁴⁹ Ignoring this diversity would necessarily reproduce the homogenization of indigenous people through the process of colonisation. Indeed, this has been used as a mechanism of domination and the assertion of power by the colonizers. Global power, the very core of Quijano's theory, does not create space for a diversity of cultures but rather essentializes and creates meaning in a paternalistic way.

The data which I gathered for this paper has to be seen as the product of 500 years of colonisation which acts like a filter—that means the information may or may not be trustworthy. Also, not all spheres of Mayan culture have left the same amounts of information behind, and certainly not according to their 'real' importance in a former society. Therefore, I am approaching this biased information through the colonial lenses that wrote history and with my own blurred vision.

Another fact that makes the information I have less trustworthy is that a huge part of the research about Mayan people was conducted by men, which I argue further influences the findings too. Research has neglected to account for the gendered dimension of Mayan history. Apparently there has been a lack of interest in gender for a long time within Maya research.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Ardren 2002: 234.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 99.

Much research shows that the majority of Mayan societies were mostly patrilineal and were structured around kin relations. Women were used to build alliances between different dynasties by inter-familial marriages.⁵¹ However, there are varying examples where female rulers existed, so the male kin is of primary but not exclusive importance. Many female names that researchers were able to translate from ancient Mayan languages meant ‘mother of’ or ‘wife to’. This demonstrates that women were defined and socially valued through their connection to men. In public spheres men held ultimate authorities⁵², therefore women were often made victims to the assertion of male power.

Lugones and Martínez-Salazar assume that in Mayan societies gender hierarchies were of less importance than in the Eurocentric order. According to Martínez-Salazar, the Mayan cosmovision saw both male and female energies being inherent in both genders.⁵³ She uses as an indicator for gender not being a structural element of social hierarchies. The male and female energies are interlocked⁵⁴ and complementary.⁵⁵ Therefore, they cannot exist without each other because they would be incomplete.⁵⁶ The genders are different from each other but equal in their importance, and opposite to each other but necessary to build synergies. Hence, the Western binary concept of gender is not applicable because the biological genders are interpreted in very different ways.⁵⁷ They do not determine the individual’s way of life⁵⁸, it was the social gender that constituted what people thought, felt or wanted.⁵⁹

Lugones emphasizes the Maya’s openness to a third gender. This does not refer to an anatomic third gender but, rather, to individuals that live in a mixed female and male way and which are socially accepted as so.⁶⁰ Within Mayan arts, portrayals of three distinct genders can be seen through activities and costumes depicted in the art.⁶¹ Often, third gender people played important roles in spiritual practices and acted as mediators between male and female genders.⁶² Furthermore, third-gender people occupied an accepted and highly valued social position—more than just an exception from the biological norm.

The existence of a non-binary category influenced Mayan society’s way of thinking. The openness of Mayan society also included the acceptance of different sexualities. Mayas did

⁵¹ Ibid. 70.

⁵² Ibid. 70.

⁵³ Martínez-Salazar 2012: 10.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 26.

⁵⁵ Ardren 2002: 70.

⁵⁶ Ibid. 236.

⁵⁷ Martínez-Salazar 2012: 29.

⁵⁸ Ibid. 11.

⁵⁹ Martínez-Salazar 2012: 29.

⁶⁰ Ardren 2002: 100.

⁶¹ Ibid. 198.

⁶² Ibid. 173.

not have the same obsessions about sex and gender like the Spanish colonizers but approached sexual acts and classifications totally differently.⁶³ Lugones claims the Mayas to have been homo-positive,⁶⁴ but actually homosexuality as a classification does not fit to a group of people so far away from Western sexual notions because those concepts were invented during the modern era.⁶⁵

The Mayan spirituality is a sphere where the relation of male and female is very visible. Two crucial deities are the moon goddess, clearly associated with femininity and the role of nurturing⁶⁶, and the maize god, who reflects masculinity.⁶⁷ Particularly rulers were performing these roles and therefore changing their identity and gender. Spiritual performance included a lot of gender connotations and shaped ideals of what to expect from those. They also offered the worshippers the opportunity to switch between male and female. The importance of spirituality and its gender connotations should be taken seriously for their discursive meaning, even if they are not representative for daily and practical functions.

Despite the fluidity of gender roles within spiritual realms, the division into male and female was still an important structuring principle in the daily routines of social life. The question is what these genders implemented, not if the Maya acknowledged male and female genders at all (since they did that obviously).

Research on Mayan graves reveals that burial objects were given to the individuals according to their gender. For example, axes and hoes were given to males while tools for grinding corn and weaving were reserved for females. This shows that tools are connected to the division of labour which in turn is connected to one's gender's identity. The division of labour has been researched a lot and does not seem to be clearly divided by gender.⁶⁸ Though it is safe to assume that some common divisions by gender existed, the factual division of work was more complex.⁶⁹ Agricultural work is often seen as an indicator for gender tasks and values, however, for the Mayas, the division within the agricultural field has varied a lot through time and space.⁷⁰ Some tasks were divided by gender⁷¹ but it seemed to depend on the geographical landscape and possibilities offered by the natural world.

Biological arguments that connect women's tasks to sexual reproduction are not valid since socio-economic influences were more important than the forces that were put on women from

⁶³ Sigal 2000: 7.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 11.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 214.

⁶⁶ Ardren 2002: 182.

⁶⁷ Nash 1997: 342–343.

⁶⁸ Ardren 2002: 14.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 231.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 28.

⁷¹ Ibid. 50–51.

being child-bearers or lactating.⁷² The age of women was very important for their social standing, research led to the assumption of a strong age-dichotomy.⁷³ Two phases of womanhood existed: pre-menopausal and grandmother. Prohibitions against women during child-bearing years existed because young women were seen as being unpredictable in their loyalty. This is not to say that they may have been promiscuous, rather more because they might reject their nurturing role. A fear of females or their sexuality being directed against men implies hierarchies between the genders. On the contrary, the grandmother energy stood for domesticity and security⁷⁴ and was seen as preserving the human race.⁷⁵

Finally, it is difficult to say if Mayan societies had more or less patriarchal tendencies, however, the literature shows that the implementations gender structures had on the Mayas' lives were totally different from those which were implemented by the Spanish.

IV.2 Colonisation and the Shift of Gender Roles

The influence of colonialism on pre-colonial Mayan gender roles was drastic, whatever they may have exactly looked like in pre-colonial times in the area of Guatemala, differing between regions, communities and cultures. Quijano's main point, the implementation of racism to create hierarchies, is inseparable from having an effect on gender roles.⁷⁶

The subordination of non-white people is the framework for a second marginalization. Women's position within society is shaped by race, ethnicity and class. Colonisation changed the meanings of biological sex for an individual's position in society. The Spanish brought an ideology of strong binaries that included both the fixed ideas of a 'correct' sexuality and the subordination of women. It is difficult to classify whether it was the binaries themselves that were a colonial construct or only their consequences.⁷⁷ However, the expansion of Spanish imperialism included the imposition of a gender-based-hierarchy, which contained classifying structures detailing their social roles, the division of labour and social relations.⁷⁸ The taxonomies developed by the colonizers were then internalized by the colonized. This process stripped away the people's capacity of self-determination; people were made to believe all their desires, particularly sexual ones, were intrinsic to their being and identity.⁷⁹ This is how

⁷² Ibid. 14.

⁷³ Nash 1997: 343.

⁷⁴ Ardren 2002: 224.

⁷⁵ Martínez-Salazar 2012: 27.

⁷⁶ Quijano 2000: 171.

⁷⁷ Schiwy 2007: 272.

⁷⁸ Ibid. 275.

⁷⁹ Sigal 2000: 7.

the New World Order discussed by Quijano got naturalized and found its way from a relatively small group of European colonizers into the heart of the colonized society.⁸⁰

How did the colonizers implement their classification system? Most importantly, they inscribed a heterosexual order which affected a wide range of spheres.⁸¹ In Quijano's words, they claimed their discriminatory categories to be natural and scientific.⁸² The colonizers emasculated indigenous men through the rape of both men and women.⁸³ The rape of women was used as a tool to impose the idea that indigenous men could not protect 'their' women.⁸⁴ This re-enforced patriarchal relations: the colonizers took away female agency and reduced them to objects; the abuses of women signified damage to male honour as much as it targeted them directly. This is how the colonizers implemented control of indigenous men over indigenous women. Furthermore, militarism and the growing segregation of gender roles favoured the mobility of men and led to a growing disparity of power and control over resources between the male and female.⁸⁵

Enforced labour division also perpetuated the division between women and men. The heavy exploitation of indigenous people and their resources was a huge part of the colonizers' motivation and mission and acted in accordance with the genocidal agenda.⁸⁶ This labour division contributed strongly to the subordination of women because they were forced into the domestic and private.⁸⁷

Christian ideology put women into a reproductive role. The ideal of mighty female deities owning regenerative and nourishing power was replaced by fulfilling limited household roles.⁸⁸ While in indigenous religions females were associated with supernatural powers⁸⁹ which would contradict patriarchy, Christianity turned gender-images around by substituting old powerful figures with their own ideas. The famous Virgin of Guadalupe is an example for these mechanisms. She lost her power and instead was connected to virginity and purity which limited her meaning until she became harmless.⁹⁰ The role of rationality as a force

⁸⁰ Quijano 2000: 168.

⁸¹ Schiwy 2007: 276.

⁸² Quijano 2000: 168.

⁸³ Schiwy 2007: 275.

⁸⁴ Nash 1997: 276.

⁸⁵ Ibid. 355.

⁸⁶ Quijano 2000: 170.

⁸⁷ Nash 1997: 334.

⁸⁸ Ibid. 355.

⁸⁹ Nash 1997: 348.

⁹⁰ Ibid. 350.

claiming the Spanish thinking to be superior should not be ignored.⁹¹ It suppressed indigenous thinking but was somehow able to coexist with Christianity.⁹²

Conclusively, the colonisation of the indigenous people suppressed women through racism and put them into a place where they were subordinate to a racist and misogynist state, to their husbands and to the Christian priests.⁹³ Women's work was neither valued nor taken seriously because it was not as threatening to the Spanish as for example the masculine military sphere. Ironically this is also the same reason why some parts of the 'female culture', particularly in domestic spheres, have survived. Due to its perceived harmlessness, there was no need to eradicate this knowledge or replace it.⁹⁴

IV.3 History of Guatemala since Colonisation

The conquest of Guatemala in 1542 marked the beginning of racial discrimination against the indigenous population. Although the colonial period ended officially in 1821 when Guatemala gained independence from the Spanish crown⁹⁵, but especially for indigenous people their social position was not drastically changed, nor was it necessarily improved.⁹⁶ Only for those in positions of power within a classed society a new terrain did open up. This meant a small elite continued to reap social and economic benefits from the continual racial subordination and economic and social dominance.⁹⁷ This minority represented the prototype of the citizen of the new state while indigenous people were excluded.⁹⁸ The liberal reforms in 1871 institutionalized this discrimination (or 'ladinization'). While all Guatemalans formally became equal before the state, the informal racial hierarchy remained unchallenged.⁹⁹

A large socio-economic, cultural and political shift took place in 1944 in the aftermath of the democratic revolution, the so-called October-Revolution.¹⁰⁰ A coalition of workers, students and army officers overturned Federico Ponce, the interim president who had followed Jorge Ubico after he had resigned in the same year due to protests.¹⁰¹

Juan José Arévalo became president and started legal and social reforms, especially regarding to education and worker's rights. One of the most urgent and contentious issues, the agrarian reform, was not implemented until the election of Jacobo Árbenz Guzmán who was

⁹¹ Quijano 2000: 173.

⁹² Ibid. 172.

⁹³ Nash 1997: 348.

⁹⁴ Ibid. 356.

⁹⁵ Martínez-Salazar 2012: 63.

⁹⁶ Jonas 1991: 16.

⁹⁷ Martínez-Salazar 2012: 45.

⁹⁸ Ibid. 46.

⁹⁹ Ibid. 48.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. 52.

¹⁰¹ Jonas 1991: 23.

elected in 1951. Árbenz aimed to overturn Guatemala's dependence on the capitalist economic system into an independent one by skipping tax privileges for foreign investors and working against monopolies.¹⁰² In 1952 he started an agrarian reform that would have transformed land ownership heavily because most land was owned by a small Guatemalan and foreign elite. The literature mentioned that different opinions exist on how radical the reform and its consequences were. For example the reform dispossesses companies like the United Fruit Company, the biggest land owner that let 80 percent of the land they owned lie fallow, but in the same time the Guatemalan state compensated those companies.¹⁰³ This reform was a key incident that led to the outbreak of the armed conflict when a CIA-financed anti-communist campaign led to a coup against Árbenz.¹⁰⁴ He was replaced by the pro-US Castillo Armas which both reflected US-American interests and an inner-Guatemalan opposition, mostly based on an economic oligarchy.¹⁰⁵

The national economic elite and the military, supported by the CIA, established a heavily repressive regime.¹⁰⁶ This led to the development of different guerrilla movements.¹⁰⁷ The army's power kept growing until 1960 when they finally forced a pact with the civil government. They established an agreement with politicians, the military and companies to conduct counterinsurgent tactics, professionalized with the assistance of the USA.¹⁰⁸ The counterinsurgency state was institutionalized after 1970, when the government's goal became to eradicate the civilian support base of the guerrillas and semi-official death squads were established. Many defeats and reorganizations of the insurgents happened.¹⁰⁹ The army's century-old domination was threatened and caused Guatemala's indigenous population to redefine their class identity.¹¹⁰

A sad peak of genocidal practices took place during the regimes of Lucas García and Efraín Ríos Montt, when the strategy was not anymore only aiming to eliminate the guerrillas' support base but also to entirely "destroy the culture, identity, and communal structures of the indigenous populations".¹¹¹ The indigenous people were suspected of supporting guerrilla fighters and an irrational racism, fed by the idea of indigenous people being the internal enemy, led to a horrible genocide.

¹⁰² Jonas 1991: 26f.

¹⁰³ Martínez-Salazar 2012: 52

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 55.

¹⁰⁵ Jonas 1991: 29.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 62.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. 64.

¹⁰⁸ Jonas 2000: 21.

¹⁰⁹ I recommend Jonas (2000) for further reading because details would expand the frame of this work.

¹¹⁰ Jonas 2000: 21.

¹¹¹ Ibid. 24.

The control and eradication of the indigenous population were carried out in two stages. The first one from 1981 to 1983 followed the principles of a scorched earth strategy. During the government of Ríos Montt the campaign ‘quitar el agua al pez’, take the water away from the fish, was used to legitimate the terrorization of the civil rural population. The guerrillas were the fish, while the towns and villages or the Mayan population were the water. To kill the fish, they are denied water because indigenous villages were seen as the breeding ground for guerrilla recruitment. The eradication of the indigenous population was heavily supported by the US-government who suspected them to be communists and counted them to the “spectre of communism”.¹¹² Out of the 200.000 murdered people only around 42.000 had been identified until 1999. According to the identification 83 percent were indigenous.¹¹³

This campaign ‘take the water away from the fish’ particularly targeted women. When women were victimized through violence the abuse of the body was the most frequent treatment. This was done to assert the soldiers’ superiority or dominance as well as a reward and compensation to the soldiers.¹¹⁴ In at least six massacres nearly all women in a village were raped.¹¹⁵ Obviously here a connection to Gender Based Violence takes place, which reintroduces what I have raised in the beginning of this paper. It is difficult to estimate how many women were victims of GBV committed by the governmental forces, because due to the shame many women refuse to give evidence of they made this kind of experience.¹¹⁶

Sources give different information and the inconsistencies do not allow deciding whether the violent sexualized treatment of women followed an intentional strategy or happened in such numbers by coincidence. However, it is evident from the widespread application of sexualized violence that the soldiers’ behaviour was coherent. Between 1980 and 1983 the percentages of male and female murdered victims was nearly reversed: up until 1980 the majority of victims murdered was male. However, after 1983 women were targeted more.¹¹⁷ The number of females killed rose from 14 percent to 42 percent during Ríos Montt’s dictatorship which is tightly connected to the ‘take the water away from the fish’-campaign. Indigenous women were particularly vulnerable; 88.7 percent of female victims were Mayan.¹¹⁸ This clearly demonstrates who the victims of Ríos Montt’s rule were and how race and gender are tightly intertwined.

¹¹² Martínez-Salazar 2010: 73; Commission for Historical Clarification Guatemala (CEH): 15, 18.

¹¹³ CEH 1999: 15.

¹¹⁴ Recuperation of Historical Memory Project (REMHI): 6.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. 5.

¹¹⁶ United Nations Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) 2012: 26.

¹¹⁷ Sanford 2008: 107.

¹¹⁸ UNHRC 2012: 25. Efraín Ríos Montt stood trial in 2013 and was convicted of genocide and crimes against humanity but the trial was reset to 2015.

During the second stage of destroying the social backing of guerrillas, after 1983, the goals were carried out through the imposition of coercive institutions throughout the countryside: the ‘Patrullas de Autodefensa Civil’ (PAC) were established as mandatory “civilian self-defense patrols”.¹¹⁹ At one point they consisted of one million peasants, which was one fourth of the adult populations.¹²⁰ They were established as paramilitary groups to ensure the control and terrorization of the entire population.¹²¹

It is important to acknowledge the imbalance of violence committed between the two sides. Around 93 percent of violence was committed by state forces.¹²² This is indicative of the amount of violence from the state’s side. Furthermore, the army implemented model villages for the displaced indigenous population for total control and surveillance. Between 500,000 and one million people were victims of forced displacement.¹²³ The total observation, both through PACs and model villages, was aiming to systematically destroy indigenous organizational structures.¹²⁴ It is not clear how active or passive (caught between the guerrillas and the governmental forces) the indigenous population was during the conflict. Within the latter end of the conflict some authors claim them to have been the social base of the guerrillas.¹²⁵ Others say they had a leading role within the guerrilla groups, even though the majority of leaders in guerrilla troops were Ladinos and racist tendencies existed.¹²⁶

The long and difficult peace process started in 1987 and brought a formal end to the war in 1996.¹²⁷ The army had won over the guerrillas and was therefore first not motivated to conduct negotiations, but the URNG applied pressure.¹²⁸ Also, Guatemala was isolated after the excessive violence that had happened because international organisations and aid subsidies were not sent anymore. During the 1980s 90 percent of the population lived below the poverty line.¹²⁹ Ethnic discrimination and poverty, together with other regional and international pressures, made the Guatemalan army and government (an elected civil and formally democratic government existed since 1986) open towards negotiations.¹³⁰ In 1988 the government initiated Guatemala’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CEH) which published their report in 1995 containing of investigations about the war and its

¹¹⁹ Jonas 2000: 24.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Oettler 2004: 64.

¹²² CEH 1999: 15.

¹²³ Ibid. 26.

¹²⁴ Oettler 2004: 18.

¹²⁵ Jonas 1991: 132.

¹²⁶ Martínez-Salazar 2012: 86–92.

¹²⁷ Jonas 2000: 30.

¹²⁸ Ibid. 31, 37.

¹²⁹ Ibid. 28.

¹³⁰ Ibid. 30.

recommendations. Because of the government's limited mandate, the Human Rights Office of the Archbishopric of Guatemala (ODHAG) published a more radical report in 1998 containing more than 7,000 interviews.

The civil society had been extremely weakened and gradual steps towards democracy were prevented by the counterinsurgency state.¹³¹ Solving the main causes of the conflict(s) would have meant rebuilding the entire weak state.

The peace negotiations were pretty complex, involving the UN, but to sum up it can be said that the results were a huge set of agreements that tried to deal with the main causes for the conflict; the acknowledgement and implementation of human rights, socio economic aspects that were mostly performed mostly by social infrastructure and an agrarian reform, and as part of human rights the security of cultural, social, political and economic rights of the indigenous population that would acknowledge their identity and end discrimination.¹³² These goals sound great and ambitious, but they still lack implementation today.

IV.4 The Recent Situation of Guatemala

The same described colonial racist and discriminatory mechanisms are still prevalent today, in daily actions and the whole state system. To achieve an overview of the recent situation with a focus on the indigenous people's situation it is first necessary to acknowledge that around 60 percent of the 15 million inhabitants see themselves as indigenous.¹³³ 24 different groups exist out of which 22 see themselves as descendents of the Maya. The rest are called Ladino and denotes people "who are of mixed European—usually Spanish—and indigenous ancestry".¹³⁴ To which group people belong is less biologically determined and more so about what people seem to be by life style, language and behavior. The community is the main space for belonging and identity.¹³⁵ If they spoke Spanish without an accent or decided not to wear their traditional clothing, some indigenous people could and did choose to hide their identity to be safer during the war.¹³⁶ Of course this was not possible for many people because their education often did not offer them enough skills in Spanish.¹³⁷ In a private sphere or in their community such people would still identify as indigenous.

¹³¹ Ibid. 30.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ French 2010: 2.

¹³⁴ Ibid. 2.

¹³⁵ Ibid. 6.

¹³⁶ Martínez-Salazar 2010: 73.

¹³⁷ Ibid. 74.

Ethnicity and poverty are still tightly connected. Indigenous people earn less land and get lower wages.¹³⁸ In 2009, 38 percent of the rural indigenous earn less than \$1, for rural Ladinos it is ‘just’ 26.3 percent.¹³⁹ Notably, urban areas are less poor than the rural areas where indigenous people mostly reside.

Indigenous people are also less educated than Ladinos. While 48 percent of indigenous are illiterate, only 20 percent of the Ladino population does not know how to read or write.¹⁴⁰ In rural areas 50 to 90 percent of indigenous people are illiterate. Health care in rural areas is also much worse: adequate health centres and resources (both doctors and medicine) do not exist, or due to language barriers services are difficult to offer.¹⁴¹ Disadvantages in employment and presentation in politics are a result of the unequal education.¹⁴² Indigenous people earn less than Ladinos and often work in informal sectors which, according to the UNDP, promote worse conditions.¹⁴³

Indigenous people have less power, income and often have to deal with dispossession of land.¹⁴⁴ The recent situation illustrated here reflects an institutionalized discrimination compounded by weak institutions.

IV.4.1 The Situation of Women

Within an unequal society and a strong discrimination of the indigenous population, women are particularly disadvantaged.¹⁴⁵ They earn less than men and suffer heavily from heavy GBV. It is more difficult to estimate and find numbers on general GBV but different institutions publish (different) numbers on femicide and woman-killing. The rates of murders of women keep rising, also after the conflict and the period of huge rising since 1980. The Guatemalan Human Rights Commission (GHRC) factsheet shows how rapidly rates of murder rose, see Figure 1 below.¹⁴⁶

Most of the victims are aged between 16 and 30.¹⁴⁷ The rates in Figure 2 show a generally violent culture, for both genders. Both rates of female and male murders are rising, but the difference is that men are not killed for gender-based reasons. According to the Human Rights Attorney of Guatemala (PDH) males are killed with less physical contact and less suffering,

¹³⁸ Ibid. 63.

¹³⁹ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 2009:103.

¹⁴⁰ Tejida 2000: 22.

¹⁴¹ Ibid. 22.

¹⁴² Ibid. 23.

¹⁴³ Ibid. 23.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Martínez-Salazar 2012: 126.

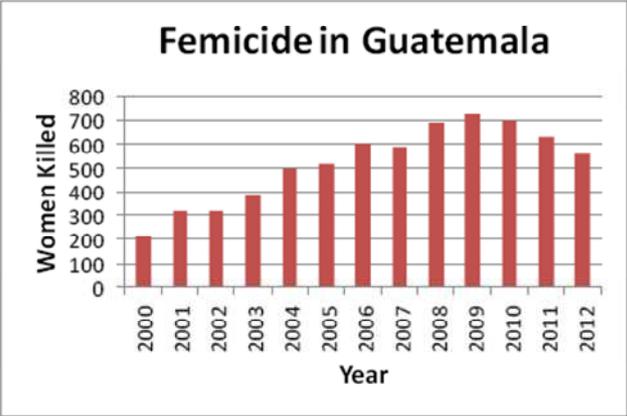
¹⁴⁶ GHRC 2012.

¹⁴⁷ Sanford 2008: 109.

while women’s killings are generally accompanied by heavy brutality, sexual violence, mutilation and dismemberment.¹⁴⁸

Figure 1: Women Killed in Guatemala 2000–2012¹⁴⁹

Year	Number of women killed
2000	213
2001	317
2002	317
2003	383
2004	497
2005	517
2006	603
2007	590
2008	687
2009	720
2010	695
2011	632
2012	560
Total:	6,731



Source: Human Rights Ombudsman’s Office

Figure 2: People Killed in Guatemala 2001-2007, recorded by National Police¹⁵⁰

Homicidios de 2001 a 2007 según Policía Nacional Civil

Año	Total	Masculinos	Femeninos	% de homicidios de mujeres
2001	3230	2927	303	9.4%
2002	3631	3314	317	8.7%
2003	4237	3854	383	9%
2004	4519	4010	509	11.3%
2005	5747	5195	552	9.6%
2006	5885	5282	603	10.2%
2007*	4213	3784	429	9.8%
TOTAL	29833	26914	2919	

* Hasta el 30 de septiembre del 2007 según datos presentados por la Comisión de la mujer del Congreso de la República de Guatemala: “Tercer informe sobre muertes violentas de mujeres, hombres, adolescentes, niños y niñas”. Octubre 2007.

According to Amnesty International, 600 women have been murdered in 2005 and only two convictions were decided upon.¹⁵¹ Recently the rates of femicide are going down but there is no evidence of why or if this is going to continue.¹⁵² Apart from murders, which

¹⁴⁸ AI 2002: 2–3, AI 2006: 2.
¹⁴⁹ Ibid.
¹⁵⁰ Svendsen 2007: 97.
¹⁵¹ AI 2006: 2.
¹⁵² GHRC 2012.

maybe are the most brutal form of violence against women, other kinds of GBV are committed. In 2011, 20,398 cases were filed under the femicide law.¹⁵³

The whole system has gaps. It starts with flaws in investigations¹⁵⁴ which were not even made in some cases because the Public Ministry happened to fail to provide instructions.¹⁵⁵ In their annual report from 2005 the Public Ministry claimed 42 percent of cases to be solved, a poor performance in reality because only 3.8 percent of the cases included a formal accusation and in only 1 percent of these cases did a court hearing take place.¹⁵⁶ Apparently no reliable statistics for the efficiency of laws exist because the government so far has failed to collect any.¹⁵⁷ The National Institute of Statistics (INE), the institution that is supposed to collect data from multiple governmental Institutions (National Police (PN), Public Ministry and PDH, National Center for Analysis and Judicial Documentation (CENADOJ)) did not get resources allocated to them, which combined with the lack of a uniform complaint intake mechanism, makes it so that numbers are often contradictory. At the end of 2005, 100 out of 224 cases were archived due to a lack of evidence.¹⁵⁸ The state neglects the structural problems behind these cases and has no gender-related focus.¹⁵⁹

Amnesty International's report on Guatemala's legal situation from 2002 examines the failure of its justice system to reliably follow the law.¹⁶⁰ AI sees the whole judicial apparatus as responsible for impunity and the failure to protect human rights.¹⁶¹ The state is corrupt and judges are threatened when they held members of the army or other influential people responsible.¹⁶² People do not have faith in the legal apparatus or the police¹⁶³, especially as chances for justice are low for poor and indigenous citizens in remote areas.¹⁶⁴ Improvements seem unlikely. In 2009 the UNHRC repeats the analysis from 2002: a corrupt state and legal insecurity are prevalent. Until 2013 less than 3 percent of cases resulted in judgement.¹⁶⁵

¹⁵³ Musalo/Pellegrin/Roberts 2010: 269. To put his information into comparison: Guatemala is comparable in many aspects to Paraguay where only a third of cases were filed in the same year, population size already taken into account.

¹⁵⁴ AI 2006: 3.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. 6.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. 5.

¹⁵⁷ Musalo/Pellegrin/Roberts 2010: 277.

¹⁵⁸ AI 2006: 5.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. 8.

¹⁶⁰ AI 2002: 4.

¹⁶¹ Ibid. 4, 10.

¹⁶² Ibid. 10.

¹⁶³ Ibid. 8.

¹⁶⁴ AI 2002: 44.

¹⁶⁵ Also the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) did investigations on public officials having been involved in crimes during the war and found 25 people, including six judges who are now accused of maintaining ties to crime or breaking the law (CICIG 22).

IV.4.2 Femicide Law

In this context of general institutional weakness the implementation of a femicide law in 2008 seemed particularly ridiculous seeing as one year after the law was realized numbers still kept rising.¹⁶⁶ Out of 722 women murdered (75 percent considered femicide) only 2 perpetrators were convicted.¹⁶⁷ A staggering 99 percent of cases are not getting resolved.¹⁶⁸ It is likely that even more murders happened but are not even called to attention due to initial fear or a lack of faith into the legal system.¹⁶⁹ Out of the 38,000 complaints which the Public Ministry received in 2011, only 22,000 cases were filed.¹⁷⁰

The impunity for violence on women is still worse than on men and for crimes that are not related to sexuality. Deep-rooted gender biases and stereotypes uniquely prejudice against the proper investigation and prosecution of cases involving female victims. Males are generally more advantaged than women when it comes to court cases or the protection of their property. Different institutions supporting women's rights trace that back to inequality and the subordinated position of women in society.¹⁷¹ Women are seen as objects and personal possessions belonging to the domestic and private spheres.¹⁷² Violence, particularly domestic violence keeps them in their place.¹⁷³ Because women are generally more educated and more often employed they access male-dominated spheres, rendering them as scapegoats for unemployed men.¹⁷⁴ Men blame their unemployment of them. Moreover, the heavy impunity, connected to the image the police promotes that female victims are often sex workers or that their murders are connected to gang violence or crimes of passion¹⁷⁵, supports violence because it makes it less dangerous for men to commit gendered crimes as an outlet for frustration.

Plenty of women's rights organisations connect the high rates of GBV to a misogynistic worldview, a patriarchal society and the structural inequalities implemented and reinforced by the legal system. The special legislation on GBV seems ineffective at reducing both violence taking place and impunity.¹⁷⁶

¹⁶⁶ Sanford 2008: 2.

¹⁶⁷ Tejada 2010: 25.

¹⁶⁸ Ispanel Medinilla 2009: 74.

¹⁶⁹ Svendsen 2007: 14.

¹⁷⁰ Musalo/Pellegrin/Roberts 2010: 270.

¹⁷¹ Svendsen 2007: 12, 15.

¹⁷² Suarez/Jordan 2007: 3.

¹⁷³ Svendsen 2007: 25.

¹⁷⁴ Suarez/Jordan 2007: 4.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. 6.

¹⁷⁶ Musalo/Pellegrin/Roberts 2010: 274.

Noticeable gaps in the collected statistics show that the ethnicity of the female victims is hardly mentioned¹⁷⁷, or that there are at least no comprehensive statistics on ethnic status of the victims collectively. Although the statistics are generally unconvincing in any case, what this gap serves to show is that even though many factors support the idea of indigenous women being generally disadvantaged, this is not reflected in statistical interest or consideration.

V Poetry and its Social Function

Poetry has played an important role in political movements for ages. It has been used as a tool to express one's opinion or perspective and is done in a way that goes beyond classic speech. In the following section, I want to explore how poetry opens up these new ways of expression and is therefore able to achieve a social function.

Going deeper into the history of poetry and political expression through art would reach beyond the scope of this thesis. Therefore I will only focus on the role of poetry within the feminist movement. Rooting the performance poetry of the last century, poetry has already been prevalent within the feminist struggle for many decades.¹⁷⁸ In the 1960's and 1970's, at the beginning of the revolutionary poetry movement, a transformation of both political and personal issues took place in many women's lives. Literature shows that grassroots groups were a place where women gathered "to examine their personal experiences and to develop wideranging political analyses out of what they discovered"¹⁷⁹. The poetry written in these circles raised consciousness through "the confessional" act of phrasing the anger, despair, and pain that resulted from living in a patriarchal culture"¹⁸⁰. Particularly in the beginning of one's (feminist) transformation, this process was mostly inward looking to admit the extent of frustration one felt.

This is the exact meaning of the slogan 'the personal is political.' It phrases how feminists used their individual experiences to achieve an analysis about the ills of the entire system they lived in.¹⁸¹ By connecting personal problems to a political frame, poetry provides opportunities both for self-expression and also for self-healing. However, the individual starting point of the transformation did not lead to an isolation of the poets as lonely fighters

¹⁷⁷ With the exception of Peace Brigades International, see Tejida 2010.

¹⁷⁸ Whitehead 1996: 24.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. 26.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

with their personal problems. Instead, the shared sorrows connected poets to both each other and the community sharing their suffering.¹⁸²

Gloria Anzaldúa, a Mexican-American writer, defined the means of poetry by rooting her ideas shamanism; in ethnopoetics the poet is “the soul of the people and integrates all facets of life”¹⁸³. Thus, artistic expression is not disconnected from its functions and daily issues.¹⁸⁴ Judy Grahn, an American feminist poet, established the concept of commonality. It stands for a poetics in which the writer empowers the readers (or listeners) with the text to discover what intersects with their own experience.¹⁸⁵ Victims of violence and trauma deal with a particular situation. They do not only suffer from their personal experiences but also from their trauma of being publicly silenced. This is the case both for personal and indirect trauma, such as trauma based on intergenerational, historical or culture-wide incidences.

By writing poetry women reclaim a subject-identity and fight against their passive, victimised position. According to Elena Poniatowska, a political author from Mexico, women are writing in order to bear testimony and overcome their tortuous realities.¹⁸⁶ Writers create a chance to break the silence over their experiences and share them with an audience. This is a chance to be understood by others. The process of sharing thoughts and emotions can encourage readers to do the same, to find relieving words for their own suffering. A reality determined by oppressive patriarchy and neo-colonial governments might even catalyze women’s creativity in order to dismantle reductive categories.¹⁸⁷ Readers can also partake in somebody else’s struggle in case they do not personally relate to the authors’ work.

The extended use of poetry opens up spaces for new ideas. The consciousness in connecting individual suffering and structural oppression led to reflections how to seek for social change. Poetry was not the mere expression of thoughts but also political activism.¹⁸⁸ It provided a medium for constructive political and cultural dialogue.¹⁸⁹ For the writers, poetry was “one of the matches that lights the fuse of revolution” as well as “a trigger finger when the time is right and the people need it”¹⁹⁰. In the introduction to an anthology about poets resisting gender violence, Laura Wiseman calls poetry-writing a revolution carried out by fighters armed with words.¹⁹¹

¹⁸² Ibid. 54.

¹⁸³ Ibid. 60.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. 54.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid. 96 .

¹⁸⁶ Kempen 2001: 12.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. 18.

¹⁸⁸ Whitehead 1996: 53.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. 83.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid. 51.

¹⁹¹ Wiseman 2013: XVI.

V.1 Why (of All Things) Poetry?

Poetry has been frequently used by humans to express emotional and political thoughts, but what are the reasons to choose poetry over other kinds of fictional and non-fictional writings?

First of all, poetry is generally easily accessible.¹⁹² This is true both for production and publishing.¹⁹³ It is possible to write and publish it piece by piece; it is adaptable to any time, space and amount of money. Also, the performance or perception of poetry needs less time and attention for both author and audience.

Writing poetry requires less time and effort because it has few requirements for linear narratives and length,¹⁹⁴ particularly since the discovery of the open form.¹⁹⁵ The non-narrative characteristic is of particular importance in my eyes. Poetry opens up spaces in which traumatizing experiences can be phrased without rules, only guided by the unfiltered expressions of imagination.¹⁹⁶ Some researchers see trauma as a way the human brain deals with a missed memory. The shocked brain denies remembering the experienced atrocity and blinds it out. It is not accessible anymore by rational thinking. Instead the memories are often saved in emotions or pictures.¹⁹⁷ Those are differently or more subconsciously accessible than other memories. Poetry allows for a form of expression that fits to a broader variety of memories than rational thinking. It draws a connection between the subconscious inaccessible traumas to the conscious self.¹⁹⁸ Therefore poetry provides outlet for problems that would not be accessible via rational argumentation.

Another revolutionary and powerful ability of poetry is its ability to bring together the individual and collective. Borders between them are crossed when they blend their experiences and sufferings together.¹⁹⁹ The writer puts out their personal thoughts and the reader tries to comprehend, to connect to this insight. They identify due to personal experiences. Both parties gain insight about themselves through the other, based on poetry as a mediating tool. A circle of thoughts and emotions flows from the writer to the reader and create a community. The connection of individual to the collective is what gives poetry its social and political importance. Poetry bears the possibility to break through power structures and turn them upside down. Oppression is turned into new possibilities and voices. It does not

¹⁹² This is ironic, since beginning in the late eighteenth century, women were considered by the literary establishment much more suited to the prosaic tasks of writing fiction, while the lofty work of seeking inspiration and writing poetry was thought to be the domain of men.

¹⁹³ Whitehead 1996: 41.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. 41.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. 41.

¹⁹⁶ Premo Steele 2000: 4.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. 2.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. 4.

¹⁹⁹ Whitehead 1996: 18.

follow formal limitations. Instead, it opens a space where colonial powers are less influential, where people can achieve the power and language to be resistant out of their own inspiration.

This act is artistic and creates something new that has implications on the whole community. The interconnection between author and audience is evident in the performance of the political message because it reflects both the content and intent of the poem itself. The achieved unity is already part of the aim of the de-colonial anti-patriarchal struggle because it breaks hierarchies and creates solidarity. The intertextuality between writer and reader is generally important, but especially for feminist poetry it is necessary to connect shared daily experiences with political views.

V.2 The Concept of Testimonio

The mechanisms which give political poetry its importance are also found in the concept of ‘testimonio.’ It triggers the connection between collective and individual, similar to poetry, and also combines personal experience with a political position. ‘Testimonio’ is Spanish and refers to a certain concept that is not simply translatable into ‘testimony’. Instead, it means that one person tells their personal story that is inevitably connected to their whole community. It is a collaborative effort and intends to raise consciousness and effect change.²⁰⁰ Laura C. Kempen gives a more detailed explanation through reflecting on other authors’ ideas of ‘testimonio.’²⁰¹ All of them agree that a crucial part of the definition of the concept is that the individual writes about their own experiences. The story-teller is an agent of collaborative memory who transfers their personal thoughts into the public sphere. They share a subjective and personal view that enables identification.²⁰²

Often this includes the fact that the author can accept the painful memories. By dedicating the story to collective healing they indirectly dive into a process of self-healing.²⁰³ Poetry provides a distinctive means of access to pain that resembles a healing ritual.²⁰⁴ Anzaldúa acknowledges the healing power of poetry. Physical and spiritual wounds and memories are turned into solutions by identifying their causes.²⁰⁵ In her community it is the task of a shaman.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁰ Kempen 2001: 101.

²⁰¹ Ibid. 103–104.

²⁰² Ibid. 105.

²⁰³ Saporta Sternbach 1991: 98.

²⁰⁴ Premo Steele 2000: 2.

²⁰⁵ Ibid. 82–83.

²⁰⁶ Ibid. 81.

Like in poetry, in the concept of 'testimonio', the borders between private and political disappear.²⁰⁷ The relationship of speaker and listener is a performance that is necessary for accessing the trauma because the self is constructed through the other.²⁰⁸ The reader meanwhile becomes a witness to somebody else's trauma. It is a way of sharing somebody else's memories and making the conscious decision to participate.²⁰⁹

A very important and influential example of 'testimonio' from Guatemala is "Yo, Rigoberta Menchú". Rigoberta Menchú is a Guatemalan Maya woman who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992 for defending the human rights of her people.²¹⁰ Her work is a perfect example for 'testimonio' because it shows her own narration and reflection of her and her people's story. The title emphasizes on that. She makes herself a bridge between her community and the outside world. For her and community's sake, she used it as a tool of passion, poetry and wisdom. Rigoberta Menchú's work is not only that she told the story of the genocide and received international recognition. She has also changed the role of the female subject within her community by breaking out of it.²¹¹ She has been intensely criticised for not being authentic.. She has been accused of having made up many parts of her story. The variations that happen when she tells her story over and over again bring her text and story to life. She does not give evidence for a legal case²¹² in which she would have committed to one version, but instead her storytelling shows that there is no one single truth.²¹³ How she was treated reflects on the discrimination against somebody who does not come from the Global North, from a place of rationality and binary oppositions.²¹⁴ The criticism questions her authenticity, which continues the imperialist marginalization of the indigenous speaker. Her identity is necessarily fluid because she moves between communities and has been doing that for a long time already. It is part of being the mediator between her community and the world she wants to inform.²¹⁵ This inevitable creates a distance to her traditional indigenous identity.

V.3 Application of Poetry

There are many examples of how poetry has been used to bring personal stories into the public and to overcome marginalisation. Even writers who later became professional political

²⁰⁷ Saporta Sternbach 1991: 97.

²⁰⁸ Premo Steele 2000: 85.

²⁰⁹ Ibid. 1.

²¹⁰ Silverstone 1998: 78.

²¹¹ Kempen 2001: 125.

²¹² Ibid. 109.

²¹³ Ibid. 127.

²¹⁴ Ibid. 5.

²¹⁵ Ibid. 5.

authors often started with writing about their own private experiences, such as Audre Lorde or bell hooks. There is a large range of collections of essays written by marginalised women who decided to share their experiences. Noteworthy examples of this are Laura M. Wiseman's "Women write resistance: Poets Resist Gender Violence"; "Women's Untold Stories: Breaking Silence, Talking Back, Voicing Complexity" by Mary Romero and Abigail J. Stewart; or Browdy de Hernandez's "Women Writing Resistance: Essays on Latin America".

Writing poetry has the advantage of being easily accessible, and recent decades has made publishing even more feasible due to the development of less expensive technology. Radio offers a spoken medium for poetry and is one of the most accessible ways to reach people living in remote areas. Where internet is available, it provides cheap and uncomplicated ways of publishing written words or performances, in blogs, for example.²¹⁶

Poetry allows authors to share their thoughts, even if this kind of expression normally would not fit to the mainstream of the society the authors live in. Poetry opens up spaces that are otherwise denied to many, thus creating an opportunity to speak, for many who are normally voiceless. According to Spivak, poetry gives a voice to the marginalised because it is not an expression given to them from outside but instead it is a tool that lets the subaltern develop their form of expression. They achieve the agency to express themselves and break through the suppressive mechanisms.

The Western feminist struggle and its use of poetry demonstrate the existence of a possible tool that is applicable to the Guatemalan case, but also shows existing risks. Spivak underlines the risk of one group speaking for another and therefore reproducing the mechanisms of suppression, such as an urban elite speaking for rural more marginalised women. The 'Coalitional Voice' is a concept widely used in feminist politics. It deals with exactly this problem. All parties agree on a form of coalition that is open and shifting, and fulfils a temporary goal. It recognizes differences between the participants in order to avoid empty sloganeering and universalizing.²¹⁷ The participants speak only from the point of their own personal experience and remain in that position. A complicated nexus of identities (that includes not just gender, but race, ethnicity, class, age, and sexuality) evolves that has to be respected by all participants to avoid assuming one common homogenous position. The 'Coalitional Voice' creates a possibility for the cooperation of women from different backgrounds and privileges without reproducing suppressive mechanisms.

Writing poetry can be used to break marginalisation. It allows for insights into a marginalised position, such as a female position in a patriarchal society, or an indigenous

²¹⁶ Classifiedsarcastic (2011).

²¹⁷ Whitehead 1996: 56.

identity in a racialized society. Both the authors and the audience gain knowledge through this insight, either about themselves or about others. Understanding is a crucial basis for unity and political struggle, as in the feminist case, which is based on the common identification as women. Even though not all power structures can be questioned and deconstructed at once, poetry and the coalitional voice offer powerful tools for political struggle. These instruments reflect a de-colonial struggle, in which not all layers of power structures can be simultaneously dissolve.

VI Data

VI.1 Data Collection

Due to the lack of evidence statistics provide about the attitudes and possibilities of Guatemalan women to resist the prevalent violence, another kind of data are needed. What data can provide information on their thoughts and feelings without risking to speak *for* them? In a country where women are silenced and targeted by violence this data would have to be self-created and independent from mainstream forces. For various reasons already pointed out poetry provides a space for exactly this.

Therefore I started searching for poems written by Guatemalan women, ideally by indigenous authors, but often there is no information on their ethnic background. I will come back later to the constraining fact that only poetry already published is accessible to me, which inevitably raises the question who is able to publish, who has access. This most likely is the urban mestizo elite. After an extensive internet research I found a feminist Literature Collective based in Guatemala City, a few blogs and the website of a US-American NGO called Cultural survival. They did a poetry-workshop about writing remembrance with indigenous people in Guatemala. I collected all poetry that contained any key words connected to gender, femicide, GBV, women, feminism, war etc. I did not make a list of these keywords; I just kept every single poem that vaguely seemed to deal with my topic. I decided to focus on poems published by the literature collective, one from a blog, two from Cultural survival and some poems I came across in the foreword of a report of a human rights organisation. The poetry I found was mostly in Spanish, only the poems that were the outcome of the poetry workshop carried out by Cultural Survival were translated from Mayan language into English. I stopped collecting when I found around 40 poems that seemed relevant to me. I could only estimate which sample size would be representative, so it was the available sources and estimated time I would need to dedicate to evaluate them that decided upon my selection.

VI.2 Authors

I have included background knowledge about the authors in order to give an overview about where they come from and to make their intentions and messages more transparent. People's knowledge, backgrounds and socializations always differ and the symbolic meanings of poetry are specifically transported between the lines and might only be accessible with a specific knowledge. For some authors I was unable to locate further background knowledge and for others it is very limited. Generally, I still trust the poetry to speak for itself and further information is mostly additional to provide further hints to the reader.

Most of my authors I found via the *Colectiva Mujeres en las Artes*, which means the collective influenced my choices to a large degree. Some background knowledge on this will be useful to locate my analysis in a bigger frame.

The collective consists of five women who founded it in 2001.²¹⁸ All of them are from a Guatemalan an urban middle-class, mestizo background, and were raised with the privilege of extended education: Guisela López (PHD), Carolina Escobar Sartí (PHD), Solis-Fong (PHD), Lucía Morán (Specialization), Maya Alvarado (Master) and Maya Varinia Alvarado Chávez (the only one from who I do not use poetry). Their academic background mostly includes political science, sociology and gender studies. They were all born between 1960 and 1970, write poetry, have already published poetry, articles, essays or other works, are publicly respected and politically active in different ways.²¹⁹ Their contributions to the collective range from lectures to classes and workshops. So far around 100 people have attended their services. The collective creates a space for female writing, creativity and the acknowledgement of female literature, arts, desires, and thoughts. It is designed to be a horizontal space for creation and transformation in which women support each other. They fight for a culture of peace, of equality and respect to humans and nature. Their fight for social change deals with oppression and rewrites a history in which there is space for creativity, female strength, and fun.²²⁰

The Seminario (*Seminario de Literatura Feminista y Ciudadanía*, Instituto Universitario de la Mujer Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala) is the academic branch of the collective and exists since 2009. It serves as an academic alternative for women to study feminist literature, and to write themselves. It is coordinated by Guisela López and the founders of the collective are also the main professors but invited professors (successful writers, indigenous

²¹⁸ *Literatura Feminista* 2010.

²¹⁹ *Colectiva Literature* 2014.

²²⁰ López 2004 and 2010.

women, international professors) and older students also give classes.²²¹ The seminar published “Mujeres, discurso y ciudadanía”. In this piece, 24 participants of the seminar publish some of their poetry. They are all independent politically active people from diverse backgrounds who take the initiative to write about their position and to reinterpret the world from a female position.²²² They are all middle-aged and mostly mestizo. The authors whose poetry I use are María Lucrecia Vicente Franco, Carla Yadira De León Alvarado, Samara Pellecer, and Alma Yolanda Nuñez. Only three of them are indigenous, which, Guisela López explained in an email, is due to the lack of access to education for indigenous people. I used the poetry of two of them: Feliciano Ujpán and Adela Delgado Pop who are both involved in struggles for indigenous rights.²²³

Other authors I used are Hilda Morales Trujillo who is a law professor and lawyer for women’s rights from Guatemala. She grew up in poverty but became a human rights activist and was even nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005.²²⁴ The other poets I used are less famous. Alejandrina is an author of a poem on femicide which I found on the blog ‘Poemas del Alma’. This blog publishes well known poetry from Latin America but also gives unknown writers the opportunity to upload their poems, which is the case for Alejandrina.²²⁵ There’s no further information about her. Probably she is not a professional writer. Ana Luisa Catalino, Rigoberta González Sul, Olga Mercedes, Ajcolón Tuís and Alma Temaj are all indigenous women who participated in a workshop given by Cultural survival about writing remembrance. They are also involved in radio projects. That is the extent of the information I could find about them.

Some of the authors are particularly privileged. They are urban educated mestizo women that are probably less affected, or less directly affected, by misogyny and GBV than poor rural indigenous women. They raise their voices in coalition with less powerful, maybe even voiceless women. I will consider this in the analysis but not too much weight should be given to this fact since again the poetry should speak for itself and be a testimony in itself.

VI.3 Methodology

Major decisions I made regarding my methodology mostly followed the intention to apply an inductive bottom-up approach. I wanted to open a space that would allow women to speak through their poems and not filter them more than necessary. Of course by translating and

²²¹ Colectiva Mujeres en las Artes (2014).

²²² López 2010: 17.

²²³ See email in Annex, and López 2010.

²²⁴ World People’s blog 2007.

²²⁵ Alejandrina 2011.

interpreting them I would necessarily interfere but I try to be critical of my own view and attentive of my own approach. A huge part of the poetry I chose, particularly that by the literature collective, is consciously political: that means an inherent characteristic of the poems is to carry a message.

Though I am aware that my limited language skills in Spanish and lack of cultural knowledge make it possible (or likely) that some meanings will escape my grasp. Neither would interpreting poetry in my mother tongue necessarily prevent me from that nor do I generally trust in the concept of objectivity. I am trying to be attentive but certainly my own attitude towards GBV influences my conclusions.

By showing my translation and providing information on the authors I am trying to make my approach more transparent. The English language does not provide an equivalent to several grammatical options in Spanish, which are used in the poems. This is the case for different linguistic features but most important for the female version of adjectives and nouns. English does not make a difference between grammatical genders, unlike Spanish. In Spanish, the 'a' for singular or 'as' for plural at the end of nouns or adjectives demonstrate the female gender. This is an important limitation to consider in my poetry analysis. The poetry is written by women and phrases particularly female experiences, pointing out the female view which is otherwise often neglected. The grammatical marking is therefore relevant to underline the female voice expressed through poetry.

Meuser/Nagel's interpretative method inspired me.²²⁶ Their method has been developed for analysing interviews but their approach seems very natural and also transferrable to poetry. They developed five steps for how to analyse and condense interview material, while remaining faithful to the original source and still considering a theoretical background. These five steps are paraphrasing, finding titles, comparing passages of text of similar topics, conceptualising them sociologically, and a theoretical generalisation. Unlike in interviews, I cannot consider how the interviewee speaks which is a factor in Meuser/Nagel's approach. Instead, the material I use has been given more time and intention: it is not the written version of oral words, but a conscious phrasing of thoughts, intentionally chosen for publication.

I decided on a few steps that are fairly close to Meuser/Nagel's steps. Setting these steps allowed and forced me to proceed with all my poems in the same way and make the outcome more comparable. First I translated all poems. The next step was to summarize the translations in order to make them more accessible, without losing their main patterns or influencing their messages. After that I arranged the poems by their different intentions and

²²⁶ Meuser/Nagel 1991.

grouped poems with similar messages together. I created many different categories and then realized they were too narrow to continue with them. Too many poems belonged into many different categories, which failed to make the poetry accessible. Therefore I merged some of the categories together. I rely on the final categories to demonstrate how poetry accomplishes its social function. I also realized that the number of poems I chose was too large for such a short thesis. I dropped some, but kept as many different authors and messages as possible.

By merging various categories, they each became broader and much better to work with. During the process of inventing subcategories I had to reflect on how the different topics and approaches of the poems would be connected to each other. Considering the order of formation of the categories and how they are intertwined created a great chance for me to rethink them. The topics raised in the categories are steps on the path of building resistance. My outcome resembled of my chapter about the social function of poetry, which seems to be a great proof of evidence, because the same framework leading from individual acknowledgement to unified resistance occurred to me but had developed independently. I will come back to this in my analysis-chapter.

With these categories, the subsequent step was to substantiate them with evidence and connect them to the context of my particular Guatemalan case study.

Flexibility, as Meuser/Nagel emphasize, was necessary to work with the poems. It was my own decision how much relevance to give to which poem or trope. Due to the fact that I had skipped some poems that were too similar I could not estimate the importance of certain tropes by looking at how often they occurred in the poetry. My data does not show how important issues are through mere quantity. The relevance I gave to each is also based on my knowledge of what was relevant in the plethora of poetry I read before I made my selections. Furthermore, for my analysis I have to trust the poems and authors' clarity as well as my intuition and understanding.

VI.4 My Own Role as a Researcher

This chapter provides insight on my motivation to write about this topic. It also touches on my own role as a researcher from the Global North dealing with post-colonialism and the inner attitude of people from the Global South.

I am writing about a group of people I do not belong to and who are much less privileged than me in a global comparison, but probably even within the societies they and I respectively belong to if this is comparable at all). Even having the chance to gain knowledge about something that is so far away from my reality and then write about it shows a strong

imbalance of power between me and the ‘objects’ of my research. The women I am writing about are not only geographically and culturally far from me but also on the other end of the global imbalance of power—based on a history of colonisation. I acknowledge the absurdity I notice of me writing about post-colonialism from a perspective based on an education that still reproduces Eurocentrism and is coined by the capitalist values I am trying to deconstruct and criticise.

I decided to write this chapter to create transparency about my own position. I cannot know for certain where my interest in writing about a topic that is barely connected to me comes from. In fact I feel strong discomfort about the many cuttings and generalisations I am forced to do to stay in my frame and to not lose the overview of my topic. Even though my intentions might be good and I want to shine light on an issue I find important, the struggle of Guatemalan women, I do exactly what Spivak sees as a risk: I am sliding into speaking *for* the Guatemalan women. I reproduce asymmetrical power instead of letting them speak themselves.

This necessarily raises the question if speaking *about* somebody can avoid speaking *for* them and not be paternalistic. Mohanty’s concept of feminist solidarity which is based on Jodi Dean’s reflective solidarity, resonates with me.²²⁷ She proposes an inclusive kind of solidarity that entitles individuals to talk about others based on a reflected analysis in order to create a coalition for social change.²²⁸ She does not reduce inter-female solidarity across ethnic boundaries to ‘global sisterhood’ which has the huge risk of letting powerful women define the struggle and reproduces the marginalisation of the other less powerful women.²²⁹ One point I want to emphasize is the mutual benefit of the parties involved, either by sharing privileges or learning from each other.²³⁰ This cooperation is based on shared interests.²³¹

This is the same case for the concept of the coalitional voice, which is perfectly applicable for poetry and has been mentioned already in the chapter on the “social function of poetry”. This concept emphasizes on the coalition being temporary and acknowledging differences. This allows for a focus in the shared interests of an issue, as it is the case for the Guatemalan authors who are from higher social classes.

Personally I am even closer to the position of Cultural Survival and its intentions, because the NGO is from the Global North and partly works out of academic interests.

²²⁷ Mohanty 2003.

²²⁸ Ibid. 523.

²²⁹ Ibid. 503.

²³⁰ Ibid. 522.

²³¹ Ibid. 505.

During my research on the social function of poetry, I came across the idea that witnessing is the decision to participate.²³² I put myself into the role of a witness by gaining knowledge about the current situation in Guatemala. I witnessed both atrocities and a tool to overcome them, which gives me the responsibility to pass this knowledge on to other women who could learn from it. My passion for the subject instilled in me the desire to be a translator or mediator, despite my limited knowledge and skill required for this position.²³³

My choice is partly based on my female gender and my personal experiences I made with patriarchy, which convinced me of the necessity of feminism. I am trying to be attentive and to acknowledge my subjective position and learn from the women I write about. This is easy in my case because there is so much I can learn for my own feminist struggle from their bravery and the tools they use. This is probably the main reason why I chose this topic and why I am so motivated by it. Writing poetry is a feminist act because it reconstitutes the female subject. Therefore the topic of this paper is essentially connected to my own life and learning process.

VI.5 Summaries of Poems

The following section contains of translations of each single poem I chose for my analysis. My translation focuses on the content of the poetry, rather than style. The translation should increase the accessibility of the poetry for the reader. That means the translations are sometimes slightly shorter and follow English sentence structures instead of keeping the order of the Spanish. I used ‘/’ to replace line breaks in the poems and ‘//’ for blank lines. The originals can be found in the annex. The poems in this chapter are already arranged into the categories I created. Most of the poetry I leave uncommented, with the exception of a few pieces where I find it necessary to give an explanation and point out some (hidden) importance.

VI.5.1 Gender Based Violence

1) *Quién es?* (Yoli Nuñez): Who Is It?

– Who is the one of thousand colours that flies in the height? – / They ask to see her flying. // It’s a butterfly / that brings the history, / the dreams, / hopes and strengths / of many women who think. / Who want to be free, / without oppressions / without

²³² Premo Steele 2000: 1.

²³³ Kempen 2001: 4, 152.

violence... // But, who is it? / It is Casandra, / it is Sofia, / it is her, it is me and it is you! / Beautiful and diverse...

2) **Titulares rojos (Ana Lucía Morán): Red Titles**

Behind every press title / are the tides. / Today / women we [part of the verb] are / red titles. / Behind those / the functional monster of violence / which is always brutal / conducts us / to imprisonment / to silence / to domestic work / the kitchen / forced maternity / non-mutual loyalty / imposed heterosexuality / obedience... // But they should know / that WE / will never / return.

This poem shows how women-killings became headlines and how the author feels helpless by being overpowered by those forces she cannot influence, like tides. The individual cases vanish behind news titles and the victims and their stories are not acknowledged any further. The permanence and amount of violence shows that it is a structural issue that does not happen randomly, but limits every woman's life. The poem ends with the empowering call that women will not return anymore. Where they would return to, whether the structural cage GBV has created or anything else, is not expressed.

3) **IX (Ana Lucía Morán)**

We women are always in danger, no significance to skin colours, cloth, academic titles, relationships or relations.. Nothing protects us from the consensual behaviour of violence against us simply because we are women.

4) **rosario de cuerpos (Carolina Escobar Sartí): Rosary of Bodies (to the assassinated women of Guatemala)**

in the name of the mother / the daughter and / all the dead (females). / Amen. // Painful mysteries. // Agony. A mother does not recognize / the destroyed face of her daughter / nor her body, fenced in barbed wire. / Pray for us. // Lashing. / A girl does not understand why her mother / stops letting her go to school / and already everybody speaks about the red tears of the orphan (female). / Pray for us. // Coronation of thorns. It was her fault. / For being a slut. That is what her naked body said. / And the semen between her little legs. / Pray for us. // A cross on the back. Beheaded, / humiliated, stoned, marked, / beaten, tortured, mutilated. / Pray for us. //

Crucifixion. A blag bag in an empty grave / for the dismembered woman with nobody's name / and none. XX. / Pray for us. / Pray for us. / Pray for us.

This poem is dedicated to the assassinated women of Guatemala. It is characterized by its prayer-like tone. It starts with the title which draws a line between praying and dead bodies, but also reduces corpses to beads on a chain.

The beginning sounds like the Our Father, but instead of the father, the sun and the Holy Spirit, female versions and dead women are addressed. The poem is full of religious references, the Amen, the repeated "pray for us".

First, it is about a girl, than about her mother. At a point it is no longer clear whether the mother or daughter was the victim of the murder. One line breaks after 'a girl does not understand why her mother'. This could hint at the death of the mother and the social dimension of the women killings that led to a lost generation.

One common trope is also in this poem: victim blaming. The victim of the murdered is called a slut and accused to have offered her naked body. That semen is found between her legs points at her guilt. By having been abused, she is said to have retrospectively given up her right on the integrity of her body.

Also the story resembles the crucifixion of Jesus; symbols mentioned are the (in this case red) tears, the coronation, carrying a cross, being naked and humiliated.

5) Cuerpos Nombrados y NO (Ana Lucía Morán): Mentioned and UNmentioned Bodies

During the war bodies that were agonized / disappeared, assassinated... / bodies which had fled from the mountains / bodies that ended up without flesh and that were turned into skeletons with skin / bodies that lost names, houses, animals, harvest, mother earth / bodies that changed garment, language, religion / bodies that were forced to use a gun, to signalize, attack, bury their / village. //

And there were other bodies... / bodies that for the reason of being female / formed a military aim / Bodies as a reward for the soldier / bodies as a medium for martyrdom, humiliation, and demonstration of power over the enemy. /

Bodies as a medium to diminish, separate and extinguish a group. /

Bodies that became enslaved for domestic service and sexual abuse. / Bodies that became pregnant with children. Bodies that aborted. / Bodies infected with curable and incurable illnesses. / Bodies that became sterile. / Bodies that have not forgotten and will not forget, they stay silence. / Bodies that are frozen inside from horror / and outside the finger of unfair stigma still points at them. //

For every body ... those named and those unnamed. TRUTH //
For those bodies that carry the memory of the Guatemalan holocaust. JUSTICE //
For all those bodies... REPARATION //
For the bodies that we are now and those that come. NO REPETITION.

Femicide

6) Poesía sobre femicidio (Brenda Solis-Fong): Poetry About Femicide

I / In Guatemala / like in Ciudad Juarez / being a woman / results in an act of
courage. / II / Therefore they recommend: / do not go out when the sun sets. / III /
Therefore they say / that the dead ones (female) were / gang members, / prostitutes, /
drug dealers, / cheaters, / bad, / crazy. / IV / Therefore they discovered / that we were
/ easy to immobilise, / to violate, / to kill. / That is how they would like to control /
the rest of the species.

7) Femicidio (Guisela López): Femicide

The fear / makes its nest / in our bodies. // Invades our dreams. // Blocks / every
deliberate act / from our lives. // It's necessary to banish the / hunt.

8) Solo cifras (Ana Lucía Morán): Only Numbers

Today / appeared another assassinated woman. / Yesterday it was three. // These add/
to the hundreds every year / to the thousands / during the armed internal conflict. //
What is deterring, sick and dignant / is that they are only numbers // that do not move
anything / which do not detain anything / that do not change anything.

9) Femicidio (Alejandrina): Femicide

In the dark silence of this room, / which once was a temple / of caresses and
whispers, / loving words, I hear only the passing of the clock, / cruel instrument...; /
mark and remark the time / of forgetting and horror / You killed my hugs, my smiles
and song; / You humiliated my provincial kiss. / Harmony, like a broken doll, / sits in
the corner of disgrace / gagged, restrained on feet and hands. / Nothing keeps me on
the table; / the basket of fruits / overstuffed with stones... / I am a dreamer [naïve], I
am still waiting / hoping for a shining sun / that dries the purple crying / that drops
from my legs. / A scream of freedom surges in my gorge... / and then.. Nothing.

10) A Chayito (Brenda Solis-Fong): To Chayito

The pain I cause you when I tell you that I love you / than a deadly bullet fired into
your head. / My sister told me about it in dreams / and I cried out of anger,
remembering it. // You left wearing that blouse you liked so much, / the white one,
with the lace. / And without intending it you left, in your suitcase / our family's
happiness / which in that time / became scarce. // Time passes and pain settles down /
The shot-down soul scars over. / My mother does not cry anymore (frequently), / My
father sat down in silence, / The village remembers you beautifully and tenderly /
And in this world / your broken pursuits of a woman stay.

11) A Cristina Siekavizza (Brenda Solis-Fong): To Cristina Siekavizza

Pink silken bows fly / pink bows blackened by smoke / pink bows persist / they
fathom, inquire, / request .. Where is Cristina / and like diasporas, the notice flies. /
captive women break the silence. / Blindfolds wipe off, the (caught) justice curls,
which flag, which bows. / Where is Cristina, beautiful Cristina? / And a choir of
voices arises / without considering the social condition they arise. / voices that fight
the fear / voices that resurrect the thousands of women brutally assassinated / made
savages in the impunity / broken families / unheard cries "where is my Cristina, as
well" / crosses overloaded with Christ (in mercy) / sleepless, prayers / pools of tears /
fugitives in the immodesty / sold justice.

Cristina Siekavizza was a victim of (domestic) femicide in Guatemala City in 2011. She or
her body could not be found for a long time. Her family organised marches to shine light on
domestic violence. The case was intensely covered by the news and led to increasing attention
on femicides. This is probably the reason why the author picked this particular example, out
of many that happen on a regular basis.

In the poem, ribbons stand for normality and innocence, but they first blacken and finally
disappear. The justice system seems to be blind to what is going on and the shock becomes so
big that that people start rising up, not considering their own suppression anymore. They
connect this case to their own missed loved ones, to their own unheard cases. The poem
denounces the impunity of the legal system, mentions corruption and the "sold" justice, and
emphasizes on the frustration of the affected people.

VI.5.2 Voice

12) **Indudablemente (Feliciano Ujapán):** Undoubtedly

Undoubtedly / is the immensity / and meaning / of time. //

Today / I am / with the actual women / weaving / our history: / writing it.

13) **Monólogo para mí (Vicente Franco):** Monologue for Myself

I am experimenting / with a combination of sentiments / that manifest in my body./

They call for my attention, / they want to tell me something, / and I have to make a
break, / create silence in me, / to listen to me.

14) **La voz de la sin voz (Vicente Franco):** The Voice of the Voiceless (female)

From these beautiful red lips / arises / the voice of a woman who had lost her voice.

// Because they educated her for silence. / Because they forced her to silence herself.

/ Because they don't want to listen to her. // To regain her voice / she has to enter
herself, / get to know herself again, / search for herself in other women, / speak a
new language. // This woman you see here... / has regained her voice.

15) **Poesía (Carla Yadira De León Alvarado):** Poetry

Mysterious forms / in which they (female), / the others (female) / – who I admire – /
name / exactly / that what counts.

The author expresses admiration for (other) women who write and express what she agrees on to be important. Unlike her, the others (can) raise their voice and find the right, the exact words. They speak for the author as well and she is happy and grateful for it. Their support allows her to mention something that is difficult for herself.

Of course it is somehow ironic that this is written in a poem, because it shows that the author is capable to speaking. Maybe other women think exactly what she is writing here, which emphasizes again the point of speaking for the voiceless. She phrases the perspective of the voiceless phrasing their perspective on others who are not voiceless. Instead of being ashamed for her helplessness the author can relate to what others write, can gain energy from their words.

The title shows that this function of poetry is the very core of the medium.

16) **Conjuros (Guisela López):** Spell

Long live the magic words! // The witches / come from everywhere, / carry magic potions, / exchange spells, / invent sorceries, / everything / to deter / the hate / of men. // I awake, / terrified / I dream / that somebody throws cadavers on the roof / – they are assassinated women – // I get up / and write / like someone / performing an exorcism / – I write – / without a break... / until dawn. // I invoke the water, / origin of all life, / the earth, / cloth of the mountains, / the wind, / who calls out, / the fire / that cuts the darkness. // I invoke the strength and passion of our ancestors (female) / so that they make my voice / their residence.

Breaking the silence

17) Ni Una Más (Guisela López): Not One More (female)

I / When they steal / the dreams from life / the sky covers itself, / the seas / overflow from salt / divide themselves / bitter sum of tears. / II / So much pain does not fit into the word. // They overflow from silence / the broken smiles, / kisses not blooming / into promises... / Spool (for a kite) without thread / drifting in the wind. // III // How many broken histories, / fish on asphalt. / Memories / of sunrises full of sun, / Sunday dresses and pink lips, / dancing shoes and rag dolls, / valentines-hearts / and birthday cakes. // IV // “Because your eyes are evening skies” / “Because your hands are eager birds” / “Because your hair is (a) river / and your steps... / traces of the moon on the grass” // Lolita ili tina, / Lety sole ana, / Tere cesi ale // Their names covering the cities walls with cries / with trodden daisies / with dead poems / before spreading the swings. // We cannot close our eyes to the terror / its labyrinth could devour us. / To bridle the shadows that threaten us / sum up our voices, / breaks from doubts, / to not lack roses / or verses, / or songs. // Let’s be intolerant to the silence, / so that / Never one again / is divested from April, / the wind, / and the rain.

Hopelessness can infiltrate and destroy everything; any emotions and actions, symbolized by nature and broken promises of positivity, are put on hold from having been overwhelmed by pain. This pain is shortly interrupted by sweet memories, but without explanation the poem recites the victims` names. There is no escape from the terror. This terror has to be resisted and finally will lead to a united struggle so that nobody is denied anymore what is strongly needed: happiness, beauty, lightness.

18) Augurios y premoniciones (Guisela López): Omen and Foreshadowings

Despite all the shadows / we won't shy away from our path / to turn to hopelessness.
// Since centuries we forge ahead / opening spaces / breaking stereotypes, / breaking /
the taming walls / imposed on us / by gender. // The witches unite... // Their magic /
sprinkles the night / with fireflies / the silence / of words.

Mourning

19) Untitled (Ana Luisa Catalino (Mam), Stereo Acodim, Nampix Ixtahuacán)

Guatemala, a country where hard-working men and women live in harmony,
in those mountains and forests, smiling like the flowers in the gardens, just like the
birds with their songs in the mountains; but one day they killed those human beings
without knowing what they had done. Why did they have to die this way?

20) Nan Pix Pix (Rigoberta González Sul, Radio Ixchel, Olga Mercedes Ajcolón Tuís, Radio Juventud, Alma Temaj, Radio Doble Vía)

A piece of land / with trees, mountains and a / beautiful cistern of water. / The most
beautiful place / in the world, where only / the birds and the animals live/ houses of
adobe and straw / here and there. / But the day came / when the pig Pix Pix /
screamed, wept, cried for help / before the bullets that / killed its people one by one. /
The children, the elders / watched the late afternoon, watched the sun / hide with
tears in the eyes. / Thinking of where to go, of taking refuge/ out of fear, of the
brothers with / a rifle in hand / without knowing, what will happen
tomorrow?

VI.5.3 Subject

21) Cambios (Ana Lucía Morán)

It is pretty likely that my mother / got pregnant // without an orgasm. // I.. renounce
children/ but not // orgasm.

The author makes decisions for herself, does not follow the expectations that others might put on her due to her gender. She compares her freedom with that of her mother, obviously she wants more than what was allowed to her mother, for example the acknowledgement of sexual pleasure. This would necessarily change the female role from a passive role that is about delivering pleasure into a role that is about receiving pleasure and making independent choices in favour of pleasure.

22) ‘YO’ (María Isabel Grijalva de León): I

I live like I want to live. / I love like I want to love / I don’t know if for a little bit or for an eternity. // My being, my ME, / assume an identity of a woman. / I like what I am, rebellious, critical, loved, sometimes romantic or sarcastic. // I don’t allow double morals, / injustice makes me angry. / I know there are things I cannot change, / but yes I can change what does not suit me, / for not aging / from forgetfulness.

23) Ix’balam’ qe’ (Adela Delgado Pop)

I was born a female cat, / I was born a female jaguar. / My name is Ix’balam’ qe’, / female jaguar from the cold, / the one that watches the night. // With my twin brother Jun Ahpú / – who blows the certana [blowpipe for hunting] – / we fight the darkness, / surpass the tests, / and bring light to humanity. // That’s why Ajaw, / who is father and mother, / allows us to keep close to humanity, / alternating us. // How I told them / my name is Ix’balam’ qe’, / but they also call me: The moon.

The author is strongly connected to Mayan symbolism which stands for having power, standing between human and supernatural world, being strong and in transformation. She feels responsibility for humanity based on her role according to her Mayan identity.

This poem also reminds of Mayan gods being both female and male and how these categories are not set in stone.

VI.5.4 Transformation and Utopia

24) Deseo II (Samara Pellecer): Wish II

I wish that we women / open our windows, / that we emerge / through the words, / that we walk free, secure, / with the only and vital acceptance / to be and recognize us women.

25) Caminares (Guisela López): Walking (noun in plural, not translatable)

From the pavement of the world / we see a huge parade of the absurd passing by. // Its mask of power / does not succeed to intimidate us. / Neither its wild ferocious slap / with which it guards its absolute aegis. // Neither the gold foil nor the carnival / troops of the bicephalous dragon / seduce us. // With the sunset / we let free a kite, / its rainbow goes painting the streets. // We walk / until the moon / offers to replace

itself, / untangling its braid of colours. // We believe another world is possible, / a world with viewpoints of sun, / in which we women / can carry smiles. // In which girls and boys / can play together, / running on meadows singing thousands of songs / and drink fresh water out of springs.

26) Presentes (Guisela López): Present

We women / walk along the squares of this world, / spreading words. // We came from every corner, / some sad, / some happy, / others broken. / Drawing the rainbow / with our skin colours, / and constellations / with our diverse gazes. //

We meet / announcing / the sovereignty of our bodies, / defending the freedom of our steps. / Making our voice resonate / from one continent to the other. //

Passing over mandates, / building lovely metaphors / with the strength of our desires. // Connecting us / beyond our ages / and nationalities. // Transporting hopes / into the hopelessness. / Weaving nets, / hard-working spiders. // Building citizenship, / centimetre by centimetre.

27) Dolor Histórico (Hilda Morales Trujillo): Historic Pain

Women / we rise up so they understand it is not just one single (female), that united we form half of the earth and the sky, / that we are ready to raise walls against violence. / and we create new norms so that our sons / break the ancestral chain of beating / So they do not learn to kill the tenderness and dignity of our daughters, granddaughters and great-granddaughters.

28) Ave Fénix (Vicente Franco): The Bird Phoenix

Every time / you feel beaten down, / come back to the source of your ancestors, / to their love, / their wisdom, / to continue with this new life / of a complete woman.

VI.6 Categories

All categories, particularly in their order, build upon each other, intertwine and sometimes even depend on each other to evolve. Some poems belong to more than one category. This overlap obviously occurs for categories like voice and, where it is not clear what comes first and which one is necessary for the development of the other. These grey areas seem to me be a sign of the complexity of the development of resistance.

VI.6.1 Gender Based Violence

The poems within this category deal with the atrocities that women have to experience or fear, and their misogynist base and long-term consequences.

The poems show in a captivating and direct manner how the authors, in their position as women, are victims and continuously in danger. Womanhood brings them to this inevitable situation (Poem No. 1 and 3). The ongoing GBV controls their behaviour and limits their freedom because they are always exposed to punishment if they break the norm (No. 3). How women dress, their location, and the time of day can all constantly be perceived as a provocation to perpetrators. It is the perpetrators who make the decisions to mutilate, unpredictable by reason or relationship to the victim (in case of Alejandrina she obviously knew her perpetrator and had had a loving relationship with him in the past, No. 9). By stepping outside their assigned norms, they risk their female value. No matter what relation they have to the perpetrator, victims are blamed with accusations; they were guilty of leaving a sphere and situation they were supposed to stay in (domestic, hard-working, mother, heterosexual, silent) (No. 2). This threat turns them into objects of control and possession (No. 6). Being female is also already an act of courage because women's lives are permeated by fear (No. 6). The poem "rosario de cuerpos" reads like a prayer (No. 4). It shows how the female body cannot be protected, and how praying seems to be the only recourse females have against the exploitation of their bodies. The poem alludes to this fact through religious overtones, connecting the sacrifice of the female body to the sacrifice of Jesus for humanity (No. 4). Victim-blaming is used as an explanation by official forces or perpetrators, even though an overwhelming number of cases have irrefutably proven that women do not need to misbehave to be targeted. Not that any misbehaviour would justify the 'vigilantism' men perform against women. Still, it is used frequently to explain why particular individuals became victims, which veils the underlying objectification. The same mechanism was applied during wartime, when female bodies were used as a reward for soldiers, and their violation as a tool to destroy communities (No. 5). They are seen as objects rather than as individuals. Therefore, not even every murder is mentioned and gets (media) attention (No. 5). Objectification and violence against women reproduce patriarchal structures by reinforcing women's dependence on male control and protection. Misogyny is accepted, permanently performed and maintained by a consensus to subordinate women (No. 3).

The poems prove that (some) women realize their position in society, and its limits and injustice. Women want to break out, fulfil their desires, own equal rights and be free. Some poems carry an empowering tone. Still, the will is not enough to break out since they are

systematically silenced and have internalized this already. This prevents social change (No. 8). Also, as mentioned earlier, breaking with the norm and raising their voices creates an additional risk for becoming targeted by violence.

The poetry contains empowering messages, especially because it deconstructs GBV as unjust (No. 3): it and shows that women are not guilty or bound to live in a subordinate manner (No. 2), even though it might be internalized already (No. 7).

Femicide

The poems in this subcategory raise topics which are often close to GBV. However, they focus on femicide directly in their titles, either by being called femicide or by the name of a victim of femicide. Femicide is the heaviest form of GBV and is a more obvious legal category than GBV and its diverse range. While numbers in cases of GBV are difficult to find, numbers and news about femicide are omnipresent (No. 8). In the poetry, the media is criticised for their sensationalism; they normalize the murders and turn women-killings into empty numbers that do not lead to any change.

The three poems about examples of femicide show an inner (No. 9) and outer perspective (No. 10 and 11). Both kinds are about pain, the struggle to survive and to hope nevertheless (No. 9). They highlight grief and trauma, either the survivor's own or the victim's families' pain. They make these experiences more accessible because they show their personal dimension: the frustration to deal with that sudden change of reality (No. 10). In the case of "A Cristina Siekavizza", the critique is specifically targeted on media and police. These three poems try to do the opposite of what media does: they turn women-killing into individual cases again, instead of empty sterile statistics or news. These cases show how unbelievable and wrong femicide is; how it is unjust and not simply an inevitable part of life that happens and can be called normal for a society. It is compared with exorcism (No. 16), which hints at how "the wrong victim" is persecuted. It indicates how this victimisation veils the real reason why women are made victims. Women are structurally discriminated against, but instead of acknowledging this fact, society blames women for it. These poems show desperation, disbelief and shock—both about the cases themselves and about the state and media's role. They directly criticise impunity and systematic misogyny.

VI.6.2 Voice

These poems are obviously the act of raising a voice themselves, but others also call for a voice or write about the need for one. A voice can only be owned by a self-aware subject; therefore gaining a voice is an essential step on the way to this subject-position, which is the

topic of the next category. The poems deal with different aspects but all emphasize the importance of a voice to break free from pain, isolation, and to strive for social change, unity and solidarity. A voice, particularly a written one, is a weapon against oppression (No. 16).

The first step is to acknowledge the self and spend time looking at the inner struggle of the individual (No. 13). This essentially takes personal suffering seriously, recognizes self-value, and creates space and a fresh gaze to look at it. In “La voz de la sin voz” (No. 14) every sentence contains of ‘herself’, ‘her’ or ‘she’. This reflection emphasizes how the attention is more and more directed inside.

The following step is to connect with others who share this pain and create unity. Phrasing experiences is often only possible in a rational descriptive way that does not cure the victim, while poetry can reflect the direct perception of pain and therefore create a new paradigm. Pain can be phrased in a manner so that it becomes tangible and discussable, which deconstructs experiences and opens up possibilities for solidarity. This also protects from getting consumed by hopelessness.

The creation of a voice can either be done by the victim themselves or by others in order to encourage victims who are in a situation worse than the creator and who cannot do it themselves (yet). In one poem this voicelessness is mentioned directly and full of symbolism (No. 14). It could refer to being speechless out of shock; it can mean to be silenced or to simply not own a voice at all. The latter refers perfectly to Spivak`s concept. The voicelessness is a social product but hopefully can be challenged by solidarity with those who are more privileged. ‘Poesía’ (No. 6) shows the perspective of somebody who is grateful that others achieve a voice. She agrees with what they are saying, says she herself could not phrase it better. That this message is transferred in a written poem obviously contains a slight irony. Gaining a voice is a truly de-colonial concept because it uses a tool coming from inside the victim to create resistance. It is the heart of poetry, the creation of power out of a suppressed place. It then can be shared with others, and step by step, draw wider circles to reclaim power.

This also is used to rewrite the past and deal with long-term traumata. The retrospective view can also be used to acknowledge the positive sides of the past and comprehend how the individual is rooted in it. In ‘Conjuros’ (No. 16) the author represents her ancestors’ passion and strength. One poem is about a female rewriting of history, even about “weaving history” (No. 12). The intent is to create a new version of history that acknowledges women’s subordination and contribution. It exposes how women were eliminated from history and shines light on the recent strategies of oppression.

Breaking the Silence

The first step of the process of gaining a voice is to break the silence about the ongoing atrocities. This too is part of the larger process of becoming a subject and gaining a voice. Breaking the silence around the atrocities and horrible experiences that happen to women is both a means and an end. Silence is isolation. One poem mentions learning a new language (No. 14). This could be a language that is better for sharing experiences because it belongs to a different cultural context. Also a different linguistic composition or way of expression could open up new thought structures. The 'old' language belongs to a sphere in which women are stuck in isolation and helplessness. It did not provide access to new spheres in which they can reach beyond their normal opportunities. The poems within this category primarily focus on pain, but with the intention of preventing hopelessness from overpowering the anger (No. 18). Instead, phrasing and sharing pain leads to a united struggle that can break the isolation (No. 17). This open mentioning of frustration and hopelessness is a way to phrase the current position and, again, a first step in direction to the acknowledgement of being a subject.

Mourning

An important part and early step in the process of speaking about atrocities is mourning. It consciously creates space for the helplessness of those who are left behind after the death of a loved one, how they were taken by surprise and shock.

Mourning could be an extra category, but I see it more as a way of phrasing pain from the past to gain ideas about how the path should lead into the future. This means it is a way of breaking the silence around a topic and transforming pain into a will for change. It is one example of creating a bridge between the act of breaking silence and transforming society. It is interesting how little mourning is mentioned in the poetry I found. I would have expected it to be a dominant trope. In my opinion this could be sign on how mourning is suppressed by the normalization of femicide and how important it could be as a step towards resistance.

VI.6.3 Subject

The poems in this category all deal with the wish or attempt to (re)claim a subject-position. This consists of acknowledging the authors' or victims' power and importance for society, but it also means that the women discover love for themselves, their identities, and their bodies. Here the concept of identity is more about the cultural and historical embeddedness than about the personal identity. Therefore the respective identity also contains pieces the individual cannot influence. Feeling love for one's personal history and ancestors though, can

be a form of accepting the self as being the product of something beautiful instead of focussing on current misery (No. 16). Women change society by changing the female role, which means what they are supposed to be in the eyes of a male-dominated society (No. 22). Instead of being suppressed they start making free decisions about their bodies, desires (also sexually: No. 21), and choices. Women see themselves as whole persons, full of emotions, contradictions and idealism (No. 22). This subject-position is an essential base for uniting with other people, for developing together, rising up and knowing what they want and do not want. Writing as an expression of a subject-position (No. 16) can also happen silently but still serve its purpose of acknowledging the own position. This can be necessary particularly if an expression that exposes the author is too dangerous for them. In a patriarchal environment this can be the case.

The poems refer to either a subject-position as women or as Maya (women). The latter reclaims a pride for their heritage. This particular background is often used to create an alternative vision of society. This includes gender relations (symbols of gender-switching and powerful goddesses in No. 23), a discursive space for rethinking the status quo, and a 'return' to a better state. For this it actually does not matter if the assumption of a better pre-colonial time is historically correct. More important is that people have a strong faith in their identity and secure standpoint which allows them to believe in alternative and better ways of living. The Mayan heritage offers both possibilities, as well as a kind of responsibility to acknowledge, protect and maintain indigenous traditions that could be helpful for the whole society. Adela Delgado Pop who is also indigenous phrases this as "bringing light to humanity" (No. 23).

The idea of subject-positions is de-colonial because being a subject with one's own ideas and will is exactly what has been denied to anybody who is suppressed. In this case, it is women and indigenous people since the colonisation of Guatemala.

VI.6.4 Transformation and Utopia

Transformation and utopian ideas are more than visions and high ideals about how female life could be better. They are also about how these aspirations could be reached and what the transformation from suppression to resurrection by poetry could look like.

Transformation is based first on having desires, visions and the will to transform. A certain pride in identity is also a necessary element of transformation. That is why this category is strongly connected to owning a subject-position (No. 21 and 24). The visions of a better life consist of being able to make decisions and have equal rights. It includes a global vision and

perception of both misogyny and the fight against GBV—across borders and colours of skin (No. 26).

Transformation can be fed by the energy that is set free by sharing utopian visions, by being able to dream despite all hardship. The representation of the Phoenix symbolizes being reborn from the ashes of the old (No. 28). No matter how dark the current situation looks, there is still string hope and potential for beauty and life (No. 27). The energy set free from utopian thinking is crucial in resisting and overcoming hopelessness (No. 25). Contemplating utopia offers a new gaze and allows for the deconstruction of patterns behind structural violence. The creation of a utopia for the future consists of dealing with the past not only for analysis (of reasons), but also in order to learn from the past and know what should look differently in the future. These women are seeking to change future generations while they look back to their ancestors. They gain power and security, and even a feeling of responsibility from that retrospection (No. 27).

The categories show the different steps approaching and taking resistance. This represents the essential message of my chapter about the social function of poetry. Therefore it is another example of poetry as a helpful tool of inner resistance and empowerment.

VII Analysis

The aim of this thesis was to explore how the high rates of GBV in Guatemala are connected to its colonial history, and to explore the possibilities for resistance by women. The whole thesis is structured to work on issues from the macro to micro level, from global to local, and from power to resistance.

Quijano's theory²³⁴ is occupied with how colonisation has implemented global power structures in a top-down-approach that reaches from global to local level. He defines power as a network of suppressive mechanisms which have huge influence on the power mechanisms on the local level. The European colonizers started the process of colonisation by physical force and manifested it by naturalizing racial hierarchies. The indigenous population was denied their agency about how to live; they had to adapt to the European structures. The European order justified itself with the idea of a unilinear history which provided the perfect explanation why the Europeans had both right and responsibility to impose their 'modern' world order. This history located the indigenous Others at the losing end of the hierarchy. Indigenous people were not real humans or citizens. They were excluded from the state and did not own the same rights as 'real' citizens.

²³⁴ Quijano 2000.

Race is a key category of colonial domination, but it does not stand alone. It is one crucial power mechanism within a network of different ones. In section III.1 is demonstrated that power is strongly intertwined with gender. For GBV this connection is important, it is the significant aspect Lugones adds to Quijano's conception.

The colonizers implemented a binary gender system that led to a system in which the biological male or female gender determines every individual's position in society. Their ideas of a modern 'correct' heterosexuality and gender norms included the subordination of women. Gender binaries, heterosexuality and patriarchy were inscribed by the humiliation of both men and women. Women became objects and male property which enforced a patriarchal ideology. Women were restricted to the private sphere. The fact that men benefitted from this shift of power most likely facilitated the implementation of the colonizers' values and regulations in the indigenous population. Obviously it is hard to find evidence if those gender binaries were (also) rooted in pre-colonial ancient Mayan cultures or mostly a colonial construct. However, the kind of regulations that came with the straight gender dichotomy underlie colonial rule. Definitely Lugones and other authors are convinced that genders were less important in power contexts in Mayan cultures before colonisation.

The double oppression by both race and gender hit indigenous women the hardest. They were subordinated and excluded by the colonial system as indigenous and objectified as women by patriarchy. The social norms based on gender dichotomy and hierarchy are still a dilemma for indigenous women today. They must locate themselves on a line between traditional and modern, between being stuck in the past and losing their 'own' culture. Anything that follows more traditional (gender) ideas enforces the accusation of being 'unmodern' and therefore anti-developmental.

Even though gender inequality is a necessary pre-condition for GBV this does not yet explain why GBV emerges. GBV stabilizes male hegemony because it reinforces patriarchy. However, the necessity to rule over someone needs to be backed up or justified. Male hatred might develop after the subordination as a justification (of a will) for power, but it does not explain why men originally chose and continue to choose to use violence against women.

However, GBV obviously exists. Violence happens and, to a severe degree, it targets women, particularly indigenous women. The Guatemalan case shows how the network of power structures implemented by colonialism has suppressed and continues to suppress women. It reproduces down to the lowest level. According to Torfing's definition, power "should be seen as a constitutive act of inclusion and exclusion that shapes and reshapes structure and agency and, thereby, constructs the conditions for how we make sense of the

world and act appropriately”.²³⁵ Embedded into this concept of power, agency defines what has been and still is denied to women, and GBV and impunity are symptoms of that. Agency is located at the absolute micro level of power. It reflects Spivak’s characteristic of the subaltern: not being aware of their own marginalization. The subalterns do not have power and are excluded from the basic tools and knowledge of how to achieve it. This powerless position is reproduced by impunity because it allows violence to happen. The perpetrators do not need to be afraid of punishment and therefore carry on. Impunity is manifested by the victim’s suppressed position and lack of instruments to rise up. These victims are not real citizens because they lack the basic right to hold their perpetrators responsible, much like indigenous people were not citizens in early colonisation. Also, the notable dearth of information I came across on indigenous women signifies both a lack of awareness and a disregard for them, which further increases their vulnerability and therefore domination.

Global power creating inequality does not *necessarily* give a reason for the extreme GBV in Guatemala. However, the existence of GBV is a *sufficient* reason to assume that global power affects and influences power structures on the local level.

VII.1 Resistance

The next step is to explore how the women suppressed by a patriarchal system can take actions for resistance. The key aspect of global power structures is that they are oppressive on all levels, including the local, and cannot be broken in a structural way. Suppressed groups do not even have a chance to phrase their suppression—or, in case of the subaltern, do not have any analysis of their function in society. The categories of race and gender are deeply internalized and determine people’s self-perception and identity. This means, like Spivak theorises, that they first need to achieve an analysis of their position before they can become resistant to oppressing structures.

While abstract hierarchical power structures are very stable and difficult to affront, at the bottom level a transformation can take place that is entirely different and independent from what happens on higher levels. The suppressed individual cannot simply change global structures, but they can acknowledge their own standing point and use it as a start for further development. The basic forms of communication that can lead to more abstract analysis and exchange of information are hearing and speaking. This is what, according to Spivak, is denied to the subaltern. If women are able to phrase their frustrations on their own without a necessity to be heard by others at the beginning of their transformative process, they form

²³⁵ Torfing 2009: 108.

their own voice in silence and slowly start representing themselves, again in the words of Spivak. It breaks open the hegemony of rigid classes and hierarchical structures by an inner resistance. Even though the possible actions of the women are entirely suppressed, their inner attitude is still not entirely determined by outer categories. This is true even in cases where suppression has been largely internalized.

Therefore the female struggle that is visible in the poetry has to start at a very early point in order to break open the internalized oppression and give women the chance to realize their exploited position.

VII.2 Poetry

Poetry creates an opportunity to speak without necessarily having to be heard, therefore without the need to comply with rules. It works at the individual level and breaks open a potential that has been suppressed, but not extinguished. It is a way to achieve an individual analysis in silence by phrasing personal struggle. It sheds light on inner resistance by expressing direct thoughts and feelings without blurring or distorting them. How women build resistance gives a hint on how power structures are designed: it points out how those structures imply forces and how those can be broken open by women.

Poetry is multidimensional in at least an emotional, aesthetic and linguistic way. Of course its creation, interpretation and perception also underlie colonial structures of thought, but it is a tool to subvert suppressive rationality. Poetry 'works' because it can be relieving, deconstructing, healing, resistant, and de-colonial. It is an instrument that accompanies the whole process from fighting the internalization of oppression: to acknowledging one's own subject position; to creating unity and solidarity with other victims who are touched by the expressed emotions.

The opportunities poetry offers need to be transferred into a wider struggle to become political acts. The personal is political, and poetry is a key tool to both realize and express that. It creates a space in which everything can be mentioned, from daily experiences to political ideas and personal trauma. Thus, it transfers the personal into a political frame, because collective personal suffering has an important distributable political message that has to be acknowledged.

The cycle of the social function of poetry (realizing one's own situation, breaking the silence, gaining a subject position, creating a voice and later solidarity that leads to transformation) is the essential guide for political poetry. Transformation is achievable by many people sharing their experiences of suppression. They come together based on mutual

identification with each others' difficulties and unify in order to create solidarity and change. The key point in the process from individual acknowledgement to widespread solidarity happens when a connection is created between poet and audience. It does not matter if the poetry is read out aloud to the audience or read by women silently. The poetry transports a message. It gives people who share this suffering a chance to recognize themselves in it which hopefully inspires and encourages them to either pass the message on or to embrace it themselves. The de-colonial trick is that people unite on this basis and accumulate their strength. Unity is resistance even in an entirely hierarchical system. In the soil of unity, the seed of a revolution starts growing and the beauty of the human can bloom.

VII.3 Example Cases

Obviously poetry can accelerate the process of resistance, but how does it start? The first step out of the subaltern position into the process of resistance happens, and how that occurs, is mostly a theoretical problem, not a practical one. In reality there are different examples of how individuals or institutions pass on a momentum of solidarity. It facilitates the transformation from a suppressed into a more powerful position. This sharing of a voice through poetry is based on solidarity or empathy and either 'lights the fire of expression' or passes it on. The process can be seen as exemplary for the concept of a coalitional voice, like in the case of the Literature Collective and Cultural Survival.

The Collective's *raison d'être* is to be the institutionalized space for transformation through the arts. The founders believe in the creativity and talents of women (themselves included), and their transformational power. The collective is an opportunity to work on their talents in order to overcome patriarchal barriers; therefore making art *is* a political action.

Guisela López, one of the founders of both the collective and seminar told me that she sees the seminar as a central point for women to start writing and creating an analysis. Writing pushes the authors' development of becoming critical to society's values.²³⁶

The same mechanisms are used by Cultural Survival but even across culture and language and from a very academic background. There is a huge risk that their intentions to make the subaltern, while noble, end up *speaking for them*. This would reproduce their marginalization within a space that was designed to do the opposite. A fair amount of sensitivity is needed to open up a space that can be used by marginalised people without constricting them to use it in a certain way—or even in forcing them to use this chance at all.

²³⁶ See email in Annex by López

Publishing poetry is already an advanced step within the cycle of writing poetry for resistance. Publication though is also fraught with potential difficulties. The poetry I chose to analyse was obviously accessible to me and therefore published, which begs the question of who the authors are and who would have access to this occupation in the first place. Is it the well educated urban elite Spivak mentions? Is it elite (Ladino?) women that speak for indigenous women that would never have access, resources or time to occupy themselves with writing poetry? It is difficult to find evidence whether the elite attempt to share their privileges with those who are less privileged, or if there are other motivations for their involvement.

Spivak raises the issue of transparency. The intentions of anybody to do something are never entirely transparent. We can hope and assume that both example cases respect the complex nexus of identities of potential authors, try to consider them as much as possible in an unequal world. Their main motivation might be to support political or specifically female issues across class or ethnic boundaries. Even though some writers are more privileged than the marginalized audience they are *writing for*, those authors can use their voice, name personal experiences and inform the wider public which lets also those women benefit who cannot phrase their experiences. If privileged women open up spaces for other women this might be a first step to break through the vicious circle of suppression and solve the (theoretical) problem of how to exit the marginalised space in the first place.

Even though doubts exist and cautiousness is essential to prevent paternalism, there are possible options which would at least go d'accord with Mohanty's concept of reflective solidarity²³⁷ in which she emphasizes on a reflected and well-thought out way to share solidarity based on common interests across borders of culture and class.

VIII Conclusion

I realize that the core of my topic is conclusively women's development as subjects in a colonial system. The two parts of this paper, GBV in Guatemala rooted in colonialism and female resistance against it by poetry, do not dismantle this core instantly. Nevertheless they weave a thread that connects them to the female struggle of reclaiming agency and self-determination.

The Guatemalan female subject is embedded in different contexts that maintain her suppressed position. Those contexts have evolved historically. States located in the Global

²³⁷ Mohanty 2003.

South, such as Guatemala, are still affected by the history of colonisation and at the losing end of global inequality. This obviously has affects on the population of these states. As proved by Quijano's theory, the influence of global power structures is not limited to the global level but effective the bottom-levels of a society. While power structures are anything but transparent at the bottom-level, they nonetheless carry out suppressive power. Even though the members of a society perceive them, obviously to varying degrees, it is difficult for the affected individual to recognize and name the global power structures. Even more so it is nearly impossible to question and challenge them, particularly because other more local discriminations prevent them from having a conceptual analysis in the first place, which is crucial to build resistance.

Within their nation states, women are excluded from society because they do not enjoy the same rights as men. The significant impunity for crimes of GBV demonstrates how women are denied full citizenship. If they are not fully acknowledged citizens, MacKinnon's famous question "are women human?"²³⁸ has not yet been answered sufficiently. Women are trapped in powerlessness based on a discrimination of gender, race and class. This position indicates a network of interwoven power structures.

Here Spivak's concept of the subaltern is perfectly applicable. Her manner of phrasing the female lack of agency by asking if the subaltern can speak already implies what is needed to change this lack of agency: a voice that cannot be overheard. Global and local power structures maintain a space that constantly reproduces the deprivation of female voice and agency, which is an essential part of the definition of the subaltern.

At this point poetry comes into play. It is able to interfere with the network of power structures. This takes place at the only plane that is within reach of the suppressed female: the individual level. As already shown, poetry equips the suppressed with a tool to create a voice and to then pass on this tool for others to begin that process. It expresses the individual will for freedom, thanks to the inspiration of arts. Poetry (among other art forms) gives us a chance to catch a glimpse of the inner human beauty which still exists, independent of centuries of abstract power mechanism.

Obviously it is not clear how effective poetry as a decolonizing tool is in practice. It will be hard to prove. What is demonstrably true is that it can raise attention on topics that are otherwise silenced. Whether it makes people actually change their mind, on issues like structural misogyny, is another story. At least an increase of media attention like in Cristina Siekavizza's case (see poem No. 11) can be a short term goal that leads to further victories.

²³⁸ McKinnon 2006.

This thesis personally also left me with a bit of frustration. Women are structurally oppressed, which is reflected by the substantial rates of GBV. The structural level has a huge influence on many people's daily reality, but seldom is there anyone who can be held accountable for that. Our legal system only holds individuals responsible. Reliable punishing of perpetrators would at least decrease the rate of impunity, although even this is a far cry from the current situation. Furthermore, the perpetrator's actions are reflecting a problem of a structural dimension: misogyny and its outcome, the will to attack women for their gender. Many difficulties to understand the reasons for misogyny come back to psychological mechanisms, but there is not sufficient space to address these additional considerations in this thesis.

Throughout the research and composition of this paper I have been searching for a standing point to judge structural violence. I embrace the idea that those who are benefitting from inequality are (also) guilty. An unequal society necessarily contains a group in privileged and advantageous positions. Instead of creating more justice and social equality, the opposite occurs with the prevalence of impunity. Discrimination is further reproduced by impunity. Those who are suppressed are denied the very social status they need to hold their perpetrators accountable. Impunity protects the perpetrators. They cannot be claimed guilty which means it is predictable that the victims lose anyway, if they try to accuse the perpetrators or not.

This paper is dedicated to the marginalised women. It acknowledges their abject position and suffering for which they bear no responsibility. I identify with them as much as possible across culture and class, and I am grateful for their inspiration. This paper has given me a lot to learn, both about my personal struggles and the opportunities to overcome patriarchal power structures that maintain global inequality. As the poems have made clear, it is only in the soil of unity that the human spirit can be nurtured, trauma overcome, and the immortal inner beauty of the human condition can blossom.

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Annex

IX.1 Email from Guisela López from 19th May 2014.

Hola Marietta:

Algunas respuestas abajo.

Estoy buscando mi tesis de mi diplomado de género que es sobre la colectiva y te la envío.

PREGUNTAS Y RESPUESTAS

La colectiva de mujeres en las artes es un grupo que se creo en 2001. Es una experiencia única. Somos cinco mujeres mestizas, urbanas, con estudios de postgrados, con obra literaria publicada un promedio de cinco poemarios cada una o más, con un reconocimiento público, premios literarios.

Es la colectiva la que crea el seminario de literatura feminista como un espacio para la formación de mujeres en la literatura. En el seminario han participado al menos cien mujeres, pero solo han participado cuatro mujeres indígenas: Dorotea Gómez, Adela Delgado, Feli UJpan y Carol Vivar de ascendencia Chinca.

Hemos tenido docentes invitadas: Por ejemplo en el seminario de literatura Guatemalteca participaron dos escritoras que han obtenido el premio Nacional de Literatura: Luz Méndez de la Vega y Margarita Carrera. Asistieron dos escritoras indígenas una de ascendencia Maya: La escritora Maya CU y una de ascendencia Garífuna: Nora Murillo. Las escritoras Delia Quiñonez y Johanna Godoy. También hemos tenido docentes internacionales como la Doctora Consuelo Meza de la UNiversidad Autónoma de Aguascalientes, México. Juventina Palomino escritora cubana, entre otras. Pero el cuerpo docente básico son las integrantes de la Colectiva de Mujeres en las Artes. También algunas integrantes del seminario de literatura feminista han que ya tienen cuatro o cinco años de estar participando han dado algunas cátedras.

Nuestras modalidades de trabajo han variado. antes nos reuníamos de manera periódica para leer, planificar, conversar. Ahora nos reunimos de manera más puntual para preparar los eventos o actividades.

Tambien quiero decir que tu poesía que he leído esta muy inspirativa para mí, tambien personalmente.

Con un saludo grande. Guisela López

IX.2 Poetry

IX.2.1 Gender Based Violence

1) ¿Quién es?

Yoli Nuñez²³⁹

- ¿Quién es esa de mil colores que vuela en lo alto?-

Preguntan a verla volar.

Es una mariposa
que lleva la historia,
los sueños,
esperanzas y esfuerzos
de muchas mujeres que piensan.
Que quieren ser libres,
sin opresiones
sin violencia...

Pero ¿quién es?
Es Casandra,
es Sofía,
es ella, soy yo y eres tú!
Hermosas y diversas...

2) Titulares rojos Ana Lucia Morán²⁴⁰

Tras cada titular de prensa
está la marea.
Hoy
las mujeres somos
titulares rojos.
Tras estos
el monstruo funcional de la violencia
que siempre brutal
nos conduce
al encierro
al silencio
al cuarto de bordado
a la cocina
a la maternidad obligatoria
a la fidelidad no correspondida
a la heterosexualidad impuesta
a la obediencia...

²³⁹ López 2010: 122.

²⁴⁰ Solís-Fong: 2013: 154.

Pero debieran saber
que NOSOTRAS
no volveremos
jamás.

3) IX

Ana Lucia Morán²⁴¹

Las mujeres siempre estamos en peligro sin importar el color de la piel, el costo de lo que vestimos o los títulos académicos o parentescos a afinidades... nada nos ampara frente al comportamiento consentido de la violencia contra nosotras por el simple hecho de ser mujeres.

4) rosario de cuerpos

Carolina Escobar Sarti²⁴²

en el nombre de la madre
de la hija y
De todas las muertas.
Amén.

Misterios dolorosos.

Agonía. Una madre no reconoce
el rostro desfigurado de su hija
Ni su cuerpo cercado por alambre de púas.
Ruega por nosotras.

Flagelación. Una niña no entiende por qué su madre
la acaba de dejar en la escuela
y ahora todos hablan de las lágrimas rojas de la huérfana.
Ruega por nosotras.

Coronación de espinas. Ella tuvo la culpa.
Por puta. Así lo decía su cuerpo desnudo
Y el semen entre las pequeñas piernas.
Ruega por nosotras.

Cruz a cuestras. Degolladas
ultrajadas, lapidadas, marcadas,
golpeadas, torturadas, mutiladas.
Ruega por nosotras.

Crucifixión. Bolsa negra en fosa vacía
para la mujer descuartizada de nombre nadie
y ninguna. XX.
Ruega por nosotras.
Ruega por nosotras.

²⁴¹ Solís-Fong: 2013: 153.

²⁴² Solís-Fong: 2013: 78.

Ruega por nosotras.

5) Cuerpos Nombrados y NO

Ana Lucía Morán²⁴³

Durante la guerra
hubo cuerpos matirizados, desaparecidos, asesinados...
cuerpos que huyeron a la montaña
cuerpos que dejaron de tener carne y se convirtieron en esqueleto con pellejo
cuerpos que perdieron nombre, casa, animalito, cosecha, madre tierra
cuerpos que cambiaron traje, idioma, religión
cuerpos que fueron obligados a usar un fusil, a señalar, atacar, a enterrar a su
pueblo.

Y hubo otros cuerpos...
cuerpos que por poseer sexo de mujer
formaron parte del objetivo militar.
Cuerpos premio para el soldado
cuerpos medio para el martirio, la humillación y demostración de poder sobre el
enemigo.

Cuerpos medio para mermar, separar y aniquilar al grupo.
Cuerpos que fueron esclavizados para servicio doméstico y abuso sexual.
Cuerpos que concibieron hijas e hijos. Cuerpos que abortaron.
Cuerpos contagiados de enfermedades curables e incurables.
Cuerpos que quedaron estériles.
Cuerpos que no han olvidado ni olvidarán y sin embargo, guardan silencio.
Cuerpos que por dentro los congeló el horror.
y por fuera, aún les señala el dedo del estigma injusto.

Por cada cuerpo...los nombrados y los que no. VERDAD.

Por esos cuerpos que aún guardan memoria del holocausto guatemalteco.
JUSTICIA

Por todos los cuerpos...REPARACIÓN.

Por los cuerpos que ahora somos y los que vendrán NO REPETICIÓN.

Femicide

6) Poesía sobre femicidio

Brenda Solís Fong²⁴⁴

I
En Guatemala
como en Ciudad Juárez
ser mujer
resulta un acto de valor.

²⁴³ Solís-Fong: 2013: 155.

²⁴⁴ CALDH 2005: 3.

II

Entonces, recomendaron:
cuando el sol se ponga,
no deben salir.

III

Entonces dijeron,
que las muertas eramos
mareras,
prostitutas,
narcotraficantes,
infieles,
malas,
locas.

IV

Entonces descubrieron
que éramos
fáciles de inmovilizar,
de violentar,
de matar.
Así quisieron controlar
al resto de la especie.

7) Femicidio
Guisela López²⁴⁵

El miedo
anida
nuestros cuerpos.

Invade nuestros sueños.

Obstaculiza
cada acto deliberado
de nuestros vidas.

Es necesario conjurar
la cacería.

8) Solo cifras
Ana Lucía Morán²⁴⁶

Hoy
apareció otra mujer asesinada.
Ayer fueron tres.

Esto se suma
a las cientos de cada año
a las miles
durante el enfrentamiento armado interno.

²⁴⁵ López 2007: 33.

²⁴⁶ CALDH 2005: 69.

Lo que asusta, enferma e indigna
es que sólo son cifras

que no mueven nada
que no detienen nada
que no cambian nada.

9) Femicidio **Alejandrina²⁴⁷**

En el silencio oscuro de este cuarto,
que alguna vez fue templo
de caricias y susurros,
de palabras enamoradas,
solo escucho los pasos del reloj,
cruel instrumento ...;
marca y remarca los tiempos
del olvido y el espanto
Me mataste el abrazo ,
la sonrisa y el canto;
ultrajaste mi beso provinciano.
La armonía, como muñeca rota,
yace en la esquina de la ignominia
amordazada , atada de pies y manos.
Nada me queda ya sobre la mesa;
la cesta de la fruta
repleta esta de piedras...
Ilusa de mí aún espero
un sol brillante
que ponga a secar el llanto púrpura
que se escurre por mis piernas.
un grito de libertad se desgrana en mi garganta...
Y luego la nada .

Examples

10) A Chayito **Brenda Solis-Fong²⁴⁸**

Cala más hondo el dolor que te hace quien dice que te ama,
que una bala mortal insertada en la cabeza.
Mi hermana me lo contó en sueños,
y lloré de rabia, al recordar.

Te fuiste con la blusa que tanto te gustaba,
la blanca, aquella de encajes.
Y sin pretenderlo te llevaste en tu maleta,

²⁴⁷ Alejandrina 2011.

²⁴⁸ Solís-Fong: 2013: 41.

la alegría de familia
que en ese tiempo
se volvió escasa.

El tiempo pasa y el dolor se acomoda
El alma baleada cicatriza.
Mi madre ya no llora (frecuente),
Mi padre se asiló en el silencio,
El pueblo te recuerda (bella y tierna)
Y en este mundo
se quedaron traspapeladas tus aspiraciones truncadas de mujer.

11) A Cristina Sienkavizza Brenda Solís-Fong²⁴⁹

Listones rosados vuelan
listones rosados ennegrecidos por el humo
listones rosados persisten
indagan, inquietan,
imploran... ¿Dónde está Cristina?
Y como diásporas, la noticia vuela.
mujeres cautivas rompen el silencio.
vendas se despojan
la justicia (cautiva) ondea, cual bandera, cual listones.
Donde está Cristina, ¿dónde está la bella Cristina
Y un coro creciente de voces se alza
sin importar la condición social, se alzan.
voces que vencen el miedo
voces que resucitan a miles de mujeres cruelmente asesinadas
hechos salvajes en la impunidad,
familias arrancadas
gritos no escuchados “¿dónde está mi Cristina también?”
cruces cargadas con Cristo (en misericordia)
insomnios, plegarias
charcos de lágrimas
prófugos en la impudicia
justicia vendida.

IX.2.2 Voice

12) Indudablemente Feliciana Ujpan²⁵⁰

Indudable
es la inmensidad
y el significado
del tiempo.

²⁴⁹ Solís-Fong: 2013: 43.

²⁵⁰ López 2010: 39.

Hoy
estoy
con las actuales mujeres
tejiendo
nuestra historia:
Escribiéndola.

13) Monólogo para mí
María Lucrecia Vicente Franco²⁵¹

Estoy experimentando
una combinación de sentimientos
que se manifiestan en mi cuerpo.
Me están llamando la atención,
algo me quieren decir,
y debo realizar una pausa,
hacer un silencio dentro de mí,
para escucharme.

14) La voz de la sin voz
María Lucrecia Vicente Franco²⁵²

De estos hermosos labios rojos
surge y expande
la voz de la mujer que había perdido la voz.

Porque la educaron para el silencio.
Porque la obligaron a callarse.
Porque no la querían escuchar.

Para recuperar su voz
tuvo que adentrarse en sí misma,
reconocerse,
buscarse en otras mujeres,
hablar un nuevo idioma.

Esta mujer que veis aquí...
recuperó su voz.

15) Poesía...
Carla Yadira De León Alvarado²⁵³

Misteriosa forma
En que ellas,
Las otras
- que admiro -
Nombran,
Cabalmente,

²⁵¹ López 2010: 161.

²⁵² López 2010: 123.

²⁵³ López 2010: 40.

Lo que siento.

16) Conjuros
Guisela López²⁵⁴

Vivás palabras mágicas

Las brujas
llegan de todas partes
traen pociones mágicas,
intercambian conjuros,
inventan sortilegios
todo
por detener
el odio
de los hombres.

Despierto
Sobresaltada
Sueño
Que arrojan cadáveres al techo
- son mujeres asesinadas –

Me levanto
Y escribo,
Como quien hace
un exorcismo
- escribo –
sin tregua...
hasta la madrugada.

Invoco al agua
Origen de la vida,
A la tierra
Vestida de montañas,
Al viento
Pregonero,
Al fuego
Que rasga las tinieblas.

Invoco
La fuerza y la pasión. de las ancestras.
para que hagan de mi voz
su residencia.

17) Ni una más
Guisela López²⁵⁵

I

²⁵⁴ López 2006: 57–60.

²⁵⁵ Solís-Fong: 2013: 114.

Cuando roban
los sueños a la vida
el cielo se encapota,
los mares
se desbordan de sal
se resquebrajan,
amarga
suma de lágrimas.

II

No cabe tanto dolor en la palabra.

Desbordan el silencio
las sonrisas truncadas,
los besos sin florecer
las promesas...
barriletes sin hilo
derivando en el viento.

III

Cuantas historias rotas,
peces sobre el asfalto.

Memorias
de mañanas con sol,
de vestidos de domingo y labiales rosa,
de zapatillas de baile y muñecas de trapo,
de corazones de San Valentín
y pasteles de cumpleaños.

IV

“Porque tus ojos son cielo de la tarde”
“Porque tus manos son pájaros ansiosos”
“Porque tu pelo es río
y tus pasos...
huellas de luna sobre el césped”

Lolita ili tina
Lety sole ana
Tere cesi ale

Sus nombres tapizando la ciudad con gritos
con margaritas pisoteadas
con poemas muertos
antes de extender las alas.

No podemos cerrar los ojos al terror
su laberinto podría devorarnos.

Para contener esta sombra que se cierne
sumemos nuestra voz a la palabra,
hagamos pactos de amor,
treguas de dudas,
que no falten rosas

ni versos,
ni canciones.

Seamos intolerantes al silencio,
para que
Ni una más
sea despojada de abril,
del viento
y de la lluvia.

18) Augurios y premoniciones **Guisela López²⁵⁶**

Pese a tanta sombra
no vamos a dejarnos abatir
por la desesperanza.

Hace ya siglos que avanzamos
abriendo espacios
rompiendo estereotipos,
impactando
los muros de contención
que nos impone
el género.

Las brujas se reúnen...

Su magia,
salpíca la noche,
de luciérnagas,
el silencio
de palabras.

19) Untitled **Ana Luisa Catalino²⁵⁷**

Atzan tuj paxil jatuma ateqa xnaq b'ix
x'uj aq'nal xjal. Tuj chik'ul b'ix
tze' nchi tzen ixytzan ni b'ech b'ix
ikytzan ch'it nchi bitzan tuj chik'ul,
jun prim o chi kub' b'iyon qa xjal
nchanq'in b'ix nti kyu'n ti twitz
kyil tzan o chi kub' b'iyon—
Ikytzanjajo.

20) Nan Pix Pix **Rigoberta González Sul, Olga Mercedes Ajcolón Tuís, Alma Temaj²⁵⁸**

²⁵⁶ López 2006: 63–64.

²⁵⁷ Euphrat Weston 2012. Cultural Survival is also responsible for translation.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

Un pedazo de tierra
con árboles, montes y un
hermoso tanque de agua
El lugar mas hermoso
del mundo, donde sólo
los pájaros y los animales
lo habitan uno que otras
casas de adobe y pajón.
Pero llegó aquel día
en que el cerro Pix Pix
gritaba, lloraba, auxiliaba
ante los balazos que
mataba una por una a su gente.
Aquellos niños, aquellos ancianos
miraban el atardecer, al sol
esconderse con lágrimas en los ojos.
Pensando a donde ir, a refugiarse por
el temor, en los hermanos con un
fusil en la mano
sin saber ¿qué pasará mañana?

IX.2.3 Subject

21) Cambios

Ana Lucía Morán²⁵⁹

Es probable que mi madre
haya concebido hijas e hijos

sin orgasmo.

Yo.. renuncié a las hijas e hijos
pero no

al orgasmo.

22) “YO”

María Isabel Grijalva de León²⁶⁰

Vivo como quiero vivir.
Amo como quiero amar
no sé si por un rato o por una eternidad.

Mi ser, mi YO,
asume identidad de MUJER.
Me gustaser como soy, rebelde, crítica, amante,

²⁵⁹ Solís-Fong: 2013: 160.

²⁶⁰ López 2010: 156.

a veces romántica o sarcástica.

No admito la doble moral,
me encoleriza la injusticia.
Se que hay cosas que no puedo cambiar,
pero YO si puedo cambiar lo que no me acomode,
para no envejecer
de olvido.

23) Ix'balam' qe'
Adela Delgado Pop²⁶¹

Nací felina,
nacé hembra-jaguar.
Mi nombre es Ix'balam'qe'
-hembra jaguar del frío.
la que mira de noche.

Con mi hermano gemela Jun Ahpú
-Un cerbatanero-
vencimos a la oscuridad,
superamos las pruebas
y trajimos luz a la humanidad.

Por eso Ajaw,
Que es Padre y Madre,
nos permitió seguir cercade la humanidad,
alternándonos.

Como les dije,
mi nombre es Ix'balam'qe',
hembra jaguar del frío-
la que mira de noche.
Pero también me llaman: La Luna

IX.2.4 Transformation and Utopia

24) Deseo II
Samara Pellecer²⁶²

Deseo que las mujeres
Abramos nuestras ventanas,
Que emerjamos
A través de las palabras,
Que caminemos libres, seguras,
Con la única y vital aceptación
De ser y sabernos mujeres.

²⁶¹ López 2010: 119.

²⁶² López 2010: 174.

25) Caminares
Guisela López²⁶³

Desde la acera del mundo
vemos pasar el largo desfile del absurdo.

No logra intimidarnos
su máscara de poder.
Ni los zarpazos feroces
con que guarda su égida absoluta.

Tampoco nos seducen
sus oropeles y comparsas
de dragón bicéfalo.

Con el atardecer
soltamos a volar un barrilete,
su arco iris va pintando las calles.

Caminamos,
hasta que la luna
se ofrece a reemplazarlo,
desmadejando su trenza de colores.

Creemos que otro mundo es posible
un mundo con miradores de sol
en el que las mujeres
podamos vestirnos de sonrisas.

En el que niñas y niños
puedan jugar la misma ronda,
recorrer los prados cantando mil canciones
y bebiendo agua clara de los manantiales.

26) Presentes
Guisela López²⁶⁴

Las mujeres
recorremos las plazas del mundo
desplegando palabras.

Hemos llegado de todas partes
unas tristes,
otras alegres,
algunas rotas.
Trazando arco iris
con nuestros colores de piel,

²⁶³ Solís-Fong: 2013: 145.

²⁶⁴ Solís-Fong: 2013: 143.

constelaciones
con nuestras diversas miradas.

Nos encontramos
proclamando
la soberanía de nuestros cuerpos,
defendiendo la libertad de nuestros pasos.
Haciendo resonar nuestra voz,
de continente a continente.

Transgrediendo mandatos,
construyendo metáforas amables
con la fuerza de nuestros deseos.

Enlazándonos,
más allá de nuestra edad
y nuestras nacionalidades.

Acarreando esperanzas
en la desesperanza.
Tejiendo redes,
laboriosas arañas.

Construyendo
ciudadanía
centímetro a centímetro.

27) Dolor Histórico
Hilda Morales Trujillo²⁶⁵

Mujeres
Alcémonos para que comprendan que no es una sola
Que todas unidas formamos la mitad del mundo y la mitad del cielo
Que estamos dispuestas a levantar muros contra la violencia
Y hacer nuevas reglas para que nuestros hijos hombres
Rompan la cadena ancestral de golpear y golpear
Que no aprendan a matar la ternura y dignidad de nuestras hijas, nietas y bisnietas.

28) Ave Fénix
María Vicente Franco²⁶⁶

Cada vez
Que te sientas agobiada,
Regresa al manantial de tus ancestras,
A su amor
A su sabiduría
Para continuar con esta nueva vida
De mujer completa

²⁶⁵ Svendsen 2007: 6.

²⁶⁶ López 2010: 190.

Gender-based violence is defined as violence that is directed against a person on the basis of their gender or sex,² including acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty. Harmful traditional practices. Include female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C); forced marriage; child marriage; honour or dowry killings or maiming; infanticide, sex-selective abortion practices; sex-selective neglect and abuse; and denial of education and economic opportunities for women and girls. Socio-economic violence. Gender-based violence can lead to a vicious cycle of violence and abuse as survivors Gender violence, also known as gender-based violence or gendered violence, is the term used to denote harm inflicted upon individuals and groups that is connected to normative understandings of their gender. This connection can be in the form of cultural understandings of gender roles, both institutional and structural forces that endorse violence based on gender and societal influences that shape violent events along gender lines. While the term is often used synonymously with "violence against women" Gender Based Violence (GBV) has been globally recognized to stem from patriarchy which is also based on the ideology and exercise of power. Gender Based Violence and Patriarchy. The paucity of discourses/studies that effectively link the incidence of GBV to patriarchy within marital relationships may not allow for robust analysis of the focus area of this article. However, theoretical articles and empirical studies on related themes provide opportunities for discourse. The economic systems introduced by colonialism denied women the use of public space and confined them to the domestic sphere. The implication was the further invisibilization of women and the negation of their economic, political and social roles.