

The Guatemalan Genocide Through Indigenous Mayan Literature Twenty Years After the Peace Accords: Rigoberta Menchú, Humberto Ak'Abal and Victor Montejo

David Caballero Mariscal

Department of Hispano-American Literature, University of Granada, Spain

davidcaballero@ugr.es

Submitted: 2024-04-28 · Accepted: 2024-07-28 · Published: 2024-08-28

DOI: 10.2478/ejls-2023-0013

Abstract

Guatemala experienced a cruel genocide in the early eighties, in the context of a repressive Conflict. Due to the different governments' repressive policies, this terrible social situation was little known abroad, and even in the own country. Just after the Peace Accords, several organisms worked to uncover the historical truth. In any case, we cannot forget that testimonial literature is a privileged mean to know this dark period of the contemporary history of Guatemala. This genre is particularly relevant, because the main writers are originally Mayans, and have directly suffered both repression and social exclusion due to ethnic reasons. Rigoberta Menchú, Unmberto Ak'abal and Víctor Montejo represent a new and original point of view in the measure in which they describe feelings and situations from the perspective of those who experience them personally. Testimonial literature or the Testimonio becomes an ethnographic document that allows us to know not just a period but a people who have suffered from repression and exclusion for centuries.

Keywords: Guatemala, testimonial literature, Mayans, genocide, Conflict.

Introduction

Testimonial literature or *the Testimonio* emerged in Latin America in the wake of the Cuban revolution, of the need to face the society's most urgent problems and the serious violations against human rights which took place in several countries in that region (Figuerola, 2004). In several countries as Guatemala or Colombia, in the eighties decade, this literary gender becomes a means of rewriting national history, in order to avoid the government censorship or the official interpretation or the

national historiography. That is why Ortiz (2000) considers *the Testimonio* as “an alternative perspective of the life conditions of those who are affected by wars, political prosecution, inequality or violation of rights” (p. 341).

Suárez Gómez (2011) considers that testimonial literature is “a hybrid representation which juggles realities, literary subjectivities and memories” (p. 57). In this sense, *the Testimonio* marries direct and experienced elements with the rewriting of obtained and reinterpreted data. The subject narrator, in fact, fluctuates between the perspective of some cultural and experienced components of reality and, in turn, other, imagined aspects. That is why some elements of veracity can be perceived as diffuse, as far as an empirical or pragmatic point of view is concerned. George Yúdice (2009) synthesized *the Testimonio* as follows:

Testimonial writing may be defined as an authentic narrative, told by a witness who is moved to narrate by the urgency of a situation (e. g. war, oppression, revolution, etc). Emphasizing popular, oral discourse, the witness portrays his or her own experience as an agent (rather than a representative) of a collective memory and identity. Truth is summoned in the cause of denouncing a present situation of exploitation and oppression or in exorcising and setting aright official history (p. 17).

We cannot forget that narrative is fiction, and the creation of narrative spaces implies a substantial reinterpretation of spatiotemporal sequences, even though the events are usually represented in a similar way to how they took place, located in real and verifiable settings. In this regard, Barcena (2001) underscores that “the words do not rise to the wound they concern” (p. 3). Semprún (2001), on the other hand, underlines the importance of the witness, because the real witness is the one who can no longer transmit testimony, having been unable to survive the atrocities. The writer, in this case, does not belong to this sector of victims, but becomes the sole witness, capable of transmitting and translating these events into reality. Testimonial literature, despite its limitations, is a privileged vehicle for understanding and analyzing specific events that took place in a given situation and time.

Nora Jilevich's perspective (2006) is particularly interesting, because she tries to approach reality in an objective way, in order to “retrieve the dignity of the community” (p. 17). Despite limitations that can be found in this literature, mainly due to inherent intentionality or even ideological bias, we must not lose sight of the fact that there is an unavoidable link between this literature and social commitment. This social engagement became greater after the massacres, the scorched-earth policies and the genocide, which “causes the nightmare of the helplessness and the silence in face of the horror that was going on in front of their eyes” (p. 20). The *Testimonio* has not just a *therapeutic* function, but also turns into an effective way to spread the truth that was forced to be gagged.

If we take into account the ethnographic significance of literary and testimonial documents, we should draw attention to several significant questions. First, the relevance of the testimony cannot be questioned. However, *the Testimonio* consists of an interpretation of reality, and this fact in itself has different nuances we should take into account. Secondly, and for the reason we have just described, there are some subjective elements, although they should not affect the objectivity of the process. It is a well-known fact that writers present various events from an external perspective, even though they were part of the event to a greater or lesser extent. tz (1998) discusses whether or not the analysis of a culture can be objective, and this question can be applied to testimonial literature:

Translate pain, uncertainty, the insurmountable distance that separates this today from that decade in which we used to move like fish in water, not knowing that water was poisoned (Strejilevich, p. 117).

The Testimonio, in all its facets, contributes significantly to understanding the facts, *ad intra* and *ad extra*. This is essential to building social justice and memory (Figuerola, 2004). It is a way to give voice to the voiceless (García, 2005).

Genocide Victim'S Testimony: Indigenous-Mayan Testimonial Literature

It can be considered a privilege to find indigenous voices in Guatemala that express their experiences and own perspective from *the forgotten side*. The genocide testifies to "the indigenous side of the inequality" (Del Álamo, 2004). In this sense, the emergence of Mayans describing their own drama is a real breakthrough in the fight against injustice. This new literature goes beyond the rigid patterns of indigenous literature, which reinterprets, adapts, and even distorts references in order to build a new consciousness (Cornejo Polar, 1989). In contrast, this new literature breaks away from previous ideologies, fulfilling aesthetic and social functions while also serving as an ethnography that provides privileged data.

In the case of Guatemala, we cannot forget that there is ethnic diversity, often under the hegemony of certain majority groups—in this case, *kakchiqueles* (Bastos y Camus, 2003)—although there are other important collectives with a strong cultural identity. In any case, we should take into account that indigenous testimonial literature has different manifestations and nuances, depending on ethnic origin, personal education, personal trajectory, and their experience of genocide. Bastos and Camus (2003) underscore that identification and self-identification with those elements linked to *mayanity* can be vast or very specific. In this sense, some sectors of Guatemalan society feel complete Mayan awareness, while other rural collectives are not aware that they belong to the Mayans, but rather to a concrete or specific group, that is to say, a particular ethnic group.

As far as testimonial indigenous literature in Guatemala is concerned, we will focus on three significant examples of this positive change: Rigoberta Menchú, Humberto Ak'abal, and Víctor Montejo. In the case of the first authors, we must take into

account that there is little contact with biculturalism. That is why their Mayan identity is manifested in the use of their mother tongue. This circumstance determines not just their writing, but their perspective on the genocide. On the contrary, Víctor Montejo represents a mixed perspective. He is of Mayan origin, but with a significant *ladina* influence. As a result, his narrative shows a three-dimensional perspective: indigenous, Castilian, and, in turn, living in exile in the USA (García, 2005). An important part of his work is written in English, directed to an external collective. It aims to inform American readers about these tragic events.

Humberto Ak'abal and Rigoberta Menchú usually write in Spanish, and this could be interpreted as self-ethnocide, due to the paradox of writing in the colonial language to denounce injustice. Nevertheless, we cannot forget some important elements. As far as Rigoberta Menchú is concerned, we must underscore that she is not the direct author of her work, but the source, transmitting the information. As a matter of fact, it is a reinterpretation of oral communication, a direct experience of a woman who learned Spanish in adulthood. Concerning Humberto Ak'abal, he normally writes in either Spanish or Mayan. Some of his poems are even written exclusively in Mayan-quiché.

To narrate past events from the indigenous point of view can be considered a privilege, despite the translation or interpretation they carry out. Buxó (1983) considers that "two languages are not similar enough to claim they both represent the same social reality". As a result, "two worlds, living different realities are different worlds, and not the same world with different labels" (p. 28).

In the following pages, we will approach the genocide through these three authors.

The Mayan writers of the Guatemalan genocide

Rigoberta Menchú Tum

Rigoberta Menchú, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992, has generated many controversies in her country and all over the world. There are some elements we cannot forget if we analyse her work. First, the controversy that arose from her publication can be partially understood as a smear campaign against her person. Second, we cannot ignore that her testimony has been ratified by diverse entities which have researched these tragic events during the hardest years of the Conflict. Third, we must mention that Guatemala is an ethnocentric country, and in this context, Mayans usually claim their rights and cultural identity. They are the basis of Guatemalan society, although they suffer from social exclusion.

Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia (1982) (*My name is Rigoberta Menchú and this is why my Conscience was born*) was written by the anthropologist Elizabeth Burgos from the transcriptions of personal interviews with Rigoberta. This book has sparked controversies and contradictory opinions since it was published. Thus, some authors, like David Stoll, in his work *Rigoberta Menchu*

and the *Story of All Poor Guatemalans* (1999), argue that the Mayan is not faithful to reality and the events, and that she usually overemphasizes situations she describes. In any case, the literary critic Arturo Arias puts forward the counterargument by emphasizing that Menchú was the first woman who tried to break the stigma of discrimination, a triple discrimination in the case of rural women in Guatemala: female, indigenous, and poor. Her testimony let the world know about the harshness of the Conflict and its significant consequences. In addition, she describes habits, ways of life, beliefs, traditions, and the Mayan cosmovision. For the very first time, this Mayan writer invests her people with the deep dignity they deserve.

Elizabeth Burgos respects the Mayan way of expressing ideas and feelings, being faithful to Mayan linguistic patterns. She even makes grammatical mistakes in order to reflect the authenticity of indigenous thought and practices.

We must put special emphasis on the narrator's perspective. Burgos (Menchú) writes in the first person, as in an autobiographical work. Thanks to this, many cultural issues are described, and when the author approaches *ladina* culture, she observes that reality with surprise and perplexity, as if it were a totally different perspective:

La forma en que se siembra ahí no es la misma forma en que se siembra entre nosotros. El indígena rechaza cualquier clase de abonos químicos que le traten de enseñar (Burgos, 2005, p. 170).

The common thread of this narrative is the confrontation between the indigenous and the *ladino*. In this context, the problem of land becomes a recurrent theme: its equitable distribution, justice, indigenous tradition, and Mayan cosmovision are unavoidably linked to this crucial issue. Menchú reveals all the social miseries when she narrates her personal experiences in the capital city, in an unfavorable context for her. As she worked as a maid, she concludes that Mayans occupy a position of social exclusion and inferiority in Guatemala:

Cuando vi que la sirvienta sacó la comida del perro. Iban pedazos de carne, arroz, cosas así que comieron los señores. A mí me dieron un poquito de frijol y unas tortillas tiesas. A mí eso me dolía mucho, mucho, que el perro había comido muy bien y que yo no merecía la comida que mereció el perro (...). Pero me sentía muy marginada. Menos que el animal que existía en casa (Burgos, p. 143).

Rigoberta reflects the personal pain suffered by every indigenous person who must leave their land behind. All these testimonies are very useful in understanding, to a greater or lesser extent, the subsequent development of rebel movements against injustice and arbitrariness. In this specific case, Vicente Menchú becomes a key figure in the struggle for social justice by force, if necessary. His life and death make us realize the harsh living conditions of millions of Mayans, spanning several generations.

Chapter XXIV describes the occupation and burning of the Spanish Embassy in 1980. In principle, these peasants took over the Spanish Embassy in order to protest against the government and its repressive policies. The final result can be considered one of the most significant violations of human rights. In this narrative, the author projects a personal and direct experience of the Mayan genocide.

Entonces entraron en la embajada de España. Ni siquiera nos pasaba por la cabeza lo que sucedería después. En primer lugar, porque allí había personalidades importantes. En segundo lugar, porque allí se encontraban también elementos del régimen que cayeron, murieron quemados junto a los campesinos. Por supuesto sabíamos que iba a haber una tensión, pero pensábamos que era posible que a todos lo que tomaron la embajada les concedieran una salida del país como refugiados políticos para que también pudieran dar a conocer su lucha afuera (Burgos, p. 250).

Although we must underscore that Rigoberta's perspective is crucial in order to understand the social context she lived in, and the events that took place in the Spanish Embassy, we cannot forget there are other readings of this event that call into question the veracity of this narrative. In this sense, David Stoll (1999) differs considerably from Menchú's testimony as far as the causes of the occupation are concerned. He affirms that "the massacre at the Spanish embassy could have been a revolutionary suicide that included murdering hostages and fellow protesters" (p. 88). This accusation against the Mayan peasants contradicts this version, because many provisions and food were found among the peasants' belongings, and this shows that their inherent intention was to stay in the embassy for an indefinite period. Although Stoll calls into question this evidence and one key issue (the condition of the bodies after the fire), there was no terrorist intention in this peaceful occupation. Arias (2001) considers these claims by Stoll as an attempt to discredit Menchú and to falsify this information, due to ideological reasons.

El Clamor de la tierra: luchas campesinas en la historia reciente de Guatemala (1992), written with the *Comité Unidad Campesina* (CUC), describes a similar situation. We can perceive a significant affinity with the revolutionary movement of 1994, and, in turn, a deep social denunciation. Relevant themes are emphasized in this work: social exclusion, inequality, the problem of land, speculation, and the abuses suffered by Mayans:

Así los criollos y ladinos ricos, a lo largo de la historia han organizado políticas sociales y culturales prescindiendo de la existencia de cinco millones de indígenas. Esto les ayuda a convencerse de que no les somos indispensables (p. 23).

The Conflict, the peasant movement and the Massacre of Panzós become the key elements in order to understand the events:

El 29 de mayo de 1978, cerca de 600 hermanos kekchíes del departamento marcharon sobre el pueblo de Panzós (...). Al llenarse el parque empezaron a

escucharse detonaciones (...). Cuando las armas callaron, más de cien personas yacían en el suelo sin vida, nunca se supo el número de víctimas exacto (p. 45).

Against this background, it is possible to see one important fact: the unity of the Mayans, rooted in a significant sense of belonging, which served as the basis for subsequent vindication.

Humberto Ak'abal.

Humberto Ak'abal has become one of the most significant Guatemalan literary figures. He is a widely renowned Mayan poet, and his poetry has exerted a deep influence both in Guatemala and abroad over the last two decades, mainly owing to his personality, creative capacity, originality, social commitment, and even the controversies in which he has been embroiled. We must affirm that this relevant Central American writer creates poems straddling the *Testimonio* and a profound lyricism. *Grito-Raqonchi'aj* (2004) represented a real turning point, a complete change of direction in Guatemalan literature, and not just a sharp shift in trend. *Grito* (yell) turns into a cry, a scream, groaning, and grief over the dramatic situation and the pain suffered by the Mayan people, as well as the dramatic consequences of the genocide for indigenous communities.

One might think that testimonial experiences are exclusively represented by narrative texts. It is obvious that narrative presents facts relating to an external reality through dialogue and description. In this sense, fiction has become the most significant manifestation of this literary genre in most Latin American countries. Nevertheless, several decades ago, Urbanski (1965) recognized the proliferation of testimonial poetry. Testimonial verse began to surpass the boundaries of the traditional craft of poetry to express personal experiences of genocide, exclusion, asymmetry, and social denunciation.

In this regard, Ak'abal's literature represents a subsequent as well as crucial moment. His verses are full of lyricism and testimony. That is why they can be considered an indispensable document for reading reality in a different, unofficial way. His poetry bears witness in a way that is capable of touching any sensibility. Hence the crucial role of testimonial poetry in the general context of the *Testimonio*, although some lyrical components might hinder easy comprehension of the broader events. We should underscore that

In addition to his many poetic works, it is worth noting that he also writes narrative. In any case, we would like to focus on *Grito-Raqonchi'aj*. These verses reflect inner concerns and *testimonial* experiences, going beyond conventional canons, and trying to construct the indigenous-Mayan subject by assimilating, consciously and directly, his own reality. (Claudia García, 2005, p. 75).

Ak'abal's poems—fresh, direct, full of lyricism and melancholic pathos, yet subtle and metaphorical as well—revolve around two axes. On the one hand, there are the

languages he writes in, both Spanish and Kiché. His verses are written in both linguistic expressions. However, his mother tongue (Mayan-Kiché) is most significant in his thinking and expression. His Castilian verses are merely translations of his original Mayan poetry. This is an important way to fight for indigenous rights and to underscore the importance of his own language, often repressed and sullied by violent oppression. In addition, his Mayan expression is revealed in the syntax, logic, and lexicon he cannot hide. The themes of his poems can be summarized as follows: social denunciation, his suffering people, a shared awareness of belonging to a Mayan collective, the social and cultural background of the author, and a society marked by injustice and full of unequal or asymmetric relations. The main focus revolves around social criticism and the pain of the most deprived sector of his society: the indigenous people:

His social sensitivity is mainly manifested in the pain that Mayans experience. He clearly describes this collective as subjected to abuse and social exclusion by the *ladinos*, and this issue plays a key role in Ak'abal's testimonial poetry. Women, a quintessential element of the indigenous cosmovision, become the main target of discrimination. That is why this poet often addresses women from his deepest feelings.

Children, the weakest of the weak, also crop up in his work. They are described as innocent, fragile, and bearers of hope as well.

The context of the Conflict becomes constant and it is often related to the five centuries of pain, considered by Ak'abal as the starting point for the ethnocide, the genocide and the beginning of the end to the traditional Mayan culture. In any case, the Guatemalan poet refers to the death of innocent people, nameless and the total lack of human dignity:

(p. 84).

The poem entitled "30 Years" makes explicit reference to the situation experienced by the country during the period of repression. It is a reminder of the suffering owing to the genocide and, in turn, the need to rebuild the lives of those who suffered from the war—that is to say, to "sew together the wounded land" (p. 72).

The opposition between the Mayan cosmovision and that imposed by Western culture becomes the most striking issue of this poetry.

Cosas? (p. 22)

There is a significant parity between the ethno-genocide that took place during the Conquest, perceived as a human and cultural tragedy of incalculable consequences for the development of Mayan society, and the ethno-genocide of the sixties and eighties through the terrible scorched-earth policies adopted by repressive governments.

In other poems the author continues to write about his worries, that is to say, the genocide, the erasure of the roots of their origin and culture, and, by extension, the scorched-earth policies:

el viento llora, busca, sabe que allí Humberto Ak'abal Hubo una hoguera (Ak'abal, 118).

Humberto Ak'abal sets a unique precedent in the history of his country. His poetry inaugurates a new stage in the history of Guatemala, characterized by Mayan writers who claim their place in the country, its history, and its culture. Mayan people are currently far removed from their glorious past, to a greater or lesser extent owing to the imposition of an external culture.

Victor Montejo: The Direct Experience of the Massacres

In the same vein, although with nuances, the Jakalteko writer Victor Montejo (1951) can be considered one of the most relevant authors in this genre. His fundamental work, *Testimonio: muerte en una comunidad indígena* (1987), describes the real situation of a small community in the context of the genocide. Claudia García (2005) explains that both authors, Montejo and Ak'abal, share common elements: they are indigenous, although belonging to different ethnic groups; they have humble beginnings; and they write both in Spanish and in their Mayan language. However, Victor Montejo also writes part of his work in English, to a large extent because part of his work was published in the USA. Both authors have achieved international recognition, and this fact represents a landmark, as indigenous literature takes on a new dimension that transcends the themes and structures of indigenist literature, characterized by an external vision and description of social injustice from a non-indigenous point of view.

Montejo had to move from Guatemala to the USA because of political problems in his homeland while he was working abroad with Wallace Kaufman on the poem *El Kanil: man of lighting*. In order to protect both his integrity and his family's, he had to move to a different context, which conditioned his literature and the way of expressing his *Testimonio* (Montejo, 1999, p. 115). His work is presented under three conditioning factors: originally indigenous thought and writing, Spanish-Mayan biculturalism, and its subsequent English translation. Nevertheless, it is important to underscore, with García (2005), that this circumstance gives him the privilege of being a "theoretician at the border" (p. 1). Montejo is a writer, an anthropologist, and a Mayan as well.

The story is based on the events that took place in Tzalalá, a small, remote village to the west of Huehuetenango. The army arrived at the community at the beginning of 1982. They were dressed as civilians. Hence, they were mistaken for guerrillas by the civilian patrols of that village, who dared to attack them. This attack, with stones and rudimentary weapons, provoked a massacre that killed more than twenty people. Montejo bears witness to the events he experienced when he was a rural teacher in

that region. In an indirect way, other massacres are mentioned. This underscores that similar situations were quite frequent in this decade.

This narration describes the senselessness of the conflict and the terrible forms of armed violence. Hence, the author considers that violence has no foundation. That is why repression is seen as an effective way of spreading fear and social control, but it makes no sense and can be considered a paradox. In this specific case, the situation was completely absurd, because those who tried to defend government forces were devastated by them.

It is necessary to refer to and understand the historical context in which the event takes place. In September 1982 Efraín Ríos Montt had held power for a few months. In any case, Ríos Montt's government can be considered *the government of the horrors*, due to the brutality and repression exerted by its armed wing. If under the previous president (Romeo Lucas García) both violence and repression reached unprecedented levels, the new one took Guatemalan society to a new level of fear of unexpected dimensions. Ball (1999) describes how, in seventeen months, 43 per cent of human rights violations were committed. Victor Montejo (1999) underlines that "with the raise to power of Efraín Ríos Montt, all human rights were abolished, and the army became the sole arbitrator over the lives of Guatemalans" (p. 113). The anthropologist experienced this savage repression. Therefore, Montejo levels a scathing critique against Ríos Montt, and this situation led the author into forced exile.

Reference ought to be made to the army's methods, characterized by their rawness and cruelty. Owing to their rigorous military training, they carried out a number of assaults, using all sorts of abuses and arbitrariness in order to achieve their aims. Montejo, like most of the authors on the genocide, stresses that violence is gratuitous and the members of the military seem to enjoy torture and pain. These descriptions touch the readers' sensitivity, in part due to the lack of empathy from the aggressors.

A dark-skinned veteran or rehooked one, one of the soulless, unscrupulous former foot-soldiers that President Ríos Montt recruited and sent to the Indian villages during the Offensive against Subversion (p. 23).

The collective trauma in the communities is still evident. Although Mayan culture and identity diverge considerably from these attitudes, the writer considers that indoctrination and terror contributed to transforming attitudes, and this was why the military showed little respect for human rights:

They brainwash and indoctrinate us in such a way that we could torture our own parents, if we were ordered to. I spent three years in the barracks, and what did I learn? Fucking zero. The only thing you are taught is to kill and kill, again and again (p. 86).

The abuse of power by the military arms of the political classes is represented by the different lieutenants and the commanding general, at the top of this unscrupulous behavior:

First they cut out one eye, then the other. Then, the nose, lips, the tongue, ears and testicles, and last they slice off his head. It is a slow, excruciating death, conceived to make a human being die in the greatest possible pain (p. 84).

The third chapter is particularly significant concerning the *Testimonio*, because it describes the killing of Sebastián, a young member of the community who was one of the victims of the initial obsession with putting an end to the guerrillas. "I watched my son die" represents a paraphrase of the collateral victims in the genocide.

A woman I know had gotten a bullet in her hand while she was making tortillas in her kitchen. And a man of seventy lay dying in his house, after a beating by the soldiers who broke his jaw (Montejo, p. 102).

We can read here the direct testimony of the victim's mother. This narration arouses empathy and many other feelings in the reader, mainly owe to the painful and heartbreaking description of the whole process. That is why Montejo's work becomes a privileged ethnography to know and understand the Guatemalan genocide and the Conflict itself. Furthermore, throughout this story it is possible to understand traditional Mayan culture and the survival of beliefs, habits and components of the indigenous identity, like the cycle of life and death and the relevance of the dreamworld in their lives. When Sebastian's mother describes how "last night I have bad dreams and felt a danger for you" (p. 31), puts on the table various important issues.

In this context of betrayals and the search for culprits, Montejo refers to one term, often used by the military in their effort to find traitors and guerrillas: "tell jokes" (pp. 37-39). Military jargon itself, full of linguistic turns and specificities, hides a cynical terminology. Victor Montejo refers to this particular expression to describe torture and the way the accused were beaten until confessions were extracted through brutal treatment. We should not lose sight of one significant fact: in the early eighties, most indigenous people probably did not understand or speak Spanish. Due to these methods, the organized apparatus of power achieved social control.

Conclusions

We cannot question that testimonial literature, especially from an indigenous perspective, has become a key instrument in promoting knowledge and understanding of the Guatemalan genocide. Personal experience expresses facts and feelings based on first-hand information. Twenty years after the Peace Agreements and almost forty after the tragic events these authors related, the *Testimonio*

continues to be a significant means of understanding that dark chapter in the recent history of Guatemala.

Montejo and Menchú had to leave the country in turbulent times, for specific reasons. For his part, Ak'abal stayed in Guatemala, specifically in Totonicapán, during the Conflict and currently remains there, despite the rigors of continuous violence. Strejilevich (1991), in terms of violence, genocide, and the role of different governments in spreading fear, control, and repression, distinguishes between voices in exile and voices in *inxilio*. On the one hand, exile can be considered a means of escape. It is an undesirable situation, characterized by pain and suffering due to feelings of uprootedness. In any case, it is a good setting for describing situations and abuses without censorship. The author is free to express everything, with the only limitation being the explanations and useful clarifications needed to contextualize the events in a foreign cultural framework. On the other hand, the so-called *inxilio* (p. 2) describes the situation of repression suffered by the writer living in a hostile context characterized by repression and fear. A militarized country curtails the possibilities of freedom of expression. In response to this, the author needs to develop several strategies to avoid danger and risk. To achieve this, the writer will use metaphors, symbols, and coded language to express social criticism. This is the most common way of writing about the genocide, and it becomes the main means employed by the *damned writers* of the armed conflict.

In the specific case of indigenous authors, Ak'abal is the foremost representative of *inxilio*. In any case, we should take into account that his poetry is addressed to a more specific audience. In turn, Ak'abal wrote this testimonial work ten years after the genocide, although still during the Conflict period.

Finally, we cannot call into question the value and quality of this literature, courageous and decisive, determined to denounce these perverse policies. In any case, although we can find various similarities among these three authors, each has their own particularities.

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