Translating Central American Life Writing for the Anglophone Market: A Socio-Narrative Study of Women’s Agency and Political Radicalism in the Original and Translated Works of Claribel Alegría, Gioconda Belli and Rigoberta Menchú

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Abstract

At a time when scholars have rekindled the old debate about what is world literature and how can one study it (Casanova, 2004; Moretti, 2000, 2003; Damrosch, 2003, 2009), this thesis analyses the canonisation of Central American Revolutionary women’s writing as it moves toward the ‘centre’ and becomes part of the world literary canon. Drawing on a core-periphery systemic model, this thesis examines how translation for the Anglophone market involves the marginalisation at various levels of the narratives of political radicalism and the erotic that feature in the life writing works of Gioconda Belli, Claribel Alegría and Rigoberta Menchú. The dataset chosen for this study consists of the Spanish originals and English translations of La mujer habitada (1988) and El país bajo mi piel (2001) by Belli; No me agarran viva (1983) and Luisa en el país de la realidad (1987) by Alegría, in collaboration with her husband Darwin J. Flakoll; and Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú (1983) and Rigoberta: La nieta de los mayas (1998) by Menchú.

To develop this core-periphery systemic model, I have drawn on the work of scholars in the field of the sociology of translation such as Pascale Casanova (2004), Johan Heilbron (1999, 2010) and Gisèle Sapiro (2008). In the context of the study, peripheralisation has been reconceptualised to assist in locating the texts included in the dataset within a hierarchical power structure (external level of peripheralisation); and identifying the shifts that arise during the translation and circulation of the ontological and public narratives underpinning such texts (internal level of peripheralisation).

The study of the internal level of peripheralisation will draw on narrative theory, as elaborated by Margaret Somers and Gloria Gibson (1994), Somers (1997) and Mona Baker (2006). The choice of narrative theory employed in the thesis aims to foreground the impact that translation and the publishing field have on the selection and consecration of a literary genre; facilitate the comparison between the texts and paratexts of the originals and their English translations, and disclose the mechanisms through which the agency of the woman/author is neutralised, and the narratives of sexuality, body, political radicalism and feminine subjectivity are constructed in the original and reinterpreted through translation.

This comparative (para)textual analysis questions the nature of the process by which peripheral texts have accessed the Western canon. In light of the findings, the thesis advocates the need to redefine the concept of canonisation in order to acknowledge a possible conflict between the new assumed centrality of the consecrated/translated text and the layers of peripheralisation that might still be constraining the original narratives. Secondly, these findings draw attention to a gap in world literatures scholarship. By assuming the autonomy of literature as an artistic form, world literature scholars might be in danger of obscuring the potential for manipulation inherent in translation practice, particularly in spaces favouring domesticating approaches to translation. Thirdly, this work aims to serve as a reminder to scholars and activists not to overlook the impact of literary translation on the circulation of theories and narratives, particularly in the case of highly canonical texts such as that of Rigoberta Menchú (1984).
Declaration

I, Tamara de Inés Antón, declare that no portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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Esta tesis está dedicada a tod@s vosotr@s, por ser la luz en mis tormentas.
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Introduction

The revolutionary movements of Central America in the second half of the 20th century and the rise in the number of publications by Latin American women over the last four decades are the two historical processes that frame the concerns of this doctoral project. For Central America, “[r]evolutionary upheavals and the artistic exuberance they sparked began a new cultural boom” (Barbas-Rhoden, 2003: 4). Expressions of this boom in the literary field included exteriorista poems¹ in poetry and testimonio in narrative. Against the backdrop of the rise of leftist movements whose influence lasted from the 1960s until the signing of peace treaties in Guatemala and El Salvador in the 1990s, these literary works and their authors attracted large international audiences and numerous critical studies, and were known not only for their artistic merit, but also for their recourse to oral traditions, disruption of the literary canon and strong political engagement. It is within this tradition of politically-charged cultural production that the data set selected for this thesis can be situated. All the works studied here can be encompassed under the genre of life writing, and the socio-narrative approach taken in this thesis will enable me to: (i) question the construction of these authors personal narratives of political radicalism and women’s agency within the confines of the aforementioned tradition of politically-engaged texts, and (ii) interrogate the process of translation that enables these

¹ Like the genre of testimonio, exteriorista writing emphasised collective memories and local knowledge, communicated without much artifice in ways that could be accessible to el pueblo. One of the most prominent examples of exteriorista poets was the Nicaraguan Ernesto Cardenal, who promoted his poems among peasants within the context of the famous Talleres de Poesía (Barbas-Rhoden, 2003: 5). In fact, as explained by Amanda Hopkinson in her introduction to Lovers and Comrades, “in Nicaragua’s mass alfabetización programmes, poetry is combined not only with literacy but with integrated cultural studies. Learning to write is closely tied to poetic self-expression” (Hopkinson, 1989: xii).
texts to circulate into the centre of the world of letters and reach the international community.

Translation played an essential role during the period of the 1960s to the 1990s because Central American writers were given an important platform by international solidarity groups; and the genre of *testimonio* emerged as a means of bearing witness to a collective struggle, gaining prominence with canonised works such as Rigoberta Menchú’s *testimonio*, *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* (1983), which will be part of the data set studied in this thesis. In one of the first and most frequently cited definitions of *testimonio*, John Beverley describes it as:

a novel or novella-length narrative in book or pamphlet (that is, printed as opposed to oral) form, told in the first-person by a narrator who is also the real protagonist or witness of the events he or she recounts, and whose unit of narration is usually a life or a significant life experience (Beverley, 1989: 12-13).

For his part, George Yúdice highlights in his definition that “this authentic narrative was told by a witness who is moved to narrate by the urgency of the situation (e.g. war, oppression, revolution, etc.)” (Yúdice, 1991: 17). Despite this production of politically-engaged texts sparking in international audiences an unprecedented interest in Central American literature, the publication of scholarly works on these genres has been far from steady. According to various scholars, the focus on Central American cultural production during the 1980s was only a momentary flash of enthusiasm followed by a decline in the circulation and study of Central American texts, particularly of those that were not internationally canonised during this period of enhanced interest. As established by Guatemalan author and critic Arturo Arias, “[e]ntre 1978 y 1990 Centroamérica logró, a un altísimo costo, que el mundo se fijara en ella. Pero ya en los años noventa,
pareciera como si volviéramos a la situación de antaño. Centroamérica sigue importando poco y a muy pocos en la esfera cultural” (Arias, 1995: 74). Indeed, the critical literature informing this project will demonstrate that relatively little has been translated from Central American women writers apart from the three authors informing this thesis. It will also show that the critical attention that these literary works once received has been dying out since the late 1990s, with very few scholars ever acknowledging (and never developing a proper understanding of) the role that translation played in the reception of these texts.

In her book *Writing Women in Central America: Gender and Fictionalization of History* (2003), Laura Barbas-Rhoden highlights how in 1992, Arias, in an effort to promote outstanding texts produced in the region, compiled a list of important contributors to Central American literature since the 1970s. Surprisingly, of the nineteen novels Arias identified as part of the Central American new narrative, only one was written by a woman: *El último juego* by Gloria Guardia (1977, Panama). On the basis of Arias’ list, one could conclude that if Central America mattered very little to very few, women writing in Central America mattered even less (Barbas-Rhoden, 2003: 5).

However, Barbas-Rhoden (2003: 5) continues to highlight that, since the publication of Arias’ article, a range of scholarly publications and translations indicate that Central American literature is gaining attention once again. This time, however, this development is driven by the prominence of women writers. As Barbas-Rhoden herself notes, “[f]or the last three decades it has increasingly been women writers who have contributed narrative innovations and practiced cultural criticism through their fictions” (2003: 5). In other words, the second surge of interest in Latin American literature in the late 20th century has been marked by the explosion of bestsellers written by women.
Barbas-Rhoden’s book focuses on the works of four very well-known Central American women writers: Claribel Alegría (El Salvador), Gioconda Belli (Nicaragua), Rosario Aguilar (Nicaragua) and Tatiana Lobo (Costa Rica). However, and despite her claim that their original works and their translations show that Central American literature is attracting attention again, only the first two have had all or most of their works translated into English and can therefore be included in the three-author corpus (Rigoberta Menchú, Claribel Alegría and Gioconda Belli) that informs this doctoral thesis. Moreover, these two translated authors, Alegría and Belli, had already received international attention during the 1980s, when Central American writing first came to the attention of critics and readers worldwide.

In fact, when Claribel Alegría began her publishing career in 1966, the Latin American Boom was still producing “the same masculinist metaphors it inherited from the colonial era and the modernist writers” (Barbas-Rhoden, 2003: 13). Like modernism, the Boom was a seminal movement in Latin America with extraordinary international repercussions, and had, as will be discussed in Chapter 2, a lasting impact on the literary community and on the publishing field. Born in the midst of the triumph of the Cuban Revolution and fostered by the euphoria of leftist intellectuals, the Boom exported a new vision of Latin America to the world. However, neither women nor the small countries of Central America that concern this thesis were an active part of the Latin American Boom. This is important because to this day the Boom still has an impact on whom and what is imported from Latin America into the international book market.

In his contribution to América Latina y la literatura mundial: mercado editorial, redes globales y la invención de un continente, Karim Benmiloud (2015: 129-142) writes

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2 Tatiana Lobo has never been translated into English; and Rosario Aguilar, despite her long literary career with over ten novels, has only one work translated into English La niña blanca y los pájaros sin pies (1992).
on the reception of Latin American literature in France from 1960 to 2010. He postulates the existence of a double canon of Latin American authors – one brief list of very recognised authors, and another list of authors still living under their shadow, despite the effort of some independent publishers to promote their work, and the attention they have received from academia (2015: 137). Benmiloud also mentions that “escritores procedentes de pequeños países sin grandes antecedentes literarios o sin estereotipos por el público, como Augusto Roa Bastos (Paraguay), Juan Carlos Onetti (Uruguay) o Edmundo Paz Soldán (Bolivia) hasta ahora no lograron transcender en el mercado francés” (2015: 138). It is surprising that countries such as Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador do not feature at all in Benmiloud’s analysis. In fact, one might be able to argue that they fall into the category of small countries with little symbolic value (even though Nicaragua and Guatemala are homes to one winner each of the Nobel Prize for Literature); but their writing should still be fresh in the public’s imagination for its political engagement with the Central American revolutions.

Benmiloud goes on to acknowledge that there is an almost absolute absence of Latin American women within the French literary market. He even points to the fact that even bestselling authors in other European countries, such as Isabel Allende or Laura Esquivel, enjoyed only a timid reception in France (2015: 139), and concludes by posing a couple of questions that would seem to apply also in the Angloamerican market: (i) When will we write a history of Latin American literature that includes women writers and acknowledges the role they have played in it?; (ii) How long will the hegemonic presence of writers such as Gabriel García Márquez and Mario Vargas Llosa last in the international media and market?

In spite of being a valuable contribution to the field, América Latina y la literatura mundial (2015) sets out to interrogate the multiple dimensions of the circulation and reception of Latin American literatures in the global literary world, but
fails to study in any depth a language as central as English and a market as global as the Angloamerican one. In fact, only one of the contributors to the volume studies the reception of Latin American literature by the Anglophone market: Nick Caistor (2015: 163-167) who, in his own words and unlike the others, is not an academic and has not rigorously studied this phenomenon (2015: 163). Caistor has, however, explored the reception of Latin American literature in the UK from the perspective of being a reader, a translator, an editor and an occasional literary critic. In his opinion, UK readers seek in Latin American literature the exoticism and abundance that their national production lacks, and regardless of the efforts of newer generations of Latin American writers, this attitude has hardly changed in the last forty years (Caistor, 2015: 163).

Caistor also discusses how British publishers lagged behind many other countries when it came to the “discovery” of the Boom’s literature. In general, British publishers are monolinguists, but if they speak any other language, it tends to be French. This is why, in many cases, the British interest in writers such as García Márquez, Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortázar or José Donoso generally came after they had been consecrated in France. The interest of British publishers in these authors was also driven by the influences of their American counterparts. With the exception of independent publishers (which were much more numerous forty years ago), British publishing companies closely monitor how foreign books perform in the larger US market before investing in having them published in the UK. In most cases, the English translation produced for the US market will be adopted without any revision, and the same version will be sold in both countries (Caistor, 2015: 164).

The appeal of realismo mágico was, and still is, strong in the US, where “a veces parece que todo lo que se sitúa al sur del río Grande sigue siendo tan exótico como el tocado de la actriz Carmen Miranda” (Caistor, 2015: 164). And it meant a significant increase in the number of translations into English of writers coming from Latin
American countries. As established by María Eugenia Mudrovic (2002), this new interest was due at least in part to the creation of organisations such as the Inter-American Foundation of the Arts in 1962, which proposed the development of intellectual exchange between the US and its neighbours in the South, but whose interests were largely ideological; in other words, they tacitly sought to counteract the influence of the Cuban revolution.

However, Caistor (2015) claims that this ideological agenda was not shared by British publishers who, if anything, were more influenced by leftist Italian publishers. This is the case of Serpent’s Tail, which published several books by Brazilian writer, Jorge Amado. Moreover, in the 1970s and 80s, for the first time, several exiled Latin American authors arrived on the island, stimulating interest in Chilean and Argentinian authors such as Antonio Skármeta, Daniela Eltit or Osvaldo Soriano (Caistor, 2015: 165). At the same time, several testimonios became very famous in academic circles. These include Yo me llamo Rigoberta Menchú (1983) or Si me permiten hablar (1978) by Domitila Barrios, and No me agarran viva (1987) by Claribel Alegría, which was actually first translated in the UK. In addition, Verso, a leftist UK publisher, thought that there was enough public interest to launch a book series entitled Critical Studies in Latin American Culture, with titles on painting, gender studies, cinema and, of course, literature (Caistor, 2015: 165). However, this political engagement did not last long. Caistor corroborates this claim by drawing on the case of Castigo Divino (1988), a novel by Nicaraguan writer Sergio Ramírez. Caistor was hired to translate this work, but the project was cancelled as soon as the Sandinistas lost the elections in Nicaragua in 1990, and Central American revolutionary projects were seen as coming to an end.

In Caistor’s opinion, interest in Latin American fiction decreased during the 1990s. The ‘big’ Latin American authors were still being published, but the industry was looking for something new. “Por un lado, su afán por “el realismo mágico” fue
desplazado hacia escritores que escribían en inglés, como Salman Rushdie y Ben Okri, y por otro, una nueva generación de novelistas británicos despertaba el interés de los lectores” (Caistor, 2015: 165). The efforts of younger generations of Latin American writers such as McOndo in Chile or la generación del crack in Mexico did not receive much attention in the UK book market. In fact, this “atmósfera de estancamiento duró hasta la aparición casi mágica de una nueva figura que llegó a conquistar a un nuevo público, el chileno Roberto Bolaño” (Caistor, 2015: 166).

1.2. Central American Literature, World Literature and the Anglophone World.

In the above discussion, the context of the production of Latin American literature in general – and Central American literature in particular – has been briefly presented; and some connections between the national contexts of production and the international publishing field have been delineated. Nevertheless, the position of Central American literature within world literature still needs to be defined, and in order to achieve this, one should ask at least two questions: What is “Central American literature”? And what is “world literature”?

Central American literature is frequently studied within the broader category of Latin American literature. But the premise that all Spanish-speaking American countries and most non-Spanish-speaking countries in Central and South America have common cultural connections is fraught with problems (Mignolo, 2000; Berger, 1995; Larsen, 1995) and is tainted with outdated imperialist discourses and perspectives. Nevertheless, this notion of a unified Latin American region also served as a key conceptual category during the struggles for independence, particularly through the efforts of José Martí and Simón Bolívar. Moreover, Sophia McClennen (2002: 220) also claims that regional unity has been the source of a number of Latin American movements such as the Boom and
New Latin American Cinema. And since the concept of Latin America as a single unit has served as both a tool of cultural (neo)colonisation and a source of cultural empowerment, scholars in this area should constantly re-evaluate their understanding and conceptualisation of Latin America.

Similarly, narrowing the map further, Latin American scholars tend to assume the existence of “inter-Latin American regions, such as Caribbean, Southern Cone, Central American or Andean” (McClennen, 2002: 220), each of them presenting us with common cultural characteristics. Even though they may be useful as a basis to articulate a research rationale, for example, these regional categories should also be critiqued and investigated. To be more specific, the definition of Central America as an area of study is not always as straightforward as one might hope. In her anthology of Central American women’s poetry *Lovers and Comrades* (1989), editor and translator Amanda Hopkinson also explains the reasons behind choosing only five countries as part of her corpus. She declares that her collection follows “a political rather than geographical definition of Central America (...) Panama and Honduras were excluded due to the lack of available contemporary material. Mexico has, by contrast, such an abundance of contemporary writing that it was eventually excluded as deserving an anthology to itself” (Hopkinson, 1989: xix).

Following a similar rationale, and within the context of this thesis, the term Central American literature will be further narrowed down to refer mainly to the literatures of Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua. Firstly, this thesis is concerned with works originally written in Spanish and that have already been translated into English. Thus, Belize falls out of this category for not being a Spanish-speaking country. Secondly, Mexican literature cannot be placed in the same peripheral position held by

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3 Cuba, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Costa Rica and Guatemala.
the rest of Central American literatures; whilst countries such as Honduras, Panama and Costa Rica are omitted as they do not have any women writers who have been sufficiently translated. Finally, there are useful historical, political and cultural similarities between the three home countries of the authors included in this thesis, since civil wars and left-wing revolutions took place in Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua from the 1970s up until the 1990s.

What, then, is world literature? This notion has been subject of much debate since Johann Wolfang Von Goethe first gave it currency in 1827. Even though every discussion on world literature seems to start with Goethe, it is clear that he never defined it in an explicit manner. Most commentators agree that he “saw the term as referring primarily to the increased exchange of ideas between intellectuals drawing together in first instance in Europe, and in a deferred perspective the world” (D’haen, 2015: 55). After Goethe, and in the context of several disciplines that emerged during the nineteenth century, particularly comparative literature, the term came to be interpreted as two different things. On the one hand, it stood for everything that had ever been written anywhere in the world, and on the other, it stood for only the best of that amorphous mass, i.e., the canon. These two positions (and anything in between) have attracted numerous adherents throughout the last two centuries, but the debate seems to have been rekindled in the last couple of decades with the works of scholars such as Franco Moretti (2000, 2003), Pascale Casanova (2004) and David Damrosch (2003).

Firstly, Moretti (2000a) advocates a systemic approach using what he refers to as distant reading to bring some order to the undefined mass of the world’s literatures, or even more ambitiously, to what Moretti, borrowing from Margaret Cohen, calls the great unread – all the world’s writing that flies under the radar of what has usually been

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4 See Subsection 2.4.4.
considered as literature. To summarise, Moretti aims to use concepts and methodologies from the social and natural sciences to map the relationships between the world’s literatures in terms of production and dissemination, without having to make any judgements on their aesthetic value or literary quality (Moretti, 2000a: 54-68).

Secondly, Casanova, in her book *The World Republic of Letters* (2004), builds a system in which the world’s literatures and their works gravitate within a canonical constellation with Paris at its centre, with the city’s literary establishment authoritatively selecting, filtering, translating and reviewing those works deemed valuable enough to access the centre. The canon resulting from Casanova’s model is implicitly a reflection of the quality of the works, ordered according to objective standards of an international literary field (in Pierre Bourdieu’s terms). Consequently, the world’s literary canon may at times assign values to a work or an author that are different from those assigned by the national canon.

Finally, and drawing upon the commercial vocabulary also used by Goethe himself, Damrosch (2003) defines world literature as what circulates beyond its source language/culture, either in translation or in the original if the language is sufficiently well-known abroad, which in our times practically means in English. Damrosch ultimately advocates an updated mode of close reading, which has been traditionally applied to English-language literature, and which Damrosch now extends to other literatures with some modifications. Damrosch states that one should recognise that there has never been one single work of world literature, and thus, no single way of reading will be appropriate for all texts, or even for one text at all times (Damrosch, 2003: 5). In Damrosch’s words,

A work enters world literature through a double process: first by being read as literature; second, by circulating out into a broader world beyond
its linguistic and cultural point of origin. A given work can enter world literature and then fall out of it again if it shifts beyond a threshold point along either axis, the literary or the worldly (Damrosch, 2003: 6).

In brief, highly transient works may move in and out of world literature over the centuries and, at any time, they may be regarded as part of world literature by some readers but not by others, and for some type of reading but not others. Moreover, the shifts a work may undergo have little to do with its internal logic, but mostly come about through rather complex dynamics of cultural change and contestation. Consequently, very few works secure a quick and permanent status as a world masterpiece (Damrosch, 2003: 6).

Damrosch’s understanding of world literature as a mode of circulation holds some similarities with the idea of canonisation foregrounded by this thesis, which will be developed in Chapter 2. In his book What is World Literature? (2003), Damrosch highlights that “as it moves into the sphere of world literature, far from suffering a loss of authenticity or essence, a work can gain in many ways” (2003: 6). To follow this process, it is necessary to look closely at the transformations a work undergoes, which is why Damrosch’s books claims to highlight issues of circulation and translation, and focuses on detailed case-studies. However, despite its many achievements, Damrosch’s book is written from an Anglocentric perspective, the implications of which he never fully acknowledges. To a certain extent, Damrosch’s understanding of world literature still obscures the effects that the process of translation may have in the literary work, which may gain access to a wider audience but also see its narratives reframed or even renarrated. Moreover, the scope of Damrosch’s project is so large (from the Epic of Gilgamesh to the contemporary novel Dictionary of Khazars by Milorad Pavic) that it does not lend itself to the sort of close reading that he advocates.
1.3. Research Questions

Particularly relevant to this thesis, nevertheless, is Damrosch’s chapter on the reception of Menchú’s work (Damrosch, 2003: 230-256). He acknowledges that some of the changes that arise in translation can be explained by narrative shifts due to the circulation and reception of this work by the centre; however, he does not delve into sustained comparisons between the original and the English translation. Moreover, in spite of his findings about the reception of Menchú, Damrosch concludes his book by “proposing a threefold definition of world literature that focuses on the world, the text and the reader: (i) World literature is an elliptical refraction of national literatures; (ii) World literature is writing that gains in translation; (iii) World literature is not a set canon of texts but a mode of reading” (2003: 281).

This thesis seeks to problematise the process of canonisation as conceptualised in Damrosch’s second statement. It is true that by recognising the centrality of the Angloamerican publishing field and of English as a language, one may assume that world literature cannot but gain through translation, since translation into English will serve as consecration to the author and give them access to the centre. However, this thesis is more concerned with the potential shifts that literary works originating in the periphery, such as those by Central American writers, might need to undergo in order to access the centre.

This is particularly important to the selected data set since they have been authored by three Central American women writers, which puts these works under several layers of peripheralisation when it comes to their reception in the Anglophone world. Moreover, these are all works of life writing in which the interplay between

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5 For a discussion on the centrality of English see Section 2.3.
6 See Section 2.4.
personal and public narratives is foregrounded. As Baker (2013) briefly states, memoirs and autobiographies (and in the case of this project, also testimonios) of leaders or intellectuals whose personal narratives are at odds with the shared public narratives of the target audience offer a rich source of data to be interrogated using the framework of narrative theory. Personal narratives are also a good source to study and make sense of the strategies translation uses to deal with the ways in which communities then negotiate and present themselves to the outside world. The selected works make for a rich source of data because they allow me to study first the construction of narratives of political radicalism and female subjectivity by peripheral authors who in a situation of conflict are actively trying to engage the international community.

Consequently, whilst studying the reception by the centre of works of life writing authored by the periphery, this thesis explores the following overarching question: **Drawing on a data set of six literary works, what does an analytical approach developed by combining world-systems theory, field theory and narrative theory reveal about the role of renarration in the canonisation of Central American women’s life writing?** In this study, renarration is understood as the (re)construction, rather than representation, for the Anglophone market of the personal and public narratives mobilised in the works of Claribel Alegría, Gioconda Belli and Rigoberta Menchú.

This question will be broken down into the following subquestions:

- Based on a core-periphery modelling of the world of letters, how does the ‘location’ of the life writing texts in my data set in relation to the Anglophone market influence their respective processes of canonisation?

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7 For a discussion of narrative theory see Section 3.3.
8 For a detailed discussion on the concept of location, see Section 2.4.
- Do genre-specific conventions⁹ and their respective reception in the Anglophone market result in different approaches to the canonisation of the life writing genres represented in my data set?
- How do the strategies adopted to frame Central American women’s life writing in the Anglophone market influence the translation of the narratives of political radicalism and female subjectivity that feature in my data set?
- What do the findings of my analysis reveal about the dialectical relationship between renarration and canonisation in the study of translated world literature?

1.4. Outline of Chapters

This thesis consists of seven chapters. Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to the context of production of Central American revolutionary women’s writing, delineates the relationship of these literary works and the notion of world literature, details my research questions, and offers a brief overview of chapters.

Chapter 2 operates as an overview of the theoretical framework of world literature, as understood by both “field theory” (Bourdieu 1971, 1977, 1983 and 2008; Casanova 2002, 2004 and 2010) and “world-system theory” (de Swaan 1993; Heilbron 1999 and 2010; Sapiro 2008 and 2010; Heilbron and Sapiro, 2007). This chapter discusses the efficiency of these two tendencies to approach my research questions, and presents a specific core-periphery system designed to locate my data set – examples of Central American women’s life writing – in relation to the Anglophone publishing field. Chapter 2 also proposes a set of working terms and definitions to supplement the

⁹ A working definition of genre conventions is provided in Section 5.1.
aforementioned literature. It redefines the concept of “peripheralisation,” and continues to question previous research on the consecrating role of translation. In doing so, it chooses to focus on the capacity of manipulation inherent to the translation practice and, thus, redefines the term “canonisation” as a mirroring practice to peripheralisation.

**Chapter 3** introduces the strengths of narrative theory, including a discussion of the typology (Section 3.2) and the core features of narratives (Section 3.4), as more recently elaborated in translation studies (Baker 2006). It also presents the rationale for this doctoral research to (i) adopt narrative theory as a framework underpinning the analytical chapters, and (ii) focus on the interplay of personal and public narratives as a means to define the data set. Finally, it includes a brief discussion of each of the literary works in relation to the genre of life writing and its different subgenres.

**Chapter 4** explores the translation into English of the *testimonio No me agarran viva* (1983) co-authored by Claribel Alegría and Darwin J. Flakoll, narrating the life and death of Comandante Eugenia of the Salvadorean guerrilla, and Gioconda Belli’s memoirs *El país bajo mi piel* (2001). It does so through comparative (para)textual analyses, gauging the extent to which the location of these two authors and texts might have influenced their respective processes of canonisation and the level of renarration they have undergone.

**Chapter 5** questions if genre-specific conventions and their reception by the Anglophone market has resulted in different approaches to the canonisation of peripheral texts. In order to do so, this chapter presents a close comparative (para)textual analysis of the translations into English of fictionalised *testimonio La mujer habitada* (1992) by Gioconda Belli and hybrid autobiographical fiction *Luisa en el país de la realidad* (1987a) by Claribel Alegría.
Chapter 6 takes on the figure of Rigoberta Menchú, whose exemplarity facilitates the study of possible misconceptions and assumptions regarding canon formation. Taking her prominence as a starting point, this chapter identifies three distinct moments of intervention (construction, translation and consumption/reception) or opportunities of renarration in Menchú’s testimonio. The extensive research already realised in this very mediated text has so far overlooked the impact that English translation has had in its canonisation, as well as in its critical reception within the Angloamerican context. Most importantly, a comparison between the now canonical and canonised *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (1983) and her later memoirs *Rigoberta, La nieta de los mayas* (1998a) allows Chapter six to articulate in more detail the dialectical relationship between renarration and canonisation in the study of world literature.

Finally, Chapter 7 serves as a conclusion. It summarises and discusses the findings of this study, as well as its limitations, and offers some suggestions for further research.
Chapter 2: Central American Women within the World of Letters.

Assessing the Core-Periphery System

2.1. Introduction

This chapter offers an overview of the theoretical framework adopted to study the functioning of the world of letters, as understood by both field theory (Bourdieu 1971, 1977, 1983 and 2008; Casanova 2002, 2004 and 2010) and world-system theory (de Swaan, 1993; Heilbron, 1999, 2010; Sapiro, 2008, 2010; Heilbron and Sapiro, 2007). The following sections will discuss the ways in which these two strands of translation sociology may assist me in tackling my research questions. In this context, the asymmetrical power relations informing the “world system of translation” – a term borrowed from Heilbron (1999) – will be examined in relation to those informing the “world of letters” as understood by Casanova (2004). This will make it possible to reconstruct a specific core-periphery system designed to locate my set of data – examples of Central American women’s life writing – in relation to the Anglophone publishing field.

This chapter will also propose a set of working terms and definitions to supplement the aforementioned literature. It redefines the concept of “peripheralisation” as a means firstly, to locate my data set within an unequal power structure (“the external level of peripheralisation” as seen in Section 2.4) and secondly, to understand the implications that reframing narratives of political radicalism and women’s agency had in the reception of the translated text (“the internal level of peripheralisation”). This internal level of peripheralisation will be examined in the data-analysis chapters (Chapters 4, 5 and 6) through a series of (para)textual comparative studies informed by narrative theory.
and complemented by framing theory. This chapter will move on to question previous research on the consecrating role of translation, focusing on the capacity of manipulation inherent to the translation practice. It therefore redefines the term “canonisation” as a mirroring practice vis-à-vis peripheralisation. Finally, this chapter concludes by outlining the potential spaces of miscommunication and gaps in the scholarship when it comes to close analysis of how these peripheral texts have accessed the centre.

2.2. The World of Letters

Abram de Swaan argues that “the languages of the world together constitute a single, evolving, global system” (1993: 219) – a unique system whose coherence is predicated on multilingualism and translation. It is important to note here that even though we are in front of a single world language system, it is an unequal one. Polyglots and translators/interpreters, who are the connecting elements between the different languages within the system, also act as structuring agents. In practice, this means that “the larger the proportion of multilingual speakers competent in [a given] language, the more central this language is as part of the system” (de Swaan, 1993: 219). In this context, languages that occupy peripheral and central positions within the world language system relate to each other through “patterns of rivalry and accommodation” (de Swaan, 1993: 219).

These patterns of rivalry have been the object of study of the political sociology of language, which has traditionally measured the value of languages in political and economic terms, ignoring their cultural value or “literariness” (Casanova, 2004: 17), i.e., what actually endows them with their linguistic and literary capital as symbolic-cultural

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10 For a discussion of this thesis’ methodology and corpus rationale see Chapter 3.
11 Although de Swaan frequently describes this world language system as “floral figuration,” I prefer his metaphorical characterisation of this system as a “galaxy of languages,” made up of peripheral languages gravitating around a central language, just like satellites do around a planet. In turn, relatively central languages circle a hyper-central language, like planets orbiting around the Sun in the solar system (de Swaan, 1993: 220).
goods within the “World of Letters.” Through an analysis of the cultural aspect of these power relations, Casanova argues that certain languages, by virtue of the prestige that the texts written in them enjoy, are reputed to be more literary than others. And if we were to represent metaphorically the status of these languages within a map of the literary world, they would hold a central position (Casanova, 2004: 17).

One could, therefore, conceive the literary world in terms of a dialectic mediated by polyglots and translators between those literatures that hold a peripheral position on the map and those occupying the centre. Such cosmopolitan intermediaries – including publishers, editors, critics, and especially translators – enable and facilitate the circulation of texts both into and out of specific languages (Casanova, 2004: 21). Indeed, it is the number of such consecrating intermediaries that makes it possible to measure not only the “centrality of the language” (de Swaan, 1993), but also its “literariness” (Casanova, 2004), i.e. its power and prestige as well as the volume of linguistic and literary capital that they own.

Translation is thus central to the conceptualisation of a global literary space shaped by unequal relations and violent struggles. Translation, like literary criticism, is a process conducive to consecrating value or what Larbaud calls “enrichment” (Casanova, 2004: 23). Indeed, translations may potentially increase the intellectual value or symbolic capital of the source text, as well as enrich the literary capital of the national system that receives the translation. Consequently, the translation practice is enriching at two levels: in the first place, it will increase the intellectual value of the source text since the number

12 This literary universe is in my opinion more variable and relative than Casanova paints it to be. She establishes an autonomous and cosmopolitan pole that acts as a referent to a more heteronomous and national pole. From the point of view of world-system theory, the emphasis is not so much on the different poles but on the spaces of contact/conflict among the different literary systems (Ternicier, 2014: 109). In doing so, these spaces of contact generate relationships in constant (even though at times slow) change. This explains some of the criticism that Casanova’s model has received, due to its strong Paris-centrism as seen in Section 2.3.
of literary works that are translated – and hence become part of a wider international literary space – is not always as vast as one might wish. Secondly, it ultimately enhances the intellectual capital of the target literature that receives the translated text, including it as a new piece of the immense composite that embeds the “World Republic of Letters”.

In this context, it is necessary to change the vantage point from which literature is viewed, and adopt a stance that brings light to the economic, political, and cultural value of a text in relation to the patterns of rivalry among language groups and the national states or cultures behind these language groups. This change of vantage point is again dependant on mediators, polyglots, and translators, since only through those agents is it possible to understand the power relations structuring the literary world and its fundamentally economic offspring: the international book market.

In fact, one of the weaknesses of Casanova’s model lies in the extent to which it fails to engage with two basic dimensions of the very complex literary system: the institutions of higher education or academia as canonising forces, and the publishing market as an economic one. Casanova tends to fall into an idealised and/or outdated vision of the literary world by highlighting instead, the pure aesthetic value of the literary work and the relationships of dependency of small national literatures from their home political institutions (Ternicier, 2014: 193).

2.3. The World System of Translation: A Core-Periphery Model

The study of books in translation requires scholars to shift their focus from the national to the international market space, in which the former is increasingly embedded as globalisation advances (Sapiro, 2008: 158). Considered as a transnational transfer of cultural goods, literary translation therefore provides the space of international and social relations (Heilbron and Sapiro, 2007: 95). Translation is thus not a disembodied activity, but a social practice which depends on intermediaries and, to a considerable extent, on
the book market. The aforementioned scholars, all members of the sociological branch of translation studies, draw to a greater or lesser extent on Bourdieu’s work on the social conditions within the international circulation of cultural goods.¹³

Bourdieu (1971) proposed the concept of “field” and developed a theory of the production and circulation of symbolic goods based on the opposition between small-scale and large-scale circulation – an opposition structuring the field of cultural production in general, and the particular segment of interest for this thesis: the literary field. Economic and marketing laws reign over the pole of large-scale circulation, where sales and best-sellers would be the main criterion of success. On the other hand, aesthetic and intellectual value is the benchmark against which success is measured within the pole of small-scale circulation. Therefore, writers whose work is primarily aligned with this second pole will seek to elicit recognition from other writers, literary critics, and scholars rather than securing the approval of a wider general public. Even though this latter pole of circulation seems to deny the centrality of economic profit, introducing itself as an “economic world reversed” (Bourdieu, 1983), it would be too naive to presuppose that the small-scale pole is entirely devoid of economic rationality: symbolic recognition is likely to result in a greater consecration of author/text in the long run (Sapiro, 2008: 155), which will ultimately lead to more people learning about the text, then buying it, and reading it. Moreover, the consecrated status of an author or a text can

¹³ Bourdieu (1977) analysed the role of the publisher in the process of legitimating literary products and contended that to publish is to consecrate. “L’idéologie de la création, qui fait de l'auteur le principe premier et dernier de la valeur de l'œuvre, dissimule que l'éditeur est inséparablement celui qui exploite le travail du «créateur» et celui qui, en le mettant sur le marché, par la publication consacre le produit, autrement voué à rester à l'état de ressource naturelle, qu'il a su «découvrir», et d'autant plus fortement qu'il est lui-même plus consacré” (Bourdieu, 1977: 5) [The idea that in creation the author is the main and only principle assigning value to their work hides the fact that the editor is the one exploiting the work of the ‘creator.’ It also hides the fact that by bringing this work into the market, its publication consecrates both the product, which would have otherwise remained in its state of natural resource, and the editor that discovered it]. This chapter will use Casanova’s work to extend Bourdieu’s logic to include not only the practice of publishing but that of translation in Section 2.5.
also benefit the publishing house that “discovers” it and bring to the publishing house economic profit since other more or less recognised authors could knock on their doors following the symbolic recognition reached by their colleague.

To understand the focus of this research on the sociology of translation as a theoretical framework, it is useful to discuss it in relation to the “interpretative approach” and the “pure economic analysis of transnational exchanges” (Heilbron and Sapiro, 2007: 93). The interpretative approach includes two different tendencies: the objectivistic one, which arises from classic hermeneutics, and a more relativist one, which has been commonly developed in the framework of cultural studies. Both tendencies are inclined to set aside the social conditions of the interpretative act. This amounts to ignoring not only the majority of agents involved in the translation practice, but also the effective functions that translations might fulfil – both for the translator and for the readerships – in the social spaces of reception (Heilbron and Sapiro, 2007: 94). By contrast, the economic approach “assimilates translated books into the most general category of goods and identifies them as merchandise produced, distributed and consumed according to the logic of the markets” (Heilbron and Sapiro, 2007: 94). However, to consider translated books merely as commodities is to ignore the specificity of cultural goods, as well as the particularities behind their production and marketing.

Both of the approaches given above tend to overlook the social, political, and cultural dimension of the world system of translation that I seek to question, foregrounding the sociology of translation as the most productive option in this case. In the following paragraphs, this section will present an overview of the two main strands within this school (“field theory” and “world systems theory”)

Casanova (2004) positions herself within field theory and applies Bourdieu’s concept of field (1971) to the discipline of translation, in order to theorise the world of letters as a space of tension between dominant and dominated literary/national spaces. In
Casanova’s model, this structure of domination is to some extent independent of other relations of political, social, or economic power between the aforementioned national spaces. However, Casanova relies too much on the autonomy and stability of what she understands as the international canon. Even if one could accept Paris’ centrality as literary capital at the end of the 19th century or even beginning of the 20th century, this is something difficult to maintain nowadays, where even a Eurocentric approach might be outdated, and an Angloamerican one might be closer to reality.

For the purpose of this research, one of the main successes of Casanova is to advance Bourdieu’s conceptualisation of the literary field (as part of the field of cultural production) by including translation as a consecrating agent and, thus, extending it to an international scale. However, her World Republic of Letters (2004) is still very reliant on national boundaries and writers’ attempts to overcome the constraints of their respective national literary spaces. It is possible to claim that her focus on the opposition between national/international writers within the different national literary spaces that form the “World Republic of Letters” might obscure the same power struggles that she is denouncing (see Subsection 2.4.2 and Section 2.5). Moreover, although Casanova presents and foregrounds translation as central to the consecration of literary capital, her work does not engage enough with the actual workings of the social practice of translation. Considering the research aims of this project, it will be necessary to open up this theoretical framework to include an analysis of the impact of translation choices in the reception of the works included in my data set, rather than focusing only on the social agents of consecration (both on an individual or institutional scales).

14 The status of the United States as a global economic and political power does not systematically lead to the centrality of US literature or the position of New York as a literary capital. In fact, in Casanova’s opinion, Paris was and continues to be the literary capital of the world.
On the other hand, Casanova’s contribution is fruitful when building a theoretical framework for this thesis, inasmuch as she emphasises that economic and political factors and the size of the book market are not sufficient by themselves to explain the power relations among different literary spaces. However, I consider these power relations to be reconstructed through the practice of translation, unlike Casanova who assumes the existence of a constant opposition between national and international literatures. Cultural factors need to be acknowledged here, since languages and the cultural traditions associated with them are endowed with symbolic capital according to the number of world literary pieces that they have provided. It will be the recognition and consecration of these texts that will give languages and national literary spaces a value within the world of letters. This recognition is commonly imposed and therefore controlled by the oldest and most dominant spaces, i.e., the centre.

As has already been pointed out, the sociological approach to translation takes as its object of study the social relations between the different agents of a global literary space, but this space does not necessarily need to be understood as a field. There is a second strand within this school that puts forward the core-periphery systemic model as the way to delineate this space. Core-periphery models have been commonly applied by scholars and thinkers such as Wallerstein (1974, 1984, 1991) and de Swaan (1993, 2001) as a way of conceptualising their world system theories (Sapiro, 2008: 158).

In the context of this research, my focus will rapidly move to the concept of “emerging cultural world system” as proposed by de Swaan (1993). I understand here that any transnational cultural exchange is not a mere reflection of the structural power struggles and inequalities of the world economy – as maintained by some world-system theorists, such as Wallerstein (1991). Cultural exchanges have a dynamic of their own; they are placed in a somewhat autonomous space structured around their own economic, political, and symbolic dimensions. Consequently, clear similarities between de Swaan’s
“emerging world system,” Bourdieu’s “cultural field,” and Casanova’s “World Republic of Letters” can be teased out.

It was on the basis of de Swaan’s study of power relations between different linguistic communities that Johan Heilbron built and described the functioning of the world-system of translation: a core-periphery systemic model with groups of languages as its basic units. These language groups do not necessarily coincide with nation states; for example, English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish have a definitive supranational character (Heilbron, 1999: 432). This core-periphery system is a basic four-level structure as represented in Figure 2.1.

![Figure 2.1: World system of translation and its core-periphery model (Heilbron, 1999)](image)

Indeed, 55-60% of all “book translations”\(^\text{15}\) are made from a single language, English, which holds the hypercentral position in Figure 2.1. After English, two other

\(^{15}\) It is important to note here that “book translation” is the term used by Heilbron (2010). However, he never fully defines it, and he admits that statistics of international translations are not always available or are based on what may appear to be misleading figures. In any case, he states that by combining international translation statistics with
languages currently occupy a central position: German and French. Each of them holds a share of around 10 to 12% of the global translation market. Seven languages (Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Danish, Polish, Czech, Swedish, and, since the 1980s, Russian), with a share of 1-3% of the world market of books in translation, have a semi-peripheral position (Heilbron, 1999: 434). There are also other languages with less than 1%, and these hold a peripheral position, even though some of them have a very large number of speakers, such as Chinese or Arabic.  

The conceptualisation of the world system of translation as a core-peripheral structure has a number of implications. First of all, distinguishing languages by their degree of centrality implies not only that translations flow more from the core to periphery than the other way around, but also that communication between the peripheral groups often passes through the centre (Heilbron, 1999: 435). What is translated from one peripheral language to another often depends on which books are selected by dominant publishers to be translated from these peripheral languages into the central ones. Secondly, the more central a language is, the more types of books are translated from this language (Heilbron, 1999: 438).  

More reliable national data and case studies, one could set up a coherent model of structural dynamics of translation flows within the international book market and their impact on the actual transfer of narratives across languages and cultures (Heilbron, 2010: 13).

16 It is important to note that, as signalled by de Swaan (1993), it is not the number of speakers of a language that contributes to its centrality but the number of polyglots and mediators. Thus, the reason for the centrality of English is not the number of English speakers but the fact that it is a lingua franca chosen to mediate in all kind of international relations.

17 This core-periphery model is not conceptualised as a static structure but a dynamic one, meaning that the position of languages may change over time. Moreover, it is important to note that semi-peripheral languages cannot be separated very clearly from peripheral ones, in contrast to the distinctions between hyper-central, central, and semi-peripheral position languages, which are more clear-cut.

18 Heilbron claims that book statistics in the Netherlands distinguish 33 categories of books, ranging from “religion” and “law” to “prose” or “poetry”. Only the translations from the hyper-central language, English, are represented in all the categories. Moreover, Heilbron states that the less central the source language, the smaller the variety of books.
Moreover, there seems to be an inverse relationship between the position of a language within the world system of translation and its domestic translation rates. In other words, the more central a language is in the system, the smaller the proportion of translation into that language. For example, in the UK and US, less than 4% of all published books are translations, a figure that has hardly changed since 1945 (Heilbron, 1999: 439). Holding a central position, therefore, implies that there are many translations out of this language, but relatively few translations into it. Therefore, in the international translation economy, there is no balance between exports and imports.

One could thus postulate the existence of an intrinsic relationship between this core-periphery model at the basis of the world system of translation and the workings of the publishing field. It is undeniable that publishers play a major role in the international circulation of books, both in their original language and in translation. Gisèle Sapiro (2007, 2008, 2010) has studied the functioning of the publishing field and the role of publishers in the transnational circulation of books by applying Bourdieu’s theorisation of the production and circulation of symbolic goods to the case of translations. Bourdieu claims that national book markets can be regarded as structured around the opposition between large-scale and small-scale circulation. On the one side, there are best-sellers and other commercial genres, such as romances, tourist guides, or practical books that sell tens to hundreds of thousands of copies; while on the other, there are scientific works and upmarket literary works, such as novels, short-stories, poetry, and drama, which only exceptionally sell ten to twenty thousand copies in the first year after publication.

These distinctions are used to divide some national markets, such as the publishing field in the US, into different segments. There, nonprofit publishers – mainly university presses, but also independent presses – have a different economic organisation

Translations from German, French, and Italian are represented in 28, 22, and ten categories, respectively (Heilbron, 1999: 438).
than that of trade publishers, although it is also evident that some big publishers do also publish high-brow books (Sapiro, 2008:160). Through her studies of the case of translation, Sapiro expands on the study of the publishing field at a national level by shifting the vantage point to account for the global flows of transnational circulation (often requiring translation). Sapiro (2008) asks what the implications of Bourdieu’s analysis of the circulation of symbolic goods are for translation, and she states that, in order to carry out this study, one should consider two different variables. The first variable takes the form of a binary opposition between large and small publishers. Translated literature represents less than 10% of the output of large companies, whilst the rate climbs above 25% in small publishers’ lists. This coincides with Bourdieu’s analysis of the circulation of symbolic goods, which states that innovation in the publishing field is mainly confined to small publishers. Since they cannot afford to pay high advances on fees to well-known writers, they need to take risks and discover new authors in order to survive. However, it is important to note that large publishers tend to work with many types of texts – such as text-books, travel guides, self-help, and so on, and not only literature – whilst the publishing lists of smaller companies are often exclusively limited to literary works. Given that the literary domain accounts for the highest rates of translation, a simple comparison of translation rates between a large publishing company and a small one might be slightly misleading, due to the exclusive focus on literary text of the latter (Sapiro, 2008: 157).

The second variable works around the group of languages that are translated. Big publishers translate from English as well as from other Western European languages (all of those holding a central or semi-peripheral position within the world system of translation). These publishing firms are involved in fierce competition over best-sellers (mostly translated from English) – a competition where, for economic reasons, small publishers seldom have a place (Sapiro, 2008: 157). It is, therefore, right to locate the
impetus for the commercial development of publishing worldwide in Britain and the US (Schiffrin, 1999) since the rise in the number of translations in the last few decades was largely due to the growing volume of commercial literature translated from English into other languages and the increasing market share of youth books\textsuperscript{19}, which are also mostly translated from English. However, and even if they may not have risen as quickly, the rates of translations for high-brow literature have also been rising slowly but steadily, and genres like poetry or drama continue to hold a significant share of translations, especially from central and semi-peripheral languages. Around 8\% of literary translations from German and 15\% from Spanish consist of poetry, as opposed to 2\% from English (Sapiro, 2008: 160).

The source-language variable facilitates the comparison of literary series within a publishing company. Whereas the pole of large-scale circulation is characterised by linguistic concentration on the hyper-central English language, there is a high degree of source language diversity at the pole of small-scale circulation. In the case of big literary publishers, series based on high-brow literature include translations from 20 to 30 different languages, with English accounting for only one in three. However, a series of best-sellers (pole of large-scale circulation) will mainly contain titles translated from English in at least 75\% of the cases. The role of translation within the publishing field is somewhat different when it comes to smaller/independent publishers, as their marketing strategy may actually involve specialising in a few languages other than English. As Sapiro (2008: 162) notes, “[t]hey often act as discoverers for unknown authors or peripheral languages, who later, when they gain recognition, enter the lists of bigger literary publishers”.

When studying the role of translation within the publishing field, making use of Bourdieu’s theoretical framework allows the researcher not only to examine the flows of

\textsuperscript{19} Examples of such youth books include \textit{Harry Potter}, \textit{Twilight}, or \textit{The Hunger Games}.
translation from one language to another but also to question the kind of works that are translated and the publishers’ strategies behind that selection (Sapiro, 2008: 163). It is worth noting here that a translated text circulates without its original context, and that its signification is therefore assigned by the context of reception. The publishers’ profile, the paratextual presentation of the text, along with the translation itself are all key elements when it comes to framing the reception of the translated text.

In line with this, Sapiro (2007) believes that there are “two oppositions – politicised/depoliticised and universal/particular – that largely structure the space of reception of translated works” (2007: 129). In the process of assigning meaning, translated works can be depoliticised or highly politicised or, alternatively, they can have their political meaning altered in varying ways. Similarly, they can be used to reinforce more or less stereotypical representations of foreign cultures or to give voice to the cultural identity of minorities. And whilst in some cases their universal aesthetic or intellectual value will be foregrounded, in others, it will be their ethnographic or particular character that will be highlighted. Since, ultimately, my research questions how personal narratives of feminine subjectivity, gender, political activism, body, and sexuality – present in the source texts – are translated for an Anglophone market, there is a clear need to study the potential constraints that inform the translation of such works.

2.4. Reconstructing the Core-Periphery Model: Central American Women Writers and their Layers of Peripheralisation

In order to interrogate the aforementioned constraints, this thesis seeks to operationalise the notion of “peripheralisation” at two levels: internal and external. First, the term “external level of peripheralisation” is used here to designate the position of my data set within the world system of translation and the world of letters. This level will allow us to gain a better understanding of the structural relationship between the aforementioned
core-periphery systemic model used to map the world system of translation, and the different layers of peripheralisation of Central American women’s writing within the international publishing field, which will be subsequently discussed in this section.

This thesis also aims to examine whether this core-periphery system may also operate at an internal level, affecting not only what texts have been selected for translation, but also how these texts have been translated, and whether the translation of the peripheral works included in my data set result in a renarration of the original to meet the expectations of the centre, i.e. “internal level of peripheralisation.” This thesis understands that the ways in which these texts have been translated can be investigated as a potential consequence of their marginalisation, and to explore this a series of (para)textual comparative analyses between source text (ST) and target text (TT) will be undertaken in the analytical chapters.

In this context, the current section seeks to locate my data set, examine the different layers of peripheralisation found in our reconstructed core-periphery system (Figure 2.2), and investigate the decisions behind the selection of what and who will be translated for the Anglophone market, which informs the external level of peripheralisation.
Before continuing to explain the different layers of peripheralisation in the following subsections, it is necessary to note first that they act as part of an interdependent, dynamic, and porous structure, which serves to explain the challenges that these writers face in their attempt to be recognised by and become visible to the centre. This core-periphery model will allow me to locate my set of data within the world of letters and question the implications of a peripheral position to the practice of publishing and translation. Moreover, it should be stated here that the last layer of peripheralisation included in Figure 2.2 represents the hypothetical space in which this thesis will try to discern the implications of translating these peripheral authors’ personal narratives for an audience that might find them challenging given the personal and public narratives they subscribe to. This space will therefore be studied in the analytical chapters.
2.4.1. Translation as the First Layer of Peripheralisation

Although it could be argued that the practice of translation is not a process of marginalisation but a means to build bridges across cultures, languages, and nations, in fact, and for the purpose of this analysis, the translation of books from Spanish into English already constitutes a first layer of peripheralisation. First of all, English, by holding the hyper-central position, is one of the languages that receive the fewest translations. Thus, the book markets of both the UK and the US (despite leading the commercial segment/pole of the market) hold a share of less than 5% of translated pieces of their overall number of published books.\(^{20}\)

Secondly, it is necessary to highlight and understand the role of translation flows between languages within a world book market that is itself embedded in a process of ongoing globalisation (Sapiro, 2008). Since the 1970s, with the growth of the book market and its concentration around large, sometimes transnational publishing groups, the international market of translation has become ever more global and unified, with its specific agents, places, and rules of functioning. As Sapiro notes, “[t]he globalisation of the book market has entailed the professionalisation of agents specialised in mediation between written cultures” (2008: 159). The emergence of these new agents could result in a gradual increase in translation rates, since the practice of translation has been

\(^{20}\) Emily Williams, in her article “The Translation Gap: Why More Foreign Writers Aren’t Published in America?” (2010) for Publishing Perspectives – the online journal of international publishing news and opinions – explores several reasons why “placing a foreign book with a US editor can be devilishly difficult”. In her article, Williams focuses on large scale houses that compete for high profile submissions and are not always actively seeking out translations as part of their publishing mission. This situation ends up creating a vicious circle, as “the difficulty of placing books in the US makes it less likely for foreign publishers and agents to invest in packaging their authors to submit there”. In turn, this makes it harder for US editors to develop an understanding of foreign markets and of what authors might be the best match for their audience. All this results in the scarce numbers of published translations in the US and the similarly scarce chances that the books that do get published will find success among the general public (Williams, ibid.).
professionalised and internalised by the publishing field. However, on the other hand, one should not overlook the fact that the international translation system is firmly dominated by one hyper-central language. In this context, it would be fair to assume that translation from other languages will decrease, leading to a virtual monopoly for translation from English, as suggested by Jacques Melitz (1998).

Although statistics of books in translation available so far show that this is not necessarily the case, and that the number of translations from other languages has not suffered any significant decline, it is still evident that the number of works selected to be translated into English is lower than into other language groups. Moreover, one should note the particular relevance of translations into English as a point of convergence among translations from and into different peripheral languages (Heilbron, 1999: 435). The importance of translating a piece of peripheral writing into English does not lie only in the number of readers that it will reach in the Anglophone market; it also lies in the fact that the English version will often serve as the source text for a translation into other languages. In other words, a significant number of literary works that are selected to be translated from and into peripheral languages are born from a corpus of literary works that had been previously translated into English.

2.4.2. Latin American Literature as the Second Layer of Peripheralisation

Even though the body of scholarly work informing this chapter seems to agree on the world of letters holding a certain degree of autonomy, and analyses this space assuming a unique structure and set of dynamics, it also questions the extent of this autonomy. De Swaan (1993) notes a level of “inertia” that causes the language system to operate in parallel to military or political conquest, commercial expansion, or cultural appropriation (de Swaan, 1993: 221). Similarly, Casanova admits that “to one degree or another, literary relations of powers are forms of political relations of power” (Casanova, 2004:
81). Consequently, the world of letters is in Casanova’s conceptualisation the direct result of an unequal structure of literary space and the uneven distribution of resources among those spaces. The world of letters is thus described as a relatively unified space characterised once again by a binary opposition that contrasts great national literary spaces – which are also the oldest and accordingly the best endowed – with those literary spaces that have been more recently created, through the historical and political gaining of independence of several nations, which are therefore poorer in comparison (Casanova, 2004: 83).

It becomes necessary at this point to state that Casanova measures the autonomy of a national literary space by its “literariness” or literary value. This sort of symbolic value must be, in her own words “clearly distinguished from what political sociologists who study the ‘emergent world language system’ mean when they refer to indicators of a language’s centrality” (Casanova, 2004: 109). Making literariness the basic unit of discussion, Casanova conceives the structure of the world of letters and describes the relations and power struggles of the different national spaces as having a single goal: to achieve “littératisation or denationalisation” (Casanova, 2004: 109)

In this sense, writers from all literary spaces will be divided through a binary opposition: national writers (who embody a national or popular definition of literature) versus international writers (who uphold an autonomous conception of literature). Those who regard themselves as international writers push the boundaries and constraints of their national space in order to achieve literariness, i.e., recognition as a world-literature writer (Casanova, 2004: 108). Consequently, when referring (briefly) to the Latin American case and Boom writers, Casanova presents them as an example of achieving literary autonomy.21

21 “The case of Latin American literatures would be further proof of the relative autonomy of the literary sphere, with no direct link, no cause-and-effect relations
While not doubting the literary value of these works and their originality, this thesis’ focus on translation forces us to address an aspect obscured by Casanova’s assumptions. The Latin American literary period known as the “Boom” may have added literariness to the Spanish language and achieved international recognition by innovating and presenting original literary forms that are now part of consecrated world literature. However, being literature from the periphery, its consecration is still controlled by the centre and its translation and access to the Anglophone market remains restricted.

Latin American literature only “found its place” in the Anglophone book market after a long struggle for recognition during the 1960s and throughout the 1970s. However, this success was not only due to aesthetic and symbolic value; more relevant to this study, it was the consequence of active efforts by critics, translators, publishers, and governmental programs to promote it (Mudrovic, 2002: 130). Among these promotion campaigns, the Center for Inter-American Relations22 deserves a mention as a good example of the artistic monopoly inherent in the system of literary patronage. As an institution, it selected the titles that were to be translated, paid for the translation fees, provided the translators, and even guided its protégés through New York’s book market and editorial field. It defined the canon of what the Anglophone market considered as Latin American literature; in doing so, it effectively acted as a gate-keeper to the US cultural field by carefully selecting which authors to endorse or which books to translate (Mudrovic, 2002: 139).

22 The Inter-American Foundation for the Arts was created at the beginning of 1960s by the US Government to promote intellectual exchange between the Americas and led to the later creation of the Center for Inter-American Relations in 1967 (Mudrovic, 2002: 134).
This external monopoly over what was translated is considerable proof of the peripheral position held by Latin American literature, but it is not the only one. In reality, the works of Latin American authors, even though they were increasingly translated\textsuperscript{23}, did not traditionally reach the general public. With the exception of two titles – *Gabriela, Clove and Cinnamon* and *One Hundred Years of Solitude* – no Latin American book made it into the US best-seller lists until the early 1980s (Mudrovcic, 2002: 138).

Moreover, the canon of translated works defined during the Boom continues nowadays to shape/influence the relations between Latin American books in translation and the US publishing field, according to scholars such as Sarah Pollack (2009).

Pollack highlights the difficulties of placing in the US book market a translation from any peripheral or semi-peripheral language by presenting the following data: in 1998, only 1,400 books were translated from all languages into English in North America. Therefore, and even though the consecration of Latin American post-boom and post-modern literature in the US has been underway for over twenty years and has resulted in the translation into English of works by Manuel Puig, Luisa Valenzuela, Reinaldo Arenas, Ricardo Piglia, Ángeles Mastretta or Tomás Eloy Martínez among others, the iconic Boom novelists continue today to be given most of the very limited opportunities for translation available within the Anglophone market. Indeed, these authors seem to be eclipsing in visibility their younger counterparts in the North-American book market (Pollack, 2009: 352).\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{23} Statistics regarding the publishing field at the time show how “before 1960 there were 146 Latin American titles published in translation in the US and in 1975 that number had almost tripled, reaching a total of 414” (Mudrovcic 2002: 133).

\textsuperscript{24} As an example of the aforementioned phenomenon, Pollack pointed out that the works of only three authors have been included in the annual “100 Notable Books” list published by the *New York Times* in the decade from 1998 to 2008: Borges, Vargas Llosa, and Bolaño (Pollack, 2009: 347). After that, there is no other Latin American literary work in translation listed in the *Times* “100 Notable Books” until 2012, when Daniel Sada’s *Almost Never* deserves an entry.
In this same line of argument, the *Index Translationum* – a platform supported by UNESCO – indicates that six out of the top ten authors in translation with Spanish as a source language are Latin American writers (all of them, with the exception of the only woman, Isabel Allende, part of the Boom), as shown in Table 2.1.

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<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Number of published translations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gabriel García Márquez</td>
<td>1382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isabel Allende</td>
<td>832</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mario Vargas Llosa</td>
<td>659</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jorge Luis Borges</td>
<td>580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pablo Neruda</td>
<td>395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julio Cortázar</td>
<td>353</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1: Six Latin American authors in the “Top Ten authors in translation” with Spanish as the source language (*Index Translationum*)

2.4.3. Latin American Women Writers as the Third Layer of Peripheralisation

As discussed in Subsection 2.4.2, it is very challenging for Hispanic American writers to publish their translated works in the Anglophone market. It has also been noted that, for this literature to attract the interest of bigger publishing companies, it needs to be authored by well-recognised writers; in many cases, these are still the founders of the Latin American Boom. Since the names associated with the Boom do not include any women, but still have great weight in the international publishing field, gender has become here another layer of marginalisation.

The relationship between gender and the publishing field has already received a great deal of critical attention. In this context, Jill Robins (2003) has studied the impact of the globalisation of the publishing industry on the marketing of Hispanic identities. She claims that the press is leading the wider general public to “correlate the increase of female publishers and female readers with the publication of trivial books, and concludes that those trivial books are always by, for and about women” (Robins, 2003: 95). These ideas work as a vicious circle: women who succeed in those genres tend to be more mediatised
and commercial, but they are generally considered to lack quality and literary value/prestige (Freixas, 2000: 41). Thus, an immediate correlation between the shift of the publishing field towards economic capital, to the detriment of symbolic capital, and its feminisation is promoted. This correlation mirrors “for many intellectuals and critics a loss of prestige, consecration and political solidarity associated with those literary spaces or literary genres traditionally reserved for men” (Robins, 2003: 96). Robins’ work confirms gender as a layer of peripheralisation, since she sheds light on a dangerous tendency by which women’s literature is classified as inferior, unintellectual, poorly written, and aimed at an uncultured but large female audience (Robins, 2003: 95). Crucially, this subsequently leads to a (false) presumption of women being currently in control of the book business, being published more than men, and continually writing best-sellers.

Following data collected by Laura Freixas (2000), women writing in Spanish are not a majority in the Spanish publishing industry. In the context of this thesis, this means that the size of the pool of source Spanish texts written by women available for translation is smaller, since Hispanic women authors are already a minority and the number of published works in Spanish cannot be compared to that of male writers. Moreover, and since big publishers tend only to accept translations from well-recognised authors, not many Latin American women writers will ever be published by a large publisher, and even fewer will become a best-seller for the Anglo-speaking general public.

It is possible to reflect on the perceived feminisation of the publishing field by drawing some conclusions from the most recently published bibliographical resource (Leonard, 2007). Among the over 100 novels by Latin American women writers since the

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25 “Women are a minority. They are a minority among those writers in Spanish language that are currently published by the Spanish book industry, as they are among the Spanish best-selling lists” (my own translation of Freixa, 2000: 36). Freixa’s analysis of the 1999 lists of books published by the Spanish book industry demonstrates that only 24% of novels, 22% of poetry, and 15% of essays were written by women.
1970s that are included in this guide, only 28 were published by a big publisher. Even this figure is misleading if we take into account that thirteen of those novels were authored by the same writer, Isabel Allende, who has achieved huge popularity among Anglophone readers.\textsuperscript{26}

\textbf{2.4.4. Central American Revolutionary Writing as the Fourth Layer of Peripheralisation}

The Central American narrative has been traditionally marginalised by the international publishing market even within the context of Latin American literature in English translation. In the above-mentioned guide published by Kathy S. Leonard (2007), she names three writers from El Salvador, two from Nicaragua, two from Honduras, and one from Guatemala, but names 71 Argentinian and 76 Mexican women writers. It is undeniable that nationality results in another layer of marginalisation for novels such as those included in my data set. Given that Argentina and Mexico are not the only countries with a larger number of translated writers, the role of nationality as a further reason for marginalisation needs to be qualified. Of particular relevance to the insight that Argentinian and Mexican works are translated more often is the privileged status that Argentina and Mexico have in the publishing field, as the home of large or prestigious publishers. For instance, Seix Barral, a publishing house that played a major role in the

\textsuperscript{26} Authors such as "Isabel Allende or Laura Esquivel and/or their promoters have deliberately marketed one image stereotyping Latin American letters and achieving commercial success through the magic realism formula" (Pollack 2009: 351). Their works become part of the most commercial canon of Latin American literature, which is particularly well known by the general Anglophone reader.
popularisation of the Latin American Boom, has headquarters in the following Latin American cities: Rosario, Córdoba, Buenos Aires, and México DF.27

In the introduction to her book, Barbas-Rhoden (2003) discusses the international reception of Central American women’s writing in relation to two relevant aspects: the revolutionary movements in Central America and the explosion in the number of best-sellers by women in the late 20th century in Latin America. She acknowledges the increasing international interest sparked by the new genre of testimonio and the revolutionary poetry produced in Central America as forms of resistance and protest (Barbas-Rhoden, 2003: 3). However, she also contends that the international attention that Central America received was nothing more than a momentary flash of enthusiasm followed up by a decline of interest in, circulation of, and study of Central American texts and Central American culture. She follows here the arguments of intellectuals such as the Guatemalan novelist Arturo Arias, who in 1995, already stated that the attention that Central America received in the 1980s due to the urgency of political struggle and revolutionary hopes was followed only by disenchantment and a return to the previous disinterest in the 1990s (Arias, 1995: 74).28

On the other hand, she compares the work of Central American women to that of other Latin American best-selling women authors during the 1980s and 1990s, such as Isabel Allende, Laura Esquivel, Marcela Serrano or Ángeles Mastretta, all from either Mexico or the Southern Cone – countries that have been previously described in this

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27 Seix Barral, established in 1955 and directed by Carlos Barral, was one of the big agents that took part in the distribution and marketing of authors associated with the Latin American Boom (Herrero-Olaizola, 2005).

28 “Como ha sido indicado desde hace ya bastante tiempo, el drama centroamericano es precisamente que su drama no le importa a nadie cuando no molesta el sueño de las superpotencias (...) Entre 1978 y 1990 Centroamérica logró, a un altísimo costo, que el mundo se fijara en ella. Pero ya en los años noventa, pareciera como si volviéramos a la situación de antaño. Centroamérica tiene un premio Nobel de la paz que es también una infatigable luchadora maya por los derechos humanos – Rigoberta Menchú pero aun así, sigue importando poco, y a pocos, en la esfera cultural” (Arias, 1995: 74).
subsection as homes to well-established publishing industries. Barbas-Rhoden claims that the plots created by these authors focus on a personal, intimate and individual world. These mainstream plots, she argues, differ from those crafted by Central American authors, the latter being overwhelmingly contestatory given their historical commentary and social critique (Barbas-Rhoden, 2003: 7). Although I do not fully agree with Barbas-Rhoden’s view on the writers that she calls “Latin American best-selling women authors”, her point regarding the differences in plots and topics crafted by Central American women makes my selected data set a rich source of data when it comes to an analysis of the internal level of peripheralisation. It is possible to examine if the particularities of these plots and themes (their foreignness and locality) might serve to explain why they are not being chosen for translation by a domesticating book market such as the Anglophone one. 29 Although Barbas-Rhoden never refers to the act of translation, focusing rather on the reception of her corpus of texts among intellectuals and readers, she seems to be already pointing in that direction when she states that Central American women “have told stories that because of their contestatory nature, did not always find ready patrons in institutions mainly focused on profit” (Barbas-Rhoden, 2003: 8).

The position of Central American revolutionary writing introduces then another layer of peripheralisation. This should be added to the challenges and constraints that one faces when trying to place the ST in its original national context and within the world system of translation. Consequently, to explore the peripheralisation of my data set I borrow the concept of location as elaborated by Casanova (2010). She claims that in order to locate any text in translation, it is necessary to describe first the position which the source language and the target language occupy within the universe of literary languages. Then, the translated author needs to be located within the literary space in two different ways: firstly, in terms of the place that they occupy within their national literary

29 See Section 2.6.
space and, secondly, regarding the place that this national space occupies within the world system.  Finally, the position of the translator and other consecrating agents needs to be determined.

According to these three positions and their centrality or peripherality within the literary field, Casanova designs her study of the different functions-operations potentially undertaken by translation, for example, “translation as accumulation of capital” or “translation as consecration” (Casanova, 2010: 290). Translation as the accumulation of capital happens when a dominated language/literary space translates texts from a dominating space. Translating texts from the centre into the periphery allows these peripheral spaces to import literary capital and gain heritage and nobility by “nationalising” the great universal texts (Casanova, 2010: 290). On the other hand, translation as consecration happens when a dominating language translates texts from a dominated space. Due to the peripheral/dominated status of my data set, this thesis is going to focus on the latter.

2.5. Accessing the Centre: Translation as Consecration
Regardless of the different levels of marginalisation presented in Section 2.4, my data set demonstrates that some Central American women writers have actually been translated into English. Their texts have therefore accessed the centre and achieved visibility by a wider public. Since translation is one of the principal ways of consecrating a text or an author, it is an essential weapon in the author’s battle to be legitimised within the world of letters. To understand the process through which literatures from the

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30 The discussion in Subsection 2.4.1 serves as an introductory overview of the location of the source and target languages within the world language system, while the following subsections have located the literary space occupied by the chosen data set. Further discussion on the position of specific authors and their work in relation to both their national space and the international world of letters will be required when presenting the case studies.
periphery manage to access the centre – and the consequences of this process – it is necessary to outline a conceptual network of terms that will inform this research.

Casanova (2004) uses the term “consecration,” and she defines it as a form of recognition that signifies crossing literary borders: “The consecration of a text is the almost magical metamorphosis of an ordinary material into absolute literary value” (Casanova, 2004: 126). Similarly, she claims that consecration becomes “littérisation” when the text comes from “literarily disinherited countries,” since the text passes “from literary inexistence into existence” (Casanova, 2004: 127). For those literary spaces in the periphery, translation is the only means of being perceived, of becoming visible, and of gaining access to universal recognition. However, the position of this translated text and its legitimacy will depend not only on the relation between source language and target language or the location of the translated authors, but also on the position held by the translator-consecrator (Casanova, 2010: 299).

Casanova (2010) discusses two different types of translators-consecrators: those who have been already consecrated (therefore, the prestige of the mediator legitimises the position of the translated piece) or “ordinary mediators,” who lack symbolic capital. In the latter case, the translated piece requires the involvement of better endowed mediators to be fully legitimised, whether in the form of a preface by a recognised writer or a positive critique from a prestigious critic. However, it is in this focus on the consecration and achievement of literariness that, again, one can find a gap in Casanova’s model. 31 Although Casanova acknowledges that “mediators from the centre reduce foreign literary works to their own categories of perception, which are then set up

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31 Casanova (2002, 2004, 2010) discusses the consecrating role of translation, but she delivers no follow-up discussion. Moreover, her understanding of “international writers” and her focus on consecration and literariness often obscures the power that the centre holds over the transfer of symbolic capital and the practice of translation.
as universal norms” (Casanova, 2010: 301), her conceptualisation of the literary world somehow overlooks other potential challenges and processes of peripheralisation.

For Casanova, the autonomy of the world of letters is based on the literariness or symbolic value of different literary spaces. She states that there is no miracle in this autonomy, and that every work produced in a less endowed literary space that wants to become “literature” exists only in relation to the consecrating actors of the most autonomous poles (Casanova, 2010: 294). However, in this framework, she overlooks the scope of the consecration process, a process that is always initiated by the centre. Regardless of the autonomy that one might claim for certain writers or literary spaces, if one tries to account for the value of literature in terms of its literariness and consecration, it becomes necessary to further study the practical consequences of this “consecrating power of translation.”

2.6. Questioning Canonisation: Peripheralisation-Canonisation as Mirroring Practices within the Core-Periphery Model

Translation is one of the principal means to achieve visibility, autonomy and, therefore, consecration as a universal literary text. Consequently, it is often assumed that when a work from the periphery is selected for translation into a central language, that work will be able to access the centre and become part of the canon, thus leaving behind a less powerful or more marginalised position. However, canon formation, understood as the annexation of works of literature from the periphery into the universal literary capital, does not happen within an absence of power structures. Thus, Section 2.6 seeks to re-define the potential alterations that a peripheral work undergoes in order to match the parameters of the centre as canonisation. It then goes on to draw lines between canonisation and peripheralisation as mirroring/dual practices.
The term “canon” has traditionally received the simple meaning of “privileged,” and so it has been used in relation to works with a special status of representativeness by a culture (Murfin and Ray, 1997: 38). Broadly speaking, literary works that attain the status of canon are repeatedly discussed, anthologised, or reprinted and, therefore, are placed at the centre of their respective literary areas. However, if canonisation places the text in a central position, what happens when literatures of the periphery find their way into the publishing market of the centre through translation? Could one define the process of translation as canonising, since these texts will be understood as being representative of the peripheral literature? Is this canonisation process placing periphery literature at the centre, and therefore subverting power structures? Or are these texts from the periphery suffering a process of transformation to meet the expectations of the centre? Is, then, canonisation another form of peripheralisation when it comes to already marginalised literatures, such as the case of Central American women writers?

This thesis seeks to answer the previous questions by problematising the dual and apparently contradictory working mechanisms of peripheralisation/canonisation that are in place when Central American women writers are published and translated for the Anglophone book market. In order to establish whether canonisation is yet another form of peripheralisation, it is necessary to redefine both concepts in line with how these mechanisms operate around the expectations and assumptions from all agents of the literary universe (theory/market/readers). As long as the centre controls the circulation of literary works, the history of canonisations will still be full of misconceptions and misreadings stemming from the ethnocentrism of the big literary mediators (Casanova, 2004: 20). The centre seems to ultimately and unilaterally decide the meaning of peripheral literary works, and it alone declares what is to be universal, and therefore, acceptable and accessible to all (Casanova, 2004: 154).
Thus, within the context of this thesis, canonisation will be understood not as simply accessing the canon, but as the process of reframing that the narratives of my peripheral set of data will undergo in order to resonate better with the mainstream narratives supported by the centre and/or with the expectations that the agents of the literary world have regarding these texts (either in relation to their genre, register, topic, etc.). Chapters 4, 5 and 6 of data analysis intend to examine a hypothetical gap in the previous research that has arisen from a general belief that once a text has accessed the canon, it stops suffering from the tensions of its peripherality.

This thesis argues that for this data set, the practice of canonisation does not necessarily mean escaping the periphery; and using narrative theory as its framework of analysis, it will examine the internal level of peripheralisation and the implications of different framing strategies for the reception of these texts. As understood by Alexandra Jaffe (2010), there is an underlying political dimension to all translations: “Each act of translation posits a relationship of power (whether equal or unequal) between languages and cultures” (Jaffe, 2010: 267). This means that in contexts which are by definition hierarchical – as the world system of translation has been described in both Sections 2.3 and 2.4 – the political significance of the translation is heightened. If one accepts the role of translation as a potential way to ratify the construction of “self” and “other” through the transposition of the narratives in the text, there is a space to study the internal level of peripheralisation.

Through this study I seek to shed light on (i) how Alegría, Belli and Menchú have constructed their personal narratives of female subjectivity and political radicalism against the backdrop of an accentuated interest of the international community towards Central American cultural production in 1980s, (ii) how the texts selected to be part of my data set have been reframed through translation, (iii) the strategies that constantly neutralise the woman/author’s agency by accentuating, suppressing or altering narratives
of sexuality, the body, political radicalism and the present in the ST, and (iv) the impact of translation and the publishing field on the selection and consecration of a literary genre (i.e. the case of testimonio).

This exploration of the internal level of peripheralisation will allow me to question certain assumptions and hypothetical spaces of miscommunication between theory and practice and between different theoretical frameworks. Firstly, there is a need to redefine the concept of canonisation (initiated in Section 2.5) that comes from the hypothetical miscommunication between the assumed centrality of the consecrated text and the potential layers of peripheralisation still constraining the original narratives. Secondly, there is arguably a gap in the theoretical frameworks studying the world of letters, as assuming the autonomy of literature obscures the potential violence of translation particularly in spaces of domesticating tradition. And thirdly, as a consequence of the two previous misunderstandings, there is potential for ignoring the impact of literary translation in the circulation of theories and narratives within academia and other activist circles, regardless of the canonicity of the translated text or perhaps particularly when the text becomes canonical, i.e. the case of *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (1984).
Chapter 3: Methodology and Corpus Rationale. The Interplay between Personal and Public Narratives in Women’s Life Writing

3.1. Introduction

Narrative theory has attracted the attention of many different fields of study, such as literature, psychology, gender studies, sociology, anthropology, political science, amongst others. As a result, the concept of narrativity has evolved and changed dramatically. Narrative was traditionally treated as “a mode of representation” (Somers and Gibson, 1994: 58), and some historians have therefore argued that narrativity lacks the ability to explain or interpret the past (White, 1980: 6). However, narratives have been more recently treated as meta-code, that is, as “the context for interpreting and assessing all communication – not a mode of discourse laid on by a creator's deliberate choice but the shape of knowledge as we first apprehend it” (Fisher, 1987: 193).

This doctoral project draws on the most recent application of narrative theory within the field of translation studies, namely, “the socio-narrative approach” as elaborated by Mona Baker (2006) against the backdrop of social theorists such as Margaret Somers (1992, 1994, 1997), Margaret Somers and Gloria Gibson (1994) or Jerome Bruner (1991), and communication theorists such as Walter Fisher (1987). In the context of translation studies, narrative is not understood as a literary category, but in a much broader and constructivist manner. Narrative is therefore defined as our only means of making sense of the world and positioning ourselves within it. This definition of narrative proceeds from two basic assumptions. Firstly, human beings have no direct or unmediated access to reality; our only access is always mediated by the stories that we tell ourselves and others about the world. And secondly, the stories we narrate do not only mediate our access to reality, but also participate in its construction. In this context,
translation is understood as a form not only of representation but also of reconstruction of the events and characters that it narrates into another language and another culture (Baker, 2013).

Much of the impetus behind narrative research comes from a belief among theorists and scholars that “unexamined assumptions encoded in narratives obscure patterns of domination and oppression that exclude the experiences of large sectors of society whilst legitimating and promoting those of the elite” (Baker, 2006: 23). Moreover, narrative both reproduces existing power structures and provides a means to resist and contest them (Baker, 2006: 23). This creates a complicated interplay of dominance and resistance, which is a rich source for this study, particularly when one considers, as Peter Ehrenhaus (1993: 88) does, that “marginalised voices can and will often be heard, but these public expressions occur in ways that defuse those voices.” The aforementioned citation from Ehrenhaus readily feeds back into this project’s objective to question and redefine peripheralisation and canonisation as mirroring practices.

3.2. Narrative Theory as Framework of Analysis

Baker (2007) explains how her decision to re-elaborate previous accounts of narrativity into a theoretical framework capable of studying the practice of translation was motivated by a general dissatisfaction with existing theoretical notions, such as “norm” or “the dichotomy of foreignising and domesticating strategies” (Baker, 2007: 152). In this context, she claims that the main interrelated strengths of narrative theory are, firstly, the way in which narrative theory permits the researcher an analysis that does not

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32 Norm theory as established in polysystem theory and the work of Gideon Toury encourages analysts to focus on systematic behaviour, privileging strong patterns of socialisation and glossing over potential individual or group attempts to subvert these dominant patterns (Baker, 2007: 152). This is therefore not a productive theoretical framework for a thesis that focuses on the interplay between dominance and resistance, so central to the processes of canonisation and peripheralisation.
privilege essentialist or reductive categories of race, gender, ethnicity, etc. Narrativity acknowledges the negotiable nature of our construction of the self and our positioning in relation to different social and political realities. Secondly, narrative theory allows us to see social actors, including translators, as real-life individuals rather than simply theoretical abstractions. In the words of Maureen Whitebrook (2001), a turn to narrative theory allows for the “de-personalised persons of theory, the bearers of a representative identity” to be understood as separate characters with singular characteristics that include but are not limited to their political context and/or collective identity (Whitebrook, 2001: 15).

Thirdly, narrative theory allows us to explain behaviour in dynamic rather than static terms – it recognises the contradictions produced by being embedded in crisscrossing and sometimes competing narratives, and encourages us to question and reflect on the narratives that come into contact with us and therefore shape our behaviour and worldview. Finally, narrative theory recognises the power of social structures and the workings of the system, but does not preclude the potential for active resistance as an individual or as a group (Baker, 2007: 152-154).

This thesis rationalises the use of narrative theory by emphasising the following strengths within the chosen theoretical framework. As established in Baker (2007), narrative theory allows the researcher not to privilege essentialist and reductive categories of identity. One of the main limitations of identity politics has been that it will traditionally group together individuals who share certain characteristics while at the same time, disregarding any variation within the group (Baker, 2007: 153). Since I seek to analyse the ways in which personal narratives have been canonised by the centre/World of Letters, it is arguably important to find a framework that allows the study to locate the individual at the intersection with the narratives they subscribe to and
which inform their behaviour as social agents. This is particularly important inasmuch as these authors are building their life narratives as a place of resistance and radicalism.

Moreover, Baker (2007) outlines the ways in which narrative theory allows us to move forward from the dichotomy between foreignising and domesticating strategies proposed by Lawrence Venuti (1995). Since narrative theory allows us to explain behaviour in dynamic rather than static terms, there is no need to categorise translation choices into macro-categories, such as foreignising vs. domesticating, faithful vs. free, or acculturating vs. exoticising. Even within a text, the translation choices may shift between these categories, since the focus here is on reflecting and questioning the narratives that we come into contact with and thinking about how they shape our behaviour. In the context of this thesis, narrativity as elaborated in Baker (2006) will be the main framework underpinning a study of (i) the construction of the three authors personal narratives of political radicalism and female subjectivity in the source text, (ii) the English translation of these narratives through a series of (para)textual comparative analyses between the source text (ST) and the target text (TT), and (iii) the mirroring practices of peripheralisation and canonisation.

In the context of the core-periphery framework described in Chapter 2, the translation of source texts coming from a place of peripheralisation will be controlled by the consecrating and canonising agency of the world of letters, an agency that could potentially (and in fact does) select and reframe personal narratives in order to better resonate with those public narratives that a reader from the Anglophone market is assumed to subscribe to. This perspective allows us to take advantage of the second strength of narrative theory, as established by Baker (2007), without necessarily having to focus on whom the person is translating. This thesis accepts the agency of the translator as an individual and social actor in the circulation and promotion of narratives. However, it chooses to focus rather on the agency of the World of Letters and the
publishing field in which the translator participates as one of the social actors controlling this circulation of narratives.

3.3. Introduction to the Proposed Data Set

Somers and Gibson (1994) distinguish between four types of narrative: (i) ontological, (ii) public, (iii) conceptual, and (iv) meta-narratives. This typology allows them to emphasise the role of narratives and narrativity in the construction of social identities, and consequently, their ability to explain the practices of human beings as social actors (Somers and Gibson, 1994: 60-64). Baker (2006), in turn, attempts to elaborate on this typology and move Somers and Gibson’s arguments forward in order to better explain the textual and social behaviour of translators. Within Baker’s framework, personal or ontological narratives are stories we tell ourselves and others about our position in the world and our own experience. Public narratives, in turn, are shared stories that are both elaborated and circulated by a group, also shaping their behaviour. This group can be as small or as large as necessary (i.e., a family, a nation or an ethnic group). Third, conceptual narratives are theoretical constructs elaborated within scholarly settings to account for an object of study. Finally, to conclude, meta-narratives are defined as highly influential stories with a very elevated degree of geographical or temporal reach and a high level of abstraction, i.e., narratives such as Progress, the Cold War, the Enlightenment or more recently Terrorism and the War on Terror (Baker, 2006: 28-48).

The selection of this thesis’ data set seeks to encourage the study of the interplay between personal and public narratives (and in some instances, meta-narratives) in the context of translation for a traditionally domesticating space such as the Anglophone market. As stated by Mona Baker (2013) and Sue-Ann Harding (2012), personal narratives – although ultimately focused on the self and its immediate world – are
constrained by and at the same time are constraining public narratives in a variety of ways. It becomes clear that personal narratives are both constrained by the frames derived from public narratives (without this, it will remain impossible for others to interpret our construction of the self) and by the social roles and spaces public narratives invite us to inhabit. However, in addition, it is necessary to note that the maintenance and elaboration of these public narratives can also be undermined by contesting personal narratives (Baker, 2013: 4).

Consequently, Baker (2013) briefly states that memoirs and autobiographies (and in the case of this thesis, also testimonios) of leaders or intellectuals whose personal narratives are at odds with the shared narratives of the target audience offer a rich source of data to be interrogated using the framework of narrative theory. Personal narratives are also a good source to study and make sense of the strategies translation uses to deal with the ways in which communities then negotiate and present themselves to the outside world. These personal narratives, particularly in the context of a core-periphery system, serve as a way to also introduce the public narrative in which the author embeds themselves—a public narrative that explains to others who they are, what they do and why they do it (Baker, 2013: 6).

Within the aforementioned core-periphery system, when it comes to translation into English, personal narratives that threaten to undermine shared/public narratives promoted by the centre are often suppressed through the lack of translation, or in the context of this thesis’ theoretical framework, they are peripheralised. However, this is not always the case. They might also “be allowed into cultural space but translated and framed in ways that undermine or ridicule them” (Baker, 2013: 4), and/or in ways that transform them to fit better the parameters of the centre; in other words, they will be canonised. Using narrative theory as the framework informing the (para)textual analyses of the data set allows this thesis to foreground the space of negotiation between personal
and public narratives in translation, a space that I believe will be fruitful to problematise
the mirroring relationship between canonisation and peripheralisation as social practices
established by the inner-workings of the world of letters.

Violence is inherent to translation since it “implies the reconstruction of a foreign
text in accordance with values, beliefs and representations that pre-exist it in the target
language, always configured in hierarchies of dominance and marginality, always
determining the production, circulation and reception of texts” (Venuti, 2010: 68). In
the context of a core-periphery system, the translation into English of the personal
narratives of Central American women as a social practice faces the pressures of a
market traditionally dominated by domesticating theories and practices since at least the
seventeenth century (Venuti, 2010: 69). However, it is important for the translator (and
most importantly for a fair-minded reader of the translated text) to acknowledge that
deploying a domesticating translation strategy means supporting a hierarchised structure
that not only perpetuates power structures that maintain the control of the centre, but also
hides this practice behind expectations of international recognition and (false)
assumptions of universality.

Translation might be a way of consecrating a text/author, but it is also a practice
that allows the peripheralisation, manipulation and even complete omission of literary
works. Universal literary capital grows by a process of annexation in which translation is
needed, but the mediating agents between the centre and the periphery tend to neutralise
or renarrate peripheral works systematically, by imposing central categories of

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This conceptualisation of translation leads Venuti to suggest that translators – and
other mediating agents within the publishing field – always exercise a choice concerning
the degree and direction of the violence at work in their practice. They choose between a
“domesticating method” – ethnocentric reduction of the foreign texts to fit the values and
parameters of the target culture – and a “foreignising” one – and ethnodeviant pressure to
register the particularities of the foreign text forcing the reader to meet the difference
(Venuti, 2010: 69).
perception, which they mistake for universal norms or truths. Concurrently, renarration has been defined as the enactment of a shift in the (interplay between personal and public) narratives promoted by the original text.

In the context of this data set, the personal narratives of these Central American women make visible the tensions between the public narratives which they subscribe to – and most importantly, in the case of testimonio, which they urgently intend to make visible to the Other that they are calling into action – and those public narratives from the centre which they would be made to resonate to in order to achieve a place of visibility/canonicity. This thesis’ data set are all examples of Central American women’s life writing that share the rare privilege of having been translated into English, and therefore, have a level of visibility denied to many other authors. Moreover, Rigoberta Menchú, Gioconda Belli and Claribel Alegría all aim to reconstruct history through their personal narratives. They write to challenge the present and reclaim the future, and in order to do so, they feel the need to look at theirs and their nations’ past.

The authors’ individual confrontations with colonialism and modernity in Central America, and their own political stances, lead them to question the “history” they have been told. Faced with injustice, war, violence, and gender and sexual inequality, these authors cannot but problematise an interpretation of the past that introduces these circumstances as their only possible option of a present. Their testimonios and fictionalisations of history allowed them to bring repressed histories to the front page. All three writers began to speak out at a critical moment in which the hegemonic powers had lost their ability to persuade Central American peoples to remain silent and had turned to violence to maintain the social order. However, regardless of their similarities,
each of these writers can be said to speak from a distinct position, and consequently, they and their texts should be located differently.

In line with this, Chapter 4 seeks to determine if the scope of renarration can be accounted for in terms of the location of the texts and to what extent. In order to do so, two texts with clear differences in terms of location have been chosen: *No me agarran viva* (1983) and *El país bajo mi piel* (2001) as seen in Table 3.1.

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Table 3.1: Data set I

*No me agarran viva* (1983), co-authored by Claribel Alegría and her husband, is a recollection of the life and death of Commander Eugenia of the Salvadoran guerrilla. My interest in this work lies in the different positions of the participants as agents within the world of letters. In the first place, Eugenia was already dead when Alegría and Flakoll created this *testimonio* out of a series of interviews with the inner-circle of this exceptional *guerrillera*. Secondly, Alegría is in this case a Salvadoran woman herself, and the tensions between her position as an intellectual and the subaltern speaker that she

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34 See Section 2.4.4 for a definition of location as understood by Casanova (2010).
is giving voice to are therefore different from those between Burgos and Menchú in the canonical *testimonio*. This book has been widely studied as the product of a peripheral writer (within the world of literature) lending her voice to an already dead Salvadorean guerrilla and to all those other Salvadorean women participating in the struggle and with whom the writer identifies herself. Of course, these analyses of *No me agarran viva* (1983) consciously overlook the collaborative production of this text and the role that Flakoll played in it.\(^{35}\) Finally, the translation of this text was made within the British context and not the US one, something that could have an impact when one considers the political tensions that existed in the 1980s between the US government and the Salvadorean guerrillas.

On the other hand, *El país bajo mi piel* (2001) is the title of Gioconda Belli’s memoir. It is important to note here how after the triumph of the Sandinista revolution in 1979, cultural politics in Nicaragua focused on democratising culture. A big part of this effort took place within the famous *Talleres de Poesía* promoted by Ernesto Cardenal from the Ministry of Culture. In addition, *testimonio* as a genre was also very well received and celebrated by the Sandinista government, and it experienced a significant boom during the 1980s in Nicaragua (Palazón Sáez, 2006a: 42). However, Belli’s memoir *El país bajo mi piel* (2001) came at a time when *testimonio* was no longer a central part of the literary discussion. Still, even though the urgency of *testimonio* is over, placing *El país bajo mi piel* (2001) within this narrative tradition will encourage us to problematise the consumption by the centre of both *testimonio* and/or other subsequent forms of life writing authored in the margins.

*El país bajo mi piel* (2001) is Belli’s first non-fictional work, but she was already a well-known poet, novelist, political activist and self-defined feminist. In the context of

\(^{35}\) See Section 4.2.
Central American women writers in English translation, she is the only one who has had her individual work frequently translated and recognised – to some extent – by the international market, being published by publishing conglomerates such as Harper Collins, Knopf or Bloomsbury as seen in Table A.1. Her position both within Nicaraguan literature and within the literary world, the status of her translator and the position of the publisher within the world of letters will all form part of the elements studied to locate this text. One might expect this text to have escaped peripheralisation, due to the best-selling status of the author and the text’s publication by a large publishing house. However, a closer look at the shifts of the narratives in the English translation will show a more complex situation.

On another note, the texts included in my data set also trouble boundaries between literary genres. Not only has the categorisation of literary genres always been part of academic debates about literature, but genericness is also one of the core-features of narrativity discussed in Subsection 3.4.5. In the context of this thesis, categorisations such as *testimonio*, memoirs, autobiographies or fictionalised accounts of these very subgenres are to be understood as part of the paratext that accompanies the text and pre-defines the expectations of the reader. In line with this, Chapter 5 continues to investigate the scope of re-narration as part of the process of canonisation, and it aims to evaluate the role played by genre-specific conventions in this process.

Genre-specific conventions are further defined within the confines of this thesis as the set of conventions favoured by the publishing industry to create a framework that guides our interpretation of a text, encouraging us to project certain expectations onto it. In line with this, a series of (para)textual analyses of *Luisa en el país de la realidad* (1987a) and *La mujer habitada* (1988) will allow me to study the role of fiction within the genre of life writing and to question if this introduction of the fictional has any impact on the canonisation/peripheralisation of my data set as seen in Table 3.2.
Just as much as in her memoirs, rebellious, independent and sexually self-assured women populate the imagined worlds of Gioconda Belli’s fiction and poetry. They are professionals, guerrillas, lovers, mothers, etc. However, just like the woman imagined by Sigmund Freud, they are defined by what they lack, and Belli’s texts tend to be constructed around the resolution of this deficiency. Nonetheless, in contrast to the lack pointed out by Freud (1933), what Belli’s protagonists lack is a female tradition, a memory of their foremothers, that will encourage their empowerment as women (Barbas-Rhoden, 2003: 48).

All of Belli’s narratives share a concern with women’s coming of age and are stories of the limitations these protagonists need to overcome in their quest for identity and subjectivity. Thus, there is one recurring narrative throughout all of Belli’s works: the “confrontation of women with their lack of history” (both personal and national) and their search for a space for speaking and acting, a search for empowerment through a connection with their past (Barbas-Rhoden, 2003: 49). One could therefore argue that all of Belli’s novels give a fictionalised account of women confronting a more traditional notion of history and creating their own. In her fictionalisations of history, Belli participates in a deconstructive and reconstructive process, challenging historical representations of female subjectivity and recovering a legacy of resistance. As argued

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Table 3.2: Data set II
by Barbas-Rhoden (2003), her manipulation of textual traditions promotes a different narrative of women’s subjectivity.

Patriarchal narratives are deeply imbedded in narrative forms and cultural traditions (memoirs, autobiographies, bildungsroman, and so on), and Belli appropriates them and toys with them to make them woman-centred. Unlike their male counterparts, who simply had to choose their place in a patriarchal order, Belli’s protagonists seek to reclaim a “past that does not exclude them and forebears with whom they can identify in the present” (Barbas-Rhoden, 2003: 51). Only then will they be able to challenge stereotypically assigned female roles and start acting as agents of their own personal and national history.

This is the case of La mujer habitada (1988), Belli’s first narrative work, which in the context of this thesis will be defined not as a novel, but as fictionalised testimonio. Gioconda Belli gives a fictionalised version of the National Liberation Movement in Nicaragua, and even though her work is technically fictional, it exudes the aura and content of “survival tales” and testimonio (Smith, 2010). One could argue that La mujer habitada (1988) is a special instance of testimonio because Belli is vague when it comes to details; she does not seek to indict particular military officials, so much as strive to tell the story of the Sandinista struggle against Somoza’s dictatorship.

Additionally, La mujer habitada (1988) is different from other testimonial novels in that it attacks patriarchy just as much as it does dictatorship. Belli takes a particularly gendered stance in her work, describing the double marginality of her main character, Lavinia, who is both a guerrilla and a woman. Through the character of Lavinia, Belli tells her own story of discrimination, even in the supposedly “liberated” realm of the Sandinista movement. In doing so, Belli “offers a gendered, and particularly feminist, dimension to the genre of testimonio” (Smith, 2010, 24). Unlike other Central American
texts from the same period, and particularly unlike other Nicaraguan testimonios, La mujer habitada strikes a tenuous balance between the celebration of the revolution and a criticism of its shortcomings. I therefore agree with Barbas-Rhoden (2003: 57), in that if pro-Sandinista testimonios in the 1980s often projected a vision of what the revolution would mean for the people in Nicaragua, La mujer habitada (1988) problematised that which the Sandinista revolution will come to be. Whilst still celebratory of the triumph of the Sandinista revolution as an example of the strength of the Nicaraguan people, it “deconstructs its paternalistic and romantic idealism by means of a displacement of the events to the fictional nation of Faguas” (Barbas-Rhoden, 2003: 57). I argue here that Belli consciously deconstructed literary genre conventions by using fiction to build her testimonio, a genre otherwise based on the telling of a personal and collective truth, in order to find a space in which to study the limits of the same revolution that she loved and supported.

The process of canonisation undergone by La mujer habitada (1988) will be then be compared to that of the hybrid text Luisa en el país de la realidad (1987a). The hybridity of this text actively contests standard genre-specific conventions, and as such it has been categorised by previous critics under a variety of labels: a quasi-testimonial novel, a fictionalised autobiography, an autobiographical prose/verse novel, a magical-realist memoir, and so on.

Luisa en el país de la realidad (1987a) alternates about fifty prose vignettes with approximately forty poems, all of differing lengths and formats. The text is an exceptional example of Alegria’s ability to blur the boundaries between the personal and the political, and ultimately, the political and the artistic (Boschetto-Sandoval, 1994: 98). This can be elaborated not only in regard to the prose vignettes, but also the poems, which Alegria herself understands as “political poems”, that is, as “love poems to her
people” (McGowan, 1994: 112). Regardless of the hybridity of the text, and of its obvious use of fictional and poetical elements, *Luisa en el país de la realidad* (1987a) has been encompassed under the umbrella of life writing by previous scholarship, and so it is within the confines of this thesis. For instance, McGowan (1994), who understands this text to be an autobiography, states that it expands the possibilities of formal autobiography through adding testimonial elements. She states that *testimonio* is part of both the poetry and the prose within this text. Indeed, even though *testimonio* is definitely not supposed to be fiction, *Luisa en el país de la realidad* (1987a) finds a way to assign the sense of *testimonio* to an unusual text by making both prose and poetry bear witness to the horrors of a collective living in a particular time and place (McGowan, 1994: 121).

Finally, Chapter 6 takes on the figure of Rigoberta Menchú, whose exemplarity facilitates the study of possible misconceptions and assumptions regarding canon formation. Taking her prominence as a starting point, this thesis aims to identify three distinct moments of intervention (construction, translation and consumption/reception) in order to further analyse the dual concepts of canonisation/peripheralisation within the translation and publication of Menchú’s *testimonio*. Most importantly, a comparison between Menchú’s *testimonio* and her later memoirs (as seen in Table 3.3) allows Chapter 6 to further articulate the dialectical relationship between canonisation and renarration.
When it comes to Central America and the broader genre of life writing, *testimonio* holds a prominent place. Kimberley A. Nance (2006), in one of the most recent contribution to the scholarship of *testimonio*, claims that even though “volumes have been devoted to the conditions of *testimonio*’s production, the rhetorical rules remain unwritten” and that an analysis of “the capacities and constraints that speakers, writers and critics have brought to their projects” is still needed (Nance, 2006: 7). Nance (2006) also offers the definition of *testimonio* that will be used in this thesis as “the body of works in which speaking subjects who present themselves as somehow ‘ordinary’ represent a personal experience of injustice, whether directly to the reader or through the offices of a collaborating writer, with the goal of inducing readers to participate in a project of social justice” (Nance, 2006: 7). She argues that defining the genre in terms of its goals and its means rejects previous notions of *testimonio* as an “spontaneous” text, unlike other forms of literature which are seen as being “shaped” (Nance, 2006: 7). From the point of view of narrative theory, this is particularly important because it encourages a study of *testimonio* as both (i) promoting personal and public narratives of social and political radicalism with an international reader in mind, and (ii) being shaped by the political, historical, social and economic context of production that canonised this genre.
Moreover, in the context of my data set, it is important to note that the testimonios discussed – *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú* (1983) and *No me agarran viva* (1987) – are mediated testimonios. Mediated testimonios have been traditionally defined as a form of writing in which a professional writer interviews a subaltern subject and uses that material to produce a politically charged life narrative (Nance, 2006). Taking this mediation as a central element of the production of testimonio, one can argue that this genre erodes the traditional centrality of the author.

The question of authorship is problematised by the ambiguous collaboration between the editor and the testimonial narrator. This editor is generally an intellectual who collaborates with a subaltern subject to produce a written text from a series of oral interviews. This collaboration also has big implications when one tries to position this genre either within the field of literature or within that of ethnographical studies. Therefore, the genre of testimonio has been studied by Western academia as a place of subversion, of “resistance” (Harlow, 1987). It challenges more conventional literary forms for the representation of subaltern peoples, since it is formed not only on the margins of a colonial situation, but also on the margins of the spoken and written word (Gugelberger and Kearney, 1991: 10).

Nance (2006: 6) highlights how critical studies of testimonio have focused mainly in the social role of this genre and its process of construction, whilst “remarkably little critical attention has been devoted to the actual texts.” This extensive research, particularly on the now paradigmatic *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú* (1983), provides a rare detailed insight into the conflicted processes of critical and market attention within the world of letters that are at the heart of this thesis. Consequently, it enables me to interrogate the canonisation of Menchú’s in Chapter 6, and to study the different opportunities for intervention or moments of renarration within this process.
The following paragraphs are dedicated to review the above-mentioned literature on *testimonio*. In line with its fluid definition, the fact that *testimonio* derives from and overlaps with very different disciplines (history, ethnography, literature), crossing literary genre lines and involving eclectic types of discourse, also characterises the critical analysis of the genre as intersectional and liminal. Therefore, works of *testimonio* not only sit across different systems, but they have also been critically received by very different scholarly fields and read from a diverse range of perspectives.

A second area of interest in the study of *testimonio* has been its construction as a more or less mediated form of discourse (Sklodowska 1996). The mediated nature of this genre, in which the narrator is not always the author of the text, encourages academic readings around consciousness-raising and the representation of the Other – approaches undertaken by scholars such as Beverley (1996), Zimmerman (1991, 1996), Sommer (1994, 1996), and Gugelberger (1991, 1996).

*Testimonio* has also been read as concurring with postmodern premises, such as the “subversion of the distinction between elite and mass cultures, the collapse of master narratives, the fragmentation and decentering of the subject, and the affirmation of alterity” (Maier, 2004: 7). And still, it is also possible to argue that those subversive elements have been appropriated by the Western canon, thus naturalising them. Taking Menchú’s *testimonio* as an example, one can argue that giving voice to an ethnic female subject from Guatemala is indeed proof of subversion within the traditional distinction between elite and mass cultures. However, the fact that this subject needed the collaboration of a Venezuelan French intellectual, not only to help her produce a *testimonio* in written form in a language that was not hers but also to publish it, still maintains the centrality of the intellectual/elite within the editorial world.
To summarize, *testimonio* has been studied as a genre born during a period of violent struggle and change in Central America, and constructed in strong correlation with a revolutionary leftist project that was later abandoned in the 1990s. In this context, after decades of scholarly debate and analysis, the interest in the genre of *testimonio* has faded, since it no longer conveys the state of emergency that it once held (Maier, 2004: 4). I argue that the faded interest in Central American literature and the genre of *testimonio* is strongly related to a process of canonisation that, whilst giving visibility to certain revolutionary voices, peripheralise the study of those elements that did not fit the genre’s conventions.

It is possible that the same process of canonisation that transforms texts such as Menchú’s into an exemplary reading for Angloamerican universities, is also forcing critical definitions of the genre to fit the example set by this canonical text, creating a cascading effect, and peripheralising not only the voice of Menchú in *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú* (1983) but also of future testimonial subjects. This is why I find it important to look back and explore (i) how changes in the genre’s forms and definitions mirror the process of canonisation and (ii) how the process of canonisation of this genre relates to the process of translation and the different levels of renarration potentially identifiable through close reading.

Most importantly, and regardless of the extensive research on questions of mediation (through the relationship between the editor and the subaltern subject) and representation – through collections of essays, such as those by Gugelberger (1996), Arias (2001) or Carey-Webb and Benz (1996), there is a clear gap in the scholarship when it comes to the study of the translation into English of Menchú’s *testimonio* and the role of the translator as yet another mediator. In this context, Lather’s work (2000) is a rare exception. She claims that translators, historians and ethnographers face the same issues of representation and truth (Lather, 2000: 157). However, and even if Lather
finally includes the figure of the translator next to that of historians and ethnographers, there is still no sustained research on the practice of translation in regards to *testimonio*.

Unlike that of the translator, the mediation of the ethnographer has raised frequent debates on authority, voice and subalternity. For example, Arturo Arias (2001) poses again Gayatri Spivak’s ground-breaking question “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (1988) to study Rigoberta Menchú’s mediated discourse as an ethnicised subject and a subaltern self, and the debate around the factuality of the text (the so-called Menchú-Stoll debate). Arias claims that the “authentic discourse” of the subaltern becomes suppressed, a hidden truth, because of the Westerner’s inability to comprehend the speaking subaltern on his/her own terms (Arias, 2001: 73). I would argue that, in this context, Arias’ words on the subject of Western appropriation of the subaltern discourse are applicable not only to the construction of Rigoberta Menchú’s *testimonio*, but also to the canonisation process that this text underwent during its translation into English.

In line with these representational issues around the subaltern subject, Gareth Williams (1993) analyses the process of translation/transculturation as a practice of mourning and loss in the case of Latin American *testimonios* and, more particularly, in Menchú’s text. Williams states that in order to communicate her radical message of liberation, Menchú needed to internalise the discourse of hegemony, in other words, the discourse of the centre.

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36 In the words of Williams (1993), ever since Fernando Ortiz first coined the term *transculturación* in his now celebrated sociological essay, first published in 1947 “Del fenómeno social de la transculturación y de su importancia en Cuba” (1973), the concept has come to be recognised as paradigmatic not only of the idea of *cubanidad* but also of the historical construction of Latin American selfhood. “The cultural synthesis implied by transculturation renders Latin America as the product of a constant transitive process in which phenomena are translated from one cultural space to another. Probably the most obvious example of this passage is to be found in the colonial encounter itself: when forces and structures of domination are translated from the metropolitan hegemonic centre to the periphery of empire, and remain as such in postcolonial social constructs” (Williams, 1993: 79).
Williams claims that Menchú “explicitly constructs her discourse of selfhood as other to its original Mayan form by incorporating into herself the discourse of the coloniser” (Williams 1993: 88). Indeed, Menchú’s testimonio is not only constructed in Spanish, traditionally the language of the oppressors, but it is also built to reach a Western reader and regain for her people a place from which to denounce the oppression and violence they are suffering. Having said this, it must be noted that he also highlights that Menchú’s indigenous identity is not completely lost; it is still present in the source text as part of the “imperfect syntax of a speaker who learned the language of power only three years before initiating her testimony” (Williams, 1993: 89).

In spite of the above, the metaphoric and mournful “loss of the original” that Williams defines within his article ultimately overlooks the process of canonisation as an external but constant operation of renarration. This means that Menchú’s oral testimonio is a “lost original” due to the process of construction and transformation into Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú (1983) written and published by the ethnographer Elizabeth Burgos-Debray. This process is then followed by yet another less-studied moment of intervention, which is that of the translation into English. Thus, to respond to the metaphor of losing the original present in William’s work, it is necessary to study how the target text I Rigoberta Menchú (1984) has become the canonical text, impersonating the original source text.

I also consider Menchú’s move from testimonio to memoirs as part of this renarration process. Fifteen years after the first edition of Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú (1983) and the international attention and recognition that both Menchú and her testimonio received in the 1980s and early 1990s, her memoirs Rigoberta: La nieta de los mayas were released in 1998 and immediately translated into English. However, in comparison to its predecessor I, Rigoberta Menchú (1984), this text has been widely sidestepped by academics (Varas, 2011: 330). This text will be of particular interest for
this thesis in order to follow the process of renarration within the canonisation of Menchú’s ontological narrative. I claim that Menchú’s memoir, which has been largely ignored by the same academics that once made her into a canonical example of the testimonial subject, act here as an extension to the concept of renarration. It is therefore an account created as a response to and mediated by the process of canonisation suffered by Menchú’s testimonio.

3.4. Core-Features of Narrativity

The analysis of my data set as reviewed in Section 3.3. will be informed by the theoretical framework elaborated by Baker (2006) and many other translation scholars who have followed her work. This section is concerned with offering a review of the core-features of narrativity that will underpin my analytical chapters. Baker (2006) presents and develops eight features of narrative derived from Somers (1992, 1994 and 1997), Somers and Gibson (1994), and Bruner (1991), but only four of these features narrativity will be discussed in this chapter, since they are understood as the most productive for the research at hand.37 It is essential to note, before continuing, that all these features are interconnected, and that their relations to each other are dynamic. Thus, as conceptualised by Somers, “[n]arratives are constellations of relationships (connected parts) embedded in time and space, constituted by causal emplotment” (Somers 1997: 82). Moreover, any of these aspects of narrativity are possibly (re)framed, undermined or foregrounded through the practice of translation.

37 The eight features of narrativity set out by Baker (2006) are selective appropriation, temporality, relationality, causal emplotment, particularity, genericness, normativeness and narrative accrual.
3.4.1. Selective Appropriation

All the participants in the core-periphery system that defines the limits of this thesis (writers, translators, publishers, readers) are understood as social actors. As such, they all have a series of beliefs, principles and values to help them compose their worldview, position themselves within society and make behavioural decisions. These decisions and choices are therefore, to a certain extent, the consequence of “the infinite variety of events, experiences, characters, institutional promises and social factors” (Somers and Gibson, 1994: 60) that surround them when they subscribe to or even shape any particular narrative. In this context, Norman Fairclough argues that in any form of representation, “[y]ou have to decide what to include and what to exclude, and what to 'foreground' and what to 'background’” (Fairclough, 1995: 4). This evaluation of events, which consequently leads to prioritising some aspects over others, is essential to the construction of a narrative, as “to elaborate a coherent narrative it is inevitable that some elements of experience are excluded whilst others are prioritised” (Baker, 2006: 71).

Whilst Somers (1992) suggests that this process of selection is always thematically driven, Baker (2006) highlights that there is more to selective appropriation than simply the theme of the narrative. Baker also acknowledges the influence of “our location in time or space, our exposure to a particular set of audiences, the meta-narratives that shape our sense of significance” (2006: 72) in the process of selecting those elements that will be incorporated into any given narrative. Acknowledging that all stories are selective representations of reality encourages us to question whether our narration is representing reality in stereotypical terms or whether it is introducing unfamiliar contradictions that promote both critical thinking and a place from where the subaltern subject will be able to speak.

In the context of the translation of peripheral works, this feature of narrativity becomes even more central, becoming a strategy for textual intervention: “Selective
appropriation of textual material is realised in patterns of omission and addition designed to suppress, accentuate or elaborate particular aspects of a narrative encoded in the source text” (Baker, 2006: 114). Thus, selective appropriation seems to be one of the central strategies causing what has been defined in Chapter 2 as the internal level of peripheralisation. Moreover, these patterns of omission and addition may also suppress, accentuate or elaborate resonance with a larger narrative in which the narrative promoted by the text could be embedded. This aspect of selective appropriation will therefore respond to the interplay between the personal narratives and the public narratives in which they were originally created and those which they might end up resonating with after the canonisation process.

Although Baker (2006) focuses on selective appropriation within individual translations, she already points out that this does not mean one should dismiss the importance of “higher-level patterns of selectivity, in terms of exclusion and inclusion of specific texts, authors, languages and cultures” (Baker, 2006: 114). This statement relates back to the theoretical framework of the thesis: the core-periphery model in which the world of letters is inscribed and, more particularly for this analysis, the external level of peripheralisation that has a direct relationship with the systemic working of the publishing field and the Anglophone market, as explained in Section 2.4.

Baker (2006) also claims that, although scholars of literary translation have long been interested in patterns of omission that result from the exercise of censorship and self-censorship, they do not normally approach this issue from a narrative perspective (Baker, 2006: 115). The assumptions and miscommunications created by the asymmetrical power relations of the world of letters will be problematised in this thesis through the application of narrative theory to a comparative (para)textual analysis of the selected data set, as the aim of this thesis is to cover this possible gap in previous scholarship.
3.4.2. Causal Emplotment

Causal emplotment is necessary for any event to take on narrative meaning. It “allows us to weigh and explain events rather than just list them” (Baker, 2006: 67) and permits us to form an opinion and to create a moral reading to the particular narrative. Moreover, emplotment “gives significance to independent events and overrides their chronological or categorical order” (Somers, 1997: 82). Since causal emplotment charges events with moral and ethical implications, some scholars have argued that narrativity is inherently driven to moralise reality. In brief, causal emplotment means that even people subscribing to two competing narratives could agree on the way certain events took place but disagree on how these events relate to each other and what motivates their participants (Baker, 2006: 67).

Baker (2006) argues that causal emplotment is perhaps the most important feature of narrativity, because it is identifying the cause of a set of events that helps us determine the course of action we will take to respond to them. This becomes particularly relevant within a discussion of a genre such as testimonio, which has been traditionally related to an urgent appeal to others – a call not for identification with the struggle of the narrating subject, but for action and/or complicity from the international reader (Sommer 1988: 118).

In addition to this, causal emplotment is often signalled merely through the sequence and ordering of events (Baker, 2006: 67). For instance, El país bajo mi piel (2001) surprises the reader with its apparent chronological disorder, whilst its English translation reorganises its chapters following an adamant chronological order. In both cases, the memoirs are divided into four sections that follow the main aspects of Belli’s life: “Habitante de un pequeño país”, “En el exilio”, “El regreso a Nicaragua” and “Otra vida”. Within the chronological order of each of these sections, our source text inserts chapters that break this temporal sequence. These chapters contain her love-story with
her last and current husband Charlie Castaldi, a US national. Since the causal
emplotment of the narrative allows us to weigh and explain the events in order to form
an opinion, it is possible to argue that by breaking their temporal sequence, the relations
between the different events narrated in this text and their weight within the overarching
narrative of the plot has been changed.

For example, Chapter 35 in the ST narrates Belli’s experience in the hospital
whilst giving birth to Camilo. Within the context of a very complicated pregnancy, Belli
conveys a strong criticism of how the doctors treat all the women as uneducated and
cueless girls and withhold important information from them, information that they
deserve as subjects and as human beings. Following this chapter, ST places an account of
Belli’s decision to have an abortion in New York. After Camilo’s birth, Belli’s cervix
was very badly damaged and taking this fourth pregnancy to term would have
endangered her life and the potential health of her future child. It is possible to argue that
this non-chronologicla organisation of chapters in ST has the following consequences for
the causal emplotment of Belli’s narrative. It emphasises the agency of women, an
agency constrained by the doctors in Chapter 35 and fully embodied by Belli in Chapter
36. It highlights the consequences of the actions of these doctors in Belli’s life. The
difficulties of Belli’s pregnancy in Chapter 35 led her to terminate her subsequent
pregnancy due to potential complications set out in Chapter 36. This allows Belli to
explain her decision of opting for an abortion without breaking her empowering
conceptualisation of motherhood discussed in Section 4.9. It also encourages a
comparison between health systems in Costa Rica and those in the US; and it underlines
Charlie’s acceptance of and support for Belli’s decisions and her control over her own
body, in contrast to the actions of Sergio who undermined her complaints regarding the
treatment of the doctors in the hospital and their attitude towards women. This last
emphasis on the actions of Sergio, a man who, even though he is politically conscious,
has trouble transcending traditional gender roles, is quite important, since this
denunciation of the shortcomings of “el hombre nuevo” and the revolution when it
comes to the gender question has been a huge part of Belli’s literary work.38

3.4.3. Relationality

Relationality means that it is impossible for the human mind to make sense of isolated
events or of a set of events that are not constituted as a coherent narrative (Baker, 2006:
61). Relationality has direct implications for translation since a straightforward
importation of parts of other narratives into our own is as impossible as the
straightforward translation of a text into a different culture. In the process of importing
elements from another narrative, we are always reconstructing both that original
narrative and our own: “Narrativity being what it is, the translator and ethnographer both
necessarily reconstruct narratives by weaving together relatively new configurations in
each translation act and re-sitting these new configurations in new spatial and temporal
settings” (Baker, 2006: 62). In the context of this thesis, it is not enough to metaphorise
the role of the ethnographer as a translation/mediation of the discourse of the subaltern
subject, it is essential to also look at the concrete act of translation when these
testimonial texts are transferred into other languages, particularly into more central
languages with which they position themselves asymmetrically.

One consequence of relationality is that translating a narrative into another
language and/or culture inevitably results in a form of contamination that threatens to
dilute or change the significance of the original (Baker, 2006: 62). For example, the use
of a term in translation that is already loaded with relational meaning in the target culture
can seriously disrupt the significance of the source narrative. For example, the word

38 See Section 5.7.
“compañero/a,” very frequently used in the narration of Latin American revolutions, was dealt with in The Country under My Skin (Belli, 2002) via zero-translation.\footnote{39 Outside of the authors studied in this thesis, most Central American women in English translation can only be studied through anthologies, particularly of poetry. An analysis of these anthologies showcase that there are two preferred options to translate the source term “compañero/a” They either present the English translation of the word, “comrade”, or choose zero-translation and offer the Spanish word in italics. The editor and translator of Flame in the Air (2013), María Roof offers the following explanation in a footnote: “This term does not have a good equivalent in English. It was used in Cuba after the triumph of the revolution and among Sandinista supporters to signal equality, democratic treatment and respect among fellow citizens. Sometimes translated as comrade in English, but this gives it a false Soviet resonance” (Meneses, 2013: 301).}

Although agreeing with María Roof (2013) that the term compañero/a might not have a perfect English equivalent, let us focus on a different aspect to that highlighted by her. In Spanish the term compañero/a can also be used to describe your love or life partner. This connotation is something that works very well in the Central American context where women were claiming not only equality in social and political terms but also in gender and sexual terms. The use of the word compañero to address both their love partners and other political activists unified in the Latin American revolutionary context the different elements that these women were subverting. However, the English translation of Belli’s memoirs (2002) applies zero-translation to the term only when this is charged by its more political dimension as exemplified by the excerpt in Table 3.4.
Daniel would sit there, peering at me out of the corner of his eye, casting me odd, provocative looks which I did my best to avoid. I could hardly believe he would do that right in front of Modesto and Rosario, his girlfriend, but he seemed utterly unbothered” (Belli, 2001: 272)

Modesto would suddenly appear at my side or someone would mention that I was the comandante’s partner and for one dark moment I would feel validated, important” (Belli, 2002: 265)

We became friends; partners in memories, dangers and dreams” (Belli, 2002: 291)

Table 3.4: The translation of the term “compañero/a” in The Country under My Skin (2002) peripheralises Belli’s construction of the revolution in both political and sexual terms.

I will argue in Chapter 4 that these choices add to a pattern of selective appropriation that in the English version distances two aspects of Belli’s personal narrative that she constructs as interdependent in the ST: her personal revolution and the Sandinista one. Even more disruptive to the original narrative is the translation of these terms in I, Rigoberta Menchú, where the ST term “compañero” is in almost all cases zero-translated whilst the term “compañera,” is translated to “woman” as seen in Table 3.5.
**ST3.4:** “Me ha tocado también ponerles castigo a muchos compañeros que tratan de privar a sus compañeras de que participen en la lucha, o en cualquier tarea” (1983: 246)

**TT3.4:** “I have also had to punish many compañeros who try to prevent their women taking part in the struggle or carrying out any tasks” (1984: 260)

**ST3.5:** “Puedo decir que los compañeros hombres también sufren porque muchos compañeros tuvieron que regular a sus hijos para poder seguir en la lucha o se han separado de la compañera en otra región” (1983: 250)

**TT3.5:** “I know that men suffered too, because many compañeros had to give their children away so they could carry on the struggle or they’ve had to leave their women in other places” (1984: 265)

**ST3.6:** “Nos conocíamos desde niños pero desgraciadamente él abandonó el pueblo, tuvo que irse a la ciudad, se hizo obrero y después era ya más o menos un novio que tenía capacidad de trabajo y que pensaba diferente que yo y mi pueblo. Entonces cuando empecé con mi convicción revolucionaria, tuve que definir dos cosas: la lucha o el novio” (1983: 250)

**TT3.6:** “We’d known each other since we were children, but unfortunately he left our village and had to go to the city. He became a factory worker, and then really turned into a compañero with good work prospects who thought differently from the way I and my village did. So when I became revolutionary, I had to choose between two things: the struggle and my compañero (1984: 265)

|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

The systematic translation of the term “compañera”, when meaning both militant in the struggle and love/life partner, by the term “their women” is extremely disrupting to the original narrative promoting an interconnected political and gender revolution. Not only is the translation into English breaking any resonance to this narrative, but it is also using quite a derogatory term, equating women to wives, as if this were the only possible role for them, and presenting them as a possession of their husbands. Moreover, as exemplified by ST3.6 terms such as “novio” are in fact translated as “compañero”, even when this person has no relation to the struggle. These acts of translation will be understood within the confines of the analytical chapters as strategies of framing by labelling. The act of labelling terms that are already charged with clear connotations in ST and/or TT can disrupt previous resonances created in ST or even create new ones for TT, due to the core feature of relationality.
In this sense, translators sometimes avoid the use of a direct semantic equivalent of an item in the source text when that equivalent is or has become embedded in a potentially negative set of narratives in the target culture. For example, in the case of the translation of Belli’s memoirs, and as exemplified by Table 3.6, the term “guerrillero/guerrillera” is only translated as “guerrilla” into English when within the context of military and violent struggle, excluding as guerrillas intellectuals, political militants or even the idealists of the Sandinista Revolution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ST3.7: “Pedro Joaquín Chamorro se hizo guerrillero después de su muerte, y al paso de su cadáver, como movidos por cuarenta y tres años de rabias contenidas, los nicaragüenses se lanzaron a las calles” (Belli, 2001: 232).</th>
<th>TT3.7: “Pedro Joaquín Chamorro became a warrior after his death: as his body was carried through Managua, Nicaraguans everywhere took to the streets, driven by forty-three years of suppressed rage” (Belli, 2002: 177).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ST3.8: “Nos sentábamos a su alrededor, para escucharlo comentar sobre las diferencias entre ser guerrilleros y estar en el poder” (Belli, 2001: 356).</td>
<td>TT3.8: “We sat around him in rocking chairs, listening to him philosophise about the differences between fighting for freedom and finally taking control” (Belli, 2002: 270).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.6: The translation of “guerrillero/a” in The Country under My Skin (2002). TT only uses the label “guerrilla” in direct reference to the armed struggle.

As narrated by Belli, Joaquín Chamorro devoted his life to the politics of opposition to Somoza and was chief editor of the newspaper La Prensa. In 1978, the Sandinista movement saw in him a potential ally, although they were separated by his adamant opposition to armed struggle. However, after the attack in October 1978, there were rumours that Chamorro might become the thirteenth member of the alternative government referred to as “El grupo de los doce” and might therefore support the FSLN. Unfortunately, he was assassinated in Managua when he was on his way to La Prensa. His death prompted the rage of Nicaraguans everywhere, and whilst ST3.7 states that this is how Chamorro played the part of a guerrilla after his death, TT3.7 chooses a far more neutral translation choice. Similarly, during Belli’s narration of a meeting with Fidel...
Castro during the 6th Summit Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement, which took place in Cuba in 1979, TT3.8 removes any direct reference to guerrilla warfare and translates it as “fighting for freedom.”

3.4.4. Genericness

Genericness is one of the features of narrativity proposed by Bruner (1991). Bruner (1991) defines genres as any recognisable kind of narrative, and he only provides examples of literary genres such as comedy, tragedy, Bildungsroman, romance, satire, etc. (Baker, 2006: 85). Bruner (1991) then discerns between “the plot form of a genre and the form of telling associated with it” (Baker, 2006: 85). This way of telling is not “a cosmetic, outer layer that merely glosses the content of the narrative” (Baker, 2006: 86). Conventionalised ways of telling activate certain expectations for their audiences or “predispose us to use our minds and sensibilities in particular ways” (Baker, 2006: 86).

In the context of this thesis, genericness entails that genres that are identified as systemic ontological/personal narratives, such as autobiographies or testimonios, create in the audience an expectation of truth.

Paradoxically, the initial construction of testimonio as a genre raises important issues of representativity, authority and truth that should be analysed as part of a first moment of intervention. As claimed by Marc Zimmerman in the article published in The Real Thing (1996), there is a need to problematise representation and representativity when reading Menchú’s testimonio or to consider them major keys for grasping the implications of her text. There is the question of whether she represents more than herself – as her text is claiming,⁴⁰ which leads on to the question of referentiality and

⁴⁰ “… quiero hacer un enfoque que no soy la única, pues ha vivido mucha gente y es la vida de todos. La vida de todos los guatemaltecos pobres y trataré de dar un poco de mi historia. Mi situación personal engloba toda la realidad de un pueblo” (Burgos, 1983: 21)
truth – particularly if one claims that Menchú is, in fact, wielding authority over her discourse. It becomes impossible, then, to deny that there is an ideology behind the text. One needs to question if Menchú wants to tell her story to win sympathy for her people, but at the same time, is afraid to tell the whole truth. Alternatively, it could also be argued that she is not afraid to tell that whole truth, but resists doing so, claiming her place outside the silence of the periphery by placing strategic secrets that she refuses to reveal (Sommer, 1996: 131-157).

Also of importance to the genre of testimonio is the fact that “literature in translation abounds with examples of source texts that have been accommodated to the target culture conventions of a given genre” (Baker, 2006: 96). Genre conventions could explain, for example, the need to reorganise chronologically the chapters of Belli’s memoirs to better fit the target audience’s expectations of an autobiography. Or in the case of Menchú’s testimonio, the genericness of the narrative might explain the target text’s tendency to apply to an oral narrative the conventions of written prose which might result in a critical overlooking of the presence of the ethnographer by the Anglophone reader. This is because the fluency in TT’s narrative allows it to be read more as an autobiography, that as the oral testimonio of a Quiché woman struggling to express herself in Spanish.

In line with the above, the marks of orality in Menchú’s testimonio is what makes this text a rich source of data to analyse the impact of “frame ambiguity” in the process of canonisation. As defined by Goffman (1974: 304), frame ambiguity “is the special doubt that arises over the definition of the situation.” Menchú’s particular use of the Spanish language creates a text full of ambiguities that Wright’s translation systematically resolves. This makes the text much more fluent to the Anglophone reader, but the ambiguity that has been resolved inevitably gives its audience an unequivocal
reading – a discourse that may or may not be the one that Menchú was trying to promote in the first place.

3.5. Translation and the Framing of Narratives

The aforementioned concept of “frame ambiguity” is only one element of the studies of frames, frameworks and framing that sociologists, such as Erving Goffman (1974), and theorists of social movements, such as Robert Benford and David Snow (2000) and David Cunningham (2004), have realised. This thesis will draw on the concept of framing to highlight the strategies that used around and within the translated text, constituting in some instances what I have identified as the internal level of peripheralisation.

Although the first conceptualisation of frames established by Goffman (1974: 345) is already accepting the agency of the participants by clarifying that they not only perceive frames, but also act upon them, his interest in the concept of framing seems limited to questions of interpretation by the participant rather than the active intervention to actually frame an event in one way or another. This agential and conscious act of framing is in fact the focus of scholars of translation studies such as Baker (2006, 2007, 2013) who emphasise the dynamic nature of framing and studies of social movements that had stressed that “framing denotes an active, processual phenomenon that implies agency at the level of reality construction” (Benford & Snow, 2000: 614).

In the context of this research and in line with Souhad Al Shariff (2009: 65), frames will be understood as negotiable and interpretative structures that are socially constructed by individuals and/or groups and that can be further reconstructed within another cultural, spatial or temporal context. Moreover, it is important to state here that resonance with specific frames can be activated by the participant to construct a
particular meaning for a given occurrence. Finally, and since they allow participants to interpret the situation from a specific vantage point and decide on how to act according to their judgement, it is also possible to argue that frames are the outcome of a “dynamic interaction between the context, the text and the interactants’ goals and knowledge of the ongoing situation” (Al Shariff, 2009: 65). Consequently, any act of framing in this context could be defined as an agential and conscious attempt to activate particular frames and attach specific meanings to a set of texts. These meanings will be negotiated through the interaction between the source and target context of the cultures, the text itself and the participants in the process of translation and potential canonisation, all of which are included in the core-periphery system in which the world of letters takes place.

Framing mechanisms used by translators operate at different levels and will be structured in this section as (i) paratextual framing, which will cover the study of titles, images, prefaces, footnotes, and cover blurbs of the text; and (ii) textual framing, which will cover patterns of text choices and the omission or addition of specific materials to the translated texts.

### 3.5.1. Paratextual Framing

Paratextual framing provides the lens through which the reader’s expectations about a given text are shaped even without the study of its internal plot. Werner Wolf (2006) includes titles, epigraphs, footnotes, and postscripts in her study of paratextual framings. She also distinguishes between “authorised/intracompositional” and “unauthorised/extracompositional” devices. The first category will include those framing devices used by the author of ST to support her argument, whilst the second category will include all those devices that have been altered or added to the framed – in this case, translated – text, independently of their original design (Wolf, 2006: 18).
This thesis is mostly interested in any unauthorised elements, including paratextual framing devices such as images, cover blurbs and reviews of the texts at hand as well as titles, headings, prefaces and translators’ notes. And as such the analytical chapters will offer a (para)textual analysis of my data set. To exemplify some of the ways in which paratextual framing can complement narrative theory as the framework informing my analytical chapters, this study will compare the title of Menchú’s *testimonio* to that of its English translation.

Much has been said about the differences in the titles of translated materials in comparison to their original (Baker, 2006; Nord, 1995; Kovala, 1996 and Yuste Frías, 2010 among many others). Due to their highly visible and central position, titles function as a compass that guides the readers through the plot. Titles are regularly and deliberately employed by writers, editors, translators and publishers to activate particular narrative frames for them to interpret the work at hand. This is the case of the English translation of the canonical and canonised *testimonio* *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* (Burgos, 1983) as *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman from Guatemala* (Burgos, 1984). Although there is a clear lack of analysis of this work from the perspective of translation studies, the centrality of the English translation in academic and activist circles has led a number of scholars to briefly acknowledge the difference between both titles. Montejo, in his article for the edited volume *The Rigoberta Menchú Controversy* (2001), reflects on the resonances of the original title.

It is very expressive in revolutionary slogans because here she talks about revolutionary consciousness, *conciencia de lucha*, as if the Maya were not conscious of their situation but passive and opposed to change, as Marxist thought would assert. Appropriately, the title was changed in the English translation” (Montejo, 2001: 377)
It is interesting how Montejo (2001) is here not only acknowledging the difference between the titles, but also highlighting the fact that this has been “appropriately” decided; however, he never fleshes out the reasoning of his argument. Indeed, this is the case of all the scholars, in that even those from departments of Latin American Studies choose to cite and reflect on the English translation, sometimes even mentioning that the translation is altering the original, but never reflecting on the impact of this manipulation, whilst paradoxically discussing other elements such as subaltern voices, the position of the intellectual and the narrating subject, truth, and so on.

This thesis understands that the differences between these two titles have significant consequences from the perspective of narrative theory. The reader of the English version will not only never activate prior to reading any frame related to revolutionary struggle and the Marxist theories supposed to shape the interpretation of the original, but will activate a frame through which Menchú’s narrative is not merely the personal story of an individual, but represents all Indian women of Guatemala.

3.5.2. Textual Framing

Textual framing refers to those textual strategies implemented by the translator in order to reshape and manipulate the original narratives. These strategies will be largely based on Baker’s account of framing narratives in translation (2006: 114-139). They will include (i) the “reorganisation of parts of the original material”, even the reordering of chapters, as is the case of Belli’s memoirs (2002); (ii) “selective appropriation” realised in patterns of omissions and additions to the ST, designed to suppress, undermine, accentuate or elaborate particular aspects of a narrative (Baker, 2006: 114); and (iii) framing by labelling. By labelling, Baker (2006) refers to “any discursive process that involves using a lexical item, term or phrase to identify a person, place, group, event or
any other key element of the narrative” (Baker, 2006: 122). The importance of labelling in translation comes from the fact that any type of label used to identify a key element within the narrative then provides an interpretive frame that guides and constrains the reception of that narrative by the audience/reader (Baker, 2006:122). Some examples of labelling have already been studied in this chapter as part of Subsection 3.4.3 on relationality.

Finally, Baker (2006: 132-139) presents the positioning of participants as the last example of the textual framing strategy. The ways in which participants of any interaction are positioned or position themselves in relation to each other and to the event narrated is also fundamental to the feature of relationality. Through translation, these participants can be repositioned in relation to each other and to the reader “through the linguistic management of time, space, deixis, dialect, register, use of epithets, and various means of self and other identifications” (Baker, 2006: 132). Translation can actively reframe the promoted narrative by carefully, and sometimes very subtly, realigning the participants in time and social/political space (Baker, 2006: 133), and this could be realised through textual shifts, and also through paratextual commentary.

By analysing the uses and consequences of these framing strategies, this research will show how “whichever local strategies the translator might opt for, their cumulative choices always have an effect beyond the immediate text” (Baker, 2006: 139). Inasmuch as Baker (2006) highlights the fact that individual narratives never exist in a vacuum, in isolation of larger narratives circulating in that society, I claim that the narratives included in this data set are not simply transferred to and promoted in the centre. They are (re)framed to better resonate with those narratives circulating in the centre of the world of letters and, in many cases, shared by an assumed reader.
Chapter 4: Location and the Canonisation of Life Writing

4.1. Introduction

As established in Section 2.4, my data set faces several layers of peripheralisation, adding to the challenges and constraints that one should account for in order to appropriately locate these works in the literary world. Casanova (2010) claims that it is necessary to define the position of a text in three ways in order to fully understand its location within the world of letters. First of all, one has to describe the position that the source language and the target language occupy within the universe of literary languages. Then the translated author needs to be located within the world literary space in two different ways. Firstly, in terms of the place that they occupy within their national literary space and, secondly, regarding the place that this national space occupies within the world system. And finally, the position of the translator and other consecrating agents needs to be determined.

According to these three positions and their centrality or peripherality within the literary field, Casanova designs her study of the different functions of translation, i.e., “translation as accumulation of capital” or “translation as consecration” (Casanova, 2010: 290).41 Due to the peripheral/dominated status of my data set, I focus on the latter, which takes place when texts from a dominated language are translated into a dominating one.

Since translation is one of the principal ways of consecrating a text or an author, it is an essential weapon in the author’s battle to be legitimised as part of the world of letters.42 For those literary spaces in the periphery, translation may be the only means of

41 See Section 2.5.
42 Even though Spanish is a global language, due to its number of speakers and the number of countries in which Spanish is an official language, for the purpose of this thesis it will be understood as a semi-peripheral language in a world system in which
being perceived, of becoming visible and gaining access to universal recognition. But the position of the translated text and its legitimacy will depend not only on the relation between source language and target language or the location of the translated authors but also on the position held by the translator-consecrator (Casanova, 2010: 299).

Casanova (2010) discusses two different types of translators-consecrators: those who have been already consecrated (therefore the prestige of the mediator legitimises the position of the translated piece) or “ordinary mediators” who lack symbolic capital. In the latter case, the translated piece requires the involvement of mediators with greater symbolic capital to be fully legitimised, whether in the form of a preface by a recognised writer or a positive critique from a prestigious critic. The paratextual analysis of the dataset will bring light to this type of strategies.

However, in this framework, Casanova overlooks the scope of the consecration process: a process that is always controlled by the centre. Regardless of the autonomy that one might claim for certain writers or literary spaces, if one tries to account for the value of literature in terms of canonisation, it becomes necessary to further study the practical consequences of this “consecrating power of translation.” Therefore, the following sections of this chapter will focus on two case studies and their translations into English. The location of these texts as understood by Casanova (2010) is quite different. They are published at very different times: No me agarran viva (1983) was published whilst the struggle for national liberation in El Salvador was still taking place, whilst El país bajo mi piel (2001) was published after the Nicaraguan revolution had taken place, and the Sandinistas had gained and lost their power. Their publishing context is also different: the first was published by a small and independent UK publisher, whilst the latter was released by one of the largest US publishing houses.

English holds a central position. For a discussion of the world system of translation see Section 2.3.
Moreover, in the case of *No me agarran viva* (1983), the translator Amanda Hopkinson could be considered as a “translator-consecrator,” due to her weight within the academic community and her long career studying and promoting Central American women writers for the Anglophone reader.

### 4.2. Location of Claribel Alegría’s *No me agarran viva* (1983) within the World of Letters

Like many of her compatriots, Claribel Alegría began her literary career as a poet but “turn[ed] to the novel when poetry no longer sufficed to describe the national reality” of Central America (Craft, 1997: 72). She was born in Estelí, Nicaragua, in 1924, but she moved to Santa Ana, El Salvador, as an infant for political reasons, since her father had participated in the insurrection led by Sandino. Although she has been in voluntary exile for a long part of her life, she considers El Salvador as her homeland. Linda Craft (1997: 72-73) argues that Alegría’s professional career describes a process of consciousness raising, and Ramón L. Acevedo (1992: 20) claims that the subjectivism of her early poetic career associated with “feminine literary discourse” develops into objectivity with regards to an unjust world, strident antimilitarism, distrust of US imperialism and a focus in the testimonial and political dimensions of literature. Craft (1997: 3) points to *Cenizas de Izalco* (1966) – her first novel, written in collaboration with her husband Darwin J. Flakoll – and the 1960s as a moment of inflexion in Alegría’s career.

Even though Alegría also wrote independently, a large part of her work in prose was produced in collaboration with her late husband Flakoll. With regards to my data set *No me agarran viva* (1983) is the product of a collaboration between Alegría and Flakoll; and *Luisa en el país de la realidad* (1987a) was authored by Alegría alone, but translated into English by Flakoll. Thus, despite my focal point of interest being
women’s life writing from Central America, I do not understand the collaboration between Alegría and Flakoll as a reason to leave *No me agarran viva* (1983) out of my data set, but rather as a rich source of data in my exploration of the process of canonisation.

During her long career as a writer, Alegría has experimented with very different literary genres: poetry, novel, short story, *testimonio*, essays, and other non-fiction works, etc. Her work is highly recognised within academic circles, but it is important to note that her poetry has traditionally received more critical attention than her prose, where she frequently collaborated with her husband Flakoll (Velasquez, 2002: 2). In spite of the works of prose that Alegría co-authored with her husband being amongst those that have received more critical attention, there has been a “collective critical silence” about the role of Flakoll in Alegría’s literary career (Barbas-Rhoden, 2003: 23). Craft (1997: 77-9) dedicates a couple of pages of her chapter in Claribel Alegría to provide a biography of Flakoll, in what she refers to as an “homage.” Flakoll had a background as a journalist, and he entered the foreign service in 1950, when the US State Department sent him and his family to posts in different Latin American countries, and finally Paris in 1962. US foreign policy during the sixties in Latin America and Vietnam further discouraged him to the point that he finally left.

Craft (1995) in an interview with Alegría recorded how “he was very proud to have fought against Hitler and fascism, but that the anticommunist hysteria in pursue of Castro disillusioned him.” After his resignation, Flakoll dedicated himself to writing in collaboration with Alegría, and translating literature from Spanish into English (among other things Alegría’s work). In any case, Craft (1997) does not explore further the nature of their collaboration, even though her chapter on Alegría focuses on *Cenizas de Izalco* (1966), *No me agarran viva* (1983) and *Luisa en el país de la realidad* (1987a), the first two being co-authored by the couple. On the other hand, Barbas-Rhoden (2003)
briefly acknowledged this silence in her academic work and ventures that “this is perhaps because Salvadorean and women’s issues predominate in these works, leading readers to attribute erroneously the writing to Alegría” (2003: 24).

The analysis in this thesis demonstrates how this silence runs much deeper, and it seems much more intentional when one turns to the translation into English of No me agarran viva (1983), where Flakoll’s participation has been completely erased from the book, both textually and paratextually. The reasons behind this decision are never openly explained, nor has the fact itself ever been acknowledged by other academics. However, it seems unfortunate and unnecessary to make this collaboration disappear, particularly within the context of an already mediated text which is openly re-constructing the story of a dead woman, and given its nature as testimonio, a genre which has been traditionally understood as a collaboration between the speaking subaltern and the mediating intellectual (Beverley and Achúgar, 1992: 9).

Contrary to other testimonios, such as that of Rigoberta Menchú, the mediator(s) make the processes of elicitation transparent to the reader. In the original version, both authors make themselves visible by recording some of their questions and intercalating the pronoun “we” periodically. However, only the presence of Alegría is apparent to the Anglophone reader, as seen in Table 4.1.

| Table 4.1: Erasure of Flakoll's presence in TT They Won’t Take Me Alive (1987) |

Their questions serve to contextualise the story and transition between different topics, but at the same time they indicate to the reader the presence of interviewees who, to a certain extent, control the dialogue, which emphasises the constructed nature of the history that they are telling (Barbas-Rhoden, 2003: 36). This constructedness is also
highlighted by the fact that the story is not narrated by its protagonist, but by several interviewees that interpret Eugenia’s life in very different manners and embodying a variety of roles: student, sister, compañera, mother, wife, guerrillera and political leader. After the first novelistic chapter, in which the last hours of Eugenia are fictionalised\(^{43}\), the format of the testimonio changes and each chapter is organised around a theme: induction to revolutionary activities, married life, machismo, motherhood and children in the revolution, etc. Alegría and Flakoll contextualise the themes and guide the dialogue to a certain extent, but the text is mainly an account of different individuals that relate anecdotes and complete the story of Eugenia, who can no longer speak for herself. Therefore, this effort of remembering, of narration, is a collective one (Barbas-Rhoden, 2003: 38). And it is in this context of collectivity that the disappearance of Flakoll within the English translation is most difficult to understand from an academic perspective.

Bearing the above in mind, I advocate here the usefulness of applying to this text the concept of location (Casanova, 2010), as discussed in Section 4.1. The position of the source and target language has been answered from the outset of this thesis, since all the texts analysed are translated from a semiPeripheral language into a central one. The location of the authors within the World of Letters has been established in the paragraphs above. Claribel Alegría, even within the peripheral position allocated by her status as both woman and Central American writer, has received considerable critical attention and her work has been published both abroad and in her home country. Thus, it is time to turn our attention to the third level of location posed by Casanova.

\(^{43}\) All the members of the unit (included Eugenia) died on duty, therefore nobody can know for sure exactly what happened during their final hours.
The English translation of *No me agarran viva* was published in 1984 by Women’s Press44, an independent publishing company based in London (UK) and dedicated to making available feminist works by women writers from around the globe. Similarly, the translator Amanda Hopkinson presents herself in the paratext of *They Won’t Take Me Alive* (1987) as a writer and journalist who has lived and travelled extensively in Central America and who has been involved in the women’s liberation movement since 1968. Thus, it is possible that the very ideology of the publisher and the “translator-consecrator” influenced the editorial decision to erase Flakoll’s presence from this version.

It is difficult to agree with Barbas-Rhoden (2003) when she suggests that readers might erroneously consider Alegría as the only author just because this work foregrounds the struggle of women from El Salvador. Firstly, as has been explained, the English and canonised translation completely erases the presence of Flakoll, preventing Anglophone readers from understanding this work as a collaboration. Secondly, this decision can be considered to be a conscious one. It is easier to market such a politically and sexually subversive text if it is written by a Salvadorean woman, and not by her husband, particularly when this husband is a US citizen, the very country whose Cold War master narrative this book is trying to disrupt.

When comparing Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2, one of the first things to be noted is how the cover of the English translation completely erases the presence of Flakoll. Moreover, the only time in which the English translation acknowledges the presence of

44 “Established in 1978, The Women’s Press is dedicated to publishing incisive feminist fiction and non-fiction by outstanding women writers from all round the world. Literary and crime fiction, biography and autobiography, books on psychology, health, race and disability, women’s studies and cultural, sexual and political history all have a place within the inclusive and unique publishing space that is The Women’s Press” (Publisher’s website is unavailable. Information copied from the following directory: www.writewords.org.uk)
Flakoll is in the section “About this Book” written by Hopkinson (1987: 32) that seems to replace the “Prólogo” (1983: 7) from the ST. And even there, as seen in Figure 4.4, the TT emphasises the status of Alegría as the author, who, with the help of her husband’s research and testimonies of many of Eugenia’s circle, has recounted the story of the life and death of the protagonist of this work. The importance of Alegría as the author is underlined again on the back cover of the TT, where the fact that this story “is told by one of El Salvador’s foremost writers” seems to give weight to the text and grant authority to the testimonial voice.

The question of authorising subaltern voices has been largely discussed by the scholarship on testimonio (Yúdice, 1991; Gugelberger, 1991; Achugar, 1989; Sklodowska, 1993; Picornell, 2011). The narrating testimonial voices lack cultural and epistemological authority, partly because they are circumscribed to orality rather than the written word. Consequently, the genre of testimonio, its production and reception, can be understood as a means to authorise voices from the periphery (Beverley, 2002: 10). In this context, Yúdice (1991) creates a distinction between the function of the intellectual that speaks for the subaltern, and those “testimonialistas” that narrate their story directly addressing a specific interlocutor. It is in the second example where Yúdice finds the essential nature of the genre of testimonio, a narrative of urgency in which a subject involved in the revolutionary struggle and a mediator politically committed to the cause collaborate (Yúdice, 1991: 17).
Figure 4.1: Front cover of They Won’t Take Me Alive (1987)
Figure 4.2: Front cover of *No me agarran viva* (1983)
The urgency of the *testimonios* included in this thesis was given by the need of the narrators to make known for an international audience the horrors and oppression suffered by their people. This is therefore a literary genre characterised by its ethical and political commitment, foregrounding not only the personal narratives of the narrator but also the public narratives of the political radicalism they seek to promote.

4.3. Causal Emplotment and Public Narratives of Salvadorean Political Radicalism

As established in Subsection 3.4.2., causal emplotment is an essential feature of narrativity that allows people to weight and explain events, so they can form their opinions (Baker, 2006: 67). Therefore, it charges the events depicted with moral and ethical significance, it allows people to moralise reality, and as such it becomes a central part of a socio-narrative study of a politically charged genre such as *testimonio*. The comparative readings of the paratextual elements introduced in Figure 4.3 and Figure 4.4 will start to uncover a pattern of paratextual decisions that foreground certain political aspects of an already political text.
Prólogo

Eugenio, modelo ejemplar de abnegación, sacrificio y heroísmo revolucionario es un caso típico y no excepcional de tantas mujeres salvadoreñas que han dedicado sus esfuerzos, e incluso sus vidas, a la lucha por la liberación de su pueblo.

En estas páginas aparecen algunas de ellas: mujeres que conocieron y trabajaron estrechamente con Eugenia y otras, igualmente en la lucha, que comprometidas, sólo la conocieron por referencia.

Inés Dimas y "Eva" también cayeron junto con centenares de otras, cuyos nombres quizás seguirán para siempre en el anonimato de las "desaparecidas."

La lista de las héroes y mártires reconocidas de la revolución salvadoreña es demasiado larga para reproducirla aquí, pero queremos dejar constancia de que este libro está dedicado a su memoria, y en igual medida a las miles de muchachas, mujeres y ancianas salvadoreñas que siguen de frente en la lucha, sin claudicar.

Figure 4.3: Paratextual framing of No me agarran viva (1987): “Prólogo”
They Won’t Take Me Alive (No Me Agarran Viva) was created to fulfil a promise to Javier, Eugenia’s husband, who wished he were a writer, in order to be able to tell Eugenia’s story. Claribel Alegría is a writer and, together with the research undertaken by her husband and the testimonies of many of Eugenia’s comrades-in-arms, has recounted the development of her political struggle. Not only was this a struggle undertaken against one of the bloodiest and most brutal military régimes within even the aggressively oppressive contexts of many Latin American countries, but it shows the personal struggle of a woman coming to terms with a series of ideological and political steps that lead her to lose her life in a violent confrontation.

But the story is not just Eugenia’s. It is that of her suffering and rebellious fellow-nationals, still engaged in waging the ‘popular war’, against a system that many of them describe here in cruel and personal detail, and for a system that some of them have begun to see realised in the zones liberated by the guerrilla armies of the FMLN. And it is a book dedicated to Salvadorean women engaged in political struggle, to Ana Patricia (Eugenia’s daughter), to the next generation and a new civilisation.
In the words of Baker (2006), “patterns of causal emplotment can be subtly changed in translation through the cumulative effect of relatively minor shifts that lend a different weighting to the elements of the original narrative” (Baker, 2006: 70). Therefore, this section is in no way denying the political nature of the original No me agarran viva (1983), but rather establishes the ways in which shifts in causal emplotment of the translated narrative are highlighting the role of the US as facilitator of the violence faced by the people in El Salvador and emphasising the importance of armed resistance as the only means to end the struggle.

Figure 4.4 and Figure 4.6 serve to exemplify the ways in which framing by labelling is taking place in the TT. Baker (2006) defines labelling as “any discursive process that involves using a lexical item, term or phrase to identify (...) a key element in a narrative” (Baker, 2006: 122), and she argues that any type of label used for identifying a key element or participant in a narrative then provides an interpretative frame that guides and constrains our understanding and response to that same narrative (Baker, 2006: 122). Paratextual elements of the TT, such as the back cover of the book, emphasise terms that resonate with the armed struggle such as “comrades-in-arms”, “political struggle”, “violent confrontation”, “military missions”, “popular war”, “guerrilla forces”, “war of liberation”, “guerrilla armies” or “soldier.” Moreover, this armed struggle is presented as the only alternative in the face of a military regime described “as one of the bloodiest and most brutal ones, even within the aggressively oppressive contexts of many Latin American countries” (Hopkinson, 1987: 32).

On the other hand, the labelling of the ST centres the narrative in the abnegated role of women that would do and have done everything and anything to liberate their people, as seen in Figure 4.3 and Figure 4.5. And thus, it is established that even if one might not agree with their political ideology, it is impossible not to value their heroic and absolutely selfless actions. Therefore, the ST is paratextually framed as a narrative of
heroism, abnegation and martyrdom, emphasising terms such as “entrega total,” “abnegación, sacrificio y heroísmo revolucionario,” “lucha por la paz y la justicia,” “heroínas y mártires,” “comprometidas.”
Este libro es un pequeño homenaje a la mujer salvadoreña que se ha entregado a luchar por una sociedad más justa. La biografía de estas mujeres se caracteriza por su abnegación, su sacrificio y su heroísmo revolucionario. Se podrá o no estar de acuerdo con sus ideas, pero lo que no se puede dejar de reconocer es su entrega total a la causa de la liberación de su pueblo.

En estas páginas aparecen algunas de ellas, alrededor de la vida de Eugenia, un modelo ejemplar. Al contar la historia de Eugenia, cuentan su propia historia y la de su papel femenino en la organización político-militar. Eugenia es una de esas miles de mujeres salvadoreñas.

Este libro está dedicado a la memoria de Eugenia y a la de miles de muchachas, mujeres y ancianas, que siguen luchando por la paz y la justicia en El Salvador.
‘Despite her fragile physical build, she never faltered on any of her military missions, either on the long treks or at times of great physical exertion. Her moral strength, a certain mysticism, made her overcome all physical debility.’

This is the triumphant story of the life and death of Commander Eugenia of the Salvadorean guerilla forces, as seen through the eyes of her comrades, and told by one of El Salvador’s foremost writers.

Drawn from interviews with her family and those who fought beside her, the book reconstructs Eugenia’s youth, her growing involvement in the resistance movement, and brings the war of liberation vividly to life. Together the accounts mark the progress of Eugenia, ‘a comrade always in the process of development’ in all aspects of her life, as political leader, soldier, revolutionary, proletarian, mother and wife.
In addition to a fairly close translation of the content of ST, the English version includes two new paratextual elements written by the translator Amanda Hopkinson, a “Historical Introduction” (1987: 1-19) and a “Preface” (1987: 20-29). These two sections continue to frame this narrative in the same manner as the elements previously discussed. Hopkinson begins her “Historical Introduction” with a reference to the brutal massacre of Salvadorean peasants suffered in 1932, in which over 30,000 peasants were murdered in less than two days at the hands of the military. Hopkinson discusses more than once throughout her introduction how the legacy of this event has created, promoted and maintained certain stereotypes from both sides. It allowed the state to disseminate the idea that any tactic was justified against the “[c]ommunist hordes about to overrun the country” (Hopkinson, 1987: 1), whilst creating a profound mistrust of the peasantry against the military in whichever guise they may appear.

Hopkinson continues to state that this violence is “endemic in El Salvador, as in so many other colonised countries, and dates from the imposition of Spanish rule” upon the indigenous people (Hopkinson, 1987: 2). She also analyses the ways in which this colonisation fostered a national situation in which the levels of poverty and brutality were unbearable. And she determines that it is “through business practices and commercial interventions that Western (particularly US) economic imperialism began to take over where Spanish colonial imperialism had left off” (Hopkinson, 1987: 10). By offering some striking numbers, she demonstrates how the situation has not changed much in the country in the fifty years that passed from the massacre that took place in 1932, but that the real horror remains in the fact that the army that still behaves in the same way it did in 1932 now has access to “all the weaponry that another half-century of United States’ technology (and money) can buy” (Hopkinson, 1987: 15).
Through causal emplotment, Hopkinson frames the current violence in El Salvador as endemic but, most importantly, as caused by first Spanish colonisation and then US imperialism. This emphasis on the US is underlined by the way in which Hopkinson finishes her “Historical Introduction” with the words of the spokesperson for the Salvadorean Trade Union Congress: “What we want is peace and genuine democracy, not rule by the United States through the armed forces” (Hopkinson, 1987:19).

In the “Preface”, Hopkinson states that visiting El Salvador in 1986, even ten years after the armed struggle at the centre of this testimonio, is still a “discomforting experience.” At least 1/5 of El Salvador’s population are in exile, and even the most conservative sources estimate that over 50,000 people had already been killed during the civil war. Hopkinson focuses her preface on the ways in which the tactics of intimidation by the army had changed from the moment in which ST had been written, even though the carnage is still taking place (1987: 20). The translator highlights how a certain level of concern for international opinion (arguably the same international opinion sought by ST in the first place) have “prevented a repetition of the mass killing of students (…) and [put a stop to the exhibition] of the mutilated torsos and severe heads along the highway” (1987: 20) described in No me agarran viva (1983). However, indiscriminate bombings sponsored by the United States are now taking place in the countryside with a large number of civilian casualties. Hopkinson also discusses how along with the bombs and planes, El Salvador’s army was importing from the United States a programme of psychological propaganda, designed to indoctrinate their prisoners with a narrative in which the army’s actions are nothing but a regrettable necessity in the face of the threat to democracy posed by the FMLN and FDR45, and that the guerrillas were directly

45 FDR (Frente Democrático Revolucionario)
responsible for any excesses the army might be committing against the population (1987: 21).

Hopkinson also centres the rest of her preface on the person of Duarte as “mouth piece and manager” of the US, which is described as “El Salvador’s super-government” (1987: 24). Hopkinson ends her preface arguing that this very change in the tactics employed by the army has been mirrored by those within the guerrilla movement. Consequently, “what Eugenia and her comrades hoped would be a triumph on a par with those of Cuba and Nicaragua has settled into what the revolutionary movements term as prolonged popular war” (1987: 29). However, even though their tactics may change, the ideology remains the same and therefore the narrative presents them as justified. This is just a “people fighting for dignity, self-determination and freedom” (1987: 29).

In addition to the patterns uncovered by the previous paratextual analysis, there is an excerpt of fully new text added by the translator to TT and placed in the middle of chapter two of They Won’t Take Me Alive (1987), where Javier explained how by the end of 1974, both he and Eugenia “became convinced that no other alternative [but the armed struggle] existed” (1987: 61). It was under the rule of President Molina (who came to power in 1972) that the government started to employ “modern forms of repression against resistance from the popular forces” (1987: 61). Under Molina’s authority ORDEN\textsuperscript{46}, a paramilitary organisation based in the capital but dedicated to sowing terror in the countryside, was created. At the end of 1974, they produced their first operation and massacre in Chinanmequita and student unrest started anew.

\textsuperscript{46} ORDEN (Organización Democrática Nacionalista)
outskirts, but dedicated to sowing terror in the countryside. At the end of 1974 it produced its first 'search and destroy' operation at the massacre of Chinamequita and student unrest started up again.

The students took up cudgels on behalf of the oppressed peasants because at that time the peasants were hardly in a position to rise up in protest themselves. In a country where the only party-political opposition came from an enfeebled Communist Party (that had been virtually leaderless since the 1932 uprising and subsequent defections) and the nascent and timid Christian Democrats, there was not yet a rural guerrilla movement. In fact, to begin with, ORDEN attracted many of its 100,000 members from a peasantry who desperately wanted arms to secure the poor plot of land they actually owned, and the exemption from paying land-tax that membership automatically bestowed. But, most importantly of all, all ORDEN members were issued with identity cards, and without them the rural poor—landless and petty landowners alike—were always open to suspicion of subversive activity.

The US involvement was there from the beginning, in ideology and in practice. ORDEN's raison d'être was 'to root out communists' and during the 1970s conservative heyday, members were gathered from the peasantry by tried and tested carrot-and-stick techniques. On the one hand, membership guaranteed weapons to defend a margin of land, however meagre; on the other, ORDEN identity cards protected the possessors from constant harassment.

Those casting suspicion and, all too often, administering rough justice, were the ORDEN members themselves. As in any witch-hunt, personal points were doubtless made, scores settled, and land or remuneration acquired simply by the association of a particular name with an ill-defined 'subversive activity'. In 1970 El Salvador's General Staff's College Review published an article on Communist Subversion and Guerrilla Action. This defined how, in General Guzmán Aguilar's words, 'it will be necessary for agencies to penetrate governmental dependencies and recruit agents for intelligence networks at the level of villages'. This mutual spying and suspicion became systematised into legalised

Figure 4.7: Excerpt of new text included only in TT They Won't Take Me Alive (1987)
terror and sadism supervised by the likes of Major Roberto d’Abuisson who, in the 1970s, became the United States’ presidential protégé for El Salvador.

The United States input had a decidedly McCarthyite flavour from the start. As early as 1964, the US military was running a Central American Security Communications Network inside each country in the region, operating out of native intelligence services ‘to permit police and security agencies . . . to directly communicate information on the identity, movements, activities and plans of subversives and criminals’. The programme was geared to ‘rooting out communists’ within each Central American country – a task which, in El Salvador in the 1970s, apparently necessitated one Salvadoran in every fifty spying on the other forty-nine.

General Medrano himself believed he was relinquishing more formal links with the National Guard in order to put his capacities at the service of ORDEN – ‘to fight the plans and actions of international communism’, with the backing of the CIA and the US State Department. The first US military trainers came with a Colonel Arthur Simons of the Green Berets and, again according to Medrano, ‘We talked about how we had to indoctrinate the people, because he who had the population wins the war . . . it was almost like a religion’.

It was this US-inspired ‘hearts and minds’ campaign that the various student organisations Eugenia had worked with were combating, but the scale of ORDEN’s atrocities was in itself leading many peasants to seek out the way of armed struggle in self-defence. After their massacre at Chinamequita, the sense of outrage was such that the time seemed ripe to build a military initiative.

Javier continued:

At the beginning of 1975, the two of us joined the Farabundo Martí Popular Liberation Forces – the politico-military organisation that Marcial and his comrades had founded five years earlier.

By 1975 Eugenia was completely absorbed in our work. Little by little, she abandoned her university studies. She left the

Figure 4.8: Part II of the same excerpt
It is after this explanation, that Hopkinson adds about two pages, Figure 4.7 and Figure 4.8, that briefly explain the role of students in these uprisings, on behalf of the oppressed and hardly organised peasants. But mostly, Hopkinson explicitly underlines that the US involvement was there from the beginning, in ideology and in practice. The role of ORDEN was to “root out communists” (1987: 62) and “to fight the plans and actions of international communism with the backing of the CIA and the US State Department” (1987: 63). Similarly, Hopkinson relates how the head of ORDEN, General Medrano, described how military trainers from the US came and talked about how “we had to indoctrinate the people, because he who had the population wins the war… it was almost like a religion” (1987: 63).

This added section ends establishing that it was against this very US-inspired narrative that various student organisations – like those with whom Eugenia was working with – were rebelling. And that at the end of the day, it was the scale of the atrocities ORDEN was committing that led many peasants to seek out “the way of armed struggle in self-defence” (1987: 63). This added information does not contradict the one that appears in ST, but it frames it in a way that reinforces the position of the participants in the narrative. It defines once again the Salvadorean army as mostly a mere puppet of the US, and both the army and the US are presented as reasons for the actions of the guerrillas, who were ultimately acting in self-defence.

To summarise, the (para)textual analysis above demonstrates how TT showcases the original public narrative that in ST claimed the uprising of the Salvadorean people and the armed struggle were the only and ethical alternative in that context. However, it also changes its causal emplotment to not only define the horrors perpetrated by the Salvadorean army and the oppression suffered by the people as cause for the uprising, but also to strongly underline the role of international politics in general, and the US in particular, in promoting such an oppressive context in the first place.
In addition to this, some of the editorial decisions in the TT, such as obscuring the role of Flakoll – a male US citizen – in the production of the original text, also reinforce a public narrative by which the political radicalism of the narrating voices, authorised by a politically committed intellectual: Alegría – also female and Salvadorean herself – denounce to an international audience the suffering of their people at the hands of not only the army but also Reagan’s policies. It could therefore be argued that the location of the TT, translated by Amanda Hopkinson who during the decade of 1970s was the editor of the human rights magazine *Central America Report*, and published in the UK by Women’s Press in 1987 at a time in which the civil war in El Salvador was still ongoing, had an impact in terms of how the original narrative was reframed in translation.

4.4. The Role of Women in the Armed Struggle: The Woman-Warrior

The Women’s Press (London) was not only an independent publisher, but also a self-defined feminist one, dedicated to promote feminist fictional and non-fictional works written by women. This creates a potential space of manipulation by which the ideology of the publishing company might have an impact in the selection of narratives that are promoted and/or the ones that might be reframed or fully renarrated. It has already been established that the collaboration between Alegría and her husband Flakoll was completely renarrated, leaving Alegría as the only mediator between the testimonial voices and the Anglophone reader.

The rest of this section will be concerned with how the role of women was portrayed in the original text and then translated into English, particularly their participation in the armed struggle and the FMLN. In her feminist reading of *No me agarran viva* (1983), Mary J. Tracey (1994: 75-96) discusses how Latin American
revolutionary culture has cultivated a potent image of the woman warrior since the 1960s (Tracey, 1994: 76), perhaps beginning with the idealisation of the guerrilla “Tania” who accompanied ‘Che’ Guevara to Bolivia and died in the struggle creating a symbol for the new woman. Tracey underlines that this symbol of new woman combines both a traditional feminine beauty with the masculine power granted by carrying her gun (Tracey, 1994: 76). She continues to present some other examples where the symbol of the guerrillera and her rebellion against restrictive sex roles are praised through literature, poems and songs, but only insofar as she remains a symbol of her people’s liberation, asks nothing for herself and puts her barely won freedoms at the service of the patria (Tracey, 1994: 76).

These woman warriors have been frequently represented as willing to shift their sensuality, love and loyalty from just one man to the greater (but still masculine) whole of the nation state. It is Tracey’s opinion, and that of other feminist critics of testimonio, that women writers and/or sympathisers of the revolutionary causes are less likely to create their revolutionary female characters as “faceless beauties whose association with fertility adds a sort of mystic hope to a political movement” (Tracey, 1994:78). Instead, there are several instances, in which these women writers created a space in which the voices of real women from the guerrilla could be heard by publishing their interviews in books and magazines. However, and because most of the interviews with these guerrilleras were quite short, there was not enough space to comment, elaborate or contradict a life story that was now expected by the readership. As a result, the personal narratives of Latin American guerrilleras, even when from different countries and engaged in different struggles, seem to blend together into one collective voice that discusses all or most of the following elements: the guerrilleras are proud of developing their physical strength, they are confident leaders of both men and women, and they are quick to address the sexism that emerges in their units. Moreover, the reader generally
sees the guerrillera’s ambition to continue working outside the home after the revolution, her plans to have a heterosexual relationship based on gender equality and shared family responsibilities and her profound desire to have children or to be reunited with the children that she already has (Tracey, 1994: 79).

Alegría, in collaboration with Flakoll, was the first Latin American woman to dedicate a full-length book to the exploration of the life of a single guerrillera. However, Tracey continues to criticise Alegría and Flakoll’s text for still “being in the business of creating myth” (Tracey, 1994: 79) and not making Eugenia’s existence sufficiently distinguishable from that of many others. Tracey argues that although testimonio is a genre less preoccupied with the celebration of the individual and more with that of a representative of a social group, there are other testimonios, such as Rigoberta Menchú’s, where more is revealed about the protagonist of the text.

In the context of this research, one should note how Tracey highlights the lack of photographic evidence as part of the paratextual decisions that serve to erase Eugenia’s individuality (Tracey, 1994: 79 and 87). However, this is a decision only taken for the English translation, since the Spanish text does include a couple of black-and-white photographs that can be seen in Figure 4.9 and Figure 4.10.
Figure 4.9: Photo of Eugenia in ST No me agarran viva (Alegría and Flakoll, 1983: 8)
Figure 4.10: Photo of Eugenia and her daughter Ana Patricia in ST (1983: 48)
I argue here that this lack of visual paratext serves to build a more comfortable resonance between the narrative at hand and the expectations of an international readership regarding *testimonio*, as a genre more preoccupied with the collective than the individual. Moreover, the multiplicity of voices included in *No me agarran viva* (1983) means that each person involved in this *testimonio* has less space to develop their narrative, and this potentially makes them more reluctant to deviate from the generic *guerrillera* life story. Moreover, and from the perspective of narrative theory, the aforementioned similarities between the narrated lives of different *guerrilleras* are easy to explain. Baker (2006: 29) defines personal narratives as the stories that we tell ourselves about our place in the world and our own personal history. These stories help us make sense of our own lives. More importantly, they are social in nature which means that “even the most personal of narratives rely on and invoke collective narratives – symbols, linguistic formulations and structures – without which the personal would remain uninterpretable” (Ewick & Silbey, 1995: 211-12). In concrete terms, this means that the narrated lives of these *guerrilleras* contain labels and identifiable structures that have been disseminated through the revolutionary society to make sense of their own national experience. At the same time, since these very symbols and collective narratives pertain traditionally to one’s society, it is not always easy to build personal narratives that dissent from the dominant public ones, even more so when you are a committed participant of that revolutionary society.

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47 The importance of the collective in the genre of *testimonio* has been discussed as one of its key differences with other life writing genres such as autobiographies. In the words of Palazón, “la autobiografía implicaba una postura individualista del sujeto que escribe y que se apropia del sistema literario para manifestar la singularidad de su experiencia, mientras que en el *testimonio* la función del YO testimonial implica un NOSOTROS y una narración de urgencia colectiva en la que se abandonaba la versión liberal del triunfo personal prodigado por la autobiografía” (Palazón-Sáez, 2010:60). This issue is discussed further in section 5.2.
4.5. The Interplay between Public Military Narratives and Personal Romantic Ones.

Chanfrault-Duchet (1991: 81), in her study of narrative and oral history, explains how women’s life stories tend to be organised around two interconnected axes: one refers to collective history and the other to their personal life experience. Similarly, in *No me agarran viva* (1983), Alegría and Flakoll create a discourse in which two narratives are intertwined through the multiple voices at play: one refers to Eugenia’s emergence in the public sphere as a revolutionary, and the other to her personal development as woman, wife and mother. I will argue here that these two interconnected axes relate back to what researcher Ileana Rodríguez has identified as “narratives of success and failure” (Rodríguez, 1994: 45-57).

In her article, Rodríguez uses Spivak’s *Selected Subaltern Studies* (1988) as a theoretical point of reference and shows how Alegría’s work contributes to the study of subalternity by offering us a reading of woman as revolutionary subaltern in the context of social struggle. Rodríguez focuses on the ways in which Spivak questions the concepts of success and failure in reference to the constitution of the subaltern subject to then question the ways in which the gendered narrative created by Alegría and Flakoll in *No me agarran viva* fails (1983) or succeeds.

*No me agarran viva* (1983) is an example of success when it comes to the convergence of a plurality of voices that even from the authorial point of view include both masculine and feminine, Western and Central American, as embodied by Alegría and Flakoll. Similarly, it succeeds in creating a space in which women are no longer at the margins of political insurgency and history (Rodríguez, 1994: 46). This *testimonio* promotes a public narrative of organisation and incorporation to the revolutionary struggle in which the gendered subject is constituted as a full participant, as an equal one.
It is a public narrative in which women’s liberation is confronted in the same terms as that of their male counterparts. In the Central American revolutionary context of the 1970s and 1980s, women’s understanding of their own struggle seems to differ from the concerns of European radical feminists (Velasquez, 2002: 34) Their priority is to participate next to their male counterparts in the struggle for national liberation, as can be seen in the following excerpt from Norma Herrera’s book *La mujer en la revolución salvadoreña* (1983):

> Nuestros principales problemas son la explotación en el trabajo por las clases dominantes, la represión y la violación de los derechos humanos (...), la lucha por la libertad de todo un pueblo (...) Es por eso que la mujer se ha incorporado masivamente a todos los frentes de lucha. Y en el bregar diario por liberarnos conquistaremos también nuestros legítimos derechos de igualdad con el hombre (Herrera, 1983: 19)

Of course, one could question what the practical results of this public narrative were. Did the participation of Central American women in the national liberation movements lead them to escape other forms of gender inequality, as had been promised to them? It has been widely documented that the revolutionary leadership always asked women to wait and postpone their own gender struggles “for the sake of unity, of national security, for the sake of their children…” (Rodriguez, 1994: 46). Consequently, to say that women are to liberate themselves by means of incorporation into the revolutionary struggle is not a simple or full truth. Alegria and Flakoll, in their construction of Eugenia as woman warrior, succeed in incorporating women into the traditionally male field of military action, but they frequently do so through labels that resonate with traditional masculinity. Thus, some questions remain: What about their femaleness? Does femaleness have a place in the armed struggle, in the revolutionary public sphere?
As established above, within the context of Central American revolutions public narratives consistently prioritise the parameters of class struggle over any other. They postulate themselves as narratives of progress and largely erase the confrontations that take place in the domestic cultural spaces where the constitution of gender roles is rooted (Rodríguez, 1994: 49). The revolutionary subject is frequently framed in terms of the very adjectives put forward by ‘Che’ Guevara’s *hombre nuevo*, and a successful *guerrillera* is therefore evaluated through her capacity to incorporate into their feminine body these same adjectives.

Going back to the aforementioned two interconnected axes in women’s life stories, Rodríguez also suggests that *No me agarran viva* (1983) weaves together “dissimilar strands of military and romantic” discursive protocols (Rodríguez, 1994: 48). This binary is particularly fruitful for a socio-narrative analysis since it seems to follow the very organisation of the text, in which the first chapter is framed mainly in military language – where Alegría and Flakoll novelise the last hours of Eugenia’s life; whilst the last one comes back to the same moment, but places it in the context of several love letters to her husband written just before the military action in which the protagonist of this *testimonio* would lose her life.

A textual comparison between these love letters in ST and TT will underline again how the inner weaving of these two master narratives, the political/military and the romantic one, into Eugenia’s personal narrative is more successful in ST than it is in the English version. These love letters are of considerable interest, since they create the only moment in this text where the reader has direct access to Eugenia and her personal narrative. I aim to highlight here the way in which in ST the language of these letters clearly divert from that of the rest of the text. In contrast with the rest of this *testimonio*, the language used in the letters is more sentimental, and less pragmatic or journalistic.
There is a lower frequency of terms labelled for their Marxist resonance (even though they are still present), and a much higher frequency of colloquial terms.

In her love letters, as seen in Table 4.2, Eugenia beautifully succeeds in bringing together romance and revolution. Firstly, in reiterating her love for her husband and daughter, she brings forward her love for the Salvadorean people. Secondly, she foregrounds her desire to raise her daughter as a revolutionary, whilst instructing her husband in how to deal with their daughter. And even her last words, her goodbye, are carefully chosen to tell her family how much she loves them and to cry some revolutionary chants: “RMEPAV” (¡Revolución o muerte! ¡El pueblo armado vencerá!).

Table 4.3 showcases not only this letter as translated in TT, but also a different translation into English as included in A Dream Compels Us: Voices of Salvadorean Women (Ed. New Americas Press, 1989) by South End Press. A Dream Compels Us (1989) includes the voices, interviews and short testimonios from several Salvadorean women who share their lives, pain and dreams amidst the revolutionary struggle. One of its chapters is dedicated to Eugenia and includes a brief summary of Eugenia’s story as told by Alegría and Flakoll and a translation into English of the final letter that Eugenia wrote to Javier before her death. This translation into English has been included here in order to further demonstrate the impact that translation decisions might have on the overall narrative of a text.
A la gordita un gran besote y todo mi amor, la quiero tanto. Hoy he visto la foto y está bella. [...]

Me cuidaré y si no, te amo para siempre y habrá modulator a la nena para que sea una revolucionaria; ya me estoy durmiendo. Duermo poco, gran preocupación. Trataré de controlarme más.

Aquí está difícil el patrullaje y todo yuca, hay que andar ojo al Cristo. Me cuidaré lo más que pueda. Le pasé la ropa al compadre T. Ojalá te la envíe, todavía quedó aquí algo, pero aún así me dijo era muy grande la bolsa. Los juguetes y otra ropa quedaron. Se los daré a mi compadre y daré algunos, por si los llega a buscar usted. Ella tiene nuestros documentos y ropa, oye.

Gordito, te dejo ya y espero te llegue ésta. Te amo para siempre. Un cosjeco interminable y un gran besote. Para ti y la nena todo lo que soy y esfuerzos para poner en práctica lo que me has enseñado. No te defraudaré.

Cuidese mucho allí. Nos vemos, ojalá sea pronto, se me clava muy dentro la ausencia. Ahórra se oye borce, a ver qué es. Besos, te amo. Ojalá ésta te llegue, Le encomiendo a la nena, cuidela, no la deje comer tierra y pupú. Si puede me escribe o me deja noticias con la madrina, ¿OK? Besos, te amo, Gordo, para siempre.

RMEPAV. Los quiero a los dos enteros.

Tu gorda.

Table 4.2: Eugenia’s last words to her husband as per the letter included in ST No me agarran viva (1983)
TT4.2a: Give the little poppet a giant kiss and all my love. I love her so. I saw her picture today and she’s beautiful…

I’ll look after myself and if not, I’ll still love you always. It’s so crucial to make a revolutionary out of the child; but I am falling asleep. I sleep too little, another great worry. I’ll try to get a grip on myself.

The patrol is very dangerous here, one has to go saying one’s prayers through the manioc fields. I’ll take care of myself the best I can. I passed the clothes on to Comrade T. Hopefully he’ll send them on to you, there’s still some stuff here, but they told me the bag was already heavy enough. The toys and more clothes were left behind. I’ll give some to a friend in case you can come and collect them yourself. She has all our documents and clothes, see.

Darling, I’ll stop now in the hope that this gets to you. I love you forever. And endless cuddle and giant kiss. All I am and have is for you and the little girl, and I’ll put into practice all you have taught me. I will not disappoint you.

Look after yourselves carefully there. We’ll meet, hopefully it’ll be very soon, your absence cuts me to the quick. All of a sudden there is a lot of noise, I wonder what it is. Kisses, I love you. Hopefully this will reach you. I entrust the little girl to you; and do not let her eat earth and shit. If you can, write to me or leave me a letter with your mother, all right? Kisses, I love you, Darling, forever.

SWALK. I love you two totally.

(Alegría and Flakoll, 1987: 140)

TT4.2b: A great big kiss to the baby and all my love. I love her so much. I saw her picture today – She looks so beautiful!

I’ll take care of myself. But if something should happen, I love you forever. I’ll always be with you. Make sure that our daughter is brought up as true revolutionary – I am falling asleep – been sleeping very little lately, too much on my mind. I’ll try to get a hold of myself.

There is a lot of surveillance around here, it’s been really bad. We’re constantly on guard. I’ll be as careful as possible.

Sweetheart, I have to go now. I hope this letter reaches you. I will always love you, a big, big kiss. For you and the baby, everything I am and all my efforts to put into practice what you have shown me. I won’t disappoint you.

Take care of yourselves. We’ll see each other soon, I hope. Your absence digs deep into me. Just heard some commotion – I’ve got to go see what it is. Kisses, I love you. I hope this gets to you. I’m entrusting the baby to you. Take care of her and please don’t let her put dirt of poop in her mouth.

Write me if you can, or leave word with the baby’s godmother, O.K?

Kisses, kisses and more kisses. I love you sweetheart, forever and always…

I love you both with all my heart.

Revolution or Death- the people armed will triumph!

Your Gorda,

Eugenia

(Ed. New Americas Press, 1989: 141-143)

Table 4.3: Eugenia’s last words to her husband in translation as per the letter included in TT They Won’t Take Me Alive (1987) and in A Dream Compels Us (1989)
Overall, the translation included in They Won’t Take Me Alive (1987) aims to stay closer to the original text. However, it does so in a mechanical manner that steals some freshness inherent in the orality of the original. Moreover, the labelling of the translation minimises the level of colloquialism. For instance, “pupú” is translated as “shit”, “bonche” is translated as “noise.” Moreover, the popular expression “andar ojo al Cristo” that means being vigilant is somehow mistranslated in TT4.2a, also taking some colloquialism away from the narrative.

In addition, there are some instances in which the coexistence of these two brands of narrative, the revolutionary and the romantic, appears to be halted by the framing of the translation. A major example is the translation of the Eugenia’s last goodbye from RMEPAV – a revolutionary chant – to SWALK or “sealed with a loving kiss.” Even though, for an English reader the acronym SWALK might still resonate with a narrative of war, since this was a common end for the letters written from the front during WWII, the content is much more romantic than political, erasing a very important layer of Eugenia’s last words.

In comparison with the aforementioned analysis, the translation published within A Dream Compels Us (1989, 141-143) seems to underline the orality of the text. It does not follow the original so closely, but it is more effective in foregrounding the emotional weight of Eugenia’s words. In this translation, terms of endearment are always present and even overemphasised, as seen in Table 4.4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ST4.3: Besos, te amo, Gordo, para siempre.</th>
<th>TT4.3a: Kisses, I love you, Darling, forever.</th>
<th>TT4.3b: Kisses, kisses and more kisses. I love you sweetheart, forever and always…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Table 4.4: Translation of terms of endearment in Eugenia’s last letter.
4.6. The Female Body

In previous sections, I have highlighted the ways in which Alegría and Flakoll have successfully created a space in which women are the protagonists of the story and have the opportunity to share with the international reader their experiences of the revolutionary struggle. However, both the representation of Eugenia and the rest of the women participating in this testimonio seem to emulate the aforementioned figure of the masculinised woman warrior in that a relation between the erotic and their bodies has very much disappeared.

It is perhaps in her love letters, the only instance in which we get to hear Eugenia’s own voice, where the protagonist of this testimonio becomes less sanctified and more real. However, throughout most of this narrative the revolution seems to have embodied Eugenia so fully that there is no space for femaleness or the erotic in her own person. In terms of a gender analysis, the guerrilleras are still praised for their ability to embody the same adjectives as their male counterparts in battle, whilst at the same time bringing in personality traits that have been traditionally deemed as feminine: “suave, agradable, tímida, nerviosa” (Alegría and Flakoll, 1983: 49).

Eva Gundermann (2002: 33) examines the potential dangers of aiming to textually liberate women through a connection between the revolutionary identity and its ideological discourse. She argues that the constitution of the subaltern subject and revolutionary subject hinders the constitution of the feminine one, since the feminine subject is left behind in the service of the revolution. A narrative that gives voice to the full identity of these guerrilleras, as both revolutionaries and women, is, I would argue, possible. Nevertheless, it is common for published works to seek to resonate with those collective narratives that make their readers feel more comfortable. Therefore, and as
previously mentioned, the joined voices included in this *testimonio* are likely to follow a collective master narrative in order to be heard.

Both the female body and the erotic are mostly erased from this particular *testimonio*, in contrast to the second text that will be studied in this chapter *El país bajo mi piel* (Belli, 2001). Furthermore, the only instance in which Eugenia’s female body is present, is labelled in terms of weakness and illness: “La compañera era débil físicamente, constantemente estaba con asma, agripada y con alergias. Era muy sensible pués. Ni el dolor que le causaban sus sentiments, ni el dolor físico quebraron jamás la moral de Eugenia” (Alegría and Flakoll, 1983: 57). Thus, Eugenia appears to connect with her body only to the extent to which it can serve the revolution. For example, even during her complicated pregnancy, when she was asked to rest in bed, she moved her bed into the meeting room in order to fulfil her revolutionary duties. Here, Javier explains to the reader how even when faced with the possibility of a miscarriage, Eugenia could not stop working for the organisation and her people.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ST4.4: La opción la hacemos prácticamente convencidos de que ella no iba a abortar, pero que si ello llegara a suceder como consecuencia del cumplimiento de su deber revolucionario, sería un nuevo dolor que nosotros concebíamos como un golpe del enemigo, un dolor que profundizaba por un lado el amor a nuestro pueblo y por el otro, el profundo odio de clase (1983: 94).</th>
<th>TT4.4: The decision we’d gone for spelt out that she probably wouldn’t miscarry, but that if it resulted from our fulfilment of revolutionary duty, it would be a fresh point to concede the enemy, a pain that on the one hand would be deepened by our love for our people and, on the other, class hatred (1987: 97).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Table 4.5: Shifting the narrative’s causal emplotment through translation. Eugenia faces a potential miscarriage**

In fact, it is established through Javier’s words that even if she had miscarried, this would have been understood as an enemy attack and that it would have deepened
their love for their people and their hatred for class divisions. As seen in Table 4.5, the English translation changes the causal emplotment of the narrative to state that the pain of that miscarriage would have been deepened by their love of their people and not the other way around. Moreover, the English translation minimises the physicality of the danger of a miscarriage, by stating that it could result from the fulfilment of their revolutionary duties, when in truth, the danger of miscarriage needed to be connected to Eugenia’s body, a female body struggling to take the pregnancy to term whilst fulfilling all her chores as a member of the guerrilla.

Gundermann (2002: 36) compares this lack of body representations when it comes to Eugenia with the corporeality found in Omar Cabezas’ famous testimonio, *La montaña es algo más que una inmensa estepa verde*, awarded the Premio Casa de las Américas in 1982, where descriptions of his body and especially of his penis are a large part of his narrative. “Cabezas habla de una masturbación, una erección e incluso de su primera ‘cagada’ en la montaña. Este es un ejemplo de discurso revolucionario que a la vez es una oportunidad para sentir corporeidad” (Gundermann, 2002: 36). Gundermann continues to argue that, of course, a male body is easier to represent than a female one in our phallocentric culture.

However, I claim this lack of corporeality when it comes to Eugenia’s representation can be explained, at least in part, by the location of the text. First of all, the very construction of the text and the fact we are in front of a multiplicity of voices narrating Eugenia’s life amplifies the potential for public and collective narratives to be promoted over any personal one. Moreover, the English translation of the text, even though foregrounding the feminine nature of the narrating voices, continues to emphasise the political importance of this narrative, not so much as a struggle for women’s liberation, but as the struggle for justice of the people of El Salvador in the midst of a brutal situation, one in which the United States’ involvement is constantly highlighted by
the English translation. Finally, I argue that since ST was published in 1983 and TT in 1987, the priority was to gain solidarity, peace and justice for an oppressed people in the midst of a civil war. Besides, one could claim that since at that time the triumph of the revolution was still a possibility, the dream that this revolution could bring gender equality (as promoted in the frequently repeated public narrative of this text) was also still alive.

In comparison to this, the following sections of this chapter will focus on the memoirs of Nicaraguan best-selling author Gioconda Belli, famous for her use of the erotic as part of her literary work. The fact that the erotic and the female body and sexuality are both a big part of Belli’s work and that of scholars researching her literature distinguishes this text from that of No me agarran viva (1983), where the presence of the erotic body is minimal. However, it still begs the question as to how these elements may have been translated for the Anglophone market. Are these key concepts of sexuality, body and feminine subjectivity present in the source text transformed or neutralised in any way? Is it possible to describe a pattern? Could this pattern shed light on the process of canonisation or transformation of narratives in order to facilitate resonance with collective narratives shared by the target audience and the World of Letters?

Moreover, regardless of the fact that El país bajo mi piel was written in 2001, far away from the events recounted in the text, it is still possible, and maybe useful, to

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48 For example, Lucía Guerra-Cunningham, a prominent feminist scholar in the field of Latin American literature, states that female sexuality becomes part of the discourse of women writers such as Delmira Agustini and Alfonsina Storni at the beginning of the 20th century, but it is in the seventies and eighties that a new poetics of the erotic is clearly present in the works of authors such as Isabel Allende, Ángeles Mastretta, Laura Esquivel or Gioconda Belli (Guerra-Cunningham (1994). According to Guerra-Cunningham, these women openly write about experiencing the female body, desire and the joys of sexual pleasure.
inscribe Belli’s memoirs within the tradition of Central American *testimonio*, a genre whose urgency and even attractiveness seems to be long gone nowadays. In brief, even though *No me agarran viva* (1983) and *El país bajo mi piel* (2001) both describe the lives of women within the armed struggle for national liberation in El Salvador and Nicaragua, respectively, they do so at very different moments. In the case of *El país bajo mi piel* (2001), Belli is writing her memoirs from Los Angeles in the house that she now shares with her American husband, after the Sandinistas lost the general elections of 1990. She is therefore looking back to the revolutionary movement, somehow disenchanted, having had some time to analyse the triumphs and shortcomings of a failed revolutionary ideal.

### 4.7. Location of Gioconda Belli’s *El país bajo mi piel* (2001) within the World of Letters

Gioconda Belli is a Nicaraguan poet, writer and political activist. She was involved in the Nicaraguan Revolution from a very young age and occupied important positions in the Sandinista Party and in the revolutionary government. She left the Sandinista Party in 1993 and is today a notable critic of Daniel Ortega’s government. She won the Casa de las Américas Prize in 1978 for her poetry book *Línea de fuego*, and the prize for the Best Political Novel of the Year in Germany in 1989 for her novel *La mujer habitada* (1988).

Her work has been translated into many languages. She has written six novels, a memoir, six books of poetry and two children’s books, aside from essays and political commentary. Her poetry has been awarded numerous prizes. Her memoir *The Country under My Skin* (2002) was a finalist for the Los Angeles Times Book Prize in 2003 and selected as one of the best books of the year by the same newspaper. She won one of the

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49 See Section 5.2. and 5.4.
50 Biographic information retrieved from her web page www.giocondabelli.org.

Belli published her first non-fiction work – a memoir – *El país bajo mi piel* in 2001, and cooperated with Kristina Cordero on its English translation as *The Country under My Skin* (2002). When applying my re-constructed core-periphery model\(^{51}\) to the case of Gioconda Belli, it is important to note that in the context of Central American women writers in English translation, she is the only one that has her individual work frequently translated and recognised – to some extent – by the international market. On the other hand, *El país bajo mi piel* (2001) has seldom received the attention of the critics. It might be that from a metropolitan perspective, the Central American region faded from academics’ view once the revolutionary struggles settled, as Arias (2007) claimed; and that recent Central American “literary discourse has been disempowered politically, while paradoxically, being empowered as a commodity by globalising trends” (Arias, 2007: 25).

Taking this as a departure point, one could claim that the location of Belli’s memoirs and her best-seller status provided her with an escape from the space of peripheralisation informed by her language, nationality and gender. However, a close analysis of the editorial decisions of the TT presents a more complex situation regarding the marketing of the book for the Anglophone world. Table 4.6 showcases TT front and back covers and two very different ways of understanding the same work and, more importantly, of selling it for the UK and the US respectively.

\(^{51}\) For a discussion of this model see Section 2.4.
TT4.5: “Lives don’t get much more quixotic or passionately driven than that of the Nicaraguan revolutionary Gioconda Belli. She may have been educated by nuns and dazzled all as a well-heeled society girl, but Gioconda lifted her ‘guilt of privilege’ by joining the Sandinistas in her twenties, to serve and then lead in their underground resistance. If part of her wanted to fulfil society’s classic code of femininity and produce four children (which she did), there was also part which wanted the privileges of men - the freedom to carry out clandestine operations, to forge the Sandinista resistance effort even with toddler and infant in tow. She hid political pamphlets from her first husband as she hid her love affairs with remarkable men. This remarkable book is a journey of the heart, through marriages and grand passions, as well as an insider’s view of a revolutionary movement”

Cover of Bloomsbury publication (2003): London

TT4.6: “Until her early twenties, Gioconda Belli inhabited an upper-class cocoon; sheltered from the poverty in Managua in a world of country clubs and debutante balls; educated abroad; early marriage and motherhood. But in 1970, everything changed. Her growing dissatisfaction with domestic life, and a blossoming awareness of the social inequities in Nicaragua, led her to join the Sandinistas, then a burgeoning but still hidden organisation. She would be involved with them over the next twenty years at the highest, and often most dangerous, levels. Her memoir is both a revelatory insider’s account of the Revolution and a vivid, intensely felt story about coming of age under extraordinary circumstances. Belli writes with both striking lyricism and candour about her personal and political lives: about her family, her children, the men in her life; about her poetry; about the dichotomies between her birth-right and the life she chose for herself; about the failures and triumphs of the Revolution; about her current life, divided between California (with her American husband and their children) and Nicaragua; and about her sustained and sustaining passion for her country and its people”

Cover of Knopf publication (2002): NY

An analysis of the semantic groups underlined on both covers foregrounds very different publishing agendas. Whereas TT4.5 seems more focused on Gioconda Belli’s gender, her representation of femininity and of herself as woman and lover, TT4.6 gives more importance to her role as a political Sandinista activist. The focus on these two different aspects of Belli’s memoirs is further emphasised through the images portrayed on the cover. TT4.5 offers a collage of three photos of Gioconda Belli, on the upper left at her first wedding, on the right giving an oath and on the lower left in Mongallo during her participation in the literacy program launched in 1980 by the Sandinista government.52 One could argue that these images – centred on Gioconda Belli’s person – frame again this book as a woman’s autobiography. TT4.5 presents two different images: on the left, the paperback cover; and on the right, the hardcover version. Both visually emphasise the more political and military aspect of Belli’s memoirs.

Although there is only one English translation of this text, it is still possible to claim that the influence of the paratext on the reader’s expectations sets up a very specific frame for understanding this translation. Thus, it could be easy to explain how the paratextual framing of these memoirs in TT4.5 leads to the following review by The Guardian in Table 4.7.

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52 The “Nicaraguan Literacy Campaign” has been internationally recognised and it received the UNESCO Nadezhda K. Kruskaya literacy award.
“For many of the journalists who covered the Central American wars in the 1980s, Gioconda Belli was the Nicaraguan revolution at its most glamorous and enticing. A beautiful, sexy daughter of the upper middle classes, Belli had rebelled first against convention, by publishing poetry that was frank about female desire, then against the mores of her class by taking a lover while she was married. Finally, she rebelled against the 40-year dictatorship of the Somoza clan (it had ruled Nicaragua since 1936) by signing up with the Sandinistas.

It was an irresistible combination. Belli has often written about her body as a metaphor for her country. This memoir describes in frank detail the degree to which she lived that metaphor. At every stage of her journey, there’s a new passion. Her husband, married at 19 in her haste for adult life to begin - and with whom she had two daughters - quickly palled and was replaced in her affections, first by a poet who encouraged her to write and introduced her to bohemian Managua, then by a revolutionary who was killed by Somoza’s National Guard. Belli’s quests for both revolutionary triumph and the ultimately fulfilling love affair ran in tandem until finally the revolution failed and she found lasting happiness - in one of life’s wry little jokes - with a US citizen, Charlie Castaldi. Judging from her description of the chauvinism of the Sandinista men, she made a wise choice.

It would be easy to satirise this account of a naive young woman for whom the passions for revolution and revolutionaries were so hopelessly confused. But Belli in many ways represented that aspect of the Sandinista revolution that attracted the sympathies of many who would not have signed up for the grim existing socialism of the USSR or even Fidel’s tropical socialist dictatorship in Cuba. It was not her political sophistication – and certainly not her personal constancy – that made her so attractive. It was her idealism.”

Table 4.7: Review by *The Guardian* (Hilton, 2002)

Furthermore, I argue that certain decisions of the paratext are externally informing this memoir and placing it in a peripheralised space constrained by the book market’s expectations. Therefore, TT4.5 in Table 4.6 and Table 4.7 can be read as resonating with a current public narrative that claims that the book market has been feminised. As I have discussed in Subsection 2.4.3, Jill Robbins (2003) argues that the press is leading the public to assume the feminisation of the publishing field, a feminisation that always appears linked to a globalisation process that tends to commercialise literature.
It is then possible to study the ways in which claims such as “it would be easy to satirise this account of a naive young woman for whom the passions for revolution and revolutionaries were so hopelessly confused” (Hilton, 2002) added to a public narrative that presumes the naivety of women that write unintellectual but romantic books destined to other “uncultured women” (Robbins, 2003: 95). That narrative, in this case, is neutralising the author’s political radicalism by framing it within another public narrative that allows Angloamerican and a Western audience to identify with Belli’s political perspectives by labelling the book “glamorous and enticing, idealistic and not politically sophisticated” (Hilton, 2002). This identification, however, would be impossible (or so the narrative goes) with other socialisms such as the Soviet and the Cuban, with the latter further labelled as a dictatorship.

I believe that from her position as a well-recognised author, Belli is constructing in the book a narrative of political and gender radicalism that textually negotiates between the reality of Nicaraguan society and the Western world, and between the Sandinista triumphs of the 1970s and the failed revolutionary projects of 1990s. Contrary to other Central American revolucionarias, who also present their own social and gender analysis but distance themselves from feminism such as Rigoberta Menchú, Belli does self-identify as a feminist. Still, her personal narratives of female subjectivity, body and sexuality were constructed within the confines of the Sandinista revolution. This means that her narrative may dissent from public narratives of mainstream Western feminism, and particularly from those of European radical feminists.

53 See Section 6.4.

Throughout Belli’s work, it is possible to find “una retórica del placer cuya función primordial es la de redefinir la sexualidad que el patriarcado ha estipulado para la mujer” (Urzúa-Montoya, 2012: 40). Belli redefines the concept of sexuality to allow women to resist marginalisation and regain their own power.\textsuperscript{54} \textit{El país bajo mi piel} (2001) describes how Gioconda Belli was introduced to the concept of lovemaking and knowledge about the female body by her mother. From this first conversation about menstruation, sex and pregnancy, she developed her own convictions about her sex and her gender. Belli describes this conversation with her mother as a nearly magical and clearly transcendental starting point for her own fate. The following excerpts in Table 4.8 demonstrate the impact that this conversation had in Belli’s construction of her own identity as a woman and might explain some of her actions in search for sexual liberation\textsuperscript{55}:

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|p{0.4\textwidth}|p{0.4\textwidth}|}
\hline
\textbf{ST4.7}: “Aunque su intención era seguramente inculcarme las responsabilidades de la maternidad, sus palabras acerca del poder de la feminidad en una mente joven y sin prejuicios como la mía, despertaron ecos que trascendían la mera función biológica” (Belli, 2001: 45). & \textbf{TT4.7}: “Naturally, her intention was to inform me about motherhood and its myriad responsibilities, but the things she said about the power of femininity echoed far beyond the realm of the biological in my young impressionable mind” (Belli, 2002: 18). \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

\textbf{Table 4.8: Belli’s construction of her own identity as a woman}

\textsuperscript{54} It is important to note that “female eroticism was particularly disturbing because it blurred the lines between private and public; eroticism was the intrusion into the public sphere of something that was at base private” (Hunt, 1991: 5).

\textsuperscript{55} Gergen and Gergen (1983) argue that ontological narratives are a linguistic implement constructed and reconstructed by people through social relationships; and that these social interactions then sustain, enhance or impede a person’s actions (Gergen and Gergen, 1983: 256).
The translation into English of this crucial conversation seems to slightly undermine this magical reading of femininity and petrifies even more the mother in her traditional role of housewife. The use of the adverb “naturally” further predisposes the reader of TT4.7 to understand this mother-daughter talk as simply a female duty that Belli’s mother had to fulfil. However, ST4.7 claims for hope, for an ancient conviction that women, if it were not for the constraints of a patriarchal society, can access a more transcendent and powerful understanding of their own femininity.

This powerful femininity is linked from this very first conversation with Belli’s mother to their own female sex and their own female body, hence Belli’s continuous glorification of woman’s biology: menstruation, pregnancy. Belli’s idea of motherhood is idealised since it comes naturally from her own sex, which is the source of her own power and could never be limiting to women – a notion of motherhood exemplified in Table 4.9.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ST4.8</th>
<th>TT4.8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Quizá porque desde niña consideraba mi sexo una ventaja, me concebía libre, soberana de mí misma. No aceptaba que el matrimonio o la maternidad significaran la renuncia al cúmulo de posibilidades de la vida” (2001: 42)</td>
<td>“Ever since childhood, I had always felt that being a woman was an advantage, and perhaps that was why I considered myself free, master of my own domain. There was no way I would accept the kind of marriage or motherhood that would require for me to relinquish the infinite possibilities that life had in store for me” (2002: 20)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.9: Belli’s construction of motherhood as empowering

TT4.8, however, defends the idea that marriage and motherhood “can” be limiting to a woman’s own self-development, but not necessarily, which is why our protagonist refuses to accept becoming “that kind of mother and that kind of wife.” Thus, the idealised conception of motherhood present in ST4.8 is renarrated in TT4.8. This is particularly important when placed in the context of the problems that an ideology such as feminism has had in transcending national/cultural/racial or ethnic
boundaries. Some scholars have claimed that Latin American feminists will differentiate
themselves from North American feminists because they understand this movement as
“antimale and antifamily” (Loach, 1994: 52). Loach states that instead of seeking
equality among sexes, Latin American feminists believe that their power as women lies
primarily in the difference of their sexual role (Loach, 1994: 53). This difference that
Belli claims empowering when affirming that “consideraba mi sexo una ventaja” informs
her own feminist narrative of sexuality and motherhood, one that, however, appears
neutralised and transformed in the target text into meeting a more Western/mainstream
feminist narrative.56

Furthermore, the erotic discourse present in Belli’s work creates an unbreakable
bond between the female body and her own pleasure. Although images of certain body
parts and an explicit relationship between the body and the senses are continuously
present in the ST, there is a tendency for them to disappear in the TT, as proven by the
following examples in Table 4.10.

| ST4.9: “Me quedé sin más ojos, oídos o tacto que los que me exigía aquel amor endemoniado” (Belli, 2001: 336) | TT4.9: “But such maddening, all-encompassing love monopolised all my senses and robbed me of energy” (Belli, 2002: 258) |
| ST4.10: “Mi cuerpo celebraba su afirmación. El simple acto de respirar me daba placer. Me tragaba el mundo por la nariz y la sensación de plenitud era tal que dudaba que mi piel pudiera contenerme.” (Belli, 2001: 62) | TT4.10: “My body celebrated this wonderful affirmation. The simple act of breathing was a thrill. I was possessed by such a feeling of plenitude that I wondered how I could contain myself” (Belli, 2002: 32) |

Table 4.10: Peripheralising the body in TT *The Country under My Skin* (2002)

ST4.10 introduces Belli’s body as the subject of its own celebration and
highlights how every physical body part or action brings her pleasure. The focus of this
section on the translation of Belli’s highlighted physicality and frequent inclusion of

56 For a discussion on the translation of motherhood see Section 4.9.
references to the body as part of her writing is based on the attention that these issues have received by scholars and critics. As stated by David William Foster, Latin American women writers such as Belli emphasise “an erotic imagination that re-territorialises the body in order to escape the genital privileging of patriarchal sexuality” (Foster, 1997: 40). The re-territorialisation, celebration and re-politicisation of the body have been a central part of feminist scholarship since “the body is identified as a site of power, that is, a locus of domination through which subjectivity is constituted” (Bartky, 1988: x).

In her PhD dissertation, Miriam Urzúa-Montoya (2012) establishes that Belli’s writing narrates the body as a place where strategies of resistance take place. She explains these strategies by framing them within Foucault’s narrative that emphasises the fact that “where there is power there is resistance” (Foucault, 1978: 95). I argue that the constant processes of selective appropriation that eliminate references to the body within the translation of Belli’s memoirs are causing the author’s strategies of resistance to lose her original narrative frame, which in ST is almost always connected to the body.

To continue with this line of argument, the following excerpts included in Table 4.11 exemplify how Belli’s celebration of her own body allows her to also celebrate sexuality, pleasure and desire, both in her personal life and in her literature.

| ST4.11: “Que una mujer celebrara su sexo no era común en 1970. Mi lenguaje subvertía el orden de las cosas. De objeto la mujer pasaba a sujeto. Yo nombraba mi sexualidad, me apropiaba de ella, la ejercía con gozo y pleno derecho. Los poemas no eran explícitos y mucho menos pornográficos, pero celebraban mis plenos poderes de mujer. En eso residía el escándalo” (Belli, 2001: 68) | TT4.11: “It was 1970. I wasn’t saying anything that had not been said before by men, but I was a woman. It was not done. Women were objects, not subjects of their own sex drive. I wrote joyfully about my body, my passion, my pleasure. The poems were not explicit – they weren’t even remotely pornographic. They were simply a female celebration of her senses, the wonder of her body, But they created uproar” (Belli, 2002: 38). |

Table 4.11: The erotic in Belli’s poetry
The description of her own poetry in ST4.11 starts by claiming the need for every woman to celebrate their own erotic and sexual body and the possibility of subverting reality with language. In the ST, it is this original celebration of womanhood that made her poems a source of scandal. In TT4.11, however, what is emphasised is the fact that, in the 1970s, explicit sexuality or women as subjects of their own sex drive were both concepts lacking from women’s writing. Thus, the focus in the TT lies in how subversive the erotic is for women, and not so much in real women celebrating their own erotic bodies.

Moreover, TT4.11 adds a whole new level of meaning to Belli’s narrative of sexuality and writing, by implying that sexual expression by women and men are similar, rather than different: “I was not saying anything that had not been said before by men”. In brief, TT4.11 seems to defend her poems by saying that they were not remotely pornographic, but they still created uproar, whilst ST4.11 clarifies that the celebration of women’s senses and their body was the real reason for the scandal – framing further Belli’s personal narrative within Foucault’s definition of the body as a place of power and therefore of resistance. Furthermore, poetry has not been the only sphere in which Belli has analysed the relationship between her own sexual body and her conceptualisation of femininity and women as subjects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ST4.12: “Por esa época, probando antiguas estrategias de seducción, intenté recuperar la noción de mí misma, mi poder de mujer conmocionado por el abandono de Marcos. Se despertó en mí un instinto casi masculino de conquista” (2001: 198)</th>
<th>TT4.12: “During that period I felt the need to prove to myself that I could still wield the seductive, ancestral powers of my gender. It was my way to deal with Marco’s loss and what it had done to my sense of self, my own validation as a woman. A desire to seduce, to conquer, that felt almost masculine in its determination, arose within me” (2002: 147)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Table 4.12: Belli’s construction of female subjectivity in relation to the sexual body
ST4.12 included in Table 4.12 describes how Belli tried to use her ancestral seductive powers to regain her sense of self, those female powers that she felt lost after Marcos left her. TT4.12, on the other hand, describes Belli in need of validating herself as a woman and therefore in need of proving to herself that she can still be seductive. It creates an even stronger link between Belli, her sense of womanhood and her ability to seduce men, as if the loss of one man proved that she was unable to seduce and therefore invalidated her as a woman; whilst ST4.12 just clarifies the use of her seductive powers as way to recharge her batteries, to feel powerful again. Moreover, TT4.12 reframes masculinity to embed it in a narrative that includes not only notions of conquest but also determination, stating that what made Belli’s desire for seduction feel almost masculine was the determination to conquer that lay behind it.

Belli’s conceptualisation of the erotic, of the sexual female body as a source of feminine power, has not only been recognised as a constant theme in her discourse by multiple scholars, but is also embedded in the theorisations about love present in her memoirs. And it is this lyrical connection between love, emotions and the body that completes Belli’s idealised universe of the erotic. In any case, and as exemplified by Table 4.13, this narrative is also neutralised.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ST4.13: “La exploración disipó las dudas sobre mi poder pero no ahuyentó mi tristeza. Comprendí que el único mecanismo de control del desbordado erotismo femenino es que requiere del amor para desatarse plenamente” (2001: 199)</th>
<th>TT4.13: “This exploration chased away any doubts I may have had about my womanly powers, but it couldn’t chase away the sadness I felt” (2002: 147)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ST4.14: “Me obligué a mirar en mi interior para descubrir sus vulnerabilidades: mi necesidad de amor como reflejo de una carencia esencial que asociaba en demasiado mi poder femenino con la sexualidad, la seducción y pasaba por alto y hasta menospreciaba mis otros dones” (2001: 378)</td>
<td>TT4.14: “I forced myself to examine my vulnerabilities: I had filled a raw emotional void, tried to make up for the affection I had lacked, by asserting myself and my femininity mostly through my sexuality and my powers of seduction, ignoring and underestimating my other gifts” (2002: 290)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.13: Belli’s construction of the erotic as empowering
This link between body and emotions, this idealisation of the erotic accentuates Belli’s conceptualisation of female sexuality as source of power, but also seems to create a counter-reaction: a need for completion that comes from women’s relations to the image of the man. ST4.14 presents Belli’s vulnerabilities, her need for romantic love, as a consequence of linking her feminine powers to her sexuality and ability to seduce. TT4.14 on the other hand, maximises this “mistake”, describing Belli as a woman lacking affection and in need of asserting herself and her femininity through her sexuality.

This particular fragment of Belli’s self-reflection on the dangers of asserting her feminine powers through her own sexuality relates very closely to Amy Kaminsky’s observation in Reading the Body Politics (1993) that – at least in the case of Latin America – “feminist scholarship needs to retain the notion of sexuality as a key to gender hierarchy and therefore as a site of oppression, without pushing women back into the little corner in which they are nothing but sex and have nothing to say about anything but sex” (Kaminsky, 1993: xiii). Women may use their sex as a source of power but it is important to consider that the regulation of sexuality present in our patriarchal society has always traditionally been used as a means of oppression towards women. It is possible to argue that the translation into English of Belli’s memoirs frames her narrative of sexuality in a way that highlights this correlation.

Moreover, even as a Sandinista revolutionary and declared feminist, even after her subversive erotic writing and celebration of her own sex, Belli still feels torn by gender binaries. As seen in Table 4.14, Belli describes herself as two different women...
with two different lives: one of them follows the codes traditionally inscribing the feminine, whilst the other one yearns for the mobility, power and freedom reserved only to men. This torn self-representation relates back to the feminist conceptual narrative of the bifurcation of consciousness, as she explains the separation between two worlds – the masculine-oriented abstract world of politics and the concrete world of wife and mother:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ST4.15</th>
<th>TT4.15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“He sido dos mujeres y he vivido dos vidas (...) Aprender a balancearlas y a unificar sus fuerzas para que no me desgarraran sus luchas a mordiscos y jaladas de pelos me ha tomado gran parte de la vida. Creo que al fin he logrado que ambas coexistan bajo la misma piel. Sin renunciar a ser mujer, creo que he logrado también ser hombre” (2001: 12)</td>
<td>“I have been two women and I have lived two lives (...) I have spent the greater part of my life trying to balance these two identities, to avoid being torn apart by their opposing forces. In the end, I believe I have found a way that allows both women to live together beneath the same skin. Without renouncing my femininity, I think I have also managed to live like a man” (2002: x)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.14: Shifting Belli’s construction of gender to mirror that supported of western feminism

It could be argued that ST4.15 inscribes itself in the traditional discourse of gender stereotypes. Belli describes her two identities fighting, biting and pulling each other’s hair – a stereotypical “cat-fight”. There is also a reference to gender as a social construction when she states that “sin renunciar a ser mujer, creo que he logrado también ser hombre”. However, TT4.15 seems more established in the Angloamerican narrative of “gender as a social construction” by a process of labelling: the explicit use of the term “femininity” and the idea of Belli “living” like a man – acting by the codes that inscribe

57 Dorothy E. Smith (1987) developed this term to refer to a separation between the world as you experience it and the dominant view to which you must adapt (e.g., a masculine point of view). The notion of bifurcation of consciousness underscores that subordinate groups are conditioned to view the world from the perspective of the dominant group, since the perspective of the latter is embedded in the institutions and practices of that world. Conversely, the dominant group enjoys the privilege of remaining oblivious to the worldview of the Other, or subordinate group, since the Other is fully expected to accommodate to them.
masculinity – and not “being” a man as ST4.15 claimed. Furthermore, one should note that TT4.15 neutralises the notion present in ST4.15 that these identities, following these codes of what should be considered masculine or feminine, can not only be balanced but also unify forces – hypothetically empowering themselves by this conjunction. Thus, it could be argued once again that the translation practice follows a pattern of strategies that create a target text that better fit Western/ mainstream feminist expectations. In brief, the English translation is promoting a narrative of gender and sexuality that, although also resistant to patriarchy, has been framed to better resonate with shared narratives within Western feminist groups.

I argue that this quest for resonance relates back to this thesis’ working definition of canonisation. As stated by Baker, “individual textual narratives do not exist in isolation of larger narratives circulating in any society” (2006: 139). The translation into English gives Belli’s memoirs visibility and attention from the centre, whilst peripheralising, reframing and re-positioning her personal narrative to better resonate with public narratives of Western feminism. This will encourage the imagined readership to further sympathise with Belli’s choices and actions.

In one of the few critical works concerned with this text, Gemma Palazón-Sáez (2006a) analyses Belli’s memoirs from its testimonial dimension. She goes on to study the motherhood discourse that Belli has used in much of her literary production, and she articulates it within the revolutionary and feminist discourse of Nicaragua during the 1980s. Palazón-Sáez claims that it is not a simple coincidence that, even though El país bajo mi piel (2001) embodies a strong claim from the author to narrate her own revolutionary experience and to situate herself within the historical discourse of the Sandinista revolution, her memoirs were written and published long after the Nicaraguan revolution took place, when Belli was already an internationally consecrated author and
definitely the only Nicaraguan – even Central American – woman writer to be consistently translated by large publishing companies.

In brief, I understand that this process of canonisation, by which Belli’s personal narratives of gender and sexuality have been renarrated to better resonate with public narratives of mainstream feminism, can be accounted for in terms of the location of the text. The status of Belli as a best-selling author gives her access to large publishing houses, which means reaching a wider audience, but these publishers are also traditionally market-oriented\(^{58}\), and so Belli’s subversive narratives are in danger of being westernised. I argue that the neutralisation of these contradictions between Belli’s personal narratives and Angloamerican feminism result in an important loss of the original value of the text as a space of resistance and negotiation, where Belli was making use of the intertextuality of her work to reflect on the specificity of a feminist practice constructed for the social reality of the Nicaragua of the 1970s and 1980s.\(^{59}\)

4.9. Motherhood

The narrative of a woman’s identity as mother is re-signified by Belli in the same way that she addresses the geography and history of Nicaragua, that is, by reframing it within the Sandinista public narrative of a nurturing female body. Belli’s narration of Nicaragua is always female, full of nature and power, and the Sandinista revolution is narrated as been born from the nurturing womb of the gendered Nicaragua. This maternal link is therefore extended from any particular woman to society as a whole, allowing Belli to build a narrative of motherhood that transgresses the private and trespasses into the public (Palazón-Saez, 2006a: 50). As Palazón-Saez states:

\(^{58}\) For a discussion on small and large publishers and their functions within the publishing field see Section 2.2.

\(^{59}\) See Section 5.5.
Lo que a lo largo de la Historia nos ha estigmatizado y respondido al poder hegemónico para quedar ligadas a la representación de dualidades tales como pureza/impureza, amor/histeria, divinidad/pecado, relegadas a la función biológica de la reproducción y sometidas a la identificación con la pulsión irracional de la Naturaleza, le sirvió al gobierno revolucionario para exaltar a las mujeres como máximos estandartes simbólicos de la revolución y la maternidad como principal ejercicio revolucionario (Palazón Saez, 2006a: 51)

_El país bajo mi piel_ (2001) brings into the public sphere aspects located traditionally within women’s private world, narrating everything from menstruation to birth, from eroticism to sex. It plays with the image of the idealised Sandinista woman as mother, well described by Kampwirth (2004) in her book about feminism and its role within Central American Revolutions:

>A young woman, she grinned while holding a nursing infant; over her shoulder a rifle was slung [...] It captured both the extent and the limits of the Sandinista feminism [...] in this revolutionary image, the nursing mother was armed and powerful. But she was also, apparently, a single mother” (Kampwirth, 2004: 19)

This transgression of the private and the public, as well as the Sandinista militant/mother, is metaphorised in Belli’s memoirs by the narration of her Sandinista oath – which is taken by another woman, Leana, at a moment when both of them were pregnant. Kampwirth’s frame of the single mother seems to be amplified and extended in Belli’s description of her second pregnancy in Table 4.15.
Although both ST4.16 and TT4.16 represent this idea of the woman as “single mother,” the only one responsible for the creation, the only one capable of being fertile, it could be argued that the single mother narrative is more emphasised and mystified in ST4.16. It relates to a very biological process and labels the woman as only progenitor, as being able to fertilise herself. This power of creation related to women as being solely able to bring new life into the world encourages not only resonance with Sandinista’s gender narratives, but also a lyrical, almost magical, dimension in Belli’s narrative of motherhood in particular, and of womanhood in general. This second line of narrative is neutralised in the English translation through processes of selective appropriation as exemplified by Table 4.16.

The disappearance of elements of this narrative such as the underlined sentence in ST4.17 or the changes to ST4.18 distances the English translation of Belli’s narrative of motherhood from magical/transcendent elements that are, however, inherent to her
personal world-view and authorial voice. In this context, it is possible to argue that ST4.18 seeks to underline the poetic dimension of this maternal instinct that, in Belli’s narrative, always empowers women and their wombs – this magical place capable of absorbing the world and embodying it, transforming it into pure original life – and thus to go beyond the more simple idea of women bringing new life into the world.

Premonitions, instincts and dreams – in many cases linked to Nature – inhabit both Belli’s fiction and her memoirs. This is not only a literary strategy but also a personal narrative that allows Belli to construct a world in which lyrical magic empowers the feminine, imposing on it a certain mystic transcendence. This narrative, although it does not disappear completely in the English translation, is neutralised by cumulative processes of selective appropriation. As an example, Table 4.17 introduces Belli’s description of the earthquake that destroys Managua.

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60 “Otra forma por la cual las protagonistas de algunos de los relatos de Belli se construyen su subjetividad es por medio de la magia. En su prosa, ésta tiene la función de ayudar a las protagonistas a establecer una fusión o conexión” (Urzúa-Montoya, 2012: 49).

61 See also the example in Table 4.9.
Table 4.17: Peripheralising magical and transcendent elements within Belli’s construction of womanhood in TT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ST4.19</th>
<th>TT4.19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Esa noche de vísperas de Navidad los trineos, los renos y los Santa Claus acostumbrados al Polo Norte ardieron en un incendio descomunal que arrasó seiscientas manzanas de mi pobre ciudad, engalanada para la Nochebuena (...) Con mi instinto de bruja había intuitido que algo malo sucedería. Mucho calor hacía para un día de diciembre. Tomé la previsión de dejar la llave del pasador de seguridad junto a la puerta de la casa. Hasta quité los adornos de las mesas. Hipnotizado frente al televisor, como todas las noches, mi esposo me miró burlón haciendo caso omiso de mi miedo. Me dormí angustiada, apretando una almohada al estómago que empezaba a ensancharse con mi segundo embarazo. Estaba convencida de que algo siniestro flotaba en el ambiente. Un puño gigantesco se escondía en las sombras. Pasé la cuna de mi hija Maryam a mi habitación” (2001: 30-31)</td>
<td>“Because it was just before Christmas, the tragedy felt like a betrayal. (...) I can still recall the dense atmosphere that December afternoon. The sky was gray and it was unseasonably hot and windless. I had fled from the crowds that packed the stores downtown feeling I would suffocate. I left Maryam’s presents to be gift-wrapped and went home, wondering if I was catching a cold or feeling the effects of the first trimester of my pregnancy. I couldn’t get into the Christmas spirit and was aware of the irony of the big, joyous Santas, dressed for the North Pole, who would find no chimneys in Nicaragua. The spray-painted snow, the alpine villages on shop windows, the plastic evergreens, all irritated me (...) Nature was too quiet, too expectant. My acute animal instinct told me something was wrong. That evening I moved Maryam’s crib to my room so she could sleep near us, I left the house key next to the door” (2002: 46-47)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TT4.19 seems to focus on Belli feeling unable to get into the Christmas spirit, as if this were caused by her feeling physically unwell or by the irony of globalisation and consumerism that exported the image of a white Christmas and North Pole Santas to a tropical country like Nicaragua. Moreover, and although she instinctively knows that something is wrong, ST4.19 openly narrates the earthquake through frames of magic and nature. Belli’s premonition is due to her “instinto de bruja”, but soon enough she mentions the weather, as if nature were talking to her. Moreover, she mentions her fear and her pregnancy, as if this natural state brought her close to Nature, to life and to those ancestral instincts reserved to women.

This notion of intuition and premonition is cumulatively erased from the narrative of motherhood and womanhood promoted by the English translation, although it does not completely disappear. One could argue that these processes of selective appropriation...
seek to re-frame Belli’s personal narrative of motherhood and womanhood, distancing it from discourses of “magical realism” and making it more suitable to the realism expected by the implied reader of an autobiography. This is, however, a very constrained understanding of Belli’s discourse that reduces Belli’s use of images, such as premonition, intuition, a magical and women’s unique bond to nature, to merely literary strategies.

This chapter claims that all these elements are inherent to Belli’s personal narrative and worldview, and not a product of “magical realism” as a literary genre. In fact, I understand these elements as a crucial part of a dialectic that confronts Belli’s free construction of womanhood and motherhood and its sometimes contradictory narratives. These contradictions in the discourse (openly debated by the author in excerpts such as the one included in Table 4.14) are explained in Palazón Saez (2006b) as “cracks of the discourse” created through an attempt by the author to appropriate elements traditionally present in the discourse of patriarchy and to promote a narrative that allows the subaltern to speak.62

This comparative textual analysis of Belli’s memoirs and their translation into English brings light to the process of canonisation that in order to frame Belli’s personal narrative as a feminist autobiography has peripheralised key elements of the original. A series of cumulative processes of selective appropriation and labelling have made fundamental elements disappear for the causal emplotment of the original. Regardless of the potential contradictions or cracks of the discourse present in Belli’s personal narrative, she constructs a narrative of womanhood empowered by the erotic.63 In Belli’s

62 “El texto de Belli incide en la consideración de subalternidad del sujeto que escribe (una mujer), al tiempo que reivindica un espacio en el circuito intelectual internacional propio, logrado a través del éxito editorial” (Palazón Saez, 2006b: 71)
63 The erotic in Belli’s texts – as understood in this thesis – follows Audre Lorde’s definition: as an enlightening lifeforce of women, “a resource within each of us that lies
narrative of female subjectivity, both the physicality and sensuality of the body are places of resistance and empowerment; and menstruation, pregnancy, motherhood and menopause are all elements that bring women closer to themselves and need to be both de-mystified and brought into the public sphere. And it is by appropriating these elements that Belli seeks to transcend into a nearly magical and mystic realm in which even her country is female. For Belli, women are empowered by their connection to their female bodies, in the same way that a gendered Nicaragua nurtured the revolution that empowered her people. And this is a narrative that has been un-employed and reframed by the English translation.

4.10. Labelling and the Narration of the Sandinista Revolution

The aforementioned “maternal narrative” was an aspect introduced by Belli first in her poetry and then in her novels, but which is still present in her memoirs. This proves that more than a literary strategy, it is a story that allows Belli to position herself as woman subject and to translate her militancy into something that transcends her political compromise. This narrative allows Belli to frame her own personal revolution within the Sandinista one – to appropriate this discourse (Palazón Saez, 2006b: 72). Within this context, Belli narrates Nicaragua (her patria64) in terms of female bodies and wild nature. Similarly, the Sandinista revolution was also born from the maternal womb of the Nicaraguan nation, extending then the bond of the maternal womb and its transcendental love to the whole of Nicaraguan society – as seen in Table 4.18.

64 See discussion regarding the translation of term patria in Table 4.20.
Table 4.18: Gendering Nicaragua as the motherland

Table 4.18, the term “pueblo” has been translated as “(will of a) nation”. One of the most frequently discussed limitations in the practice of literary translation is the conveying of elements that are culturally specific to the source worldview and non-existent in the target culture. This is even more problematic when these differences exist more in a connotative realm than a denotative one. In this case, some of the Spanish words present in the poems are terms with multiple layers of meaning conveyed by an English equivalent. For example, and as already discussed by Hopkinson in her translator’s note to her anthology of Central American women poets in English translation, *Lovers and Comrades* (1989), *pueblo* is a term that comes imbued not only with a long historical association between “people” and “settlement” but with more contemporary political relevance in the case of these Central American countries. It can then, be affectionate or pejorative depending on the chosen context, “meaning anything from “my people” or “nation” to a “mob” or “the common masses”. It can also identify a settlement, “a community ranging from the smallest hamlet to a hick country town” (Hopkinson, 1989: xxix).

Moreover, in countries that have undergone a revolution, such as Cuba or Nicaragua, an extension of the problem arises for the translator. The vocabulary alters and some terms become very frequent and charged with different connotations. For example, the word *compañero* or *compañera*, very frequently used in the context of Latin American revolutions, has received – as well as the term *campesino* and *comandante* – a zero-translation.
As important as the use of indicative labels such as compañero/a in the construction of a revolutionary identity\(^{65}\), is the adoption of chanted slogans, such as “*Patria Libre o Morir* (Free Homeland or Death) which are repeated as timely reminders of military successes and exhortations to greater efforts in the face of still greater privations” (Hopkinson, 1989: xxix). I accept that there is not a simple/good translation of these chants, a translation that could frame these elements in the same revolutionary narrative as the original, but the real issue with the text in hand is its lack of consistency, as it can be observed in Table 4.19. Moreover, as seen in TT4.23 not only does the English translation lose the resonance of a political and cultural revolutionary context, but it also neutralises Belli’s lyrical embodiment of Nicaragua as female.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ST4.21</th>
<th>TT4.21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“-Por aquí frente a la casa ya están pasando los guerrilleros abrazándose con todo el mundo y gritando <em>Patria Libre o Morir</em>. Ya ganaron ustedes, amorcito” (2001: 318)</td>
<td>“-A procession of guerrillas has been passing in front of our home, hugging everyone and shouting, <em>Patria Libre o Morir</em>, Freedom or Death. You guys won sweetheart” (2002: 240)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST4.22</td>
<td>TT4.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Mis padres le avisaron de que llegaba y allí estaba ella para darme la bienvenida a mi patria libre, acompañarme a mi casa” (2001: 324)</td>
<td>“My parents told her that I was coming, and there she was to welcome me, to take me home” (2002: 246)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST4.23</td>
<td>TT4.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Todos los años al acercarse la fecha del aniversario de Revolución, me contagiaba del ánimo celebratorio. Me poseía la geografía de mi país como un cuerpo amado, con volcanes por pechos, recuperado a sangre y fuego (...)Nicaragua. Nicaragüita. Patria libre. Y yo había vivido para verlo” (2001: 134)</td>
<td>“Every year, as another July 19 grew near, I would be swept into the celebratory spirit that preceded the big rally to commemorate another anniversary of the Revolution in Managua’s largest plaza. (...)Nicaragua. <em>Nicaragüita</em>. A free country. And I had lived to see it” (2002: 323)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.19: Lack of consistency in the translation of Sandinista chants

Because of Belli’s gendering and embodiment of Nicaragua, one could debate if Belli’s narration of this *patria* is in fact closer to that of the “motherland”. As stated by

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\(^{65}\) For a discussion on relationality and the translation of the term “companero/a” see Subsection 3.4.3 in regard to Table 3.4
Kaminsky (1993) in her chapter “Translating Gender”, the semantic content of the word *patria* bears clear masculine connotations of patriarchy and fatherland. However, the grammatical gender of the term is undisputedly feminine, which makes it possible to ignore the semantic connection in favour of a morphological one. “Shifting the meaning of patria from masculine to feminine is a powerful discursive tactic” (Kaminsky, 1993: 6) and it is one present in the poetry and narrative of this author, who constantly embodies Nicaragua (her *patria*) as her “motherland”, as a nurturing woman with a wild female body. Interestingly enough, the word *patria* is translated as motherland only in Table 4.20 which is an excerpt of the anthem of the Cuban rebel movement:

| ST4.24: “Adelante, cubanos, que Cuba premiará vuestro heroísmo, pues somos soldados que vamos a la Patria liberar” (PBP: 19) | TT4.24: “Onward, Cubans; Cuba will reward your heroism, for we are the soldiers who will free the Motherland” (CUS: 5) |

Table 4.20: Translation of the term “patria” as “motherland”

But the translation of Sandinista slogans and the term *patria* are not the only labelling issues in this text. I have also found that even though the translation into English of the term *guerriller/o/a* as “guerrilla” is frequent, it is only used in those cases in which actual military actions is being narrated. This is a pattern noted in Chapter 3 that can be observed in Table 3.6.

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66 It would be difficult to make the term guerrilla completely disappear from Belli’s memoir given the political and cultural contexts that she is writing about.
4.11. Causal Emplotment and the Reorganisation of Chapters

I also introduced in Chapter 3\textsuperscript{67} how *El país bajo mi piel* (2001) surprises the reader with its apparent chronological disorder, whilst the English translation reorganises its chapters following an adamant chronological order.\textsuperscript{68} In both ST and TT the memoir is divided into four sections that follow the main aspects of Belli’s life: “Habitante de un pequeño país”, “En el exilio”, “El regreso a Nicaragua” y “Otra vida”. In ST within the chronological order of each of these sections, Belli inserts chapters that break this temporal sequence. These chapters contain her love-story with her last and current husband, Charlie Castaldi, a US citizen and journalist.

Although when recounting ontological/personal narratives temporal organisation is seldom strictly chronological, many institutional authorities – and most importantly to this chapter, expectations regarding literary genres such as autobiographies – insist on introducing a chronological ordering of the events. Baker (2006: 51-52) presents an example of imposing a specific temporal structure in the translation of the 1969 version of Milan Kundera’s *The Joke* by cutting, pasting and reordering the chapters to make them fit a strict chronological order. This is also the case with Belli’s memoir.

I argue here that the reorganisation of the chapters has affected the causal emplotment of the narrative and its relationality. Since the causal emplotment of the narrative allows us to weigh up and explain the events in order to form an opinion, it is possible to argue that by breaking the temporal sequence, the relations between the different events and their weight within the narrative as a whole have been changed. In Subsection 3.5.2, I already discussed the example of chapter 35 and the different

\textsuperscript{67} See Subsection 3.4.2.
\textsuperscript{68} See Appendix B

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consequences that the non-chronological sequencing of events in ST had for the narrative’s causal emplotment.

Similarly, Chapter 16 in the ST tells us the story of how Belli was suspected of supporting the Sandinista movement and was tailed by the police of the dictatorship for two months. This narrative is followed by Chapter 17 in which Belli explains how one of her superiors in the FSLN questioned her relationship with Charlie Castaldi, a US journalist, at a time when Nicaragua’s relationship with Reagan’s government was extremely difficult and when Belli’s job was to supervise the general elections in 1984. The sequencing of these events encourages a comparison between Somoza’s dictatorship and the Sandinista Government. It again allows Belli to question her freedoms and agency as a woman in both cultural and political backgrounds.

Conversely, I also seek to question the larger pattern of renarration that allows the English translation to distance Belli’s memoirs of love from Belli’s memoirs of war, her private voice from her public voice. The non-chronological organisation of chapters in the ST allows Belli to create a personal narrative that encourages a dialogue between her actions as a Sandinista and her private life with Charlie Castaldi. She creates a narrative that overcomes some of the contradictions within her construction of herself (as a woman/mother/lover/militant) and within the political triumphs and failures of the Revolution, but that does not make them disappear entirely. In fact, one could even argue that this organisation of chapters highlights these contradictions, these breaches in the discourse. However, there is no need to understand these contradictions in a negative

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69 Most interestingly, this tendency to separate Belli’s eroticism and her political radicalism can also be observed in the translation of her poetry. When studying Belli’s poetry in translation, one is able to discern a pattern of neutralisation and omission of elements of the revolution that were not exclusively concerned with politics but also with social and sexual inequalities. There is a tendency to promote a division between the erotic and the political in target texts that it is contradictory to the achievements of the source texts, which attempt consciously to blend sexual and political radicalism.
light and seek to undermine them in order to create a more coherent narrative, as is the case in the English translation.

**TABLE 4.21:** TT emphasises the role of the Reagan Administration had in the Contra war that took place in Nicaragua in the 1980s and the subsequent failure of the revolution

When it comes to the more political narrative within Belli’s memoir and her narration of the years after the triumph of the revolution in 1979 up to the FSLN’s loss in the 1990 elections, the reorganisation of the chapters in a chronological manner in the TT also leads to the addition of new information that was not present in the source text and that emphasises the role that the Reagan Administration and the US had in the Contra Wars and the failure of the Sandinista Revolution. By contrast to this, the ST discusses the failure of the Revolution as the consequence of not only the US intervention (of course) but also the mistakes of the Sandinista leaders, in particular the Ortega brothers.

The excerpts included in Table 4.21 serve as an example.
4.12. Conclusion

To summarise, the previous (para)textual analysis – comparing both source and target text in the two selected case-studies – illustrates how these works have not escaped peripheralisation and how they are still subject to a number of transformations in order to fit the narrating peripheral voices in the parameters created by the target market. The particular focus of this chapter has been to explore the influence that the location of these texts had in this process of canonisation, by which the notions of women’s agency and political radicalism from the periphery have been selected, reframed and even renarrated on the way to accessing the centre.

I have found that the English translation of *No me agarran viva* (1983), which was published in the UK by independent publisher Women’s Press, emphasises the political dimension of this testimonial text, foregrounding the role of the US in promoting the military repression of the Salvadorean people. Moreover, this translation consistently erases the existence of Flakoll as co-author. I have argued that this is a conscious decision of the translator and publisher, based on the fact that Flakoll’s authorship would undermine the aspects of the narrative that the translation had foregrounded, since he is both a man and a US citizen. The English translation of *No me agarran viva* (1983) fits well with the early years of reception of *testimonio*, which were characterised by a near-euphoric celebration of a poetics of solidarity among all those involved in a global Latin American leftist project, and the belief that new/subaltern voices were finally speaking and contesting oppressive official histories (Nance, 2006: 5).

On the other hand, the English translation of *El país bajo mi piel* (2001) promotes the reading of the text as a love story in an exotic and romanticised revolutionary context. The location of Belli’s memoir is quite different to that of Alegria and Flakoll’s
testimonio. This is a text written and published in the US, a couple of decades after the Central American revolutions took place. The translation into English of this work, by promoting the reading of the text as a love story, hinders Belli’s ability to weave a narrative that integrates elements of both political and sexual radicalism and that presents them as interdependent. Moreover, Belli’s narratives of motherhood and womanhood have been renarrated when they conflict with public narratives of western feminism, preventing the emergence of a potential space of negotiation between different feminist practices.

In terms of the critical reception of El país bajo mi piel (2001), I have suggested that this text has not awoken the interest of academic circles, despite or arguably because of the best-seller status of the author. In the context of world literature, the reception of Central American literature had its boom in the 1970s and 1980s, thanks to the genre of testimonio; and after the failure of the revolutions, “many critics have come to speak of the testimonial moment in past tense” (Nance, 2006: 5) and with it Angloamerican interest in Central American literature seems to have faded. I argue that in the context of this thesis, the prominence of testimonio, particularly the canonisation of I, Rigoberta Menchú (1984) as the single most widely read testimonio in the Angloamerican context, has also acted as a layer of peripheralisation, affecting the academic reception of other forms of life writing. In line with this argument, the next chapter introduces La mujer habitada (1988) by Belli and Luisa en el país de la realidad (1987a) by Alegría. Contrary to El país bajo mi piel (2001), La mujer habitada – written in 1988 and traditionally understood as a fictionalised testimonio – has been widely studied by literary scholars. The following chapter delineates some comparisons between the political and gender narratives promoted in El país bajo mi piel (2001) and La mujer habitada (1988) and their translation into English. More importantly, it delves into the
definition of life writing and its different subgenres to question the impact that genre conventions may have had in the canonisation of the data set.
Chapter 5: Genre Conventions and the Canonisation of Life Writing

5.1. Introduction

The data set studied in this thesis has been encompassed under the overarching term of life writing, which Smith and Watson (2010) state is used “for a variety of non-fictional modes of writing that claim to engage the shaping of someone’s life.” In their definition of this genre, Smith and Watson (2010) also point to the permeable boundary between autobiography (writing your own life) and biography (writing that of another). Even though they have defined life writing as a non-fictional mode, they also acknowledge the permeability between fact and fiction in the writing of someone’s life and go on to include autofiction as one of their listed life writing subgenres.

Similarly, Buss (2002) states that the field of life writing extends from what Marlene Kadar (1992) calls the “most fictive,” such as the autobiographical novel – in this thesis exemplified by Luisa en el país de la realidad (1987a) – “to the ‘least fictive’ such as bare-bones testimony to daily activity that we find in the reticent diaries of nineteenth century farm women” (Buss, 2002: 6) – in this thesis represented by the genre of testimonio. It has been established from the introduction that my data set includes fictional and non-fictional works of life writing from Alegría, Belli and Menchú, in an effort to study the interplay between personal and public narratives in the texts and the impact that their canonisation had in the (re)narration of political radicalism and women’s agency through English translation. This chapter is particularly concerned with interrogating the way genre-specific conventions and their respective reception by the Anglophone market result in different approaches to the canonisation of the texts included in my data set.

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70 For a discussion on the relationship between testimonio and truth see Section 5.4. and 6.2.
Genre conventions have tended in the past to be an “exclusionary process whereby men with power over language usage delineate what is and what is not part of the genre in question” (Buss, 2002: 6). This has traditionally been an unacknowledged male-gendered act, one that unfortunately works to exclude most women’s writing. Conversely, in current theorisation, genre is understood as a discursive practice “in which one takes into account not only the rhetorical strategies and salient features of a particular writing practice, but also the functional aspects of this practice” (Buss, 2002: 6). This means that, to theorise literary genres, one should consider the way in which a genre is born from a particular set of social needs and becomes a cultural practice with the capacity of remaking ideology, representing new identities, etc. (Buss, 2002: 7).

Baker (2006: 86) defines genre as a conventionalised framework that guides our interpretation of any narrative in two ways. Firstly, it allows us to recognise it as an instantiation of an identifiable communicative practice; and secondly, it encourages us to project certain qualities onto the narrative experience, such as factuality, seriousness, or literary value. In addition to this, Rak (2013) claims that “genres produce social knowledge and have material effects because genre provides the terms of recognition for an event, an object, or a text” (Rak, 2013: 26). Thus, it might be useful to think about genre as both what Todorov (1975) famously called “the horizon of expectation” or the ability of genres to organise knowledge in a manner that makes it recognizable, and as the set of practices that work within the publishing industry to create that horizon. In the analysis that follows genres are defined as the set of conventions favoured by the publishing industry to create a framework that guides our interpretation of a text, encouraging us to project certain expectations onto it.

As such, genre-specific conventions often work as peripheralising processes that select which texts are to be included under certain categories, and/or even change, erase and reframe those elements within the selected texts that do not fit the description.
Moreover, as highlighted by Baker (2006: 95), some genres have tended to be more policed or controlled than others. Baker is mainly talking about active practices of censorship or policing of certain texts for political or ideological reasons, with higher levels of regimentation generally serving those in power. However, in the context of this thesis, I understand the policing of genre as a publishing and social practice, more than an institutional one. Thus, in this chapter I question if the translation of certain narratives has been different when the text was marketed as pertaining to a fictional or a non-fictional life writing subgenre. And to do so, two fictionalised accounts will be analysed: *La mujer habitada* (1988) and *Luisa en el país de la realidad* (1987a).

But first, section 5.2 offers a review of life writing as a literary genre and as a critical practice, section 5.3. focuses on feminist approaches to life writing acknowledging the specificities of women’s personal accounts in comparison to their male counterparts, and section 5.4. briefly defines the different life writing subgenres under which each text of my data set has been categorised and the expectations they create for the reader.

5.2. Life Writing as a Genre and as a Critical Practice

Kadar (1992: 3) claims that scholars have been using the term “life writing” in two ways. Firstly, life writing may be viewed as a limited and limiting genre, as it was in the eighteenth century when life writing was a synonym of biography – a genre that also included autobiography as the biography written by the subject about himself, always maintaining a desired degree of objectivity. However, the usefulness of that first version of life writing is limited in several ways. Firstly, it has a history of being androcentric, taking the exceptional life of the “great man” as normative subject, underlining the peripheralisation of women’s accounts, and potentially generating androcentric
interpretative strategies. And secondly, it has a history of privileging objective truth and narrative regularity, leaving little space for non-linear modes of narrating events and fragments or unpublished documents (Kadar, 1992: 4-5).

The second and most broadened version of the term life writing is, according to Kadar (1992: 5), the one often celebrated by feminist literary critics concerned with the celebration, recuperation, and authorisation of women’s practices of (self)representation. Here, life writing is a kind of writing about the self or the individual, that might favour autobiography, but includes journals, diaries and biographies. Most importantly, this kind of life writing may be written by literary men and women, or it may be written by “ordinary” men and women, opening space for oral narratives, anthropological life histories, or in the context of this thesis testimonios.

Finally, Kadar (1992: 12) presents her own vision of life writing as a critical practice that encourages the reader to develop their own self-consciousness and to humanise and make more concrete the “self-in-the-writing.” Kadar (1992) also emphasises that there are many subgenres in which the reader has a certain access, or at least expects to have it, to the written self, such as autobiographies, letters or diaries; but that to them one should add their fictionalised equivalents, including self-reflexive metafiction and narrative poetry. With that, life writing becomes both a genre and a critical practice. And “at it most radical, the critical practice of life writing enhances reading as a means of emancipating an overdetermined subject” (Kadar, 1992: 12).

Because of the above and the focus of life writing in the practice of (self)representation, a large body of feminist work – inaugurated by the publication of the widely-cited Women’s Autobiography: Essays and Criticism (Jelinek, 1980) – has sought to delineate the specificities of women’s life writing and to demonstrate how those properties led to its critical marginalisation in regard to their male counterparts.
In the introduction to his book *Postcolonial Life-Writing: Culture, Politics and Self-Representation* (Moore-Gilbert, 2009: 11-29), Bart Moore-Gilbert presents a very useful review of the main contributions feminist criticism has made to the study of life writing, whilst at the same time denouncing the ways in which previous studies of women’s life-writing, such as Stanton (1987), Brodki and Schenck (1988), Smith (1987), Smith and Watson (2001, 2010), have for their most part ignored the production of non-western authors. Expanding on the above, the following section provides a brief overview of scholarly approaches to women’s life writing and suggests some reasons for the current interest that the book market seems to have in the production of women’s memoirs.

### 5.3. Feminist Approaches to Women’s Life Writing

Moore-Gilbert (2009: 19-29) establishes that the difference between women’s life writing and canonical western male autobiography has been asserted by feminist scholars in three distinct areas: (i) thematics of subjectivity; (ii) issues of form; and (iii) the social function and cultural politics of life writing.

In relation to the first area, three particular aspects of women’s subjectivity have been identified as the source of important differences of emphasis between women’s life writing and their male counterpart. Firstly, it is generally argued that women’s life writing is characterised by “a rejection of the model of sovereign, centred, unified selfhood” as it is allegedly constructed in Western male autobiography, and a promotion of models of dispersed and decentred subjectivity (Moore-Gilbert, 2009: 19). Secondly, feminist critics have repeatedly claimed of canonical autobiographers that a primary

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71 Even if I do not delve into issues of postcoloniality, some of the insights offered by Moore-Gilbert (2009) will be useful to me since the selected data set is written by non-western women and received by Angloamerican readers.
concern is the establishment of an autonomous personhood which is clearly marked off from the author’s circumscribing social world, i.e. their narrative is that of the exceptional great man. In contrast women’s life writing offers a more dialogical conception of selfhood as something that is inherently social and relational. In the words of Gilmore (1994: xiii), “men are autonomous individuals with inflexible ego boundaries who write autobiographies that place the self at the centre of the drama. Women, by contrast, have flexible ego boundaries, develop a view of the world characterised by relationships (...) and therefore represent the self in relation to others.” And thirdly, feminist critics suggest that bodies are rarely foregrounded in the canonical male autobiography, whilst many women authors of life writing “have insisted on the constitutive role of a discourse of embodiment to women’s subjectivity” (Moore-Gilbert, 2009: 20).

In relation to the second area, it has been often argued that women’s life writing can be differentiated from their male counterpart by the degree of formal experimentation with the genre of autobiography as traditionally conceived. This second area is particularly important to this chapter, since it is basically highlighting the fact that women’s life writing tends to question genre conventions. For instance, the aforementioned emphasis on the relationality of selfhood in women’s life writing necessarily erodes traditional distinctions between autobiography and biography. Moreover, women’s life writing also tends to “deploy other genres, notably fiction and historiography” (Moore-Gilbert, 2009: 24) to a degree that threatens any genre classification of their work.

And finally, the third main element that establishes the specificity of women’s life writing in the eyes of feminist criticism concerns the cultural politics and social functions of this literary genre. Canonical autobiography has traditionally been considered a conservative narrative form in that the use of the “great man” as a
normative subject encourages existing social orders to prevail. Conversely, life writing has also been claimed to play an important part in the emancipation of women and in the articulation of their continuing demands for equality and agency in a patriarchal society, being used as part of a political strategy to produce change (Moore-Gilbert, 2009: 26).

Here, Moore-Gilbert points to the differences of emphasis between women’s life writing and postcolonial life writing. Many postcolonial authors of life writing produce their work within a context of deep political disempowerment, in which the rights enjoyed by many western women simply do not apply. This would be the case of the writers of testimonio, where in terms of their personal experience there would be no contemporary Western analogue for the more extreme forms of material deprivation and political oppression.

The fact is that, as established by Leigh Gilmore (2001: 16), the genre of life writing is thriving, fuelled by a surge of publications of personal accounts of trauma. Gilmore suggests that there exists a range of contemporary and historical forces that explain “how and why the age of memoir and the age of trauma seems to have coincided and stimulated the aesthetic forms and cultural practices of self-representation that mark the turn of the millennium” (Gilmore, 2001: 16).

In Chapter 1, I have already established that during the 1970s and 1980s there was a boom of cultural production in Central American countries, with a particular focus on the genre of testimonio. However, since my data set is not limited to testimonio, and it also includes works from the 1990s and early 2000s, it is important to locate these works both in relation to: (i) the tradition of testimonio in Central America, and (ii) the market’s thriving interest in memoirs at the turn of the 20th century.

Gilmore (2001: 16-18) reviews the reasons behind the current boom in memoir as follows. First, this boom would be inconceivable without the influence of social and
political movements during the last four decades that have made it possible for a larger number of women, members of the LGBTQ community, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities and/or survivors of abuse to share and publish accounts of their lives, contributing to the expansion of life writing by illuminating suppressed histories and creating new emphases and subjectivities. Secondly, the surge in talk shows and social media has produced another representative. Life writing is not only for celebrities, but also for the everyday person (Gilmore, 2001: 16). Thirdly, categories such as “personal criticism” and “creative nonfiction” indicate the permeability of the autobiographical “I” into new spaces, giving birth to hybrid and interdisciplinary texts. And finally, the literary market has proved a strong shaping force. Gilmore (2001) states that it is unclear whether and to what extent the market has actually led or followed this trend, but that there is an obvious market demand that currently “encourages marketing practices such as subtitling an author’s book ‘a memoir’ when in previous decades it might have been classified as fiction” (Gilmore, 2001: 17), or selecting for publication a memoir by someone whose story would not have been expected to appeal to readers before, or maybe someone whose story would have never been privileged enough to be heard in previous decades.

5.4. Proposed Data Set and the Subgenres of Life Writing

Gilmore states that the “intertwining of collective and individual representation demonstrates the close relation between representing yourself and participating in a representative structure in which one may stand for many” (Gilmore, 2001: 19). And this lies at the heart of what she describes as the “autobiographical paradox of representativeness”, by which having an exceptional and unusual life, for instance that of the president of a country, allows you to stand for others and be a good representative
subject of an autobiography. When it comes to the narration of trauma, this paradox becomes intensified because trauma is by definition an unprecedented experience but it also has a real capacity to signify representativeness. To use Menchú’s *testimonio* (1984) as an example, the violence she described and survived stands for that suffered by many Guatemalan people, and her *testimonio* was received as an effort to represent this collective; but at the same time, it was a unique traumatising experience that would also pose as a strong burden into any act of memory. In the words of Gilmore, “how can one tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, when facts, truth and memory combine in the narration of trauma to undermine rather than strengthen representativeness?” (2001:19).

Moreover, if autobiography has traditionally helped to install the sovereign subject, “the great man”, can it also be turned towards the interests of those whose story and identity cannot be and/or has not been represented by dominant discourses? Or would these people find a more productive space in the limits of autobiography? For instance, it can be said that women’s first-person accounts of “trauma are likely to be doubted, because their self-representation already is at odds with the account the representative man would produce” (Gilmore, 2001: 23), and that they represent an intervention in/interruption of a whole meaning-making apparatus that constantly threatens to shut them down. In this context, a writer’s turn to the fictional might mark an effort to shift the expected judgement of their text.

In the case of Belli’s life writing, *La mujer habitada* (1988) was marketed as a novel, even though its critical reception has always defined it as a fictionalised *testimonio*, in that it is easy to recognise Nicaragua in the fictional country of Faguas, and Somoza’s dictatorship as the oppressive regime described by the book. Similarly, the way Belli narrates the radicalisation of Lavinia’s political and personal views mirrors the way in which she narrates her own in *El país bajo mi piel* (2001). It is interesting that in
1988, Belli decided to write a fictionalised account of the Sandinista movement, her first literary work in prose. Belli’s turn to fiction might have enabled her to build a discourse that does not fully resonate with the public narratives promoted by a then triumphant Sandinista movement. Moreover, the following sections will study whether and to what extent her narratives have been translated differently in her memoir than in this fictionalised testimonio.

As established in Chapter 4, Belli’s memoir was written and published in 2001, a long time after the Sandinista revolution took place, and when she was a consecrated international author. She was therefore writing from a space of a certain privilege, and in the midst of what has been called “the memoir boom,” a period roughly spanning the first decade of the twenty-first century. In the context of the Angloamerican book market, this was a period in which the production and public visibility of memoirs by celebrities, but also by ordinary people, sharply increased (Rak, 2013: 3). Buss (2002: 7) claims that whilst only a handful of scholars have paid any attention to the discursive practice of memoirs, the press and the market have popularised the term to the extent that it has started to displace that of “autobiography” as the umbrella term that describes any life writing practice. Similarly, Rak (2013) and Couser (2012) highlight that the books of the memoir boom were published by mainstream presses and for large audiences, and that this might be the reason why the scholarship of auto/biography tends to overlook them and why academics do not teach them on their courses. Rak also underlines how autobiography had historically become the only “literary” mode of self-writing, whilst memoir was understood as a mass-market product for more than a century, until the advent of the memoir boom (Rak, 2013: 6). Conversely, today nobody writes something

72 Till that moment she had only written poetry.
73 The translation of Belli’s memoir has been studied in Chapter 4.
This debate can be directed back to my data set. For instance, the Spanish branch of the publishing conglomerate Random House categorised *El país bajo mi piel* (2001) as an *autobiografía*, and the British branch categorised its English translation *The Country under My Skin* (2002) as a memoir. I argue that the genre classification of *The Country under My Skin* (2002) as a memoir might be a reason why literary scholars have not paid proper attention to this text\(^\text{74}\), because “some traces of that earlier association of memoir with trashy writings for the marketplace remain” (Rak, 2013: 6).

Similarly, the English translation of *Rigoberta: La nieta de los mayas* (1998a) entitled *Crossing Borders* (1998b) is reviewed as follows: “Part memoir, part political manifesto, this impassioned testimony by the Guatemalan Mayan human-rights activist and winner of the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize is a stirring sequel to her 1984 autobiography *I, Rigoberta Menchú*” (Publishers Weekly, 1998) or “A candid continuation of her eloquent autobiography” (Chicago Tribune, 1998). From these reviews, three important questions can be discerned. The first one is how *Crossing borders* (1998) is framed as a memoir (at least partly) at a time in which the latter has become a bestselling genre for the Angloamerican market. The second is how *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (1984) is framed as an autobiography. It might have not been described as a *testimonio* because this is considered to be an academic term for the Anglophone reader, because the interest in this genre has now faded, or a combination of both, but what seems important is that *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (1984) will never be marketed as a memoir. The international

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\(^\text{74}\) In Chapter 4, it is also argued that the lack of attention paid to Belli’s memoirs by scholars might have been a consequence of the fading interest that Angloamerican academia had in Central American cultural production after the 1990s, once the moment of *testimonio* was considered to be over.
recognition of Menchú’s *testimonio* is too great, it has become part of the canon, and as such part of the traditional discourse of the public and political sphere.

Finally, the third aspect to be noted here is how *Crossing Borders* (1998) is constantly framed as a continuation, sequel or response to *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (1984). This allows me to argue in Chapter 6 that the canonisation of Menchú’s *testimonio* has permeated the boundaries of this text, and that the process of renarration – initiated in *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (1984) and its critical reception – continues in the production, translation and reception of *Crossing Borders* (1998). But it also allows me to argue here that the centrality of *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (1984), as the single most-widely read *testimonio* in the Angloamerican context has had an impact in defining the genre and the expectations of its readers.

To give an example, in her book *Can Literature Promote Justice?* (2006), Nance highlights the feminisation of *testimonio* and claims that “over the course of time, *testimonio* has come to be regarded, specially by non-Latinoamericanists, as a women’s genre.” She goes on to say that this feminisation is a “curious outcome for a movement initially traced to a father figure in the person of Miguel Barnet (…) and often identified with a second foundational male figure, Roque Dalton” (Nance, 2006: 145). Each of these writers produced mediated *testimonios*, the narrative form that has become canonical for the genre. Moreover, many of their immediate precursors, the writers of guerrilla diaries like Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara, were also male.

I agree with Nance (2006) that the effective eclipse of these men’s *testimonios* cannot be traced back to a lack of translation or of circulation, since they have been available since the incursion of this genre into academic and activist circles. However, I would underline the fact that this feminisation is a critical perception of the genre more
than a reality\textsuperscript{75}, a perception that should be read (at least in part) as a consequence of the canonisation process of \textit{I, Rigoberta Menchú} (1984), as well as the interest of certain scholars, including Margaret Randall\textsuperscript{76} or Amanda Hopkinson, the translator of \textit{They Won’t Take Me Alive} (1987), in the promotion of women’s life narratives and their participation in the revolutionary project. A more detailed discussion of \textit{No me agarran viva} (1983) and its English translation was included in Chapter 4. But in the context of this debate, I find it important to remember the critical silence over Flakoll’s role in the production of this text, since this might arguably be part and consequence of the feminisation of this genre.

On another note, Nance (2006: 33) also discusses how more recent scholarship is observing that the concept of truth in testimonial literature is far less straightforward than had been assumed in earlier confluences of \textit{testimonio}. Still, she is pointing here to the possibility – or rather the impossibility – of one person narrating “true history.” In addition to this, I claim that earlier reception of \textit{testimonio}, understood as the true account of a life experience, has had an impact in peripheralising the productivity of the fictional in relation to Central American life writing. For instance, in the case of \textit{No me agarran viva} (1984), the first and last chapters are obviously fictional in that they narrate

\textsuperscript{75} Maier and Dulfano (2004) published the volume of essays \textit{Woman as Witness: Essays on Testimonial Literature by Latin American Women} as a response to the fact that, with very few exceptions such as Rigoberta Menchú, \textit{testimonio} criticism has long focused on male-authored narratives, and perhaps most importantly, theorists of \textit{testimonio} have rarely addressed the specificity of women’s production. The essays included in \textit{Revolucionarias: Conflict and Gender in Latin American Narratives by Women} (Kumaraswami and Thornton, 2007) also make specific reference to gender in the writings of Latin American women in moments of conflict, and the ways in which women’s subjectivity can be expressed and experienced.

\textsuperscript{76} Randall is a poet, writer, academic and activist. Her production of \textit{testimonios} includes \textit{Sandino’s Daughters} (1981) and \textit{Sandino’s Daughters Revisited} (1991), among others. These works have not been considered for my data set because they were written originally in English. In fact, there are several cases in which testimonial projects have been published first and/or even only in English, such as Randall’s work (1981, 1991) or \textit{Hear My Testimony: María Teresa Tula, Human Rights Activist of El Salvador} (Lynn, 1994).
the death of Eugenia and her compañeros, and since nobody survived there is no way of knowing exactly how the events took place. Still, this element of fiction in a text that has been otherwise categorised as testimonio is rarely discussed by critics. I believe that at the time of publication and translation, any explicit admission of fiction would have hindered the effectiveness of the text as a political tool.

In contrast with the above, Alegría’s *Luisa en el país de la realidad* (1987a) is a clear example of the most fictional end of the life writing spectrum. Placing this text within any specific literary genre has proven extremely difficult due to its hybridity. The first English edition to *Luisa in Realityland* (1987b), published by Curbstone Press, was paratextually framed on the cover as a novel, as exemplified by Figure 5.2. Even though the Spanish version was published for the first time by Universidad Autónoma de Zacatecas (1987), I have been unable to find any photos of this cover. Moreover, every critical work on the text I have consulted is written in English and cites the English translation, or in the scarce cases in which the Spanish text is being quoted, they cite the Spanish edition of 1997. Figure 5.3 showcases this cover, where the literary genre of the text has not been named. Finally in 2013, Pereza Ediciones (Miami) published again *Luisa en el país de la realidad*, and in this case the very front cover defines it as “Un collage de relatos y poemas. Un viaje a las raíces de la autora” as seen in Figure 5.4. The critical attention that this text has received in the Angloamerican classroom has been highlighted by the fact that Pereza Ediciones has re-edited this text in 2013 and by the way in which the text is paratextually framed in its back cover, as seen in Figure 5.1.

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77 See Section 5.11.
Luisa en el país de la realidad

Reeditado en múltiples ocasiones y durante varios años material de lectura en universidades norteamericanas, Luisa en el país de la realidad es, según palabras de la autora: “un libro de disgresiones, de realidad y de sueños, de percepción y fantasía. En mi itinerario poético es el libro que más quiero”.

Claribel Alegría nace en Nicaragua en 1924. Graduada de Filosofía y Letras en la Universidad George Washington, ha sido también traductora de literatura inglesa. Su prolífica carrera de escritora ha merecido importantes galardones, como el Neustadt International Prize, la Orden Gabriela Mistral, y la Orden de las Artes y las Letras por el gobierno de Francia. Su obra es un reflejo de lo que se llamó en los años 50, la Generación Comprometida, en cuanto a su visión siempre encuadada a la denuncia social y a la lucha por la democracia y la paz.

Figure 5.1: Back cover of Luisa en el país de la realidad (1987a) as published by La Pereza Ediciones in 2013
The rest of this chapter undertakes a (para)textual analysis of the two fictionalised works of life writing *La mujer habitada* (Belli, 1988) and *Luisa en el país de la realidad* (Alegría, 1987) to explore if the process of canonisation can be accounted for in terms of genre conventions, as defined in section 5.1. Moreover, a comparison between the translation strategies deployed here and those described in Chapter 4 allows me to question whether similar narratives of political radicalism and women’s agency promoted by the Spanish versions of these four texts have been framed or re-narrated differently in their fictionalised counterparts.
Figure 5.2: Front cover of *Luisa in Realityland* (Alegría, 1987)
Figure 5.3: Front cover of *Luisa en el país de la realidad* as published by UCA Editores (El Salvador) in 1997
Figure 5.4: Front cover of *Luisa en el país de la realidad* published by Pereza Ediciones (Miami) in 2013.
5.5. Gioconda Belli’s *La mujer habitada* (1989) as a Fictionalised Testimonio

In their now seminal book *Literature and Politics in the Central American Revolutions* (1990), John Beverley and Marc Zimmerman dedicate the last chapter to “Testimonial Narrative” (1990: 230-280) paying particular attention to Nicaraguan and Sandinista *testimonios*. They discuss how this genre begins to flourish in Central America over the course of the revolutionary process and to a certain extent as a Cuban import in the 1960s, through the contacts between writers such as Nicaraguan Carlos Fonseca and Salvadorean Roque Dalton with the institution *Casa de las Américas* and their contemporary Cuban writers.

They identify *Y... “las casas quedaron llenas de humo”* (Guadamuz, 1970) and *“Somos millones”: La vida de Doris María, combatiente nicaragüense* (Randall, 1977) as the first Sandinista *testimonios* per se. Conversely, *Carlos, el amanecer ya no es una tentación* (1980), which was written in prison by Tomás Borge after learning of Fonseca’s death in combat in 1976, is a hybrid text, part *testimonio* and part “long biographical prose poem,”78 and the prestige of both Fonseca and Borge within Central American letters was an important factor in establishing participant narratives by FSLN cadre members as a key postrevolutionary literary form in Nicaragua (Beverley and Zimmerman, 1990: 247). And as well as these texts, it is necessary to mention *La montaña es algo más que una estepa verde* written by *comandante* Ornar Cabezas, which won the *Casa de las Américas* Prize for *testimonio* in 1982.

Cabezas published a sequel to *La montaña* (1982), which continued the story of his involvement with the Sandinista movement up to the victory of the revolution in 1979 and its immediate aftermath, and which was entitled *Canción de amor para los hombres* (1988). Beverley and Zimmerman note how this text relates to a later

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78 It is described as such in the “Introduction” to Margaret Randall’s English translation of Borge’s text *Carlos, the Dawn Is No Longer beyond Our Reach* (1984)
development in Nicaraguan literature that they call neo-testimonio – “texts based on testimonial materials, but very much controlled and worked up by an author with explicitly literary goals” (Beverley and Zimmerman, 1990: 248). The examples of neo-testimonio that they give include Cuartel General (Blandón: 1988), No se rompía el silencio (Baltodano, 1988), La marca del Zorro (Ramírez, 1989) and La paciente impaciencia (Borge, 1989). Borge won the Casa de las Américas Prize for testimonio with this book, but it is obvious that even when La paciente impaciencia (1989) covers the same grounds as Carlos, el amanecer ya no es una tentación, (1980) it does so without the urgency and pain that characterised the earlier testimonio. Borge’s situation is very different at the time of publication of La paciente impaciencia (1989). He is not a prisoner under torture but a major leader of the revolution, and his literary interests and ambitions are evident in the text. This results in a book that places itself “between testimonio, revolutionary memoir, standard autobiography, and boom-style narrative” (Beverley and Zimmerman, 1990: 250).

It is in this context that they situate Belli’s La mujer habitada (1988), by claiming that she has moved from poetry to narrative to tell the story of the recruitment by the FSLN of an upper-class woman and her participation in the insurrection. They also acknowledge that even though the book has a testimonial core, based on Belli’s own involvement with the FSLN urban underground, the author uses a conventional third-person novel form, combined “in the fashion of [Miguel] Asturias’ magical realism” (Beverley and Zimmerman, 1990: 250) with a parallel first-person narrative voice of a Mayan woman, Itzá – who is represented as challenging the constraining female role models of her own culture and actively fighting with her male contemporaries against the Spanish conquistadors.

In turn, Arias (2007) situates Belli next to Alegría, Naranjo and Guardia to mark a space for women in the Central American narrative scene of the 1980s, and he praises
how “their narrative textuality created an alternative revolutionary subjectivity to the masculinist model of personal development” evident in the guerrilla life writing of revolutionaries such as Guevara and Payeras and criticised by Maríα Josefina Saldaña-Portillo (2003: 63-108). In the Nicaragua of the late 1980s, Belli’s fictionalised testimonio rewrites gender representations to counter the continuity with a morality that had been preserved in the Sandinista ranks by professed revolutionary leaders who remained, at heart, self-sufficient machistas and neglected women (Arias, 2007). But ironically, in the words of feminist scholar Ileana Rodríguez, it had to be “at its death that the revolutionary state had left Woman located at the centre” (Rodríguez, 1996). Ileana Rodríguez alludes here to the end of the revolutionary project in Nicaragua when the Sandinista government lost the general elections of 1990 to Violeta Chamorro and the Conservative Party79.

In her discussion of genericness as a feature of narrativity, Baker (2006) argues that genres are associated with “specific devices or contextualisation cues” (Baker, 2006: 86). Those devices indicate a textual instantiation of the genre in question and trigger a set of expectations associated with it, and they can be lexical, syntactic, structural or visual. For example, she offers “Once upon a time” as an instance of a lexical device (Baker, 2006: 86-7). In relation to La mujer habitada (1988) and its English translation, I find that visual and lexical devices are used in the paratext to highlight either the testimonial (in ST) or the fictional (in TT) dimension of the text.

The first edition of La mujer habitada (1988) was published by Editorial Vanguardia (Managua), and it was soon after published in Spain by Txalaparta (Navarra).80 Table 5.1 showcases how Txalaparta introduces itself on its website, as an

79 For a discussion on gender and sandinismo see Section 5.8.
80 The copy cited in this thesis was published by Txalaparta. I have been unable to find any images of the first edition in Nicaragua, so I will not be able to discuss their paratext.
independent publisher dedicated to promote literature that “ayude a transformar la realidad” or “abra camino a las utopías.” Apart from being the edition that will be cited in this thesis, it is important to study the publication of *La mujer habitada* (1988) by Txalaparta in two ways. Firstly, it demonstrates how, at the time of writing *La mujer habitada* (1988), Belli was not a consecrated author, regardless of her international recognition as a poet, and as such her work was published by an independent publisher. Secondly, a connection is made within this fictionalised *testimonio* between the Sandinista insurrection and the struggle of the Basques during Franco’s dictatorship as seen in Table 5.4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.1: Presentation of publisher Txalaparta in their website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

On the other hand, *The Inhabited Woman* (1994) was first published in hardcover by Curbstone Press (CT). On its website, UNESCO introduces Curbstone Press as a non-profit publisher, founded in 1975 and dedicated to literature that reflects a commitment to social change, with some emphasis on writing from Latin America and Latino communities in the United States. After the editorial success of Belli’s first work

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81 The copy cited in this thesis is a paperback published by Warner Books (NY) by arrangement with Curbstone Press in 1995
in prose *La mujer habitada* (1988), she has been consistently published by large publishing conglomerates, as discussed in Section 4.7.
Esta novela, pletórica de ludismo mágico, narra los deseos y vacilaciones de hombres y mujeres comprometidos con una lucha a muerte. La batalla por la emancipación de la mujer, el compromiso libertador, la pasión y el anhelo de vivir a plenitud el amor en sus dimensiones más amplias e íntimas, se entremezclan en estas preciosas páginas, que nos llevan de la resistencia indígena a los españoles, a la actual insurrección centroamericana, unidas ambas por el lazo, encantado y consciente, de la autora.

Gioconda Belli, nica-ragüense, obtuvo el premio Casa de las Américas en la rama de poesía. Ésta fue su primera novela, editada con gran éxito en diferentes países.

Figure 5.5: Back cover of La mujer habitada (1988) as published by Tsalaparta in 1990
As seen in Figure 5.5, the back cover of the ST only acknowledges the fictive dimension of the text by categorising it as a novel. On the other hand, the testimonial dimension of the text has been brought to the foreground through the back cover’s use of revolutionary rhetoric, with lexical items such as “lucha a muerte”, “batalla por la emancipación de la mujer” and “hombres y mujeres comprometidos.” Above all, the testimonial dimension of this text is highlighted through its connection of “la resistencia indígena a los españoles y la actual insurgencia centroamericana, unidas ambas por el lazo, encantado y consciente, de la autora”. Not only is there a mention of the contemporary revolutions and insurgencies of Central America, but the paratext uses the word “consciente” which resonates with the Marxist notion of consciousness.

On the other hand, I argue that the paratext of the TT strongly promotes the fictional dimension of the text and its best-selling status. As seen in Figure 5.6, the front cover of this text in 1995 is already marketing it as “the international bestseller” and includes Isabel Allende’s praise of the book, an important inclusion given that Allende is a Latin American female author who has achieved great international popularity as discussed in section 2.4.3. Moreover, as exemplified by Figure 5.7, the back cover of this text continues to situate this book in the tradition of Isabel Allende, Gabriel García Márquez and Laura Esquivel, all famous for their editorial success, their popularity in the international book market and their brand of “magical realism.” Finally, there is no explicit connection between Lavinia’s story and the Nicaraguan context. For the Anglophone reader, Lavinia “abandons privilege and joins a revolutionary movement against a violent dictator – and through the power of love – finds the courage to act” (emphasis is mine). There is no acknowledgement of the fact that in Nicaragua women like Lavinia, like Belli, did abandon privilege and joined the revolution against Somoza.

Furthermore, when comparing Figure 5.5 and Figure 5.7, one important difference can be found in the way that sexual and political radicalism are weighed
against each other. I believe that the paratext of ST is very effective at introducing the essential interdependency that characterises Belli’s construction of women’s struggle in the domestic terrain and in a patriarchal society, and the political revolution of her people against the dictatorship. Firstly, the back cover of the text as seen in Figure 5.5 features the struggle to live love in full (the domestic) as part of a movement for women’s liberation (public). And secondly, it explicitly links this struggle to a collective consciousness of political radicalism. Contrarily, the back cover in the TT as seen in Figure 5.7 features Lavinia as a sheltered and self-involved independent woman, who, once she is inhabited by the spirit of an ancient woman warrior, dares to join a revolutionary movement. But it is only through the power of love (to Felipe) that she dares to act. This not only hinders the Anglophone reader’s ability to understand this text in its testimonial context, but it also disrupts Belli’s personal narrative of women’s subjectivity, body and sexuality that is analysed in the following section.
Figure 5.6: Front cover of *The Inhabited Woman* (Belli, 1994) as published by Warner Books in 1995
In the mesmerizing storytelling tradition of Isabel Allende, Gabriel García Márquez, and Laura Esquivel comes Gioconda Belli. Like her shining predecessors, Belli brilliantly captures the heart of her people and the passion of her country with a distinctive brand of magical realism: lyrical yet earthbound...romantic yet suspenseful...consistently original.

Lavinia is THE INHABITED WOMAN: accomplished, independent, fiercely modern. A successful architect living in the capital of her Latin American country, Lavinia is sheltered and self-involved—until the spirit of an Indian woman warrior enters her being. Now Lavinia’s blood pulses with the tumult of ancient uprisings; now her soul is lit by the vision of long-dead rebels. Abandoning privilege, she dares to join a revolutionary movement against a violent dictator and—through the power of love—finds the courage to act.

"ONE OF THE MOST GIFTED WRITERS TO HAVE COME OUT OF CENTRAL AMERICA IN THE LAST TEN YEARS...A WONDERFULLY FREE AND ORIGINAL TALENT."—HAROLD PINTER

"[HER WORK IS] A KIND OF PUBLIC LOVE POETRY THAT COMES CLOSER TO EXPRESSING THE PASSION OF [HER COUNTRY] THAN ANYTHING I HAVE YET HEARD."—SALMAN RUSHDIE

Figure 5.7: Back cover of The Inhabited Woman (Belli, 1994)
5.6. Fictionalising Belli’s Personal Narratives of Female Subjectivity

In *La mujer habitada* (1988), Belli narrates in the third-person the participation of women in armed struggles that were attempting to constitute revolutionary nations. The protagonist, Lavinia, is a young architect educated abroad. She has just moved back to Faguas, where she has found her first job. At the architectural firm, Lavinia meets Felipe. It is because of Felipe that Lavinia becomes acquainted with the insurgent Movement. Thus, political and sentimental engagement work in tandem in *La mujer habitada* (1988), as they also do in Belli’s memoir *El país bajo mi piel* (2001). This is particularly important since Section 4.12 concluded that the English translation of Belli’s memoir consistently worked to deconstruct the interdependency between Belli’s narratives of political and sexual radicalism, by foregrounding either one or the other, but never promoting both at the same time.

To be more specific, *La mujer habitada* (1988) fictionalises the events that took place in Managua in December 1974 when a FSLN commando unit seized the home of a prominent *Somocista* during a gala for the US ambassador. This unit held captive more than a dozen foreign diplomats and members of Somoza’s regime for several days, finally forcing the dictator to release Sandinista political prisoners, pay a large sum of money and broadcast to the Nicaraguan people a FSLN communiqué. In Belli’s fictionalisation of the events of 1974, one can find a mixture of facts relating to her own participation in preparing this attack, the actual commando unit that seized the home of Chema Castillo, and the life of Nora Astorga, who was famous, among other things, for her participation in the operation “El Perro” that in 1976 killed Pérez Vega, member of the Nicaraguan military and renowned torturer.

*La mujer habitada* (1988) is dedicated to Astorga, who died in 1988 of breast cancer. Under the dedication “A Nora Astorga, que seguirá naciendo,” Belli includes as
an epigraph an excerpt from Eduardo Galeano’s trilogy *Memorias de Fuego* (1982-1984) as seen in Table 5.2. From this departure point, both elements of this preface, which has been made to disappear in TT, coincide in negating death as an absolute. The dedication to Astorga inscribes the text in the Western literary tradition of the heroic tragedy, whilst Galeano’s epigraph links this work to the cyclical notion of life present in many Mesoamerican indigenous cosmogonies (Lagos, 2003: 44). This duality in the paratextual framing of the text is particularly effective since it mirrors the duality of voices within the text: an omniscient third-person, very close to Lavinia’s consciousness, the westernised, professional and independent woman; and a first-person narration in the voice of Itzá, the spirit of a Mayan woman warrior that died during the Spanish conquest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Nora Astorga, que seguirá naciendo</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Rompo este huevo y nace la mujer y nace el hombre. Y juntos vivirán y morirán. Pero nacerán nuevamente. Nacerán y volverán a morir y otra vez nacerán. Y nunca dejarán de nacer porque la muerte es mentira”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eduardo Galeano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mito de los indios makiritare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Memorias del Fuego</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2: Preface to *La mujer habitada* (1988)

In contrast with the paratextual framing of TT that promotes an overall understanding of Lavinia’s involvement in the Movement as a direct consequence of her love relationship with Felipe, giving emphasis to Lavinia’s agency, *La mujer habitada* (Belli: 1988) creates a much more complex plot. In fact, Belli critically uses Lavinia’s relationship with Felipe to denounce the limits of the revolutionary ideal when it came to gender equality. Belli’s fictionalised *testimonio* discusses and brings to the foreground several elements central to Latin American feminist debate in the 1970s and 1980s:

> La realidad de la mujer mestiza contemporánea, su incursión en la fuerza laboral y ámbito profesional, su participación activa en los movimientos
políticos, su constante negociación con los modelos de representación que se empeñan en asociar aquello entendido como femenino, con lo natural, tradicional e intuitivo (Varela, 2011: 23)

The protagonist, Lavinia, is represented at the beginning of the book as “a liberal Western feminist” (Reid, 2010: 63). Rose M. Galindo (1997) studies the way in which Belli uses intertextuality in *La mujer habitada* (1988) to reflect on the specificity of a feminism tailored to the Nicaraguan context. To do so, she claims that Belli projects onto Lavinia the main aspects of Virginia Woolf’s analysis of gender in *A Room of One’s Own* (1929). Lavinia is an emancipated woman, educated abroad and working in a male-dominated profession. She has left the parental home and moved to the house she inherited from her aunt Inés, thus having not only a room but a house of her own. Galindo (1997: 91) establishes that, at the beginning of the book, both Lavinia’s house and her job play the role that Woolf associated with having a private space and economic solvency.

In brief, at the beginning of the story, Lavinia seems to be rather disconnected from the oppression suffered by people in her country, and more worried about claiming her own subjectivity and independence. Paradoxically, this representation of Lavinia as the liberal feminist results in her alienation from other women and places her as a subject of male authority (Reid, 2010: 63). I argue that this essentialising representation of Lavinia at the beginning of the book is Belli’s way of reproducing the collective prejudice held against feminism in Latin America, for considering it an elitist and bourgeois movement. In contrast, it is consistently highlighted throughout the text how Lavinia’s introduction to the Movement and “the vicissitudes of class struggle bring her into fellowship with other women” (Reid, 2010: 63).

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82 See Section 5.8.
The story of Lavinia follows a tradition of self-reflexivity in Central American narratives of resistance and revolution, particularly those accounts narrated by women, in which one can observe a process of social awareness or growing consciousness. But in contrast to the reflexivity present in the testimonios included in my data set, Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú (1983) and to a certain extent No me agarran viva (1983), Lavinia is not the one narrating this process of self-awareness. Instead, the evolution of the character as a socially conscious and politically engaged woman is narrated in the first-person voice of Itzá, the spirit that goes on to inhabit Lavinia. This development of what Menchú refers to in the title of her testimonio as conciencia, with all its Marxist undertones, is then more obvious to the reader of La mujer habitada (1988), who has access to the two voices narrating in the text, than to Lavinia herself (Reid, 2010: 64).

Alana Reid (2010: 64) claims that the cast of female characters in La mujer habitada (1988) represents a diverse combination of ideological stances with regards to gender and politics, which evolve throughout the novel. However, I believe that Lavinia is the only character whose stance actually evolves. This is important because it emphasises how it is only through her association with the other female characters in the book, through a sense of sisterhood, that she moves forward in this process of self-realisation. I argue here that as they help along Lavinia’s process of social awareness, Itzá and Flor also smooth the (at times) difficult process of weaving together Marxist and feminist public narratives in Belli’s text.

Itzá is the spirit of an indigenous woman who fought and died defending her people against the Spanish conquest, and who has just reincarnated into an orange tree in the garden of Lavinia’s house. Of course, Itzá knows nothing of feminist and Marxist theories, which at the beginning of the book are embodied by Lavinia and Felipe respectively, but she finds it easy to identify with both practices. She sees in Felipe a kindred spirit, a warrior. She understands the need to fight, to rise up in arms to defend
your people, as she did against the Spanish. Moreover, after Lavinia drinks the juice of the orange tree, Itzá enters her body and inhabits her. The connection between them grows throughout the story. At the beginning, it is only Lavinia that floods Itzá’s mind with difficult memories of gender constraints. But along the way, she is able to influence Lavinia and give her courage to get involved. The connection between Itzá and Lavinia’s consciousness grows to the point that they end up being one and the same, as they die in the struggle for their peoples’ liberation(s).

In terms of form, the narration in the first-person of Itzá is intercalated by Belli between the chapters in the third-person that tell the story of Lavinia’s self-realisation as a political subject. From a narrative perspective, this is particularly important, since those fragments in the first-person serve to realise the causal emplotment of the story. For example, when Felipe brings a wounded Sebastián into Lavinia’s house in the middle of the night, she feels fear: she lets them stay hidden in her house but she does not want to get any more involved. Itzá reacts with anger, making Lavinia feel guilty but not being sure why she does.

| ST5.1: “- Sebastián se puede quedar, pero te pido que en cuanto sea posible lo trasladés a otro lugar. Sé que esto te debe de sonar terrible, pero no me siento capaz de otra cosa. Tengo que ser honesta con vos.
- Estoy claro – dijo Felipe – eso es todo lo que queremos que hagás, por el momento.
- No, por favor – dijo Lavinia – nada de ‘por el momento’. Una cosa es que yo, como mucha gente, les respete la valentía. Pero eso no quiere decir que esté de acuerdo. Pienso que están equivocados, que es un suicidio heroico. Te pido, por favor que no me volvás a meter en nada de esto” (Belli, 1988: 70). |
| ST5.2: “¡Ah!, cómo hubiera deseado sacudirla; hacerla comprender. Era como tantas otras. Tantas que conocí. Temerosas. Creyendo que así guardaban la vida. Tantas que terminaron tristes esqueletos, sirvientas en las cocinas o decapitadas cuando se rendían de caminar. En aquellos barcos que zarpaban a construir ciudades lejanas llevándose a nuestros hombres, y a ellas para el descargue de los marineros” (Belli, 1988: 71). |

Table 5.3: Example of how the first-person voice of Itzá realises the causal emplotment of the third-person narrative
Itzá remembers many women of her time who, afraid of taking action, lived and died slaves of the Spanish conquistadors. This allows Belli to locate the insurrection of her people in the tradition of many other previous struggles for liberation from a cruel oppressor. Moreover, Itzá continues the story initiated in Table 5.3 by narrating the battle of “Los desollados”, in which Itzá’s people sacrificed their elders and wore their skins in an attempt to frighten the Spaniards. This highlights how Belli’s narrative presents the guerrillas’ sacrifice and death as heroic, armed struggle as the only alternative against oppression, and how the sacrifice will not be small but will be necessary.

The next day, Lavinia had to go to work and make sure that no one was talking about “the other one,” about the one who jumped the walls of the house under attack and fled. When she came back home, she saw Sebastián and Felipe accepting the death of their compañeros without drama but with anger. Evidently what mattered to them was that they should proceed. As seen in Table 5.4, Belli champions the armed struggle as the only alternative to fight oppression. She realises the causal emplotment of her narrative of political radicalism, by situating the Sandinista revolution in relation to other struggles widely recognised as just: (i) the fight of American indigenous peoples against European colonisation, in this case Spanish; (ii) the fight of European people against fascist dictatorships, as in the case of the Maquis vs. Nazis and the Basques vs. Francoism; and (iii) one’s juridical right to self-defence.

Moreover, through Lavinia’s questions, Belli describes a critical subject, a person looking for other options, and the ordering of the narrative further emphasises the justice of their actions in Faguas/Nicaragua. She presents examples of struggles in which who is the oppressor and who is the oppressed is internalised by the Western reader, and then makes you effectively question whether the use of force is justified in these circumstances, to which most readers’ answer would be yes. She agrees reluctantly to the need for force in those cases, because it is still terrible to have to resort to violence, and
only then does she introduce Faguas, where the situation is so dire that the actions of the guerrillas are easy to understand (and not difficult, as in the previous cases).

Table 5.4: Shifts in the causal emplotment of the narrative justifying the armed struggle in TT *The Inhabited Woman* (1994)

Moreover, TT5.3 further emphasises the analysis above in several ways. Firstly, it reinforces a parallel between the guerrillas and self-defence by adding the word collective (which was not present in ST). This makes the binary even more obvious: if
one agrees that the individual has a right to self-defence, then so does the collective (in the form of guerrillas). Similarly, TT5.3 also introduces the word guerrillas as a translation of the Spanish muchachos. This contextualises the narrative strongly within a tradition of struggles for national liberation, but loses the tender undertones of ST5.3, where one cannot but imagine young boys facing the Great General – reincarnating a contemporary David facing Goliath. And finally, the TT highlights how easy it is to justify the guerrillas’ actions through the repetition of the structure “it is easy/es fácil”, which was not present in ST5.3, and it changes the modal verb “podía” (possibility) to “had to” (obligation). Whilst in ST5.3 the oppressive situation of Faguas allows you to choose violence to defend the poor, in TT5.3 the situation forces you to take a stand.

Lavinia, with the spirit of Itzá pulsing through her blood, begins her process of growing social awareness. But she does not turn to Felipe for answers, at least partly because he never encourages Lavinia’s further involvement in his activities; he is too comfortable having Lavinia in his own safe and quiet space. Instead, she turns to Flor, the female nurse that helped tend Sebastián’s wounds in Lavinia’s house. Flor is a fully active member of the movement but, as a woman, she sides with Lavinia (and ultimately with Belli) in questioning the attitude of self-professed revolutionary men, like Felipe, with regards to gender issues, as exemplified in Table 5.5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.5: Questioning the role of women within the revolution in <em>La mujer habitada</em> (1988)</th>
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**ST5.4:** “-Tu problema no es Felipe
- Yo sé – dijo Lavinia, defensiva – pero me parece que él tiene alguna responsabilidad, siendo como es, la persona más cercana a mí.
- Obviamente lo que él quiere es ‘reposo del guerrero’ – sonrió Flor – la mujer que lo espere y le caliente la cama, feliz de que su hombre luche por causas justas, apoyándolo en silencio. Si hasta el Ché Guevara decía, al principio, que las mujeres eran maravillosas cocineras y correos de la guerrilla, que ese era su papel… Esta lucha es larga.
- Pero yo no quiero ser solamente la ribera de su río – dijo Lavinia.
- Pues, si querés yo te puedo dar algunos materiales para que conozcas mejor qué es y qué pretende el Movimiento – dijo Flor – Así no tendrás que recurrir a él, si eso es lo que te inquieta; así vas a poder tomar tus propias decisiones. Así lo podrás esperar en la tal ribera de su río, con un arco y una flecha” (1988: 113)
Moreover, it is important to note not only how Lavinia is introduced to the Movement by a woman, but that there is also a clearly gendered perspective in the way Flor tells Lavinia about her own introduction to politics. By contrast to the positive role that her aunt played in Lavinia’s childhood, encouraging her to become an independent woman, Flor was “adopted” by her uncle, who as soon as she was in her teens made her his lover. As a response to her uncle’s lasciviousness, at university Flor slept with anyone who was willing. And the only one who was not willing was Sebastián, who confronted her and helped her realise that at some point she had mistaken her hatred towards her uncle with anger against herself (Belli, 1988: 114). He introduced her to the Movement, where she finally had to realise by herself that the Movement was not group therapy, that she could not use it to find a reason to live. At some point, she finally managed to heal herself: “Logró por fin, no sólo reconciliarse consigo misma, sino asumir una responsabilidad colectiva. ‘Si tan sólo para que ninguna madre campesina tenga que regalar a sus hijos a parientes ricos, creyendo que así lograrán hacerlos alguien’, dijo” (Belli, 1988: 115). Here, Belli is gendering the collective responsibility of revolutionary ideals. In Belli’s text women enter the Movement by the hand of other women or to change things for other women.

To summarise, in comparison to Belli’s memoir El país bajo mi piel (2001), La mujer habitada (1988) leaves less explicit cracks in her discourse of female subjectivity83, making it easier for her personal narrative of female subjectivity to circulate into the centre. However, Belli’s representation of women in this text, whilst subversive in the face of patriarchy, comes dangerously close to perpetuating certain

83 The notion of “cracks in the discourse” is introduced in Section 4.9, and borrowed from Palazón-Sáez (2006).
essentialising identities, such as the liberal feminist (Lavinia), the housewife (Sara) or the woman warrior (Itzá).

5.7. The Female Body and the Erotic

The erotic in _La mujer habitada_ (1988) has been frequently discussed by previous scholarship, including Alice Edwards (1995), Arturo Arias (1996), Carmen I. Pérez-Marín (1997), Silvia Lorente-Murphy (2001), Alana Reid (2010) and Vinodh Venkatesh (2013). Arias (1996) focuses on Lavinia’s erotic body, her proclivity towards exhibitionism and her visual enjoyment of her own body. The frequent references to the erotic body were at the time disrupting the traditional discursive practices of the Central American novel (Arias, 1996: 189). However, and despite being much more scandalous in the 1980s than in the 2000s, the references to the body that were made to disappear in the English translation of _El país bajo mi piel_ (2001) are here to stay in _The Inhabited Woman_ (1994). I suggest that the way in which the TT has clearly framed this book as fiction rather than autobiography made it less necessary to peripheralise the erotic. If anything, the corporeality of the women subject is intensified in TT through repetitive structures such as the ones I underline in Table 5.6.
Table 5.6: Lavinia’s fascination with her own erotic body

It is important to note how *La mujer habitada* (1988) does not limit the scope of the erotic to scenes of love-making, for instance between Lavinia and Felipe, or Itzá and Yarince. In fact, Reid (2010) claims that it is unfortunate that Edwards (1995) and Pérez-Marín (1997), the two authors that mention Audre Lorde’s seminal essay on the erotic, do so only in reference to these heterosexual relationships, even though Lorde advocates “understanding of the erotic that would veer away from the sexual act” (Reid, 2010: 70). This is even more ironic, when one notes how effective Belli’s characterisation of women’s relationship with their own erotic bodies is. This is not only the case with Lavinia, as discussed in Arias (1996), but Itzá also seems fascinated by her body and narrates it in detail, as seen in Table 5.7. One could argue that the example given in TT5.7 slightly undermines this idea by saying that “Yarince was furious when he caught me looking at myself,” which makes it sound as if that were a one-off event, in comparison with the sense of continuity implied by the imperfect past form in ST5.7.
ST5.6: “Cuando bajaba al río de aguas quietas, a traerles agua, esperaba con las piernas abiertas, que la superficie estuviera lisa, inmóvil, para mirar mi sexo: misteriosa se me hacía a veces la hendidura entre mis piernas, se parecía a algunas frutas, los labios carnosos y el centro, una delicada semilla rosada” (1988: 86)

TT5.6: “When I went down to the gently flowing river to get them water, I waited there with my legs open for the surface to become smooth and motionless so I could look at my sex. The cleft between my legs seemed mysterious to me, like a fruit with fleshy lips and in its centre, a delicate rosy seed” (1994: 91)

ST5.7: “Recordé la fascinación de los espejos. Con ellos lograron atrapar nuestra atención los españoles (…) ¿Qué puede fascinar más que verse a uno mismo por primera vez? ¿Saberse? Yarince se enfurecía cuando me sorprendía mirándome en el espejito. Pero hasta entonces, yo no sabía que era hermosa. Y me gustaba contemplarme” (1988: 59)

TT5.7: “I remembered being fascinated by mirrors. The Spaniards managed to trap our attention with them (…) What can be more fascinating than to see yourself for the first time? To see who you are? Yarince was furious when he caught me looking at myself in the little mirror. But until then I had not known I was beautiful. And I liked looking at myself” (1994: 53)

Table 5.7: Itzá’s fascination with her own body

As exemplified by Table 5.7 and Table 5.8, the use of reflections is critical to Belli’s practice of constructing an erotic body that is rooted in the performativity of the female character. In line with this, the ST5.11 excerpt is quite important in that it describes the day that Lavinia, having been introduced to the Movement and with Sebastián hidden in her house, goes to work and looks at her reflection so as to assure herself that her process of radicalisation would not be evident to anybody outside herself and, to a certain extent, not even to herself, since she has not yet made a conscious decision to get involved and act.
Table 5.8: The use of reflections in *La mujer habitada* (Belli, 1988)

Venkatesh (2013) highlights how the dialectic between the character and the reflection is not developed any further in the story and he claims that this is because Lavinia, who before getting involved with the Movement was “a lost and fragmented woman” (Venkatesh, 2013: 501), has now gained a new ideal of herself. Once again, this demonstrates all the ways in which, at the beginning of the book, Belli projects onto that fragmented woman a collection of prejudices against the Western liberal feminist, namely that they areas self-involved and disassociated with the pain of poor people, only to then see her evolve into a whole revolutionary subject. But what I find noteworthy when it comes to the causal emplotment organising Lavinia’s self-realisation as a female subject is that this evolution occurs not so much through her involvement with the Movement as through a series of intimate and, to a certain extent, homoerotic, ceremonies.

Sexual liberation was adopted as a key component of Western liberal feminism as a response to patriarchy’s repressive regulation of women’s sexuality. By engaging in sexual exploration, women sought to recuperate power over their own bodies, and this idea is clearly represented by Lavinia at the beginning of the book. The way in which she...
derives pleasure not only from her heterosexual relationships but also from causing scandal by engaging in activities that are not always socially accepted (because of her status as an upper-class woman) is highlighted throughout the book. And this is not limited to the way in which she deploys her body and sexuality; there are also explicit textual references to the pleasure that she derives from imagining what certain members of her class would think of her revolutionary activities if they knew about them.

In fact, when she is finally introduced to the Movement by Flor, she decides to keep this a secret from Felipe, at least in part because she enjoys the personal power that this secret gives her within the love relationship. And in contrast to these power-plays with Felipe, and his distance, “Flor draws Lavinia into the revolution via a nurturing and intimate relationship” (Reid, 2010: 68). In line with this, the ceremony in which Lavinia takes her oath as a member of the Movement, the ceremony by which she marries herself to the Movement, takes the form of a rite of passage between two women, standing in opposition to a heterosexual marriage. And in the words of Reid (2010: 70), “[this homoerotic ceremony] allows for a more happy marriage between feminist and Marxist ideals.” After that day, Flor will be going underground, and in response to Lavinia’s anguish, she promises her: “Me vas a seguir teniendo. Mientras tengás al Movimiento, me vas a seguir teniendo, así que va a ser por mucho tiempo…” (Belli, 1988: 239). This demonstrates how Lavinia’s involvement in the Movement is strongly tied to other women, to her profound and intimate connection to Flor and to Itzá – the Mayan woman inhabiting her.

Itzá’s vision of life is clearly cyclical: in anticipation of her union with Lavinia she states, “Espero que me lleve a sus labios. Espero que se consuman los ritos, se unan los círculos” (Belli, 1988: 52). The comments relate back to the preface of La mujer habitada (1988), which was removed in the English translation, as included in Table 5.2. Moreover, the fusion of Itzá’s spirit and Lavinia’s body can be considered a second
intimate and erotic ceremony – “Atravesé rosadas membranas. Entré como una cascada ámbar en el cuerpo de Lavinia” (Belli, 1988: 55) –, the sensuality of the descriptions bringing to mind images of penetration/ejaculation.

Itzá causes thoughts to enter Lavinia’s consciousness, words to come out of her mouth. She even instigates some reactions and physical movements in Lavinia, but she does not control her. Itzá says: “De extraña manera es mi creación. No soy yo. Ella no soy yo vuelta a la vida. No. Pero hemos convivido en la sangre; y el lenguaje de mi historia, que es también la suya, ha empezado a cantar en sus venas” (Belli,1988: 142). Here, the history that they share is not in Lavinia’s consciousness, but in her blood. Memory is materialised and gendered in the body of Lavinia. Moreover, Itzá’s understanding of Lavinia as her creation, as a means to perpetuate her own personal history, can be read as procreative desire. In a way, this could be a compensation for having to deny herself the possibility of motherhood in her past life.

As such, Itzá’s desire to live on in the body of Lavinia without actually procreating “entangles the maternal and the erotic” (Reid, 2010: 71). This productive homoerotic bond has also been acknowledged, even if not developed, by Edwards (1995): “El contacto entre Itzá y Lavinia es fértil, creando mujeres que se fecundan entre sí, en una relación que no requiere de los hombres. Itzá penetra su cuerpo, adivina sus pensamientos e influye sus acciones de un modo que su amante, Felipe, nunca pudo lograr” (Edwards, 1995: 46). And Reid (2010) moves Edwards’ analysis forward by arguing that unlike under ordinary circumstances, where reproduction may be understood as a “consequence of the organised expropriation of the sexuality of women,” when it occurs outside of heterosexuality, reproduction “is instead a self-sufficient creation that circumvents the social dynamics and power relationships that keep women in a subordinated role” (Reid, 2010: 74).
5.7. Motherhood

The narratives discussed above have their counterparts in *El país bajo mi piel* (2001): Belli takes her oath as a Sandinista with Leana, both of them being pregnant at the time, and she also develops and extends the revolutionary public narrative of the single mother onto her own personal narrative of motherhood as essentially empowering, as can be seen in Table 4.15 and Table 4.16. However, *The Inhabited Woman* (Belli, 1994) does not put in practice the same peripheralising strategies found in my analysis of *The Country under My Skin* (2002) when it comes to the erotic, Belli’s personal narratives of motherhood and female subjectivity.

I suggest that this might be explained in terms of location of the text and/or in terms of genre conventions. Belli’s use of fiction allows certain subversive narratives of sexual radicalism and motherhood to escape peripheralisation. By framing her narratives within the tradition of magical realism, the eroticism of a fusion between Itzá and Lavinia becomes acceptable, for example. On the other hand, in terms of location, that the publisher was an independent and socially aware non-profit such as Curbstone Press would have had an impact on the practice of translation.

In terms of Belli’s personal narrative of motherhood, as developed throughout her literary career, there is an interesting addition foregrounded by *La mujer habitada* (1988), one that situates this text in the tradition of other women’s *testimonios* such as *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú* (1984).\(^{84}\) Both protagonists of *La mujer habitada*, Lavinia and Itzá, make a conscious decision not to have children, a decision that would put into question their contribution to society in the most traditional of senses. In Lavinia’s case, her decision not to have children comes in the first place from her need for independence (she wants to study, focus on her work and on herself) and then from her decision to give

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\(^{84}\) For a discussion of Menchú’s narrative of motherhood see Subsection 6.4.3.
herself to the armed struggle. For Itzá, and many women in her community, the decision stems from her desire not to provide the Spaniards with any future servants, as seen in Table 5.9

Table 5.9: Women deny themselves the possibility of motherhood en *La mujer habitada* (Belli, 1988)

Once again, Itzá’s voice frames the narrative at hand and authorises it, gives it weight. What in Lavinia appears as a passing desire, an idea coming out of nowhere, is then explained by Itzá in the context of the many women that have seen themselves in the same situation, that have denied themselves the possibility of motherhood. Here, not having children is represented as the ultimate sacrifice, the ultimate form of resistance against the oppressor.
Even if both protagonists deny themselves being a mother, the narrative of motherhood is still a prominent element in *La mujer habitada* (1988). As has been argued by Barbas-Rhoden (2000: 51), pro-Sandinista writers in Nicaragua rejected their immediate past, which had been discredited by the revolution, and searched instead for other materials to construct a new revolutionary and cultural identity. To establish this identity, they usually turned to their distant past. More specific to the authors in my data set, they recognise a lack of a female tradition, a gendered past, and as such they find the creation of female subjectivity through their texts essential. In Belli’s case, the roots of Lavinia’s rebellion are linked to those of her indigenous ancestor Itzá. In parallel to this, Lavinia’s relationship with her mother is estranged. Lavinia lacks a mother, just as women traditionally lack a place in historic accounts. The figure of Itzá is appropriated by Belli and textually woven into the narrative as not only Lavinia’s mother but also the mother of the Movement, just as Sandino had been appropriated by Carlos Fonseca in his creation of the FSLN (Palazón-Sáez, 2010: 110).

5.8. Selective Appropriation and the Feminine Question in the Public Narratives of the Sandinista Revolution

One of the ways, in which this fictionalised *testimonio* differs from other cultural productions of Sandinista Nicaragua, is the criticism it directs at a revolutionary movement that still poses difficulties for the involvement of women as a result of it favouring and privileging the heroism of men. From the perspective of the women involved in the Sandinista movement, the progress of feminism ran (or at least should have run) alongside that of the revolutionary project.

For the political left, the Sandinista revolution was once a worldwide symbol of social change, democracy and gender equality (Molyneux, 1985). But this view now
outdated and recent scholarship, such as Silke Heumann (2014), revisits the historical relationship between *Sandinismo* and feminism in looking for a way to explain the increasing antagonism between them. Unlike other socialist regimes, the Sandinistas created a combined state-led and private-based economy with free elections and parliamentary democracy, and they adopted one of the most progressive constitutions in the world. The guerrilla organisation “had more women fighters than any other guerrilla movement in Latin America at the time, and once in power, they involved women in the tasks of the revolution” (Heumann, 2014: 290), opening up to them spheres such as education, work and political participation.

Legal reforms included parity in family law and the possibility of unilateral divorce. Even though abortion law was not liberalised, there was access to abortion when this was considered to be a therapeutic alternative, in cases where the life of the mother and/or the foetus were in danger (Kampwirth, 1998). Moreover, even though the Sandinistas were never supportive of sexual diversity, they did not persecute people on the basis of their sexual orientation – unlike other socialist governments such as the Cuban and Soviet regimes (Heumann, 2014: 291). Thus, there were many reasons to believe that this political project was going to bring about gender equality, but as Heumann (2014) points out, thirty years after the revolution this expectation has considerably changed.

In the Nicaragua of today, the Sandinistas of Daniel Ortega – who Belli openly opposes in her writing and interviews – regained power in 2006. Kampwirth (2008) and Heumann (2014) denounce that even though they maintain a rhetoric of revolution and anti-imperialist defence of the poor, they have actively supported the free trade agreement, built an alliance with the political right and the conservative sectors of the Church, and openly pursued anti-feminist politics. “The most dramatic expression of their increasingly open hostility toward feminism was the elimination of therapeutic
abortion in Nicaragua and the subsequent persecution of feminist leaders” (Heumann, 2014: 291).

In this context, a comparison between the promoted narratives in *La mujer habitada* (1988) and *El país bajo mi piel* (2001) serves to foreground: firstly the relationship between feminism and *Sandinismo*; and secondly the relationship between Belli’s personal narratives of political and sexual radicalism, with public narratives of Western feminism. I have already described how Belli negotiated between Marxist and feminist narratives through her construction and fusion of female characters. And I have argued that Lavinia’s development as a character operates as Belli’s means to reflect on Western feminist narratives and their productivity when applied to the Nicaraguan context.

I now turn to the relationship between Lavinia and Felipe, and to a certain extent Sebastián, since I believe here is where Belli has developed her main criticism against the Sandinista movement and its shortcomings with regards to gender constructs. Belli notes in her memoir that little attention has been paid to the amorous life of male revolutionaries, but that the private life of women in the revolution was a different matter; and she challenges her readers to think about sexuality as a necessary part of the revolutionary process. Her explicit use of the body and the erotic in her texts works towards that goal, as it does embodying the (un)happy marriage between marxism and feminism in the relationship between Felipe and Lavinia.

In line with this Table 5.10 exemplifies how Lavinia reads the documents on the Movement Flor had given her as she thinks about its ability to influence sustainable change. It is important to note here the organisation of the list of items the Movement is looking to change. Firstly, the FSLN’s emphasis on literacy and changing the cultural

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85 Belli’s personal narratives of women’s agency and their (lack of) resonance with public narratives of Western feminism are discussed in more detail in Section 4.8.
dynamics of the country has been discussed by scholars such as Palazón-Sáez (2010: 99), who underlines the importance granted to education and culture in the revolutionary process by one of the icons of Sandinismo, Carlos Fonseca. Secondly, I argue that by including these parentheses after the agrarian reform and women’s emancipation, Belli structures the narrative in a way that activates the following comparison. In the same manner that the agrarian reform, announced by the Great General86, was not going to improve the lives of the poor farmers, because the change was not running deep enough; the attitudes of the self-professed “new men” needed to change if there was going to be any hope for a real instance of women’s liberation.

Table 5.10: Lavinia questions the Movement’s potential to bring about real change

And so, even after learning of Lavinia’s participation in the Movement as a full member, Felipe refuses to see her as an equal, as a compañera. In fact, the use of the label compañero/a in The Inhabited Woman (1994) further emphasises this question as exemplified by Table 5.11. In contrast with my findings regarding this same label in Belli’s memoir.87

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86 Belli refers to the dictator of Faguas as the “Gran General/Great General”, a fictionalisation of Somoza in Nicaragua.
87 This issue is discussed further in Section 4.10, in regard to Table 3.6.
ST5.14 and ST5.15 demonstrate how Sebastián consistently calls Lavinia “compañera”, right from the start, and TT maintains the Spanish label. However, TT does not always opt for zero-translation of this term. Firstly, TT5.16 is just one example of how the English translator prevents Lavinia from using the label “compañero/a,” when she is not yet part of the Movement. This changes once she becomes a member. Then the English translation goes further, and represents Felipe as refusing to use the label compañera, when he is talking to Lavinia or referring to her, as exemplified by TT5.17.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>ST5.14</th>
<th>TT5.14</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-No se preocupe compañera – dijo, hablando por primera vez, mirándola – no me le voy a morir en su casa – y sonrió casi triste (Belli, 1988: 63)</td>
<td>-Don’t worry compañera, he said, speaking for the first time, looking at her. I’m not going to die on you in your house, and he smiled almost sadly (Belli, 1994: 64)</td>
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<th>ST5.15</th>
<th>TT5.15</th>
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<tr>
<td>-Buenos días compañera – dijo. (Insistía en llamarla compañera) -Buenos días – dijo ella - ¿Cómo se siente? (Belli, 1988: 75)</td>
<td>-Good morning, compañera! He said. (He insisted in calling her compañera) - Good morning, she replied. How are you feeling? (Belli, 1994: 78)</td>
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<th>ST5.16</th>
<th>TT5.16</th>
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<tr>
<td>-Siento mucho lo de sus compañeros. -Ellos murieron como héroes – dijo Sebastián, mirándolo seria y dulcemente – pero eran personas como vos y como yo (Belli, 1988: 88)</td>
<td>-I’m sorry about your friends. -They died like heroes, Sebastián said, looking at her with an expression that was serious as well as kind (Belli, 1994: 93)</td>
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<tr>
<th>ST5.17</th>
<th>TT5.17</th>
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<tr>
<td>-Sós compañera del Movimiento – dijo Felipe. ¿No decís que estás segura de eso? (Belli, 1988: 211)</td>
<td>-You’re a member of the Movement, Felipe said. Didn’t you say you were sure of that? (Belli, 1994: 222)</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Table 5.11: Labelling as compañero/a in ST and TT

As exemplified by Table 5.12 and unknown to Lavinia, Felipe had prevented her from taking part in the operation that was going to seise the house of General Vela. But the night of the 19th of December, a fatally wounded Felipe gets to Lavinia’s house. He had been shot by the driver of the taxi that he was trying to seise in preparation for the operation that was going to take place on the 20th. Ironically, it had all been a
misunderstanding, he did not identify himself as a member of the Movement (with whom the taxi drivers were collaborators), and the driver shot him mistaking him for a thief.

The very same driver tried to help him by taking him to Lavinia’s house, but it was too late.

**ST5.18:** “Escúchame bien. Mañana es la acción. La acción es en la casa de Vela. Nos vamos a tomar la casa de Vela. Es un comando de trece personas. Yo soy parte de ese comando… eras… - dijo con una media sonrisa; hablaba con firmeza como si hubiese acumulado fuerzas para hablarle, las últimas fuerzas que le quedaban – Cada persona es imprescindible. Quiero que tomés mi lugar. Vos conocés bien la casa. Ya no hay tiempo para que nadie más la conozca tan bien como es necesario. Quiero que seas vos quien tome mi lugar. Nadie más. Sólo podés hacerlo. Además te lo debo, porque fui yo quien me opuse a tu participación… - respiró cerrando los ojos; los abrió de nuevo – te lo debo. Vos podés hacerlo. Lo has demostrado. Vos podés hacerlo (…) No vas a dejar que te digan que no (…) Sos una mujer valiente, ¿sabés? – dijo Felipe, con una voz delgada, un sonido de viento a través de un desfiladero.

**Table 5.12:** Felipe admits that it was him who prevented Lavinia from participating in the operation

And just like that, another circular narrative is realised. Lavinia learns of Felipe’s revolutionary activities *out of necessity*, when he brings a wounded Sebastián to her house, and she gets to participate in the final operation *out of necessity*, when Felipe manages to get to her house just to die in her arms. Apart from the importance of noting how the structure of the story keeps emphasising the idea of life as a cycle, which has also been foregrounded by the epigraph and dedication in the preface; I argue that this structure is being strategically used to criticise the role of women within *Sandinismo*. In fact, Lavinia explicitly reflects on how Felipe only asked her to participate out of necessity, how women would only enter history out of the necessity of men as seen in Table 5.13. This is emphasised by the repetition of the term “necessity” both in ST5.19 and TT5.19.
Table 5.13: Women would enter history out of necessity

To summarise, the fact that Lavinia’s battles mirror those of Itzá hundreds of years before also adds emphasis to the circular structure of the narrative. Both Itzá and Lavinia have to struggle against gender constraints and for the liberation of her people, and they both die doing so. It would then seem that history repeats itself, and social inequalities based on gender, ethnicity, race or class are a constant threat. Whilst still championing the armed struggle as the only alternative to the oppression and dictatorships that were destroying Central America, Belli’s fictionalised testimonio (1988) was already critical of the ways the revolutionary ideal had not been realised in Nicaragua, something that will become more obvious later in her memoir (2001).

Nevertheless, La mujer habitada (1988) ends in a triumphant note, with a poem that sings to the strength of Nicaragua and those who fight injustice as seen in Moreover, the process of labelling in this poem activates some of the narratives discussed in this chapter, such as the cyclical nature of life, the importance of the body, particularly the female body and its capacity to produce life. This is present in both the ST and its English translation, but I argue that the ST is more effective in its embodying nature and gendering as female, with a more constant use of verbs such as fecundar: “su cuerpo abona campos fecundos” or “nos fecundarán eternamente” vs. “her body fertilises the rich fields” or “they will make us fruitful forever.”
sobre el grito.
Los disparos ataron apagando los gritos quebrados del niña. Lo que de su Mafriem rompió el aire un segundo antes de que Vela disparara, penándose encendido, descargando el escucho odio de su contacto, estrenando por altos para matar.
Lavinia sintió el golpe en su pecho, el color mordiéndola. Vio al general Vela aún de pie frente a ella, sosteniéndose, disparando, salpicado de sangre su uniforme, la mirada, agua regía, veneno.
Aún bajo los disparos de Vela, ella recuperó el equilibrio, y llano, sin pensar en nada, viendo imágenes dispares de su vida empezar a correr como venados desbocados frente sus ojos, sintiendo los impactos, el dolor almacenándose en su cuerpo, apretó el arma contra sí y terminó de descargar todo el magazín.
Vio a Vela caer derribado, derrumbado, y sólo entonces permitió que la muerte la alcanzara.
Todo había sucedido en segundos. Flor y la «Ocho», alentadas por el grito del niño, alcanzarían llegar en el momento en que se decidía la contienda.
Instantes después apareció Sebastián. El mediodía se había llevado la propuesta.
Se negaría.
«Eureka» había salido bien.
Mañana todo habría terminado.

La caza está en silencio. El viento sobre mis ramas apenas parece el aliento de nubes sobre el fuego apagándose. Estoy sola y en vilo.
He cumplido un ciclo: mi destino de semilla sembrada, el destino de mis antepasados.
Lavinia está ahora hierba y fulanos. Su espíritu dudó en el viento de los tordos. Su cuerpo ahora campos fecundos.
Desde su sangre vi el tránsito de los ximiquis viscosos.
Recuperaron a sus hermanos. Vencieron sobre el odio con serenidad y terca de ollaje ardientes.
La luz está encendida. Nadie podrá apagarla. Nadie
apagará el sonido de los tambores batientes.

Figure 5.8: Poem ending *La mujer habitada* (1988)
To conclude, in this (para)textual analysis of La mujer habitada (1988) and its English translation, I have demonstrated how Belli has made use of fictional elements in order to develop her personal narrative of female subjectivity. The process of self-awareness undertaken by the protagonist Lavinia helps Belli effectively negotiate between her personal feminist narratives and public narratives imported from western feminism. Lavinia’s involvement with the Movement, and her political radicalisation help along this process of self-awareness. And it has been noted that other female characters, particularly Itzá and Flor, encourage this process of and to a certain extent smooth over the tensions between Marxist and feminist narratives in the text.

At the beginning of the book Belli presents a very essentialising image of Lavinia that has been read as criticism to an elitist/bourgeois form of women’s emancipation,
disconnected to the material and cultural aspects of Central American countries. The evolution of Lavinia’s character throughout the story allows Belli to argue for a potential space of communication among different forms of feminism, something that is also present in her memoir, but has been unfortunately hindered by the English translation. Belli’s narration of the erotic and the body, that was disrupted in the translation of her memoir, has been translated into TT without major changes. It has been suggested that this could be explained in terms of location of the text and/or genre conventions.

Finally, the main particularity about this fictionalised testimonio within the Sandinista cultural production has been its ability to criticise the (un)happy union between revolutionary and feminist ideals. I have argued that the relationship between Felipe and Lavinia has been used as a paradigm to foreground these tensions.

5.9. Blurring Literary Genres in Claribel Alegría’s Luisa en el país de la realidad (1987a)

As was established in section 4.2, the work in prose by Alegría has received less critical attention than her poetry. To this day, the edited volume by Sandra Boschetto-Sandoval and Marcia P. McGowan (1994) and Antonio Velásquez (2002) are the only two critical works wholly dedicated to Alegría’s prose, and to this I add Linda Craft (1997) and Laura Barbas-Rhoden (2003) who dedicate one chapter to Alegría. This allows me to hypothesise that the hybridity of Luisa en el país de la realidad (1987a) has ultimately peripheralise its analysis within academic circles. Both Velasquez (2002) and Barbas-Rhoden (2003) have excluded this text from their data set. Velasquez (2002) in his introduction states that the decision not to study Luisa en el país de la realidad (1987a) has been a conscious one, for not considering it a novel, in spite of it being framed as such by its English translation (Velasquez, 2002: 6). More unfortunate is, in my opinion,
the omission of Barbas-Rhoden (2003) whose focus lies with gender and the
fictionalisation of history in the writings of four Central American Women, two elements
that, as this chapter demonstrates, are central to *Luisa en el país de la realidad* (1987a).

Craft (1997: 98) describes *Luisa en el país de la realidad* (1987a) as a “hybrid of
autobiography-testimonio-historical novel.” Even though, the cover of its English
translation describes this text as a novel as discussed in section 5.4, the author has
experimented with the narrative form, complicating its generic categorisation. In *Luisa
en el país de la realidad* (1987a) a third-person narrator follows, not chronologically, the
life anecdotes of Luisa, from the time she is seven years old till she reaches
grandmotherhood. These short vignettes of narrative are intercalated with poems
“creat[ing] a literary pastiche” (Craft, 1997: 99). Even though the third-person narrating
voice refers to Luisa, the autobiographical dimension of the text becomes evident for
example in the name of Luisa’s husband, Bud Flakoll. Moreover, whilst the vignettes in
prose are narrated in an omniscient third-person, the poems are generally written in a
first person that at times even inserts Alegría in the text in an explicit manner, as seen in
Table 5.14.

| ST5.20: (...) y escuchar mi silencio
| que madura
| y titila en mis labios
| y se rompe en mi lengua
| y escuchar a la tierra
| que respira
| y la tierra es mi cuerpo
| y yo soy el cuerpo
| de la tierra
| Claribel (Alegría, 1987a: 24)

Table 5.14: Poetic voice as explicitly autobiographical in *Luisa en el país de la realidad* (1987a)

Arias (1994; 2007) notes the changing roles of Central American writers in the
1960s. He claims that the new literature emerging in the 1960s made a significant break
with the traditional discourse of the 1950s which had been strongly influenced by a
Soviet brand of social realism. The emergence of the Cuban revolution in 1959 and the apparition of guerrillas in Central America in the early 1960s created a divide between the old and the new left. A new generation of writers, critical of the soviet model but still committed to fight for social and economic transformations in their homelands, appeared and *Cenizas de Izalco* (Alegría and Flakoll, 1966) became the first of a series of novels that were not only politically transgressive but linguistically innovative too (Arias, 2007).

Arias (1994) also notes that for Salvadorean writers like Dalton and Alegría, these changes encouraged them to question their own role as intellectuals. Writing became for them a means to escape their original class and redefine their identity in alliance with the emerging Central American revolutions. But this also meant for Alegría, as an upper-class intellectual married to a US citizen, a need to question their own ability to speak for a group that they did not fully represent. Arias (1994: 36) highlights how Alegría chose not to “speak for” this group but to facilitate their narratives, through testimonios such as *No me agarran viva* (1983). In addition to this, I suggest that this process of self-definition, that for Alegría meant finding her own voice in a dialogue between her political position allied with the Left and the reality of violence in her homeland, had an impact in the genres the author chose to carry out this task. If Arias (1994, 36) discusses her choice of mediated testimonio in these terms, I turn to *Luisa en el país de la realidad* (1987a) and Alegría’s use of fiction, generic hybridity and fragmented narrativity to study the ways in which she negotiates her position.

In 1994, Arias was already highlighting how Central American fiction writers were opting “for a style of writing in which the ideological challenge is to force readers to change their reading practices” (Arias, 1994: 37). Here Arias is referring to Alegría and Flakoll’s first novel *Cenizas de Izalco* (1966), but I believe that the same can be
applied to testimonios, and other forms of fictionalised life writing included in my data set. In line with this, *Luisa en el país de la realidad* (1987a) challenges reading practices and genre conventions by blurring the boundaries between prose and poetry, the personal and the political, and the factual and the fictive. In fact McGowan (1994: 118) claims that *Luisa en el país de la realidad* (1987a) is not only an autobiography, but a peculiarly female one, not only in the issues it confronts but also in its form. As established in section 5.3, formal experimentation has been considered one of the elements that give specificity to women’s life writing in regards to their male counterparts. Unlike men’s autobiographies that are most often chronological, directional and possessed by a linear narrative, women’s autobiographies are often “disconnected, fragmentary or organised into self-sustained units rather than connecting chapters.” (McGowan, 1994: 118).

Boschetto-Sandoval (1994) describes *Luisa en el país de la realidad* (1987a) as a quasi-testimonial novel “that attempts to invent a linguistic structure a linguistic structure that will reach out and accommodate areas of experience (both personal and political) normally inaccesible to language” (Boschetto-Sandoval, 1994: 98). McGowan (1987) recorded in an interview that Alegría admitted that “though some people call it a novel, I don’t know what to call it; it is a very special book.” In the context of this thesis, I argue that this text’s active refusal to being categorised can be read, in line with its radical content, as a practice of resistance. And for purposes of identification, I have chosen to call it a testimonial collage, a term that I believe highlights both the testimonial dimension of the text and its hybridity.
5.10. Resonance between Personal and Public Narratives of Motherhood and Female Subjectivity

Boschetto-Sandoval (1994) analyses this testimonial collage as a feminist reading lesson, and she focuses in the intended confusion that this text causes in the readers. She claims that the reader is meant to be unsettled by this collage, “just as we are meant to be unsettled by feminist criticism which seeks to shake up critical communities that do not acknowledge the excluded margins” (Boschetto-Sandoval, 1994: 98). This relates back to Arias’ understanding (1994) of this text as challenging reading practices. I concur then that this text is challenging readers’ expectations by refusing to adapt to the genericness feature of narrativity and preventing them from easily making sense of what they are reading. Moreover, I argue that, although done in a much more experimental manner, it is possible to draw a connection between Alegría’s strategy and Menchú’s explicit silences and secrets within the text as discussed in section 6.4.1. But in contrast with Menchú’s strategic use of frame ambiguity in her narration of violence and torture, this text’s resistance to their readers resides in its generic instability and its use of fiction and poetry to bear testimony.\(^{88}\)

*Luisa en el país de la realidad* (1987a) parallels women’s testimonios in that the “self ultimately achieves its identity as an extension of the collective” (Sommer, 1988: 108). Here the Western cult of individualism is replaced with a collective consciousness, and therefore Alegría’s focus is not in the creation of an individual self, but rather in the construction of the female self as multiply oppressed and with a political identity that can never be divorced for these conditions of oppression. In that sense, this collage of memories, fragmented stories and poems allows Alegría to “stand up among” Central American women rather than “standing in for them” (Sommer, 1988: 112).

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\(^{88}\) See Section 5.13.
Alegría’s gendering of history and of the national struggle for liberation is evident in this testimonial collage, as it is her use of metonymy which allows her to represent the plural, not because it “replaces the group, but because the speaker is a distinguished part of the group” (Boschetto-Sandoval, 1994: 103). In this context, Luisa en el país de la realidad (1987) challenges the readers to recognise relationships between very “excentric feminisms”, such as the one displayed by la loca Pastora in “La loca de Grande Armée.” In this vignette, the third-person narrator tells us how Luisa always felt nostalgia when she saw “the prostitute of the Grande Armée” preaching to the automobiles waiting in the traffic light till one night when she was coming back home from the movies with Bud, “se acordó de pronto de la loca Pastora que con ojos desorbitados y el bastón en alto, predicaba la desigualdad social en las esquinas polvorrientas de Santa Ana” (1987a: 114). Or the radicalism displayed by Manuel’s crazy grandmother, in “La abuelita y el Puente de Oro.”

The above-mentioned vignette illustrates Alegría’s use of orality in her collage, as a way to reinforce the testimonial dimension of the text. The story presents a mostly unmediated account of a conversation between Luisa and Manuel. As seen in Table 5.15, TT5.21 adds information that was not present in ST5.21 and that helps to contextualise the anecdote for the Anglophone reader. Even though this rests some immediacy to the dialogue, the English translation is otherwise recovering the marks of the orality present in the original. Moreover, TT5.21’s description of the Golden Bridge works along the original narrative, reinforcing its criticism to the corruption of the Salvadorean government and the burden this takes on the general population. Another way in which the story is contextualised is by translating the more general “guerra” into the more specific “civil war.”
ST5.21: Manuel tenía una cantidad infinita de anécdotas acerca de su abuela loca que tenía una choza y un terrenito a medio kilómetro del Puente de Oro. -Está loca pero muy emprendedora – sonrió-, estaba orgullosa de su gran puente colgado sobre el Lempa. “Mi puentecito,” le decía. Manuel era dirigente de una organización de campesinos salvadoreños que habían venido de Europa a dar una serie de charlas. - ¿Qué tenía de loca? – preguntó Luisa. - Bueno, desde que prendió la guerra, el ejército puso retenes en cada extremo del puente para protegerlo. A mi abuela se le ocurrió que iba a hacer fortuna sirviéndole de cocinera a la tropa (…) - Muy enérgica, pero de loca nada – observó Luisa. - La locura era que les cobraba tan barato por una comida tan rica y tan abundante, que no ganaba nada. Por si eso fuera poco, después de que los compas “volaran su puente” se le ocurrió teñirse el pelo de colorado. - ¿Cómo? – lo miró Luisa incrédula (…) (Alegría, 1987a: 125)

TT5.21: Manuel had an endless store of anecdotes about his crazy grandmother who owned a small hut on a trip of land half a kilometre from the Golden Bridge. “She was crazy, but a very active old lady,” he grinned reminiscently, “and terribly proud of her huge bridge spanning the Lempa River. ‘My little bridge’ she used to call it.”

Everybody else in El Salvador called it the “Golden Bridge,” because with contractors’ kickbacks to high government officials and inflated materials and labour estimates, it had cost the Salvadorean taxpayers three or four times what it should have. Manuel was the leader of the Salvadorean peasant organisation, who had been invited to Europe on a speaking tour.

-Why do you say she was crazy? Luisa asked
- “After the civil war started, the army stationed troop units at either end of the bridge to protect it and to control traffic crossing it. It occurred to Granny that she could make a fortune cooking for the troops (…) “Very energetic, as you say, but she doesn’t sound crazy.”

“She was crazy,” Manuel insisted, “because she only charged them for the cost of the food she cooked and she didn’t earn a penny for all that work.”

“Patriotic, maybe?” Luisa ventured.

“Maybe” Manuel lifted a shoulder, “but as if that weren’t enough, what did occur to her to do after the compas blew up the bridge? She went out and dyed her hair red, that’s what.”

Table 5.15: Selective appropriation and marks of orality in TT Luisa in Realityland (1987b)

This story is also an example of Alegría’s use of humour and irony to contest the oppressive violence of El Salvador. Manuel goes on to tell Luisa that there was a surprise attack before the guerrillas blew up the bridge. One of them was killed, and the guards found on him a plan of the defensive trenches, with the location of machineguns and the
number of troops on both ends. So a few days later, a lady in the market told Manuel’s granny that the guards were looking for her. And that was why she dyed her hair red.

When the guards came to the hut, she told them that the old lady they were looking for was gone. Table 5.16 showcases how Alegria plays with the readers’ expectations for whom believing that Manuel’s grandmother is just a poor old lady is easy, and turns them upside down when she ends up being an active and essential participant of the guerrilla movement.

**Table 5.16: Irony as a form of resistance in *Luisa en el país de la realidad* (1987a)**

- Soy la respetable dueña de una casa de placer en Suchitoto – les respondió – pero con los subversivos hostigando el cartel constantemente se me acabó la clientela y tuve que jubilarme. Así es la guerra – suspiró.  
Luisa y Manuel se echaron a reír y Manuel prosiguió:  
- La historia no termina allí. Unas semanas después me encontraba en un campamento a la orilla del Lempa, cuando veo venir a una abuelita pelirroja remando fuerte contra la corriente en una lancha llena de canastas.  
- Vendo jocotes, papaya limones, naranja dulce, ¿Quién compra? – pregonaba.  
- Hola mamá Tancho – le saludó el responsable. Como no sabía que era mi abuela me dijo:  
- Esa es la vieja que nos facilitó los planos para el ataque al Puente de Oro. Le ayudamos a amarrar la lanchita debajo de un árbol y me abrazó quejándose.  
- Ay, Memito – me dijo – que cada día esos babosos me hacen la vida más difícil. Desde que volaron el puente todos los días tengo que venir remando hasta aquí.  
El jefe guerrillero le preguntó riéndose:  
- ¿Y qué más nos traes mamá Tancho?  
Ella quitó una capa de mangos de una de las canastas y siguió cantando con voz de pregonera: Granadas de fragmentación, cartuchos para G-3, obuses de mortero 81, ¿quién me compra? (1987a: 126-7) |

Dark humour and irony are a central part of this testimonial collage. This is explicitly acknowledged by the author in the vignette “El Estanque,” that describes one of Luisa’s dreams. Luisa and her mother were both in a pool with two statues, one had a garland around its neck and the other had a serpent. When Luisa asked about it, her mother answered “El humor y el dolor. No lo olvides nunca,” and she vanished (Alegría, 1987a: 146). Overall, I argue that these ironic anecdotes work in *Luisa en el país de la realidad* (1987a) as a form of counterpropaganda, to negate a general assumption that
women have not had a central role in history. This quest to recuperate a gendered past and present is not emphasised only by the prose vignettes but also by poems such as “La playa” (Alegría, 1987a: 61) as seen in Table 5.17.

McGowan (1994: 121) claims that one of the most innovative aspects of *Luisa en el país de la realidad* (1987a) is that although the entire collage serves as *testimonio* of the horrors lived by the Salvadorean people during the civil war, the first-person narration occurs only within the poetry, rather than in the prose. As explained by Alegría in her preface to ST, poetry has been always dictated to Luisa by the illiterate Gipsy that inhabits her dreamscape, a character that comes and goes, but whose presence can be traced back to Luisa/Alegría’s childhood. In a way, the relationship between Luisa and the Gipsy operates paralleling that between the subjects of *testimonio* and the intellectuals that produced the final text.

It is therefore quite unfortunate that the English translation has not included Alegría’s preface as seen in Figure 5.10, Figure 5.11 and Figure 5.12. I believe that this preface is rather effective if one is to read *Luisa en el país de la realidad* (1987a) as a *testimonio*, without resting importance to Alegría use of fiction. Here, the subaltern speaking is an inhabitant of Alegría’s dream-world and the transcriber is Alegría’s alter ego Luisa. Moreover, the narrative appears further authorised by Cortázar, Alegría’s good friend and a big name in Latin American literature.
Una mañana de julio estaba Luisa en la playa y junto a ella distraída se encontraba la gitana. Ximena se acercó llorando. Sus primos le habían torcido un dedo porque no quería seguir acarreándoles arena. Luisa trató de consolarla sobándole el dedito y diciéndole cualquier cosa. La gitana se echó a reír, la llamó a su lado y le dijo:

No ha sido nada, ven, voy a contarte un cuento si no lloras (…) Hace mucho tiempo, le dijo mientras la sentaba en su regazo allá en la China les ataban los pies a las mujeres todo el cuerpo crecía sólo el pie se quedaba allí preso entre las vendas y las pobres mujeres casi no podían caminar (…) No es que fueran inútiles es que así las querían sus maridos sus padres sus hermanos un objeto de lujo o una esclava. Eso sucede aún en todo el mundo no son los pies los que atan es la mente, Ximena. Y hay mujeres que aceptan y mujeres que no, déjame que te cuente de Rafaela Herrera con tambores, con cohete con sábanas ardiendo, espantó nada menos que a Lord Nelson tuvo miedo Lord Nelson creyó que el pueblo entero se había sublevado (llegaba de Inglaterra a invadir Nicaragua) y regresó a su patria derrotado. Tu dedito torcido es como ser mujer tienes que usarlo mucho y verás cómo sirve (…) (1987a: 61-3)

That’s nothing to cry over, come here, I’ll tell you a story if you stop crying the story happened in China (…) A long time ago, I said as I settled her on my lap, far away in China they bound women’s feet their bodies went on growing only their feet were imprisoned beneath the bandages and the poor women could hardly walk (…) It’s not that they were useless it’s that their husbands their fathers their brothers wanted them like that a luxury object or a slave. This still happens all around the world it’s not that their feet are bound it’s their minds, Ximena. And there are women who accept and others who don’t. Let me tell you about Rafaela Herrera: with drums and firecrackers and flaming sheets she frightened none other than Lord Nelson. Lord Nelson was afraid the thought the whole town has risen up (he came from England to invade Nicaragua) and returned home defeated. Your twisted thumb is like being a woman you have to use it a lot and you’ll see how well it heals (…) (1987b: 50-1)
As seen in Table 5.17, ST5.23 introduces the poem “La Playa” by telling the reader that Luisa and the Gipsy were in the beach when Ximena came to them crying because her cousins had twisted her thumb. In ST, it is the Gipsy that to get her to stop crying tells Ximena a story. TT5.23 has made that introduction disappear, and makes it seem like Luisa is telling Ximena the story to console her. This is one of the instances in which the English translation has lost the ability of the original to experiment with the permeability between the fictive and the factual. Since, unlike the Anglophone reader, the Spanish reader cannot but wonder how the Gipsy can be telling Ximena a story if she only exists in Luisa’s dreams.

Ultimately, the poem “La Playa” is also a beautiful example of Alegría’s quest to gender history, bringing to the fore the figure of Rafaela Herrera. In this context, the translation of the last stance included in Table 5.17 “and you’ll see how well it heals” rests strength to the original representation of female subjectivity, in which Rafaela Herrera serves as an example of one of those women who did not accept men bounding their mind. With that, the Gipsy offers Ximena a gendered past and she explains to her how women have been marginalised due to their gender. She will have to struggle against these constraints, but at the end of the day she can do anything.

In Figure 5.11 Alegría recalls how the Gipsy stopped visiting her for a few years when she became a mother. The Gipsy said “te has puesto bobo, solo de niños hablas, no me interesas más” (Alegría, 1987a: 10). I argue that if one reads the Gipsy’s as an embodiment of Alegría’s literary creativity, and as such her ability to serve her people through her writing, this comment serves as the author’s brief reflection on the most limiting aspect of motherhood. In this preface Luisa becomes a mother, and (at least for a time) she also becomes disconnected from her own creative self, too busy thinking and “talking about children.”
Otherwise, in this text the maternal narrative parallels that of Belli’s texts as discussed in Section 4.9 and 5.6. For example, the “single mother” narrative comes back in *Luisa en el país de la realidad* (1987a) with an ironic twist, embedded in a subversion of catholic myths. In the vignette entitled “La primera comunion” (Alegría, 1987a: 47-8), the narrator explains how Luisa’s mother, Chabe and all her aunts have told her that this is going to be the most important day of her life, and thus she needed to make some sacrifice first.

When she is getting ready to go to bed, Luisa asks Chabe if it is true that the day of her first communion she will be able to ask for anything she wants. Chabe agrees, but she highlights that it can only be one thing so that it should be something important: “que Dios le conserve muchos años a sus papás, que usted se conserve pura, que sea sanita y buena” (Alegría, 1987a: 47). In contrast with Chabe’s suggestions, that would circumscribe Luisa within the patriarchal narrative by which women are to be pure and passive, Table 5.18 showcases how Luisa asks for her future husband to die as soon as she becomes a mother.

Table 5.18: Subverting Catholic myths and the narrative of “the single mother” in *Luisa en el país de la realidad* (1987a)

| ST5.24 | “Luisa se arrodilló, abrió ligeramente la boca y recibió la hostia. Con la cabeza baja y las manos juntas sobre el pecho volvió a su reclinatorio. Se sentía levemente mareada. ‘Es ahora, ahorita que hay que pedir tu deseo’ le dijo una voz interior. ‘Niño Jesús’ le dijo Luisa en voz baja, ‘yo no me quiero casar, no me gusta cómo son los hombres con las mujeres, pero quiero tener un hijo, niño Jesús. La Chabe dice que sólo las mujeres casadas pueden tener hijos, por eso yo te pido con toda mi alma que me case y que cuando tenga el niño mi marido se muera.’ La hostia se le acabó de deshacer en la boca y Luisa levantó la mirada. Una sonrisa beatífica le iluminaba el rostro (1987a: 48) |

Saltz (1992: 23) claims that *Luisa en el país de la realidad* (1987a) consistently contests the patriarchal narrative that identifies women with either completely innocent and pure, or wholly corrupt. For example, “la Malinche” is vindicated and female
prostitutes are actively portrayed under a positive light. Women’s roles are always projected as participative, not passive. In line with this, the vignette “La primera comunión” exchanges the simple victimisation of women in the face of male violence for a utopic notion of motherhood and family that excludes men as seen in Table 5.18. This needs to be read along the vignette that follows it “La tía Filiberta y sus cretonas” in which Alegría “exposes the ‘they lived happily ever after’ myth (Saltz, 1992: 23). Aunt Filiberta is a battered woman with many children that at least three times a year will run away from her violent husband and into Luisa’s house. Luisa’s father, who overtly opposes political violence and the oppression suffered by their people at the hands of the corrupt regime, always absents himself during the stays of Aunt Filiberta, as to ignore the violence happening in front of his eyes. Alegría is here criticising the silence that has traditionally surrounded acts of domestic abuse, a silence highlighted by the fact that her father actively stands against abuse in the public sphere.
NOTA DEL AUTOR

A los cincuenta años de haber publicado mi primer libro de poemas, *Anillo de silencio*, vuelvo con un libro muy salvadoreño, tan salvadoreño como *Cenizas de Izalco* y con el agravante de ser santaneco, como diría Roque.

A veces, en mi caso raras veces, los libros que son más fáciles de escribir son los que más le satisfacen al autor.

*Luisa en el país de la realidad* nació con aura privilegiada y una facilidad asombrosa.

Bud y yo estamos viviendo en Deyá, un delicioso pueblito de pescadores en Mallorca, que queda entre las montañas y el mar y que Robert Graves lanzó a la fama.

No recuerdo el año. Ya para entonces había publicado unos cuantos libros de poemas, alguna novela corta y, por supuesto, *Cenizas de Izalco*.

Empecé como sonámbula a escribir viñetas de mi infancia y mi adolescencia en Santa Ana (“Luisa” es un libro fundamentalmente santaneco y por eso tan importante para mí). Después de escribirlas las guardaba en una gaveta, sin la menor intención de publicarlas. Eran trozos sueltos que no estaban destinados a servirme para una novela o ni siguiera para un cuento, pero me divertían y los guardé.

Cuando ya tenía algunos cuantos, decidi enseñárselos a Aurora, a Julio Cortázar y a Carol. Aurora, la primera mujer de Julio, tiene una casa en Deyá y cuando ella no la ocupaba se las cedió a Julio y a Carol, última mujer del gran cronopio.

Los tres nos reíamos con las viñetas y ellos me alentaban a que siguiera adelante.

Figure 5.10: Preface to *Luisa en el país de la realidad* (1987a) I
Recuerdo que Carol me escribió desde California, donde Julio dirigía un seminario, urgíándome a que le enviara las nuevas viñetas de Luisa y que dejara de distraerme en otras tonterías. Así lo hice. El libro está dedicado a ella y sólo fue después de terminarlo y dedicándolo que me di cuenta de que el nombre de la protagonista, Luisa, y el nombre a quien está dedicado, Carol, virtualmente reproducían el nombre del autor de Alicia en el país de las maravillas, de Lewis Carroll. El título del libro, naturalmente, está inspirado en el célebre autor inglés, pero lo otro, lo de Luisa y lo de Carol, es pura casualidad. ¿Existen las casualidades? Cortázar afirmaba que no.

Hubo otras cosas extrañas que son difíciles de explicar.

En el verano de 1994, por ejemplo, Bud y yo estuvimos en nuestra casa de Deyá, donde vivimos muchos años. Allí me puse a hurgar en un viejo arcón que contenía manuscritos, papeles olvidados, etcétera, para ver si valía la pena rescatar algo. Allí me encontré un cuaderno que mi madre había guardado, con mis primeros poemas y algunos apuntes.

Lo hojeé despacio, sonriendo con nostalgia y asombrándome de tanta cursilería. No recordaba nada. De pronto me detuve ante un párrafo que hablaba de la gitana, de cómo la gitana se me apareció en sueños y me dictaba poemas. Sólo entonces me di cuenta de que la gitana que aparece en Luisa y que es el eje de este libro, con todas sus extravagancias y exabruptos, había sido un personaje principal en mi paisaje interior durante cincuenta años. Venía del subconsciente, de esa extraña frontera cuya franja más familiar es el país de los sueños. Sólo en sueños recuerdo su cabellera abundante, sus ojos ligeramente extraviados, sus numerosas pulseras. Es feliz y nostálgica la gitana. Se me extraviaba, se me pierde. No recordaba que tan temprano hubiese surgido en mí.

¿Cuándo volvió a derrumbar después de que la perdi?

Sé que cuando comencé a tener hijos ella desapareció por muchos años y antes de irse me dijo “te has puesto bobo, sólo de niños hablas, no me interesas más”.

Figure 5.11: Preface to Luisa en el país de la realidad (1987a) II
Piense que volvió cuando me dio por pintar. A pintar en sueños, por supuesto, pero igual cuando me fui de Mallorca para Nicaragua ya tenía acumuladas más de setenta telas, suficiente para una exposición.

Mientras el libro avanzaba pensé en escribir poemas que subrayaran las viñetas.

La idea poco a poco se trocó en necesidad y la necesidad también fue para mi fuente de inspiración, ya que muchas ocurrencias invadieron en el mundo de mi conciencia.

“Luisa” es un libro de disgresiones, de realidad y de sueños, de percepción y fantasía. En mi itinerario poético es el libro que más quier.

Hace mucho que no viene la gitana a visitarme. Seguramente me he vuelto tonta irremediable. En uno de nuestros últimos encuentros le pregunté por qué se vestía con colores tan chillones.

“A lo mejor por nostalgia”, me dijo. Cuando tenía unos trece años, veía en mi vida una pompa de jabón iridiscente. Una gran pompa de jabón. Pero todas estas muertes cotidianas, el peso de la rutina, el noticiero desafiado de las ocho, las pequeñas mezquindades, la fueron destrozando poco a poco y ahora apenas le queden unos cuantos destellos de arcoiris.

Se hace larga tu ausencia, gitana. No importa que se haya oscurecido tu pompa de jabón y que con los años yo me haya vuelto sensata, lo que para ti es sinónimo de tonta.

Te necesito, ven. He perdido mi asombro y sólo tú eres capaz de revivirlo.

Claribel Alegria

Figure 5.12: Preface to Luisa en el país de la realidad (1987a) III
5.11. Selective Appropriation and the Subversion of Catholic Myths

In *Luisa en el país de la realidad* (1987a), much of Alegría’s power of subversion comes from her balance between the comic and the tragic. Alegría frequently uses humour as a counterpoint to the sadness of the situations she describes. And even though, as discussed by Anderson (1994: 200), Alegría’s humour can be “whimsical” at times, similar to that of children’s fairy tale, she tends to give a more central role to irony as exemplified by Table 5.16 and Table 5.18.

I argue here that Alegría selectively appropriates elements of Catholic myths and rituals to realise the causal emplotment of her narrative, or in more concrete terms to charge her stories with a subversive morality in the face of patriarchal and political oppression, as demonstrated by my analysis of Table 5.18. Moreover, this is not the only instance in which Alegría appropriates Catholic myths in such a manner. Other examples can be found in prose vignettes such as “La toma de hábitos” (Alegría, 1987a: 39-40) or “Letanías de Luisa” (Alegría, 1987a: 18) where the reader is told that every night before falling asleep Luisa prayed for the souls of her dead grandparents. Her mother told her that she must never forget to do this because “los muertos necesitan que se les recuerde y se les nombre para no caer en el limbo” (Alegría, 1987a: 18). Luisa became obsessed with this idea of limbo, and every time some relative or friend of the family died, she began asking for them. After that, it wasn’t only her friends and family, but also the author of her favourite books. The increasing number of deaths started to weigh on her, as she would spend hours every night asking grace for this neverending list of souls.

This story that appears quite early in the collage helps to frame Alegría’s concern with the dead as a constant to her literary production. Spadola (2014) highlights the correlation between the thanatological and the autobiographical in Alegría’s work, which frequently underlines her fierce fight not to let the dead be forgotten. I understand this as
a response to the level of violence in her home country, and to the common
disappearance of people who stood up to the regime and whose bodies were never found.

*Luisa en el país de la realidad* (1987a) operates here as a monument of remembrance to
those who have already lost their voices in the struggle.

The subversion of catholic myths is also present in the poems included in this
collage as seen in “Operación Herodes” in Table 5.19.

| ST5.26: “En mi país desde hace rato empezaron los militares a matar niños a golpear el cuerpo tiernos de los niños a levantar en bayonetas por el aire a los recién nacidos. De cada niño muerto nacen diez guerrilleros de cada uno de esos cuerpos mutilados brota en larvas la cólera que es luz que se propaga la riega el llanto oscuro de las madres y mueren agusanados los Herodes” (1987a: 44) |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| TT5.26: “In my country some time ago the soldiers began killing children bruising the tender flesh of children tossing babies into the air on bayonets. For each dead child ten guerrillas are born from each one of those mutilated bodies the virus of fury sprouts it is dust it is light multiplying itself the stifled tears of mothers water it and the Herods die riddled by worms (1987b: 35)” |

Table 5.19: Tortured bodies and Catholic myths

Baker (2006) argues that recurrent storylines or masterplots have a special
resonance for particular groups of cultures, which result in the members of these groups
finding “individual narratives that echo these storylines highly credible” (Baker, 2006: 82). Similarly, Somers and Gibson (1994: 73-4) highlights how the nature of any given
repertoire of narratives ready for appropriation is always culturally and historically
specific. This means that Catholicism offers Alegría a series of masterplots that she
appropriates and that give further credibility to her subversions. For instance, “Operación
Herodes” activates for the reader familiar with Catholic myths a narrative by which the
army not only commits a cruel act in the name of maintaining power (Herod was afraid of the three wise men said will be king) but will ultimately fail. Because in the same way the army of Herod missed Jesus Christ, and the prophecy still came to happen, the Salvadorean army might kill the people’s children, but for each one of those dead babies ten guerrilleros will rise, and the salvation/liberation of El Salvador will inevitably come.

| “Creo en mi pueblo que por quinientos años ha sido explotado sin descanso creo en sus hijos concebidos en la lucha y la miseria padecieron bajo el poder de los poncio pilatos fueron martirizados secuestrados inmolados descendieron a los infiernos de la “Media Luna” algunos resucitaron entre los muertos se incorporaron de nuevo a la guerrilla subieron a la montaña y desde allí han de venir a juzgar a sus verdugos. Creo en la hermandad de los pueblos en la unión de Centro América en las vacas azules de Chagall en los cronopios no sé si creo en el perdón de los escuadrones de la muerte pero sí en la resurrección de los oprimidos en la iglesia del pueblo en el poder del pueblo por los siglos de los siglos Amén (1987a: 163-4) |
| “Creo en Dios, Padre Todopoderoso Creador del cielo y de la tierra Creo en Jesucristo, su único Hijo, Nuestro Señor, que fue concebido por obra y gracia del Espíritu Santo, nació de Santa María Virgen, padeció bajo el poder de Poncio Pilato fue crucificado, muerto y sepultado, descendió a los infiernos, al tercer día resucitó de entre los muertos, subió a los cielos y está sentado a la derecha de Dios, Padre Todopoderoso. Desde allí ha de venir a juzgar a vivos y muertos. Creo en el Espíritu Santo, la santa Iglesia católica, la comunidad de los santos, el perdón de los pecados, la resurrección de la carne y la vida eterna por los siglos de los siglos Amén. (Credo de la Iglesia Católica) |

Table 5.20: Comparison between Alegría’s “Credo personal” and the Catholic Creed
All three authors included in this thesis refer to Catholic storylines in their works, because this is a strong part of Hispanic culture, and these narratives will resonate with their readers activating different assumptions. However, the same might not be said for the Anglophone reader, for whom these implications might be lost in translation. Table 5.20 showcases the poem “Credo personal” next to the Spanish “Credo de la Iglesia Católica,” to demonstrate how impossible it would be for a Spanish speaker to miss the religious implications behind this poem. On the other hand, as seen in Table 5.21, the English version offers a close translation to ST, but does not mimic the structure of the Catholic Creed in English, by for example using the same verbs as the prayer. Of course, it could be argued that the appropriated prayer, which is the “skeletal storyline” of ST, would not have been as familiar for the average English reader, as it is for the Spanish one.

5.12. Framing the Body

It can be argued that the experimental form of Luisa en el país de la realidad (1987a) calls attention to the junctures, the silences within a discourse that displays a discontinuous juxtaposition of images of love, natural beauty and mythic tradition with images of poverty, disease, torture and death. Alegria’s text “attempts to collapse the physical and psychological marginalisation that the politics of repression, violence and
torture have imposed upon her homeland and upon her as a writer” (Satz, 1992: 21). The singular first-person voice found in the poems of this collage conveys a feminine point of view in its psychological and social elements, which include political and feminist struggles. Moreover, the focus on female characters in the prose segments narrated in a third-person voice maintains and generalises this female perspective.

The fragmented nature of the text allows Alegría to juxtapose two ways of narrating the body. In contrast with *No me agarran viva* (Alegría and Flakoll, 1983), where the erotic did not have any part in the text and Eugenia’s female body was only portrayed as ill and tortured, *Luisa en el país de la realidad* (Alegría, 1987a) offers frequent instances of an erotic and gendered embodiment of nature and her homeland as seen in Table 5.14. This lyrical and erotic practice comes closer to the strategies discussed with regards to Belli’s works.

Juxtaposed to this, the narration of poverty, tortured bodies and disease also plague the text in a way that brings *Luisa en el país de la realidad* closer to *testimonios* such as *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú* (1983). Alegría’s narratives of poverty and torture have been exemplified in this chapter by the poems in Table 5.19 and Table 5.20, but they are also central to some prose vignettes such as “Los perros de Mejía” that describes how three times a week two men would come to the Mejía’s vacant mansion with a whole cow chopped in pieces to feed the dogs that lived there. Each time, children of the neighbourhood would come and try to seize some of scraps of meat and offal that fell to the ground. Some would leave empty handed and some would run off excitedly to offer their mothers whatever they had seized. By sharing with the reader how the Mejía family is rich enough to waste three cows a week in their dogs, Alegría highlights the injustice of her people’s poverty. This is further reinforced by the narration of the children’s
behaviour, fighting to get a hold of any scraps of meat falling to the ground, and that brings to mind the behaviour of dogs waiting to receive any scraps of their owners’ meal.

Similarly, in “El teatro azul” and in “Pesadilla en Chinandega” Alegría explores the topic of torture, with both ST and TT conveying explicit images of physical pain. In “Pesadilla en Chinandega” Carlos tells Luisa how when they took the fortress of Chinandega, someone heard a moaning coming from a well. They investigated and found “enterrada junto a veinte compas que ya estaban agusanados, había una mujer embarazada que había perdido la razón. La sacamos dando gritos y negra de gusanos. No nos pudo decir nada, pero nosotros sabíamos que había sido enterrada ahí por orden del comandante” (Alegría, 1987a: 122). This vignette is further framed by being next to the poem “Porque quiero la paz” (Alegría, 1987a: 123) showcased in Table 5.22. In this poem, Luisa/Alegría explains how she has to keep fighting because she wants peace, how she wants to keep fighting because the Salvadorean people is being tortured, killed, made disappear. In more concrete terms, this first-person voice effectively justifies the guerrilla movement, the armed struggle, as the only alternative to achieve peace and security for El Salvador.

| Porque quiero la paz  
y no la guerra  
porque no quiero ver niños con hambre  
ni mujeres escuálidas  
ni hombres con la lengua amordazada  
debo seguir luchando.  
Porque hay cementerios clandestinos  
y escuadrones de la muerte  
y Mano Blanca  
que torturan  
que eclipsan  
que asesinan  
quiero seguir luchando (…)  
(1987a: 123) |

**Table 5.22: Justification of the Guerrilla Movement**
In an act of international solidarity, “El teatro azul” also denounces the use of violence by Pinochet’s regime in Chile. Even though, it remains unsaid in the text, I argue that it is no coincidence that Alegría narrates instances of torture by military regimes historically supported by US foreign policy, like the one in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Chile. “El teatro azul” concerns Alejandra’s memories of watching a friend being tortured. Alejandra explains her current insomnia to her friend Luisa by saying that a blue neon light on the street next to her room is keeping her awake. She then recounts the story of the blue theatre, where imprisoned for political reasons, Alejandra was taken to identify a friend. Upon her refusing to do so, “le cortaron la otra oreja, le cortaron los dedos, las manos; él sin pegar un grito y yo ahí obligada a mirar, mirando esa sangre y mirándolo a él (…) El milico que estaba de guardia me dijo que Sergio estaba muerto y que era culpa mía, porque si hubiera dicho la verdad a lo mejor lo hubieran soltado” (Alegría, 1987a: 135).

Moliner (1994: 180) notes how “El teatro azul” acts as a clear literalisation of the experience of pain, even though the narration is doubly filtered through the memories of an observer and thus the body in question remains othered the narrating voice. That is also the case of “Pesadilla en Chinandega.” In both cases, however, “the experience of pain eventually finds language, albeit someone else’s language, and language inevitably finds pain,” allowing Alegría fiction to speak from the silences of the tortured (Molinaro, 1994: 181).
5.14. Conclusion

Because most of Alegría’s work portrays Nicaragua and El Salvador during the 1970s and 1980s, the social realities conveyed by her texts frequently feature forms of physical violence controlled by the government such as imprisonment, torture and disappearance. Molinaro (1994: 175) claims that, contrary to instances of emotional and psychological pain, a similar examination of physical pain is very rare in Latin American literature, except for the genre of testimonio, which has otherwise been understood by the scholarship as non-literary or against literature (Beverley, 1993). However, I have found that Luisa en el país de la realidad (1987a), in its hybridity, finds a way to effectively juxtapose images of love, beauty and nature with images of torture, poverty and oppression.

I have argued that Alegría’s use of a fragmented text with multiple of voices, and a mixture of the poetic and the fictional in this testimonial collage, creates a fruitful space in which narratives of feminism and political radicalism are weaved together. I suggest that this text’s refusal to follow genre-specific conventions has facilitated an across-the-board subversion of patriarchal and religious myths and a construction of a deceased female subjectivity, in which the only commonality seems to be a representation of women as participative rather than passive.

The narration of the body in Luisa en el país de la realidad (1987a) serves, in the context of this thesis as a middle-ground, between the erotic body in Belli’s texts and the tortured body in Menchú’s and Alegría and Flakoll’s testimonios. I have suggested that Alegría’s choice of an experimental and fictive form has allowed her to construct a more radicalised narrative that the one we can find in No me agarran viva (1983), but on the other hand it seems to have peripheralised this text’s academic reception. Even though the back cover of the ST frames it as frequent part of reading lists in Angloamerican
universities, I have noted in this chapter *Luisa en el país de la realidad* has received scarce critical attention, and how the interest in this author, or at least in this particular book has faded since the 1990s.

Contrary to this, I have noted that *La mujer habitada* (1988) has been widely studied by literary critics, unlike Belli’s memoir *El país bajo mi piel* (2001). I have also found that the same narratives of female subjectivity, motherhood and the erotic body that were renarrated for the Anglophone reader in the case of Belli’s memoir have been allowed to circulate into the centre in the case of *La mujer habitada* (1988).

I have suggested that this can be explained in terms of the different locations of the two texts, *La mujer habitada* (1988) being published and translated by independent publishing houses, whilst Belli’s memoir has been published by large conglomerates such as Random House and Knopf, at a time in which she is an already consecrated author. Moreover, I have argued that this difference can be explained in terms of genre conventions, and that the book being marketed as a novel instead of an autobiographical text has allowed the more radical aspects of Belli’s narrative to escape peripheralisation.

To summarise, the (para)textual analysis of this chapter has studied the ways in which genre-specific conventions have influenced the construction and translation into English of narratives of women’s agency and political radicalism. I have found that the turn towards fiction by Belli and Alegría have allowed them to escape peripheralisation in ways in which their more factual accounts *No me agarran viva* (Alegría and Flakoll, 1983) and *El país bajo mi piel* (2001) did not, as discussed in Chapter 4. I therefore suggest that the circulation of narratives within texts categorised under canonised forms of life writing such as *testimonio*, autobiography or memoir (as opposed to hybrid examples such as Luisa en el país de la realidad) have proven to be “controlled or policed” by the centre, in line with Baker (2006: 95) who argued that at various points in
history and in various parts of the world some genres have tended to be more tightly controlled by those in power.

In the light of the (para)textual analyses undertaken in Chapters 4 and 5, it is possible to argue that these peripheral texts accessing the centre, or being consecrated by their English translation, does not necessarily result in their original narratives escaping peripheralisation, as it could have been assumed. Quite the opposite, the process of canonisation in these texts seems to mirror that of peripheralisation, resulting in the renarration of their radicalism in terms of the political and gender struggles taking place in Nicaragua and El Salvador.
Chapter 6: Renarration and the Canonisation of Rigoberta Menchú

6.1. Introduction

In this thesis translation has been understood as a form of (re)narration that participates in the construction of a story, rather than merely as a process of textual transfer from one language to another. As established by Baker (2012), translation constructs cultural realities and not simply reproduces texts, “and it does so by intervening in the processes of narration and renarration that construct the world around us” (Baker, 2012: 1)

However, this thesis also acknowledges that within the asymmetrical power-structured world of letters, translation is a consecrating tool as seen in section 2.5. Bearing both arguments in mind, this chapter continues to investigate to what extent the concept of renarration is central or even inherent in the process of canonisation that allows peripheralised texts to enter the World of Letters. In order to do so, a definition of the potential scope of the process of renarration will be needed.

When one understands frames as the outcome of a dynamic interaction between the context, the text and the interactants’ goals and knowledge of the ongoing situation\(^\text{89}\), it becomes possible to argue that this interaction might take place at different moments or levels.\(^\text{90}\) Thus, in the context of world literature, and particularly in testimonio as a very mediated genre, a narrative might be framed, reframed and renarrated not only through translation. Along the process of canonisation, that of renarration is not necessarily limited to the translation of the peripheral text into a central language. To investigate the scope of the process of renarration and to articulate the dialectical

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\(^{89}\) For the working definition of frame see Section 3.5.

\(^{90}\) In the case of Menchú’s testimonio these moments of renarration are described as 1) Construction of a mediated testimonio – The oral interviews between Menchú and Burgos are transformed into a written text and editorial decisions are made for its publishing; 2) Translation into English; 3) Critical Reception; 4) Canonisation of the text and Centrality of TT; 5) Construction of Rigoberta Menchú, Nieta de los Mayas; 6) Translation into Crossing Borders.
relationship between renarration and canonisation, this chapter will focus on the genre of
*testimonio* and the canonical case of *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú* (1983).

At the time in which this thesis is being written “the moment of [canonical]
*testimonio* has long passed” along with the state of urgency that it carried (Beverley,
1996: 138). In this context, the definition of *testimonio* as a genre has traditionally been
understood in line with the armed liberation struggle that took place in Latin America in
the second half of the 20th century (Beverley, 1996: 138). Most importantly for this
thesis, *testimonio* was intimately linked to international solidarity networks in support of
revolutionary movements and human rights struggles around the world, making the
process of translation into central languages essential. However, this was a genre that
called not only for international attention, but for international action. And in this sense,
*testimonio* no longer is, since the action is no longer required. This does not mean that
this genre is no longer worthy of scholar interest, far from it. This thesis argues that the
particularly central role of translation in the formation of this genre and its relation with
the international readership make it a fruitful case of study, allowing me to explore the
concept of renarration in line with that of canonisation.

6.2. Canon Formation and the Culture Wars

After its beginnings in Cuba with the creation of a special prize category for *testimonio*
by the *Casa de las Américas* annual literary competition, this literary form was exported
to Central America and further developed as a way of denouncing military repression in
South American countries, such as Argentina and Chile. Critical and theoretical attention
to this genre grew during the 1980s, producing many articles, essays and doctoral theses,
all of these coinciding with the moment of publication of Rigoberta Menchú’s text
(1983) but also with the effects of dictatorships and civil wars in the Central American
region. Rigoberta Menchú and her *testimonio* (1983) achieved worldwide reception even before she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992. Her work is the paradigm of canonisation of women’s *testimonio*, not only for Central America but, some would argue, for Latin America and the post-colonial or subaltern subject as a whole (Mackenbach, 2015: 420). Thus, within the confines of this thesis, Rigoberta Menchú occupies a place of prominence that facilitates the study of possible misconceptions and assumptions regarding canon formation.

As established in Section 2.6, the term “canon” refers to works with special status of representativeness by a culture (Murfin and Ray, 1997: 38). It can be said that literary works that attain the status of canon are repeatedly discussed, anthologised, or reprinted, therefore placed at the centre of their respective literary areas. However, as exemplified by the different texts included in this thesis’ data set, canonicity can be achieved or granted through a variety of means. For instance, a text could be perceived as a high-brow, highly referenced and praised academic text, whilst another could be understood as a low-brow, highly commercial best-seller. They will both achieve canonicity in their own terms, but they will be part of quite different canons.

When it comes to the reception of Menchú’s *testimonio* within the Anglophone context, academia had a very prominent role in granting this text its canonicity. The role of academia is easily identified by the part that this text played in the so called “battle of books” or “culture wars,”91 with Stanford’s academic curriculum at the centre of the

91 “What have come to be known as “culture wars” in the United States were the result of a fatal collision between two historical processes: on the one hand, the arrival to university faculties of the children of the 60s, and on the other hand, the arrival to the White House of Ronald Reagan” (Mary Louise Pratt, 2001: 30) and Stanford was at the centre of the conflict. This university was on the front lines of the debate in part because of its prestige, but mainly because it was at the same time the intellectual seat of Reagan’s conservative right-wing revolution and the site of a significant effort for educational reforms with liberal teaching programs including Feminist, African/Afro-American and Chicano studies.
conflict. In 1980, Stanford University adopted a two-semester course on Western culture as a requirement for all first-year students. This course’s curriculum included a reading list of predominantly classical and northern European philosophical materials. From 1984-1986, a multi-ethnic student movement rose demanding a change in this course and two years of furious curricular debate followed. Rigoberta Menchú’s text appeared frequently in the debated curriculum of US universities’ courses seeking to decentre the mostly traditionalist and Eurocentric curricula of their Schools. As a result, Stanford’s curricular reform created a transformed freshman course called “Europe and the Americas” in which Menchú’s testimonio was one of the required readings (Pratt, 2001: 31-34).

In 1991, this battle over the text and the curriculum produced one of the texts that have established Menchú’s testimonio as a political target/mark, i.e. Dinesh D’Souza’s Illiberal Education: The Politics of Race and Sex on Campus (1991). This book was a passionate attack on the educational reforms of the 1980s and attacked Menchú on two somehow contradictory levels: (i) as an ignorant and uneducated Indian woman who thus had nothing to teach/share, and (ii) as an Indian woman whose experience was insufficiently typical to be representative of the indigenous worldview (Pratt, 2001: 35). The controversy over the Nobel laureate was only exacerbated by the New York Times sensationalist front-page report of December 1998 “Tarnished Laureate” by Larry Rohter, following the discoveries published by anthropologist David Stoll in his book Rigoberta Menchú and the Story of All Poor Guatemalans (1999) – which questioned, among other things, many biographical facts in Menchú’s famous testimonio. In brief, Menchú’s text (as well as the controversy surrounding it) have become part of the Angloamerican canon/academic curriculum and have been extensively researched by

92 The required reading materials included: The Bible, Plato, Homer, a Greek tragedy, Augustine, Dante, Thomas More, Machiavelli, Luther, Galileo, Voltaire, Marx/Engels, Freud and Darwin (Pratt, 2001: 32).
6.3. **Renarration and the Canonisation of Menchú’s Testimonio: Construction, Translation and Consumption**

The canonical status of Rigoberta Menchú’s *testimonio* and extensive research on the construction of *testimonio* as a genre offer an outstanding opportunity to identify chronologically the different moments of intervention/opportunities for renarration within the process of canonisation that gave this text access to the centre.

6.3.1. **First Moment of Intervention**

Taking *El Periódico de Guatemala*’s interview with Arturo de Taracena (1999) as a starting point, this section will commence by analysing the editing process that resulted in the publication of the internationally-recognised text *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* (1983). Taracena claims that in January 1982 he was approached in Paris by the representative of ORPA\(^{93}\), a woman then known as Marie Tremblay, who informed him that the ethnographer Elisabeth Burgos was seeking to publish the testimony of a Guatemalan Mayan woman. Tremblay had let Burgos know of the presence in Paris of Rigoberta Menchú – a militant of the CUC\(^{94}\), raising consciousness about the repression suffered by the people of Guatemala – who was at the time staying at Taracena’s house. They agreed on a meeting, and that Sunday, Taracena accompanied Menchú to Burgos’s house, where he participated in the first day of interviews along with the two women – following an outline agreed by the three

\(^{93}\) Organización del Pueblo en Armas (Revolutionary Organisation of Armed People)  
\(^{94}\) Comité de Unidad Campesina (Comittee for Peasant Unity)
participants. He states that the interviews continued the following Tuesday and that on Wednesday, the need to rethink the outline due to Menchú’s narrative capacity became clear – she was going beyond what they had originally conceived. Moreover, it was at that moment that Taracena (a militant of the EGP 95) left the interviews. On Saturday, he came back to accompany Menchú back to his home, where they recorded the last tape on the subject of death.

The first moment of intervention will be understood within this chapter as the construction of the Spanish version of Menchú’s testimonio, and it covers the intervention of the ethnographer in the ordering and writing of Menchú’s oral account, the publishing of her testimonio, as well as the editorial decisions imposed to the paratext of this book. The (para)textual analysis included in Section 6.4 will expose several differences between Taracena’s account and the events described in the editor’s paratexts of Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú (1983). Elisabeth Burgos wrote two paratextual prefaces to Menchú’s testimonio: “Introducción” (Burgos, 1983: 7-8) and “Prólogo” (Burgos, 1983: 9-19). In these paratexts Burgos completely erases the figure of Taracena from the account. During an interview 96 in 1999, Taracena stated that he agreed to this omission because of his militancy for the EGP, in order to not politicise the book. However, it is difficult to claim that this book has not been politicised, or was not political by its very nature.

In her “Prólogo,” Burgos states that Menchú arrived at her doorstep on a very cold evening wearing her traditional clothes. Most interestingly, Burgos describes Menchú’s clothing and appearance in exoticising detail. She also states that Menchú stayed at her house for eight days and that a common friend brought her the recorded

95 Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres (Guerrilla Army of the Poor)
96 Luís Aceituno published his interview with Arturo Taracena in The Rigoberta Menchú Controversy (2001: 82-95)
tape on the issue of death, even though Burgos had not dared to ask about this topic during the interviews:

Al día siguiente de su partida, un amigo común vino a traerme una cinta que Rigoberta se había molestado en grabar a propósito de las ceremonias de la muerte “que nos habíamos olvidado de grabar”. Fue este gesto el que me hizo comprender lo que tiene de excepcional esta mujer. Con su gesto demostraba que, culturalmente, era de una integridad total (Burgos, 1983: 17)

It is important to highlight here that the same fact that Burgos uses to reassure the reader of Menchú’s integrity, and of the truthfulness in their relationship is arguably – if we take into account both Taracena and Burgos’ words – a moment that has been manipulated during this first moment of intervention.

The construction of the book – the transfer from an oral discourse recorded on tapes to a written one in the form of testimonio – is also outlined by Burgos in her “Prólogo” (Burgos, 1983: 17-18). She describes the following steps: (i) Transcribing the content of the tapes word by word; (ii) Identifying first the main topics and then those that were most frequent; (iii) Building the text in the form of a monologue, thus making her own presence and questions disappear from the text; (iv) Naming and ordering the different chapters – since the text intended to be a coherent monologue, Burgos followed a chronological line of the events. For those chapters describing customs or rites, they were placed where Menchú had brought them up, following her line of thoughts and the operation of her memory; (v) Erasing repetitions and correcting grammatical mistakes – in order, according to Burgos, to avoid any over-exoticisation of Menchú: “[Burgos] decidí corregir los errores de género debidos a la falta de conocimiento de alguien que acaba de aprender el idioma, ya que hubiera sido artificial conservarlos y además hubiera
The initial construction of this text – and of the now canonical mediated form of the genre of *testimonio* – raises important issues of authority and truth\(^97\) that need to be analysed as part of this first moment of intervention. As claimed by Marc Zimmerman (1996), there is always a need to consider the concepts of representation and representativity\(^98\) when reading Menchú’s *testimonio*. First, there is the question of whether she represents more than herself – as her text is claiming at points\(^99\), and then there is the question of referentiality and truth – particularly if one claims that Menchú is in fact holding authority over her discourse.

When problematising the construction of *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú* (1984) as a first moment of intervention, it is important to question whose motivations are driving this text. On the one hand, it is possible to observe Menchú’s own motivations, “as a politically-minded cadre who has been trained to see reality in a certain way and to seek

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\(^97\) In any mediated *testimonio*, in which the oral narrator and the author of the written text are not the same person, the question of *authorship* and *authority* becomes problematic. The first will problematise who the author of the text is: the narrator or the ethnographer? The second would discuss who is to be accountable for telling the truth and who has a position that the public will believe. However, is the concept of absolute truth something that any written account can even achieve? Is it not possible, at least within narrative theory, for the same story to be told in many different ways? If one agrees on this, to what extent can we assure that Burgos did not manipulate our understanding of Menchú’s oral account just simply by ordering it, or dividing it under chapter titles – all actions which she admits to in her introduction? In brief, this thesis highlights the need to acknowledge and problematise these questions taking into account the different moments of intervention that this text has suffered through its canonisation.

\(^98\) In the scholarly field of *testimonio* *representation* and *representativity* are very frequent terms. Taking Menchú’s text as an example, issues of representation would problematise the role of the ethnographer as mediator, the need for an intellectual figure that allows the voice of the narrator to be heard, the ability of Menchú to speak in her status of subaltern. On the other hand, issues of representativity question the ability of one individual, in this case Menchú, to represent a collective, i.e. all Quiché women, her community, the whole Mayan people, all indigenous people in America, etc…

\(^99\) “… quiero hacer un enfoque que no soy la única, pues ha vivido mucha gente y es la vida de todos. La vida de todos los guatemaltecos pobres y trataré de dar un poco de mi historia. Mi situación personal engloba toda la realidad de un pueblo” (1983: 21)
certain outcomes for her people” (Zimmerman, 1996: 111). On the other hand, one should not forget that Menchú tells her story to a Paris-trained anthropologist and prominent left-wing political activist “who will clearly affect the text, ordering the material according to her own sense of priorities, framing the chapters and determining the questions she asks” (Zimmerman, 1996: 111). However, if Burgos admits to ordering and editing the material prior to publication, any eliciting questions have been erased from the body of the text, arguably to create a sense of immediacy between the constructed narrator and the reader or maybe to better appeal to a specific imagined reader.

6.3.2. Second Moment of Intervention

The two prefaces included in Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú (1983) inform the reader about the mediating presence of Burgos, and they are therefore announcing a certain partiality of knowledge when it comes to this text. Because of its status of mediated text there is no real sense of immediacy between the narratorial “I” and the readerly “you”, but the construction and body of the text seems to urge for the empathy of a reader who might prefer to live under the “illusion of immediacy and intimacy” (Sommer, 1996: 131).

Most interestingly for this research, I argue that the above-mentioned illusion of immediacy is further reinforced during the second moment of intervention, i.e., the translation into English of Menchú’s testimonio. Indeed, I, Rigoberta Menchú (1984) includes a translation of Burgos’ “Prólogo”, but this is preceded by a “Translator’s note” where Ann Wright focuses on the fact that Menchú’s discourse is that of someone who is not a Spanish native speaker and the difficulty that this presented during the translation process. Ann Wright erases from this “Translator’s note” the presence of the
ethnographer Elisabeth Burgos to whom she never refers. Ironically, she discusses how she has ventured in some strategic editions to Menchú’s words in order to convey clarity, but at the same time she obscures the fact that she is working upon a text that has previously suffered the intervention of an ethnographer who also claimed to have aimed for that clarity. In fact, Wright’s “Translator’s note” bears an uncanny resemblance to Burgos’s “Introducción” to the first edition in Spanish (Burgos, 1983: 7-8), which has been excluded from TT. This can be observed when comparing Figure 6.1 and Figure 6.2 with Figure 6.3 and Figure 6.4.
Rigoberta Menchú pertenece a la etnia Quiché, que es una de las 22 etnias que pueblan Guatemala. Rigoberta tiene apenas 23 años, y aprendió el español hace solamente tres años, de ahí que a veces su frase parezca incorrecta; sobre todo en lo que concierne al empleo de los tiempos verbales, y al de las preposiciones. El no haber transformado o “corregido” su forma de expresarse fue debido a una decisión de mi parte. Decidí respetar la ingenuidad con la que se expresa todo el que acaba de aprender un idioma que no es el suyo. Porque además el aprendizaje del español es una de las dimensiones del problema que enfrentan los indígenas en nuestro continente.

A pesar de su corta edad Rigoberta tiene mucho que contar porque su vida, como lo dice ella misma, es la vida de todo un pueblo. Pero es también la historia de la colonización todavía vigente con sus secuelas de violencia y de opresión.

Es la historia de los más humillados entre los humillados. Pero Rigoberta no sólo nos cuenta sus sufrimientos y los de su pueblo, sino que también hace gala de un orgullo discreto para hacernos conocer su cultura milenaria, que nos describe minuciosamente cuando nos cuenta las ceremonias del nacimiento, del matrimonio, de las siembras. Muchos me aconsejaron eliminar del libro esa parte descriptiva, porque podía parecer demasiado larga al lector y podría hacerle perder el hilo de la historia. No obedecí esos consejos porque sentí que hacerlo significaba traicionar a Rigoberta. Todavía tengo el recuerdo del tono de su voz, del brillo de sus ojos que mostraban su orgullo cuando a través de esas descripciones minuciosas ella quería hacerme comprender, y hacer comprender al mundo, que ella también era poseedora de una cultura, y de una cultura milenaria, y que si ella luchaba era para salir de la miseria y de una vida de sufrimientos, pero también para que su cultura fuera reconocida y aceptada como cualquier otra.

En América Latina, los que somos culturalmente blancos denunciamos con facilidad —y con razón— al imperialismo norteamericano, pero nunca
Introducción

Rigoberta lucha a la vez contra los dos, convirtiéndose así en sujeto de la historia. El enfrentamiento, postergado desde casi cinco siglos, está hoy a la orden del día. La lucha que hará estremecer al continente en la década que se avecina será la emergencia del hombre americano autóctono a recuperar el poder y el lugar que le corresponde por derecho en las instancias del estado. Guatemala será una nación el día en que el poder sea compartido proporcionalmente a la población que existe, y los indígenas constituyen la mayoría de la población. Hasta ahora la situación de Guatemala es muy parecida a la de África del Sur en donde una minoría de blancos tiene todo el poder sobre la mayoría negra. La lucha de los indios de América es compleja, porque es a la vez una lucha contra el imperialismo que azota América Latina, pero la dimensión cultural y étnica es también un móvil principal. No se trata de pregonar guerras racistas, y está en nosotros, los que pertenecemos culturalmente a la población blanca del continente, comprender las reivindicaciones específicas de las poblaciones indígenas, y no conformarnos con definiciones reduccionistas de clase, que si llevarían a los indígenas a encerrarse aún más en una posición defensiva que puede llevar a enfrentamientos de tipo racial. La lucha de los pobladores autóctonos de nuestro continente, contra el colonialismo interno y el externo, será la que librará definitivamente de los males que nos acosan y que se oponen a nuestro desarrollo y por ello debemos...

Figure 6.2: “Introducción” to Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú (1983) part II
Rigoberta’s narration reflects the different influences on her life. It is a mixture of Spanish learned from nuns and full of biblical associations; of Spanish learned in the political struggle replete with revolutionary terms; and, most of all, Spanish which is heavily coloured by the linguistic constructions of her native Quiché and full of the imagery of nature and community traditions.

She has learned the language of the culture which oppresses her in order to fight it – to fight for her people – and to help us understand her own world. In doing so, she has created a form of expression which is full of passion, poetry and wisdom. Sometimes, however, the wealth of memories and associations which come tumbling out in this spontaneous narrative leave the reader a little confused as to chronology and details of events.

The problem of translation was how to retain the vitality, and often beautiful simplicity, of Rigoberta’s words, but aim for clarity at the same time. I have tried, as far as possible, to stay with Rigoberta’s original phrasing; changing and reordering only where I thought the meaning could not be readily understood. Hence, I’ve left the repetitions, tense irregularities, and sometimes convoluted sentences which come from Rigoberta’s search to find the right expression in Spanish. Words have been left in Spanish or Quiché, where they are objects or concepts for which we have no precise equivalent.

Figure 6.3: “Translator’s note” in I, Rigoberta Menchú (1984)
I argue here the “Translator’s note,” as seen in Figure 6.3 and Figure 6.4, promotes a strategic immediacy between the TT and the Anglophone readers, by glossing over the figure of the ethnographer who intervened in the construction of the testimonio. And I claim that this same move is mirrored again by the critical and academic reception of I, Rigoberta Menchú (1984). One finds extensive research focused
on issues of truth and representation citing the English translation *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (1984) that acknowledges and debates over the figure of the first mediator (Elisabeth Burgos) but extensively ignores that of the second one (Ann Wright).

### 6.3.3. Third Moment of Intervention

The above leads me to the third moment of intervention, which is the critical reception of Menchú’s *testimonio* within academia and its consumption as a canonised\(^{100}\) text as part of the curriculum of Angloamerican universities. In order to illustrate this moment of intervention, I have used three seminal volumes. Each of these volumes achieved a certain prominence within the field of *testimonio* and the Rigoberta Menchú text in particular: *The Real Thing* (Gugelberger, 1996), *The Rigoberta Menchú Controversy* (Arias, 2001) and *Teaching and Testimony: Rigoberta Menchú and the North-American Classroom* (Carey-Webb, 1996). The first is a scholarly collection of issues surrounding *testimonio* as a genre, the second is a collection of essays that aims to provide different angles regarding the Menchú-Stoll debate, and the third analyses the challenges of using *testimonio* as a pedagogical tool.

If one considers that renarration is an important part of the process of canonisation, and that in the case of Menchú’s *testimonio* its translation into English should be understood as a second and central opportunity for renarration, it becomes necessary to identify if the critical audience of this text is in fact referring to the ST (in Spanish) or the renarrated TT (in English) when undertaking their studies. Table 6.1 uses

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\(^{100}\) Chapter 6 is building upon the difference between what has been traditionally considered a *canonical* text (as part of a canon, thus representative of literary value) and what I call a *canonised* text (one that has undergone a process of canonisation – the renarration needed for a peripheral text to access the centre).
our first collection of essays, *The Real Thing* (1996)\textsuperscript{101} to demonstrate the centrality of the TT within academia:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú</em> (1983)</td>
<td>Alberto Moreiras\nGareth Williams</td>
<td>Georg M. Gugelberger\nJohn Beverley (twice)\nMargaret Randall\nMarc Zimmerman\nDoris Sommer\textsuperscript{102}\nSantiago Colás\nFredric Jameson</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.1: *The Real Thing* (1996) and their preference for referring to TT

The preference for referring to *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (1984) – without acknowledging translation as a second moment of intervention – is somewhat ironic and even dangerous when one recalls that this collection of essays, *The Real Thing: Testimonial Discourse and Latin America*, claims to be “exploring how critical writing about testimonio has turned into discourse about the institution of academia, the canon, postmodernism, postcolonialism and the status of Latin American Studies generally” (cited from the back cover of Gugelberger, 1996). Moreover, and even though this collection of essays is not limited to only studying Menchú’s text, it is her black and white portrait that occupies its front cover.

The situation only escalates in the case of *The Rigoberta Menchú Controversy* (Arias, 2001). This collection of essays not only disregards translation as a moment of

\textsuperscript{101} Note that the collection includes articles by fourteen scholars, I have excluded from my table three of them because they did not mention Menchú.

\textsuperscript{102} One should note the case of Sommer (1996) who cites *I, Rigoberta Menchú* but provides the reader with the pages of both ST and TT simply mentioning “translation altered” next to some of the TT pages. She is then acknowledging certain differences but never highlighting them, analysing them or using them to inform her theoretical framework or her findings.
intervention but erases its presence completely. Some of the articles were originally in Spanish and have been translated into English by the editor Arturo Arias, who, one can surmise, has replaced the title *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú* (1983) with *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (1984). This is of course problematic when the text is discussing issues of truth, representation and the construction of the testimonial text within the Menchú-Stoll debate.

The third collection of essays is the most interesting in this respect, since it invites a new reading of the process of canonisation – and the so-called canonised text – as a pedagogical tool and object of consumption by the North-American classroom. *Teaching and Testimony* (1996) also acknowledges, from a pedagogical point of view, the challenges of bringing the periphery into the centre. As a starting point for my analysis, Table C.1 divides the articles included in the collection (listed by the names of contributors) and identifies if they refer to ST, TT or if there is any indication of acknowledgement to translation as a second moment of intervention. I have found that only two articles out of twenty-three refer to the ST instead of the TT. Citing *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (1984) might be understandable since these articles are analysing ways of using Menchú’s *testimonio* as a pedagogical tool for the Angloamerican classroom, and therefore these scholars might need to work on the translated text with their students. However, it is still noticeable that, although issues of representation and truth are present within the main challenges of presenting this text for consumption, only one third of the aforementioned authors identify translation as a level of mediation; and even in those cases the argument is not critically analysed or developed, as seen in Table C.2 in Appendix C.

Table 6.1 and Table C.1 demonstrate the high frequency with which scholars prefer to cite *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (1985) instead of its source text. Also, one can observe that the frequent disregard of the practice of translation as another level of
intervention results in an “overlooked” manipulation of the text that undoubtedly contributes to the process of canonisation. It can then be argued that the canonised text that has been critically consumed and recognised as part of the testimonial canon is in fact a reading of *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (1985). Furthermore, this naïve consumption of the translation heavily obscures several levels of peripheralisation otherwise central to debates on truth, representation, authority, voice and identity that academics on the genre of *testimonio* have and continue to entertain.


The centrality of *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (1984) may surprise many readers, since it is traditionally understood that the TT will play a subservient role to the ST. The relationship between *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (1984) and *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú* (1983) can be explained in the same terms previous scholars have discussed that of the text and the paratext. Genette (1997), in his cataloguing of paratextual elements, recognises the practice of translation as paratextually relevant (Genette, 1997: 405) and claims that he has not elaborated on it for reasons of space.

More recently, Tahir-Gürçaglar (2002) has returned to this concept and refused to categorise translation as a form of paratext, as this will disempower the translator and relegate the target text to an eternal secondary position. Taking this argument even further, Mary Louise Wardle (2012) claims that this premise regarding the relationship between ST and TT can even be reversed, “viewing each translation as a text on its own right, with its own range of paratexts” that could ultimately include the ST (Wardle, 2012: 28). Wardle’s proposition is applicable to the canonisation of Menchú’s *testimonio*, where *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (1984) has not only accessed the centre/canon – translation as a process of consecration as theorised by Casanova (2010), but has also
taken the primary role within the ST/TT binary. Thus, it is possible to read *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú* (1983) as a mere, and to some extent forgotten, paratext of *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (1984).

This thesis argues that, by privileging the study of *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (1984), critics of *testimonio* are ignoring and/or depoliticising a very manipulative practice (that of translation), and at the same time overlooking the scope of the process of renarration that this text has suffered. The canonisation of this *testimonio* has given a central position to a heavily mediated text, which has gone through several moments of intervention to give voice to a subject from the periphery. *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (1984) has found its place in the canon of the World of Letters through constant repetition and recitation. Its canonisation does not only mean that this text will adhere to the centrally generated conventions of the genre; but also that, by achieving such an iconic status, future texts might need to follow these same parameters in order to be read as *testimonio* by academia, thus silencing or homogenising other marginal voices in the process.

This process of canonisation relates back to Isabel Dulfano’s (2004) claims of Westerner consumption of *testimonio* and recent disenchantment by Angloamerican academics. Dulfano states that academics have “consumed *testimonio*’s utility and discarded the remains of the discourse” (Dulfano, 2004: 83), but it is possible to move this argument forward. *Testimonio* as a resistant text has been canonised and consumed by academia under a certain set of central norms. These norms could not always fit the peripheral nature of the text, thus creating certain resentments, omissions and tensions. The central position of *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (1984) gives the illusion of a less, rather than more, mediated text and consequently responds to a Western desire of consuming subaltern/peripheral voices, which are ultimately denied a fully authoritative status.
In the following sections I study a series of paratextual and textual framing strategies from ST and TT that seek to demonstrate the extent of renarration in this text, by linking it to the different moments of intervention (construction, translation and consumption) that have been identified in Section 6.3. For instance, a comparison between the images chosen for the different front covers in ST and TT allows me to trace the story between the construction of the text and its consumption by the market and academia. In this context, it is important to note that Menchú was awarded the Peace Nobel Prize in 1992, nearly ten years after the first publication of her *testimonio*, and that a second edition of the text (after the Nobel Prize) has been published both in ST and TT. As such, Figure 6.5, featuring a long-shot, signals a higher level of social distance than Figure 6.6. This choice of images plays with their interactive meaning and can be read in two ways. Firstly, the woman in Figure 6.5, after been awarded the Peace Nobel Price has achieved a certain status that requests a higher level of social distance between her and her readers. Secondly, it is possible to read this distance as a metaphor of the resistance of the subject to being easily appropriated and consumed by the Westerner reader.
Figure 6.5: Front cover *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú* (1983) as published after she won the Nobel Peace Prize
Figure 6.6: Front cover of Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú (1983)
On the other hand, the right image of Figure 6.7 does not present its Anglophone audience with a photo of Rigoberta Menchú but with a very colourful and close-up drawing of her face. The close-up shot invites the viewer to feel closer to the represented participant; and the colourful imaginary and font of letters chosen for the cover seem to contradict the seriousness of the text. However, this choice could also be explained as a consequence of the strong emphasis on the exoticised Indian ethnicity of the narrator.

The emphatic focus of the TT on the Indian identity of Rigoberta Menchú can also be noted in another paratextual framing strategy: the transformation of the title from “Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia” to “I, Rigoberta Menchú. An Indian Woman in Guatemala” that was already discussed as an example in Section 3.5.1.
The colourful nature of the right image in Figure 6.7 is toned down in the much
darker left image – an edition published after Menchú was awarded the Peace Prize and
had achieved a canonical status in the Anglophone market. Moreover, the painting in is
Figure 6.7 part of Oswaldo Guayasamín art-work (1996)\textsuperscript{103}. Guayasamín was a
renowned Ecuadorian painter whose art-work focused on depicting the racism and social
injustices suffered by the indigenous peoples of Latin-America. It is argued here that
even though not less exoticising, the image in the left gives a less infantilising
impression due to the shifts in the colour palette.

Furthermore, it is important to note that both English front covers make disappear
the presence of Elisabeth Burgos, as seen in Figure 6.7. As discussed by Irene Mathews
(2000), the “authority” (truthfulness) of \textit{Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú} (1984) and its
“authoring” (narrative responsibility) have a controversial history (Mathews, 2000:104).
The controversy behind the authoring of this text can also be explored through a
comparative paratextual analysis of ST and TT. The Spanish version includes
Rigoberta’s name in the title \textit{Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú}, but Elisabeth Burgos is on the
cover and title page as author of the book. However, the text published in English shows
no “author” on the cover and the text featuring on the title page reads as follows: “Edited
and introduced by Elisabeth Burgos-Debray” and “Translated by Ann Wright” (Burgos,
1984: Title page). Even within the English translations the paratextual choices for cover
blurs differ in the level of erasure of Elisabeth Burgos participation as exemplified by
Table 6.2 and Figure 6.8.

\textsuperscript{103} The authorship of the painting is acknowledged in the bottom left of the back cover of
“This book recounts the remarkable life of Rigoberta Menchú, a young Guatemalan peasant woman. Her story reflects the experiences common to many Indian communities in Latin America today. Rigoberta suffered gross injustice and hardship in her early life: her brother, father and mother were murdered by the Guatemalan military. She learned Spanish and turned her catechist work as an expression of political revolt as well as religious commitment.

The anthropologist Elisabeth Burgos-Debray, herself a Latin American woman, conducted a series of interviews with Rigoberta Menchú. The result is a book unique in contemporary literature which records the detail of everyday Indian life. Rigoberta’s gift for striking expression vividly conveys the religious and superstitious beliefs of her community, as well as the effects on her own thoughts on feminist and socialist ideas. Above all, these pages are illuminated by the enduring courage and passionate sense of justice of an extraordinary woman.” (First Edition, 1984: Back cover)


Whilst the back cover of the first edition acknowledges that the book is the result of a series of interviews between Menchú and Burgos, the second edition does not mention the ethnographer at any point, neither on its back nor its front cover as seen in Figure 6.7 and Figure 6.8. On the contrary, it actually highlights the narrative authority of Menchú by establishing that she is the one that “retells her life story”.
‘A fascinating and moving description of the culture of an entire people.’ *The Times*

‘The autobiography of a poor Guatemalan woman whose family was oppressed by light-skinned landowners and brutalized by right-wing soldiers has become a cornerstone of the multicultural canon over the last fifteen years.’
*Chronicle of Higher Education*

‘An extraordinary document.’
Francis Sejersted, Chairman of the Norwegian Nobel Committee

The remarkable life story of Guatemalan peasant woman Rigoberta Menchú, as she retells it here, reflects the tragic experiences of countless Indian communities in Latin America. Since its first publication more than twenty-five years ago, it has captured imaginations around the world with a harrowing account of military oppression, moral endurance, and the struggle for justice.

This new edition includes a further reading section, addressing the widespread discussions and debates that followed the original publication of *I, Rigoberta Menchú*.

Rigoberta Menchú received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992 for her efforts to end the oppression of indigenous peoples in Guatemala. Her memoir *Crossing Borders* is also available from Verso.

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Figure 6.8: Back cover of the second English edition as published by Verso (2009)
6.4.1. Frame Ambiguity and “The Secrets of Rigoberta”

One of the most cited and influential articles on the scholarship of testimonio, Doris Sommer (1996) is an insightful study on Menchú’s textual refusals to talk that defines them as calculated silences or secrets. Sommer argues that these strategic silences are not there to cut short our curiosity, but to incite it. She suggests that Menchú’s refusal to divulge all of her secrets is primarily performative, “it constructs metaleptically the apparent cause of the refusal: our craving to know. Before she denies us the satisfaction of learning her secrets, we may not be aware of any desire to grasp them” (Sommer, 1996: 34). Her narrative aims to make sure that the reader wants to know, but feels distanced from a knowledge that escapes them.

Sommer (1996) also acknowledges that one could naively argue that these silences might simply be a protest from the narrator to the ethnographer’s line of questioning. However, one should notice that these refusals to speak have survived the editing process from the taped interviews to the written text and remained as part of the final product. In fact, it is with a reminder to her well-kept secrets that both Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú and its English translation conclude, as illustrated in Table 6.3.

| ST6.1: “Pero sin embargo sigo ocultando mi identidad como indígena. Sigo ocultando lo que yo considero que nadie sabe, ni si quiera un antropólogo, ni un intelectual, por más que tenga muchos libros, no saben distinguir todos nuestros secretos” (1983: 271) | TT6.1: “Nevertheless, I am still keeping my Indian identity a secret. I’m still keeping secret what I think no-one should know. Not even anthropologists or intellectuals, no matter how many books they have, can find out all our secrets” (1984: 289) |

Table 6.3: What are Menchú’s secrets?

I agree with Sommer’s view that Menchú is using these secrets as a strategic tool to keep the distance with an incompetent reader.\(^{104}\) It is important to notice that Menchú,

\(^{104}\) Sommer (1994:523-551) describes how critics, as competent readers tend to treat the text as a command performance. She discusses how years of training reinforce a kind of
as most of the narrators of *testimonio*, does not have any ideal reader. A reader that does not identify Menchú as Other, for instance a member of her community from which she would not need to keep secrets, would be most likely illiterate or unable to speak/read in Spanish (Sommer, 1999: 130). Most importantly for this thesis, a Maya Quiché might be the ideal reader for Menchú’s personal discourse, but they will never be the ideal reader for a *testimonio*, a genre that has been constructed with the main goal of reaching an international audience and gaining their solidarity.

Sommer’s analysis of the textual refusals to speak in Menchú’s text has been widely included and frequently cited in other scholars’ works. However, I argue here that it is possible to expand on this strategic distance between the narrator and the reader, and claim that the ambiguity that characterises Menchú’s discourse in ST is not only a consequence of orality of the original discourse and her use of a language that she does not know well (Spanish), but an intentional textual strategy that keeps her readers from knowing too much, from appropriating and easily consuming her narrative, and from identifying with her. The difficulty the reader needs to overcome when going through this text, the frequent repetitions and halts in the fluency of the narrative, might as well be part of the construction of the text as a political tool (Arias, 2001: 77-82). Menchú’s secretive privileging of the unknown and the uncertain reflects a general strategy in the text to distance readers and frustrate their access to the truth. This strategy would help the narrator to avoid cultural and political exploitation of her community’s worldviews.

In his doctoral thesis, William J. Brown (2012) states that Menchú’s strategic silences, ambiguities and uncertainty could also be understood as attempts to mirror the entitlement to know the text, “possibly with the possessive and reproductive intimacy of Adam-who-knew-Eve” (Sommer, 1994: 524). However, some books resist the competent reader intentionally, by marking a distance between the reader and the text. The strategy of these books is to raise questions of access and welcome, and to produce a *readerly incompetence* that more reading will not be able to overcome.
feeling of uncertainty produced in Guatemala by the state’s rhetoric of fear and lack of access to official information as a strategy for social control (Brown, 2012: 96). Brown, whose focus is on the representations of violence and torture in Guatemalan literature, moves on to argue that Menchú does not seek to recreate this feeling of uncertainty but to counter and resist it. He acknowledges how this privileging of the uncertain and unknowable was limited exclusively to those chapters of her testimonio dealing with cultural practices of her community, and does not apply to her narrations of torture (Brown, 2012: 97). And finally, he claims that the use of vivid details in her narrations of torture aims to offset the previous distancing created by her secrets. Those passages provide sufficient detail for the reader to believe that they have attained complete and stable knowledge, that they are in front of an apparently undistorted truth.

It is, indeed, quite surprising for the reader of the Spanish version to see how the characteristic lack of fluency in Menchú’s discourse disappears in her narrative of torture that becomes very much a matter-of-fact rhetoric with a clear preponderance of details. Menchú’s does not seek here to horrify her readers and to distance them further, her descriptive narrative and steady tone is aimed to convince. As Zimmerman (1996) stated, perhaps it is actually the even tone of her narration of torture that her readers find most convincing, because Menchú is speaking from a condition that would be “absolutely traumatic and silencing from most of us” (Zimmerman, 1996: 112). It is here where she subverts the silencing of her people’s fears and challenges the unspeakability of violence. She provides the reader with a narrative that reads as a whole truth, as uncontested knowledge (regardless of its actual factuality).

At the same time, torture in Menchú’s narrative is given meaning. Regardless of the hyperbolic and senseless violence described in her narrative, Menchú does not depict it as an irrational act, but as a way for the Army to reach information on those that were considered subversive individuals and communists. This allows Menchú to build a
narrative that presents to the international reader these tortures not as irrational acts of fear but as purposeful violations of the law. This way, “rather than privilege[ing] the unknowing and anxiety created by extreme violence, Menchú turns the excessive use of pain into a public and international demand of support” (Brown, 2012: 117) against illegal use of force by the Guatemalan army. Similarly, by narrating not only these episodes of torture but also the response of her community, the empathic reaction of a crowd that felt compelled to respond confrontationally, organise themselves and even take arms against the State, Menchú ensures that her audience is also called to action. Her detailed descriptions of torture aim to generate a response in her audience that mirrors that of her community.

Menchú went to great lengths to make torture visible for her international readers. This emphasis on visibility and disclosure allow her rhetoric of torture to counter the state’s attempts to silence her community. Strong examples of her narration of torture are the chapter on her brother’s death, who was heavily tortured by the army and burnt alive in front of the whole family and the community, and that of her mother’s rape and torture to her death. Her mother’s body was never recovered. In these chapters, there is no place for ambiguity in her account of violence, which in the Spanish version creates a clear contradiction with other passages of her testimonio in which ambiguity, repetitions, and marks of orality reign. And it is here where the main difference between the Spanish and English version lies. Not only are the textual refusals to speak, i.e. the silences studied by Sommer, present in the English version; they are emphasised even by the exclusive use of the lexical term ‘secrets’. By contrast, “secrets,” the general lack of fluency of Menchú’s narrative that constantly distances her from the reader has otherwise been carefully wiped out by the translator, producing a text that is far easier to consume by the international market.
The translation of Menchú’s depiction of torture into English is very close to that of the Spanish version. Indeed, these are the passages in which the efforts to create fluency on the part of the translator were not that necessary. However, a comparison between both versions allows the reader to question how well-kept were Menchú’s secrets in the English version, if we consider these silences as strategic rhetorical tools to keep her audience from knowing/from easily identifying with the narrator. The need of the Western reader to access the Other encouraged a translation that promotes a much more fluent narrative, that maintains Menchú’s textual references to her silences but frequently betrays her needs for distance, for alliance and collaboration, but not for identification.

6.4.2. Selective Appropriation and the Critical Reception of Gender

Similarly, one can observe the imposed needs and preferences of a Western reader in the selection of topics that have been studied in relation to this text. Although hundreds of articles and dozens of very important anthologies and books have been produced on I, Rigoberta Menchú, only an alarmingly small number of scholar have paid any attention to its representations of gender (Bañales, 2014: 363-4). Menchú’s testimonio has therefore been widely read as representative of a “racial, ethnic, national, cultural, and/or class-based collective community,” always at the expense of gender and sexuality.105

Translocalities/Translocalidades (Alvarez et al., 2014) includes one of the most recent scholarly works around Menchú’s testimonio. In her chapter, Victoria Bañales (2014) questions the reasons behind academia’s decision to sidestep the issue of gender when it comes to I, Rigoberta Menchú (1985). I present here an overview of Bañales’

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105 Examples of scholars that have drawn attention to representation of gender in relation to Menchú’s testimonio are: Marín, 1991; Sternbach, 1991; Bueno, 2000; Matthews, 2000; Smith, 2010; Fernández-Olmos, 1989; Cantero-Rosaless, 2003; Bañales, 2014.
propositions, with whom I agree, but most importantly I aim to add another piece to this already complicated puzzle. I argue that, regardless of the attention paid by scholars to the struggle of the subaltern to speak, or to the “secrets” that the narrator of *testimonio* might keep to distance herself from the readers, the reception of Menchú’s work has itself been part of a process of selective consumption. In order to do so, the following subsections present excerpts from both ST and TT that illustrate how the practice of translation has had a considerable impact in reinforcing, if not generating, the academic de-emphasising of gender when it comes to the critical reception of this particular *testimonio*.

Bañales suggests that part of the problem “no doubt stems from the false opposition set up between dominant notions of collectivity (as the overlooking of difference) and differences (as the forfeiting of collectivity)” (Bañales, 2014: 365). As a genre, most *testimonios* literally and figuratively claim to represent not only the experiences of the narrator but those of larger communities, and Menchú’s text is no exception. Thus, in a world constructed through binaries, this tendency to overemphasise the plurality and collectivity often serves as an effective way to efface the individuality (and in this case gender) of the author (Bueno, 2000: 119). Menchú’s favouring of her identity as representative of her community over her own individuality is a textual strategy that, although present in ST at times, has been further overemphasised in TT, as exemplified by Table 6.4.
Table 6.4: Overemphasising representativity in TT

As observed in Table 6.4, TT6.2 marks in italics the pronoun “my” and emphasises that this is not only Menchú’s life, but the testimony of her people. On the other hand, in ST6.2 the narrative maintains that this story is a living testimony, one that has grown with Menchú, one that she has learnt as part of a collective adventure with her people. Similarly at the end of the excerpt in TT6.2, it explicitly states that Menchú’s story is that of all the poor Guatemalans, whilst ST highlights that she is not the only one living under these circumstances, that this is the life of all the poor people in Guatemala, and that she is going to tell her part of the story. Thus, without denying the collective and denouncing nature of testimonio as a genre, it is important to acknowledge the ways in which the translation into English, or second moment of intervention, has affected the reception of this work and overemphasised the representativeness of Menchú in order for her to fit this image of the idealised witness.

In addition to this, there is no need for sameness (the community) and difference (gender) to be these mutually exclusive categories. It is possible to read Menchú’s testimonio as both emblematic for a larger community and specific to Maya women’s
issues (Bañales, 2014: 365). Western academia could and should have resisted this tendency to present gender and collective indigenous forms of resistance as irreconcilable struggles. An analysis that rethinks dominant notions of collectivity and difference would promote a reading of the participation of Mayan women in the revolution not simply as ethnic selves, but as gendered ethnic subjects. In this way, their status of women is not something to be erased from the field of struggle, but something that fuels their people’s collective resistance (Bañales, 2014: 364).

This tension between notions of collectivity and difference had already been observed by Lynda Marín (1991) in her studies of Latin American women’s testimonios. Marín stated that gender needs to be understood as a critical instrument in the rewriting of the history in which the genre of testimonio is embedded. It is important to read these texts negotiating the tension between their “stated project” – to speak in a unified way for their struggling and suffering people – and their “unstated project” – to do that whilst highlighting the inequalities that women endure in their cultures (Marín, 1991: 55). In brief, testimonial subjects do encompass gendered subjectivities, and generally their voices and experiences would have been discursively and ideologically shaped by the construction of gender in which they are culturally and socially located (Bañales, 2014: 366). Therefore, the fact that Menchú repeatedly echoes the notion of a collective and communal struggle should have not impeded more gendered analyses of her work. In fact, this has not even been the case for other testimonios written by Latin American women, which have indeed received gender readings, i.e. the critical analysis of the representations of gender transgressions in Alegría’s They Won’t Take Me Alive by feminist scholars such as Ileana Rodríguez (1994) or Laura Barbas-Rhoden (2003), as demonstrated in Chapter 4.
6.4.3. Framing the Interplay between Menchú’s Personal Narratives of Female Subjectivity and Motherhood and a Public Narrative of Indigenous Resistance

Consequently, one could go on to speculate that the reason behind a lack of engagement with issues of gender in this particular text has not so much to do with the collective nature of the genre of *testimonio*, and more with the fact that Menchú’s life narrative does not emphasise enough gender differences. But the truth of the matter is that Menchú elaborates and widely discusses gender representations through her life narrative. She not only develops several representations of women in the text – as mothers, exploited workers, targets of (sexual) violence, participants in the armed struggle and so on – but her text itself exhibits an incredible ability to actively respond to, resist, complicate and counter the same contradictions that are present in her construction of gender roles via other representations.

In her chapter “Birthing Ceremonies”, Menchú states that male babies are expected to face deeper hardships in life, promoting a sexual division of labour – where men are relegated to the work sphere and women tend to the family. However, Menchú’s account of the lives of women contradicts this idea. Indigenous women do not only work at home and take care of the family, but they also work outside, i.e. in the *fincas* alongside of men and/or serving at the houses of *ladino* families.

Similarly, the narrative built by Menchú in the chapter “Birthing Ceremonies” does not seem to match her account of her own experience. Even though boys are supposed to have more outdoor privileges, it is Menchú the one that travels with her father instead of her brothers, and from a very young age. Similarly, Menchú presents an even stronger transgression to traditional gender roles through her choice not to marry or bear children, which she discusses in some length in her *testimonio*. 
In fact, it is not only Menchú’s self-representation that does not match traditional
gender roles, but most of her representations of women. If we look at other aspects of
women’s lives represented in Menchú’s testimonio – such as the high mortality of
children, the deep suffering of mothers, rape and other forms of torture used against
women by military men, the hardships of work in the fincas, whilst carrying small
children in their backs and nursing them in any work interval they manage to get – these
notions of male versus female hardship become rather relative and highly problematic to
maintain.

Therefore, in terms of the socio-narrative approach taken in this thesis, Menchú’s
personal narrative of female subjectivity contradicts and resists the public narrative that
her indigenous community maintains around gender representations. This can be
observed in the way Menchú’s testimonio does not construct women only as victims and
mothers. Although the suffering mother is a frequent participant of her narrative, she also
repeatedly demonstrates the role of women within the (armed) resistance. She describes
cases of both young girls and older women who face the soldiers, risking their lives or at
a minimum being raped, and disarm them.

Given the dominant narrative around gun, masculinity and power, the fact that the
soldiers are captured and neutralised not by armed male guerrillas but by unarmed
indigenous women demonstrates how Menchú’s testimonio develops very explicit
“gender transgressions to illustrate that binary constructs such as ladino and indigenous,
feminine and masculine, public and private, and active and passive are never as stable as
they are made out to be in the dominant discourses” (Bañales, 2014: 374). The women’s
appropriation and usage of the soldiers’ weapons subverts dominant patriarchal and
patriotic imaginings by breaking the link between the gun and ladino masculine power,
and it demonstrates the ways in which indigenous women can and indeed have extracted
some power of resistance from such a phallic weapon.
Moreover, and even when the activist role of Menchú’s father, Vicente Menchú, is undeniable, her mother also took active part in the struggle. In fact, Menchú’s role in the revolution is authorised and supported in her account by both her father and her mother. Menchú’s mother, Juana Tum, repeatedly reminds her that her duties as a woman are also to serve the political needs of the community. And these words not only point to a strong affirmation of indigenous women’s equal participation in the struggle, but also to the fact that this equality doesn’t go through ascribing to male standards of sameness. Menchú’s mother advocates the equal participation of indigenous women as “women”, rather than as or like men. There is no need for women to leave their gender behind in order to join their fathers, brothers, sons and husbands in a struggle of genderless bodies, they should be encouraged to help their community as “women” (Bañales, 2014: 376).

Although, this text provides its readers with representations that undeniably reflect an autonomous and revolutionary feminist praxis, Menchú’s testimonio “can hardly be labelled as feminist by Western standards” (Bañales, 2014: 367). Moreover, Menchú herself is quite critical of Western forms of liberal feminism, and this is something that embeds her text.

Thus, it is easy to imagine how feminist critics might enjoy the multiple textual representations of revolutionary indigenous women, but they will most likely find themselves rather vexed by other textual moments (i.e. the chapter on birthing ceremonies) in which gender relations are not so favourably represented, particularly because although machismo is explicitly critiqued in the text, some might feel that it is done insufficiently (Bañales, 2014: 367). Bañales states that here that machismo is “quite often explained as a nontroubling aspect within the community or as a cultural phenomenon that simply is” and chooses the following excerpt from the chapter “Birthing Ceremonies”, included in Table 6.5 to prove her point:
**Table 6.5: Comparison of the narration of Birthing Ceremonies in ST and TT**

Even though Menchú acknowledges the presence of *machismo* within the community both in ST and TT and somehow minimises its consequences, I argue that

| ST6.3: “Pero cuando es niño el que nace, tiene una celebración especial, no es porque sea hombre, sino por lo duro que es su trabajo, por toda la responsabilidad que el hombre tiene que tener como hombre. Ahora, para nosotros no es tanto que el machismo no exista, pero no es un elemento dificultoso en la comunidad ya que de hecho vamos a tomar en cuenta las costumbres. Entonces, al hombre se le da un día más de la pureza que tiene que estar con su madre. Al varoncito se le mata una oveja o se le da pollos porque es la comida más común entre nosotros para celebrar la llegada de un niño. Al hombre se le tiene que dar más, la comida se aumenta por todo su trabajo, que será difícil, por toda su responsabilidad. Y al mismo tiempo es un poco como el jefe de la casa, pero no es en el mal sentido de la palabra, sino es algo que tiene que responder con montones de cosas. No es tampoco despreciar la mujercita. También tiene duros trabajos, pero hay otros detalles que también se le dan a la mujercita como madre, pues. En primer lugar, la niñita tiene valor como algo de la tierra, que da su maíz, que da su fríjol, que da sus yerbas, que da todo. La tierra es como una madre que multiplica la vida del hombre. También la niña tiene que multiplicar la vida de los demás hombres de nuestra generación y precisamente de nuestros antepasados que los tenemos que respetar. Se le da una integración a la niña muy importante pero al hombre también, entonces, es relacionado, es relativo y es compatible de los dos. Sin embargo, al nacer, el hombrecito tiene una alegría más y los hombres son los que se sienten más orgullosos cuando nace un niño en la comunidad” (1983: 35-36). |
| TT6.3: “When a male child is born, there are special celebrations, not because he is male but because of all the hard work and responsibility he’ll have as a man. It’s not that machismo doesn’t exist among our people, but it doesn’t present a problem for the community because it’s so much of our way of life. The male child is given an extra day alone with his mother. The usual custom is to celebrate a male child by killing a sheep or some chickens. Boys are given more, they get more food because their work is harder and they have more responsibility. At the same time, he is head of the household, not in the bad sense of the word, but because he is responsible for so many things. This doesn’t mean girls aren’t valued. Their work is hard too and there are other things that are due to them as mothers. Girls are valued because they are part of the earth, which give us maize, beans, plants and everything we live on. The earth is like a mother that multiplies life. So the child will multiply the life of our generation and of our ancestors whom we must respect. The girl and the boy are both integrated in the community in equally important ways, the two are inter-related and compatible. Nevertheless, the community is always happier when a male child is born and the men feel much prouder” (1984: 15-16). |
ST6.3 is never stating that *machismo* is such a big part of the community that it does not present a problem for their members, as it is translated in TT6.3. On the contrary, ST6.3 argues that even though there is *machismo* in her community, it is not such a central issue when it comes to the rituals and ceremonies since in fact their members are going to follow their ancestral ways/ customs. In other words, Menchú is only referring to the context of the ceremonies, and not generalising to include the whole of the community life. Moreover, nowhere does ST6.3 state that the community is always happier with the birth of a male child. Menchú’s words are much more ambiguous; in fact, it is possible that she is still talking about the extra day that the male baby has with his mother when she states that “el hombrecito tiene una alegría más”. And finally, ST6.3 does not state that men feel much prouder when a male child is born than when a female child is, but that men are the ones that feel prouder when a male child is born in their community.

Even without the overemphasisation of the English translation, it cannot be said that representations like these, in which gender contradictions are paramount, are not likely to cause high levels of discomfort in First World feminist critics. They might still feel torn between a need to critique and draw attention to the patriarchal tendencies within these customs and a desire to do so in a way that respects Maya worldviews and cultural differences. Bañales seems to indicate that in most cases these readers decide to ignore these gender contradictions, “allowing them to remain untranslatable” (Bañales, 2014: 369). She also argues that, just as Menchú sometimes chooses to deemphasise the gendered aspects of these rituals, focusing instead in their deep cultural and historical value for indigenous survival, scholars in solidarity with this text might decide to do the same.

However, and regardless of the intentional strategy at play here, the silencing of these gender issues in the critical reception of this *testimonio* does not come without its shortcomings. Firstly, not dealing with gender by engaging in selective and safer forms
of analyses could be in itself a form or reverse paternalism. It is a type of misguided anti-racism by which academics might project their own desires and fears into the text, whereby Menchú becomes the “idealised other” (Bañales, 2014: 370). Along similar lines, Eva P. Bueno (2000: 119) discusses the problematic ways in which North American academics choose and exalt texts that fit certain parameters while rejecting others. Bueno focuses on the way in which Angloamerican critics keep drawing attention to texts that represent the natural goodness and the “nobility of the Indian.” In that sense, *I, Rigoberta Menchú* might satiate a scholar’s longings for a perfect witness subject, a communal being with no individuality, much less a gender (Bueno, 2000: 131).

Nonetheless, this does not mean that Menchú’s *testimonio* inherently welcomes or generates this type of analyses, but that a selective reading process – in which particular aspects of the text are exalted and others (those that not fit the parameters that well) are actively ignored/repressed – is being undertaken by Western critics. To illustrate this process, I am taking as an example David Stoll’s research, which generated a tremendous controversy and fuelled extensive debate and a large number of articles, responses and scholarly work. As established by Irene Matthews (2000), in concentrating on the history of interfamily rivalries over land tenure and on details of whom in Menchú’s immediate family died exactly which sort of horrible death, Stoll’s book scarcely mentions the sexual atrocities and crimes against women that plague Menchú’s account. He also chooses not to discuss Menchú’s depiction of women acting on their own behalf, to resist this violence or even to incite retaliatory violence against their aggressors (Matthews, 2000: 93). Similarly, even though Stoll acknowledges that Menchú’s mother was raped, his work does not attempt to interpret the significance of rape or any other tactic of war in the treatment of women, prisoners and civilians. In his account of a period in which many Maya Guatemalans suffered from the most horrific atrocities, Stoll does not even include the term rape in the index of his book.
Silencing or disavowing certain parts of Menchú’s *testimonio*, just because they could prove controversial or culturally sensitive, is but another failure to let the subaltern speak on her own terms. The authority to decide where, when and what is appropriate for Menchú to speak about should not lie in her Western readers, their (good) intention notwithstanding. Regardless of its sometimes contradictory or problematic representations of gender, Menchú’s *testimonio* exemplifies women’s participation in the struggle, asserting their subjective presence, their political agency, their resistance and their deep cultural affirmation. Consistently ignoring or downplaying the role of gender in this text has allowed to get lost in translation Menchú’s disruption of dominant narratives of gender and sexuality as represented in the ladino patriarchal racist ideologies and institutions and her attempt to re-tell history.

6.5. Menchú’s Memoir. Writing and Translating as a Socio-Narrative Response to Canonisation

Fifteen years after the first edition of *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú* (1983) and the international attention and recognition that both Menchú and her *testimonio* received in the 1980s and early 1990s, her memoir *Rigoberta: La nieta de los Mayas* was released in 1998 and immediately translated into English. However, in comparison to its predecessor *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (1984), this text has been widely sidestepped by academics (Varas, 2011: 330).

I have already ventured that Menchú’s memoir has been mediated by the process of canonisation of her previous *testimonio.* In more concrete terms, I argue that this text serves as an imagined response to a more dominant narrative, i.e., that of *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (1984) and its critical reception in the Angloamerican context.

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106 See Section 5.4.
Moreover, a comparison between *Rigoberta: Nieta de los Mayas* (1998) and its English translation will explore the ways in which both texts differ in the narratives that they aim to answer to, arguably as a consequence of the process of renarration suffered by Menchú’s *testimonio* during its canonisation.

### 6.5.1. The Impact of Framing on Questions of Authorship and Authority

Its cover is logically the first thing that we perceive from a book, and therefore the translation of its title and other editorial decisions – such as the selection of fonts and the inclusion of a particular image – will have a drastic impact on our first impression of the text. *Rigoberta, Nieta de los Mayas* (1998a) has been translated into English as *Crossing Borders* (1998b). In this way, the attention is drawn from Menchú’s origins and her self-characterisation as heiress of her Maya ancestors to Menchú’s status as a privileged citizen and international political agent after the publication of her *testimonio* and her receiving of a Nobel Peace Prize. Reinforcing the relevance of Menchú’s international influence and her constant travels, the back cover of TT includes an illustration of the skyscrapers of a Westerner city. Moreover, as we can observe in Figure 6.9 the translated text opts again for a colourful illustration of Menchú as part of its cover and bright yellow letters for its title.
On the other hand, Figure 6.10 shows how ST chose a more serious font of letters for its title and a close-shot photograph of Menchú. The editorial decisions around the covers of ST and TT in both Menchú’s testimonio and her memoir seem to follow the same trend. In the two cases, TT opts for a colourful and animated illustration of Menchú whilst ST chooses and actual photo of the indigenous activist.
Furthermore, as I elaborated in Section 6.3, the process of canonisation of Menchú’s *testimonio* included at least three moments of intervention or opportunities for renarration. I also established that although the first moment, frequently understood by scholars exclusively as the mediation of the ethnographer, has been largely studied by the critics, the second one or the intervention of the translation has been widely ignored. Through their analyses of *testimonio* as a mediated text and critical readings of the figure of the ethnographer, critics of this genre have enjoyed the opportunity to debate over issues of authorship and authority.

In Section 6.4, I examined how the debate around issues of authorship of this text had been also framed by distinct paratextual decisions in ST and TT. Similarly in the case of *Rigoberta, Nieta de los Mayas* (1998), its front cover presents Rigoberta Menchú as author in collaboration with Dante Liano and Gianni Minà, as seen in Figure 6.10. On the other hand, the English translation erases the presence of those two contributors and places Menchú as only author. This has led Margaret Randall to state in her review of *Crossing borders* (1998b) that: “now Rigoberta Menchú has published a second book, this one written on her own” (Randall, 1998: 23). Interestingly enough, TT recognizes Ann Wright as both translator and editor. The status of Wright as editor of the text might help explain some of the more radical editorial decisions in TT, for instance where the organisation and content of chapters divert from that of the original.

Moreover, whilst ST includes several introductory/ additional materials, TT eliminates all of them and only includes a Translator’s Note (1998b: vii-ix) and a map of Central America. The translator’s note in *Crossing Borders* (1998b) not only reminds the

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reader of the “Translator’s note” of *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (1984), but also it does explicitly refer to the famous *testimonio*.

**TT6.4:** “Doña Rigoberta’s first narrative was coloured by the influence of the linguistic constructions and her native K’iche’ on her newly learned Spanish. The same influence is felt in parts of her second book about her family, the natural world, and Mayan customs and traditions. Here again, by following some repetitions of the syntax and phrasing I have tried to keep the flavour of her speech and preserve its poetry and passion. The parts of the book, however, which dealt with more abstract concepts at the UN and the wider social and political struggle, reflect the many years Doña Rigoberta has now worked in Spanish. Here, I have tried to make the translation much more compact and concise. These different approaches explain some of the unevenness in the translated text, wavering as it does between the quite literal and a freer form” (1998b: vii-viii).

**Table 6.6: Excerpt of the “Translator’s note” in TT *Crossing Borders* (1998b).**

Moreover, as illustrated by Table 6.6, this paratext briefly explains how the translator has approached the text in different ways depending on the topic being treated. I argue that making this distinction serves on the one hand to exoticise and peripheralise further those parts in which the translator has decided to maintain some of the well-known syntactic repetitions and original phrasing to “keep the flavour of Menchú’s speech”. And on the other hand, her approach to the second part mirrors the needs for identification and easy consumption of Westerner, and more specifically Anglophone, readers when it comes to *testimonio*. In brief, even as the “translation domesticates Menchú for an English audience, it carries on the old pattern of ethnicizing her as a figure of childlike innocence” (Damrosch, 2003: 255), as seen in Figure 6.9.

David Damrosch (2003) notes how *Crossing Borders* (1998b) systematically “undoes Menchú’s framing of the book and makes major changes in organisation, content and style throughout” (Damrosch, 2003: 252). Thus, the following sections explore the ways in which TT frequently shifts and reframes Menchú’s original narrative in order to meet the expectations of the centre, and potentially act as a better response to the canonised text *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (1984).
6.5.2. Impact of Frame Ambiguity on Issues of Representativity

In both texts, her *testimonio* and her memoir, Menchú carries a double burden: on the one hand, she needs to tell what she knows, what she witnessed, she has an ethical responsibility to denounce the horrors suffered by her people; on the other hand, Menchú acts as keeper of silences for her community. This forces Menchú to make constant and active decisions regarding what she should tell her Western audience and what needs to be kept from them. In Subsection 6.4.1, I have already discussed how the translation into English of her *testimonio* consistently resolved the “frame ambiguity” maintained in the Spanish version, making the text easier to consume by the foreign reader, but also losing Menchú’s ability to use these ambiguities and silences as a way of highlighting the precision in her narrations of torture.

Varas (2013: 168-169) claims that in Menchú’s *testimonio* there is an effort to remember correctly, even if this is unverifiable. In the urgency of the moment, Menchú would have sought to denounce the struggles of her people as truthfully and objectively as possible. She would be trying to recount history, not just her memory. In any case, those issues of representativity and truth widely debated over in Menchú’s *testimonio* do not seem to hold so much weight when studying her memoir, since scholars might not force this text into such a legalistic frame.

Even though in both texts Menchú values direct experience of (traumatic) events and uses them as means to validate her narrative, her arguments are still constructed through different textual devices. Varas (2011: 332) states that whilst Menchú’s *testimonio* was dominated by metonymy, her memoir makes a more central use of metaphors to help the narrative build over opposites such as the personal and the political, or the individual and the collective. If in Menchú’s *testimonio*, the deaths of her

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108 The concept of “frame ambiguity” (Goffman, 1994) was introduced in Section 3.5.
mother and brother were narrated in traumatising detail, Varas argues that “in her memoir these episodes acquire an almost mythic dimension, as she reconnects with her mother’s dreams and foreboding” (Varas, 2013: 169). She also highlights here how there are several instances in which Menchú uses magic as a mnemonic technique to reconstruct her traumatic narrative, particularly in relation to her mother. As such, Menchú explicitly explains in her memoir, how she did not feel capable to talk about her mother in her testimonio (although she describes her torture, rape and murder in detail), and how she has grown closer to the idea of her mother after her death. She feels that although she never understood her mother completely, she was indeed a constant element in her life, a helpful teacher. She even expands on how she still dreams about her, and how she asks her for help when she faces the most difficult moments.

6.5.3. Causal Emplotment and Selective Appropriation in Menchú’s Personal Narrative of Motherhood and Female Subjectivity

The narrative of motherhood is largely developed in ST in “La madre y la tierra” – chapter four of Rigoberta Menchú, Nieta de los Mayas. The title of this chapter is translated in TT as “The Legacy of My Parents and My Village”. Their content is similar, and even though in TT Menchú does describe her relationship with her family, she does so focusing primarily in the role of her mother and of women in general.

In the case of chapter four, in both texts, Menchú expands on her representation of motherhood and womanhood, through an exploration of the character of her mother and the relationship she had with her. At the same time, this chapter is built around premonitions (Menchú narrates how her mother reads an episode with bees as a forewarning of a danger for the family weeks before Patrocinio’s death. She also states how she had precognizant dreams before the death of her mother and father), dreams
(Menchú explains in more than one occasion how she can talk to her mother in her dreams and get advice from her) and myths (Menchú talks about the Maya myth of the nagual/nawaal).

This chapter is evidently a good example of how metaphors take a central role in Menchú’s memoir. At the same time, this particular organisation of events creates a relation of causal emplotment that gives weight to the construction of womanhood as linked to narratives of nature, the magic of dreams and premonitions. A narrative of female subjectivity, that unlike that of her testimonio, brings to mind the one conveyed by Belli in *La mujer habitada* (1988) and *El país bajo mi piel* (2001). Moreover, Menchú’s mother in her role of midwife, healer and shaman seems to embody this ideal of womanhood even further:

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ST6.5: “Tenía razón mi madre cuando decía que sus manos eran grandes e invisibles. Con esas manos recibía al mundo las criaturas, desnudas, desconcertadas, arrastrando un gran ombligo. Pues nacimos en el vacío y nuestro primer contacto con el mundo es con las manos de la partera y de esas manos se pasa a enterrar el ombligo en la tierra para que eche raíz. Todo esto lo explicaban mamá y nuestros abuelos” (Menchú, 1998a: 114)
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Table 6.7: Menchú’s identification of women as mothers

The above-mentioned identification of women as mothers, and the connection between women and nature, is highlighted in ST by the title in ST “La madre y la tierra” and neutralised in TT. It is crucial to note how Menchú’s understanding of womanhood has been constructed in relation to that of motherhood. Even though in her testimonio, she chose to actively participate in the struggle at the expense of the possibility of marriage and maternity, she frequently talks about women as mothers, and even use the terms rather indistinctively. For instance, she narrates how the “mothers” of

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109 See Sections 4.8, 4.9, 5.6 and 5.8.
110 It has been translated as “The Legacy of My Family and My Village”
the community talked to a captured soldier, when one could assume that she is indeed referring to the women in that community.  

Varas (2011) establishes how Menchú’s relationship with the concept of motherhood in her *testimonio* is indeed complex. She never rejects her mother, but she frequently identifies women’s bodies with the abject and maternity with a process that, far from reinforcing women’s agency, can be described as never-ending suffering and sacrifice for her children and community (Varas, 2011: 342). I agree that Menchú frequently identifies women with mothers, but I argue that the connection between the role of mothers and the act of suffering is in fact a product of causal emplotment in her narrative: her *testimonio* describes initially the high rates of childhood mortality in Guatemala, later the hardship suffered of indigenous peoples and finally the military oppression with which they struggled. In this context it is easy to identify women with widows, grieving mothers, etc…

In *Rigoberta, La Nieta de los Mayas* (1998a), Menchú finds an opportunity to expand on the role of women and highlight the importance of gender in her discourse, as seen in Table 6.8.

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111 “Todas las madres de la comunidad pasaron frente al soldado, después los hombres también le rogaron que fuera a contar su experiencia al ejército” (1983: 164)
ST6.6: Mi madre representa a la mujer y al indígena. Ella representa una doble marginalización. Las mujeres y los indígenas hemos sido los incomprendidos. Esto constituye una deuda impagable porque hay cosas que jamás podrán restituirse. Sin embargo tengo mucha esperanza de que mujeres e indígenas podrán incidir decisivamente; quizá en otra época de la humanidad (…) Soy nieta de los mayas y creo que hay cosas que cambiarán más adelante. Las mujeres hoy cobran gran importancia en muchos campos. Las mujeres han desafiado dictaduras desde condiciones desiguales y parece que podrán desafiar, más adelante, la impunidad a escala mundial. La impunidad es un arma de guerra local y también se eleva a escala mundial. Las mujeres, por haber sido madres de tantos desaparecidos sobre la Tierra y de tantos niños de la calle y por haber sido madres de tanta generación perdida en la droga, por haber sido madres de los que destruyen la Tierra, cómo no van a sufrir, cómo no van a sentir. Así la lucha de los indígenas nace de algo que no se puede decir, algo que está más allá de la locura y de la ideología (1998a: 130)

TT6.6: My mother is a symbol of women and of indigenous people. She personifies two kinds of discrimination. Women and indigenous peoples have both been mistreated. It is a debt that cannot be repaired, because there are ills that can never be undone. Yet I have every hope that women and indigenous peoples will come into their own one day, perhaps at another point in history (…) I’m a grandchild of the Mayans and I believe that someday things will be different. Women now have influence in many spheres. Ordinary women have challenged dictatorships, and perhaps they can go on to challenge injustice all over the world. Women are the mothers of the “disappeared”, the mothers of the street children, the mothers of young people destroyed by drugs. They are also the mothers of people who destroy the land. How can they not suffer, how can they not feel? (1998b: 87)

Table 6.8: Treatment of gender and racial representations in ST and TT

In Table 6.8, one can observe how Menchú negotiates her identity as an indigenous woman. ST6.6 declares that Menchú’s mother has been doubly marginalised and in this way Menchú seems to weave gender and ethnic issues together. In TT6.6, however, there is a tendency to frame these two sides of Menchú’s identity as somehow separated. In TT6.6 Menchú’s mother is a symbol of women and a symbol of indigenous people. As such she suffers two different kinds of discrimination. But, unlike in ST6.6, those two identities and those two kinds of discrimination are renarrated in a way that prevents them from reading as interactive.

Once again women are here identified as mothers of all, including those who suffer and those who inflict pain. As such, “how can they not suffer? How can they not...
feel?” (Menchú, 1998b: 87). Interestingly enough, even though in her political narratives she keeps highlighting the way in which women/mothers capacity of feeling seems to be limited to that of suffering, in this second book Menchú is no longer rejecting marriage and motherhood as she did in her testimonio. Contrarily, she is enjoying her role as wife and mother – her family being the topic of the first chapter in both ST and TT.

Moreover, even though the narrative in Menchú’s memoir – unlike that of her testimonio – is rather fluent and academic, it is still possible to observe how TT keeps resolving some of the ambiguities still present in the ST. In the final lines of Table 6.8, we see how Menchú’s reference to the indigenous struggle is erased, making her narrative: (i) cleaner and easier to read, and (ii) resonating with the aforementioned distance that TT seems to create between both of Menchú’s identities, as a woman and as an indigenous person. This same resolution of ambiguities can be seen at the end of Table 6.9, where TT6.7 clarifies that indigenous men pay as dearly for their mistakes as indigenous women. This seems to be a statement of sameness among genders. Contrarily in ST6.7, one could read that indigenous women are in a position in which as public figures they will pay for their mistakes dearly, and that this is something that in general happens to all indigenous people, in brief to any subaltern that may try to speak. Thus, in ST is not so much a question of sameness among genders, but of sameness among subalterns.
ST6.7: “Los movimientos de liberación dieron otro enfoque, pero no tuvieron una verdadera comprensión de la lucha de las mujeres y de la lucha de los pueblos indígenas. Entender la miseria y la pobreza como algo injusto y luchar porque haya igualdad social, eso se ha dado. Y nadie puede negar que esta profunda conciencia social abrió una gran brecha hacia la democratización. Pero no en la misma medida para las mujeres y los indígenas (…)”

Yo no estoy subestimando papeles de mujeres en el continente americano. Hay mujeres que han desafiado y que están presentes en la lucha, pero estar presentes como mujeres no significa entender el derecho del género, no significa entender una lucha de género. Tampoco significa lograr la plenitud del respeto. O lograr la plena, activa y efectiva participación a todo nivel. Por experiencia propia yo pienso que es muy difícil hacer prevalecer tus inquietudes, tus ideas y tu papel frente a los compañeros. Ellos en un determinado momento, si no se pueden valer de otra cosa se dicen: “Esas son cosas de mujeres.” No digamos las enormes dificultades que encontramos las mujeres indígenas que estamos en función pública. Nuestros errores los pagamos inmensamente caros. Esto es la misma realidad para cualquier indígena (1998a: 131-132)

TT6.7: “The liberation movements took a different approach, but they had no real understanding of the struggles of women and indigenous people either. They understood that privation and poverty were unjust, and they knew that they had to fight for social equality. No one can deny that this profound social awareness marked a big breakthrough towards democratisation. Yet it did not affect the position of women and indigenous people (…).

I’m not denying the contribution of some exceptional women on our continent, women who have taken up the challenge and joined the struggle. Yet the presence of women doesn’t necessarily mean they grasp what is involved in a campaign for women’s rights. Nor does it mean that they are respected, or allowed to participate actively and effectively at every level.

From personal experience, I know that it is hard to get your compañeros to accept your concerns, your ideas and your role. There comes a point when, if they can’t think of anything better to say, they tell you: “Those are women’s problems.” As for the huge problems that we indigenous people women face in public life, we pay dearly for our mistakes! So do indigenous men (1998b: 88)

| Table 6.9: The narration of women’s roles in the Central American liberation movements. |
| As illustrated by Table 6.9, Menchú analyses the role of women within the liberation movements of Central America in chapter four of her memoir. She not only discusses gender issues in more depth than in her testimonio, but she is also more critical towards what these revolutionary projects did for women. In this sense, she clarifies that she is no way minimising the role of women in the struggle, but that their presence does not necessarily mean that gender issues are being addressed. TT seems to highlight this |
problem by resolving the ambiguity kept in ST and declaring that “the presence of women (in these political movements) does not necessarily mean that they grasp what is involved in a campaign for women’s rights”. I argue here that labelling Menchú’s “lucha de género” as “a campaign for women’s rights” is indeed a very limiting and Westerner way of reading Menchú’s words.

In chapter six “El Tinte Maya” that was translated as chapter ten “The Mayan Spirit” in TT, Menchú talks again about her experience as an indigenous woman in politics, particularly after the Nobel Prize. She explains how people in power tried to intimidate her in Guatemala, not only threatening her life but also using the media to undermine her role.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>ST6.8</strong></th>
<th><strong>TT6.8</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tengo que temer no sólo la muerte sino a la posibilidad del hostigamiento político por parte de los sectores que jamás podrán tolerar la presencia destacada de una indígena en política. Les cuesta compartir escenario conmigo, pero yo no tengo la culpa, ni tengo ganas de hacerme a un lado (…) En las poquísimas ocasiones en las que recibo una tarjeta de invitación para un acto oficial de los gobernantes, dice que debo llevar traje oscuro. O se equivocaron de puerta, o se olvidaron de que yo soy multicolor y estoy muy orgullosa de serlo (1998a: 177-178)</td>
<td>Not only do I have to fear being killed, I also have to worry about political harassment from those who cannot tolerate the presence of an indigenous woman in politics. It is hard for them to share a platform with me. (…) On the few occasions that I have received an invitation to an official government function, it always specifies that I should wear a dark-coloured dress. Either they have sent the invitation to the wrong address or they have forgotten that I and my clothes are multicoloured – and proud of it (1998b: 192)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 6.10: Discussion of Menchú’s role as an indigenous woman in politics.**

*Crossing Borders* (1998b) further underlines the “Otherness” of Menchú in the face of the media, particularly the international one, by adding to TT6.8 in Table 6.10, the following paragraph that was never included in the original text.

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112 The chapters of Menchú’s memoir do not follow a chronological order, and the organisation of chapters in TT differs slightly from that of ST.
“Journalists and generous admirers have often asked me whether the Nobel Peace Prize has changed my life. On one occasion, I said, “Of course it has changed my life, it has opened a great door and I have been lucky enough to pass through it”. It really did change my life, yet it was never going to change it that much. Quite simply, I have always had the same face, the face of a poor indigenous woman, and there is no way in which I can change that. The Nobel Prize is for life, but so too are my beliefs and my origins” (1998b: 192).

Table 6.11: New paragraph added to Crossing Borders (1998b)

This way, TT6.9 is not only referring to Menchú’s colourful clothes as a part of her appearance that differentiates her as an indigenous woman in political circles (as observed in Table 6.11), but also to her facial features that mark her indigenous and poor origins.

In this same chapter of Rigoberta: Nieta de los Mayas (1998a), Menchú goes on to explain how even though her voice is not always welcome, her status of Nobel Prize winner has made her into a privileged citizen of the world. By placing her discussion of other international conflicts, such as the one in the former Yugoslavia, in the same chapter in which she analyzes her own role in politics, she activates for the Spanish reader a framing strategy that links the situation of Guatemalan indigenous women and that of other women who have suffered the horrors of war.

She also highlights in this context the historical meaning of rape as a warfare strategy. “La mujer siempre ha sido violentada en toda la historia de las guerras. La esencia de una madre, lo más profundo de una mujer siempre fue utilizado como arma de guerra, en todas partes y en todas las épocas” (1998a: 186). And she advocates the collaboration among all women to break the silence, and raise the cause of these abused women as a battle cry that would live forever in our common memory as a gender. In line with this, she champions these women’s right to decide over her bodies (as she already did in her testimonio). She states that hearing some world leaders begging these women not to have abortions went not only against her ethics but also against her own
experience as a victim: “Solo una mujer violada sabe el significado de esa crueldad y es ella la que tiene la autoridad absoluta para determinar la mejor forma de enfrentarlo” (1998a: 187).

On the other hand, the English translation has been placed this same discussion of rape as warfare in chapter nine “The Quicentenary Conference and the Earth Summit, 1992”. The ordering and framing of this narrative in a chapter that focuses on the Quicentenary of the “Discovery of America” shifts its moral weight. For the Anglophone reader, the activated frame triggers an association between the ethnic cleansing in former Yugoslavia and rape as a method used by Spaniards at their arrival to the American continent in order to create a mixed race.

The above example illustrates just one of the ways in which TT’s reorganisation of the original material has reframed the narratives present in ST. I suggest that in the context of Menchú’s memoir renarration can be explained (i) in terms of the location of this text, (ii) in terms of the genre conventions that frame it as a memoir in the midst of the memoir boom, and (iii) as a response to the process of canonisation suffered by Menchú’s testimonio. Firstly, the status of Menchú as a Nobel Prize winner situates her memoir in a different position from the one held by her testimonio, as an indigenous woman. This is further emphasised in TT Crossing Borders, where the two collaborators acknowledged by Rigoberta: La nieta de los Mayas are made disappear, and the choice of title is already commodifying the figure of Menchú as a cosmopolitan citizen of the world (Khader, 2013: 175). Secondly, the categorisation of this text as a memoir implies different expectations from its readers than that of testimonio. As such, the narrative is here more fluent and academic, without so many orality marks. Moreover, as discussed in Subsection 6.5.1, the narration of traumatic events moves towards the mythical, rather the horrible detail in which violence was narrated in her testimonio. And finally, this text can be understood as a response to the process of canonisation that granted I, Rigoberta
Menchú (1984) discusses in his positive review of
*Rigoberta: La nieta de los Mayas* (1998a) how he believes that this text has been written
(at least to a certain extent) as a response to Stoll’s research and the ensuing controversy.
I have understood this controversy as a small part of the process of canonisation of
Menchú’s testimonio, and thus, I venture that Menchú’s memoir is in fact an extension to
the practice of renarration needed for the peripheral life narrative of an indigenous
woman from Guatemala to gain access to the centre.

6.6. Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to demonstrate the theoretical gain of moving the concept of
canonisation and that of renarration forward, and past the moment of translation within
the text. Firstly, I have identified a series of moments of intervention/opportunities for
renarration when it comes to Menchú’s life writing. In order to do so, I have closely
followed the process of canonisation of Menchú’s *testimonio*, which had been widely
studied by the critics. An overview of the extensive research on this *testimonio* has
uncovered the following: (i) the centrality of TT I, *Rigoberta Menchú* (1983); (ii) a lack
of critical studies on the impact of translation for this canonised text, and for the genre of
testimonio in general; (iii) a surprising absence of gender analyses in relation to
Menchú’s *testimonio*. Secondly, I have suggested that the reasons behind the lack of
gender analyses when it comes to Menchú’s *testimonio* could be explained by the
processes of renarration that embedded the canonisation of this text.

Conversely, Menchú’s memoir has been mostly forgotten by academia. Within
the confines of this thesis, it has served as rich source of data in the socio-narrative
analysis of Menchú’s life writing, and as an example of how the process of renarration
can be extended to encompass the act of writing or translating as a narrative response to
canonisation. I therefore conclude that in a world of letters in which works from the periphery must suffer a shift in their narratives/a process of renarration in order to become part of the canon imposed by the centre, it might be possible to discover similar cases to that of Menchú’s life narrative, i.e. a highly mediated account of a woman’s life that to achieve its exemplary level of canonisation has undergone numerous processes of renarration, peripheralising those elements that do not easily resonate with more dominant narratives and reframing others in order to adapt them to the parameters of literary genre and audience expectations.
Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1. Summary of Findings

This thesis situates itself at the interface between the disciplines of translation studies, gender studies, Latin American cultural studies and world literature studies. At a time when scholars have rekindled the old debate about what is world literature and how to study it (Casanova 2004; Moretti, 2000, 2013; Damrosch 2003, 2009), my thesis has sought to explore the process of canonisation through which six examples of life writing by Central American women, and hence from the periphery of world literature, access the centre. All these literary works have been written against the backdrop of the revolutionary movements taking place in Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador, from the 1970s till the 1990s. During this period, Central America’s cultural production attracted the attention of large international audiences and numerous critical studies – a level of attention that started fading once the revolutionary projects were abandoned in the 1990s. During this period, translation played an essential role in the circulation of these texts because international solidarity groups provided Central American writers with an important platform that led to the emergence of the genre of testimonio as a means of bearing witness to a collective struggle. Canonical works such as Rigoberta Menchú’s testimonio, analysed in Chapter 6, thus became part of the curriculum in Angloamerican universities, in an effort to open world literature canon to the non-Western, ethnic, female subject.

Consequently, my data set has served as a paradigmatic example of how peripheral literary works can be given visibility by the centre. To study this instance of canonisation, I have first articulated a core-periphery systemic model to account for the different layers of marginalisation that affect these texts, as part of what I have conceptualised as the external level of peripheralisation. Secondly, the socio-narrative
approach adopted by this thesis has enabled me to scrutinise the construction of these three authors’ personal narratives of political radicalism and women’s agency against the backdrop of the armed struggles taking place in their home countries. More importantly, it has foregrounded how translation, understood as social practice, has allowed these texts to circulate towards the centre of the world of letters and reach the international community.

All the texts included in my data set have been translated from a semi-peripheral language (Spanish) to a hyper-central one (English), and therefore serve as examples of translation as a consecrating practice (Casanova, 2004). In this context, no one would question the benefits of being translated into a central language, particularly in the case of testimonios, where the original narrative is being constructed with an international audience in mind. The works included in my data set have then gained visibility and become consecrated through the practice of translation. But is this the end of the story?

I started this project driven by the hypothesis that, in a system defined by asymmetrical power relations like the world of letters, the process of canonisation through which my chosen narratives of political radicalism and women’s agency move towards the centre might not be as fluid and uncomplicated as one might have assumed. Canonisation has been presented as a process that encompasses more than simply accessing the world literary canon; it also involves a reframing of the narratives underpinning my peripheral set of data, so that the original texts are able to better resonate with mainstream narratives supported by the centre and/or with the expectations that the agents of the literary world will have regarding these texts.

By exploring and redefining the process of canonisation, I have sought to contribute to previous scholarship and explore what happens once these peripheral texts have been selected for translation. Through a series of (para)textual close readings,
informed by the aforementioned core-periphery modelling of the world of letters and narrative theory as elaborated by Baker (2006), I have articulated canonisation and peripheralisation as mirroring practices. Assuming the consecrating power of translation does not necessarily imply a lack of internal peripheralisation of the translated text, I have sought to establish whether renarration is an essential part of the canonisation process. Renarration has been defined within the confines of this thesis as the re-construction rather than the representation of the original personal and public narratives promoted by the authors of my data set. I will now summarize my findings under the relevant subquestions:

*Based on a core-periphery modelling of the world of letters, how does the ‘location’ of the life writing texts in my data set in relation to the Anglophone market influence their respective processes of canonisation?*

In Chapter 4 I have discussed *No me agarran viva* (1983) and *El país bajo mi piel* (2001) in terms of their “location”¹¹³ within the world of letters, a concept that I borrowed from Casanova (2010). I have shown how the English translation of *No me agarran viva* (1983), which was published in the UK by feminist publisher The Women’s Press, emphasises the political dimension of this testimonial text, foregrounding the role that the US and its international policy had in supporting the military repression of the armed struggle in El Salvador. Moreover, I have found that the English translation has consistently downgraded Flakoll’s co-authorship, presenting Alegría as the only author of the text. I have argued that this was a conscious decision by the English translator and/or publisher; this was then mirrored by a critical silence within academic circles surrounding the figure of Flakoll. I have also explored how this act of renarration could

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¹¹³ For a detailed discussion on the concept of location, see Section 2.4.
have been influenced by the location of the authors/text in relation to the Anglophone book market and Anglophone academia, on the grounds that acknowledging Flakoll’s collaborative role – as a United States male citizen – would have undermined the political dimension of the source text that the English translation was foregrounding. It would have also questioned the capacity of this work to represent Salvadorean women in the struggle for national liberation.

The English translation of No me agarran viva (1983) fits well with the early years of Angloamerican critical reception of testimonio, characterised by a euphoric celebration of a poetics of solidarity among those involved in the Central American revolutionary project in various capacities. On the other hand, the publication and English translation of El país bajo mi piel (2001) take place after the revolutionary project had been abandoned. I have found that the English translation of Belli’s memoir frames this text as a love story against the backdrop of an exotic and romanticised revolution. My analysis indicates that Belli’s narratives of motherhood and female subjectivity have been renarrated to enhance their alignment with public narratives of western feminism, thus preventing a very much needed conversation between different feminist theories and practices. Moreover, the English translation has renarrated the relationality between Belli’s narratives of political and sexual radicalism. While such narratives are constructed as interdependent in the original, the English translation has consistently separated them as if they were two non-interactive radicalisms.

I have also noted that, unlike La mujer habitada (1988), Belli’s memoirs have not awoken much interest within academic circles. I have suggested that this can could be explained by its location: after the failure of Central American revolutions, academics’ interest for this region’s cultural production began to fade.
Do genre-specific conventions and their respective reception in the Anglophone market result in different approaches to the canonisation of the life writing genres represented in my data set?

In Chapter 5, genres have been defined as the set of conventions favoured by the publishing industry to create a framework that guides our interpretation of a text, encouraging us to project certain expectations onto it. As such, genre-specific conventions often work as peripheralising processes. Drawing on this premise, I have explored the specificities of the genre of life writing as a feminine and feminist practice, and identified the different life writing subgenres under which my data set can be categorised.

Following my exploration of genre-specific conventions and their reception by the Anglophone market, I have found that the critical silence around texts such as *El país bajo mi piel* (2001) can be explained by their categorisation as memoirs amidst “the memoir boom.” I have noted that scholars have not studied *El país bajo mi piel* (2001) against the backdrop of *testimonio*, apart from Palazón-Sáez (2006). And this has led me to suggest that the marketing of this text as a bestselling memoir for an Anglophone readership might have influenced its (lack of) critical reception in academic circles.

*How do the strategies adopted to frame Central American women’s life writing in the Anglophone market influence the translation of the narratives of political radicalism and female subjectivity that feature in my data set?*

I have noted that the narratives of female subjectivity, motherhood and the erotic found in *El país bajo mi piel* (2001) also feature in *La mujer habitada* (1988). But while in the former text, these narratives were consistently renarrated, the translation of *La mujer habitada* (1988) allowed such narratives to make it all the way to the centre. I have
suggested that the difference between the translation strategies adopted in these two texts can be explained by the ways in which these texts have been framed for the Anglophone market. As far as the genre-specific conventions are concerned, I have suggested that framing *La mujer habitada* (1988) as a novel instead of a testimonial/autobiographical text has enabled the more radical aspects of Belli’s narrative to escape peripheralisation.

The (para)textual analyses of the two fictionalised accounts discussed in Chapter 5 have demonstrated that the authors’ turn towards fiction – as illustrated by *Luisa en el país de la realidad* (1987a) and *La mujer habitada* (1988) – have allowed them to escape the internal level of peripheralisation, unlike what happened with their more factual accounts *No me agarran viva* (1983) and *El país bajo mi piel* (2001). I have therefore argued that, in contrast to hybrid works such as *Luisa en el país de la realidad* (1987), those texts included in my data set that belong to more canonical genres such as *testimonio*, autobiography or memoir have proven to be more controlled by the centre.

I have also argued in relation to *Luisa en el país de la realidad* (1987) that it is through its hybridity that Alegría has found a way to effectively juxtapose images of love, beauty, nature and the erotic with images of torture, poverty and oppression. It has been noted how this text’s refusal to follow genre conventions has facilitated an across-the-board subversion of patriarchal and religious myths and a construction of a narrative of female subjectivity that foregrounds women as participative agents, rather than passive characters. I have also highlighted that Alegría’s decision to experiment with form has given her the space to convey a more radicalised narrative that the one found in *No me agarran viva* (1983). On the other hand, it has also been noted how *Luisa en el país de la realidad* (1987) has been peripheralised within academic circles, that have tended to overlook this text, often because it fails to meet standard genre-specific conventions.
What do the findings of my analysis reveal about the dialectical relationship between renarration and canonisation in the study of translated world literature?

In Chapter 6 I have drawn upon Menchú’s life writing as an example to demonstrate the need to redefine the concept of renarration in line with that of canonisation. In order to do so, I have closely followed the process of canonisation undergone by Menchú’s testimonio, and identified three moments of intervention or opportunities for renarration: (i) the construction of the source text *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú* (1983); (ii) the translation into English as *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (1984); and (iii) its reception in the Angloamerican context. By reviewing the extensive literature on this paradigmatic testimonio, I have uncovered firstly the lack of critical studies on the role that its translation into English played in the canonisation of this text in spite of its centrality, and secondly the lack of gender analyses about this text.

I have therefore discussed how these different opportunities of renarration should be understood in a mutually influencing dynamic relation that embeds the process of canonisation by which Menchú’s testimonio has been renarrated into the canonical and canonised text *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (1984). This has led me to propose that the centrality of TT *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (1984) had an impact on the articulation of testimonio in the form that has become canonical as a mediated text in which a professional writer interviews a subaltern subject and produces a politically-charged life narrative (Nance, 2006: 145). Moreover, I have found how the centrality of TT has shaped its critical reception in the Angloamerican context, which has enabled me to establish a correlation between the centrality of the English translation and the absence of gender analyses in *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (1984).

Additionally, I have advocated the need to read Menchú’s memoir, which has been largely ignored by the same critics that championed her testimonio, as an extension
of the practice of renarration, and thus as a response to the process of extreme canonisation in the case of *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (1984).

### 7.2. Limitations of the Project

Some of the limitations of this thesis are related to time and space constraints. Although the (para)textual analyses undertaken in this study have provided enough data to answer my research questions, more examples could have been given, were it not for the word limits of a PhD thesis – particularly when the need to provide examples in Spanish and in English puts further strains on the wordcount.

Moreover, there is a subjective element to be considered in regard to any research informed by the close reading of literary texts. Admittedly, the (para)textual analyses included in this thesis could have been complemented by a reader response survey, to explore how other readers – apart from myself – perceived the enacted shifts in the narratives of political radicalism and women’s agency constructed by Alegría, Belli and Menchú in ST. Because the time and space constraints of this thesis have prevented me from including such a survey, I have made use of scholarly work reporting on the critical reception of the work included in my data set to further scrutinise the insights derived from my close reading of the texts.

Finally, I believe that a series of interviews with the authors of ST, translators of TT, and publishers of both would have also served to corroborate or refute some of the findings in this thesis. Once again, time and space constraints have prevented me from following this path; it should be noted that independent publishers such as The Women’s Press (UK) are no longer in business, and/or that the three authors of my data set might have not been interested in participating in such a project. Moreover, Darwin J. Flakoll,

7.3. Suggestions for Future Research

One of the main goals behind this research was to uncover the dialectic relationship between canonisation and peripheralisation, and invite further research into what I have called the internal level of peripheralisation, i.e. the renarration of original narratives constructed by peripheral authors as their texts move towards the centre. There is still a need to develop a larger study on the impact that this process of renarration may have had in (the lack of) conversation between different feminist theories and practices, for instance between Latin American and Angloamerican ones, particularly against the backdrop of transnational feminism.

In line with the above, my thesis has demonstrated how these three authors use the erotic as an empowering force, that informs their original narratives of female subjectivity and motherhood, most evidently in the case of Belli’s texts. Conversely, I have also discussed how in those more canonical genres such as *testimonio*, autobiographies and memoirs, this use of the erotic has been peripheralised and in many cases made disappear from the text, replaced by other narratives that better resonate with western feminist expectations. I therefore believe that within the context of women writers in Spanish, there is still much to be said about their use of the erotic and the body. This is an area of study that has been overlooked so far, arguably in part because of the renarration suffered by these texts in their process of canonisation. Future research could thus examine the production and translation of erotic literature, by drawing lines of comparison between the construction of erotic narratives celebrated by awards such as
La sonrisa vertical and the current popularity of erotica in the international market with bestsellers like Fifty Shades of Grey (James, 2011).

Finally, I have noted that within the context of Central American women’s writing, and most likely within that of other peripheral literary spaces, there is a need to study anthologies in translation, an area that has failed to attract scholarly attention to this day. Future research could therefore interrogate the particularities of anthologisation as a literary practice, and the space created when this practice intersects with that of translation. This would allow for a productive discussion on their parallel potential for consecration and peripheralisation.
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*Translocalities/translocalidades: Feminist Politics of Translation in the*


--. *La paciente impaciencia*. Managua: Editorial Vanguardia, 1989


Chanfrault-Duchet, Marie Francoise. “‘Narrative Structures, Social Models, and Symbolic Representation in the Life Story.’” *Women’s Words: The Feminist...*


Speech.


“Narrating Trauma. From Testimonio to Memoir: The Case of Rigoberta Menchú.”


### Appendix A: Gioconda Belli in English Translation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Translator</th>
<th>Title of Translation</th>
<th>Publisher of Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Pergamino de seducción</em></td>
<td>2005 Seix Barral</td>
<td>Lisa Dillman</td>
<td><em>The Country under My Skin</em></td>
<td>2002 Alfred A. Knopf: NY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table A.1: Belli’s books in English Translation**

In Appendix B, I present a review of the chapters included in *El país bajo mi piel* (2001) and *The Country under My Skin* (2002), including a brief summary of their content.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 1</th>
<th>Chapter 2</th>
<th>Chapter 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Donde dan inicio, con olor a pólvora, estas rememoraciones (1979, Cuba)</strong></td>
<td><strong>1. Where these memories, dusted with gunpowder, begin (Cuba, 1979)</strong></td>
<td><strong>2. Where I tell of certain bizarre connections between California, interoceanic canals and my life (Santa Monica, 1998)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belli is in Havana in the shooting range of the FAR (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias). Later, watching Fidel talking to other compañeros, a collage of childhood memories came to her (Fidel in Sierra Maestra seen as heroic by the Nicaraguans of the time, the Somoza regime and its relationship with Kennedy – the Bay Pigs invasion…)</td>
<td>Belli is in Havana in the shooting range of the FAR (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias). Later, watching Fidel talking to other compañeros, a collage of childhood memories came to her (Fidel in Sierra Maestra seen as heroic by the Nicaraguans of the time, the Somoza regime and its relationship with Kennedy – the Bay Pigs invasion…)</td>
<td>Belli can see from her house in Santa Monica the ocean. And ocean that for her links Nicaragua and the US The quest for an interoceanic passageway. Sandino’s opposition to American intervention, Somoza and their relationship with the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Donde se narran algunas extrañas vinculaciones con California y el papel que han jugado en mi vida los canales interoceánicos (1998, Santa Mónica)</strong></td>
<td><strong>2. Where I tell of certain bizarre connections between California, interoceanic canals and my life (Santa Monica, 1998)</strong></td>
<td><strong>3. On how a coin led to my first trip to the United States and on my first experience of witnessing bloodshed (Managua, 1952-1959)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belli can see from her house in Santa Monica the ocean. And ocean that for her links Nicaragua and the US The quest for an interoceanic passageway. Sandino’s opposition to American intervention, Somoza and their relationship with the United States</td>
<td>Belli can see from her house in Santa Monica the ocean. And ocean that for her links Nicaragua and the US The quest for an interoceanic passageway. Sandino’s opposition to American intervention, Somoza and their relationship with the United States</td>
<td>Belli’s time at her grandmother’s house. The story of the coin that she swallowed and her first trip to the US with her mother. Belli’s family and their views of Somoza’s dictatorship. The first time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. De cómo una moneda me llevó por primera vez a Estados Unidos y de la primera sangre derramada que vi en mi vida (Nicaragua, 1952-1959)</strong></td>
<td><strong>3. On how a coin led to my first trip to the United States and on my first experience of witnessing bloodshed (Managua, 1952-1959)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belli saw the blood of a young man that had been killed by the National Guard.</td>
<td>Belli saw the blood of a young man that had been killed by the National Guard.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>---</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. De cómo un cataclismo borró el paisaje de mis primeras memorias (Managua, 1972)</td>
<td>4. On how it was that I had an early introduction to marriage, maternity and disenchantment (Managua, 1966-1969)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of Nicaragua and its geography. The narration of the earthquake that destroyed Managua. Belli (who was pregnant) had a clear premonition that something bad is about to happen so she took precautions. Belli and her husband left the house with their daughter Maryam. Everybody was in panic. Around two or three hours later they decided to sleep in the car. The next day they drove around a destroyed city. They left to Granada where Belli’s family in law had a house.</td>
<td>Belli finished high school in Spain and then travelled to Philadelphia. She wanted to study medicine but her father opposed. After she finished her studies in advertisement, she came back to Nicaragua. where she got a job in an advertisement agency. She met her first husband in a friend’s country house. She liked him because he also loved reading and because her parents would approve. Belli narrates her wedding day. Belli’s conversation with her mother regarding female body and motherhood. Belli narrates her boring life with her husband, her pregnancy and birth of Maryam and her narrative of motherhood. Her distaste for domesticity is narrated along the political instability of the time. She read feminist books and she got a new job.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. De otro terremoto que viví y donde empieza la historia de cómo llegué a parar a California (Santa Mónica, 1994)</td>
<td>5. On how I stopped being a “perfect wife” and started getting mixed up in illicit activities (Managua, 1970)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belli feels angry for having to live another earthquake. A small seism a few days before convinced Belli that there was going to be an earthquake so she took precautions. This earthquake did not destroy their house. The next day Belli could not believe that the environment around her was so calm, like nothing had happened. Contrast between Nicaraguan and US context. Narration of how Belli met Charlie Castaldi (her last and current husband) in 1983 in a barbecue organized in Washington to introduce three members of the Sandinista party to a group of US journalists. Belli was at the time director of the Section of International</td>
<td>Belli met the Poet in her new job. He introduced him to a bohemian life, his artist friends, literature and political discussions. They started having an affair</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Information in the FSLN and Charlie was going to be sent to Nicaragua due to his job. She told him to call her.

6. De cómo fue que llegué temprano al matrimonio, a la maternidad y a la desilusión (Managua, 1966-1969)

Belli finished high school in Spain and then travelled to Philadelphia. After she finished her studies she came back to Nicaragua where she got a job in an advertisement agency. She met her first husband in a friend’s country house. She liked him because he also loved reading and because her parents would approve. Belli narrates her wedding day. Belli’s conversation with her mother regarding female body and motherhood. Belli narrates her boring life with her husband, her pregnancy and birth of Maryam and her narrative of motherhood. Her distaste for domesticity is narrated along the political instability of the time. She read feminist books and she got a new job.


Belli met Camilo through the Poet. Camilo introduced her to the Sandinista Front. During this time she also started to write poetry. One day she showed it to the Poet. Her poems were published in *La Prensa Literaria*. Belli reflects upon her erotic poetry and the reception of her work. She left the Poet to protect her family.

7. De cómo dejé de ser la “Perfecta casada” y me involucré en actividades prohibidas (Managua, 1970)

Belli met the Poet in her new job. He introduced him to a bohemian life, his artist friends, literature and political discussions. They started having an affair.

7. Of the oath I took before a pregnant woman (Managua, 1972)

Camilo introduced Belli to Martín. Martín educated Belli regarding the revolution and the Sandinista ideals. Martín’s wife, Leana became Belli’s contact with the Sandinistas. She took her oath when both of them were pregnant.

8. Donde hago un alto para continuar la historia de cómo llegué a California (Managua, 1983)

In 1983, Charlie went to Nicaragua in several occasions. He invited her out for dinner and after that evening there were many others. They talked about their childhoods, about the Sandinista government and their decision to help the Salvadorian guerrilla (which Belli and the Sandinistas officially denied). She criticized the US international policies.

8. Of how a cataclysm obliterated the landscape of my earliest memories (Managua, 1972)

Description of the earthquake that destroyed Managua. Focus on the fact that the tragedy took place on Christmas time. Belli felt irritated, and uncomfortable, she ended taking some precautions. Belli and her husband left the house with their daughter Maryam. Everybody was in panic. Around two or three hours later they decided to sleep in the car. The next
and he admitted that he would have probably been a guerrilla if he had been born in Nicaragua. He criticized strongly the US actions towards Nicaragua but he spoke very highly of their democracy.

day they drove around a destroyed city. They left to Granada where Belli’s family in law had a house

| Belli met Camilo through the Poet. Camilo introduced her to the Sandinista Front. During this time she also started to write poetry. One day she showed it to the Poet. Her poems were published in *La Prensa Literaria*. Belli reflects upon her erotic poetry and the reception of her work. She left the Poet to protect her family. |
| 9. On how one continues to live after losing a city and what I did in Granada (1973) |
| When she moved to Granada she finally managed to get in contact with the movement again. Her contact was another woman, Andrea. They both pretended to offer humanitarian help to those more affected by the earthquake, but their work was in fact political, recruiting new members for the Sandinista movement. |

| 10. Del juramento que hice a una mujer embarazada (Managua, 1972) |
| Camilo introduced Belli to Martín. Martín educated Belli regarding the revolution and the Sandinista ideals. Martín’s wife, Leana became Belli’s contact with the Sandinistas. She took her oath when both of them were pregnant. |
| 10. On how I returned to my broken city, to childbirth, and an unexpected death (Managua, 1973) |
| Belli and her family went back to Managua. She gave birth to Melissa. Melissa gets very ill and she needs blood transfusion. Belli starts working with Andrea again. Belli finds out about the death of one of the members of the movement and Andrea’s lover. |

| 11. De cómo se vive tras perder una ciudad y lo que hice en Granada (Granada, 1973) |
| When she moved to Granada she finally managed to get in contact with the movement again. Her contact was another woman, Andrea. They both pretended to offer humanitarian help to those more affected by the earthquake, but their work was in fact political, recruiting new members for the Sandinista movement. |
| 11. On how I met Roberto and Marcos, and became a courier for the underground resistance (Managua, 1973) |
| Roberto was Belli’s new contact. They were going to be the contacts with both Martín and Marcos. She met Marcos and drove him from one location to another. |

| 12. Donde Carlos me comunica que se traslada a vivir a Nicaragua y las consecuencias que trajo la cercanía (Managua, 1984) |
| Charlie has been asked to stay in Managua for work reasons. In 1984, Belli |
| 12. On how I got my first book of poetry published, and on how the dictatorship’s secret police began tailing me (Managua, 1974) |
| The publication of *Sobre la Grama*. Belli is told that they have received a call at her |
was executive Secretary of the Electoral Commission. She was in charge of supervising the elections. She was also the speaker of the FSLN to the International press. Charlie interviewed her for his job. Belli reflects upon the situation and the US view of Nicaraguan democracy. After one of their dinners they became lovers. It was easy because it did not necessary have any future. workplace to let her bosses now that she is part of the Sandinista movement. She denies it, and her image of bourgeois young woman helps her convince them. She is, however, going to be tailed during two months, with no contact to other members of the movement. At this point, Belli is already separated from her first husband. Belli also remembers how she learned to shoot before she started to be tailed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>13. De cómo retorné a mi quebrantada ciudad, al parto y a una muerte inesperada (Managua, 1973)</th>
<th>13. On how I reconnecte with Marcos and participated in the preparation of a commando operation (Managua, 1974)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belli and her family went back to Managua. She gave birth to Melissa. Melissa gets very ill and she needs blood transfusion. Belli starts working with Andrea again. Belli finds out about the death of one of the members of the movement and Andrea’s lover. Andrea’s premonition about his death.</td>
<td>Belli went to Mazatlán, at her cousins Pía and Alfredo’s house she met with Marcos and other compañeros. She fell in love with Marcos. Her love story goes along the preparation of a commando operation. Two years later Marcos will be killed by agents from the National Security Office.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>14. De cómo conocí a Roberto y Marcos y me convertí en correo de la resistencia clandestina (Managua, 1973)</th>
<th>14. On how I found out – while I was in Europe – that the foretold Operation was underway (Managua-Europe, 1974)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roberto was Belli’s new contact. They were going to be the contacts with both Martín and Marcos. She met Marcos and drove him from one location to another.</td>
<td>Belli was separated from her husband during six months and then they decided to try again. She never stopped seeing Marcos though. When the operation was going to take place, Belli was told to leave Nicaragua, since she was a suspected Sandinista. She went to Europe with her husband. When they were in Italy, they heard the news about the guerrilla operation. She stayed in Barcelona with her sister for a few months to avoid repercussions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>15. De las fragilidades de vivir en tiempo presente (Managua, 1984)</th>
<th>15. On how my mother helped me prepare for an interrogatory and what happened upon my return to Nicaragua (Panama-Nicaragua, 1975)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charlie and Belli were lovers. The Sandinista government was worried about an attack by the US. She considered the dangers of having a relationship with a US journalist but Belli was sure that she</td>
<td>Belli met her mother in Panama. She prepared with her for a possible interrogation regarding her actions before</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
would be able to leave confidential and professional information outside of her love life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>16. De cómo se publicó mi primer libro de poemas y me vi perseguida por la policía secreta de la dictadura (Managua, 1974)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The publication of <em>Sobre la Grama</em>. Belli is told that they have received a call at her workplace to let her bosses now that she is part of the Sandinista movement. She denies it, and her image of bourgeois young woman helps her convince them. She is, however, going to be tailed during two months, with no contact to other members of the movement. At this point, Belli is already separated from her first husband. Belli also remembers how she learned to shoot before she started to be tailed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>16. On how I survived another year of brutal dictatorship and how it was the Sandinista movement multiplied and divided (Managua, 1975)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fear of being captured for her political actions. Pedro takes over the urban resistance; Belli is being kept out of the loop for returning to Nicaragua without obeying her orders. During this time she met Jacobo. Belli explains the three conceptions of Sandinismo. Belli started working with Tomás Borge. Divisions among the Sandinista movement. Belli and Rosario Murillo became friends. Jacobo was captured by the dictatorship. Belli escaped to Mexico, in Nicaragua she was judged and convicted. Jacobo was tortured but he never talked.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>17. De las complicaciones del amor en tiempos de guerra (Managua, 1984)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tomás Borge calls Belli to her office to question her relationship with Charlie. She was asked to end this relationship and she did.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>18. De cómo volví a ver a Marcos y participé en la preparación de una operación de comando (Managua, 1974)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belli went to Mazatlán, at her cousins Pia and Alfredo’s house she met with Marcos and other compañeros. She fell in love with Marcos. Her love story goes along the preparation of a commando operation. Two years later Marcos will be killed by agents from the National Security Office.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>19. De cómo la solidaridad femenina me llevó a recuperar a Carlos (Managua, 1984)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It was the fifth anniversary of the revolution. Belli narrates the situation of Nicaragua at the time. During the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
celebration, Belli sees Charlie with other journalists. She goes to visit Pia, and she advices her to make the decision of seeing Charlie again, since asking her to leave him was a sexist decision by the Party. Belli gets back together with Charlie. She doesn’t lose her job. First elections after the Revolution take place. The US does not accept the results. Nicaragua is worried about an attack from the US. Belli and Charlie discuss their future if this happens since she does not want to leave Managua.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>20. De cómo me entero, estando en Europa, de que el anunciado operativo estaba en marcha (Managua-Europa, 1974)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belli was separated from her husband during six months and then they decided to try again. She never stopped seeing Marcos though. When the operation was going to take place, Belli was told to leave Nicaragua, since she was a suspected Sandinista. She went to Europe with her husband. When they were in Italy, they heard the news about the guerrilla operation. She stayed in Barcelona with her sister for a few months to avoid repercussions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>21. De cómo mi madre me ayudó a prepararme para un interrogatorio y de lo que sucedió a mi regreso a Nicaragua (Panamá-Nicaragua, 1975)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belli met her mother in Panama. She prepared with her for a possible interrogation regarding her actions before and after the operation. Reflection of the relationship between Belli and her mother.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>22. De cómo sobreviví un año más de dictadura enfurecida y de cómo se multiplicó y dividió el Sandinismo (Managua, 1975)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Fear of being captured for her political actions. Pedro takes over the urban resistance; Belli is being kept out of the loop for returning to Nicaragua without obeying her orders. During this time she met Jacobo. Belli explains the three conceptions of Sandinismo. Belli started working with Tomás Borge. Divisions among the Sandinista movement. Belli and Rosario Murillo became friends. Jacobo was captured by the dictatorship. Belli escaped to Mexico, in Nicaragua she was judged and convicted. Jacobo was tortured but he never talked.

23. De las angustias que pasé en otros aeropuertos y las sorpresas que pueden sobrevenir cuando uno descubre el poder de la imaginación (Estados Unidos, 1985)

Difficulty of traveling to the US being Nicaraguan. Contrast between Nicaragua and the US. Deja-vu.

Table B.1: Review of chapters included in “Primera parte: Habitant de un pequeño país” in ST and “Citizen of a small country” in TT

24. Donde llego a México en vísperas de navidad y comienzo el exilio reencontrándome con viejos amigos (México, 1975)

Belli moves to Mexico. She meets Andrea again. She also finds Marcos. They re-start their love affair. Belli wrote Línea de Fuego. Belli acted as speaker of Sandinismo in Mexico, as a poet, she would contact other artists, writers and journalists. They tried to get international attention about the situation in Nicaragua. Belli’s husband came to see her in Mexico and they finally broke up. Marcos disappeared. She finally admitted that he was in love with another woman. Belli moved to Costa Rica.

17. On what happened after I fled to Mexico City and started my life in exile by getting together with old friends (Mexico, 1975)

Belli moves to Mexico. She meets Andrea again. She also finds Marcos. They re-start their love affair. Belli wrote Línea de Fuego. Belli acted as speaker of Sandinismo in Mexico, as a poet, she would contact other artists, writers and journalists. They tried to get international attention about the situation in Nicaragua. Belli’s husband came to see her in Mexico and they finally broke up. Marcos disappeared. He finally admitted to Belli that he was in love with another woman. Belli moved to Costa Rica.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>25. De cómo me inventé una nueva vida en Costa Rica y de las dificultades que tuve que atravesar para reunirme con mis hijas (Costa Rica, 1976)</th>
<th>18. On how I embarked on a new life in Costa Rica and of the difficulties I encountered in my efforts to reunite with my daughters (Costa Rica, 1976)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>She lived in San José. She found a job in an advertisement agency. The Sandinista network in Costa Rica needed a lot of work and development. She met Jaime who introduced her to Sergio Ramirez. They would edit <em>Solidaridad</em> together. Love affair with Jimmy (her first boyfriend). Difficulties to get her daughters back, but they are finally sent to her in Costa Rica.</td>
<td>She lived in San José. She found a job in an advertisement agency. The Sandinista network in Costa Rica needed a lot of work and development. She met Jaime who introduced her to Sergio Ramirez. They would edit <em>Solidaridad</em> together. Love affair with Jimmy (her first boyfriend). Difficulties to get her daughters back, but they are finally sent to her in Costa Rica.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. De cómo concilié la maternidad con la política; de los amores y amoríos después del desencanto y de cómo se cumplió un mal presentimiento (San José, 1976)</td>
<td>19. On how I reconciled politics and motherhood; love and disenchantment; and how a bad premonition came to be fulfilled (San José, 1976)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She tells her daughters the truth about their exile. She broke up with Jimmy. She worked a lot. Belli’s exploration of her womanly powers and her emotional dependency. Marcos’ death.</td>
<td>She tells her daughters the truth about their exile. She broke up with Jimmy. She worked a lot. Belli’s exploration of her womanly powers and her emotional dependency. Marcos’ death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. De cómo se puso en marcha la Insurrección (San José, 1977)</td>
<td>20. On how the insurrection was set in motion (San José, 1977)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belli was now part of the Insurrectional tendency within Sandinistas. She met Humberto Ortega, Camilo’s brother. The worked together building the Sandinista underground network in Costa Rica. The idea to build an alternative government, in order to lose the Sandinista image as only guerrilla movement. Part of this alternative government would be Fernando and Ernesto Cardenal. Humberto Ortega imagined one master military operation against the National Guard, after which the rest of the nation will follow. Debate regarding this decision and reflection upon it.</td>
<td>Belli was now part of the Insurrectional tendency within Sandinistas. She met Humberto Ortega, Camilo’s brother. The worked together building the Sandinista underground network in Costa Rica. The idea to build an alternative government, in order to lose the Sandinista image as only guerrilla movement. Part of this alternative government would be Fernando and Ernesto Cardenal. Humberto Ortega imagined one master military operation against the National Guard, after which the rest of the nation will follow. Debate regarding this decision and reflection upon it.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>28. De cómo, con música de samba, le llegó el consuelo a mi enlutado corazón (San José 1976-1977)</strong></td>
<td><strong>21. On how samba music brought solace to my grieving heart (San José, 1976-1977)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belli started her relationship with Sergio. New stories about Marcos and his multiple lovers.</td>
<td>Belli started her relationship with Sergio. New stories about Marcos and his multiple lovers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>29. De cómo continuaron los preparativos para los ataques y se me encomendó, inesperadamente, una misión peligrosa (Costa Rica, 1977)</strong></td>
<td><strong>22. On the hectic preparations for the attack and on how I was unexpectedly called to perform a dangerous mission (Costa Rica, 1977)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The preparations for the military operation continued. Belli was asked to move several weapons to the border. The contacts arrived late but finally they delivered the weapons.</td>
<td>The preparations for the military operation continued. Belli was asked to move several weapons to the border. The contacts arrived late but finally they delivered the weapons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>30. De cómo un fracaso militar se convierte en una Victoria política (San José, 1977)</strong></td>
<td><strong>23. On how a military failure turned into a political victory (San José, 1977)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The military actions failed. Of the three attacks planned, only one took place. There were some good results: they built “el grupo de los doce” and they signed a report supporting the Sandinista Front. Belli’s house was a refuge for many combatants that got hurt during the attacks. The situation in Nicaragua, more division within the Sandinista tendencies. It was however the beginning of the end for the dictatorship.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>31. De los avances del amor y los deseos de multiplicarse (San José, 1977)</strong></td>
<td><strong>24. Of the progress of love and the instinct to multiply (San José, 1977)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wedding with Sergio. Desire to get pregnant again.</td>
<td>Wedding with Sergio. Desire to get pregnant again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>32. De un Cid Campeador nicaragüense y de cómo perdí a Camilo y Arnoldo (Managua-San José, 1978)</strong></td>
<td><strong>25. Of a Nicaraguan El Cid and how I lost Camilo and Arnoldo (Managua-San José, 1978)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The story of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro. Belli’s political anxieties regarding the Insurrection tendency and Humberto’s</td>
<td>The story of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro. Belli’s political anxieties regarding the Insurrection tendency and Humberto’s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 33. Donde un premio literario me hace reflexionar sobre la poesía (San José, 1978)

Belli is awarded the prize “Casa de las Américas”. She reflects upon her poetry.

### 26. On how a literary prize prompted me to reflect upon poetry (San José, 1978)

Belli is awarded the prize “Casa de las Américas”. She reflects upon her poetry.

### 34. De cómo resolví mis angustias y contradicciones políticas (Panamá- San José, 1978)

Belli met José Benito. She became part of the GPP tendency. Dora became her contact. She met Modesto. There was a problem with Belli’s pregnancy.

### 27. On how I resolved my political anxieties and contradictions (Panama-San José, 1978)

Belli met José Benito. She became part of the GPP tendency. Dora became her contact. She met Modesto. There was a problem with Belli’s pregnancy.

### 35. De cómo terminé en el hospital y me anunciaron la muerte de mi hijo (San José, 1978)

Situation in the hospital. Belli’s arguments regarding the doctors and their treatment of women as uneducated children. She gave birth and was told that her baby was dead, then that he was alive, then dead for a second time and he was finally alive.

### 28. On how I landed on the hospital and was informed that my son had died (San José, 1978)

Situation in the hospital. Belli’s arguments regarding the doctors and their treatment of women as uneducated children. She gave birth and was told that her baby was dead, then that he was alive, then dead for a second time and he was finally alive.

### 36. Donde vuelvo a Nueva York con Carlos en una triste misión (Nicaragua-Nueva York, 1985-1986)

Belli gets pregnant again. After Camilo’s birth, her cervix is very damaged. It would be a very dangerous pregnancy. They went to the US to make a decision. She describes the health system in the US. She makes a decision. Belli has an abortion.

### 29. Of how the war spread throughout Nicaragua, and of the many dangers that came into my life when Modesto arrived (San José, 1978)

Spread of the war in Nicaragua. Development of Belli’s attraction for Modesto. Belli will be transporting money, messages and documents between Costa Rica, Honduras y Panama.

### 37. De cómo se generalizó la guerra en Nicaragua y de los muchos peligros que se introdujeron en mi vida con la llegada de Modesto (San José, 1978)

Spread of the war in Nicaragua. Development of Belli’s attraction for Modesto. Belli will be transporting money, messages and documents between Costa Rica, Honduras y Panama.

### 30. Of clandestine flights and a bizarre meeting with Panamanian General Omar Torrijos (Costa Rica-Panamá, 1978)

Chuchú Martínez and their flights to Panamá on Antoine. The episode with
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Money, messages and documents between Costa Rica, Honduras y Panama.</th>
<th>General Omar Torrijos. Criticism of the abuses of men in power.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>38. De cómo hice varios vuelos clandestinos y de la experiencia insólita que me tocó vivir con el general Omar Torrijos (Costa Rica-Panamá, 1978)</strong></td>
<td><strong>31. Of how the walls of my Jericho came tumbling down (San José, 1978)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chuchú Martínez and their flights to Panamá on Antoine. The episode with General Omar Torrijos. Criticism of the abuses of men in power.</td>
<td>Modesto and Belli started having an affair.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>39. Donde me arriesgo a hacer una oferta de matrimonio (Managua, 1986)</strong></td>
<td><strong>32. Of the first time I travelled to Cuba and the unusual meetings I had with Fidel Castro (Panama-Havana, 1978-1979)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belli decides to propose. Charlie needed time to think and decide.</td>
<td>First time in Cuba. Belli meets Fidel Castro. Belli is called outside and they have a conversation. Belli questions Castro’s unbalanced support to the different tendencies. Second conversation with Castro.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>40. De cómo se derrumbaron las murallas de mi Jericó (San José, 1978)</strong></td>
<td><strong>33. Of other trips, events and adventures (San José, 1979)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modesto and Belli started having an affair.</td>
<td>Relationship with Modesto. Situation in Nicaragua. Malena and Belli will be travelling to Europe. Problems in the airport to get to Spain. Meeting with Felipe González. Stories of their time in Paris and meeting with Régis Debray.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>41. Donde viajo a Cuba por primera vez y tengo un extraño encuentro con Fidel Castro (Panamá- La Habana, 1978-1979)</strong></td>
<td><strong>34. On how forty-five years of dictatorship came to an end (San José-Managua, 1979)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First time in Cuba. Belli meets Fidel Castro. Belli is called outside and they have a conversation. Belli questions Castro’s unbalanced support to the different tendencies. Second conversation with Castro.</td>
<td>Modesto left to Nicaragua to reunite with his troops. The war in Nicaragua and general strikes. The international support. Belli wanted to get back to Nicaragua but she is ordered to stay. Somoza left the country. Urcuyo Maliaño’s brief presidency. The triumph of the revolution.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Table B.2: Review of chapters included in “Segunda parte: Exilio” in ST and “Exile” in TT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>ST</th>
<th>TT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>42. De cómo tendimos Carlos y yo el puente sobre nuestras distancias geográficas (Managua, 1986)</td>
<td>Belli started writing her first novel <em>La mujer habitada</em>. She decided to divide her time between the US and Managua after the 1989 elections. In 1987 they get married.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. De otros viajes, aventuras y sucesos en los que me vi envuelta (San José, 1979)</td>
<td>Relationship with Modesto. Situation in Nicaragua. Malena and Belli will be travelling to Europe. Problems in the airport to get to Spain. Meeting with Felipe González. Stories of their time in Paris and meeting with Régis Debray.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44. De cómo terminaron cuarenta y cinco años de dictadura (San José-Managua, 1979)</td>
<td>Modesto left to Nicaragua to reunite with his troops. The war in Nicaragua and general strikes. The international support. Belli wanted to get back to Nicaragua but she is ordered to stay. Somoza left the country. Urcuyo Maliaño as president. The triumph of the Revolution.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. De cómo entré a Managua repartiendo periódicos (Managua, Julio 1979)</td>
<td>Belli got back to Nicaragua. Managua, the celebration. Belli delivering newspapers: <em>Patria Libre</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Of how I entered Managua delivering newspapers (Managua, July 1979)</td>
<td>Belli got back to Nicaragua. Managua, the celebration. Belli delivering newspapers: <em>Free Country</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>46. De la experiencia de saber que hay que empezar desde el principio</strong> (Managua, Julio 1979)</td>
<td><strong>36. On the experience of discovering that one must start from zero</strong> (Managua, July-August 1979)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start from the beginning. There was no police, no military, no ministries… Belli’s relationship with Modesto and Sergio. She is asked to choose.</td>
<td>Start from the beginning. There was no police, no military, no ministries… Belli’s relationship with Modesto and Sergio. She is asked to choose.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>47. De cómo tomé posesión de la estación de televisión estatal y saqué al aire el primer noticiero sandinista</strong> (Managua, 1979)</td>
<td><strong>37. On how I took charge of the country’s TV stations and aired the first Sandinista newscast</strong> (Managua, 1979)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bayardo Arce asked Belli to take charge of the TV stations. Belli created “Noticiero Sandinista”. The issue of <em>El Gran Dictador</em> and Fidel Castro’s discourse. Belli left Sergio. He kept Camilo. Some time later, Sergio moved with Camilo to Nicaragua</td>
<td>Bayardo Arce asked Belli to take charge of the TV stations. Belli created “Noticiero Sandinista”. The issue of <em>El Gran Dictador</em> and Fidel Castro’s discourse. Belli left Sergio. He kept Camilo. Some time later, Sergio moved with Camilo to Nicaragua</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>48. De las implicaciones del poder y de cómo el amor me hizo perder la cabeza</strong> (Managua, 1979)</td>
<td><strong>38. On the implications of power and on how love made me lose my mind</strong> (Managua, 1979)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modesto asked Belli to leave her work and work with him. Bayardo told Belli that was a mistake. She became Modesto’s secretary. Belli’s reflections regarding power, submission and love. Belli’s relationship with Modesto.</td>
<td>Modesto asked Belli to leave her work and work with him. Bayardo told Belli that was a mistake. She became Modesto’s secretary. Belli’s reflections regarding power, submission and love. Belli’s relationship with Modesto.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>49. De los recuerdos que revisité con Carlos y de las hazañas de mis hijas</strong> (Managua, 1985)</td>
<td><strong>39. On my return to Cuba and on another encounter with Fidel after the Revolution</strong> (Havana, 1979)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryam and Melissa are part of the Sandinista Youth. Charlie and Belli go to visit them at the coffee fields where they were volunteering. This stirs up Belli’s childhood memories of the first time she visited coffee fields and how her social conscious was born there.</td>
<td>Belli travels to Havana with Modesto. They attended the 6th Summit Conference of the Non-Aligned movement. Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo. The stories of Omar Cabezas.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>50. De cómo volví a Cuba y me reencontré con Fidel después de la revolución</strong> (La Habana, 1979)</td>
<td><strong>40. On how the shadows of the past came to cloud the present</strong> (Managua, 1979-1981)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belli travels to Havana with Modesto. They attended the 6th Summit Conference of the Non-Aligned movement. Daniel</td>
<td>Tomás Borge’s discourse. The attitude of the Nicaraguan leaders regarding the US and vice versa.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51. De cómo las sombras del pasado empañaron el presente (Managua, 1979-1981)</td>
<td>41. On my travels to the socialist countries and of my meeting with Vietnamese General Vo Nguyen Giap (October-November 1979)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tomás Borge’s discourse. The attitude of the Nicaraguan leaders regarding the US and vice versa.</td>
<td>After the Summit in Cuba, they travelled to the socialist countries. Soviet Union East-Germany and Bulgaria. North of Africa: Algeria. Meeting Gyap. Libya (Belli’s criticism of her treatment as a woman).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>52. De cómo viajé a los países socialistas y conoci al General vietnamita Vo Nguyen Giap (Octubre-Noviembre, 1979)</th>
<th>42. On how a cycle in my life came to a close (Managua, 1979-1981)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>After the Summit in Cuba, they travelled to the socialist countries. Soviet Union East-Germany and Bulgaria. North of Africa: Algeria. Meeting Gyap. Libya (Belli’s criticism of her treatment as a woman).</td>
<td>Literacy Programme. Belli broke up with Modesto. Suffering. Reflection of love, motherhood, womanhood</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>53. De cómo se cerró un ciclo de mi vida (Managua, 1979-1981)</th>
<th>43. Of how dreams were transformed into nightmares (Managua, 1981-1982)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Programme. Belli broke up with Modesto. Suffering. Reflection of love, motherhood, womanhood</td>
<td>Reagan. Nicaragua sent weapons to the Salvadorian guerrilla. This affected the relationship with the US supplying weapons to the Contras in Honduras. State of emergency declared. Belli felt her job in the Media department was empty.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>54. De cómo los sueños se fueron transformando en pesadillas (Managua, 1981-1990)</th>
<th>44. On the idea I had to improve the Revolution’s image abroad and give myself a new job (Managua, 1982-1983)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
55. Donde se narra cómo fue que vi la caída del muro de Berlín en un hotel en Miami, y la muerte de mi madre (Managua-Miami, 1989)

Her disagreement with Daniel Ortega was affecting her political role. Belli her second novel *Sofía de los Presagios*. Charlie offered holidays in the US. Belli had problems to get a visa. She finally met him in Miami. They watched the fall of the Berlin Wall on TV. Her mother gets sick, Belli went back to Nicaragua after Christmas to see her and she died two days later.

56. De cómo llegaron a su fin los años más intensos de mi vida (Managua, 1990)

FSLN lost the elections. Pacific end to the revolution. Belli decided to move to the US. Violeta Chamorro as a motherly figure.

Table B.3: Review of chapters included in “Tercera parte: El regreso a Nicaragua” in ST and “The return to Nicaragua” in TT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>57. De cómo viví mis primeros años en Estados Unidos (Managua-Washington D.C., 1990)</th>
<th>45. On how it was that a casual encounter turned into many dinner invitations (Managua, 1983)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The process of adapting to the US and their culture. Their life in Washington. Maryam and Melissa left to study in Mexico. Charlie and Belli moved to Los Angeles.</td>
<td>Charlie invited Belli to go out for dinner. They talked about their childhood. Belli’s remembered her first trip to the coffee fields. Long discussion regarding the relationship between their two countries, Nicaragua’s aid to the Salvadorian guerrillas. They discussed democracy and freedom of press. There were many dinners after that.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>58. Donde esta Quijota termina de contar sus memorias (Santa Mónica-Managua, 2002)</th>
<th>46. Of how it happened that I found love and a new job in election times (Managua, 1983)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passion and idealism within the Revolution. The Contra War and the conflict with the US was derailing the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Revolution from its goals. The inner working of the Sandinista government. In 1984, Belli was executive Secretary of the Electoral Commission. She was in charge of supervising the elections. She was also the spokesperson of the FSLN to the International press. Charlie interviewed her for his job. Belli reflects upon the situation and the US view of Nicaraguan democracy. After one of their dinners they became lovers. It was easy because it did not necessary have any future.

| 47. On the complications brought about by love in times of war (Managua, 1984) |
| Tomás Borge calls Belli to her office to question her relationship with Charlie. She was asked to end this relationship and she did. |

| 48. On how female solidarity brought Charlie back into my life (Managua, 1984) |
| It was the fifth anniversary of the revolution. Belli narrates the situation of Nicaragua at the time. During the celebration, Belli sees Charlie with other journalists. She goes to visit Pia, and she advises her to make the decision of seeing Charlie again, since asking her to leave him was a sexist decision by the Party. Belli gets back together with Charlie. She doesn’t lose her job. First elections after the revolution take place. The US does not accept the results. Reviving the fear of a US invasion |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>49. Of the trepidations I endured at other airports and the surprises granted to me by the power of my imagination (United States, 1984)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belli gets pregnant again. After Camilo’s birth, her cervix is very damaged. It would be a very dangerous pregnancy. They went to the US to make a decision. She describes the health system in the US. She makes a decision. Belli has an abortion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>51. On the memories I revisited with Charlie and of my daughters’ many exploits (Managua, 1985)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maryam and Melissa joined the Sandinista Youth Coffee Pickers Brigade. Charlie and Belli went to visit them in the coffee fields.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>52. Where I take the risk of making a marriage proposal (Managua, 1986)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Belli decided to propose. Charlie needed time to think.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>53. On how Charlie and I constructed a bridge that spanned our separate geographies (Managua, 1986)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belli and Charlie got engaged. Belli felt the urge to write again. She wrote her first novel. Belli and Charlie made a deal to live some time in the US and some time in Nicaragua. They got married.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>54. On how I witnessed the fall of the Berlin Wall in a Miami hotel, and on the death of my mother (Managua-Miami, 1989)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Her disagreement with Daniel Ortega was affecting her political role. Belli her second novel *Sofía de los Presagios*. Charlie offered holidays in the US. Belli had problems to get a visa. She finally
met him in Miami. They watched the fall of the Berlin Wall on TV. Her mother gets sick, Belli went back to Nicaragua after Christmas to see her and she died two days later.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>55. On how the most intense years of my life drew to an end (Managua, 1990)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FSLN lost the elections. Pacific end to the revolution. Violeta Chamorro as a motherly figure.</td>
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<tr>
<th>56. Of how I lived my first year in the United States (Managua-Washington, 1990)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belli’s guilt for leaving Nicaragua. The process of adapting to the US and their culture. Their life in Washington. Maryam and Melissa left to study in Mexico. Charlie and Belli moved to Los Angeles.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>57. Of how an earthquake made me realize so many differences (Santa Monica, 1994)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belli feels angry for having to live another earthquake. A small seism a few days before convinced Belli that there was going to be an earthquake so she took precautions. This earthquake did not destroy their house. The next day Belli could not believe that the environment around her was so calm, like nothing had happened. Contrast between Nicaraguan and US context. Adoption of Adriana</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| EPILOGUE – Where this female Don Quixote brings her memoirs to an end (Santa Monica-Managua, 2002) |

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Table B.4: Review of chapters included in “Cuarta parte: Otra vida” in ST and “Another life” in TT
Appendix C: Analysis of the Critical Reception of Translation in *Teaching and Testimony* (1996)

|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|

Table C.1: *Teaching and Testimony* (Carey-Webb, 1996) and their preference for referring to TT
Articles | Noted Issues related to Translation
--- | ---
“Transformative Voices” by Allen Carey-Webb (3-18) | This article discusses the representation of truth in the genre of testimonio understanding that Burgos mediated the text first, and that “I, Rigoberta Menchú depends on Ann Wright’s translation from Spanish”(12). The article does not develop this concept of the translator being another figure of intervention, arguably as important as that of the ethnographer.

“Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú. Autoethnography and the Recoding of Citizenship” Mary Louise Pratt (57-73) | This article establishes that “the English translation by Ann Wright is very good, but readers and teachers still need to know that the book reads rather differently in Spanish than in English” (58). It uses the contrast between the title of ST and its translation into English as an example.

“Passion and Politics. Teaching Rigoberta Menchú as a Feminist Text” Stacey Schlau (175-182) | This article refers to the testimonio as My Name Is Rigoberta Menchú and This is How my Consciousness was Born rather than using the title Ann Wright gave to TT. She objects to the TT’s title “because it emphasises the individual more than the original in Spanish” (182)

“Testimonial Dictionary to the Reading of Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia. In Search of Our Voice” Avellaneda, Bilbija, Gutierrez, Osorio, Skar and Wasia (205-221) | Note the following entries:

**Burgos, Elisabeth:** “She is listed as author in the Spanish version although the English translation is catalogued in libraries under Menchú” (209)

**Indian:** “Where the English version employs the term Indian, to refer to Menchú’s ethnic background, the Spanish version uses indígena” (213)

**Translation:** “At all levels of the translation process, the meaning suffers many changes, which can include the omission of whole sections such as the manifesto that appears in the Spanish version but not in the English one” (220)

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114 The way of citing both Spanish and English versions does not seem to be properly established – due to aforementioned issues of authority and representation. Although TT is more frequently cited under Menchú’s name, and the Spanish version under Burgos’, this is not consistently the case.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Not Just Plain English. Teaching Critical Reading with <em>I, Rigoberta Menchú</em>” Clyde Moneyhun (237-246)</td>
<td>This article acknowledges translation as mediation. In the classroom the teacher will stress I.A. Richard’s view of translation as a negotiation not simply between languages but between mind-sets and worldviews. “Thus, students can recognise that the experience of reading Wright’s version of Burgos’ version of Menchú’s version of her life is several times removed from whatever we might recognise as Menchú’s real world” (238)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“This is my Testimony. Rigoberta Menchú in a Class of Oral History” Meri-Jane Rochelson (247-257)</td>
<td>This article acknowledges both ethnographer and translator as mediating figures but it does not expand on this idea. Also it notes the use of “Briticisms incorporated by the translator herself, which occasionally added — for American readers — an unexpected formal or inappropriately foreign tone” (253)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table C.2: Critical reception of the practice of translation in the edited volume *Teaching and Testimony* (Carey-Webb, 1996)