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Chapter 4

When the Mountains Tremble: Images of Ethnicity in a Transcultural Text

Teresa Longo

Crucé la frontera, amor...
Rigoberta Menchú

When U.S. filmmakers document the lives of people from other countries, especially Third World countries, they risk making a film that objectifies and mythifies the cultural other.[1] The challenge, according to filmmaker and cultural theorist Trinh T. Minh-ha, is to "re-create without re-circulating domination" (15). My purpose in writing about *When the Mountains Tremble*, a documentary on civil war and ethnic survival in Guatemala, is to examine the possibilities it offers for overcoming the film industry's tendency to dominate—to mythify and objectify—its subjects. *When the Mountains Tremble* (1983 and 1993)[2] is, strictly speaking, a *U.S.* documentary: it was created by the founders of Skylight Pictures (Pamela Yates and Thomas Sigel, directors, Peter Konoy, producer), was funded by the Public Broadcasting System (PBS), and is distributed by New Yorker Films to a largely U.S. audience. Yet in spite of their U.S. interests and national origins, Yates, Sigel, and Konoy have made a concerted effort to create a documentary whose focus is more transcultural than ethnocentric and objectifying. The most important evidence of this effort may be found in the decision to involve Rigoberta Menchú as an active participant in the work's creation.[3] Indeed, Menchú is not the object, but the narrator—or speaking subject—of *When the Mountains Tremble.* As the primary storyteller, Menchú is also the creator of the text's verbal images of ethnicity. As my investigation probes the ideological significations of ethnic imagery in *When the Mountains Tremble,* I analyze Menchú's imagery not in isolation but in relation to its visual counterparts.[4] I argue that the conjoining of the visual (images selected by U.S. filmmakers) and the verbal (images composed by Menchú)[5] challenges delineations based on nationality, stretches the boundaries between the filming subject and the filmed object, and renders this text transcultural. As a result, Yates, Sigel, Konoy, and Menchú address the practice whereby documentary filmmakers reproduce exotic cultural others. Thus, the creators of *When the Mountains Tremble* begin to re-create without recirculating domination.

Earth/Corn and Mother/Father

Menchú begins her narration of *When the Mountains Tremble* by underscoring Guatemalan ethnicity as the thematic focus of her text: "Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú, indígena quiché del pueblo de Guatemala... les voy a contar mi historia que es la historia de todo el pueblo de Guatemala."[6] As the voice of the people, Menchú then begins to define her culture in terms of its ancestral ties: "We are descendants of the Maya. Most of us live in the high mountains . . . we cultivate corn . . . Before planting . . . we ask permission from our mother earth for the wound we're going to create . . ." In correspondence with Menchú's opening remarks, Yates, Sigel, and Konoy begin the text's visual narration by acknowledging the importance of an ancient tradition—the cultivation of corn—in contemporary Guatemalan culture. By beginning the documentary with images of earth and corn, the U.S. filmmakers, like Menchú, recognize the indigenous Guatemalans' respect for the earth that sustains them. According to Rigoberta's people, this respect has profound roots: Rigoberta Menchú's ancestors—the ancient Quiché Maya—conceived of the earth as a divinity and corn as the source of their humanity (Tedlock, 14, 47). The visual and oral representations of the relationship between earth and corn—used by Menchú and her U.S. colleagues to introduce Guatemalan ethnicity—are, therefore, extremely important: the opening images of *When the Mountains Tremble* portray Guatemalans as a people with age-old connections to the divine, a people with ancient and sacred rights to their land.

Dual images like earth and corn abound in *When the Mountains Tremble.* For example, while Menchú introduces herself and Guatemala, viewers see Mayan women and men in pairs approaching the camera. As in the opening scene of earth and corn, the text's dual imagery reflects the teachings of the ancients: according to the Maya Quiché's story of creation, the first people modeled from corn dough, the first Quiché leaders, were dual entities—the mother/fathers of their lineage (Tedlock, 47).[7] In *When the Mountains Tremble,* the mother/father duality, like the earth/corn duality, ultimately symbolizes the Guatemalan people's rights to the land. This is the case in the filmmakers' controversial dramatic re-creation of a conversation between María and Jacobo Arbenz and the U.S. ambassador to Guatemala.

The scene, based on declassified U.S. documents, was staged by the Skylight group in order to clarify the historical background of U.S. involvement in Guatemala beginning in 1954 (Barnouw, 302)[8]: viewers hear Jacobo Arbenz, the president of Guatemala, and his wife, María, explain to U.S. ambassador John Peurifoy why Guatemala will no longer allow the United Fruit Company to control its finest land. Yates, Sigel, and Konoy's work here has been criticized for its oversimplification of Guatemalan history.[9] I would argue, however, that this dramatic performance is not as simple as it seems: in terms of the text's symbolic meaning, what viewers hear is secondary to the highly suggestive images that they see. The visual presentation of María and Jacobo Arbenz is an image of two complementary figures. When Jacobo speaks, María listens knowingly. When she speaks, he nods in agreement. Side by side, the partners address their adversary, the U.S. ambassador, seated at the opposite side of the table. The ambassador attends dinner with his wife as well, but she never speaks and camera angles diminish her size. In contrast with the grandiose figure of the ambassador and his silenced wife, Mr. and Mrs. Arbenz emerge as two equally dignified individuals who act as one.[10] They are the mother/father leaders of their nation—dedicated to their people's right to cultivate the land. As a result of the dual imagery of this dramatic re-creation, the U.S. filmmakers demonstrate a transcultural understanding of Mayan culture. They have sacrificed the complex rhetoric of U.S.-Guatemala diplomacy, but it was a sacrifice worth making, for it reveals — on a level more subtle than the verbal — the complexity of Guatemalan ethnicity.

Beauty in the Land of the Quetzal

Included among the images that Rigoberta Menchú uses in order to subtly convey her people's ethnicity is an image of Guatemala as the "land of the quetzal." Menchú's mention of the brilliant national bird native to Central America ("...hace diez años... acababa de salir de la tierra del quetzal") evokes a Guatemala that values natural beauty and indigenous life. Like Menchú, Yates, Konoy, and Sigel also portray Guatemala as the "land of the quetzal." In contrast with the natural brilliance suggested by Menchú, however, the Skylight group (assuming a position critical of U.S. intervention in Central America) reveals a Guatemala that is neither indigenous nor natural, a Guatemala whose "beauty" is imposed — and purchased — from abroad.

The scene from the documentary that most clearly conveys this new and imposed vision of Guatemalan beauty centers on a Miss Guatemala Pageant around 1982. Just prior to the pageant scene, viewers hear an address in which President Ronald Reagan thanks U.S. business leaders for their resourcefulness in Central America and encourages them to further expand their enterprise throughout the hemisphere. Also prior to the pageant scene, viewers see a series of billboards advertising the products of U.S. companies: a shot of a Pepsi billboard, an advertisement for Viceroy, and a close-up of an ad for Wrangler — a U.S. flag inside an unzipped pair of jeans with the caption, "Wrangler, the American Way of Jeans." The montage ends as contestants of the Miss Guatemala Pageant dance across a stage in jeans while the pageant's emcee announces that "tonight there is beauty in the land of the quetzal." Viewers perceive the full ironic impact of the emcee's statement as a result of the Skylight group's careful and creative editing: even before we witness the pageant, the jeans and the flag have already informed us that beauty and culture, in the land of the quetzal, are profoundly and intimately dictated by U.S.

business interests and backed by the U.S. government.[11] As the reigning Miss Guatemala adjusts her crown and proceeds down the runway, images from the pageant itself continue to reinforce the new standards: were it not for the Spanish-speaking emcee, it would be difficult to say that the fair-skinned, blonde-haired, evening-gowned queen was not Miss North Dakota or Miss Virginia 1980-something.

Once we have taken a final look at the reigning Miss Guatemala, Yates, Sigel, and Konoy further direct our attention to the topic of Guatemalan ethnicity—and to threats of its extinction. In their filming and editing of the beauty pageant, they include disturbing images of ladina contestants modeling the native dress of Guatemalan Indians: "luzco el traje del pueblo quiché," states a young ladina woman whose short hair and "cover-girl" makeup negate her claim to an understanding of Quiché ethnicity.[12] The young contestant's obvious act of disrespect unveils a certain acceptance by ladinos of the new, U.S. standards of beauty—an acceptance that results in the mythification (falsification) of indigenous cultures: "sure, the outfit looks pretty," states Menchú, "because it brings in money, but the person who wears it is as if they were nothing" (*Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú*, 234). And, "as if they were nothing," indigenous Guatemalans are significantly absent from "this night of beauty in the land of the quetzal." Via images from the Miss Guatemala Pageant, *When the Mountains Tremble* attests to the very real threat of extinction facing Guatemala's ethnic cultures.

"We the Indians" and International Solidarity

Menchú's reference to Guatemala as the land of native or ethnic beauty and the corresponding portrayal of the suppression of ethnicity, via the beauty pageant sequence, constitute an act of solidarity and an important transnational critique of imperialism. Throughout *When the Mountains Tremble*, Yates, Sigel, Konoy—and Menchú—will continue to stress the importance of national (Guatemalan) and international solidarity in the struggle for ethnic survival in Guatemala. Early in the text, the meaning of Menchú's "we," symbolic of her solidarity with her own people the Maya Quiché ("les voy a contar mi historia... somos descendientes de los Maya"), quickly expands to include all the indigenous peoples of Guatemala: "*We the indigenous people,*" states Rigoberta, "have no childhood. From the time we're very young we have to work hard in order to earn a living" (my emphasis).[13] Complementing Menchú's narrative are visuals of Mayan children picking coffee, native women en route to their jobs as servants in the capital, indigenous men shoveling garbage on the outskirts of a town: in all cases, the images—like Menchú's "we"—demonstrate the collective nature of the Guatemalan situation wherein a common national plight subsumes individual suffering. As Menchú continues her story, the subject of her "nosotros los indígenas" becomes ever more inclusive: "the landowners' security forces arrived to kick us off our small plot of land. They violently took us from our homes... That's why my father joined with workers, unions, Christian students, and other sectors."[14] The Skylight group reinforces Menchú's focus on the solidarity between ladino workers and indigenous peasants with archival images documenting the mineworkers' strike of 1977: as workers and peasants march to the capital together, their banners proclaim the unity of the people.[15]

The emphasis on solidarity in *When the Mountains Tremble* reaches an international level when Menchú offers her insights on the Americas: "For us indigenous people, it isn't exactly a bad time... and I'm completely sure that in many countries of America the indigenous will live forever and I hope that's so; it depends on society."[16] In this statement, Menchú promotes solidarity not only with Native Americans but also ("y depende de la sociedad") with an extensive international audience, which would include nonnative communities in the United States. Clearly, she has already established solidarity with the U.S. filmmakers who demonstrate their transnational sensitivity by portraying visual images of the righteous nature of Menchú's cause.

Yet, for even the most sensitive of U.S. filmmakers, the imperialist point of view is hard to avoid. For example, immediately after the beauty pageant sequence, the filmmakers cut to the testimony of a Mayan woman who speaks out in open defiance of the mythification and objectification of Guatemala's indigenous people: "The government uses us when it's in their interest. They exhibit us in our native dress in a park as though we were in a zoo. The army and the rich consider us unskilled brutes who don't know anything." It is obvious that Yates, Sigel, and Konoy see this testimony as important for they present to their international audience the image of an intelligent, articulate, honest woman whose very presence defies domination. The U.S. filmmakers, however, fail to acknowledge the speaker's ethnic origins, to identify her native language, or to introduce her by name. To a certain extent, the oversight reveals an act of unintentional ethnocentrism on the part of the filmmakers.[17] The people's unity promoted by the Skylight group in *When the Mountains Tremble* is a real necessity in Guatemala: the success of the resistance movement clearly depends on strength in numbers, the ability to organize, and international understanding and support. Nevertheless, an overwhelming focus on solidarity without an affirmation of the individual contributes to a negation of ethnicity:[18] when viewers see the twenty-two separate ethnic groups in Guatemala "unify" or merge into one category called "Indians," Guatemalans are denied the very ethnicity Menchú and the U.S. filmmakers hope to protect. It is impossible to "re-create without re-circulating domination" when individual and ethnic identification are not acknowledged on the screen.

Ethnicity and Humanity

In *When the Mountains Tremble* Rigoberta Menchú relates the shocking story of the torture and killing of community members—including her younger brother. Her testimony reveals intense government repression of Guatemala's ethnic population. (Like Menchú, those tortured are descendants of the Mayans.) The images of Rigoberta's testimony also reveal government efforts to deny the Indians their very humanity:

> The army kidnapped my brother. His crime was to have been the secretary of a small agricultural cooperative in the village. They tortured him for fifteen days. They cut out his fingernails. They sliced his body. Then the army published a document telling people to go see the punishment that they were going to give the guerrillas in their power. We went to the Plaza de Chajul. There were twenty tortured men there. Among them was my brother.

> Their swollen bodies were without fingernails, without ears. An army official spoke for three hours, threatening the people by saying that whoever participated in subversive activities would meet the same end as these men. He gathered the men together and, while they were still alive, he poured gasoline on them. They were burned in the plaza.[19]

The images that communicate dehumanization most thoroughly here refer to acts of bodily torture that render individuals unrecognizable.[20] These twenty men, cut up and swollen from abuse, were denied their ethnicity and their humanity even before they were burned alive in the Plaza de Chajul: as a result of government oppression, the prisoners were abducted — severed from their families, their communities, and their livelihood. Now, images of severed fingernails and ears disclose not only the men's physical pain but also the torturous separations inflicted on Guatemala's ethnic communities by their oppressors. According to Rigoberta Menchú and the U.S. filmmakers with whom she collaborates, Guatemalans have been systematically split up from their families, uprooted from their land, and divided from their culture. The visual imagery that most clearly communicates the severing of humanity described by Menchú appears in a scene of the film that documents the aftermath of the government's massacre of the inhabitants of a Guatemalan village. Just prior to the massacre scene, we see drawings of war done by Guatemalan children: their subjects are machine guns, blood, and the outline of a decapitated body. Similar to the children's drawings, the images of the subsequent footage of the massacre are images of havoc and destruction. We see rows of dead bodies — their bloody hands and their faces. The imagery, like that used by Rigoberta in the portrayal of her brother's death, is highly metonymic: the focus is not on whole human beings but on isolated body parts. In this way, the U.S. filmmakers record the forced fragmentation of ethnic communities in Guatemala.

In addition to the filming of hands and faces, coverage of the Skylight group's work on the massacre scene includes close-up coverage of the intense human reactions of those who survived: a woman whose passage is blocked by a barbed-wire fence covers her face in her hands; another woman cries out in agony as she caresses the cloth covering a loved one. The scene is as painful to watch as Menchú's testimony is to hear. The question, of course, is "how close is too close?" Can filmmakers document tragedy realistically without furthering victimization with their intruding cameras? Pamela Yates maintains that part of her camera style is to really look at people, to "feel people as human beings, as having lives, dimensions" (Rosenthal, 548). She "wanted to make a film which would actually draw Americans closer to Guatemala" (ibid., 545). With this purpose in mind, it seems that the Skylight group filmed the massacre scene in the only way possible. The largely U.S. audiences of *When the Mountains Tremble* experience only a fragment of the grief affecting the survivors. But—as a result of this close-up experience—we do experience something. Pamela Yates hopes that this brief moment of shared agony will promote U.S. viewers to stop their government's intervention in Central America.[21] When this happens, the camera's momentary intrusion into the grief of the victims will become not a victimizing tool, but a component in the effort to stop the fragmentation and dehumanization of Guatemala's ethnic communities.

The Armed Struggle, Little Sisters

Ultimately, Guatemalans are portrayed not as victims but as survivors in *When the Mountains Tremble*. And according to Rigoberta Menchú, survival—ethnic survival—depends on armed struggle: "For us orphans there hasn't been any other path but that of struggle," states Menchú. "My two little sisters [*hermanitas*] have chosen armed struggle." Menchú's combination of the diminutive image "little sisters" with the notion of armed conflict suggests the intriguing, multilayered dimensions of the lives of the people—especially the women—involved in the Guatemalan struggle. Menchú's subjects are not one-dimensional, or mythical objects, but individuals whose lives are complex and even contradictory. Like Menchú, Yates, Sigel, and Konoy present this complexity successfully in their filming of the daily routines of guerrillas-in-training in the Guatemalan highlands. The documentary's highly acclaimed guerrilla scenes include coverage of initiation ceremonies and armed skirmishes as well as interviews with revolutionaries.[22] In her own interview with Alan Rosenthal, Yates refers to the filming of the guerrilla scenes as an extraordinary "once-in-a-lifetime" experience: "the general oppression in Guatemala is so intense that you can't just ask someone their candid opinion, because they won't tell you. At least not above ground in the capital. But when we went with the guerrillas, it was like crossing an invisible line. All of a sudden, everyone would tell you anything you wanted to know... And to me that was a revelation" (546). To Yates's comments, I would add that, for the viewers of *When the Mountains Tremble,* the real "revelation" of the guerrilla scenes lies not only in the information we hear but also, and perhaps even more poignantly, in the images we visually perceive. As the filmmakers draw their viewers into the day-to-day workings of revolution, we catch glimpses of some of the essential and unexpected elements of the guerrillas' existence: this is a world of army fatigues, black berets, guns, and dog tags. It is also a world of intricately woven *huipiles,* delicate earrings, and sewing needles.

The complexities of revolutionary existence apparent in the juxtaposition of such incongruent images come to life when the Skylight group interviews two very young Mayan women who, like Rigoberta Menchú's little sisters, have both chosen a life of active participation in armed revolution. During the interview, one of the young women speaking leans against her gun and embroiders. Her companion, with a rifle resting at her side, brushes her hair and listens. The seemingly contradictory images of the young guerrillas' life—guns, a hairbrush, and an embroidery hoop—parallel the sharp distinction between the innocence of their years and the gravity of their message: "In the future when we win, we're going to achieve a new society very slowly," states the first young woman, "but we the guerrillas will be able to adapt to the new life that is coming. We will be able to go into the villages and nourish the old culture, the best part of our folkways." Here "to nourish," with all its feminine implications, is associated with the preservation of ethnic culture and with the success of the revolution. Women—and some very young women, indeed—have found a place in the Guatemalan revolution. As the young guerrilla interviewed by the Skylight group states, "It's good to be here: everyone is equal." In the Guatemalan revolution, young people articulate adult concerns; women feminize the masculine enterprise of war: the hairbrush and the gun may not be as incongruous as they seem.[23]

Before the Skylight group could capture on film this young woman's insights on revolution, before Yates, Sigel, and Konoy could document the complexities of her life as a revolutionary, they had to cross what Pamela Yates has called an "invisible line." It is hard to imagine that the group's line or border crossing was not in some way facilitated by the identification in gender between Yates and her subjects. In *I, Rigoberta Menchú*, Menchú maintains that women have played an incredible role in the revolution: "It is unbelievable. Mothers with their children would be putting up barricades, and then placing 'propaganda bombs,' or carrying documents. Women have had a great history. They all experienced terrible things, whether they be working-class women, peasant women, or teachers" (233). And to this list of female participants in the revolutionary struggle, it seems that Menchú has also added a U.S. filmmaker and her collaborators.

When she agreed to narrate their documentary in her own words, Menchú and her U.S. colleagues opened a border that has for so long blocked international dialogue through film. *When the Mountains Tremble* is not a flawless piece of transcultural communication. Neverthless, Menchú's "border crossing"[24] together with Yates, Sigel, and Konoy's "step over the invisible line" may constitute an important direction to be taken by U.S. documentarists—a direction that subverts ethnocentrism by recognizing the complexity of the hairbrushes alongside the guns.

Notes

When the Mountains Tremble can be purchased from New Yorker Films at 16 W. 61st St., New York, NY 10023.

1. See Christian Hansen, Catherine Needham, and Bill Nichols, "Pornography, Ethnography and the Discourse of Power," in Nichols, *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*. As an alternative to discourses of domination, the authors propose documentaries based on "dialogue, heteroglossia, political reflexivity, and the subversion of ethnocentrism" (227). The "dialogue" proposed here is apparent in *When the Mountains Tremble* in the cooperative efforts of Rigoberta Menchú and the creators of Skylight Pictures.

2. *When the Mountains Tremble* was originally produced in 1983 and then rereleased with additional narrative by Menchú in 1993. On the original production, see Erik Barnouw, *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film* (300–302).

3. Rigoberta Menchú is a Maya-Quiché activist, a spokeswoman for indigenous rights, the 1992 recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, and the narrator of the testimonial *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* (Elizabeth Burgos, ed.). She is currently recognized as an international authority on justice and ethnic survival. See Teresa Longo, "Authority and Reconquest in *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú*."

In an interview with Alan Rosenthal, published in Rosenthal's *New Challenges for Documentary*, Pamela Yates clarifies Menchú's participation as follows:

> We knew that our main problem in the editing of *Mountains* was that we had very few central characters, and we had no one, central character to act as the thread to weave the film together. And then, about three days after I met her, I knew that she would be the best choice. Then it was Tom's idea that we film her in isolation the way we did, to give her that storytelling quality... and to represent her as the voice of the Guatemalan people... [We filmed her] at the very beginning [of the editing process], before we really had an assemblage. She came and looked at all the footage with us, and we discussed the kinds of scenes we were going to put together. Of course, we knew her whole story. We had tried to gather every article that had been written about her, and we also had many long conversations with her. Then she sat down and wrote the script, her own personal story, over a period of three days. Afterward we went into a studio and filmed her. (546)

4. My analysis of signification relies on Roland Barthes's theory of the image. In "The Third Meaning," Barthes writes that signification or symbolic meaning is referential to history (52). On the relationship between verbal and visual imagery, see W. J. T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*. Mitchell's theory centers on the notion that the "dialectic of word and image seems to be a constant in the fabric of signs that a culture weaves around itself" (43); "we create much of our world out of the dialogue between verbal and pictorial representations" (46).

5. The editors also selected the portions of Menchú's oral testimony that would be included in the documentary. My focus, here, however, is not on the selection or deletion of entire narrative passages but on the imagery within those passages that Menchú uses to tell her story.

6. Menchú's opening statement also introduces a dialogue between *When the Mountains Tremble* and *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* (Elizabeth Burgos, ed.), which begins in much the same way. The first edition of Burgos's work was published in 1985, although she began recording Menchú's story in 1982—just one year before Skylight Productions filmed the Guatemalan activist. Menchú's narration of *When the Mountains Tremble* closely resembles a "condensed version" of *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú*. In the cinematic representation of the activist's story, the details are provided not by the narrator but by Yates, Sigel, and Konoy.

7. In the introduction to the *Popol Vuh*, Dennis Tedlock writes that even today there are individuals called mother/fathers who serve in ritual matters as symbolic androgynous parents to everyone in their respective lineages (47). In *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú*, Rigoberta herself offers additional information on the responsibilities of mother/father. In Menchú's community, the leader is not a single

person who symbolizes a duality; the community leader is an actual mother/father pair.

> En la comunidad de nosotros hay un elegido, un señor que goza de muchos prestigios. Es el representante. Tampoco es el rey pero es el representante que toda la comunidad lo considera como padre. Es el caso de mi papá y de mi mamá, que son los señores elegidos de mi comunidad. Entonces, esa señora elegida, es igual como si toda la comunidad fueran sus hijos. (27)

8. This is one of two dramatic re-creations in the documentary. The second scene dramatizes the CIA-backed overthrow of Arbenz and the installation of Castillo-Armas in 1954. See Barnouw, 302. Although Yates, Sigel, and Konoy have been criticized in the United States for mixing drama and documentary, this aspect of their work is, in fact, a principal characteristic of New Latin American Cinema. See Ana M. López, "An 'Other' History: The New Latin American Cinema" (315).

9. In response to this criticism Pamela Yates argues that the Skylight group "made the film for an American audience, most of whom know little about Central America . . . about the role of the United States in the war there." She adds that because they want a more complex analysis, "political analysts and film critics of the left have criticized [the] film . . . They've been very narrow-minded in terms of documentary film form, arguing that the dramatic sections ruin the film" (Rosenthal, 550).

10. In *Radical Thought in Central America,* Sheldon B. Liss also acknowledges the first lady's role as a national leader. According to Liss, "Secretary of State John Foster Dulles believed that U.S. investment was threatened by nationalization and the socialist thinking of Arbenz' friends and advisors and his wife, María Cristina Villanova" (30).

11. See also Grupo Chaski's 1986 film *Miss Universe in Perú,* available through Women Make Movies, which offers a similar critique of the corporate commodification of women.

12. Indeed, according to Rigoberta Menchú, the appearance of the young beauty contestant would contradict, rather than support, Quiché tradition: "mi madre me decía que una mujer indígena sólo es respetada cuando lleva su... traje completo... 'No cortarse el pelo', decía mi mamá. 'Cuando te cortas el pelo, ya se fijan en ti y dicen, esa mujer está rompiendo muchas cosas y ya no te respeta la gente' " (*Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú,* 236).

13. *"Nosotros los indígenas,"* states Rigoberta, "no tenemos niñez. Desde niños tenemos que trabajar duramente para ganar la vida."

14. "las fuerzas de seguridad de los terratenientes llegaron a despojarnos de nuestra pequeña tierra. Nos sacaron violentamente de nuestras casas... Así es como mi padre se juntó con obreros, sindicatos, estudiantes cristianos y otros sectores más."

15. Accompanying the archival footage of the mineworkers' strike is a speech by a popular leader who declares that for the first time in Guatemalan history Indians and ladinos sharing the same suffering will build a powerful movement. Also significant in this context is the Skylight group's interview with a labor lawyer who reiterates that "it is the unity of [the] Indian population with the

non-Indians—the unity of the workers with the peasants—that allowed the mass movement to grow."

16. "Para nosotros los indígenas, no es un tiempo malo, exactamente... y yo estoy completamente segura que en muchos países de América los indígenas viviremos eternamente y ojalá que así sea y depende de la sociedad."

17. In "Colonialism, Racism and Representation," Robert Stam and Louise Spence address the ways in which the filmic medium and filmmakers produce Others.

18. According to John Beverley, "an affirmation of the individual self in a collective mode" is a principal characteristic of the testimonial genre. Menchú asserts her individuality in the declaration, "Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú": she is not, therefore, subject to "the 'facelessness' that is already [hers] in the dominant culture" (96). In *When the Mountains Tremble*, this kind of affirmation needs to be extended to other indigenous speakers as well. The filmmakers do provide the names of the lawyers, church officials, and army officials who also contribute their testimonies.

19. "El ejército secuestró a mi hermano. Su crimen era ser secretario de una pequeña cooperativa agrícola de mi aldea. Lo torturaron durante quince días. Le cortaron las uñas. Le cortaron el cuerpo. Después, el ejército publicó un documento llamando a la población a que fuera a ver los castigos que iban a darles a los guerrilleros que tenían en su poder. Fuimos en la Plaza de Chajul. Habían veinte hombres torturados. Dentro de ellos estaba mi hermanito. Estaban hinchados de los cuerpos, sin uñas, sin orejas estas personas. Un oficial del ejército echó un discurso por tres horas amenazando a la población si se metían en subversión le tocaba el mismo destino como estos hombres. Los juntaron. Vivos les echaron gasolina. Los quemaron en esta plaza."

20. In *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú*, Rigoberta asserts that her brother's body was, indeed, beyond recognition. See chapter 23, "Tortura y muerte de su hermanito quemado vivo junto con otras personas delante de los miembros de la comunidad y familiares."

21. In his interview with Yates, Rosenthal states that "one hopes that these kinds of films will bring about change, though what documentary does is absolutely undocumented. What would you like this film to do?" and Yates responds, "Well, I'd like the film to help organize Americans to stop U.S. intervention in Central America. And also, in doing that, to aid in the organization efforts for social change in the United States" (Rosenthal, 551).

22. Erik Barnouw refers to the Skylight group's work with the guerrillas as "an unprecedented close-up look at... men, women, and children under constant government bombardment" (302).

23. Yates also addressed this issue in her interview with Alan Rosenthal. Rosenthal: "Were you conscious of the very gentle, very human way the women guerrilla recruits are shown in the film? Was there a conscious attempt to get shots that would show them in that way? The women are soldiers but still seem very tender and feminine." Yates: "Yes, I like those scenes with the young women recruits... they combine tender and childlike qualities with a very serious and sophisticated understanding of what they're doing, why they're fighting. They are wise beyond their years" (549).

24. The phrase comes from the poem by Rigoberta Menchú, "Crucé la frontera, amor," which concludes *When the Mountains Tremble.*

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