The Imagining of Community in the Arts of Guatemala

THE IMAGINING OF COMMUNITY IN THE ARTS OF GUATEMALA

Weaving, Folk Tales, Marimba Performance, Contemporary Painting

David B. Greene

With a Preface by
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Foreword

This book is one in a set of three books dealing with the imagining of community in and through works of art. The second one takes up the imagining of community in some European art and architecture (the Limbourg brothers, Perugino, Tintoretto, Botticelli, the Sens Cathedral and the Blue Mosque), and the third one the imagining of community in some pieces of European music written between 1825 and 1970. These are published by the Edwin Mellen Press under the titles, *The Imagining of Community in European Art and Architecture, 1140-1617. Envisioning Transcendence of, Authority in and Foundations for Community* and *The Imagining of Community in Works of Beethoven, Verdi and Shostakovich. Musical Means for Envisioning Community.*

All three books work from a distinction between imagining community through a work of art and having a concept of community in a work, and in the main dwell on the former. The term, "having a concept of community," is used when a work of art involves images that illustrate or allude to a concept of community and that the artist knows before beginning the work. The content of the concept is much the same whether it is referred to artistically or explained discursively. The work of art treats the concept as though its content were fixed and stable, the product of good thinking, and generally considered worthy of universal agreement. The purpose of the artistic images is to add affective power to the concept, and not to modify its content.

The term, "imagining community," is used when the interrelationships among the parts of a work of art have an impact on the meaning of the images. Caught up in a network of interconnections created by the artist, the content of an image is quite different from whatever it might be in another context. Because the interrelationships themselves are unique and particular to the work of art, they turn something general or vague into something unique and specific, something that is peculiar to the work, something that cannot be universalized. Prospects that can be couched only in the artistic medium have come into being. The artist's skill in managing the medium and interrelating the work's various parts has created otherwise unavailable imaginings.

The artist's skill and the interrelationships it creates are also what make a work of art enduringly appealing. That means that what makes a work of art outstanding as a work of art overlaps with what makes its imagining of community stand out.

The three books in this set point out and detail imaginings of this kind in some important works of art. They try to bring to the surface the particular way particular works of art enable their audiences to imagine, re-imagine and renegotiate certain aspects of community.

There are two goals for these efforts. One is to get deeper into the works themselves. The other is to think new thoughts on the crucially important issues that the pieces re-imagine, such as the pursuit of the common good, the value of working, legitimizing a community's power structure, the boundaries of community, and the nature of the contrast between being inside and outside these borders.

Closure on these issues is not a goal. Unlike fantasizing imaginary communities, imagining puts forward real possibilities, but it does not stifle further questioning. It stresses what is particular at the expense of what can be universalized. It is effective when it is stimulating, and does not have to elicit widespread

agreement in order to be valuable. It sets up prospects, but does not coerce people, either rationally or emotionally, to embrace them. It does not do people's thinking or feeling for them.

Focusing on imagining rather than conceiving community, this set of books only mention and do not really deal with the controversies usually associated with "arts and community." For in most cases it is not the imagining, but the conceiving of community that loads debates on topics like public support for the arts, arts in public spaces, arts to promote community wellbeing, arts education, and the use of law to censor the arts or economic resources to control their impacts. Each of the various sides in the controversies has a concept of "community," and the concepts do not tally. When people whose concepts of community are incompatible try to discuss these issues, they find they cannot. In order to work toward consensus, it may be useful for them to set aside their preconceptions of community for a time in order to sink into the imagining of community in some works of art, and then, in light of the prospects shining from these works, re-conceive community.

An example is the quarrel about support from taxes for the National Endowment for the Arts in the United States. The NEA slogan is, "A great nation deserves great art." It may be the case that the absence of great art is a symptom of national mediocrity, but it is certainly the case that where concepts of a "great nation" are at odds, there cannot be agreement on which works are paradigms of great art. What might have been a discussion easily slides into name-calling. Imagining the line between being inside and outside the nation and envisioning the nature of the contrast drawn by the line is essential to thinking about nations and national greatness. Works of art, such as the Maya weavings in Guatemala, that imagine the inside/outside contrast diversely can indicate directions and stimulate aspirations, even though or because they do not directly propose or endorse a certain concept of "great nation." Conceiving national greatness too often

tilts toward an arrogant exclusiveness, which then justifies oppressing those who are excluded, and it may be that this outcome is inevitable unless one can imagine enjoying (and not just tolerating) the presence of outsiders precisely in (and not in spite of) their status as outsiders.

Another example is the controversy over censorship in the arts, which tends to pit the needs of society against the rights of the individual. Except in the very short run, neither of these makes sense without the other. What is lacking is a means of holding the two together. After all, the individual who has rights also belongs to a society, and the sense of belonging, even when it is negative, is at the core of an individual's identity. At the same time, society is made up of individuals, and societies put together of stunted, repressed individuals regularly become stunted, repressed societies. Where individuals and individualism are conceived in terms of generalized and stale concepts of freedom and autonomy, a person's own sense of independence and self-determination is brushed off. Then, either society oppresses the person, or the person rebels against society. Viewers of paintings, such as the Limbourg brothers' books of hours and Tintoretto's "Vulcan Surprising Venus and Mars," can imagine individuals' simultaneous participation in and transcendence of a community as two intertwined and equally basic aspects of community. Although (and because) these works do not present a concept of community or of an individual's transcendence of it, they can put viewers in touch with aspects of themselves that they would do well to keep in mind when they conceive the dangers of pornography and the risks of censorship.

Increasingly through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the arts were used as a means of social protest. For example, works like Ralph De Boissiere's *No Saddles for Kangaroos* make a narrative out of the concept that it is unjust for factory workers doing mind-numbing labor to be paid far less than workers doing less disagreeable jobs. Opposed to this concept of economic justice and art pieces that embody it is the concept that market forces are the appropriate means for es-

tablishing a just price for labor. Neither concept involves a very robust respect for the workers themselves, for both concepts reduce the value of laborers as human beings to the value of the outcome of their work in building the community's infrastructure; they differ only on how that value is to be determined. Works of art like marimba performance in Guatemala imagine working itself, and not just what the working brings into being, as valuable. It may well be that workers are not ever respected unless their working itself, precisely in its most disagreeable aspects, becomes—is imagined as—an object of awe.

The tone of voice used in describing these examples bespeaks a belief that whenever a work of art imagines aspects of community it is addressing issues that all communities must somehow address. This belief does not mean that imagining community should replace conceiving it. Thomas Nagel's *The View from Nowhere* calls urgently for a way to coordinate two deeply different kinds of seeing. Seeing from a very particular somewhere and dwelling on uniqueness, as in the imagining by artists and their audiences, has to be harmonized with seeing from nowhere in particular and arriving at a synthesizing concept of all that is seen from everywhere. The openness of imagining has to be coordinated with an effort to establish general concepts and rationally argued conclusions on which universal accord can be solicited.

Coordination means that neither imagining nor conceiving is reduced to or dominated by the other. And there is more: harmonizing the two must itself be both imagined and conceived.

At stake are at least two things: the autonomy of art, which can be imagined far more readily than conceived, and the social responsibility of the artist, which can be conceived more easily than imagined. But the autonomy of art needs to be conceived as well as imagined so that there can be a tightly drawn distinction between authentic art and so-called art that is really propaganda for a certain political platform or an audio-visual aid to a dull co-existence for culturally diverse

people whose differences the pseudo-art thinly and temporarily disguises. And it is also the case that artists' responsibility to deliver value beyond the aesthetic needs to be imagined as well as conceived; otherwise artists are not likely to nurture the communities that nurture them.

On the one hand, coordinating imagining with conceiving means that imagining artistic autonomy involves a firm grip on a well-wrought concept of artists' social responsibility and the obvious fact that when community weakens and withers, art dries up with it. On the other hand, the coordinating means that conceiving artists' responsibility involves imaginatively internalizing the obvious fact that the call for value beyond the aesthetic means that this other value must be in addition to and not instead of aesthetic values; otherwise it is not the *artists'* responsibility, but that of some other kind of image-makers, that is being conceived.

To point out obvious facts is not to say that it is easy to harmonize the imagining and the conceiving with each other. Works of art like those examined in these books may help. At least they exemplify the opportunity: they prompt their audiences to imagine the coordination of artistic autonomy with artists' responsibility, and then on that basis to re-conceive the coordination as well.

For they are all works that join autonomy with a kind of social responsibility that has been mostly overlooked. They are all works whose autonomy takes the form of exercising social responsibility by re-imagining one of the vexing issues that community involves. Although they have all been around for quite a while, they are still vibrantly serviceable. Any person or any community that attends to them carefully comes face to face with some daring possibilities.

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Preface

Books dealing with arts and community are typically driven either by fears that government is censoring the arts or by accusations that artists are becoming rabble rousers. David Greene's set of three books on arts and community step back from that fray to get to a more basic issue, one that underlies both the anxieties and the anger: the capacity of art to shape novel images of community. Taking up works as different as Shostakovich Symphonies, Verdi's choruses, Botticelli's "Primavera," the Gothic cathedral at Sens, the Blue Mosque in Istanbul and Guatemalan marimba musical performance, his compelling studies hinge on the careful distinction he makes between concepts of community and what he calls "imaginings of community." For example, his examination of works of Dmitri Shostakovich leads to a new kind of focus on the purpose of community. Beneath the composer's apparently inconsistent political positions, Greene finds a continual effort to re-imagine community as centered around a vision of the common good that itself shifts and changes and will, necessarily, need to be approached in a variety of ways. Greene argues that Shostakovich points toward a post-liberal, post-socialist "civic republicanism" which reconciles the tension between the individual and the collective through an open-ended pursuit of the common good.

In the interplay between Giuseppe Verdi's main characters and his choruses, new relationships between the individual and the community are put forth. The chorus plays a crucial dramatic role and becomes a vehicle for expressing collec-

tive identity against which the main character may be measured, accepted, embraced, or rejected and cut off, and, in the process, the sense of "participating in" as well as "transcending" community takes on a new sharpness. His examination of the miniature paintings in the Limbourg Book of Hours leads to a new focus on the importance of multiple perspectives and angles of vision. This new focus then leads to new insights into the way individuals' sense that they belong to a community is at the core of their identity, and at the same time individuals transcend themselves and, as they do, they transcend their community as well.

Greene has given us a work of great range, crossing disciplinary boundaries and pursuing imaginative visions in music, painting, architecture, philosophy, religion and politics. His case studies are only the tip of the iceberg, however, as readers will, no doubt, wish to take up his invitation to consider how other great works of art may be imagining community.

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CHAPTER ONE

The Paintings of Alejandro Wer: Imagining Community when Two Cultures Live in One Space

1. ALEJANDRO WER: A CONTEMPORARY GUATEMALAN PAINTER

Alejandro Wer-Gálvez is a Guatemalan painter of Scottish-Spanish[1] descent, born in 1959. His work hangs in the homes of Guatemala's most discerning collectors as well as in the offices of United States Senators and the Vatican and in private collections in over twenty countries on five continents. He has had exhibitions in Guatemalan government and other public sites as well as shows in France, Italy and Spain. It is not unusual for short-term visitors to Guatemala to buy one of his paintings literally before the oil is dry, while it is lying on the floor of his gallery in La Antigua Guatemala. One of the buyers said of his purchase, "This painting could only have been done by an artist who was not just a great painter but also a great person."

The third and fourth sections of this chapter consist of a series of interviews,[2] in which Wer talks about specific paintings. He comments on his way of work-

[1] His mother is a descendant of the Gálvez family that served the Spanish royal court for four generations. In that capacity Bernardo de Gálvez founded and gave his name to Galveston, Texas.

[2] The interviews took place in La Antigua Guatemala during the summer and fall of 2007. The language of the sessions was English. The order of the interviews in Sections 3 and 4 is not the same as the order in which they were conducted.

ing—how he approaches a new painting—and on the various levels of meaning he tries to convey in each one. As an introduction to the interviews, this section generalizes his comments as a series of four stages that comprise the coming-to-be of a painting and presents in a systematic way what the interviews present in connection with individual works of art.

Although these stages are readily apparent in his comments about each painting, it would distort his thinking to suppose that Wer explicitly says to himself every time he paints, "Now I am in stage one, now I am moving into stage two, ..." It would also be a misunderstanding to infer that he has just one idea and paints it over and again. For in fact the end result in every case is surprising and unpredicted, even to Wer himself. Every painting is just itself, one of a kind. But the stages by which the final painting comes into being follow a repeating pattern.

The first stage is an event that sets the work on a painting into motion. It is a very particular experience. Invariably it is a moment that is memorable and intense. Sometimes it is quietly intense, such as seeing a huge tree that has fallen onto the shore of a lake, or an ice cream cart, or a child playing with the water in a fountain, or bulls in a pasture, or a flowering tree. At other times, the intensity is more overt, such as a bullfight or the swift changes made by a sudden storm. The experience is sometimes of only two seconds' duration, or it can be several hours long. Generally, but not always, it is a very common, apparently ordinary event. In any case, it has a depth and a breadth that is actually not unusual in human experience, though it may be unusual for people to be explicitly aware of it. For Wer, these moments reach down into the foundation of what it means to be human and reach outward to include all human beings.

When Wer commits himself to present a certain moment, he centers attention on that very particular experience, and not on the sum of experiences that resemble it and not on the range of experiences that it may bring to mind. This commitment completes the first stage of his work.

He then begins to construct a visual presentation of the experience. At this stage he makes a second commitment, and that is to empower his viewers to see

clearly and easily what is there, and not have to guess or speculate at what he may have meant or intended. It would be easy, but mistaken, to see this as a commitment to a tradition or style of painting. It is more for the sake of transparency. It is also for the sake of transparency if he does something experimental (for example, when he makes a painting that can be hung with any of its four sides at the top, or put on a table and viewed from above). Many of his paintings have areas where something is only vaguely presented, but it is clear that it is vague; viewers are clear that they are to be uncertain about what exactly is depicted. Wer is keen that the painting not seem profound just because it is difficult to make sense of it.

Transparency for him also means that viewers are called to deal with a particular moment itself in all its richness, and not to use the painting as merely a starting point for their private sentimental journey or feast of memories. If the moment has in fact the depth and breadth that Wer experienced, and if Wer's use of colors, composition and tradition are transparent to that depth and breadth, then viewers' experience will be touched, illumined and enriched by being connected to Wer's moment and his presentation of what is objectively there, over against them.

In sum, having begun with a brief but intense experience, Wer wants his viewers to be pleased as soon as they see the painting. He wants them to experience a moment of happiness brought on by the harmony of line and color joined to the emotional value of the moment depicted. Other things will happen when they spend weeks and years with one of his paintings.

These two stages are so important and generate something so worthwhile that it is surprising that the depth, value and intensity of a particular moment is just the beginning. Yet his work is only preliminarily for the sake of showing that wonderful moment and giving viewers happiness with it. As Wer highlights in the conversations recorded below, while he is working to present a particular moment by making a composition that is also particular as well as obedient to the nature of the medium, he gradually comes upon something beyond that moment. This something is as much built into the painting itself as is the second-stage presenta-

tion of the special moment that has spread itself out in the first stage. This something is a sense of a reality that is inscrutable, deeply important, yet so familiar it is as though he (like his viewers) knew it all along. The inscrutable-familiar something in each painting is unique and particular to that painting. Perhaps the most important thing about it, common to all his works, is that as viewers gradually become aware of it, their experience deepens.

Just as each child in a family is unique but also has family traits, so it is with the familiar-inscrutable something that emerges in each of Wer's paintings. They all have two things in common, and putting these forward takes place in the third and fourth stages of the Wer pattern: they all present a duality or an opposition, and they all have to do with ways of joining the aspects that are opposed to each other in this duality. While it makes sense to separate these stages conceptually, they usually intertwine each other chronologically.

In the conversations below, Wer refers to this duality as "againstness." For example, in the "Two Cultures" paintings (Color Plates 1.5 and 1.6) he sets European and Maya people, dress and customs down next to each other and European style of sculpture next to Maya style of work and play. In the abstract paintings of the bulls (Color Plates 1.1, 1.4), Wer sets the bullfight, the earth and the sea against each other, the pleasures of land against those of the sea, and he puts the peace of the bulls in the pasture against the violence of the bulls in the ring. "Birth of Tucum-Umán, the King's Son" presents two modes of homage to the princely infant: the taut upward stretch of the priest's arms is juxtaposed to the repose of the mother and the other figures. Through the title one knows the future of this infant (much as one also knows the future of the infant Jesus in Christian nativity painting) and the disrespect with which the Spanish will treat his people; this contempt is set against the profound respect and admiration the painting shows for its subject; the slavery that is coming is implicitly set against the self-determination and self-fulfillment that the birth ritual presupposes. In one of the miniatures, Wer sets the beauty of the volcanoes that ring Lake Atitlán next to a sinister tree-monster lying on the shore of the lake. In another one, a storm is implicitly set

against a cloudless day, which had prompted no thought of rain. In "Julia" he puts the ruins of human architecture next to the blooms of nature's fertility, the call to worship next to the call to play, and a reminder of Christianity up against allusions to Maya lifestyle.

Oppositions and dualities take place in many a work of art. Often they create tensions that bind the aspects of the work together; resolving or not resolving the tensions is the point of the work. Wer's dualities are different, for they do not generate tension; things are simply juxtaposed without shouting out for some sort of resolution, and consequently the duality is usually not the first or even the second thing a viewer notices. It may be weeks or years before an owner of a Wer painting sinks into this aspect. What is remarkable, then, is that the duality does not seem at all remarkable.

Moreover, one cannot make a generalization about what kinds of things are juxtaposed to each other. Each particular juxtaposition is just itself—a particularity in its own right and not at all the more or less mechanical working out of a principle, anterior to each painting, such as using duality to create aesthetic tension, or to imply ethnic conflict, or to stress a human/non-human disjunction.

In short, what is set in contrast to what in a Wer painting is always surprising. It takes a highly original mind to put a lake-monster/tree next to a woman taking in the beautiful view of the volcanoes. No matter how many of his paintings one has seen, the dualities continue to have an element of the unpredictable, and that fact is significant.

Even more significant is that the juxtaposed elements are, in the end, not merely juxtaposed. They are also joined, and the joining is the fourth and final stage in the Wer process. Just how the opposed elements are joined is invariably even more surprising, less to be predicted, than what is opposed to what. As the juxtapositions do not generate tensions, the joinings do not amount to resolutions. Both are quiet, understated. As Wer comments in the interviews, and as viewers' transactions with the paintings confirm, the joinings tend not to embody a com-

pleted fulfillment of what the juxtapositions aspire to, but rather point to a future of deeper and deeper joinings.

The nature of this joining is particular to the painting in which it occurs. Things as different as juxtaposed ethnic groups (Maya and Spanish) and juxtaposed states of bulls (in the pasture and in the arena) are joined by the way the colors depicting the respective groups achieve a balance. In other cases, the juxtaposed groups of people are joined by the fact that they are all enjoying the same thing. In another, it is done by the way a Maya child at play in a European-style fountain unself-consciously crosses cultural lines in a moment of delight. As she does so, she changes the fountain, for she has expanded the kind of pleasure it can provide. Her simple act has literally changed the fountain from a mono- to a bicultural entity. In "Birth of Tucum-Umán, the King's Son" the quiet joining is subtle and implicit. It occurs in the classic-period Maya vase that serves as a point of intersection between what Maya and Europeans respect and admire. In the abstract painting of Spain, the sea and land are joined by a literal bridge; in addition, the pleasure of the bulls at pasture is joined to the pleasure of Alejandro at the sea by the fact that the two together balance the reds of the earth and the bullfight. In "Julia" it is the spiral composition that binds together the toy-seller, the toy-buying child, the worshiping mother, the ruined church, the jacaranda tree, the ice-cream cart, and the little girl buying an ice cream.

All of these joinings are familiar to viewers from everyday experience. If anything qualifies for the adjective "ordinary," these joinings are on the list. Yet they are also presented as something mysterious. A hallmark of Wer's style is that each painting lets the uncanniness of the joinings shine through. Viewers recognize (as does the painting) that each joining is as uncanny as it is familiar. In each case it is the painting's imagining both the familiarity and the mystery of the joining that speaks to viewers and makes the painting so worthy—worth so much. Along the way, the experience that launched the movement toward first juxtaposing and then joining contrasting things as well as the transaction with the possibilities and limits, the opportunities and the challenges, inherent in the medium

are all preserved. It turns out that the initial experience and the transaction with the medium are not important just for their own sake. Their greater importance is to set up a juxtaposition and take part in a joining, and it is imagining this familiar-inscrutable joining that lifts the painting from the level of a private experience and personal rumination to the level of a revelatory work of art.

Because of the familiar-inscrutable juxtaposition and joining, viewers who have experienced an immediate happiness, as Wer calls it, on first viewing the painting are gradually led in the end into a deeper feeling and a many-sided wondering. They experience the wonder that joining opposed elements can take place at all. One has to wonder how it can be that things whose natures are so separate can be joined without undermining the nature of each. Wer speaks eloquently about the wonder that goes along with seeing something for the first time (a girl buying an ice cream, the moment before a storm); he describes the way he tries to capture that "first-time-ness" in his paintings. To the extent that he succeeds—and many of his viewers and buyers would say the success is total—he is capturing the power of an event just to be itself and is putting viewers in touch with the powers of separate events. The power of each thing presented separately makes viewers aware that these powers are tough, and so they resist being joined to other powers. Joining is not done easily. It is not done by merely wishing that it be done. Moreover, by putting viewers in touch with the power of each entity separately, each painting presents that power as something to be respected and maintained. And so the wonder is twofold: viewers are in touch with the familiar-inscrutable wonder of joining and the wonder of honoring the integrity of each element in spite of the joining.

In the following interviews Wer describes eight of his paintings. In every case he elaborates on all four stages of its genesis, and comments on each of the following, though not always in this order:

1. an intense experience in a particular moment and his decision to present it visually

2. some details of the composition that are intended to enable viewers to feel immediately the experience that launched the painting and to enjoy its intensity

3. something beyond that moment—a sense, a reality, that is inscrutable, deeply important, yet so familiar it is as though he and his viewers knew it all along. Wer uses the word, "againstness," to refer to this inscrutable-familiar something, for it involves some sort of duality or opposition

4. the joining of these opposite elements

The interviews in Section Three describe the first four paintings—two miniature landscapes (Color Plates 1.2 and 1.3) and two somewhat more abstract works (Color Plates 1.1, 1.4). As a group, these four make it clear how different Wer's paintings can be in spite of the fact that all of them pass through the same four stages as they come into being. Especially important for purposes of imagining community are the various imaginings of, first, "againstness" and, then, the joining of elements that are in some sense against one another. There is no particular reason for claiming that these four presentations of againstness and joining touch on an imagining of community, though, if one wanted to, one could choose to use them as a springboard for envisioning community in a new way.

In fact, that is what Wer himself does in the four paintings he describes in the Section Four interviews (Color Plates 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8). For all of these involve setting some moment or aspect of the indigenous Maya community against the Spanish colonial culture, and then joining them. Seeing these four paintings in the context of the first four confirms that the elements of againstness and joining in Plates 1.5. through 1.8 are indeed significant components of these paintings. Because the nature of the againstness and the mode of the joining are different in the four cases, the group offers four richly different, yet complementary imaginings of community.

Wer is by no means the only Guatemalan painter who deals with contrasting cultural elements, but his means of doing so are his own. Other painters join indigenous motifs with European principles of color and composition, or they inte-

grate motifs from the two cultures. In these cases, a concept of community that can embrace and unite people with different pasts and traditions seems to be at work, controlling the integration. The paintings then serve to illustrate or embody this anterior concept of trans-cultural harmony. Wer's process differs in two ways. First, as becomes clear in the interviews, Wer does not have a concept of community; he does not work from one, and he does not work toward one. Second, the cultural againstness is put into the context of other contrasts, which have to do not with opposing traditions but with painterly issues, such as color and form, or with thematic contrasts, such as worship and play. As the contrasting painterly elements are joined, their joining brings with it the contrasting cultural elements. While the result is not a concept of a viable bi-cultural community, there is an imagining of community in which contrasting elements are real and yet are joined without losing the distinctiveness brought forward in the contrasts. Thus it is the joined contrasts of painterly elements that serve as the means whereby he and his viewers can imagine the joining of culturally opposed elements in two co-existing communities. At times he even imagines the possibility of joining them into a single community. Wer's mode of imagining communities that share a space by juxtaposing and connecting contrasting elements is amplified in Section Five.

This possibility is imagined, not conceived, which is to say that the possibility is not based either on conceiving the cause of the againstness or on a conception of the means of joining. To imagine such a joining is therefore open to a number of different ways of conceiving a joining and to different concepts of its foundation. Perhaps the openness of imagining serves to open up concepts so that they increase the number of possibilities that they address.

In order to give content to the assertion that Wer is imagining, not conceiving, againstness and joining, the contrast between imagining and conceiving needs to be spelled out carefully. Consequently, the difference between conceiving community and working toward empowering an imagining of it is delineated in the next section, before the record of the interviews is presented. This delineation

is additionally important because the same distinction is in play in Chapters Two and Three. Because it is central to the analyses offered there, some aspects of imagining that have a bearing on the analysis in later chapters are taken up here even though they are not especially relevant to Wer's work.

2. IMAGINING AND CONCEIVING COMMUNITY

Imagining community, like conceiving community, goes on all the time, sometimes directly, sometimes unself-consciously, sometimes carefully, sometimes more and sometimes less comprehensively. It is part and parcel of belonging to a community. Regardless of the community, artists do not necessarily do it better than others, and their imagining is distinctive in the first instance simply because it is done in an arts medium. But when the medium really matters to the imagining, it is suggested in what follows, images of community can emerge that are otherwise unavailable.

Initially at least, it may seem that the imagining of community in a work of art is nearly the same as conceiving community in art, as of course by some understandings of "imagining" it is. What is intended here, however, is quite different from presenting a concept of community in a painting or presenting a concept in a song that comports with that of community.[3] The imagining does not presuppose a particular concept of community, it does not illustrate one, and it does not necessarily lead to one.

An imagining of community is also quite different from presenting an "imaginary community." Works of art depicting an imaginary community are usually illustrating a concept of a community that does not and probably cannot exist. By contrast, an imagining of community is putting before oneself the pa-

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[3] The distinction between conceiving and imagining community is elaborated in David B. Greene, *The Imagining of Community in Works of Beethoven, Verdi and Shostakovich: Musical Means for Envisioning Community* (Lewiston, NY, 2010), pp. 1-15.

rameters of a community that does exist or that, for those doing the imagining, is coming into existence. These parameters are imagined and envisioned in a particular way.

A salient feature in this way of envisioning is its dynamism. The imagining is dynamic in the sense that it presents some aspect of a community in the process of coming into being, constituting itself, and modifying itself. It does not presuppose a particular concept of community identity, and so it does not celebrate or reinforce one. If the work simply imagines community—if it offers an imagining of community—then negotiating its image can take place, outside power struggles, between the artist and the viewers, among various viewers, between a critic and the artist and among various critics analyzing the same work.

Three refinements are needed at once, and all of them affect the analytic process—that is, the process of bringing out and negotiating the imagining of community in a particular work of art. First, it should be said that a work of art imagines only one or a few aspects of community. Works rarely if ever imagine a community in all its aspects and all its complexity. For example, Wer imagines the connecting of two culturally different communities that occur in the same space and whose elements are juxtaposed. He does not imagine the boundaries of either community or what it means to be "inside" or "outside" the community or whether "inside" and "outside" have the same meaning for the two communities. That aspect of community is imagined in the tales and textiles whose spaces are explored in the third chapter. The second chapter takes up a set of works of art whose imagining focuses on still another aspect of community in Guatemala—namely, working to build its infrastructure. Identifying precisely what aspect of community is being imagined is an important step in describing what is taking place in these works. Seeing the community imagining at the heart of one work does not, however, necessarily by itself prepare one to recognize community imagining in another piece. Because this chapter and each of the other two take up imaginings that focus on such different aspects of Guatemalan community, each

chapter has to develop its own method for describing the imagining of community. Even so, they all have this step in common.

Given that a work imagines only some aspects of community, one is not surprised that, second, the work may put forward not only an imagining of some aspect of community but also put a concept of another aspect, a concept that has previously been shaped by the artist or someone else. Conceiving and imagining community, it therefore needs to be said, are not necessarily incompatible. It is crucial for analysis that the difference between the two processes be respected and care be taken to make out what commonly held concepts of community a work is simply assuming to be valid, which aspects of community, if any, are in fact being actively re-imagined in that work, and which aspects are simply being ignored. This step in analysis is somewhat complicated by the fact that the contrast between imagining and conceiving is not absolute or fixed, and in some works the distinction is less marked than in others.

Third, the imagining of community does not always involve treating "community" as a theme in the work. In fact, the imagining described in Chapters Two and Three is mostly indirect and oblique. The imagining of community comes across while attention is more directly focused on a theme other than community, or on some aspect of composition in the works that do not have a theme. These works of art often have a relevance for negotiating community that is not immediately obvious, and relevance is especially elusive if one assumes that a work's "message" is restricted to its treatment of an explicit theme.

These refinements make it possible to bring forward the most salient characteristic of the imagining of community in Guatemalan works of art and the most important reason for attending to such works: the imagining is invariably carried by features that are crucial to the artistic power of the work and are central to the work's over-all force and effectiveness. Absent this characteristic, the works' imagining of community would not have been clear enough to be recognized as such. The situation is quite different in works of art that present concepts of community, for the way the concept is presented may be indifferent to the artistic

quality of the work. That is, a weak work of art may present a concept of community, and the strength of a strong one may not have much to do with the concept of community it puts forward. Conceiving community in art can take place by alluding to concepts that precede the work and are well known and well formed, so the work itself does not have full responsibility for conveying the concept.

Not so with imagining community: if the work does not imagine it effectively there is no imagining; if there is clear imagining but not through the work's own central features, there is no meaning to the claim that the work itself is imagining community. After all, artists are called artists because they are skilled in the techniques of a medium, and they use this skill to build images and structures. The imagining of community by an artist *qua* artist takes place through this structure, whether or not the work explicitly addresses community as a theme. If a work presents a previously known concept of community, and embodies it through its own distinctive structure, the form in which it is presented usually affects the concept, and turns it into something new: it becomes an imagining of community, and not simply the presentation of a known concept.

It is precisely this skill and the structures it makes possible that set Guatemalan (and other) artists' imagining of community apart from other modes. It is what gives their works a particular value. Artists are, after all, just folks; they are not necessarily community heroes. Their imagining of community in one sense is just one more imagining of community. Anyone's imagining of community can prompt someone else to re-imagine community. Or it can if it is sufficiently clearly imagined. In contrast to the inchoate quality of run-of-the-mill imaginings, artists' imaginings are clear, subtle, articulate, and profound. In other words, they are helpful to the exact extent that they are artistic—well composed, technically apt, structurally astute, and possessing the qualities that are sometimes said to make a work "aesthetically powerful."

The difference between conceiving and imagining corresponds to differences in the way the two change, both in the arts and elsewhere, and both in the various paintings by Alejandro Wer and also in marimba performance and Maya weaving.

Conceiving community involves generalized concepts of, for example, the boundaries of community or of an individual's obligation to contribute to its infrastructure. These ideas change as new data come forward and as logical inconsistencies surface, but they are always heading toward a stable concept. Conceiving community often proceeds by making comparisons and drawing contrasts to other concepts as ways of sharpening the conceiving.

Imagining community changes differently. Always involving a community in which one participates or can imagine joining, it changes as one's own sense of the community's boundaries change, for example. For another example, it is precisely as one deals with the tension between one's own sense of obligation to the infrastructure and others' sense that one renegotiates one's own imagining. The encounter with another's imagining may lead to surprise or even hostility, which lead not to drawing comparisons but to re-imagining and renegotiating.

Typically the changes embodied in new imaginings are small. One is preliminarily mostly unaware of these changes. But whether large or small they do not have to be justified either logically or empirically. Each imagining is of a particular moment, hence temporary, as imagining is continuously being done and redone. Conceiving community involves synthesizing and harmonizing what is seen from as wide a range of viewpoints as possible. Imagining community, by contrast, privileges the viewpoint of a particular subject, and does not intend to integrate what is seen from a variety of viewpoints.

This aspect of imagining controls analysis to a considerable extent. When critics identify a concept of community that they believe an artist is illustrating, they typically present evidence that the artist was indeed aware of the concept and may offer reasons (such as a commission, or a desire to increase sales, or a commitment to a particular idea) why the artist chose to illustrate it. By contrast, it would be a mistake for analysis to proceed as though Wer, or any other artist, first imagines community and then sets about creating a work that projects that image. As the interviews exemplify, Wer (like most artists) discovers his image of community through the process of making it. He comes to see through the act of in-

venting. For this reason, the appropriate question is not, "What is Wer's image of community?" but rather "What aspects of 'community,' if any, are being imagined in each of his works?" Then the analyst asks which of these aspects are thought-provoking and likely to be helpful for other imaginings of community.

Every well-wrought work of art has its own composition and form, its own set of distinguishing features and mode of effectiveness. It follows that the imagining that is embedded in them is also unique and particular to that work. Since the imagining is located only in the work, it cannot be general and universal, which is precisely what a concept can be and strives to be. Still, the imagining in one work bears comparison to that in other works by the same or another artist. One can see the changes and inconsistencies in imagining within Wer's *oeuvre,* or that of any single artist, as an example of the artist negotiating the imagining of community with her- or himself over the course of a career. While the critic cannot always claim that the imagining that takes place in one work of art alludes or refers to that in other works, still what occurs uniquely in one work clarifies, amplifies and strengthens the imagining that takes place in other ones. Tracing this clarification and noting the wobbles in an artist's imagining is an important step. Analysis, in other words, means attending to a series of imaginings, which as a whole add up to something more like a narrative than a concept.

3. INTERVIEWS I:
FOUR EXAMPLES OF AGAINSTNESS AND JOINING

(1) Untitled

Color Plate 1.1

David: Let's start by looking at an abstract painting you did very recently.

Alejandro: This painting is part of the series of paintings having to do with bulls and bull-fighting that I did after being in Spain last May [2007]. It is a

painting of three colors. Here it is a matter of the weight of the colors because, believe it or not, we can actually weigh the paint of the different colors in grams. And in addition to the balance of colors, literally in terms of weight, as I just said, I am also working here with the same principles of lines that I used in the painting of the birth of the king's son.[4] Light colors dominate in the sense that they cover the greatest amount of surface area. One light color is this pale, yellowish green, and the second is this reddish color. And these two lighter colors together equal the heavy blue that is made even heavier by mixing in black, which is of course always very heavy. You can see that the balance does not come from covering the same amount of space with each color. And you feel this balance even without thinking about it. So you see I am trying to put things together by the way I use colors.

What I was working with here is my experience in Spain, and the sea that I visited there. I was both in Madrid and also in Palma on the island of Majorca in the Mediterranean. So in this painting I am painting the bulls and the bullfighting in Madrid [upper left corner], but also those incredible blue colors in the sea, which I saw when I took the plane back and forth. I juxtaposed the green fields with the marvelous blue I saw from the plane and also on the beach at Palma.

The green has to do with the fact that for the first time in my life I saw those bulls roaming free, grazing out in the open fields. And when I saw the bulls there, I was struck by what amazing creatures they are. So powerful! They give this feeling of muscles and strength. And there they were, just eating and enjoying the day in that light green field. So I tried to capture that too. Also, the red of the soil. And you see that area there in the top left. That color is almost red. That is the element you see with the *torrero*, the bullfighter, who uses a cape to confuse the bull during the fighting. I used that color there because the particular bullfighter I saw was not using a cape in the traditional red, but a cape in that color there, which is off red toward pink. So you see I am telling my own story of the bull-

[4] Color Plate 1.7. See pp. 31ff below.

fight, not the standard story. I know that people will say, why not red, because most of the time the cape *is* red, but what I saw was that color, almost pink. And then we have this little patch of purple-blue in the top right corner, which is there both to contribute to the balance of color but also to remind us that the painting has to do with an island. So what I am painting about is my whole experience in Spain. You can see the color of the earth, the color of the sea, that light green over the yellow, and here in the upper left you see the figure of the bull and the *torrero*. But very abstract. And actually I was very impressed with the two elements—the bull and the bullfighter, the one against the other—so I just show the againstness of story elements, landscape features and moral aspects by presenting the color of againstness. That is the main thing. In all the paintings I use againstness as the main theme.

Another example of againstness, much less violent, is this area of the red earth that goes out over the blue of the sea. You see the interaction of the earth and the sea by seeing this earth that is like a bridge. It has to do with my trips to Madrid and then back to the island. So that imaginary bridge with the color of the earth is crucial in the way it crosses the blue area. Of course, I am using a geometrical shape here, but what is interesting and crucially important is that when you are working with your memories you have to be very disciplined; you cannot just be free. You have to make everything exactly the right size. Trying to tell a story geometrically is similar to writing about the bridge, the link, between the island and the continent. You have to use the right prepositions, but you also have to give the right amount of description to each element. If you describe the sea in great length, but only give a word or two to the bridge, it doesn't work. Likewise I have to think what color should be in what space. If I put the wrong color in or the wrong amount of color in, not everything will work together. In particular I had to be very careful with the heavy weight of the blue.

David: This area here, the upper left, really seems quite violent, and that makes sense as the bullfight. The rest of the painting is not violent, but it is very active. Your sea is very, very active.

Alejandro: I saw it from the plane. It is a bird's view. I was right there, the painting tries to get that right-there-ness across. I was spending quite a few moments with that incredible blue. So remembering the blue is remembering the experience of going back and forth between the island and the continent. You can see the waves and the white caps, viewed from above.

David: Do you also think of the earth part and the green fields as being seen from above?

Alejandro: No, the other parts are seen from a point of view on the ground, with the figures, like the bull and bullfighter facing you.

David: So we have two perspectives: a down-on perspective onto the water, and then an away-from-you perspective on the bulls.

Alejandro: And I made the cape a regular rectangular shape that is not moving. I am working and enjoying working with corners and angles here. I couldn't make the painting in any other way. I had to make the colors very strong. That was the only way I wanted to talk about or depict the experience. You can hardly make out figures here. Could be something, but it is not at all clear. But I still had to be very strict with myself. I had to put the important motifs and colors on the proper vertical and horizontal lines, and I had to balance the heavy colors and light colors. I couldn't just represent the elements that I like such as the bulls, the colors of the earth and the sea, the light green fields. And I had to pay attention to the kind of brush strokes I should use. When you get close to the painting you can see that the paint is built up and there is more texture in the earth and also in the blue-black areas. I was trying to give the feeling that people should touch the surface of the painting and feel the texture and actually feel the earth for themselves.

David: You don't really know the earth until you touch it.

Alejandro: And when I was swimming there in the water I felt the turbulence and the waves and you feel that turbulence in the texture of the built-up paint.

So seeing the painting as a whole is like reading the last line in a book when you finally get the answer, you finally see what the book is all about. Here is the

bullfight that you finally see, but you see it in its juxtaposition and also connection to the bulls in the field and to the experience of going back and forth to the island.

David: So, to summarize what you've said: You start with a very, very specific experience, and then you find ways of presenting it. In the process of doing that, you have to be true to the medium; you cannot do more than what a painting can do. But you have to keep making what a painting can do stay faithful to your own experience. So you've got these two masters you have to serve.

(2) Two Untitled Miniatures

Color Plates 1.2 and 1.3

Alejandro: I sometimes do a miniature, and here are two of them. In each of them I try to create a whole world in a very small space.

David: Yes, it's amazing.

Alejandro: In all of them the subject is women, all the time. They are the focal point, or at the focal point. And you see just part of the landscape. Here in the top left one in the group [Color Plate 1.2] is the shore of Lake Atitlán. Years ago I saw this tree, which had probably just fallen down, and I made a sketch of it. Just the other day I found the sketch, and I really liked it because when I was there the tree looked to me like a monster or creature from the lake or something. I really loved this appearance, so I painted it.

In it you see a woman with many fruits in the basket on the top of her head just looking out into the beautiful landscape with the three volcanoes. She is having the opportunity just to contemplate the beauty of Guatemala. For me it is important that every moment I appreciate that beauty. I love the Mediterranean and its beauty, but I know people from that area who are not open to the beauty of Guatemala, and I feel sorry for them. Art is about being open to new experiences, not experiences that are "better" than some other experience, but open to what is new and different. Without that openness you cannot experience art. And the

other way around: art helps to make you more able to enjoy new experiences wherever you are or go. But my friend says, "No, I am not going to change my mind. The Mediterranean is better."

David: And that goes to a fundamental confusion, which a lot of people make, namely that art and beauty are about morals, and so there is an "ought" and a "should" and a "good" and a "better." If it were a matter of morality, you would have to make decisions about what is better and why. But in art you just don't have to.

Alejandro: But what you *do* have to do is to be very open and sensitive. And this is a different kind of "have to" from the moral kind; it's just that unless all your senses are open, art doesn't happen. Years ago when I made that sketch, I just enjoyed my imagination seeing that tree and thinking it was a creature from the lake. And that's what happiness is!

David: It's like the Loch Ness monster that everyone loves to be scared of.

Alejandro: And here is another miniature [Color Plate 1.3]. It's a scene from Costa Rica. I remember when I traveled there I was very impressed with the pieces of land that reach into the ocean and become little islands. We are very close to the shores of Costa Rica, but we don't have anything like that in Guatemala. I was really impressed that the kind of trees and the land and the rocks—the whole topography—on the Atlantic coast of Costa Rica was so completely different from what we see on our coasts. I saw people there riding horses in the sunshine, and I remember that feeling of a storm coming and seeing all these waves getting stirred up. Then when the storm started, I had the opposite feeling, namely that the sun was there just minutes ago. And then the clouds filled the sky all over, and the people started running and were already getting wet while trying to get some shelter. Just five minutes before nobody was in the shelter. But all of a sudden, in five minutes, there was this terrific, heavy, yet typical tropical storm. So I remembered that particular moment and decided to paint it. And you can see the tree that was close to me is done mostly in browns, more like a silhouette, but just minutes before that tree was green. All of a sudden it became dark because the

sun had gone away. So it made sense to me to paint that story in a miniature, because even in the miniature you can show that swift change from green and happy to brown and threatening. The small size helps convey the suddenness of the change.

David: It must take tremendous discipline to do so much in so small a space. Every brushstroke has to count.

Alejandro: I read somewhere once that human beings should be like children and be open to the mystery of sudden change and to all mystery, even when they are adults. That's something I have in mind, and I don't want to lose openness to mystery as the years go on. I remember when I was a child the first moment I arrived somewhere new, and I said, "Oh my, what is this?" Like the first time you see the ocean.

David: Or like the first time I saw Antigua. I'll never forget that moment.

Alejandro: Okay! Exactly. And you just have to give yourself over to that and enjoy it, ...

David: And it's such a thrill ...

Alejandro: ... and afterwards you can give that feeling to the people because you paint it for the sense of the mysterious. People can find that detail, and realize it's not there just for decoration; it's not just something to enjoy. But it is there so you can just open your heart to it and dwell on that detail and say to yourself, what is *this*, what *is* this?

David: And every time you look at your painting of it, that's what happens, that sense of seeing whatever you're seeing for the very first time. I mean, that's one of the wonderful things about one of your paintings: every time you look at it is a first time!

Alejandro: Maybe the reason is this, that when I paint I allow myself to feel a lot of passion. Even if the scene is a peaceful one. When I paint something it is because I was really involved in it with a lot of passion. And then you have to work with colors to present this center or this peaceful scene or this passing moment. But at the same time somewhere inside myself there is that passion. It's

like two opposite feelings I have at the same time. It's another juxtaposition—another kind of againstness.

(3) Untitled

Color Plate 1.4

Alejandro: This painting is very geometrical, very abstract. I was trying to use just the brushstrokes to describe different things. The painting has to do with the island of Palma. This black horizontal here shows the boats. There were incredibly beautiful boats there.

David: Is this the reflection of the boats in the water?

Alejandro: No, the painting should be hung the other way for you to be seeing the boats. The painting can be hung in four ways, with each of the four sides being the top, and each time the painting changes. Some things you see only when you hang the painting in one way; when you hang the painting another way, that area becomes part of the abstract composition. Some things can be seen in two or three of the different ways of hanging it. So when the painting is hung another way, the black line [that was the boats] connects with the bluish area, and it becomes the dagger that is used in the bullfight. And here you see the bullfighter's cape. And here you see the bull coming right toward you. And it's surrounded by blood; it's a very bloody situation. The bullfighters use capes of several different colors, but I chose this one because I really don't enjoy the bullfighting itself. I really hate to see the animal suffer and die, but at the same time it is exciting. So I really am distressed when I watch a bullfight, torn between the suffering and the excitement. There is a kind of innocence in the bull. When he is approaching the *torrero*, he doesn't know that the man is going to kill him, and the bull just wants to play with him. But actually the man is going to fight with him, and really the bull has no chance of winning. It's very sad. Well, anyway, this section is related to the cape of the bullfighter.

And here you see the water and two figures, both the same size and the same shape. They are my friend and me, enjoying the water. And here is something from the culture of India, the snake of energy that goes through your body and it goes through these two figures here who are falling in love and sharing that energy. So when you turn the painting you get different situations, but whichever way you look at it, there is something going on that makes sense. In some of the turns, there isn't any ground, and you get floating figures like the ones in a Chagall painting. You can even put it on the floor and look at it from above. Then you see what it looks like when you are arriving in Palma on the plane and can see the ocean and the land and the greens.

So it's a very complex painting. Actually all my paintings are complex. Sometimes people want something simple, and I show simple, really very simple feelings, so they can get right into it and enjoy it, but behind my scenes, even when they seem simple, there is always something very serious. Like a social problem or tradition or a flaw or something about magic. Here, in association with this embracing couple, you can see the kundalini, a Hindu symbol, which is a very important mystical symbol is for me.

David: How can you make a painting so that it works no matter which way you hang it? That's extraordinary.

Alejandro: I think it has something to do with reading about Picasso before my trip to Spain, and the way he would use different planes to show a person from several different angles. There were some phases in my life when I experimented with cubism, but now it's not as though I want to imitate or follow Picasso. I just want to see how he did things, and I try to paint in my way what I am feeling the way he painted in his way what he was feeling. I try to see why he described reality in the way he did, in his own terms. And one can do that. The subject of my painting is what I experienced, what I liked, what I didn't like. I didn't like the bullfighting, but some of it attracted me, and I was in touch with this mysterious part of myself. We all have that those areas in our brain where we are fascinated with what we don't like. Sometimes we like light, sometimes we like

darkness. For me it was disgusting to see the bulls fighting and suffering, and sometimes I felt as though I was feeling what the bull was feeling. And even though it disgusted me, it was real; it was part of the totality of what is real. I don't like it, but I have to see it. And then at the same time there is some beauty to it. And so it fits with the other beautiful things, like the couple sharing the trees and the nice blue atmosphere. Then go one line to the right, and you get the bull-fighting. During the '80s all my paintings were surrealist. This was the period of the civil war in Guatemala, and I used that style to convey suffering, to protest against cruelty and suffering, and to set brutality against dream and imagination. I think I brought surrealist elements forward and integrated them into this painting.

David: Now what is the orange-brown area?

Alejandro: That's the land; I was seeing pieces of land.

David: This is one of my favorite paintings of yours. I really am drawn to it. I think it has something to do with the incredible togetherness of violence and harmony. It really has both of those things. And I say to myself, How can he do that? It might seem that a painting has to be harmonious or it has to be violent. But I can't say that here. It's not either/or. It is somehow both of those.

Alejandro: Having harmony and violence together is part of our lives, part of our every day experience. When I wake up my son every morning for him to go to school, he doesn't want to get up right away. He is awake all right, but he says, "Five more minutes." It doesn't make sense to me. Why lie in bed knowing he has to get up? Why five more minutes? Then he'll just have to go through the agony of waking up again. Now he is already awake, and it would be easier for him just to go ahead and get up. But he enjoys the wait, and he even enjoys what he doesn't enjoy, the waking up again. It's a small example of combining the pleasant and the unpleasant, the harmonious comfort of lying in bed and enjoying it while already feeling the discomfort of getting out of the nice warm, soft bed.

David: The Hindu allusion here is really interesting because the Hindus see violence and harmony as parts of a larger whole. They are aware that in life we

cannot avoid that violence if we want to confront the whole of totality. And we have to, whether we want to or not. Peace is only a part of the totality. You cannot despair because there is always violence. I think your bringing in the Hindu symbol is really quite appropriate.

Alejandro: Talking to you makes me wonder this: I had some experiences when I was very young reading some books, such as *Siddhartha*, and I got the idea that there are some things that are outside of you that are also already inside you. It's very different from the theory of education that says we learn only from what we experience. It's more that we have to somehow uncover what we already have learned and know. Not just get information from outside myself, but to learn from myself, from inside. Things like the kundalini have to be understood this way: you see them and bring them into yourself and let them go down into your heart, which somehow already knew what the kundalini meant. And when this joining of what is outside you with what is inside you happens, then whatever is outside you actually becomes something spiritual. I see my painting as being a way to put inside and outside, spiritual and physical against each other, and join them by taking simple things outside me, outside my viewers, and bringing them inside where they meet up with the way I already knew them and they become spiritualized.

4. INTERVIEWS II.
AGAINSTNESS, JOINING, AND THE IMAGINING OF COMMUNITY

(1) "Two Cultures I"

Color Plate 1.5

Alejandro: I have done four paintings of the Central Park in Antigua, each one facing a different direction, each of them facing one of the wonderful Spanish colonial buildings around the park. The reason for this series is that in Guatemala

there is great interest—and I share this interest myself—in the particular kind of cultural diversity that we have. With its Maya, Xinca, Garífuna, Spanish and Ladino ethnicities, Guatemala is very much a multi-ethnic country. So I think it's important to paint about it. In this series you can see two cultures, and you see the great contrast between them. Their roots are widely separated geographically, so the two together really makes a special kind of culture. One of these is the Maya, which was the indigenous one, and the other is the Spanish culture, which came here in the sixteenth century.

Let's begin by talking about the colors. During the six years that I was at the National Academy of Art and Design in New York, I studied color theory with James Childs and learned how to apply it, so it is very important for me. I think a lot about the emotional value of certain colors, the way green means peace and smooth movement, red is passionate and arresting, while yellow may mean the sun and life, though in Japan it means death. I also think a lot about how to achieve harmony through a balance of the colors. In this painting, one color dominates, but you also find some accent colors in various points in the painting, and what these accents bring forward becomes important. So I used these accents to bring forward each of the two cultures. In the left, the accent color is mainly in the textiles that the Maya individuals are wearing. On the right the accent color is the bright yellow in the dress worn by one of the Spanish ladies. The brightest color is on the ground in the center foreground, which depicts the light from the sun coming through the trees. This brightness makes the painting more vibrant at the same time that it serves to balance the colors of the indigenous textiles.

Although the color makes you notice right away the two Spanish ladies who are talking to each other, you later also see a couple of nuns coming toward you, and you begin to realize that the painting consists of people just walking around the central plaza. The setting is very pleasant, even romantic. Many people describe Antigua's Central Park as romantic. The point is to put the two cultures together in this particular way. The children add to this particular joining. You see this little Maya girl with her very ordinary doll and the little European boy wear-

ing the indigenous hat from the village of Todos Santos on the right side with his dog, and they make you feel that the scene in the park is a very common one. By the way, the model for the little European-descent boy is my son, Julio.

The first plane of the composition consists of people looking at points within the depicted area, not looking toward the viewer. The fountain with its water right in the middle of all those warm tones gives you a feeling of distance; the fountain is, then, in the second plane of the composition. And then there are the people coming, approaching you, from the distance, in the trees. All this adds to making you feel it is an ordinary park.

And note that the size of the Maya figures in the left foreground is about four times that of the Spanish figures in the right side. The greater size with more subdued colors makes this figure balance the smaller figure with that strong yellow. This incredible yellow gives this figure more importance, even though she is smaller. She dominates the right half of the painting. And that is the idea—to make a balance, but to balance larger size with stronger color, not an object of a certain size with another object of the same size, or to balance one strong color with another one. And this somewhat unusual balance then balances the people depicted in an unusual way. I think it is important that the different people are of different sizes, at different distances, some of them painted in calm tones, some in bright, more active tones; otherwise it would be as though everything were served up on a plate. Yet each part, for all its differences from other parts, is in balance with them.

David: It seems to me there are three anchors: there is this Maya woman here in the left, the Spanish lady in yellow, and the central fountain. And everything else floats, as it were, around those three. Now what's your feeling about the nature of the interaction among the peoples of the two different cultures? Do they have anything at all to do with each other? Or do they just walk more or less the same places without interacting?

Alejandro: I think that what I notice is that each set of two or three figures is a group unto itself. Look at the boy with his dog. He is pointing to the dog's nose,

almost touching. And there the nuns that you hardly see are walking together, and there the two Spanish ladies with the umbrellas are facing each other, obviously having a conversation. They are very close, very close to each other. And then you can see another pair here, and they are holding hands, and there in the left background there are three Maya, and two of them are standing, facing each other, and you can confuse them with the branches of the trees because they are so indistinct. They are standing; they are not moving. And actually this little girl, holding the little doll, is looking into the little doll's eyes; she is not looking at anybody else. So there is interaction between the little girl and the doll, and here between the boy and the dog.

And here, right in the center, is a figure that at first does not seem very important, but actually she is the one who is walking beside me (though I am of course invisible) and also beside viewers, if they want to go into the painting. She is a young Maya girl, and you are accompanying her. She just has these really wonderful soft colors. She is what gives you a point of view on the scene, a perspective. What she sees is what you see.

David: So on an individual level there are subtle but strong hints of a joining of cultures, and they are extremely important. There is Julio, who is of Scottish-Spanish descent, but is also wearing the indigenous hat. And there is the indigenous girl accompanying you, the artist of European background, as well as viewers from anywhere in the world, into the park. Are there other indications that the cultures are not just juxtaposed but also connected to each other?

Alejandro: Well, you know, we Guatemalans are working toward a true joining of cultures, especially in the last twenty-five years. But judging by how these Spanish ladies are dressed, you see that the scene here must be the late nineteenth century. That was a time when this problem was darker, more difficult, and the idea of putting the two cultures together was almost out of the question. So I am trying to say that even in those times the people in each culture had their own happiness, surrounded by the flowers, having their dolls and their little dogs, and at least walking around together in the Central Park. So of course they are having

a very private conversation, those two 1890 ladies; they are really independent of the other figures in the painting. But the point of the painting as a whole is to show that something we Guatemalans are working on is a deeper appreciation on the part of each of these groups for the other.

David: So you really see the fountain as a kind of linchpin for the movement toward a future of more interdependence. Because both cultures are building their particular happiness, their joy of the moment, around the same thing.

Alejandro: What I like about the place is that fountain, which was obviously there before you or me or any of the people in the painting. So it's like a clock there. It tells the time, because what happens around the fountain gradually changes. For example, nowadays the fountain-clock sees indigenous people walking around in greater numbers; by the fountain-clock you can see that the time has changed. There is something important about the influence of the Catholic Church in this regard too, for in another painting, entitled "Two Worlds,"[5] I also show nuns, but in it the nuns are indigenous people, they have dark skin, so their time is after the time of this painting, and you can see the difference in the way the two cultures are moving toward each other. And the park is the perfect place to put people together. The fact that they are all enjoying the same thing is a kind of bond, and that's why the fountain is so important. And you can just go to that fountain and think, what else has happened around that fountain?

(2) "Two Cultures II"

Color Plate 1.6

Alejandro: Here is a very simple painting, and it is related to the previous one. You can see the same fountain and a little girl playing with the water. In its background, and maybe it is not so important to the composition as color or line,

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[5] This painting is reproduced on the front cover of David B. Greene, *How to Respond to Strangeness in Art: Four Studies in the Unfamiliar* (Lewiston, NY, 2006).

but very faintly you can see the volcano, "El Agua," which has a very distinctive and immediately recognizable shape, and so it identifies the place as La Antigua. In this painting I am playing around with a less complicated, more intimate and direct scene, focused on the Central Park fountain with its water and the sculptures of the mermaids, and also on the ceramics scattered around it. And what is the little girl doing with the fountain? People come here to get water, and that is why I have the water jugs here. At the time depicted in the painting, the fountain is one of the few sources of water in the city. You can see the Maya mother working, getting water for her house, but at the same time her little girl is using a pole to play with the water coming from the fountain. So you get the same feeling that life is happiness, especially with children.

David: Is this something you saw at the Central Park?

Alejandro: One day I saw a little boy playing with a stick in the water in a fountain, not this one, but a smaller one in one of the corners of the park. But the child playing in the water really caught my attention. Nowadays only the smaller fountains are accessible for children. The larger, central one has a lot of flowers around it and a little fence, so no one can get as close to the fountain as in my painting. But I wanted to use the central fountain because it identifies Antigua so well. The smaller fountains are nondescript and could be anywhere in the world. So my imagination changed the little boy into a little Maya girl and invented a different landscaping around the central fountain so that the little girl could easily get to it. The water is coming from the breasts of the mermaids, a very European creation. It is a beautiful monument, very beautiful. The little girl is almost touching the mermaids, and at the same time her mother, an indigenous woman, is saying, "Come on, hurry up, we have got to go home." We know she is saying that because she already has the clay jug on her head.

David: I am not sure I understand this detail right here [lower left foreground].

Alejandro: It is like a shell, and then right here there is another figure, hard to say what it is, something like a duck, like a fish, but all of these are baroque

ornaments. Here you see something like a baroque column, and all of these are like the mermaids. But the mermaids are the main thing ...

David: ... because they are what make possible the interaction, the very pointed interaction, between the indigenous water-playing girl and the European style of values. A very subtle but very real joining of two worlds. Not at all self-conscious on the part of either the mermaid or the little girl.

Alejandro: Exactly!

(3) "Birth of Tucum-Umán, the King's Son"

Color Plate 1.7

Alejandro: I lived in the United States for twelve years. I studied veterinary medicine in Alabama and then painting in New York. Perhaps because of my medical training and also because my father was a physician, anatomy has always been very important for me. In New York I learned a lot of the principles of balance and composition. After I graduated from the National Academy of Art and Design, I returned to Guatemala and did this very academic painting. The style can be called "academic realism." I wanted to take the European approach in painting this Maya subject. Here you see the Maya person—a priest—holding him up. The baby and this man on the right, presumably the infant's father, are wearing a jaguar skin, which indicates their royal level. The Maya always associated the jaguar with the king. And you can tell this character in the middle is the mother, facing the infant with her back to the viewer. You can tell that everyone in the painting knows how important are both the infant boy and the spiritual ritual. The title of the painting refers to the birth of Tecum-Umán, who later became the head of the Maya forces that faced the Spanish led by Pedro de Alvarado in the early sixteenth century. So the time of the scene depicted in the painting must be the late fifteenth century.

Every culture in the world has, at some point, suffered an invasion, a conquest by foreigners, and that happened to the Maya culture too, as everyone

knows. Some say that, at the time of the Spanish conquest, the Maya culture had decayed and almost disappeared, but this painting does not comport with that belief. One of my experiences that contributed powerfully to this painting was seeing the headdress of Montezuma at the Metropolitan Museum in New York. From that incredible work of art I realized how powerful were the cultures in America that the *conquistadores* found—Montezuma and the Aztecs in central Mexico and the Maya in the Yucatan and Guatemala. The *conquistadores* encountered a strong Maya culture, but they enslaved the Maya and tried to destroy their culture, especially their spirituality. The painting makes it clear that what they destroyed was something vibrant and viable. From the dress you can tell that the society is well ordered, with differences in dress indicating differences in rank. These are not primitive, wild people at all, and as we know the Maya had very advanced knowledge of astronomy, mathematics and so on.

David: Though this painting is from several years ago, one sees elements here that are also in your recent work, such as the obscurity of distant figures and the use of three anchors to hold things together.

Alejandro: Yes. Your mention of the three anchors makes me remember how conscious I was of academic principles of composition when I did this piece. I was specifically aware of the principle of dividing a painting into nine equal parts by two horizontal lines and two vertical lines. These lines intersect at four places, and these four lines and four points are places where, according to this principle, images or motifs that are especially important for your message should be placed. The composition has a lot of figures in it, but adhering to the principle of the four lines and the four points makes the overall composition very simple and clear. The third of the painting at the top, the area above the upper horizontal line, is almost empty, negative space, used here to give the feeling that maybe you are in a temple, and the smoke in it is coming from the incense burning at the bottom of the painting. In this top third there are faces that you can hardly see. The most important spot in the composition is the imaginary vertical line that runs along the left side of the painting, demarcating the first vertical third of the paint-

ing. The priest holding aloft the infant runs exactly along this line; in fact you can see how the priest stretches himself along this line; he emphasizes the line, just as placing the priest on this line emphasizes him.

I think line is something that has been important in all my painting, ever since I started. Strong lines give a figure security and strength. They go along with the strength a person has just to be himself or herself. In the past few years I have been painting women with legs that are elongated to make the line even stronger, so the elongated figures you see in my recent work [see Color Plates 1.2, 1.5, 1.8] is actually related to what I am doing with line in this painting of the Maya priest. In New York I really learned how to appreciate the emotional value of different lines—the repose of the horizontal line, the assertiveness of the vertical, the agony of the broken line.

So here the line and composition place enormous importance on the infant and the ceremony being performed by the priest. And then there is the lower horizontal line, on which the incense-burning pot is located. This placement both emphasizes the incense and balances the upper line. The smoke goes from the pot on this lower line to the upper third of the painting, and thus ties together the bottom with the nearly empty top part, which is only vaguely depicting something. So even though there are many, many things, they don't seem jumbled or crowded, and everything is balanced. The mother of the infant is located in the very center of the painting, right in the middle of the four points of intersection. From her clothes and headdress you can tell she is a queen, which fits of course with placing her at this exact spot.

Another kind of balance has to do with color. There is a lot of red. You see it in the feathers of the guacamaya bird. But then the priest has a headdress of quetzal feathers, which are green, and it contrasts with the red. The quetzal feathers likewise show his level, for only the highest members of the society used the feather of the quetzal, an even rarer and more precious bird than the guacamaya. The feathers also put viewers in touch with the wildlife of Guatemala. The mother's feathers likewise identify her with the environment of Guatemala.

In addition to the link with the natural environment there is a link with the cultural environment through the presence of the vase in the lower right. It links the late fifteenth-century event depicted in the painting with classic-period Maya culture, which was at its peak seven hundred years earlier. In that way the painting sets itself against those people who claim that the Maya culture was essentially finished before the Spanish *conquistadores* arrived, and all that was left were some very primitive people leading a life totally different and remote from the life of the Maya when its culture was at its peak. These are people who, seeing that the Spanish treated the Maya with gruesome disrespect, assume that the Maya lifestyle must have warranted this kind of treatment. That is, they assume the Maya were so wild and uncivilized that they needed the brutal treatment of the Spanish in order to be tamed. There are people who assume that in general people who are conquered *deserve* to be conquered. The invasion, they think, has moral implications: it is punishment for past wickedness and it sets the people onto a path of improved morality. But in this painting you see that what was going to be oppressed and suppressed was something very wonderful, for you see a culture that is very advanced, very different from the European culture to be sure, but very advanced. It even contained elements, such as the use of incense and the felt need for a ritual to celebrate a birth, that coincided with elements of European religious practice.

(4) "Julia"

Color Plate 1.8

Alejandro: This painting was inspired by the beautiful purple blossoms of the jacaranda tree. I love the sound of the Spanish word, "jacaranda"; just by itself the name has the music of poetry. The poetry of the name fits with the incredible color of the bloom.

David: What time of year does it bloom?

Alejandro: In Lent; it is always in bloom during Holy Week. And the particular thing I like is the movement you get with the blooms, just the shading in and out of different hues of this purple and bluish color. Even the wood of the tree has this color. Several years ago, on one particular day I was walking around here in Antigua, and I found this ruined church, which you can see in the background of the painting. It is only the remains of what used to be a church, built in the eighteenth century, but was mostly destroyed by earthquakes. Now, every year on Friday of Holy Week this one room that the earthquakes left is opened; the rest of the year these doors are closed.

The memory of this church, located in one of the small neighborhoods of Antigua, the memory of the moment when I saw it, has stayed with me ever since. Then I put this memory together with the memory of the jacaranda tree, and made my own composition. Along with my memory of the church is what you see on the left side of the painting. It is an ice cream man with his cart, and one of his three flavors just happened to have the same color as the flowers of the jacaranda tree, so when I was painting the man and the ice cream and the little girl and the colors of the ice cream cart, I remembered the color of the tree. So I tried to place the tree in a way that it would be complementary to and play a part in the spiral composition that was emerging in the painting. It is not a dramatic composition, but it is this: your eyes go in circles trying to find the center of the painting, which should be the man. But your eye may begin with those figures in front of the church and then move counterclockwise along the blossoms of the tree in a circle to the man. I needed something to make your eyes feel comfortable and find a harmony in the painting. Otherwise you run into this empty space and would feel the painting is defective somehow.

The painting was to be part of a series of works painted especially for ODHA [*Oficina de Derechos Humanos del Arzobispado de Guatemala,* Office of Human Rights of the Archbishopric of Guatemala], and so the focus was to be on the girl and ice cream. For the painting focuses on the right that children have to happiness—to have an ice cream, to have some fun. And on the right side of the paint-

ing you see them having fun, for right there, on their own street, you see a girl next to a man selling toys. Even during Holy Week there are a lot of toys sold for the children, and I painted that purchase here to give the idea of fun and happiness.

You can see the two cultures here, the Spanish culture in the church and the Maya culture in the little girl and her dress. You also see the Maya culture in the children, who are just enjoying an ice cream, buying a new toy—that is the point. And there are also little figures in the back—two little girls. They are also playing, holding hands, while the other little girl is buying one of these toys. The woman—their mother—is starting to go into the ruins of the church, at the moment when her daughter is buying the toy. The little girl wants to have the toy with her when she goes inside the church with her mother. The door is open only half way, which gives some sense of mystery, more than would a big open door. So you have all the flowers and the happiness of the ice cream, and the toys and the playing, and then you have this dark mysterious part ...

David: And that pulls me in. And I love the way the tree reaches out over the wall and is part of your spiral.

Alejandro: That is important because actually all that the church has now is its façade. There is no wall left behind it. The jacaranda tree hides the missing wall, which was brought down by an earthquake. I replaced the wall with the colors of the tree. I am using the tree to give some life to the church itself, so that you would not feel that the church is defective and empty. And there is still activity going on in the church; there is still somebody going into the church.

David: Really well done. I don't miss that wall; I feel that the church is whole. If I examine it closely, I can see that the wall is missing, but I don't have the feeling of something missing.

So what are the flavors of the ice cream? Strawberry, blackberry ... ?

Alejandro: I think they are strawberry and blackberry and vanilla. Very common flavors on the streets of Antigua.

It was very important to me to have a little girl here, because I was working with the rights of girls, women here. Especially the Maya girls. I see them as the future of Guatemala, the people who should get an education because they are the center of the family. And the reality here is that this little girl, who is about ten years old, probably has only about five years left before she becomes a mother and has to take care of a family. At the time I did this painting I read some statistics and was shocked that fifty percent of the children of Guatemala under five years of age have nutrition problems. So what I am putting into this painting is a replacement for that miserable situation. This little girl is one of those who have survived; she is able to have an ice cream. And it is clear she is Maya from her skirt and blouse and even her hair—she is wearing her hair in the style of the Maya women.

David: Is her huipil [blouse] from any particular village?

Alejandro: No, it is just that it is white, and I have some of the pink colors of the strawberry ice cream to make a relationship between her Maya heritage and her happiness in having the ice cream.

David: Could be Cobán.

Alejandro: Yes, could be Cobán. The style of the painting is derived from the impressionist style. During the years 1967-71 I was studying at the Academia de Pintura in Arriola, Guatemala, and the teachers there had been trained by artists who had lived and studied in Paris during the *Belle Epoque* years. They really knew how to teach us to paint in the impressionist style.

David: But here the impressionist style is integrated with both your academic style and your post-academic style.

Alejandro: Yes, I think so too. For example, the way I go about getting a balance of color here and using that balance to evoke happiness has to do with the color theory I worked with in New York. Unlike the balance of strong, contrasting colors in the abstract painting [Color Plate 1.1], color balance here is mostly achieved through the use of gray, which mediates exactly between the contrast of

light and dark, and the use of pastel colors, which moves all the colors away from contrast and toward harmony.

David: What do you call your post-academic style?

Alejandro: I think what I am doing now is primarily ethnic painting done with elements of modernism, expressionism and minimalism.

David: Where does the painting's title come from?

Alejandro: It comes from a time when my son, Julio, was buying an ice cream, and the moment really struck me, but when I did the painting I wanted to make a statement about the rights of Maya women and girls, so I turned him into Julia.

5. JUXTAPOSING, CONNECTING, AND THE IMAGINING OF COMMUNITY IN A MULTI-ETHNIC CITY

(1) Re-imagining the Past to Re-imagine Communities Sharing Space in the Present

Wer's four paintings that juxtapose Maya and Spanish elements and set them against each other depict scenes from three different time periods. "Birth of ... the King's Son" is set in the late fifteenth century; both of the "Two Cultures" paintings are set in the late nineteenth century; and the time depicted in "Julia" is contemporaneous with the time when it was painted. Setting them along a timeline, one realizes that there is another kind of progression that goes along with the temporal progression. It goes from a painting in which the againstness is most indirect yet most negative and the joining is also indirect and considerably weaker than the againstness. In the next two paintings on this timeline, the againstness is much more explicit, much less negative and the joining is more direct and stronger. Finally, in the fourth painting the againstness is open and explicit, yet much less negative and the joining is even more direct and stronger. The implica-

tion is obvious: the nearer to the present is the time of the depicted scene and the more openly and explicitly the againstness of elements from two cultures is imagined, the easier it is to imagine joining. Here are the details of what is summarized in this generalization.

In "Birth of Tecum-Imán, the King's Son," the worth and dignity of the infant prince is conveyed by the solemnity of the mood and the setting. Even more it is conveyed by aspects of the painting's form and composition, which Wer describes in the interview recorded above. First, the important elements are placed on the intersection of the four lines (two horizontal, two vertical) that divide the painting into nine parts. Second, the strength of one of the vertical lines becomes the strength of the priest. Third, the orderliness of the colors becomes the orderliness of the society. And finally, the beauty of the composition becomes the beauty of the event and the beauty of the people in it.

If the infant was a generic "king's son," that would be the end of it. But by including the name of the infant prince in the title, Wer is bringing the future of this particular infant to bear on the ceremony, in much the same way that the crucifixion bears, sometimes implicitly and sometimes very explicitly, on the meaning of the infant Christ in European nativity paintings.[6] That future is grim, and the contempt with which Pedro de Alvarado is going to treat Tecum-Imán is set against the dignity of the depicted event and, in Wer's mind at least, against the dignity of the entire Maya post-classic culture (ca. 900-1521).

Moreover, the way the Maya group is imagined in the painting is set against the way the same community is imagined not only by sixteenth-century Spanish soldiers but also by many contemporary Guatemalans and Europeans, who tend to think of post-classic Maya people as human-sacrificing savages that needed to be pacified and civilized. The imagining in the painting calls on to these people to reimagine the sixteenth-century Maya community as a first step toward re-

[6] For example, in the nativity panel of the Isenheim altarpiece, Grünewald places the infant Jesus on his mother's lap in a way that deliberately brings to mind the pose of mother and son in paintings of the Pietà, and the swaddling cloths forecast the clothing of the crucified Christ.

imagining ethnic relations in twenty-first-century Guatemala. As both indigenous and non-indigenous people reevaluate the Maya past, what it means for the two communities to share common space today seems bound to change.

This call is silently reinforced by the classic-period (ca. 250-900) vase in the lower right part of the painting. By joining post-classic with classic culture, the latter of which is much admired universally, Wer is imagining that the post-classic culture, though significantly different, is as worthy and admirable as the earlier one. And using this way to put the event depicted in the painting into the context of its past is a warrant for accepting the relevance of the contrast between the painting's affirmation of Maya community and the contempt with which Pedro de Alvarado and his descendants will treat it. This warrant does not have to be taken as decisive; that is, one may choose to view the painting only in terms of what is included within its physical frame and not within the frame of subsequent events and attitudes, which is the frame within which the most telling againstness occurs. Nevertheless, everyone who knows the imminent future of the infant prince and his community, is likely to find it hard not to feel the contrast between what is depicted in the painting and what will happen in history.

It is also pertinent to notice that the practice of summoning the relevance of the contemporary context is not uncommon among current artists in Guatemala. For example, Daniel Chauche, a photographer, who uses a documentary style in very personal photography, has a lovely photograph of a country cemetery with humble crosses surrounding a tree, whose hovering limbs shelter the grave markers.[7] It comes across as a wistful, elegiac photograph until one notices the date on the crosses and takes in the fact that in place of a person's name is the Spanish equivalent of "XX—male." The date is that of a massacre in a village at the hands of the government army in 1982, in which the victims were unidentified except with respect to gender. The photograph springs forth with a new kind of power when one suddenly notices these details. Similarly, the details of Wer's painting

[7] Cf. *La Cuadra*, vol. IV/1, pp. 13, 15, online at < www.lacuardraonline.com > February, 2010.

of the king's son regroup as something quite different from an academic monumental painting when viewers absorb its againstness to deprecating views of Tecum-Imán and post-classic culture in general.

Whether or not it is warranted to feel a call to re-imagine, first, post-classic Maya community and, then, twenty-first-century Guatemala community, the painting offers only a few clues to what the latter re-imagining might be like. Some of them are not very helpful: the joining of the European and Maya culture in the common experience of celebrating the birth of a promising infant (all infants are promising at birth), and the use of incense in the celebration. And so, while the painting issues the call and underscores its urgency, it also leaves the responsibility for re-imagining to those who feel the summons. The painting's clearest suggestion for discharging this summons is the way it elevates an ordinary event into a culture-defining event. It is indicating, that is, that to feel this responsibility is to seek to re-imagine community by re-imagining ordinary events in this way. Wer's two "Two Cultures" paintings offer powerful examples of doing just that.

(2) Imagining the Future to Re-imagine Communities Sharing Space in the Past

In the two paintings that depict the late nineteenth-century Antigua central park, againstness and joining are more open and explicit than in the Tucum-Imán painting. The inner natures of the juxtaposing and the connecting differ from their counterparts in the earlier paintings as well. In "Two Cultures II," for example, work is set against play in the context of the againstness of indigenous Maya and European culture. The two againstnesses intertwine each other because their particular details are interwoven. The indigenous woman is at work; she has filled her pots from the public fountain, her closest source of water, while her daughter is playing with a stick in the same fountain. The fountain's decorations identify its origins as European. The mother and daughter, as well as the work and play, are

joined with ease, yet without erasing their againstness. The two enrich each other; the oppositeness contributes to a deeper, more complex whole. The ease of these joinings has a counterpart in the ease with which the Maya and European elements are joined as well as opposed. The ease of the one connecting confirms and reinforces the ease of the other. In this case too, againstness is not denied or minimized, but it is imagined as no more negative or destructive than the work/play and mother/daughter contrasts. Perhaps the Maya women do not even notice the European origin of the fountain, or if they do its origin may be irrelevant to them. Such speculation goes beyond what the painting specifically imagines. What is clear and what is at the center of the painting's imagining is that there is a contrast between the Maya and the European. On the one hand the contrast does not suggest that the Maya people's opportunities for meaningful self-fulfillment are limited. On the other hand, there is no indication that the Maya experience is meaningfully widened by the presence of its opposite either. If there were no European fountain for the child to play in, she would play in some other place.

The system of juxtaposing and connecting is more complex in "Two Cultures I." The various groups, some of them European Guatemalans, some indigenous Guatemalans, are brought into focus by the color accents used in depicting them. They are all enjoying themselves, although this common enjoyment is not particularly imagined as a felt bond linking the members of different cultures. What each imagines as enjoyment is culture-specific, and viewers are not led to imagine that either group understands or much appreciates the nature of the other group's enjoyment. The presence of the other groups is not imagined as enhancing anyone's enjoyment. It is important that either because of or in spite of the non-understanding neither group diminishes the pleasure others are taking in the park with its shade, flowers and fountain. That this is so is conveyed by the way the accenting colors, which call attention to the various groups and thus to their againstness, are also in balance with one another. The balance of colors, on which Wer comments, unifies the composition and also balances the two contrasting cul-

tures, so that each is imagined as part of a stable and orderly whole. That is, the unity and balance of the composition confirms and reinforces the balance and unity of the bicultural community. That smaller areas of strong colors balance larger areas of weaker colors reinforces the distinctiveness of each culture, which persists in spite of the balance. In addition, balance occurs without necessarily meaning that there is any mutuality between the two cultures. It may be that the two cultures interpenetrate without any contacts of the sort that modify or deepen one's identity.

That there may, however, at least be some common ground in the pleasures being taken is indicated by the parallelism of the European-descent boy, who is addressing his dog, and the Maya girl, who is addressing her doll. Wearing an indigenous hat, the boy joins the two contrasting cultures, though that joining is surpassed by the one he is enjoying with his dog. While the little Maya girl is having a similar tête-à-tête with her doll, there is no counterpart to the cross-culture joining involved in the boy's hat. That there is not confirms the irrelevance or near-irrelevance of the boy's hat to his sense of pleasure. In both cases, joining is imagined as no more powerful than againstness, and that very fact strengthens the parallelism of the two children in spite of the contrasting cultures they represent. The relative weakness of cross-cultural joining on one level increases the strength of cross-culture joining on another level.

Dwelling on these examples brings to the surface that there are joinings within a culture and joinings across cultures. The first comprises the girl joined to her doll, who is over against her; the boy joined to his dog, over against him, and by extension all the members of the various groups going tête-à-tête with one another throughout the park. The second kind of joining in the painting comprises the parallelism between the boy and his dog on the one hand and the girl with her doll on the other. And the strength of this parallelism makes it clear that joinings within a culture and joinings across cultures are very similar joinings. Wer is daring to make a bold move. He is imagining and empowering his viewers to imagine that cross-culture joining need not be more difficult than intra-culture joining.

Cross-culture connecting need not be as difficult as conventional wisdom says it is because intra-culture joining is more difficult, and more in need of imagining, than conventional wisdom says. After all, Spanish speakers are not any deafer to the little girl's Maya language than is her doll.

The boldness of Wer's imagining here is somewhat disguised by its simplicity, directness, and the familiarity of its means. Wer's comment that he always starts with a simple image with an immediate and positive appeal and works from it toward some sort of deeper understanding is well exemplified by the parallelism of two touching, charming againstness-joinings from two cultures that share the same space. Wer makes it easy to imagine that there are many other examples of cross-cultural parallelisms that one would do well to keep in mind when trying to imagine the joining of againstnesses from two cultures that share a common space. For example, singing together often unites people within a culture, no matter what in particular they are singing, and indigenous and European Guatemalans parallel one another in this intra-cultural joining.

Wer also comments on a very different kind of joining in "Two Cultures I," and that is the joining of the invisible spectator (which includes the painter) with the Maya figure who is leading the spectator into the depicted scene. The againstness of a painting's viewer with the painted scene is a basic presupposition of art. Here that againstness is maintained, but the viewer and the scene are also joined by the Maya woman's gesture and by the viewer's movement into the scene. That this joining probably also involves a cross-culture joining (most viewers of paintings like this are of European descent) is less arresting than the joining of figures inside and outside the painting.

There is one more againstness and joining that Wer mentions, and this one is also very different in kind. It is part and parcel of the anachronism that Wer has built into the painting. From the dress of the Spanish colonial women in the painting, Wer conveys that the time period being depicted is the 1890s. However, at that time much of the park was an open-air vegetable market. The walkways and plantings in the painted scene are those of a century later. Except for his hat, the

small boy's dress is also that of the 1990s, and it is far more common in 1990 than in 1890 for a European-Guatemalan to be wearing an indigenous boy's hat. The most significant anachronism, however, is that in the painted scene indigenous people are using the park as a place of enjoyment. That they would be enjoying a calm and pleasant stroll in a space that they share with colonials, who are also seeking their pleasure, is more characteristic of the 1990s than the 1890s. What Wer has done, then, is to have re-imagined community in the 1890 bi-cultural city, which then sets up the possibility of a new way of re-imagining community in the contemporary bi-cultural situation in Guatemala. For the painting—and Wer's comments confirm this—prods one to consider the possibility of a 2050 re-imagining of the 2010 central park. For the present is the past of the future, and if the present can re-imagine the past, the future can also re-imagine its past (which is today's present), and today's viewers of Wer's painting can imagine that re-imagining. It would become their own re-imagining of the present.

(3) Imagining the Future to Re-imagine the Present of Two Communities Sharing Space

While "Two Cultures I" does not itself provide any clues as to what that re-imagining would look like, Wer's "Julia" does. This painting depicts a scene contemporaneous with the painting itself. In it, two powers of nature are set against each other: the destructive power, as indicated by the earthquake-ruined church, and the blessing powers, as indicated in the lovely jacaranda blossoms. Yet these powers are also joined by the way the jacaranda blooms continue the lines of the church and even serve as its missing wall. Nature—both the destructive earthquake and the kindly jacaranda tree—and human culture are set against one another, but also they are joined by the way the color of the ice cream and the color of the tree's blossoms repeat each other. Likewise, Spanish and indigenous cultures and people are set against one another. For example, a Maya woman (as identified by her dress and hair style) and her children are depicted in front of the ruins of a

European-style church for worship, but the two cultures that are juxtaposed to one another are also connected: the Maya are entering the European-style church (as indeed they have been for 400 hundred years). Her children are sufficiently affluent that they can afford the pleasures of ice cream and toys. These modes of happiness are joined to one another and to that over against which they are set: the deeply contrasting experience of serious Christian worship. The ease of these joinings parallels and reinforces the imagining that Maya and European religious pasts are also joined without any particular effort or difficulty.

The orderly, comfortable spiral composition and balance of colors in the painting, as Wer describes them, is what is tying together all these againstnesses as though there were no problem in doing so. By means of his painterly skills, Wer is imagining a community in which the elements continue to be distinctive and the relevance of the distinctiveness persists. But the antagonism and destructive aspects of the againstness of the distinctive elements do not. It is telling that the only destructive againstness in the painting is that of nature when she shook down most of the church's walls. Maya and Spanish Guatemalans were joined as fellow victims of nature's indifference to their wellbeing.

The ice cream purchase is the means of imagining the absence of destructive cross-culture elements. As in "Two Cultures I," Wer is re-imagining Guatemala community in the present by imagining a future (say 2027) re-imagining of its past (2007). That is, he is imagining a future re-imagining of its past such that in this past malnutrition for Guatemalan youngsters did not exist. Of course, malnutrition among the indigenous people in Guatemala in the first decade of the twenty-first century was a huge problem. A major againstness in "Julia" is that of the affluent indigenous child to the reality of infant malnutrition among the indigenous Guatemalans: the contrast of a Maya child who has money for buying an ice cream to the fact that an unacceptable percentage of Maya children cannot even buy enough beans to stay healthy. As in "Tucum Imán...," imagining within the painting is set against something outside it, namely the context in which the work of art as an action on the part of the painter is taking place. As with "Tucum

Imán...," the painting becomes far more significant, more likely to continue to be interesting and arresting, as the context gradually dawns on people and the deeper imagining begins to take hold and take place.

From the viewpoint of social justice, a child's ice-cream happiness may seem too slight a thing to set against centuries of exploitation and oppression on the part of the Spanish colonists against the indigenous people. Benefits of education and health care would seem to be far more appropriate counter-weights to that against which the Maya struggle.

Wer's imagining does not necessarily disagree. For he may also be imagining that there is not much point in better education and health care unless it also leads to a life that is continuously made miraculous through the enjoyments of ice cream and its cousins. Wer is imagining life after the transition from an existence in which nothing is a miracle into one where everything is a miracle.[8] He is imagining a life in which one's most memorable heroes are the family and strangers from whom one has received sudden and unexpected kindnesses, and not stars in sports or movies. His imagining opens to a life in which one remembers the challenge to live up to the expectations of a caring teacher much longer and more gratefully than the challenge to imitate the life of a candidate for President of the United States. His imagining comports with a life in which one is more aware of bonding with a friend who stood by during a period of loss than of appreciation for a government-sponsored health-insurance program.

(4) Colonial Architecture in Guatemala: Juxtaposition without Joining

However modest in scope and unprogrammatic in strategy Wer's imagining may be, it gains in importance by contrasting it to the imagining in another set of works, namely colonial church architecture in Antigua. What these buildings

[8] Albert Einstein: "There are two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle." Quoted in Des MacHale, *Wisdom* (London, 2002).

meant was radically different for the Spanish and the Maya. That does not seem particularly surprising until the fact sinks in that both groups participated actively in bringing them into being. The design of the floor plan and elevation and the overall supervision were controlled by the Spanish; the Maya did most of the unskilled and skilled labor, including much of the decoration. Except for images of Christian saints, the choice of motifs for these decorations was sometimes left to the Maya. The two groups understood these decorations and their impact on the meaning of the building totally differently. What is still more surprising and significant in terms of appreciating what Wer has imagined is the fact that neither group was aware of the difference; neither the Spanish nor the Maya realized that the other group's imagining was essentially incompatible with its own.[9]

Santiago de Guatemala, today called La Antigua Guatemala, was founded in 1543, and for 231 years was the capital of all Central America, from Chiapas and the Yucatan to what is now Panama. It suffered repeated earthquake damage, and in 1774-77 the seat of government was moved to what is now called Guatemala City.

The center of Spanish operations in all of central America, Santiago de Guatemala was also the center of religious communities working in this part of what was to them a new world—Franciscans, Mercederians, Capuchinas, Jesuits, Dominicans, Carmelites, Augustinians. Each of them had a church, and other convent, hermitage and parish churches brought the total of churches to thirty-eight. In addition to these were the secular public buildings—the seat of colonial government, the city hall, the university, and hospitals. At first glance La Antigua strikes the European eye as an entirely European colonial city, but closer scrutiny discovers details on at least half of the churches built at the end of the seventeenth and during the course of the eighteenth centuries that are in some sense connected to motifs found also in the textiles and through them to earlier Maya art.

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[9] For a fuller treatment of the contrast between indigenous and Spanish thinking and the nature of the arts that are affected by this contrast, see David B. Greene, *How to Respond to Strangeness in Art: Four Studies in the Unfamiliar*, chapter 5.

The architects of these buildings were at first Spanish, then men born in Guatemala but trained in Spain, and at length men born and trained in Guatemala. The local Kaqchikel and other Maya were increasingly involved in building and decorating these structures, parallel to the appearance of Maya in other aspects of colonial life, such as matriculation in the Tridentino Seminary in the seventeenth century and the construction of the School of Indians to house them. In fact, according to Sidney Markman, indigenous workers—*encomiendas* forced into labor—and mestizos outnumbered Spanish workers from the very beginning.[10] By the seventeenth century, the indigenous craftsmen who had learned the Spanish building arts practiced them to the exclusion of practicing indigenous crafts, and were thought of as Guatemalan, not as indigenous.[11]

The façades of all the churches were embellished with columns, pilasters and Baroque scrolls as well as niches into which statues of saints were installed. Some of the columns were stones from nearby quarries; many were made of brick, which was covered with plaster and painted. The impulse to decorate these façades with additional elaborations inheres in the Baroque style. In some cases the decoration is chiseled into the stone, in other cases it is ceramic formed in a mold, then fired and applied, and sometimes it is clay modeled without a mold, fired, applied and painted.

Among these decorations, three kinds of motifs can be discerned: (1) those that are entirely European in origin, though they may show some signs of colonial status in being coarser, made of less costly materials, less well controlled, and crafted by people further from the well springs of Baroque imagination; (2) those whose origin could be either European or Mayan, for they have aspects in common not only with Spanish Baroque but also with motifs found on *huipiles* (women's blouses), only some of which had European sources; and (3) those that seem entirely Mayan either because of a direct relation to pre-Hispanic motifs or

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[10] Sidney David Markman, *Colonial Architecture of Antigua, Guatemala* (Philadelphia, 1966), p. 45.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 48.

because of a relation to woven motifs for which there is a good link to pre-Hispanic art.

In this connection it is important to keep in mind that the indigenous people in Guatemala, then as now, were not only highly skilled in hand-eye coordination but also were almost uncannily quick in learning new techniques and copying motifs and models. The fact, therefore, that a certain motif looks exactly like a European prototype does not by itself mean that it was not done by a Maya craftsman.

The summary that follows identifies links between Maya textiles and architectural details, and then turns to effigies and composite figures from the classic period of the Maya civilization (ca. A.D. 250-900) for clues to the way the Maya may have been experiencing these details.

One of the earliest examples of Maya decoration on a Spanish baroque church is the church in the neighborhood of Candelaria, located in the city's northeast corner. It began in the mid sixteenth century as a Dominican hermitage,[12] and later served 213 Indian families (who spoke Pipil, one of only two non-Maya languages spoken in Guatemala and a member of the same language group as Aztec). In 1773 an earthquake damaged it badly, and all that remains today is part of the west façade, which was constructed in the late seventeenth century. With its twisted columns and Moorish arch, it is praised as one of the finest examples of New World Baroque. However, it also contains a decoration at the top of the upper order of twisted columns, just below the capitals, that goes back to classic-period Maya. This motif consists of interwoven bands, for which the classic-period Maya used the glyph for "pop," which was always associated with royalty because it depicted the mat on which royal councils were taken. The "pop" design is also found in treadle-loomed serapes in Totonicapán.[13] The church was designed by an architect who was born in Guatemala and well trained in the current European style. Some art historians assert that he controlled the program of sculp-

[12] Markman, *op. cit.*, pp. 164-67.

[13] Schevill, *op. cit.*, pp. 194, 197. The Museo Popol Vuh in Guatemala City uses the same design as its logo.

tures, and assume that the actual labor was done by Spanish descendants.[14] It is far more likely that the labor was in fact done by Maya skilled workers. While one can be certain that the "pop" decoration is original, since it is thoroughly integrated into the overall design, one cannot be certain that, even if it was carried out by Maya, the motif was not created by someone of Spanish descent. Markman calls it simply a "geometric design."[15] But one should keep in mind the connection with classic-period Maya imagery.

The Santa Ana church, located at the southeast corner of the town, two kilometers from Candelaria, also served an indigenous population. Although there may have been a church at this site as early as 1540, the present structure was built sometime after 1743.[16] Thanks to twentieth-century repairs it is in use today (like only three of the churches discussed below—San Francisco, Escuela de Cristo, and the Santuario de Guadalupe at Belén). Like Candelaria's decoration, its ornaments use motifs that go back to the Maya. The most important of these is the motif of intertwining serpents ornamenting the interior pilasters. The motif is commonly used to embellish the neckline of huipiles, for example those of Joyabaj.

The Franciscan monks were a major force in the colony. In addition to their work in converting the Maya to and instructing them in Christianity, they had civil, educational and medical duties. They were responsible for a series of chapels, built in 1691, along the road from their monastery church to the hermitage church, El Calvario. The road replicates the 1322 steps that Jesus took from Pilate's judgment hall to Calvary, and each chapel marks one of the stations of the cross.[17] Among the chapels standing today is number nine (restored in the 1940s), whose architectural decoration is dominated by the series of parallel rays. These same rays are woven into the huipiles of Almolonga, Chimaltenango and others.

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[14] Cf. Ernesto Chinchilla Aguilar, *Historia del Arte de Guatemala* (Guatemala, 2002).
[15] *Op. cit.*, p. 165.
[16] Markman, *op. cit.*, pp. 191-92.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 158.

The bell towers of the San Francisco church, which were rebuilt in 1960, also feature these rays. They also appear on the capitals at the top of the lower-order columns of the Santa Cruz church (1731).

The hermitage of Nuestra Señora de los Remedios was built along the Pensativo River at the south edge of town, and its church became a parish church in 1594. The building whose façade is visible today was built in 1641.[18] Above the west door is a saint in a niche and above that is a pediment, filled with the elaboration of a leaf motif that also appears on the bell towers of Santa Ana, the façade of the Augustinian monks' church (1657), and on men's pants from Chichicastenango and on men's waistbands from Nabaj.[19]

The same motif, but verticalized to decorate pilasters, adorns each of the four faces of both bell towers at the west end of the church of the Escuela de Cristo monastery, done eighty years after Los Remedios. The church survived all the earthquakes, and its walls underwent extensive repairs 1940-60.[20] A number of other eighteenth-century churches (for example, Santa Cruz) carried the leaf motif forward.

While the motif has Moorish and Baroque ancestors, it also is closely related to a prominent feature on one of the finest pieces in the Museo Popol Vuh, Guatemala City, namely an early classic-period bird out of whose beak an astonished warrior is emerging. In this case the motif is used to indicate feathers.

Maya-related vegetable motifs appear more prominently in the façade of the church at the Beaterio de Belén (the Santuario de Guadalupe). They are important, for they work toward the presentation of a hybrid, which in turn works as a commentary on the façade's central sculptures.

This church was built in 1670 by the followers of Hermano Pedro de San José de Betancurt.[21] Above the west door is a sculpture of the nativity of Christ. In the

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[18] *Ibid.*, p. 99.

[19] Schevill, *op, cit.*, pp. 90, 96.

[20] Markman, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

[21] Hermano Pedro was canonized by Pope John Paul II on July 31, 2002, the first saint in Central America.

blue field above the figures of the Holy Family, encircled by God the Father, an angel, the ox and donkey and two sheep, float cherubs and flowers. The latter, found on many other churches in Antigua (for example Santa Cruz, El Carmen) are equally the flowers of Renaissance Italy and those of Maya weaving. Textiles from Chichicastenango, Quetzaltenango, Patzún and San Cristóbal Totonicapán, among others, have woven the same flowers into life. The textile flowers closely resemble classic-period Maya flowers, for example the mural at Palenque, Mexico.[22] To the right and left of the nativity ensemble are two decorations, identical to each other, each about seven feet high, depicting burgeoning vegetation, whose blossom at the top is a human head. The last segment of the vegetation is suggestive of a garbed human body. For its Spanish contemporaries who were familiar with Baroque imagery, the motif belongs to the family of human-animal,[23] animal-animal, and human-vegetable hybrids that developed out of Renaissance decorative grotesques. The figure also has prototypes in Maya vegetable-human composite figures.[24] Next to this composite and separating it from a niche with a saint is a column whose top is an unornamented Doric capital, but whose base is vegetable growth out of which the column comes forth. The configuration invites two associations. It could be a vegetable-architecture hybrid, like the papyrus-columns in the temples at Karnack,[25] thus corresponding to and reinforcing the vegetable-human hybrid beside it. Or it could be a separate being, emerging from the womb of the plant, like the many classic-period Maya sculptures that show a human emerging from the bird's beak or jaguar's mouth or the maw of a mythical being, or an old god emerging from the jaws of a mythic reptile, or a jaguar from a monster, or the post-classic stone sculpture from Yaxjá in which a human head

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[22] See Schmidt, *Maya* (New York, 1998) p. 299.

[23] In this connection one should see the oil painting done in the eighteenth century of St. Jerome in which his companion lion has a human face, in the Museo Popol Vuh .

[24] Cf. image in Schmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

[25] While the ancient Greeks and Romans emphasized the analogy between their columns and human beings, both in their nomenclature (capital= "head") and in sculpting these columns as humans, as in the Erechtheion, the ancient Egyptians at Karnack and elsewhere made columns of trees and trees of columns.

is emerging from a turtle's mouth. All of these Maya examples have something to do with the transformation of the human into a new kind of being at death. In either case, the plant-column points to the emergence of a new kind of being and, like the vegetable-human hybrid, to the joining of two kinds of being. Thus the vegetable-human and the vegetable-column both comment on and also reinforce the joining of divine and human modes of being that is shown taking place in the central figure, the new-born Jesus, who is at once the son of Mary and the son of God. A motif familiar in a Maya context is pressed to use in a Christian context. Whether it transforms that context into something else is an interesting question.

Other façades pick up the plant-column joining and elaborate it variously. The church of the hermitage of Nuestra Señora de Carmen (1728) sets its columns into plant life, which continues to grow up the sides of the columns. The plant-human joining is also found on the façade of the Santa Clara convent church (1734).

The Santa Cruz church has eight columns coming out of plants. Located on the southeast border of the city, it was the parish church for thirty Kaqchikel families. The first structure, built in 1662, came down in the 1717 earthquake. The Kaqchikel had a new structure built for them, and it is the façade of this church, completed in 1731,[26] on which the eight plant-columns appear. Its central concept is the crucifixion—an empty cross dominates the second order, and the third order consists of the crucified Jesus. If the plant columns have a relevance here, it would be that of commenting on the transforming power of the cross, its victory over sin and death, and the new life it brings.

Both the façade and the interior of Santa Cruz show the work of highly skilled stucco artists. Similar work, but today in far better condition, is to be seen on the 1767 façade of La Merced, the church associated with the monastery of Mercedarian monks. Engineered to withstand seismic shocks, it has a façade today that, like only a very few churches in Antigua, closely resembles the appearance it had when it was inaugurated. Contrary to the assumption of art historians like Chin-

[26] Markman, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

chilla Aguilar,[27] it is likely that the stuccos at La Merced both exemplify Maya craftsmanship and also reflect Maya sensibility. For the striking white stucco on the yellow walls of the church combine motifs imported from Europe with motifs that are common in the Maya textiles as well as in Europe and some that are unique to the Maya repertory.

Among those found in the textiles (which may show the impact of the European presence) are the elaboration of the leaf motif, also used at Los Remedios and Escuela de Cristo, and flowers (also at the Beaterio de Belén). The most arresting details, however, are the stucco presentations of corn in the tympanum over the west door. Spiraling around the four columns on the lower level of the west façade are grape vines, heavy with grapes, or with corn kernels in the figuration of hanging grapes, for they are rendered to repeat the corn motif in the tympanum and spread it over the whole façade. Corn was introduced to Europe from the Americas in the sixteenth century, but played no role in European church decoration. Corn kernels and corn cobs, however, are common in Maya art; not surprisingly they appear on the forehead of the effigies of the maize god in the Museo Popol Vuh and elsewhere.

Corn was a most important agricultural product at least as early as classic Maya times, and corn tortillas have been an essential component of the Maya diet ever since. Eating so much corn, Guatemaltecos call themselves "men of corn," referring to a literal truth, but also to the Maya creation myth. According to this story, the gods, on their third try, successfully created humans by using corn as the substance out of which the new creatures were formed (the previous attempts, using mud and wood, failed to produce creatures that were satisfactory to praise and thereby nourish the gods[28]). "Men of Corn" also refers to the myth of the resurrection of the god of maize in the *Popol Vuh*, a story crucial to the funerary rites

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[27] Chinchilla Aguilar, *op. cit.*

[28] John Bierhorst (*The Mythology of Mexico and Central America* [New York, 1990], pp. 130-35) points out that the story of the successive attempts to create humans is probably the product of conflating what had been separate stories or combining variants of the same story in a way that suggests that creation-destruction moves toward perfection.

of many Maya groups. While corn cobs or kernels of corn do not show up in the textiles, it is easy to read some of the vegetable motifs as stylized stalks of corn.[29]

The eye trained by European architecture will see all these buildings as "colonial." In this context, the term means both that Europe is the source of the concepts and the techniques they embody and that, compared to their European source, they represent a lower level of achievement, either because the materials used in the European prototypes were not as available in Guatemala or that the engineering was less capable. Somewhat better informed eyes call it "earthquake Baroque," for in fact the structures were engineered to withstand earthquakes: walls are thick (sometimes five feet thick), buildings are not high in comparison to European Baroque, windows are small, and columns are huge (which is why they were built of brick and plaster and not just stone). Every year in Guatemala, there are four to six seismic shocks lasting a few seconds around 5.0 on the Richter scale, and this engineering holds against them. Unfortunately, stronger, longer tremors brought down most of these structures, leaving a few walls and façades that are now to be called "earthquake Baroque" in a new, sad sense.

The eye trained by Maya textiles and classic Maya ceramics is less likely to focus on the gap between the colonial and its prototype and more likely to see the mutual strangeness of the Maya and the Christian. While the European eye may come to appreciate the freshness of colonial naiveté and the inventiveness of earthquake Baroque engineering, it is more likely to lapse into condescension or regret.

Seeing the mutual strangeness of the Maya and Christian sensibilities can, however, also lapse into condescension. Some catechetical Catholic and evangelical Protestant groups have even become annoyed that Christian monuments would be contaminated with pagan references to Maya royalty (Candelaria), the Maya creation story (La Merced), and the serrated lines of K'an (San Francisco). But there are three other possibilities. First, in every case, the Maya meaning is rele-

[29] Cf. textiles from Nabaj in Schevill, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

vant to the Christian meaning; it applies a new metaphor to the Christian metaphor, expanding the latter's range and increasing its depth. For example, the vegetable-human joinings and their Maya meaning, confirmed to some extent by the presence of other motifs that the Maya would see as Maya, support the Christian idea of transcending the otherness of God and human, of spirit and flesh, and of sin and salvation. For some Christians, no doubt, this expansion and intensification borders on falsification. For other Christians, the Maya motifs are incorporated into the Christian world and lose their Maya-ness (if they ever had any for the Spanish, who might see all of them as derivatives of European motifs).

Second, the motifs work the other way around, too: the Christian metaphors expand the Maya metaphors. For the Maya see an otherness among the realms of god (gods, saints and images of saints), world (natural world and the spirit of natural objects, such as mountains), and spirit (one's ancestors). The Christian symbolism helps to transcend this otherness, most nearly in providing salvation for the ancestors so that descendants are released from discharging their debt to them. The Christian story of Christ's death is often said to have addressed the need, felt by the Maya, to shed blood to maintain a proper relation with the divine, and the Christian story of Jesus's resurrection to have elaborated their stories of gods dying and rising from the dead. It is important to keep in mind that, while these connections may help explain what the Maya were experiencing as they were being baptized as Christians, the architectural decorations do not confirm them.

Third, the Maya motifs are incorporated in the sense of supporting Christian motifs and are more convincingly incorporated precisely because they do *not* lose their Maya-ness. This alternative fits the Maya experience.

These three alternatives lead to the following suggestion: from the Spanish side, the presence of these motifs exemplify a pattern of what Barbara Tedlock[30] calls opposition-conversion-integration, while from the Maya side the pattern is

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[30] Barbara Tedlock, *Time and the Highland Maya* (Albuquerque, NM, 1982), *passim*.

addition, interpenetration and deepening. From the Spanish side, the opposition of cultures was real, and the challenge was to convert the Maya in terms of religion and morals and assimilate them as the Maya integrated their other cultural traits—food, clothing, housing, language—to the change in values. The result would be a single community, though one in which the Maya would forever have a lower status. From the Maya side, the experience of opposition led not to conversion but to addition; that is, they added Christian motifs to those they already had without giving up the latter, as conversion would require. Addition led not to assimilation, but to interpenetration; that is, the Maya did not see themselves as becoming part of an essentially Spanish community, but rather saw the two as interpenetrating each other. Interpenetration led not to integration but to deepening or freshening; the intermingling of communities could lead to a Maya community revitalized by its contact with and acquisition of Christian motifs.

This suggestion needs considerable amplification.

Sustaining the Maya meaning has to do not only with the content of the Maya meaning—the joined or composite entities, royalty, and so on—but also with the way Maya meaning means. Images with all their materiality belong, as images, to the divine realm, while that of which it is an image may belong to the world of nature. From the European side, that statement is unacceptably odd, and the oddness increases. The plaster articulating a vegetable-human composite belongs to the world of the divine while the mental image it evokes belongs to the world of nature. What are intermingled and perhaps joined then are not only two kinds of being (human, vegetable) but also two ways of imagining (Maya, Christian). Christians who approach the Maya symbols as though they worked in the same way as Christian symbols miss this point altogether and as result are likely not even to see the Maya symbols. It begins to become clear why they take them simply to be colonial versions of European symbols.

i. Maya Effigies and the Spaces They Imagine

It helps in getting into the Maya way of thinking to go to the effigies made by the Maya from at least 250 B.C. to at least 1500 A.D. These effigies loom large in the pre-classic, the classic and the post-classic periods, all three. They animate different materials—ceramics, stone, obsidian, jade—and come in sizes from three inches to five feet. The uses of the object into which an effigy is constructed vary from whistles and flutes to jars, pots, vases, urns, pitchers and basins to spear heads. The range of what is presented in effigy form is huge: people of all social classes, both genders, animals (pet dogs, frogs, deer, jaguars, birds, fantasy creatures, deities and mythic beings). In some cases the function dominates the effigy, while in others the effigy overwhelms the object's supposed use. Taking these cases as opposite ends of a continuum, one finds examples at many places in between. While there are pots and vessels from all periods without effigies, it is clear that the impulse to animate a functioning object—and thereby to bring a natural object into the world of the gods—was intense even when the function completely controls the object's shape. During the classic period, this impulse led to painted vessels more often than in the pre- or post-classic periods, during both of which the three-dimensional effigy was by far the most important form of elaboration.

At the other end of the continuum are objects where the usefulness is either trivial in comparison to the significance of the entity presented or severely impeded by the sculpting. An example of the first are elaborately fashioned whistles presenting mythic or fantasy creatures. Examples of the second are obsidian spearheads in the form of a running fox or dog (late classic period), which were evidently used only in ceremonial or funereal occasions, never in an actual hunt. One of the finest pieces of Maya art falls here too: a small pot that represents a large pot being carried on the back of a worker (the Maya did not use non-human animals for transportation), who is resting cross-legged for a moment. The pot and the young man carrying it form a single entity. They are so thoroughly integral to

each other that the man does not seem simply to have been added on to the small pot: the large pot (i.e. the pot represented by the small pot) is part of the effigy fully as much as he is, and his identity coincides entirely with his role as a pot-bearer. These examples make it clear how important it was for even the most expressive objects to retain a connection with a real-world use, even if that connection was merely formal; a usage is alluded to, even when it is not practiced. So long as the usage is present as a reference, evidently, the joining of realms is accomplished.

Examples in which the use and the effigy are more equally balanced are an enormous classic-period stone basin (five feet long) that has been chiseled to represent a frog and the late classic funerary urns with effigies of underworld gods. In the first case, one of the creatures that may live in the basin *is* the basin. In the second case the effigy enables the urn to fulfill its role as a connector to the next life. An even more thoroughgoing integration of function and effigy is provided by the many classic-period double jars, joined so that fluids can pass between them. Only one jar has a mouth, and the other has only a small hole. Typically the mouthless jar is also an effigy of a bird, and when liquid is poured from the other jar, a whistling sound is emitted from the bird. The effigy literally sings! The integration of function and effigy is reinforced by the integration of sight and sound, both of which are connected to the bird as well as to the jar.

These effigies do not fall into classifications like religious or secular. While the approach to the quotidian is exactly the same as the approach to death, the greatest number of examples from the end of the post-classic period are funerary urns and censors whose faces and lids are elaborated with large effigies that forcefully command attention. The practice of joining such effigies and functioning objects continued into the colonial period, and fragments of small effigy vases from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are still being found when fields are plowed, and their finders continually offer them for sale in the highland markets. The Maya were making effigy vessels at the very same time they were working on church decoration in Santiago de Guatemala, though these effigies are less im-

pressive than their classic-period ancestors. What they were not doing is embellishing their own architecture, whether public or private, religious or quotidian; Maya buildings had not been embellished since the end of the classic period (ca. 900).

When the Maya participated in decorating Christian churches, the Spanish builders assumed the indigenous people experienced the embellishments in the same way that the colonists did—ornaments framing and beautifying a statue that pointed to a saint. If one sees this assumption for the assumption that it is, and, keeping in mind that Maya buildings were not decorated at all, asks just how the Maya *did* experience the decoration, the effigy and the relation of effigy to vessel is the best clue. That is, the experience of the effigy is the only framework of which knowledge has survived by which the Maya would have understood these decorations. Following this lead would mean that they saw the church decorations the same way they saw effigies, and saw churches the same way as other functioning objects. Churches were very large vessels that, like all vessels, stimulated the impulse for spiritualizing embellishment. What Asturias says of classic walls is relevant here too: "Intoxicate the walls with fantastic decorations."[31]

In terms of spiritualizing the object, the source of the imagery would not matter. The images, statues, leaves, and composites of beings serve to animate the vessel (a building in this case) and join it as a world-object to the divine-object effigy. In fact the joining becomes a transforming: just as the actual pot becomes the effigy pot (the representation of the pot being carried) in the effigy of the pot bearer, so the stones of which the building is made become the effigy of the building. For the Christian, the nativity scene, the crucifixion, the saints serve to mark the sacred use to which the Christian community can put the building, but they do not *make* the building sacred for the Christian. As sacred, the building significantly builds the community; as a mark of that sacredness the decoration is more the result of the community than a help in constituting it. By contrast, for the

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[31] Miguel Ángel Asturias, *The Mirror of Lida Sal. Tales Based on Maya Myths and Guatemala Legends*, tr. Alter-Gilbert, Gilbert (Pittsburgh, 1997), p. 13.

Maya all these plus whatever Maya motifs may also be there actually make it part of the god-world. As a concrete link between the human and the divine worlds, they create the real possibility of community between the humans and the gods.

ii. Maya Composites and the Spaces They Imagine

The effigy process also works the other way around. Not only does the effigy or decoration have an impact on the meaning of the vessel or building, but also the latter transforms the effigy-decoration. For once the effigy on a pot or a building has pulled, as it were, the pot or the building into the effigy and the effigy becomes the entire configuration, then the effigy or decoration has to be seen as emerging from the effigy-of-the-whole. The process of the warrior emerging from the beak of a bird, of a column or person emerging from a plant becomes a process involving the entire vessel. Three examples clarify the process of decoration emerging out of that which it decorates and show the deliberateness with which it is done.

The first example is a large vase from the early classic period. It depicts a major god, whose otherness is emphasized by the large, painted tooth in its upper jaw and the fish fins on its cheeks. The decoration framing the god is essentially the rest of the vessel (even the smooth surface is part of the decorating frame). This decoration consists of motifs deliberately drawn from the god's face: the eye sockets, the eyeballs, the pointed tooth, the nose are treated as decorative motifs above the god's face and the lips and, again, the eye sockets below.

Second, the classic period produced a number of bowls whose lids have a knob done as the head of an animal, person, or anthropomorphic creature and onto which the rest of the being's body is painted. The joining of two-and three-dimensional elements in this way, indicating as it does that there is no contrast between these forms of presentation, also indicates there is no contrast between decoration and function: every aspect of the bowl is both part of the material world and of the god-realm.

Third, there are dishes presenting an effigy—a man, a bat (with Mickey Mouse ears!)—whose head is at one end of the vessel and whose arms extend along its side. The unseen body of the effigy is lying in the dish, as though it were a bath tub.[32] What is not seen is nevertheless present, and once again any contrast between what might be considered physical and what mental is simply annulled.

The churches of La Antigua sustain the same process, blatantly in the case of the church built for the Santa Teresa de Jesús convent in 1687, but no less firmly elsewhere. The west door into the Santa Teresa church protrudes from the plane of the west façade (rebuilt in 1738 and 1770) and largely for this reason resembles a triumphal arch. In the tympanum above this door is a marble sculpture of a door—also resembling a triumphal arch—with a brick vaulted ceiling, flanked by Doric columns decorated with spiraling lines, like those to come later in the west façade of the La Merced church. Except possibly the spiraling lines, all the features of the sculpted door ensemble are European, but the fact of a sculpted triumphal arch set into a triumphal arch has more to do with the Maya process of an effigy emerging from the effigy-of-the-whole.[33]

Like the warrior emerging from a bird's mouth (and innumerable other Maya examples of one kind of being emerging from the mouth of a different kind of being), the columns-from-plants and people-from-plants, decorating so many of the churches in La Antigua replicate in miniature, as it were, the process of effigy from object. As such they are the best clue to how the Maya experienced the decorated churches: the ornament emerging from the building is an instance of the same process as the effigy emerging from the object and the warrior emerging from the bird's mouth, and the people emerging from plants. The presence of other Maya motifs (such as corn and the "pop" symbol) are important in confirming the relevance of the people-from-plants, but they provide less of a clue to the way these motifs meant.

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[32] The man-basin is in the Museo Arqueología y Etnología, Guatemala City; the bat-basin is in the Museo Popol Vuh, Guatemala City).

[33] Markman, *op. cit.*, pp. 141-42, calls attention to the appearance of a "triumphal arch almost independent of the rest of the façade wall," but does not mention the arch-within-the-arch.

What these analyses bring to the surface, then, is the following profound difference. On the one hand, there is the process of converting people and using their motifs (if at all) to embellish a sculpture that refers to a real-world prototype (such as the nativity or Saint James) in order to mark (but not make) a building as sacred. On the other hand is the process of adding images, motifs and ideas from a variety of sources to enable the ensemble to emerge from that which it decorates so that it is not a decoration at all but integral to the building as a total ensemble actually to be transformed into an object that is squarely located in the realm of the gods.

Neither the Spanish and the Maya was aware that for the other group the decorations meant differently. Though the two communities shared the same space, worked on the same projects, and intermingled their imaginings, the rupture between them was greater than either group realized. The analyses above suggest that the architecture supports both ways of meaning, but only one at a time. Seeing it one way, one cannot even be aware there is the possibility of seeing it to the other way. Like the duck-rabbit drawings, which can be seen now as a duck-drawing and now as a rabbit-drawing, but never both at once, there is no tension between the two.

From either the Spanish side or the Maya side considered separately there could be no problem. The Spanish easily Europeanized the Maya motifs, making them look "colonial" (which is to say, *un peu manqué*) to the practiced European eye, while the Maya could interpret the Hispanic statues as effigies, supported by decoration at least partly familiar to them. For neither group, then, did the resulting experience involve awareness of the gulf separating their respective imaginings. The two modes of imagining were juxtaposed, but because the againstness was invisible, the possibility of a joining in Wer's sense could not be imagined at all.

The invisible gap between conversion and addition and between integration and interpenetration in the colonial architecture not only stands in contrast to Wer's juxtaposition and joining; it is also a part of Wer's past and as such helps to

clarify his mode of connecting the two cultures. For his joinings can be said to have elements from both sides of the Maya-Spanish cleft in understanding. One sees interpenetration now occurring on the European as well as the Maya side: the European boy is just as comfortable adding the indigenous hat to his costume as the little indigenous girl is in playing in the European fountain. One sees assimilation as well as interpenetration in the indigenous people's enjoyment of taking a European stroll in a European park, their eagerness to eat European food, and their commitment to European rituals. Indeed, it becomes difficult to distinguish between addition and conversion or between interpenetration and integration. Perhaps Wer's most significant achievement is to have so softened these distinctions that two non-intersecting lines actually meet.

6. IMAGINING OTHER ASPECTS OF COMMUNITY IN GUATEMALA

In imagining two communities whose spaces overlap and intermingle, Wer is dealing with an aspect of community that must be imagined by literally thousands of communities today. Of the many other aspects of community that Guatemalan works of art imagine and envision and that every community must imagine in one way or another, the next chapters will take up two. One of these has to do with a community consisting of a single ethnic group that has its own physical space. Because to be is to be someplace in particular, for a community to imagine its space it must also imagine (or conceive) the boundary to that space. It must also imagine (or conceive) the nature of what lies outside it and the kind of relationship that may exist between inside and outside. Most interesting are cases where not only different spaces are imagined but also different *kinds* of space.

This imagining is taken up in Chapter Three, which describes the imagining of space, kinds of space, and kinds of contrasts among spaces in textiles and folktales from two of the more than twenty ethnic groups in Guatemala. These

groups—the Kaqchikel and the K'iche'—imagine the contrast between kinds of space somewhat similarly, but also with some deep differences.

Imagining the boundaries dividing ethnic groups and the nature of the contrast between inside and outside, these textiles and tales come to an imagining of otherness between communities. To some extent the issue of the otherness of two ethnic groups overlaps with the issue of the dualities that, in Wer's paintings, characterize what happens when two cultures share a single space. But as Wer does not explore the nature of space and treats his "againstnesses" as occurring in the same space, his imagining also to some extent stands to one side of the otherness that surfaces when contrasts in space itself are imagined. The final section of the book goes into the possibility and the limits of imagining a blending of the two.

The second aspect of community that is imagined in a group of Guatemalan arts has to do with the infusion and expenditure of energy within a single-culture community. A certain kind of conceiving, namely economic concepts and social stratification within a community on the basis of economic status, also touches on this aspect of community. These concepts, explicitly or implicitly, dictate or spell out an ordering of the community. Indeed an economic concept carries with it the implication that in some sense an economically organized community is a single community no matter how many different ethnic groups are involved because of an implicit agreement, in which one's ethnicity is irrelevant, on the appropriateness of the economic structure and socio-economic stratification.

While economic concepts may touch on working, their focus is on the product of work, not on working or the worker. Not only economic but also political and social concepts of work generally begin by putting value on the product of the work, and then conceive the value of workers in terms of the value of the outcome of their working. Working itself is not valued. Indeed, according to this way of thinking (which the introductory section of Chapter Two will lay out), one works only because necessity requires economic activity, and so working itself *cannot* be valued for itself. Efforts to conceive of workers as valuable because of the

value of their product have consistently failed to stand up against the concept that working as such is essentially degrading or, alternatively, a concept that working should be done only by people who already are essentially less than noble if not simply debased. In other concepts, workers are at best valuable in spite of working, and the "in spite of" is regularly experienced as a stigma, something other than being valued.

Chapter Two examines a kind of art whose imagining contradicts the implications of all these economic concepts and undermines concepts of economic stratification. In these works the imagining has to do not with the product of work or even with the worker, but with working itself. This imagining takes place in the performance of marimba music in Guatemala. As Chapter Two will amplify, what goes on in this performance involves imagining the infusion and expenditure of energy. Significantly, it imagines that generating and spending energy is intrinsically valuable—that is, valuable without regard for the value of its outcome. When investing and spending energy—in short, working—is imagined as valuable, the workers gain a value that has so far proved elusive on the basis of economic concepts.

Central to this imagining is a characteristic that distinguishes Guatemalan marimba performance: the way its energy seems not to be developed by the music, as is generally the case in other musics, but rather is continuously being infused from outside the stream of sounds into that flow. The extra-musical energy empowers the music to keep going; indeed, it requires of the music that it keep going. Moreover and perhaps more surprisingly, the energy itself does not control the way it is to be spent or the shape of the flow.

It is the independence of the energy from what is energized that empowers marimba performance to envision working. Working requires, or rather *is*, an infusion of human energy into material that is essentially non-human in character. In this sense working humanizes that material. Coming from outside the material, it results in a product that is instrumentally valuable but often invisible and beneath the surface of quotidian life. A good example is working to build an infra-

structure—digging ditches to lay pipelines, making the substructure for highways, disposing of trash. Whatever non-instrumental value it may have is hidden, and it cannot effectively express the identity of the worker in the way that a painting, a weaving, a chocolate cake, an election campaign, or the structure of power relations can express the identity of their creators and thus be humanizing in this additional sense. In terms of their products, then, there are two kinds of working and making. Both kinds are creative, for both create something, and both create something the community needs. The difference is that in one case the makers create an object that expresses the identity of the makers or their group or both and in the other case the makers create non-expressive objects that help humanize an otherwise non-human aspect of the world, but the objects as such do not express the identity of the energy-givers.

But even when the product of work is non-expressive, the working itself may express a great deal; it may, for example, show forth the approach that these creators take to their work. Because the infusion of energy in marimba music has exactly the same structure as the infusion of the energy in working that creates a non-expressive product (though, again, the working itself is profoundly expressive of the worker), marimba music is a way of valorizing this kind of working. Valuing the music replicates the valuing of work, including work that creates non-expressive outcomes, and so valuing the one enacts valuing the other. Guatemalan marimba performance envisions the intrinsic value of giving energy and also the energy-giver, and so it is an imagining of the intrinsic value of both working and the worker even when the value of the product is almost entirely instrumental and only minimally intrinsic.

A community cannot be and it cannot be well without this work being done and being done well. How and how well the infrastructure is built may very much depend on a community's vision of itself as a community and how it imagines working in and for the community. Marimba music seldom has work or building an infrastructure as its theme; yet precisely that fact is crucial to the way marimba performance envisions an aspect of community, namely the way a community

musters the energy to build itself and can empower workers to see their identity in their working to create non-expressive objects. Their identity relates to their working as an intrinsically worthy activity, not worthy just because it benefits the community. Just as art can be intrinsically valuable whether or not it is also instrumentally valuable for the artist or the community, so, in this imagining, can working also be done for its own sake as well as, or instead of, for the sake of the community.

From this brief overview of what Chapter Two presents in detail, the considerable difference between the approach to imagining community in Wer's paintings and that in marimba performance is obvious. This difference is unfolded in the final section of the book. In view of the fact that the imaginings in the paintings, in marimba performance and in textiles and tales only partly overlap, one should expect surprises when one looks at other arts of Guatemala, such as its architecture and town layout, its rustic wood-carving, its ceramics, and the dances of its ethnic groups. This book undertakes only three case studies, and although the imaginings of community in these three intertwine to some extent and although as a group they constitute a fairly comprehensive package, they do not exhaust the aspects of community that Guatemalan artists envision.

Indeed, a comprehensive synthesis of these imaginings does not take place within any one work of art or all the works in any one medium. As elsewhere, the blending of various imaginings are necessarily being done by the Guatemalans themselves, and each person's re-imagining is continuously being modified as it encounters others and new imaginings are negotiated. This kind of re-imagining is like the mode of thought that Whitehead calls "understanding," which, unlike a complete "job of intelligence," is "never a completed static state of mind. It always bears the character of a process of penetration, incomplete and partial."[34]

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[34] Alfred North Whitehead, *Modes of Thought* (New York, 1958 [1938]), p. 60.

CHAPTER TWO

Guatemalan Marimba Music: Imagining the Infusion of Energy and Working as Intrinsically Valuable

1. ART AND THE DEVALUATION OF WORKING

An economically defined class sometimes, or usually, has a sense of itself, in which its members participate. Art can play a role in developing this sense. This kind of art bristles with problems that Neil McWilliam takes up in his essay on the artisan community in mid-nineteenth-century France.[35] He examines the conceptual flaws involved in using arts-generated feelings to justify class differences or to lift workers out of their class, and looks for an aesthetically defined experience that would undermine class differentiation altogether.

The inability of workers to appreciate literature and the arts was, McWilliam writes, taken as a sign of their inherent brutishness, which defined and justified their place in the class structure. He points out, as nineteenth-century social critics had pointed out, the cruelty of the vicious circle characterizing this argument: workers were denied those educational opportunities that would enable them to learn how to read a book or a painting, and then this incapacity was used as a warrant for denying them access to such an education. Besides, workers did back-

[35] Neil McWilliam, "Peripheral Visions: Class, Cultural Aspiration, and the Artisan Community in Mid-Nineteenth-Century France" in *Politics and Aesthetics in the Arts*, ed. Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (Cambridge, UK, 2000).

breaking manual labor or mind-numbing repetitive tasks fourteen hours a day six days a week, and simply did not have energy or time left to devote to appreciating the high arts. Ameliorative strategies so that the worker might appreciate aesthetic pleasures were obvious: better education and shorter working hours. The premise of this strategy was that the enjoyment of aesthetic pleasure, and not wealth or family connections, is the real meaning of middle- and upper-class status. Aesthetic subjectivity was to be seen as "an act of political empowerment as well as of personal enrichment."[36]

These strategies failed. When, many decades later, working hours were shortened and workers got some leisure time they did not use it for so-called upper-class pursuits. They preferred movie houses to museums. In any case, wealth continued to matter more than aesthetic sensibility in defining "upper class." In fact, the upper classes saw the possibility that lower class people might appreciate their art as a challenge to their status rather than as a reason for broadening its base.[37] Moreover, to the extent that some workers really did manage to participate in the life of aesthetic imagination, the harder became their return to the unpleasantness of the workplace. There they were "reduced to the unthinking level of an automaton, unyielding in its sapping of all intellectual and physical vigor with which the worker could seek solace in his moment of leisure."[38]

A different strategy, McWilliam points out, was to elevate the aesthetic status of the working-class artisans' output. To the extent that the product of artisan skill was put on the same level as high art, the class separation between worker-artisan and wealthy connoisseur was eased. To the exact extent of this easement, however, the artisan was trapped as in an elevator stuck between two floors: no longer accepted by working class fellows and not by any means accepted by upper classes as their equal. In any case, the artisan represented only a small portion of the lower economic class. The opportunity even to get stuck between floors was

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[36] McWilliam, *op. cit.*, p. 143.
[37] *Ibid.*, pp. 141-42.
[38] *Ibid.*, p. 155.

not open to most workers when machine-age capitalism had moved into high gear.

McWilliam's analysis is brilliant. It locates the Marxist critique of the arts in a specific set of artistic and social conditions. It implicitly deplores the way that the interaction between art and economic class in nineteenth-century France undervalued workers as well as their work. It explicitly denies the efficacy of attempts to alter this interaction. Recognizing that a modern community cannot be without sewers, highways, foundations for buildings, maintenance, sanitation and the other products of low-paid workers' efforts, it takes us to the threshold of asking whether there are works of art that imagine working in such a way that the community's evaluation of workers and work is altered. As a way of preparing to cross that threshold, the following paragraphs describe various efforts to establish economic justice in the face of the low esteem given to work and efforts to undo the unpleasantness of work itself.

Many communities despise their workers because the work they do is despicable and is, according to Aristotle and others, a demeaning activity that ill fits the dignity of a human being. As Camus writes, "when work is a degradation, it is not life, even though it occupies every moment of a life."[39] The more middle economic classes do not want to do a certain kind of work—picking up garbage and cleaning toilets are time-honored examples, but in some communities anything that involves touching something human, such as cutting hair, is included—the less willing they are to pay very much to those who are forced by economic necessity to do it. Before the Enlightenment, the irony and injustice in this syndrome went unnoticed in Europe.

Not all hard physical work and the people who do it, however, are despised. There are exceptions, and seeing them brings one closer to seeing how thorny is the problem of reevaluating workers and working. The exceptions involve work that is expressive in some positive way: the immense physical effort of athletes

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[39] Albert Camus, *The Rebel. An Essay on Man in Revolt,* tr. Anthony Bower (New York, 1956), p. 209.

and sculptors, for example. Such exceptions point up that if the outcome is visible and also expressive of some esteemed value or capable of being identified with the worker, then working is no longer something one would always avoid even if one could. The contrasts are obvious: the roadbed of a highway is not visible, and though the road may be honored, working to build it is not. Truck transportation is visible and the outcome is valued because it satisfies an economic need, but the work of driving the truck is not valued because, unlike the physically exhausting work of a sculptor or that of a sweaty cook, it does not express anything beyond itself. The brick façade of a building may be beautiful and expressive, but the identity of the bricklayer is lost in the process. The case of things like sculpture and professional sports and the distinction between working toward expressive and non-expressive ends exacerbates the problem: if working hard conforms to human dignity only when the outcome is expressive, the vast majority of laborers seem condemned to a non-life of degradation.

Putting the premise that unless the end is expressive, work is essentially unpleasant, something one would much prefer not to do, next to the premise that no one is inherently ignoble and base, egalitarians have proposed and tried various strategies. According to Joseph Berliner,[40] for example, workers in a market economy sell their labor at a certain price. They forego leisure because they need food, clothing and shelter; they give up a certain amount of leisure time (which includes family time), in which they would do what they would rather be doing, in exchange for a wage, with which they can purchase consumer goods. Workers who value additional goods over additional leisure may opt to work harder or take less desirable jobs or longer hours or get more training in order to get a higher-paying job, and the opposite decision may be made by those who value additional leisure over additional goods. In having and exercising these options, a worker maintains a degree of dignity. An alternative would be a system, like that practiced in a kibbutz, in which everyone does a share of the "dirty work," and jobs are rotated

[40] *The Economics of the Good Society. The Variety of Economic Arrangements* (London, 1999).

are rotated regularly. If everyone is equally demeaned by unpleasant work, no one's dignity is lost.

Other theorists begin with a different premise, and deny that work is necessarily inherently unpleasant. At the heart of Marx's political-economic theory was his belief that work "is profoundly dignified and unjustly despised."[41] The judgment of history, however, has been that communities claiming to instantiate his theory have, in focusing on production, distribution and exchange of goods, failed to enhance the dignity of work.[42] To be sure, some communist regimes have tried to dignify work and honor workers by educating them to understand that they are working not for the sake of buying power but for the good of the whole society. There were in fact periods when Stalin and later Mao succeeded in appealing to workers to work on behalf of their society, but generally work has been done for a price in planned as well as market economies. In this respect, the parameters of the capitalist and communist communities were not very different, even though the one supposedly placed more value on the individual and the other more on the group.[43] In spite of Communist party efforts to encourage people to work gladly for the good of the community, work was almost always something that people would prefer not to do. Berliner cites evidence to the effect that honoring Soviet workers who stood out for the work they did for the good of society inspired cynicism more than emulation. Honoring someone for doing nasty work or hard labor may actually make the work seem even more despicable, for honoring the worker without honoring the work implicitly emphasizes that the work itself is dishonorable.[44] It implies that the worker needs upgrading because working itself

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[41] Camus, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

[42] For Camus, workers were betrayed by their Communist Party leaders, who failed to give workers or their working any dignity, and their struggles against this betrayal has been the only real source of dignity for them. *Ibid.*, p. 218.

[43] Behind the Party's back, workers in the U.S.S.R. used to say that the difference between capitalism and communism is that in capitalism man exploits man; in communism it is the other way around. The joke has also been told as a riddle posed by a Russian diplomat during the Cuba missile crisis and as banter between two Americans.

[44] *Ibid.*, pp. 133-34.

is so degrading. It may be that the worker's status cannot rise unless the status of working rises as well.

Such an elevation is a major concern in Pope John Paul II's *Agenda for the Third Millennium.* The dignity of working, no matter how humble, and not just the dignity of the worker as a human being, is to be seen in the fact that work is always a collaboration with the creative work of God.[45] Moreover, working "constitutes a road to holiness" because it offers opportunities for improving oneself and creation, helping one's fellow citizens, and imitating Christ in active charity.[46] From these premises it follows that unemployment is a calamity, for the person deprived of work is deprived of these opportunities. It also follows that this deprivation comes from a flaw not in the person but in social institutions. These structures should be rectified, but usually in fact they stubbornly resist correction. If work is for the good of the worker as well as society, then the worker must not be exploited; crass materialism and exclusive attention to the criterion of profit undermine the value of work for the workers and tends to make their work arduous, excessively tiring and dehumanizing. Only when the worker is seen as a neighbor with whom one feels solidarity and not an instrument with a capacity for work is work dignified as collaboration with God and as beneficial opportunities for the workers.[47]

Community obviously becomes something quite different if working can be experienced as inherently dignified and dignifying and not something that one would rather not do, but must do either in order to earn a wage whereby to survive physically or in order to build up social wellbeing. James Murphy locates the possibility of dignifying, dignified work in the subjecthood of the worker. That is, the worker is not a mere instrument but one who can "use initiative, thought and in-

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[45] *Agenda for the Third Millennium* (London, 1996), p. 154.
[46] *Ibid.*, pp. 156-57.
[47] *Ibid.*, pp. 160-64.

dependent judgment."[48] Work does not have to be the tiresome, tiring, dehumanizing effort of doing what one is being paid to do only because one needs the wages. It can instead be a matter of confronting a challenge, figuring out how to meet it, and then carrying out what one has figured out. What gives work dignity "is that a worker first constructs in thought what he then embodies in matter; conversely what makes unskilled work sordid is that one man executes the thought of another."[49] One may demur that the thinking and executing phases are not so tidily separated chronologically as they seem to be for Murphy, but one can agree that it is the divorce of conception from execution that makes work dehumanizing. It is not materialism nor the pricing of labor, and certainly not who owns and who does not own the means of production that makes work drudgery.[50] The separation of thinking from working alienates workers from themselves as well as from their working, from the product of their work and from their employers. Camus agrees: "Work in which one can have an interest, creative work, even though it is badly paid, does not degrade life."[51]

Murphy goes to considerable trouble to argue that the division of labor and its benefits in terms of increased output are not necessarily incompatible with joining conception with execution.[52] He admits, however, that the currently dominant visions of community and its parameters militate against reconfiguring work so that it is more challenging and fulfilling. It is worth the effort of doing so, he argues, not because more challenging work is necessarily less demanding or tiring, but because it is less tiresome and more likely to contribute to genuine human welfare.[53] To the theorists and systems that Berliner summarizes and that see work as the despised alternative to the leisure that people really want, Murphy says point-

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[48] James Bernard Murphy, *The Moral Economy of Labor. Aristotelian Themes in Economic Theory* (New Haven, 1993), p. 5, quoting Kohn and Schooler, *Work and Personality* (Norwood, 1983), p. 81.
[49] *Ibid.*, p. 8.
[50] *Ibid.*, p. 5.
[51] *The Rebel*, p. 214.
[52] *Ibid.*, chapter 2, pp. 46-84.
[53] *Op. cit.*, pp. 225-34.

edly, "mindless work tends to lead to mindless leisure whereas challenging work leads to challenging leisure."[54]

From the Pope's and Murphy's understanding of working, then, one begins to see that the fundamental problem is to elevate the status of working when the product of the work may be valued but is not inherently expressive or when the work is expressive but the workers themselves are not linked with the expressiveness. Trying to raise the status of the worker while leaving working itself as a necessary evil may lead to a somewhat more just society, but it does not touch the problem that occurs when workers hate their work and spend half or more of their waking hours debasing themselves.

The problem is widespread, and it is an acute problem because non-expressive products are needed. A community has to build an infrastructure in order to survive and flourish, and it is precisely the working that goes into infrastructure that is most nearly invisible and its product most completely instrumental in value and hence most likely to be experienced by its modern-society agent as debasing. The problem does not arise when the product of the work (such as a sculpture) is inherently valuable and the link between the worker and the value is maintained. In this case both the working and the worker are honored as well as the product, because the working itself is believed to have emotional, intellectual and even spiritual and not just physical components. Ironically, workers of this sort (including diplomats, actors and violinists) often feel underappreciated to the extent that the physical aspects of their efforts are ignored.

That they are underappreciated by others does not necessarily mean that all workers hate their working. " 'People looked down on me,' Dan told me. 'I don't know how many times I heard people say, "I'm so glad I'm not at the end of a shovel.' He paused. 'But what they don't realize is the deep satisfaction that

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[54] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

comes from ... being able to accomplish something through the physical know-how of your body.'"[55]

The next section takes up the performance of marimba music in Guatemala and offers an analysis of the way it imagines putting physical know-how into practice—working—as something positive and envisions such working as a parameter of a community. Guatemalan marimba music performance is revelatory because it imagines working as inherently valued even when the product of work is either invisible or only instrumentally valuable or of only limited intrinsic value. In light of McWilliam's analysis of the failure of the arts to elevate the status of workers and mindful of Murphy's conclusion concerning the nature and status of working, the fascinating prospect of listening to musical performances that focus on the nature and status of spending energy is welcome and appealing.

To say that Guatemala marimba performance focuses on working will seem very odd to people who are accustomed to thinking that if art focuses on an aspect of life, it must have that aspect as its theme, for Guatemalan marimba music rarely has working as its theme. The oddness becomes perversity: the way that marimba performance imagines working *in principle* cannot come through the theme of the music. Marimba performance imagines community in a way that is detached from the musical flow and what it may symbolize or express. Instead it is related to what energizes that flow, making it possible that there be a musical flow at all.[56]

Guatemala marimba music makes a theme of and expresses many things—sadness in the face of earthquake destruction, perseverance, laughter through one's tears, delight in the flowers on a coffee bush. These expressions are enjoyable, sometimes lovely, though they are seldom profound. As the next section

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[55] Terry Tempest Williams, *Wabash Magazine,* fall 2006, p. 22.

[56] Thus, while "Zapateros pastorenses" ("Shoemakers of Pastores") has the work of making shoes as its theme, it depicts shoemaking somewhat naively. Nevertheless, performing the piece is valuable because of the way, described below, it infuses energy into the musical flow and affirms the value of that infusion, which is a close analogue to the outpouring of energy in working. Whether or not the outcome or product of the infusion of energy has intrinsic value, the infusion of energy in both cases does.

makes clear, the impact of marimba performances in Guatemala goes far beyond the effect of its musical expressiveness. For what is unusual and especially compelling in these performances is something that takes place outside the music, but just barely outside it. Although it is sounds that bring about this something and it is performers who are making the sounds, the something occurs in a narrow space between the performers and the music as such.

Because this space is highly unusual, perhaps unique to Guatemalan marimba music, it and the event that occurs in it must be defined with considerable care in order not to slide off the uniqueness. The space is part of the performance, yet it is not the space in which the musical events themselves occur, and yet again it is not the performers' real-world space either. The something that occurs within this strange aesthetic never-never land is energy being infused into the making and creating of the musical flow. In physics, "energy" is understood as the capacity for overcoming resistance and doing work, and "work" is understood as the transfer of energy into matter, thereby changing it. The energy itself is indifferent to the particulars of the work or the matter; that is, the energy is the same regardless of the details of the work it may eventually accomplish. In marimba performing, the infusion is, of course, metaphorical, not literal; nevertheless it is actual.[57] What happens, in other words, is the imagining or expressing of the imparting of energy into a process of making or creating. The performing does not just bring the music into being (which is the case with all musical performances) but also expresses the act of bringing music about (which most performances do not). The expressiveness is located at quite a different place from where one is accustomed to finding it.

This imagining of energy infusion is vital and exciting, and it can be felt wherever Guatemalan marimba performances are heard. Defining the space in which it occurs depends on making a distinction between the performance—the

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[57] For an elaboration of the distinction between literal and actual on the one hand, and, on the other, metaphorical and actual, see Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art* (Indianapolis, 1968), pp. 68-71.

act of performing—and the music that is performed. For the infusion is imagined regardless of the nature of the musical sounds to which it gives rise and regardless of what or how little they happen to express, just as in physics energy *per se* is indifferent to the particulars of the matter it may change or how it will change it. Imagining energy infusion happens frequently and variously in marimba performing, and the next section makes clear that it is valued for itself, quite independently of what the expenditure of energy accomplishes, for the performing is valued even when the music itself is humdrum.

Precisely as intrinsically valuable, it valorizes the process of infusing energy, again independently of how the energy is spent, and can therefore confirm the value of working in general. It can celebrate the energy of the event or day that it ornaments, and it can fuel that energy to reach higher peaks. Each of these—valorizing, confirming, celebrating, fueling—is an extraordinary gift to the community of listeners. While the marimba music itself may or may not be a high-quality work of art, the expression of the energy that brings it about, in the never-never land between the performer and the music, is.

Imagining the infusion of energy bears on imagining community and working, and it bears on them precisely because of the disjunction between the space in which the event of infusing energy occurs and the space in which the expressive music occurs. In many cases the expressiveness of the music itself is limited or clichéd, but what is salient is that regardless of the product of the energy—and therefore regardless of the quality of the music that follows—the energy generated and released in this space is palpable and empowering.

This syndrome is significantly similar to the situation in which workers vigorously create and spend energy but are despised and oppressed to some extent because of the very limited expressiveness of the their work's product. The two situations have the same structure; they are homologous. Seeing this likeness prepares one to see that a community that appreciates marimba performance (not just marimba music) and values its continuous infusion of energy is a community that values what that infusion valorizes. It is a community one of whose parameters is

to place a high value on the energy of working hard on an infrastructure or other non-expressive products. Seeing this value, one also sees that the energy of working is expressive, regardless of whether its product is expressive or not. Because this energy is exerted invisibly for the most part and is not framed or marked as an expression, it would be confusing to say this expressiveness turns everyday working into a work of art. Rather, an energetic style of working (when it is in fact energetic) may be said to express the individual character of the worker.

2. MARIMBA PERFORMANCE IN GUATEMALA: CREATING NON-EXPRESSIVE OBJECTS AND IMAGINING COMMUNITY

According to a Q'anjob'al legend, which, judging by the way it is told, is as old as any, the marimba is indigenous to Guatemala. In this story, the marimba came into being when a woodpecker rapped on a resonant *hormigo* tree that had been burned. When the bird pecked at different parts of the tree, it produced different pitches. A woodcutter heard this marvel, and ran to a Maya priest, who advised him to carry out certain ceremonies, for he had been called to be a musician. The woodcutter did that, and constructed the first Guatemalan marimba consisting of a very few little planks tied together with a cord.[58] There are other stories current among Maya marimbists that tell of a mysterious pre-Columbian codex that describes a marimba. There is also a story to the effect that a mid-sixteenth-century Spanish explorer in Chiapas saw a musical instrument that was like the one described in the Q'anjob'al legend and was also associated with ceremonial use.

Although there are some marimbists among the indigenous people of Guatemala who still maintain that the marimba was known by the Maya before the

[58] Fernando Peñalosa, *Tales and Legends of the Q'anjob'al Maya* (Rancho Palos Verdes, CA, 2001), p. 152.

Spanish conquest, it is generally recognized that the direct ancestor of the marimba that is used in Guatemala today was African and came to Central American in the late sixteenth century with slaves from west Africa. The word, "marimba," has an African origin. One cannot, however, be sure that both versions are not true. It could well be that the marimba, like drums and flutes, developed independently at several different tropical regions around the world. While the marimba as it has evolved in Guatemala has African origins, there may have also been marimba-like instruments among the pre-colonial Maya peoples even if they did not contribute directly to the history leading up to current marimba construction and performance.

In any case, those Guatemalans who no longer believe that the marimba grew like corn on Guatemalan hillsides still claim that the marimba, while not invented, was brought to perfection in their country. Guatemalans, they maintain, excel both as builders of marimbas and as performers on them. Marimba music is so popular in Guatemala that in 1978 the marimba was declared its national instrument and in 1999 it was officially made a national symbol, along with the flag, the Quetzal bird, the ceiba tree and the Monja Blanca flower. From the facts that few countries have an officially adopted "national instrument" and that the day on which the declaration was promulgated is annually celebrated by some Guatemalan marimbists with special performances and festivities, one gets a sense of how important marimba performance is to Guatemalans' common life and sense of their identity. For virtually every Guatemalan, the sheer sound of the marimba means Guatemala. While the analysis that follows has to do with the *nature* of that sound and the connection between the sound and what is done with it, one needs always to keep in mind that for the people of this country the sound itself connotes their home.

The contribution of marimba music to the common life is obvious and easily documented. While people may listen to marimba recordings privately, live marimba music is generally a public event, usually in the open air. Church festivals now typically include picnics on the park in front of the church, and the best pic-

nics are considered to be the ones with live marimba music. Marimba music occurs on weekends at the town's or village's central square, and on a weekday when it is the day of the town's patron saint (as in the photograph on the front cover of this book). Some restaurants and artisans' markets grace their courtyards with live marimba music. Private parties for weddings, baby showers, death anniversaries and other special celebrations have live marimba music, usually also in a courtyard. Indoors, one hears marimba music in churches,[59] airports and occasional concerts.

The repertory divides into two groups. One consists of music for non-indigenous audiences, and includes European music as well as pieces written within the last one hundred years by Guatemala composers. In many respects their musical style is a continuation of European popular music. The other group consists of *sones,* which are pieces for indigenous listeners and go back to the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[60] Both groups use the European diatonic scale, and, like much European folk music, the phrases almost invariably consist of a four-bar group paired to another four-bar group.

In non-indigenous music, this eight-bar group is paired to another eight-bar group, whose internal organization also consists of a pair of four-bar groups. This sixteen-bar group is repeated exactly, making a thirty-two bar group which is followed by a sixteen- or thirty-two bar group of somewhat different melodic material. The piece almost invariably ends with a repeat of the opening material. In longer pieces, the reappearance of the opening material is followed by sixteen or thirty-two bars of a second set of different melodic materials, and then the piece closes with a second and final repeat of the first sixteen bars. In other words, the overall form is AABBA or AABABAB (a familiar and easily available example is "Pastores querido" by Ernesto Hernández Vela [1947-]), or elongated into AABA(A)C(CDC)A (a ready to hand example is German Alcantara's "Mi bella

[59] The marimba began to be incorporated into church music in the eighteenth century. See Sergio Navarrete Pellicer, *Maya Achi Marimba Music in Guatemala* (Philadelphia, 2005), p. 88.

[60] The word *son* was used in sixteenth-century Spain for any type of popular music. See Navarrete Pellicer, *op. cit.,* p. 98.

Guatemala"). Partly because the B and C sections contrast only minimally to the A, there is in general no forward dynamic from the A group to B or C, or from B or C back to A. Correspondingly, there is no sense of arrival or culmination at the beginning of any group. Thus, in contrast to the European counterparts the reappearance of A does not project or convey a sense of return. In the *sones* the phrases likewise consist of four-bar groups (although there are some five- and ten-bar phrases[61]), and the overall form consists of alternating material that is only minimally contrasting. Pairing on higher levels (sixteen or thirty-two bar groups, for example) is weaker and less consistent than in the non-indigenous music.

This description may suggest that marimba music is derivative, simplistic, naïve, predictable, borderline monotonous and likely to be boring. As though to ward off that possibility, more recent pieces lay Latin rhythms over the European phrase structure. These rhythms enliven the surface, but the underlying framework is every bit as predictable as in the older pieces.

Music for the marimba (as opposed to music for a large ensemble in which the marimba is an incidental member) has a melodic style that is very much its own. Perhaps the nature of the sound or the way it is produced has influenced the nature of the melodies: they have to suit the sound, which is characterized by a strong attack followed by a quick decay, and the performance technique, which comprises one or two mallets in each hand. Be that as it may, it is also to be said that marimba melodies in most of the pieces derived from European popular music, particularly the older ones, are more song-like than instrumental in character. Songs are the model for the tunes these composers fashioned, and frequently a title may (misleadingly) suggest that the piece has lyrics. Intervals larger than the fourth are avoided, perhaps again because of the sound itself: each tone decays very quickly, making it difficult for the listener to hear melodic continuity across a wide gap unless the speed from one note to the next is very fast. The Maya-derived melodies are even more diatonic (that is, they even more assiduously

[61] Navarrete Pellicer, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

avoid skips). Many of these melodies in fact do have or did have texts, but in most cases the words have long since been forgotten, so while the melodies are song-like, the pieces function as instrumental music.[62] Often quite memorable, the melodies take place in a narrow compass, making them easy to hum. But the tight range also makes tedium more likely.

Unlike the European prototypes, Guatemalan marimba compositions written for the use of non-indigenous audiences do not ring harmonic changes to enrich their music. Secondary dominants occur, but rarely, and oddly they seem more routine than refreshing when they do occur. In only a few pieces is the second melodic material cast in a contrasting tonal center or different mode. This fact is related to the absence of a dynamic away from or back to the opening melodic material. There is a slight tendency toward harmonic adventurousness in recent marimba music, but in general it is very slight. In the case of the *sones,* secondary dominants are impossible, for the *son* marimba has only one level (there is nothing corresponding to the black keys on the piano). The second level of notes in the chromatic marimba used today for non-indigenous music was developed only at the end of the nineteenth century. Until then, the secondary dominant was impossible in that music also, but the second level of notes was added not for the sake of harmonic variety but to make it possible to play pieces in any key without having to alter the instrument.[63]

The loud-soft range of which the marimba is capable is very narrow. With considerable effort players can contrast a medium soft to a medium loud, but convincing crescendos are difficult to pull off. Composers sometimes, but only rarely, call for a crescendo and only somewhat more often for a clear, crisp contrast of two levels of loudness.

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[62] See Navarrete Pellicer, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

[63] Before the advent of the two-level marimba, wax was stuck onto the resonator under the key to change, for example, an F into an F-sharp so that one could play a piece in the key of G instead of the key of C. The player removed the wax if the next piece was in the key of C.

In light of this description, one may well wonder why Guatemalans enjoy this music so much. An unfriendly person may even wonder whether the people are as dull and predictable as their music is (apparently) routine and lackluster.

The answer to this question has to do with a feature that is heard wherever marimba music is performed by Guatemalans. It is a feature that is as rare elsewhere as it is regularly present in Guatemalan marimba performance. By zeroing in on this feature one is getting close to what makes performing this music both stirring and distinctive, and one is gaining a standpoint from which to see what it has to do with the Guatemalans' sense of themselves. One is also getting close to the similarity between performing this music and envisioning work and community. This feature is central to both the *sones* and the non-indigenous music, although, as Subsection (2) below elaborates, it works outward into social meanings differently in the two cases. The feature has to do with the expression of generating and spending energy and the aspects of marimba performance that are expressive in this way.

(1) Music and Imagining Energy

What both stands out in Guatemalan marimba performance since at least 1900 and also differentiates it from other musical styles is sufficiently unusual that describing it calls for concepts that are not as a rule needed in describing music. While there are many possibilities, the one that is most promising for purposes of this book has to do with musical processes that act as metaphors for developing and spending energy.

Many musical processes present themselves as metaphors for a process of generating and then spending energy. The development section of a Beethoven symphony and the ebb and flow of rhythms in a Japanese drum ensemble (*taiko*) provide ready and familiar examples, but there are many others. They differ among themselves in terms of how long the generating process continues, how intense the energy becomes before it begins to be spent, and how much energy is

spent before the generative process recommences. Sometimes the generating and spending processes are separate and successive, while in other cases they overlap, intermingle or occur more or less simultaneously. In these ways music is a marvelously supple instrument for imaging a wide range of human experiences. It can present a heroic struggle in facing, overcoming or losing to tremendous obstacles. It can be joined to the presentation of pain, grief, fear, love or joy. It can provide aural images of perseverance, steadfastness, single-mindedness, weakness, or confusion. It can imagine the nature of history. It can resemble the ideal of moving toward a future that is both the outcome of free choices and also fully explicable in terms of its past, and thus a totally ideally intelligible process, as in Mozart's music. Or it can be similar to the unfolding of a necessity that is more like an inevitability than a moral choice, as perhaps in Bach's.[64]

Generally, the sense of these metaphors and imaginings is that the source of the energy is within the music itself; the energy is not infused into the music from outside it. Asking how the musical process can be self-generating usually does not lead anywhere, for these musical metaphors are not focusing on that issue; they are not presenting an image of the origin of energy or the transition from an absence to a presence of forward-thrusting force. Music can, of course, provide metaphors for that process as well; the coming of light in Haydn's *The Creation,* the beginning of the beginning in the Prelude to Wagner's *Das Rheingold,* and the dawn of spring at the opening of Mahler's First Symphony are examples. All these musically imagine the apparently impossible transition from nothing to something. As such, they are extremely important aural metaphors for cosmological and religious understanding. These cases differ from the usual case, however, only in that they focus attention on the miracle of music generating energy from within itself, while the typical cases do not. In both the exceptional and the typical cases, the musical process is self-generating.

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[64] For an elaboration of these comments, see David B. Greene, *Temporal Processes in Beethoven's Music* (London, 1982), pp. 7-27.

What happens over and again in a variety of ways in the performance of Guatemalan marimba music differs from both. Guatemalan marimba music is distinctively characterized by frequent infusions of new energy from outside the musical process. Usually, it is not as though the energy were so nearly depleted that without a new infusion the musical process would simply stop. Rather, the frequent infusion of fresh energy from external sources exceeds what is necessary, and it is this surfeit of infused energy, the analyses that follow indicate, that makes this genre so compelling.

i. Two Distinctions.

Because this feature is so central to marimba performance and so crucial to its effect, it is important to be very precise about it. Two subtle but crucial distinctions are necessary. The first is to draw a line between two kinds of effect that sounds can make. In one case, the effect belongs to the musical flow (which is what is generally meant by the term "music"), and in the other case the effect is outside the musical flow. In both cases, it is sounds that have the effect, but while in the first case the effect has to do with the way one sound is related to other sounds, in the second case the effect has to do with the energy that comes from outside those musical relations and that enable the sounds to be related at all. The energy itself is indifferent to the nature of the relations it empowers. It simply makes possible that the sounds be related to one another. It is because it does not shape or control how they are related that it is said to be outside the musical flow. While it is sounds that bear the imagining of infusing energy into the musical flow, it cannot be said to be music, strictly speaking, that is doing this imagining. The infusion of energy is an event that occurs on the border between music and the world outside the music.

The point here can be sharpened by contrasting the nature of the aural but extra-musical event to what happens in *taiko*. The drummers are highly energetic, even jumping more than a foot in the air, apparently in order to come down on the

drums with maximal force. Yet the leap and the other visible manifestations of energy are not energy being infused into the music. In fact the energy that is heard is no less if one listens with one's eyes closed; moreover, the loudest possible sound can be produced without the leap. The leap is simply a visual event that serves to direct attention to what is happening within the music. In terms of the music itself, the leap is not necessary. For what is happening is not infusing energy from outside the music, as in the marimba performance; instead, the energy is generated and spent within the musical process itself, as in a Beethoven symphony.

The second distinction has to do with the source of the energy. The source is not something within the music itself, but it is not outside the world of sounds either. It may seem obvious that this something is the performer. But it must be added at once that "performer" here does not mean the particular person who is performing. While that person is literally expending energy, that real-world effort needs to be distinguished from the metaphorical infusion of energy. In terms of this metaphor, the particular performer dissolves into something like an abstraction—namely, the "performer as such." This abstraction is particularly conspicuous in the case of the typical marimba ensemble, which consists of seven men (although women are beginning to appear as marimbists as well) playing on two large marimbas. Each particular performer dissolves into the ensemble; all their mallets strike the marimba at exactly the same instant, and the synchronism is so perfect that, if one were not watching, one could not imagine that more than one person were performing.

But even in the case of the solo performer, the source of the infused energy is not to be understood as the particular performer. For what comes across is the aural image of human energy as such (as opposed to the energy of a person who is performing) being transferred into a process (the succession of sounds) that is not inherently human, but is humanized by the transfer. It is an imagining of human exertion. It imagines the transaction of the human with that on which it works. It

imagines human energy transforming that on which it operates and bringing something radically new into being.

Comparing this occurrence to comparable events in other artistic media where one must also speak of an abstract performer amplifies this distinction, although these other events are more casual, less central to the medium than in the case of marimba performance. One example is a moment in theater when someone on stage steps briefly away from the plot and addresses the audience directly or comments on the plot in some way. Little Merry Sunshine (in the 1960s musical comedy of that name, not the film) is tied to a tree by the bad guys, and her left hand slips out of the bonds to arrange the curls on her neck, then goes back into tied-up position. The gesture is not part of the plot, but makes it clear what kind of a plot it is. It is instructive to ask just who is this someone who is commenting on the plot. It is certainly not Little Merry Sunshine, but neither is it *tout court* the person who is enacting her, for a role is still being played. It is something like an "actress-in-the-abstract" who is doing something that contributes to the performance though not to the drama, just as the abstract marimbist contributes to the performance, but not to the musical flow. Both the abstract actress and the abstract marimbist empower the work of art to be what it is.

Another useful comparison is the way ballet performers take their bows. The dancers acknowledge and receive applause with a grace and style that is itself a performance. But it is not as though the character enacted or role expressed in the performance were taking the bow, but neither is it the dancer as a particular person. That person is still enacting a role, not simply being her- or himself. This role is something of an abstraction, something like "the dancing artist as such." This difference is conspicuous when the people who played the music for the dance take their bows along side the dancers: the musicians look like graceless klutzes in comparison to the dancers. The musicians are simply themselves, while the dancing artist continues to enact a persona during the curtain call. The dancers' bows are expressive, and they comport with the expressiveness of the dance, but,

like the infusion of new energy at moments in marimba music, this expressiveness is quite separate from that of the dance.

ii. Specific Techniques.

These two distinctions regarding the infusion of energy in marimba performance become meaningful when they are seen in the context of specific techniques by which imagining an infusion of energy is achieved, for it is only by keeping these distinctions in mind that one can discern the value of these techniques.

The variety of specific techniques is astonishing, but there are two that occur most frequently. The first of these is easy to describe. Describing the second one opens up another issue: it occurs in every piece of marimba music, yet the many never repetitions become monotonous. Consequently, the techniques that prevent it from becoming patterned and predictable must also be described. These techniques have to do with the huge variety of higher-level organizations.

The first technique whereby energy is infused into the music is related to the nature of the marimba sound and the fact that it dies away very quickly. Because of this rapid decay, the composer calls for a tremolo (re-striking the pitch four times for each beat) when a pitch needs to be sustained for two or three slow beats. The performer tries to make the rapid repetitions grow out of the first note that is struck. This effort in turn leads the performer to give that first tone a slight push, and this push (which stands to one side of the melodic and rhythmic relations) has the effect of suggesting an infusion of new energy.

The other frequently occurring technique in Guatemalan marimba performance that has this effect is the phrase that begins right on the downbeat of the measure. The quality given by this practice is called "thetic," and it contrasts to the "anacrustic" quality that is to be heard when a phrase or musical idea begins with an upbeat. An upbeat, or anacrusis, is an energy-generating gesture; that is, hearing the succession of "anacrusis to thesis" is the experience of moving, within the musical process, from creating to spending energy. The thetic gesture is the

opposite. It begins straightaway with energy that is not generated by a preceding musical event within the phrase; that is, it spends energy that is not developed inside the phrase where it occurs. Sometimes this energy is posited by a preceding phrase within the music itself; sometimes, as in marimba performance, it is heard as entering the flow of sounds from without that flow.

Thetic beginnings are somewhat flat-footed. Consequently, while they are not really rare in European music, its composers tend to prefer anacrustic melodies. By contrast, thetic rhythms prevail in Guatemalan marimba music, especially in the indigenous *sones*.[65] It is not the case, however, that all marimba melodies, without exception, begin with a strong beat. Some have anacruses. Most of these upbeats, however, project a strong thetic quality either because the anacrusis is very, very short (as in "Zapateros pastorenses" by Inocente Valle Vela) or because the anacrusis itself is powerfully thetic, that is, the anacrusis is composite and the divided upbeat is thetic; an example is the second theme in German Alcantara's "La Flor de café":

Figure 2.1

∪ = upbeat or afterbeat
– = down beat or strong beat

Examples of anacrustic melodies that do not have a thetic aspect are the second and third melodies in "Reir llorando" by Mariano Valverde.

The strongly thetic quality of these melodies, however, is not entirely the result of the composers' work. It is also the result of Guatemalan marimba perform-

[65] Without exception, all the examples of marimba rhythmic patterns used in the indigenous marimba music of Rabinal as transcribed by Navarrete Pellicer (*op. cit.*, p. 102) are thetic.

ance practice. The habit of stressing the downbeat—giving it an extra little push—when it begins a melody is uniformly followed by Guatemalan marimbists. It cooperates with the implicit thetic quality written into the music to generate an explicit sense of new (that is, extra-musical) energy coming forward to put a phrase into motion.

By itself, the thetic quality of melodies would simply contribute to the predictability and monotony of marimba music. What prevents tedium is the connection of the thetic quality to another feature: the enormous variety of higher-level organizations. Almost all marimba melodies in Guatemala consist of four-bar groups, and usually each four-bar group divides into two two-bar groups. A sixteen-bar phrase almost always consists of four four-bar groups, and the first four-bar group always pairs up with the second one and the third four-bar group with the fourth. As a result, the sixteen-bar groups divide into two eight-bar groups (a pair of four-bar groups followed by another pair of four-bar groups). Hearing these groupings is essential in listening to Guatemalan marimba music, for with the relations among these groupings (the ways they evoke and respond to one another) so much variety enters this music that the several aspects that might make for excessive predictability and monotony are overcome.

In general there are three kinds of relations. First, there are some two-, four-, or eight-bar groups that are anacrustic to the succeeding two-, four-, or eight-bar thetic groups, respectively. Second, there are some two-, four- or eight-bar groups that are echoed by the succeeding two-, four-, or eight-bar group. Third, there are some two-, four- or eight-bar groups that are succeeded by a two-, four-, or eight-bar group that is neither thetic to the preceding anacrusis nor an echo of the first group, but in spite of being an almost exact repetition comes across as the infusion of new energy. Generally, whichever of these three relationships occurs within one four-, eight-, or sixteen-bar group will happen in the next four-, eight-, or sixteen-bar group within the same melody. However—and here is the fact that is crucial to the success of marimba performance and its images of infusing energy—the kind of relation that occurs on the level of two-bars plus two bars is

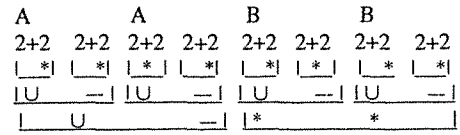
very rarely the same as what will occur on both the four-plus-four and the eight-plus-eight bar level. One of these higher levels may be the same as the two-plus-two level, but almost never both.

Moreover, the pattern articulated on the various levels in one melody of a piece (the "A" sections) is never repeated in the next melody (the "B" sections). This variety means that the moments when new energy is infused take place on continuously different levels of the musical structure. Now the moment is that of the thetic quality of the onset of a phrase. Now it is the second four-bar group within an eight-bar group. Now it is the second eight-bar group within a sixteen-bar group. Thus the new energy really is heard as new energy, not the simple or straightforward application of a pattern that preexisted the performance, or, better, the act of performing. With this feature one has to talk of a cooperation between the musical sounds and the extra-musical infusion of energy: the musical flow is organized in such a way that the extra-musical events do not occur in a patterned, predictable and potentially boring way.

Figure 2.2 gives an example. It represents the relationships among four- and eight-bar groups in "Cumbia Aguacateros" by David Mendoza (1959 -) ("Cumbia" is a Columbian dance rhythm; "Aguacateros"—"The Avocadoteers"—is the name of the Antigua Guatemala soccer team; the name alludes to the Antigueños' much touted love for avocados). The sketch indicates that the first four bars in each eight-bar group are anacrustic to the second four bars in that group. That is, the ending of the four-bar group is forwardly mobile, pushing toward the next four-bar group as a whole, and the latter begins as the arrival of that toward which the previous group was heading. Likewise the first A (the first eight bars) is anacrustic to the second A. The next sixteen bars (BB) organize themselves at the level of four-bar groups in the same way as the four four-bar groups in A. However, on the next level of B, the relations are different. The second eight-bar group (that is, the second B), unlike the second A, is not the arrival of that to which the first B group has been heading. In other words, it does not "spend" the energy that the first B group has been whipping up. Instead, it is a moment (indicated by an

asterisk in Figure 2.2) of infusing energy from outside the musical process that has been transpiring. Likewise, the onset of the BB group as a whole (measure 17) is another moment when new energy comes into the music from outside the process articulated by the preceding subphrase or phrase.

Figure 2.2



* indicates a moment when new energy enters the musical flow.

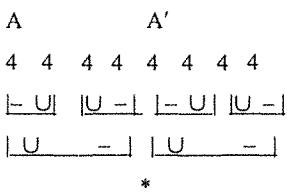
The series of eight-bar groups whose first four measures are anacrustic to the second four takes on additional importance as the only relief from the continuous infusion of new energy, which also occurs at the beginning of the third bar in every four-bar group. Were it not for the energy-summoning and -spending gestures on the eight-bar level, the rhythmic structure and the piece would be unbearably patterned.

The intermingling of the two kinds of events—those in which energy is both developed and spent within the musical flow and those in which new energy enters from outside the flow of sounds—is typical of all Guatemala marimba performance without exception, both indigenous and non-indigenous. Even so, the intermingling takes on an unusual form in the last two fifths of "Cumbia Aguacateros." After the second appearance of BB, a four-bar interlude (derived from the introduction to A at the very beginning of the piece) suffuses new energy into the musical flow, and in fact every four-bar gesture from this point to the end of the piece is one such infusion after another. At the same time, an obbligato emerges and takes over the foreground. It dominates to such an extent that the

four-bar grouping is overridden and obscured. What remains is the sense of the continuous infusion of new energy and the continuous expenditure of that energy in the constantly moving obbligato. Because of its Cumbian folkdance rhythm, the melody from the very beginning of the piece is less vocal or song-like in character than most marimba music, and from the onset of the obbligato to the end the style of foreground is not at all vocal.

What happens at the repeat of B in "Cumbia Aguacateros" happens at the repeat of A in "Reir llorando" ("Laughing through My Tears"). Figure 2.3 is a sketch of the opening melody (bars 1-32).

Figure 2.3



The first sixteen measures are almost exactly repeated in the next sixteen. The repeat is not, however, heard either as an echo of bars 1-16 or as the arrival of that toward which the first sixteen bars were heading. Instead, it is heard as a moment when new energy enters from outside the music. In this case the effect has to do with what takes place in the first sixteen-measure group. There, the second eight bars almost exactly repeat the first eight. In the opening eight-bar group, the first four measures are not anacrustic to the second four-bar group; rather the second four measures are a rounding-out gesture. However, in the second eight bars, in spite of the close likeness, the first four are anacrustic to the second four, which are now an arriving instead of a rounding-out gesture. This reversal of the musical relationships is itself reversed at the beginning of the second sixteen-bar group. Though this effect is subtle, it serves to mark measure 17 for special atten-

tion. Since this moment is also, as already noted, a moment when new energy enters the music, the underscoring of the moment by the reversal from | U – | to | – U | marks the infusion of new energy.

In "Zapateros pastorenses" by Inocente Valle Vela (1926 -), the A and B melodies have the same rhythmic structure on the two-bar level (each two-bar group is thetic) and the sixteen-bar level, but on the four- and eight-bar level they are reversed: the A groups are anacrustic on the four-bar level and thetic on the eight-bar level, while the B groups are thetic and anacrustic on the four- and eight-bar levels, respectively. This reversal not only prevents monotony but enables an infusion of energy to occur at all the places where the two groups' rhythmic structures differ.

Together, these three examples illustrate two generalizations about Guatemalan marimba music. First, it always involves, and is distinguished by involving, moments of new energy and these moments are always salient. But, second, there is so much variety in where and how they occur that the genre as a whole never seems patterned or predictable. These moments are always enlivening and always distinguishing both of the particular piece and of the genre as a whole.

The wide variety that takes place without altering these generalizations can be seen by looking at instances where exceptions occur to three other generalizations about the genre, specifically the overwhelming domination of four-, eight- and sixteen-bar groupings, the overwhelming preference for a narrow range of harmonic options, and the prevalence of an ABACA formal scheme. What is significant about every exception to the general practice is that the salience of several infusions of new energy is not diminished. Exactly the contrary, in fact: each exception turns out to be handled in such a ways as to enhance the sense of energy coming into the music or to serve as an alternative means of evoking this sense.

One of the best known and most loved marimba pieces is Valverde's "Noche de luna entre ruinas." It is one of the few pieces that use one tonal center for the A section and a different one for the B and C sections. The difference, however, is slight: the A sections are in the minor and the other sections are in its relative ma-

jor; they all use the same scale, but locate a different tonal center on that scale. The minor-key A sections are a slow waltz. The major-key sections, also waltzes, are more spirited. The A section comes back three times, each time a little faster. That is, each is a little more sprightly, hence a little more like the intervening material. Moreover, the second recurrence of A is overlaid with an obbligato figure derived from the preceding section, so that the latter's mood continues into and mingles with the A material. This continuous attenuation of the contrast between the opening material and the other materials continuously weakens whatever sense of return the A section might have. The sense of an infusion of new energy is correspondingly stronger at each reappearance of the opening melody.

"La Flor del café" by German Alcantara (1863-1919) is a series of eight waltzes. That is, it features eight distinctive themes, not the usual two or three, and this feature fits with the fact that it is roughly three times longer than most marimba pieces. All but the third and eighth waltz are played twice in succession. The formal scheme is:

AAAABBACA		DDEEFFGGHG		A
I		II		I

The piece has a degree of harmonic variety that is unusual for the genre, but is fitting for its length and polythematic character. The D waltz ends on the dominant of the tonic, and the E waltz uses that pitch as its tonic. The F waltz begins in the new key and returns to the tonic. The G waltzes are in the relative minor. Since the melody of the D waltz is closely linked to that of the F waltz, the DDEEFF section echoes the structure of the opening AAAABBA series, while the GGHG echoes the ACA structure. The structure of the piece as a whole (I – II – I) is an augmentation of the ABA on the local level. The II waltzes differ from the I waltzes both in their greater harmonic variety and in greater thematic variety (F is derived from D, while the A that reappears is a literal repetition).

These harmonic and structural features, interrelated as they are, bear on energy-infusing gestures in two ways.

First, the harmonic variety is essential to gathering waltzes four through eight into a group and to making the group sufficiently different from Group I that an overall I – II – I structure can come across. In turn, the I – II – I structure is essential to the advent of energy-infusing gestures, which occur at the beginning of both II and the second I.

Second, the beginning of the second statement of each waltz is neither a moment of arrival (as though the waltz it is repeating were anacrustic to the repeat) nor an echo of that which it repeats, but a moment in which new energy enters from outside the musical flow. The new energy is important, for the A sections in their many appearances all have a thetic (|– U |) quality: they spend energy without developing it. The same is true of the stand-ins for A in the II-section waltzes (D and G).

The piece's novelty can be pointed up by comparing it to a set of waltzes by Johann Strauss II, such as "Voices of Spring," which could have been Alcantara's model for constructing a set of waltzes. Like Strauss, Alcantara brings the opening waltz back for the closing. Like Strauss, but to a much lesser degree, Alcantara uses changes of tonal center to differentiate the waltzes and to mark the beginning of some of them. Like Strauss, but again to a much lesser degree, Alcantara does not give listeners simply one waltz after another but constructs interlocking groups of waltzes (AAAABBA forms a group, and the final A is also the first waltz in the ACA group, thereby interlocking the two groups; the H waltz is enough like the D waltz to serve both as the end of the DDEEFF group, a group that is briefly interrupted by the GG waltz, and as the middle waltz in the GGHG group). The most telling difference between Strauss and Alcantara has to do with the nature of the hinge when a new waltz begins. Strauss is a master in creating the sense that the end of a waltz is the very satisfactory closing of an event and at the same time creating the sense that the next waltz, when it begins, is the ideal and rational continuation of the past. When Alcantara begins a new waltz, it seems

less new (melodically as well as harmonically it is more similar to its predecessor than is each of Strauss's waltzes), yet less of a continuation of its past: it is not the continuation of its past but a moment of infusing new energy—energy not generated by the past, as in Strauss.

"Luna de Xelajú" by Paco Pérez (1917-51) also uses an unusual twist in the harmony and an unusual overall form in connection with an energy-infusing gesture. What is unusual in the form is that A does not recur at the end. The form is that of two juxtaposed waltz groups:

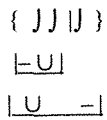
$$\underline{|AABBAAB'B'A|}\ \ \underline{|DD'D''|}.$$
$$\text{I} \qquad\qquad \text{II}$$

The A and B waltzes are thetic; they spend energy they do not generate. The D waltzes, by contrast, are anacrustic; they themselves generate the energy they use up. The I-group waltzes are quick and in a minor mode; the tempo for the II-group waltzes is somewhat slower, and they are in a major mode (namely, the relative major). Moreover, the hinge between the I and the II waltzes is bold: the beginning of D is telescoped into the ending of A at a moment when the harmony suddenly turns to the dominant of the relative major. The sudden harmonic shift is a moment when bright new energy comes from nowhere, reinforced by the shift of mode and the change from a thetic to an anacrustic melody.

"A mi madre ausente" by Carlos Berges (? -?) breaks with the rigid eight-bar grouping characterizing Guatemala marimba music. The piece consists of three slow, song-like tangos, the first and the last in a minor key. Like "Luna de Xelajú," it does not restore the opening music at the end, though the third tango does restore the minor mode, which the middle tango (in the parallel major) had left. The three tangos have exactly the same rhythm on the bar-to-bar level, and they have the same rhythmic organization within each bar. Prominent in this organization is a slow upbeat with a strong internal trochee (see Figure 2.4), which makes each measure a moment of infusing new energy. This sameness is relieved

by the change from major to minor mode and back. More subtly but also more effectively it is relieved by the introduction of a twelve-bar group (preceded by an eight-bar group and followed by two eight-bar groups in the middle tango) and then by the use of only twelve-bar groups in the third tango. Moreover, the internal organization of the twelve-bar groups is variable, hence unpredictable. In the middle tango it consists of 8 + 4, while in the third tango it is 4+8. These subtle variations make the rigid regularity on the bar-to-bar level bearable. The listener experiences a decisive relief of sameness at the onset of the second and third tangos. This relief is not generated by the preceding music, and has to be experienced as a moment when new energy enters the musical process from outside it.

Figure 2.4



"Noche de luna entre ruinas" is a more interesting title, for in this case there is a powerful, poignant—and rare—link between the title and the feature identified as distinctive to the genre, the continuous infusion of new energy. The ruins to which the title refers are those in Quetzeltenango (K'iche' name: Xelajú; nickname: Xela) following a devastating earthquake there in 1902. The repeated moments of infusion of new energy are a moving image of the work of rebuilding the city. The dynamic of surviving and rebuilding had to come from within the people. There was nothing in the situation for them to build on. That is, what was left of the city did not energize them. If there was something beautiful or moving, it was the process of transforming the rubble into a city, a home. The music with its minor-mode and major-mode sections could be heard as imagining the contrast between the ruins and the rebuilt city—or the contrast between the ruins and the dreams of the rebuilt city one might have had by moonlight. Focusing on this contrast sidelines the feature most important to the genre. If one attends not only to the sounds, however, but also to the process of infusing new energy into the sounds so that they may go on building new aural structures, one sees that the work of art movingly imagines the miracle of hope replacing hopelessness and of human energy humanizing rubble, thereby accomplishing the wonder of transfiguration.

What the title of "Noche de luna entre ruinas" makes explicit occurs implicitly up and down the genre. The genre does not consist only of a particular way of organizing sounds; rather, the coming of extra-musical energy that enables the sounds to become organized at all is what constitutes the genre. Coming-to-be music is what the genre shows forth, and so the music *tout court* is not the work of art (if it were, it would be somewhat predictable and boring). The work of art is the imagining of human energy being transferred into a succession of sounds that is not inherently human and by that transfer making it human. By contrast, the succession of sounds in European music is generally humanized by their connection to that for which they are a metaphor. That is, the music is *expressive;* ex-

pressiveness lifts the sounds into the human realm without removing them from the physical.

Marimba music may be expressive, some pieces more so than others, but the particular content of this expressiveness is separate from imagining the infusion of energy. The moments of new energy are necessary in order that there be the other expressiveness, but these moments usually have little or nothing to do with the particular direction that expressiveness takes. This statement, which sums up Subsection (1) as a whole, needs to be kept constantly in mind during Subsection (2), which elaborates on the nature and meaning of the infusion of energy itself.

(2) The Infusion of Energy and Making Non-Expressive Objects

To imagine the infusion of energy is to imagine the event of creating the possibility of expressiveness. The infusion does not express the artists themselves, and the product of the energy does not express the performer-in-the-abstract, whose energy is infused. Thus what is most distinctive to the genre is impersonal to a degree that may seem odd in view of the lyricism implicit in the titles.

A close, if not the closest, parallel to this structure is that of Guatemalan men doing their work. Many of them are highly skilled artisans, but whether they are or not, most of these men tear into their work so energetically and at the same time so carefully that one can almost see the energy and the heedfulness themselves, whether the work is tilling the soil, working with wood, laying tiles, weeding the streets, or building walls.

But they are detached from the result of their work. Their product does not express them. They walk away from what their energy has wrought as readily as if it were only the expenditure of energy and solicitude that mattered, not the product coming from this expenditure. It seems appropriate to acknowledge that their way of going about their working is expressive—it expresses their character—when it is done with energy and a constant eye on how to do it better and on what "better" would mean, when, in short, it fits Murphy's description of mean-

ingful, fulfilling work. There are, not surprisingly, a few lazy men among the Guatemalans, and while their style of working may express their character too, there is not much resemblance between the way they do their work and the expression of infusing energy in marimba performance.

Although the line between the nature of men's and women's work is not absolute and is becoming less and less clear as the twenty-first century goes along, the difference that has existed and still exists underscores the nature of work. Guatemalan women go about their work as energetically and as carefully as do the men, but in some important cases the product of women's work is highly expressive, namely, weaving textiles on back-strap looms and cooking with native vegetables. When men do weaving, it is usually with foot looms, and the product is more impersonal; wool blankets woven by the men of Momostenango are of the highest quality, but they are not expressive of the men themselves. If one can speak of a work of art in the case of men working, as in the case of marimba performing, the work of art is the act of pouring energy into creating a product that may itself not be a work of art. Even if the product is called art (as perhaps the Momostenango blankets), it is detached from the infusion of energy that makes it possible. For shaping this product is controlled by whatever it is that it means to express, not by the infusion of energy. In other words, the infusion of energy propels but does not itself shape the product.

Given the isomorphism between men working and marimba performance, one is not surprised that the latter developed as an ensemble of men only. Not too much is to be made of this point, however, as little girls are now taking instruction in playing marimba, and some ensembles, especially in churches, include young women, just as the line between men's and women's work is also being blurred in twenty-first-century Guatemala.

As the analyses in Subsection (1) have indicated, marimba music heard without attending to the aspect of infusing new energy is, generally speaking, predictable and humdrum. Its melodies, harmonic changes, formal patterns are so restricted that it does not offer a process of development or a unique object be-

coming present to the listener. Consequently the sounds and their organization are only minimally expressive. When the listener is grasped, as indeed happens, it is not the flow of sounds that is doing the grasping, but rather the transaction between the abstract performer and the sounds.

Consequently, listeners do not identify themselves with the organization of the sound as such, for its organization is only minimally metaphorical and revelatory. But the opportunity is repeatedly offered for listeners to see themselves as this performer-in-the-abstract, that is, to see the abstract performer as an image of themselves. Or, more accurately, the configuration puts before listeners the opportunity to identify their relation to their working with the infusion of energy taking place in the performance. They can see their own exertion and infusion of energy in that of the abstract performer. They can understand their need to throw their energy into their work, a need that is replicated by the performance. The marimba performance imagines the infusing of energy as such, that is independently of whatever product and however expressive or non-expressive that object may be; consequently, it constructs the relation the workers' working has to its product.

This imagining and constructing serves the community. The high value put on marimba performance valorizes working to create non-expressive outcomes in general and validates whatever valorization has already been placed on it. As stressed above, the wellbeing of the community depends on working effectively toward non-expressive products. This generalization is particularly pointed with respect to building the infrastructure—building things that are hidden from sight, such as the underwater piers of bridges, underground sewers, the girders of tall buildings, the subsurfaces of highways. Much of what makes everything else possible is non-expressive in the sense that its intrinsic value is close to zero. All its value is extrinsic, for the better it is done the more invisible it is and the less capable it is of being seen and valued for its own sake.

This kind of working stands at one end of a continuum that is defined by the extent to which the product of working is expressive. At this end of the continuum, working generates products that are maximally useful to the wellbeing of

the group and minimally expressive or reflective of the maker's or the group's self-understanding. At the other end is working whose products are maximally expressive and minimally useful apart from their power to express a society's values and thereby clarify them and strengthen the group's loyalty to them. There are many points between these poles. At the point where the product of working is both socially useful and somewhat expressive, one begins to speak of "useful arts," in contrast to the "fine arts," which are useful only in terms of their expressiveness. All along the continuum, an infusion of energy is required from outside the materials being worked upon in order that they be transformed, but the fact of this infusion becomes increasingly less explicit the further the working is removed from the infrastructure or useful art. The end of minimal explicitness is where the composer, the performer and the painter become invisible, so completely transformed are they into the expressive product, just as at the other end the product becomes invisible, so completely is it transformed into its usefulness.

To the extent that the product of work is non-expressive and invisible, people tend not to think of the working as creative. People are fascinated with creativity, but their fascination is more readily stirred when the product is expressive. The more arrestingly expressive, the greater the fascination with the infusion of energy required to bring about the expressive object. Oddly, and to the frustration of people fascinated with the infusion of energy in creating expressive objects, it often actually becomes elusive at this pole.

Curiosity about what is involved in creating the expressive object contrasts sharply to marimba performance, focusing as it does on creating the non-expressive or less expressive object. This contrast is intensified when one realizes that this focusing occurs simultaneously in two distinct ways or on two distinct levels. One is that it imagines creativity as such, independently of whether the outcome is expressive or not. The other is that it constructs particular instances of creating non-expressive outcomes. These ways correspond to the two ways in which the marimba music is exciting and fascinating: first, the infusion of new energy from outside the flow of sounds is exciting and captivating each time it

happens, and, second, it does not happen by a formula, hence does not happen at predictable moments. It seems to happen impulsively. Both this spontaneity and the particular way it is managed at each particular occurrence are also exciting and captivating.

Creating expressive and creating non-expressive objects and all points between them are necessary to the wellbeing of the community, though they are necessary in basically different ways. This necessity has not, however, enabled modern European societies to value creating non-expressive objects to a degree appropriate to its necessity. The low value they put on workers who create non-expressive objects is manifest in the disdain in which they are held as well as their wages and working conditions. If plumbers happen to be better paid than priests are, people feel it is appropriate to complain.

Europeans in earlier times and some communities in other parts of the world have denied the disjunction between creating expressive and non-expressive outcomes by building expressiveness into all the objects they create, including those of infrastructure. Decorative details are added that are not merely aesthetic touches, but link the object explicitly to some spiritual entity—a seraph, a god, a water nymph, a woodland sprite. Medieval masons put stone angels into niches of walls where they would never be seen, but would unendingly protect the building. The comments at the end of Chapter One about Maya workers whom the Spanish enslaved to build their churches have an application in this connection. The Maya incorporated what the Spanish saw as merely incidental decorations into their product; in doing so the Maya linked what they were building to the realm of spirits, recognizing that an image or design, even if it was made of stone, was more spiritual than physical.[66] Singing songs while working was experienced as an integral part of work, again spiritualizing an expenditure of physical energy. The rhythm of the song generated the power by which the working received the en-

[66] See above, pp. 57, 63-69.

ergy to go forward.[67] And Andrew Marvell's "Bermudas" (1681) leads its readers to feel that the hard work of oaring a boat in heavy seas is more than a means to an end. It is itself a praise of God more holy than the cheerful rowers' song.

When societies become desacralized and the increasing complexity of infrastructures competes with the practice of incorporating at least a few expressive elements, this option is closed off. When it is, those who work to create non-expressive outcomes are almost invariably oppressed either in term of monetary reward or esteem or both. It is as though the non-expressiveness of the product reflected that the makers had nothing to express, were themselves not worth expressing, and so are appropriately given a subsistence wage or less.

Recovering, recognizing and celebrating creators of non-expressive outcomes was a project to which composers, visual artists, writers and critics were called in the Soviet Union and Maoist China. The honor and value of these creators was a theme in many works of art—statues, stories, factory music. However, the use of arts to dignify workers has not been successful. For works of art that attempt to make the worker a hero generally come across as unconvincing and manipulative and may have even further degraded the worker.

So far, the received wisdom has been that these efforts were not successful aesthetically or socially. They did not manage to make this kind of creating seem nearly so fascinating as that of creating expressive outcomes. Workers cynically ignored the visual arts intended to honor them, and would not listen to the music that was supposed to glorify their workplace. It is as though they could smell that the works have an in-spite-of bent to them: in spite of the fact that the product of their work is not expressive hence is only instrumentally valuable, the maker is nevertheless valuable. While of course the maker *is* in fact valuable, viewers and audiences have not so far felt that such works of art actually conveyed that value. It turns out that when the worker is honored but not the working, the worker is also not honored.

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[67] Cf. Gerardus van der Leeuw, *Sacred and Profane Beauty. The Holy in Art*, tr. David E. Green (New York, 1963), pp. 115-16.

The Soviet examples afford a useful contrast to what happens with Guatemalan marimba performances. Instead of making a theme of the worker, the performance imagines working itself. The moment is aurally present when a human being tears into the physical elements whose configuration constitutes the task and transforms them by transferring human energy into those elements. It is not, however, the sheer fact of imagining working that excites listeners. Rather, hearing new energy entering the succession of sounds is an exciting experience and makes listeners explicitly aware also of the abstract performer, who is the source of that energy. The contrast to the effect of Soviet worker music is crisp. The experience of Soviet worker music is supposed to make one value the worker without valuing the work, but then it turns out that not valuing the work is a mode of not valuing the worker either. By contrast, the experience of marimba performance leads one to value the working and also to feel that one cannot do so without also valuing the worker, for one is in direct contact with the worker's (that is, the abstract performer's) energy. Valuing the working valorizes the worker.

The importance of the fact that the infusion of energy is repeatedly imagined in a wide range of different ways in marimba performance becomes clear in this context. It is because the imagining goes on going on during the course of the piece that one wants to say, using a distinction developed in Chapter One, that the performing is imagining and not conceiving work and its value. It is not as though the performance were based on a concept of the value of working and hence of the worker which the performance then embodied and presented in a temporally deployed form. Marimba performing imagines and re-imagines the excitement and value of working. The renegotiation of working as a parameter of envisioning and constructing community takes place continuously in astonishingly variable ways. There is no reason to say that it ends when the piece ends.

In imagining the energy of creating objects whose expressiveness is irrelevant to the energy, Guatemalan marimba performance may be unique among the arts of the world. Presumably it was shaped by two forces. One of them is the particular sound of the instrument itself. Especially the rapid decay of its sound

seems to require and justify the continuous infusion of new energy. That marimba performance elsewhere did not always take this turn or took it to a lesser extent suggests that the continuous re-infusion of energy resonated in the Guatemala context and that its opportunity to imagine and re-imagine the nature and value of energy-infused working was for whatever reason especially appreciated.

One would like to know whether marimba performance has in fact elevated Guatemalans' sense of the value of working when it is making non-expressive objects, or whether they already had this sense and they love this music in part because it enables them to re-imagine and renegotiate again and again a value that otherwise is mostly unenvisioned. If, as is usually the case, the art form and the values it imagines and constructs affect one another reciprocally, one would like to know the particular dynamics of this mutuality. What is clear is that Guatemalans' marimba practice, regardless of how it came about, imagines many kinds and levels of creating minimally expressive as well as very expressive objects.

This chapter has brought to the surface an idea that is deeply odd: that there can be a disjunction between the creative energy propelling the generation of a work of art and the shape of that work. An unexamined assumption in most art analysis and interpretation is that what drives the creator also shapes the work and guides its direction. That assumption may apply to the marimba composer and to the performer as a particular person, but it does not apply to the abstract performer whose energy is over and again infused into the succession of sounds without, oddly, guiding that succession. One way of reducing this oddness may be intuitively plausible: marimba performance is a celebration of creative energy as such—that is, energy in abstraction from whatever product to which it gives rise.

In this way, marimba performance joins ranks with works like Hans Pfitzner's *Palestrina*, Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus* and Richard Wagner's *Die Meistersinger,* all of which celebrate creative energy. The differences, however, are telling: first, the Pfiztner, Mann and Wagner pieces make a theme of creativity energy; marimba performance usually does not; second, these three cases assess creative energy by focusing on its result, thereby reinforcing the very assumption

that marimba performance sets aside; and, third, all of these focus on energy by the use of a narrative. Marimba performance is unique in dwelling on creative energy by abstracting it from its result and thereby denying the narrative of which it would otherwise be a part. There is a lacuna between the infusing and the spending of energy at the precise point where is a story in the other pieces.

A similar turn against narrative is a salient feature of Martin Heidegger's phenomenology. Over and again he brings out ways in which the application of narrative hides rather than illumines human existence. Narrative often seems to make human existence intelligible, but actually obscures the darkness of one's being and of being responsible for one's being. One example of his terms makes the point. Heidegger distinguishes between leaping in *for* another person and leaping in *ahead* of the other.[68] In both cases energy is expended on behalf of the other; in both cases the other receives an infusion of energy from outside. Both are modes of being with another. But the difference is radical; the outcomes are diametrically opposite. In the case of what Heidegger calls "leaping in for the other," I do for Hugo what needs to be done by Hugo himself. I cannot really do it for him, so what I am doing is not after all what needs to be done, but it hides from Hugo's sight and mine that which is in fact needful. When I leap in ahead of the other, I put before him the demand that he be fully himself in a way that fits the fact that his being is his own. Thus, I mark the gap between what he is and what he will be or must be. While I mark the gap, I do not mark its dimensions, and so I do not know and cannot say what may be required of Hugo to close the gap and to move toward being himself. My energy is infused, but the energy is radically indifferent to the work that may come of it in the sense that the energy as such does not guide its use or shape what comes of it; those are Hugo's tasks exclusively. My leaping in ahead of Hugo empowers him by demanding of him that

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[68] *Being and Time.* Tr. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York, 1962), pp. 158-59. The distinction between "leaping in for" and "leaping in ahead of" is applied to the nature of the witches' responsibility for Macbeth's murders in David B. Greene, *The Imagining of Community in Works of Beethoven, Verdi and Shostakovich: Musical Means for Envisioning Community* (Lewiston, NY, 2010).

he be himself, but it does not pretend to know what specific behavior that demand entails.

Like Heidegger's "leaping in ahead of the other," the occurrence of moments of new energy in marimba performance are irreducibly irregular and spontaneous without being random. They do not occur in accordance with an order inherent in the music, and so the event seems spontaneous. Yet the moments do not occur arbitrarily either, for each is humanly motivated. It is like leaping in ahead of the other, which likewise is neither a matter of mere chance nor of mechanical necessity.

One of the advantages of noticing that the structure of marimba performance replicates the structure of "leaping in ahead" is that doing so makes it possible to focus on an aspect of the marimba experience that has so far been left aside, and that is its uncanniness. This is an aspect of listening to marimba performance to which its audience gives ample testimony. Both leaping in ahead of the other and marimba performance enable what they require and, mysteriously, both of them enable it precisely by requiring it. According to conventional wisdom, requiring and enabling are quite separate, as are being required and being able. But in the case of leaping in ahead as well as in marimba performance the inexplicable, uncanny event of new energy requires that the energy be spent appropriately (without presuming to specify the parameters of "appropriately"), and the infusion itself provides the energy whereby that spending is possible.

The isomorphism of leaping in ahead and creating objects that are not very expressive does not imply that creating expressive objects is always isomorphic with the other kind of leaping—leaping in *for* the other. This kind of creating is also inexplicable, mysterious, spontaneous, non-mechanical; it too puts enabling demands on its audience or viewers. But sometimes an expressive object is experienced as requiring that viewers think or feel in a certain way. Sometimes it tries to do the thinking and feeling for the audience. In these cases it has leapt in for them. A sign that leaping in has happened is that a piece of art has made them angry instead of either enabled or indifferent. Instead of dismissing the piece as ex-

pressing an interesting possibility with which they happen to disagree and from which they dispassionately walk away, they feel assaulted and violated by the work; they feel they must defend themselves against it. By contrast, it is hard to imagine that anyone would be angered by a marimba performance.

One might be annoyed by it if it were merely popular and also trivial. Some people in fact feel they are wasting their time when they listen to music that is at best somewhat diverting and whose interest does not last beyond the end of the performance, if even until then. But when one attends to a marimba performance and hears its moments of infusing new energy, one is oneself energized. One's own creativity directed toward non-expressive objects is valorized and with it one's working and oneself. The valorized self in turn experiences the infusion of new energy as a demand that enables one to fulfill it. Leaping in ahead and infusing energy into work are complementary. It makes sense that they both resemble marimba performance.

The connection of marimba performance with "leaping in ahead of the other" reveals the parameters of a community that is envisioned with the kind of imagining that takes place in marimba performing. Three limits of such a community come quickly to mind, and there are no doubt many more.

First, anything that detracts from valorizing the effort of creating something, whether that something is expressive or not, would be ruled out. Language—the choice of words, figures of speech, the tone of voice—is required that values the process of infusing energy into and thereby humanizing material things, and the process is valued whatever the product may be. It is because working is a subset of this process that it is valued, and not just because, from the side of the community, the infrastructure needs to be built and not just because, from the worker's side, food needs to be bought. Courtesies are required in speaking to the workers. This obligation comes from the value of their working and not only to their value as human beings and the instrumental value of their products.

Second, anything that would pull an individual's responsibility away from him- or herself would be excluded. While there may well be ordinances, adhering

to them would not be mistaken for a person's morality. Responsibility means much more than obeying rules.

Third, anything that would blunt an individual's sense of being called to be fully him- or herself would be ruled out. The community would have modes of challenging its members to the fullness of their humanity, but always without dictating or even specifying how the challenge is to be met. This parameter fits with and considerably overlaps Murphy's insight that workers find working interesting and fulfilling when they do not merely execute other people's conceptions of a task, but when they themselves participate significantly in conceiving and designing the task. Even long hours and severe physical demands are humanizing when this imparting of energy is part of humanizing inert material and as such is valued intrinsically.

For the casual listener, marimba performance is so entertaining and diverting that it may seem unnecessarily perverse to suppose it is imagining work as a parameter of community. In facing this difficulty one gets closer to understanding why and in what sense Guatemalans identify themselves with these performances. For they are not a diversion in the sense of an escape or temporary departure from who they really are (although the music does invite them to play a role that to some degree extends the reach of who they are, allowing them to be not quite or not just themselves[69]). The event is richer than that kind of diversion. For in its very delighting, its relation of abstract performer to sounds replicates the relation of Guatemalans to the energy-infusing process that constitutes much of their everyday living and being themselves. By replicating, it confirms one of the parameters of the community in which they enact themselves by energetically creating products, whether these are expressive or non-expressive.

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[69] Navarrete Pellicer, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

(3) Performing Marimba Music, Infusing Energy, and Working among the Maya Achi

Looking into the role of marimba performing in a particular Guatemalan community is a way of elaborating this confirmation as it plays out in actual practice. In this connection, Sergio Navarrete Pellicer's superbly insightful and comprehensive study of marimba music among the Achi ethnic group of Rabinal, Guatemala, is invaluable. For it shows the full import of the infusion of energy by the abstract performer into the flow of sounds, and in particular its importance for imagining and negotiating the parameters of their particular community.

Marimba performance, Navarrete Pellicer makes clear, is especially important at defining-moment events, such as weddings, memorials of the dead, and blessings of buildings.[70] For the Rabinal these are always spiritual events in the sense that the spirits of the ancestors are explicitly summoned. Reaching into the succession of ordinary moments and transforming them by the infusion of new energy, the performance calls spirits of the dead and the living to join in the happiness or sadness, as the case may be, of the defining moment.[71] The music summons them to have appropriate feelings.[72] As something non-material, the musical performance is to be enjoyed equally by the dead and the living, and as such it binds the living not only to one another but also to the dead, for they are all enjoying the same thing. Not merely the flow of sounds, but the ever-recurring infusion of energy enables the living to experience the presence of the dead and the togetherness of everyone at the event.[73] The players' energy is an intervention: it opens paths of communication wherein people recognize one another on a deep and

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[70] *Op. cit.*, p. 152.
[71] *Ibid.*, p. 168.
[72] *Ibid.*, p. 132.
[73] *Ibid.*, p. 169.

spiritual level.[74] Performing the music becomes palpable evidence that the spirits of the dead are actually present.[75]

This community togetherness is pushed by alcohol, and the combination of music and alcohol makes individuals vulnerable. It delivers their wills "into the hands of the ancestors as an affirmation of the reciprocal ties between the living and the dead."[76] Being intoxicated with song and rum is "an expression of trust among the living and a form of communion with the dead."[77] In sum: the infusion of energy from the performers-in-the-abstract does three things: it imagines the community of all the living with one another and with their dead, what it imagines it also empowers to take place in actuality, and it witnesses continuously and repeatedly that this coming-to-be of community has taken and is taking place.

Three details of this imagining and empowering are especially revealing of the community envisioned. First, "enjoyment" of the performing takes the form of liberating emotions in the sense of releasing them to vibrate in a certain way. In other words, the energy infused into the flow of sounds is also infused into its listeners so that their emotions begin to correspond to the event itself. Intense feelings fill the awareness of all the participants, and because these feelings are all identical to each other, an important aspect of the envisioned community is the way that the line between each person and other persons, including the dead, is blurred or nearly obliterated.

Second, the energy infused to make the merrier *sones* has the effect of energizing the women working in the kitchen and enabling them to enjoy their tasks.[78] The point can be generalized: the infusion of energy into each passage of the music enables the music to energize the society itself, which includes all the ancestors, and it validates and valorizes the expenditure of energy it generates, whether the product of this expenditure is expressive or non-expressive. Keeping in mind

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[74] *Ibid.*, p. 123.
[75] *Ibid.*, p. 146.
[76] *Ibid.*, p. 124.
[77] *Ibid.*, p. 131.
[78] *Ibid.*, p. 145.

that for the Achi Jesus Christ and certain saints are among these ancestors,[79] one begins to see the almost boundless significance of the energized sounds in constituting the whole compass of Achi society in both its religious and secular ramifications and in both its labor and leisure activities.

Third, the energy infused is masculine. The significance of this aspect is clarified by taking note of the implicit sexual roles involved. The Achi marimba player, however abstract, is always understood as masculine (hence, *el marimbista*), while both the instrument (*la marimba)* and the music (*la música)* are feminine.[80] A distinctively masculine gesture or action is required to activate the instrument and make the music happen and go on happening. Achi marimba players talk about their marimba and music in the same way they talk about their women: a man is to exert himself both to control and to satisfy the desires of the instrument or the flow of sounds just as he is also to exert himself both to control and to satisfy the desires of the female person. The powerful thetic moments in marimba playing are literally the aural form of *machista* domination of the feminine. On this control and satisfaction depends the wellbeing of the community, for women are nurturers, and if their needs go unattended the group suffers. Just as the energized marimba feeds the spirits of the living and the dead, so women feed their men as well as themselves. Uncontrolled, women and marimba music (and also alcohol) not only do not nurture but also lead men astray. Apart from the *machista* infusion of energy, the marimba becomes a call to the devil.[81]

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[79] Some Catholic and Evangelical preachers deplore the survival of Maya thinking in the Christianity practiced by the indigenous people in Guatemala and assert that they are not Christian at all, having simply substituted Christian names for the Maya deities and spirits that they continue to worship. It is also possible, however, that incorporating Jesus Christ as an ancestor, regarding him therefore as an Achi, and inside the Achi spiritual system, not beyond it, was a means of being both genuinely Maya and genuinely Christian, in principle not different from using the practice of fourth-century Greek theologians to interpret the Christ-event in terms of *ousia,* substance. See Navarrete Pellicer, *op. cit.,* p. 121.

[80] *Ibid.*, p. 61.

[81] The fact that marimba music is associated with excessive consumption of alcohol is related to the eagerness on the part of many Catholic churchmen for at least three hundred years to curb or abolish marimba music. According to Navarrete Pellicer, the concern is not without a basis: "The expression of feelings, desires, and intentions during *alegrías* [happy social occasions involving marimba music] also exposes participants to symbolic violence such as envy, jealousy, and venge-

The envisioning and constituting of community affects marimba performing as well as the other way around. That its envisioning of community has played a role in constituting community plays a role in shaping marimba performance itself. When the occasion of a marimba performance includes the presence of a saint, whether in a church or at a home altar, the energy poured into the flow of sounds is understood to be a gift, an offering to the saint. Therefore, the style of making this offering must be constant in some sense from one generation to the next in order that the gift be appropriate.[82] Energized sound is likewise a gift to the dead in one's family. For this reason the music played needs to be the music most enjoyed by the dead when they were alive, just as the food eaten on All Souls Day (November 1) and on the first, seventh and fourteenth anniversaries of the death is the food most enjoyed by the dead when they were living. Not only do the same pieces need to be kept in the repertory, but also the style of playing them—the particular way of energizing the sounds—must be constant. Moreover, the specific mode by which energy is infused into the marimba in a particular village is peculiar to that village and serves to mark and preserve its identity in much the same way that the style of weaving peculiar to a village marks its identity.[83] Thus the community-constituting power of marimba performance turns out to be a powerful conservative impulse in marimba performance and works against, to a great extent overbalancing, impulses for change.[84] Since Achi culture regards women as the conservators of Achi traditions, the conservativism of marimba music is another respect in which it is feminine.

While the way that the Achi think and talk about marimba performance is only one case of how the Maya Guatemalans think and feel about their music making, the example serves to indicate how comparatively unimportant is what-

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ance through witchcraft, or to physical violence and accidents resulting from drunkenness. Even though music is immediately associated with gaiety, people also associate *alegrías* with drunkenness and fights, because 'music invites drinking and drunkards provoke fights.'" *Ibid.*, pp. 123, 131.

[82] *Ibid.*, p. 156.

[83] *Ibid.*, p. 169.

[84] *Ibid.*, pp. 126, 167.

ever expressive power the flow of sounds itself may have. The sentiments that the pieces convey have much more to do with associations—*where* the piece was heard before; *who* especially liked it for *what* reason—than with anything intrinsic to the music itself. It is probably for this reason that Navarette dwells almost exclusively on where the marimba is performed, the function of the performance and how the Achi talk about the instrument and performances of it. He says, and the Achi say, almost nothing about the musical flow itself, that is, the relations of sounds to one another—the relations that enable one to hear melodies, rhythms and an organization of sound, and not just a succession of aural stimuli. Since it is these aspects of performance that make musical expressiveness possible, their absence from the imagining that takes place in Achi marimba performance means either that the music is not very expressive or the expressiveness is not of primary importance.

An apparent exception to this generalization are Navarrete's comments on meter. While rhythmic variety is an important feature, there is a prevalence of triple meter;[85] this aspect of musical organization, however, is mostly important not for its expressive potential, but rather for its association with the indigenous *son*. It serves as a signal of the context to which the *son* is native.

It is telling that the classification of marimba music is done on the basis of extra-musical features. What Navarrete says of Godínez's classification is true of the typical taxonomy of Guatemalan marimba music: the classification "does not transform musical characteristics into ethnic and cultural essences." In fact, classification is done the other way around: "... ethnic criteria only point at the social and cultural environments in which the music is played and subordinates musical traits, influences and musical changes to those contexts."[86]

The importance of the release of energy that empowers a flow of sound is equal to the importance of the associations of the marimba performance with certain people, social occasions and particular events. While the Achi identification

[85] Navarrete Pellicer, *op. cit.*, p. 99.
[86] *Ibid.*

of this energy as masculine may or may not be equally forceful throughout Guatemala, the joining of the infusion of energy with particular associations is always present and it is always important in marimba performance. In terms of this chapter's concern with community and the imagining of the expenditure of energy, this joining is revelatory. For this joining means that what empowers working to create non-expressive objects is precisely the same thing that calls the living and the dead into a community. Community and working alike depend on the infusion of energy, and for this reason neither is more basic or fundamental than the other. It is no more true to say that community calls creating non-expressive objects into being than to say that this kind of creating calls up community. Consequently, it is impossible to care about one of these more than the other. It makes no sense to subordinate one to the other. Working—infusing energy—is honored for its own sake, and not because it builds or facilitates community and not only when its product has more intrinsic than instrumental value.

3. IMAGINING COMMUNITY WHEN WORKING IS HIGHLY VALUED

The idea that imagining the infusion of energy in marimba performance imagines and thereby actually creates community is lovely. The resemblance between marimba performing and leaping in ahead of the Other is lovely in the same way. In demanding of the Other that she or he be her- or himself without telling her or him what to do in order to meet this demand, one is prepared to respect whatever the other does so long as it meets—or can be seen in retrospect to have met—this criterion. Still more importantly, when this kind of working is one of the parameters of community, the community has the same structure. It is a community whose source energizes and empowers without guiding and shaping; it leaps in ahead, not for, its members. It is a community that requires participation on the part of its members, and always requires that one who participates also

transcends the community. Working that infuses energy and humanizes the material world is *ipso facto* a mode of transcending community. Workers who work in this way can never be reduced to being participants and nothing else.

Some additional parameters of the community that is envisioned with the kind of imagining that takes place in marimba performing now come into view. One of the special things about this community is that in it, political or social power cannot come from doing work that is more highly esteemed, nor is more highly esteemed work reserved for those with more power. It makes no sense to establish a ranking within the community along the lines of esteem for various kinds of working. All working is equally esteemed, for it all depends on the source that is identical to the source of community itself. Possessing wealth would never be a reason to disdain the working that makes non-expressive objects or an excuse for exempting oneself from participating in that kind of working. Both the distribution of power and the distribution of jobs would have to be based on preferences, skills learned from one's parents, and native talents, and the administration of authority would be understood as itself a particular kind of working, not a principle of power that becomes the basis of community organization.

The extent to which community and working in Guatemala are in fact related to what marimba performance imagines and supports is a question that goes beyond the scope of this chapter. What can be said is that the country as a whole clearly is not a community in this sense, yet there may well be in it pockets of community that do in fact correspond to the vision of community that emerges with listening to marimba performance.

Various indigenous villages and towns may be such pockets. Some of them may well exemplify coherent communities whose members all see this membership as an important component of their identity.[87] It may be that some or many of these are communities in which negotiating which persons do which jobs takes place in the context of negotiating an imagining of community that esteems work-

[87] In my experience Lagunita, a tiny village in Izabal, and Santiago Atitlán, a town on the shores of the lake, are among the many possible examples.

ing as such. Looking into that possibility would require a social-science investigation. If research along those lines were to move beyond the local to the regional level, however, it would be complicated by a realization that emerges in the next chapter. That complication has to do with the fact that feeling oneself to be in a community means that one is imagining the boundaries to the community and what it means *not* to be in the community. From studying textiles and tales from two ethnic Maya groups, it turns out that the line between inside and outside and the meaning of being outside has one meaning for villages in one ethnic group, and a different meaning for the other. What it means to be "in" a group varies, and as it does, what it means to negotiate who does what kind of working also changes.

CHAPTER THREE

Imagining Space in Maya Textiles and Tales

1. SPACE, COMMUNITY AND ART

For a community to be, it must be someplace; to imagine community is to imagine its being someplace. It is not only to imagine its particular place but also the nature of its space. In some concepts of space, Euclidean-Newtonian space is the only kind of space there is, meaning that space outside the community is a continuation of the space of intra-community relations. There are imaginings that ignore that concept, and there are conceivings that disagree with it. Alfred North Whitehead, for example, intermittently reminds the readers of his *Process and Reality* that living and experiencing in the way human beings do is taking place in a particular "cosmic epoch," as he calls it, and that space in other cosmic epochs may well be different. Though he also can say some things about those other epochs, he mostly refers to them as a reminder that there is no ultimate necessity to the way things are in this one. "Scientific descriptions are, of course, entwined with the specific details of geometry and physical laws, which arise from the special order of the cosmic epoch in which we find ourselves."[88] Non-Euclidean geometry is an example of a kind of space that is an alternative to Euclidean-Newtonian space.

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[88] Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality. An Essay in Cosmology* (New York, 1957), pp. 177-78. See also pp. 139, 148, 171, 247, and 300.

One does not have to go to an alternative cosmic epoch or an exotic, non-Euclidean geometry to realize that there are different kinds of space and that much of everyday life involves moving in and out of various kinds of space. For many people, the notion that everyday experience involves more than one kind of space seems counterintuitive. It may feel awkward to imagine that Euclidean and Newtonian space is only one kind of space among several; it may seem that going to Newtonian space from some kind of space that shamelessly violates Newtonian principles is problematic or simply absurd.

Still, there are familiar experiences. For example, thoughts seem to be spatial; they are located some place. Perhaps their space is in one's mind, or in one's head, but if thoughts are in the head, the meaning of "in" is different from the meaning of "in" when it is said that the brain is an organ "in" the head. Another example has to do with being "in" a mood. Just as one cannot be in the human way of being without being in a particular geographical place, so also a human being cannot be without being in some mood or another (even if that mood happens so to lack intensity that it is dull and vague). In comparison to geographical space, being in a particular mood has as great or greater an impact on who one is and what one does, though the nature of the impact is significantly different. To be in someone's arms is not primarily a description of physical proximity.

Moral action takes place in space in which "near," "close," "distant" and "remote" are highly relevant, but, unlike Newtonian space, none of these can be quantified in meters. Many religious people are at pains to affirm that God is "in" the world, and they are also at pains to insist that the meaning of "in" while literal is different from the way the water is "in" the glass.

To be in a community requires one to be in non-physical as well as physical space, for being in a community implies rules, standards and limits that are fundamentally different from, though no less obligatory than those of physical space. This fact comes to the surface in the sometimes excruciatingly painful experience of having to be simultaneously in more than one community. Two communities

have different rules and limits, and they may contradict each other, while each set feels as inviolable as the rules of Newtonian space.

In some imaginings of one's own space or the space of one's community, the space outside one's community is imagined to be the same as the space inside. In these cases, the line separating the two communities—the line between inside and outside—is imagined as somewhat arbitrary, at best a matter of convenience, at worst an impediment to various possible joint undertakings. In other imaginings, there is a contrast between the nature of the space shared by members of the community and the nature of space outside the community. The nature, extent and import of the contrast are imagined as well.

Also, each community imagines whether the other community is imagining its space to be continuous with or contrasting to the space of one's own community. It is not unusual for one to assume that all other communities imagine otherness in the same way that one's own community does. One imagines there is reciprocity, but if instead there is asymmetry in the imaginings of otherness, misunderstandings (like that between the Spanish and the Maya, described in the first chapter) can occur that are so profound that neither side is aware of their source.

Finally, the imagining of a community's space and the space of other communities involves imagining what it means for someone from a different community with a different space to enter the space of one's own community. It becomes clear that imagining community in terms of the meaning of inside/outside is a thorny issue, but a universal one. It is an issue that must be faced one way or another whenever a community imagines itself.

The depiction of three-dimensionality in works of visual art can be a mode of imagining Newtonian space but also various kinds of non-Newtonian space.[89] Such imagining involves envisioning the particular sense in which each kind of space is "outside" other kinds. This chapter looks into the way weavings from two

[89] Single-point perspective in paintings is usually associated with Euclidean-Newtonian space, but paintings in which single-point perspective is an important component also depict and convey other kinds of space. Some of these are described in David B. Greene, *The Imagining of Community in European Art and Architecture 1140-1617* (Lewiston, NY, 2010), Part One.

of the twenty-one ethnic Maya groups in Guatemala generate a sense of spatiality and imagine differing kinds of space. These textiles fascinate people from literally all over the world, and the fascination has something to do with the way the different kinds of space in the weavings are sometimes related to one another, sometimes unrelated, and sometimes in conflict with one another.

At this point, a distinction that may initially seem subtle but is of crucial importance must be insisted on in order to avoid subsequent misunderstanding. The argument is not that spaces generated by the colors, motifs and overall composition in the textiles replicate or symbolize or refer to the particular spaces of the weavers' community. Rather it is the *contrast* of spaces and the particular modes of juxtaposing incompatible spaces that is important. The way the woven spaces contrast to one another replicates, and in that sense refers to, the way the weavers' community imagines the contrast between its space and the space of outsiders.

2. GUATEMALAN TEXTILES: WEAVING, IMAGINING SPACE, AND A COMMUNITY'S SPACE

Of the several thousand Maya villages in Guatemala there are about 120 where a 1500-year-old weaving tradition is alive and flourishing. Textiles, especially those woven by women, are highly prized in their respective villages, in regional markets, by curators in textile museums, and buyers from literally all over the world. The particulars of color, design and motif have changed over time, sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. Tradition has, however, constantly put a high value on the textiles, and maintained a dedication to making them as beautiful as possible. The Maya have an unquestioning belief that "colorful" is an essential component of "beautiful," and a steadfast sense that there is a profound connection between the colorful, beautiful weavings and the life of the spirit.

In general, people who have sensed the spirituality of Maya textiles have gone to the motifs woven into them for clues to their religious or mystical mean-

ing. Maya traditions offer some support for this line of thought. For example, a tale that goes back to post-classic times (ca. 950-1500 A.D.), if not earlier, tells how a cloth into which depictions of bees were woven could be thrown over an enemy, and the bees would sting the enemy to death. The weaving is experienced as providing a point of contact between the spiritual (in this case the images of the bees) and physical world, a means through which a spirit can be operative in the world of flesh and blood.

While it may be tempting to think that the motifs, as in this story, account for the link to a reality different from that of the physical world, they cannot account for the deep fascination and immediate appeal that these textiles have for visitors to Guatemala from Europe and Asia as well as the Americas. Tourists are drawn into the textiles long before they learn to pull the motifs out of the overall design and find out their names. When they become interested in a motif, the interest is not to explain the attraction of the textile. Exactly the opposite, in fact: knowing the name for a motif that presumably matters to the weaver in some mysterious way confirms that there is something magical and inexplicable about the textile. The tourist is not much interested in the motif as such, only in the sense of the magical that is conveyed by the motif, or, more precisely, by the sheer fact that there is such a motif.

There is reason to be cautious in assessing the importance of the motif for the weaver as well. Different weavers use different names for the same motif, and if the conversation with a weaver goes on very long, she will say that in many cases the names of the motif are more for convenience in referring to them than an indication that what the motif depicts (such as a comb, or a crown) is especially important. Weavers frequently say that they "like" the shape of a certain motif and use it for that reason, and not because what it depicts has a symbolic value. Some weavers also say that in the past the true significance of the motifs was known, but their meaning has now been lost.[90]

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[90] According to Thomas Looper, *Birds and Thorns. Textile Design of San Martín Sacatepéquez* (Guatemala City, 2004), p. 4, "[B]oth Maya and non-Maya textile dealers are well aware of the

Though the motifs matter differently to the weavers and their foreign buyers, one thing that matters to both alike is the choice of colors. For this reason it may be that colors, and not motifs, can point the way to feeling the connection between the beauty of the textiles and their spiritual meaning. The weavers choose strong colors, and foreign buyers are fascinated with their choices. The weavers enact their commitment to color by preferring colorfast acrylic-dyed cotton threads. The particular play of colors often distinguishes the textiles of a particular village, and it, and not the choice of motif, is also the reason why the foreigner wants to take it home. Examples of this play are bold juxtapositions of vibrant colors, the choice of dark, brooding as well as bright colors, abrupt changes of color within the execution of a single motif, repetitions of the same motif with different colors, sometimes in a fixed order of colors, sometimes in an almost orderly way, and sometimes more or less randomly.

Each of these arrangements of color has the effect of generating space. In addition to the design on the two-dimensional surface of the textile, an imagined third dimension comes into being. A strong blue band next to a strong red band, for example, will recede from the plane of the fabric, while the red will advance toward the viewer.[91] If weavers and buyers are both fascinated by the play of color, its effect on space is part of the fascination.

This fascination is richly varied. The three-dimensionality is different depending on the particular play of color that generates it. Sometimes, for example,

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fact that most foreigners expect textile designs to have symbolic meaning, and often provide specious interpretations of designs in order to facilitate sales." Carol Hendrickson (*Weaving Identities: Construction of Dress and Self in a Highland Guatemalan Town* [Austin, TX, 1995] p. 159) writes on the basis of her time in Tecpán, "Although non-Guatemalans ... seemed excessively interested in knowing the stories behind these design motifs, weavers virtually never told stories when I talked to them about these patterns. For them, the labels seem to refer most directly to the designs themselves and not to what the designs resemble or represent symbolically." For a summary of the discussion concerning the relevance of motifs to the textiles' meaning, see David B. Greene, *Weaving Space: Textiles and Tales from Guatemala* (Ciudad Vieja, Guatemala, 2009), pp. 2-4.

[91] Maya textiles are of course not the only ones that feature strong colors and whose colors generate spaces. There are many weaving traditions of which it would be worth asking whether and to what extent the color-generated spaces are a mode of imagining the space of the weaver's community.

contrasting colors generate planes that are separate from one another and none of the points between the planes are depicted; space consists of distinct two-dimensional planes with literally nothing between them. Sometimes voluminousness is depicted by colors whose spaces recede indefinitely from the plane of the textile; sometimes the spaces recede only a certain distance. Sometimes three-dimensionality is indicated by depicting a three-dimensional object. Sometimes the threads whose colors project a more distant space will be literally on top of threads whose colors aesthetically lift them off the surface of the textile and closer to the viewer. Sometimes the force of a color will locate one area of a textile at a certain distance, while the appearance of the same color in another juxtaposition will put it at another distance, and the two distances will be both equal and unequal. Some of the differences, which are spelled out below in connection with detailed analysis of particular weavings, are small and subtle; others are radical and conspicuous. Some textiles generate space in only one way; others create several kinds of three-dimensionality through several kinds of color plays.[92]

Thus, not only does the creation of space through the contrast of colors work on viewers, but also the contrast in the *kinds* of spaces that are generated enters into the fascination. And there is more. Not only are spaces different depending on what specifically generates them, but also differently created spaces are sometimes boldly, sometimes subtly put down next to each other. In some cases two spaces are so different that from within either space it is impossible to think of the other space as a continuation of inside space through which some sort of arbitrary line has been drawn. In these cases, which are not rare, for each space the other is impossible; for each one the other is "outside" it in the most radical sense, namely it does not exist. Since imagining community in terms of the meaning of inside/outside is a universal issue, not one only for the Maya, the extraordinary

[92] Perhaps the most influential study of the relation of color and space was done by Josef Albers, *Interaction of Color* (New Haven, 2006 [1963]). The physiology of sight explains why there is some variation among what different people see when they look at colors. The relevance of this variation to analyzing the force of colors in Maya textiles is detailed in Greene, *Weaving Space*, pp. 14-16.

treatment of this contrast in the weavings may have a great deal to do with their fascination for foreign visitors of all stripes.

And there is even more. All the ways that color and space are interrelated group along ethnic-linguistic lines. The colors generate space; different color combinations generate different kinds of space; contrasting kinds of space are differently juxtaposed—in all three respects there is a family resemblance among the weavings from all the villages within an ethnic group.[93] For purposes of discerning the imagining of community that may be going on in these weavings, this fact is highly significant in three ways.

First, it indicates that generating space with color and juxtaposing contrastingly generated and thus contrasting spaces may be a value or at least a habit throughout an ethnic group, and not something that happens randomly. Second, it confirms, as will spelled out below, that precisely what fascinates foreign buyers also has some kind of grip on the weavers and their communities. And, third, it makes it possible to ask whether the color-generated spaces are models of—are modes of imagining—the relation between other spaces and the spaces in which the community lives. By studying textiles from various ethnic groups in terms of the juxtapositions of contrasting spaces, one has the terms and concrete examples whereby to ask meaningfully whether the nature of contrasting spaces in the textiles replicates the nature of the contrast that the community feels to that which is outside of the community.

The family resemblance with respect to the spaces woven into each ethnic group's textiles is in addition to and quite different from the resemblance that the textiles coming from a given village have to one another. The origin of all the textiles from Sololá, for example, is immediately recognizable because of the use of particular motifs (such as a dotted white line or a series of white dots), colors (such as a particular shade of red) and garment construction that readily identify the village of the fabric and its wearer. These means of identifying the origin of

[93] The sense in which the textiles from a given ethnic-linguistic group have a common approach to space is spelled out at greater length in Greene, *Weaving Space*, pp. 18-20, 45-46.

the textile are not a means of imagining the contrast between the space in which the community lives and other spaces, or, for that matter, any other parameter of community. They are a ready means of identification more than a clue to the content of identity.[94] The family resemblances connecting the textiles of all the villages in a given ethnic group are subtler, having to do with color, space, and juxtaposition of spaces and kinds of space. They are also interesting in a different way, namely the relevance of contrasting spaces to relationships within the community, relationships between the community and a member of another community or ethnic group, and relationships of the community as a whole to some other ethnic group.

The largest number of villages that maintain strong weaving traditions belong to the Kaqchikel and K'iche' ethnic-linguistic groups.[95] The Kaqchikel are located in the highlands moving from west of the capital to and including several villages on Lake Atitlán. There are also K'iche' villages on Lake Atitlán, and K'iche' is spoken in communities from the lake northward. The two languages are a little more different from each other than are French and Spanish. There are some phonemes, grammatical structures and words in common, and a linguistically gifted Kaqchikel speaker can understand a little of K'iche' if it is spoken slowly.

This chapter takes up several textiles from each of these groups and in each case describes the spaces imagined in the textile. Getting to this description moves along the lines already sketched: looking at and thinking about the play of colors, the spaces generated by this play, the juxtaposition of differently generated spaces and the effects of this juxtaposition. It could be, of course, that this imagining is a matter of caprices that have become habits and has nothing to do with the imagining of the spatial parameter of community that the weavers and the people in their community carry out every day. There is, however, an additional piece of information that makes it not only possible but even likely that the spatial imagin-

[94] The many ways in which textiles function as identification for their makers and wearers are elaborated in Greene, *Weaving Space.*, pp. 32-33.

[95] Other ethnic-linguistic groups that have a considerable production of universally admired textiles are the Tzutujil, the Mam, the Ixil, the Achi and the Q'eqchi'.

ing in the weaving replicates and models the imagining of contrasting spaces within their community and between their community and other groups.

This information has to do with the folktales that are told in the Kaqchikel and K'iche' villages. These stories project differing kinds of space because spirits, gods, heroes, animals, other ethnic groups and other villages of their own ethnic group all occupy different kinds of space. The Kaqchikel stories bring these various kinds of space into explicit contrast by narrating events in which someone goes from one kind of space into another. From the telling of the tale, it is clear that for the storyteller, these occasions are impossible but nevertheless they really take place. The K'iche' stories, by contrast, try to imagine these various kinds of space as coordinated, as aspects of a single space, but their imagining invariably fails. In short, the two groups diverge in imagining the nature of the contrasts among various kinds of space as follows: for the one, something that is impossible nevertheless happens; for the other, something that is possible invariably fails to happen.

What is fascinating, but not really surprising, is that the difference between the Kaqchikel and the K'iche' treatments of contrasting spaces in their stories corresponds to the difference in the way differing spaces are approached in their respective textiles. The textiles of the two groups give different answers to the crucial question whether inside and outside spaces can somehow be coordinated or whether what is inside must be hostile or at best indifferent to what is outside. That is not at all to say that an individual woven space is homologous with or a depiction of a certain narrated space or that the peculiarities of spaces in the one are similar to the peculiarities in the other. Rather, it is to say that what happens when differently imagined spaces are juxtaposed is the same in the stories as it is in the textiles. The already invoked distinction between comparing spaces and comparing the contrasts of spaces is applicable here. What joins the textiles and the tales from a given ethnic group together is a homology of the effects of juxtaposition, not a homology of the spaces themselves. While a certain space in a story may be described as "magical" or "divine" space, there is no reason for us-

ing either of these terms for a particular space in the textiles (though on may want to say that a certain *contrast* of spaces has a "magical" effect).[96] Since the spatial effects in the stories always have to do with imagining the space of community, this homology confirms the relevance of the imagining of contrasting spaces in the textiles for imagining the impact of contrasting space for their respective communities. By putting together the spatial treatments in the stories with those in the weavings, letting each interpret the other, one gets an idea of how each community is imagining its space and managing the inside/outside contrast. The next two sections elaborate the specifics of this imagining in connection with particular textiles and tales. First, a few terms used in talking about Guatemalan textiles need to be explained.

The weavings are done on two kinds of looms—the foot loom and the backstrap loom. The latter is almost invariably used by women, who attach one end of the loom to a tree or post and fix the other end behind their lower back. For this reason the width of the textile is constrained by what the particular woman can manage. Until the fairly recent past, foot looms were operated mostly by men, but this practice is changing. The threads are made of cotton, although silk is frequently interwoven with cotton in textiles destined for ceremonial use. While the dyes used until the late nineteenth century were entirely natural, the Maya women now prefer to use chemically dyed threads, whose colors are brighter and do not fade with wear, washing and exposure to the sun as readily as do naturally dyed threads.

The patterns most often woven on the foot looms are of two kinds. One is achieved by weaving bands of contrasting colors, which are repeated with varying degrees of regularity. Textiles with this sort of design are used for utility cloths (called *tzutes*), tablecloths, bedspreads, aprons, and so on. The other kind of pattern is achieved with the *jaspe* technique, which involves tying off certain sec-

[96] As Part Three of David B. Greene, *The Imagining of Community in European Art and Architecture, 1140-1617* (Lewiston, NY, 2010) indicates, the situation is different in church architecture, where space itself is, in various senses, indeed experienced as "holy."

tions of the threads before dyeing them, so the dye does not touch the tied off parts, then tying off another section, dyeing again, and so on; then, when the threads are woven, a pattern emerges. These patterns can be quite intricate and striking.[97] Generally, bands of solid color are intermingled with the *jaspeado* bands. Maya women use tie-dyed fabrics for their skirts.

Their blouses, or *huipiles*, are mostly made on backstrap looms. The weavers construct a huipil from two or three panels of backstrap-woven cloth. They also use backstrap looms for making utility cloths, table runners, belts, and other items for which the backstrap loom's constraints on width are not a problem. They weave in designs by using different colors in the warp as well as the weft and by weaving in supplementary weft threads of different colors. Women in some villages, also embroider designs into the cloth.

A woman is considered a good weaver if the tightness of her weaving is consistent and if her designs are recognizably traditional yet have elements of novelty that press against without trespassing the boundaries of the tradition. Because there are novel elements, it makes sense to say that the weaver is spontaneously re-imagining space and that her weaving is of the moment.

But even though imagining is continuously being done and redone, the tradition often changes only slowly. Even the best of weavers are not well known beyond their village. When textiles arrive at a market, they are almost invariably anonymous. It is as though the tradition, rather than the weaver, were being credited for the beauty of the fabric, even including its novel elements, its re-imagining of space. Consequently, the play of colors, the spaces they generate, the juxtaposition of spaces and kinds of space belong to a particular ethnic group as a whole. Because the weaver does not go outside the boundaries of the tradition, a weaving that has something to do with the space in which someone lives is not imagining just the space of the individual weaver, but of her community.

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[97] While the patterns are unique to the Maya, the technique is not; the process is generally called *ikat*, the name the Indonesian use for their tie-dyed work.

In spite of the collectivity of authorship, the descriptions that follow will treat each textile as seriously as if it were a signed painting. The usual distinction between folk art and high art is set aside. Folk arts are usually treated as handcrafts and interpreted in terms of the techniques and materials they use, the motifs they exploit, and the functions they serve. By contrast, the approach here will focus on form and composition, articulated through color and space—the sort of thing that art critics examine when they are characterizing the salient features of museum-quality paintings and sculptures. The Maya textiles reward this level of attention, for not only are they as striking as their international reputation claims they are, but also their designs are complex in subtle ways that in general can come about only through precise and careful thinking. The analysis moves from describing these complexities, which are found over and again in the textiles of a given ethnic group, to connecting these complexities with their counterparts in folktales from the same group, and finally to unfolding some aspects of space as it is imagined in the respective ethnic-linguistic communities.

3. IMAGINING SPACE IN KAQCHIKEL TEXTILES AND TALES

(1) Kaqchikel Textiles

Today the Kaqchikel are the second largest indigenous ethnic group in Guatemala. Almost all the huipiles and tzutes woven by Kaqchikel women convey a sense of three-dimensionality, and almost all use more than one technique in achieving this sense. One technique, exemplified by the tzute shown in Color Plate 3.1, consists of juxtaposing bands of several different colors, each of which exerts a force that locates it, aesthetically, at a certain distance from the viewer. Each color articulates a particular plane without indicating any sort of transition to the planes of the other colors. The effect is that space consists of two-dimensional planes that are mutually isolated so there is no possibility of an object moving

from one plane to another. Though there is literally nothing between the planes, still they are separated from one another, and communication from one to another seems to be ruled out.

Quite different is the effect when the juxtaposition of colors makes the area of each color either recede from or advance toward the viewer or both. In this case, all the points of the recession or advance are depicted and with them full voluminousness. The viewer has a sense of Euclidean three-dimensionality; space is depicted in which ordinary physical movement can take place. Sometimes the space generated by the adjacent colors participates in the same voluminousness; an example is the effect of the dynamic colors in Color Plate 3.2. In other Kaqchikel weavings, the two three-dimensional spaces are as mutually isolated as are the two-dimensional planes in the first example. For example, in Color Plate 3.3, the blue and pink juxtaposed to one another generate three-dimensionality as the blue recedes and the pink advances toward the viewer. At the same time, the same blue juxtaposed to the green also creates a three–dimensionality in which the blue recedes and the green advances and advances more than the pink. More importantly, the pink-blue volume is distinct from and irrelevant to the green-blue volume. There is no field color to hold the two three-dimensionalities together.[98]

It is not unusual for a Kaqchikel huipil or tzute to generate space in both of these ways as well as several others, and to juxtapose them. The effect is arresting. The first step in describing this effect is to see that spaces achieved in one way are significantly and sometimes radically different in kind from spaces achieved in another way. Not only is there not a transition, movement or communication from space of one kind to space of a different kind, but also the kind of thing that can take place in one kind of space can not happen in a contrasting

[98] A fuller account of the various ways Kaqchikel textiles generate space and the varieties of these spaces is given in Greene, *Weaving Space*, pp. 49-50.

space. To feel this impossibility is to sense how radical is the contrast in kinds of space.[99]

An illuminating analogy to the textile's way of juxtaposing spaces comes from Whitehead's cosmology. Whitehead argues that the immediacy wherein one becomes oneself is radically private, and one is accessible to others only when that immediacy is lost to objectivity and abstraction. Two people may be profoundly related in the sense that the relationship itself is an essential constituent of that which each one immediately is, but still the space of each immediacy, while the same kind of space, is as cut off from the other as are the separated planes in the Kaqchikel weaving in Color Plate 3.1. This separation would not occur if the space of immediacy were Newtonian. The space of a human's immediacy has extendedness, but, as "space lived," it is not divisible, and so it cannot be shared; by contrast, "space measured" characterizes physical space and the space of the objectified human experience; it is extensive and infinitely divisible.[100]

The interplay of colors and of color and motif in the huipil from Comalapa shown in Color Plate 3.4 generates spaces that are as different from one another as are Newtonian space and moral space or human space and divine space. Front and back of the huipil present three rows of flowers in a field of foliage; the rows are separated by two bands consisting of a running abstract motif in lavender and black bounded by lines of yellow, green, black, white and purple. The flowers are enough brighter than their dull green background that they stand out against the background foliage and move toward the viewer. The flowers are read as fully three-dimensional, thus going back to and coming out of the green foliage. That is, it is not as though the flowers and the foliage were on separate planes and isolated from one another (like the bands in Color Plate 3.1). In short, the flowers are depicted as spatial and existing in the familiar kind of Newtonian space; it makes sense to quantify the distance from the flowers to the foliage.

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[99] For a more complete treatment of the juxtapositions of kinds of space in Kaqchikel weaving, see Greene, *Weaving Space*, pp. 50-55.

[100] See William A. Christian, *An Interpretation of Whitehead's Metaphysics* (New Haven, CT, 1959), pp. 81-82.

The spatiality of the lavender bands is quite different. These bands come toward the viewer, but the way they come forward is not at all like the way the flowers stand out from their background. While the lavender is "closer" to the viewer than the flowers are, the word "close" seems to have quite a different meaning when one says that the "lavender is close to the viewer" from the meaning it has when one says that the "flowers are close to the foliage." "Close" has a literal meaning in both cases, but the former is irreducibly vague and unquantifiable while the latter is definable and measurable. Both the flowers in their field and the bands of the abstract lavender design are voluminous, but "voluminousness" has a different meaning in the two cases.

This difference can be sharpened by letting a contradiction in the visual experience sink in. The lavender bands appear to be physically above the field of flowers; one might well guess that the weaver had made the lavender bands separately and then sewn them onto the fabric. One could read the field of flowers as physically continuing behind the sewn-on bands of lavender. In fact, however, the threads of the lavender bands are woven into the warp and weft of the textile; there are no flowers physically beneath them. Still, the sense persists that each lavender band interrupts or blocks one's view of the flowers. Yet "blocks" is not quite right either, for the two spaces are so different that what happens in one can have no impact whatsoever on the other. The only sense in which "blocks" would be meaningful, namely looking at the textile simply as a physical thing without any spatial evocations, is also ruled out, for as a physical thing there are not any flowers beneath the lavender band for the latter to be "blocking"! One cannot even say that the lavender is "above" the flowers, for "above" has a different meaning in the two kinds of space. There is simply no continuity of any kind from the one to the other, no transition between them. There cannot be, for the kinds of space they generate are too different to be mixed, blended or joined. The juxtaposition does not seem to have any meaning. The vocabulary for describing one kind of space does not work in the other kind.

The observation that the lavender bands appear to be physically above the flower fields, yet are not, and cannot be said to be "above" them in some other sense leads to the further observation that the fields of flowers have interesting differentiations. The top and bottom rows are identical. Both consist of two rows of roses, fourteen roses in each row. With one exception (the yellow roses) the two rows consist of entirely different colors. The procession of colors in the top and the bottom field are the same, and the procession on the right side of the garment is the mirror image of the procession on the left. The flowers in the middle field are two rows of daisies, fourteen on a row, using different colors on the two rows with one exception: white appears on both rows. The threads for the daisies are brighter than those for the roses, the effect being to bring the former closer to the viewer. One could even say that the field of daisies was made separately and sewn on top of the field of roses. One might further suppose that the rose field continues behind the daisies, just as the fields of flowers might be supposed to continue behind the lavender bands. But there is a crucially important difference: "above" and "closer" have the same meaning in the space of the daisies and the roses, for, unlike the case of the lavender bands and the flowers, the daisies and the roses generate the same kind of space. The spatial difference between the daisies and the roses is intelligible in terms of the space they both generate; the spatiality of the flowers is not intelligible in terms of the lavender bands' space, nor the spatiality of the lavender bands in terms of the flowers' space.

That the lavender bands divide the nearer daisies from the somewhat further roses gives a spatial meaning to the division that the bands bring about. The particulars of the lavender bands are irrelevant to this function; a solid brown band would have done the job just as well. There are, however, subtle connections between the lavender bands and the flower fields, and these connections become relevant in view of the modest function that the bands can now be seen to be playing. These connections are colors: all of the colors in the lavender bands except for the particular shade of green also appear in the fields of flowers. Even so, the essential incompatibility of the two kinds of space persists. For the color connec-

tion is as non-rational—inexplicable and mysterious—as the juxtaposition of the two spaces.

The huipil from San Juan Sacatepéquez shown in Color Plate 3.5 offers another example of spaces that are differently generated and mutually irrelevant. There are some dissimilarities between the huipiles in Plates 3.4. and 3.5, and they are helpful for broadening one's understanding of Kaqchikel spatiality. In the Comalapa huipil, the space generated by the abstract design seems to be on top of the representational design but in fact has no spatial connection with it at all; by contrast, in the San Juan huipil it is the representational design that seems to be on top, but isn't. Strongly colored vertical bands generate various planes of space that variously recede from (purple) and advance toward (red) the viewer from the plane of the fabric (beige). While each of these bands is voluminous, their spaces are juxtaposed, not coordinated. Marching across the garment, moving away from the center, are highly stylized horses. They have a degree of three-dimensionality simply by referring to something everyone recognizes as three-dimensional, but it is not supported by the colors within the grid on the surface of each horse, for the receding (the blue) and advancing of these colors (the gray) does not fit with the nature of the horses' space. The threads comprising the horses are physically on top of the threads of the vertical bands, but the red bands advance closer to the viewer than do the horses. The space of the red bands do not and cannot exist in the horses' space. That the horses, though further from the viewer than the red bands, block the view of the red space is a sign that neither space makes sense in terms of the other. To be in one of the spaces is to be unaware of the existence of the other, perhaps even unaware of the possibility of the other. No means of coordinating the two radically different kinds of space is being imagined.

The effect of weaving mutually irrelevant spaces is even bolder and more palpable in the huipil shown in Color Plate 3.6. The central part consists of three bands, framed above and below by bands of purple and white zig-zags (variously identified as the "Feather Serpent" [an important figure in Maya cosmology], a road, a series of arches, and the ups and downs of life), in a green field. Immedi-

ately inside the top and bottom of this frame are two bands that are identical to each other. Each one consists of a row of diamonds ("eyes") outlined in pink and either filled with green or carrying a white flower. Closer to the middle of the garment in each of these bands is a row consisting of the "comb" motif. Since the two rows of combs are not in the middle of their respective bands and since the two bands both have their being in the same space, that space, one supposes, must be continuing between the two statements, where a third row of combs might well be. Similarly, the space of the "eyes" presumably continues between the two bands of combs.

The space generated by the diamonds and the space generated by the combs are both voluminous, for the colors in these bands advance and recede. Precluding the viewer's sight of the third row of combs is a strong statement of the Feather Serpent—strong because of the many colors in the zigzag, because of the size of the zigzag, and because of the strong orange field in which the zigzag takes place. This space is also voluminous, but this volume has nothing in common with the volume of the combs because the zigzag space is generated by forces that are completely independent from those generating the spaces in the rows of combs. One could almost say that the middle space (that is, the strong zigzag) more or less hostilely "interrupts" or "disrupts" the area consisting of rows of diamonds and combs. But the characterization in terms of enmity seems inapt. One might be tempted to say that the central zigzag band "hides" the continuations of the combs and eyes. That way of talking, however, does not quite work either: differently generated, the zigzag space is not in position to "hide" objects in the other spaces; in order to hide them, it would have to be in the same or a coordinated space. A better characterization would be to say that the spaces interpenetrate each other, but never intersect; there is no means of access from one space into the other.[101]

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[101] The concept of interpenetrating but non-intersecting spaces has moved beyond science fiction. See the BBC Report on parallel universes; May 31, 2008: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/science/horizon/2001/paralleluni.shtml >.

(2) Kaqchikel Tales

To the descriptions of spatialities elaborated in the previous subsection it would be easy to object that they are much too intellectual, too abstruse, too European to be true to the experience of the Kaqchikel weavers. It would be easier to assume that the weavers are simply playing with colors and the play has no spatial meaning. Or if one grants that the force of colors really does generate spaces and spatial oddities like those described above, that is interesting only to foreigners and not an indication of how the Maya experience these textiles.

There may be a cultural bias built into this objection. That is, the objection may be resting on an assumption that Maya women are not trained in and hence not capable of such sophisticated subtleties. The objection may also be based on a bias in favor of verbal expression: unless the weavers describe their work using the same terms as the descriptions above, they must not be thinking along these lines either.

No definitive response to either of these biases is possible. It can be pointed out that anthropologists are increasingly aware of the intricacies of thought in non-European cultures that slip entirely through the nets of European conceptualities, but not everyone will be convinced by their work. Art critics insist that the visual image has priority over verbal descriptions of it. Not even the artists themselves have terms at their disposal to which their work can be reduced. If they did, the visual image would be unnecessary; at best it would be an illustration of what could just as well or better be expressed verbally. Even so, the wish will not go away that words would come from the culture itself to the effect that the spaces and spatial oddities pointed out in the previous subsection really matter to people in the culture.

In fact there are such words: the words used in folktales told by the Kaqchikel. The stories that the Kaqchikel tell one another indicate a lively awareness that there are different kinds of space. It may be easier for Europeans and Euro-Americans to recognize this sensibility in the folktakes than in the textiles,

and then, seeing it in the stories and seeing the spatial parallels between the stories and the textiles, accept that the play of colors in the textiles really do project interesting spatial juxtapositions.

Not only do the Kaqchikel stories lead listeners into different kinds of space, but also do so in such a way that they experience moving from one kind of space to another as impossible or highly problematic. One could say that what is problematic is that it happens in spite of being impossible. The people of Santa Catarina Palopó tell the story of a fisherman who dove for crabs at the bottom Lake Atitlán everyday.[102] One day, suddenly and without feeling anything unusual, he realized he had come to a city at the bottom of the lake that was populated by all the people who had died in the lake. He recognized some of them, but could not converse with them. Space inhabited by the dead is so different from the space where the living can move that usually one cannot go back and forth between the two. The story sustains that difference in two ways. First, the diver has only visual contact with the dead; he cannot make aural or intellectual contact with them. Second, the passage of time is different: the little while spent at the bottom of the lake turns out to be half a day as time is experienced in the village of Santa Catarina. In another story, this one involving movement from human space into the space of the Spirit-Lord of the Lake, the time difference is even more marked: what is experienced as one day in the Lord's space corresponds to the passing of many years in human space.[103]

Another story told among the Kaqchikel goes to (or comes from) the difference in the nature of human space from the nature of spirits' space. This story tells of two brothers-in-law. One of them (the brother of the other's wife) is in fact an angel—a spirit being in human disguise. He returns to their house every day with a miraculously large load of fresh fruit. Not knowing he is an angel, his brother-in-law wants to know how he finds so much food, and finally persuades

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[102] Perla Petrich and Carlos Ochoa García, eds., *Tzÿonik. Cuentos del lago* (Guatemala City, 2003)., pp. 27-28.
[103] *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

the angel to let him accompany him. Eventually the man sees his brother-in-law and other angels flying among the clouds. The man takes one of the angels' capes, puts it on and also flies among the clouds. This cape is black, however, and brings on terrible rainstorms. The angels track him down and take off the cape so that the rain might stop. Unaware of the difference between the principles governing the human and the angelic spaces, the man has brought on a disaster. Juxtaposing incommensurable spaces, the story amazes its listeners, and it is clear from the telling that the teller is also amazed. Even the central character in the story is affected: his belt turns into a tail, and the man becomes a monkey.[104]

Other stories work from the differences—the incompatibility and mutual inaccessibility—between human space and animal space, or the space of everyday people and the space of heroes, or the space of humans and the space of the gods. They "work from" these differences in the sense that the events in the stories depends on these differences, and what counts as the climax or the point of the story or both is completely lost if these spaces are not radically different. The Kaqchikel are fascinated by these contrasts, but even more they know they have to live with them somehow.

A willingness and eagerness to think about and present the effect of contrasting kinds of space is evident in these tales. Seen in their context, the textiles evidence a similar fascination with contrasting space. Of course, the textiles do not identify one of the spaces they present as humans' space, another as spirits', another as animals', and another as gods'; nevertheless, the nature of the contrast between the spaces and their apparent mutual inaccessibility as presented in the textiles is very similar to the corresponding contrast in the stories. The relation of the diver to the city of the drowned in Lake Atitlán, for example, is an isomorph of the relation of the lavender bands to the roses and daisies in the Comalapa textile (though there is, once again, no similarity between the diver's everyday space and either of the spaces generated in the textile).

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[104] *Ibid.*, pp. 31-34.

This relation includes the fact that in spite of the incompatibility of the two spaces and the impossibility of going from one to the other, nevertheless it happens. The event of transitionless happening across the boundaries of a space to another kind of space is not to be understood, but it happens just the same. Members of a community, as the stories indicate, are bound together into a community by the fact that they live in the same space. They all know the rules governing that space, and the rules apply to all. But to move temporarily into space governed by different rules is not to become a participant in a different community. The diver may have been in the city of the drowned, but in the end he was not really there, for he was not and could not be a member of that community.

(3) Textiles and Tales: Imagining the Space of Community

Through the juxtaposition of spaces in the textiles shines the fact that the Kaqchikel can imagine a variety of kinds of space that are differently related or differently unrelated to the spaces in which they live. They are capable of imagining a variety of ways of being outside to and other than their own community, a diversity of meanings to being an outsider, a series of ways in which being in a community is imagined by imagining its opposite. In an effort to clarify these imaginings of space and community, examples can be pulled from the textiles described above and put onto an axis of decreasing irrationality. Some of the examples come from the same textile, so each textile as a whole cannot be located at a single place on this axis.

First, the Kaqchikel can imagine kinds of spaces that are so different from the spaces in which they live that a point of contact between the two spaces cannot be imagined. The Feather Serpent (Color Plate 3.6) zigzagging along, interpenetrating the space of the combs and flowers without ever intersecting their space is such an imagining. The two spaces seem to be irrelevant to each other, and yet this very irrelevance is itself present, which undermines the irrelevance, but without defining at all any sense in which there might be relevance.

There are textiles in which a point of contact seems to be imagined in spite of the fact that it cannot be imagined. Hence it is an absurd point of contact, yet sufficiently powerful to make the spaces and what happens in them mutually irrational. Such a surd is illustrated in the narrative mode by the differences in time (the diver to the bottom of the lake) or the extreme danger entailed in moving through this point into the other kind of space (the soon-to-be monkey who fools around with the angel's cape). There is a glimmer of such a point of contact in the 3.4 textile. The colors in the lavender band seem to make a connection to the colors in the roses (but not to the colors of the daisies, though the daisies and roses are in the same kind of space), but this seeming is left at that. The connection, if it is felt at all, is vague and undefined. In the 3.5 textile, there is also a connection through colors, but it is even vaguer, more unsettled. Some of the colors filling the grid on the horses' bodies seem to be affected by the color of the stripes behind/in front of the horses, while others are not. However, even where there seems to be a color connection, the colors have a force that works contrary to the three-dimensionality of the horses, so the connection, made by the color pulling the horses and the bands whose space passes through their space into a relationship, is extremely tenuous.

And there are textiles, or different respects of the same textile, in which two spaces are separate and mutually isolated, but are the same kind of space. The result is that continuity between the two is imagined though in fact they are discrete; while there is no traffic between the two, it is imagined that there could be, as in the space of the combs and eyes in 3.6. And there are places where space of a certain kind continues even when a change of motif changes what is going on in the space; the space of the roses and the daisies in 3.4 is an example.

It might be tempting to suppose that the points along this axis stand for decreasingly weak or difficult relations with other communities—the Kaqchikel-European relation, the Kaqchikel-Ladino, the Kaqchikel-other Maya, and the relation between two Kaqchikel villages. While this procession does have some resemblance to the procession of spatial juxtapositions sketched above, there is no

evidence at all that the Kaqchikel have the Europeans in mind when they weave the Father Serpent across the eyes and combs. Besides, if more Kaqchikel textiles were described, there would be more points defined along the axis, and the search for real-world relations that are counterparts to each of them would not yield very much.

But in any case this way of fleshing out the analogy misses the point: being aware that there are a variety of ways for space to be outside of and other than the space of one's community is a way of sharpening one's imagining of what it is to be in the community. The texture of within-ness is, or may be, quite different depending on the specific outside-ness to which it is in contrast. Presumably the Kaqchikel hold together these various modes of within-ness so that none of them dominate all the others. Being-in the community has a far richer texture than a simple we/they dichotomy would allow. And the we/other is more fluid, for, since the Kaqchikel know so many meanings to "outside," there is always the possibility that the relation to a particular outsider can change from one meaning to another. This parameter of Kaqchikel community is revisited after the spatiality of K'iche' textiles is described.

4. IMAGINING SPACE IN K'ICHE' TEXTILES AND TALES

(1) K'iche' Textiles

The number of ways in which space is generated is much greater in the Kaqchikel weavings than in the K'iche' textiles as a whole. Moreover, the differences in color-generated spaces in the K'iche' fabrics are less disruptive, less unsettling. As a result, a sense that conflicting kinds of space are being generated is for the most part less certain. For an observer who has become accustomed to the irrationalities in the Kaqchikel spaces, this difference is palpable fairly quickly.

This difference notwithstanding, the K'iche' weavings vitalize space as much

as do the Kaqchikel. In place of the Kaqchikel sense of mutually irrelevant or mutually hostile or at least problematically juxtaposed multi-verses, each K'iche' textile makes space dynamic by projecting a principle of orderliness and at the same time vitiating the validity of this principle. Color Plates 3.7 through 3.11 show three different ways of achieving this dynamism: promising and withholding orderliness through symmetry of color repetition, through symmetry in the interplay of color and motif, and through making and denying a foreground-background distinction. To the extent that withholding order overwhelms the promise, the disorder may be experienced as the irrational juxtaposition of unlike spaces, as in Kaqchikel weaving. The persistence of the promise of order, even though it is not fulfilled or not completely fulfilled, means that if there is a sense of inter-permeating, non-intersecting spaces in the K'iche' textile, it is much less secure than in the Kaqchikel.

The tzute from Nahualá shown in Color Plate 3.7 is an excellent example of dynamism that comes from setting up but then denying symmetry. The design is complex, but not unusually so. The immediate impression is that of orderliness, but as one looks more closely the sense of orderliness is overwhelmed by exceptions and complexities. But on a third look, orderliness reemerges, but only almost. The principles of orderliness are symmetry (bands of the same color on either side of a band of a different color) and regularity in the order in which colors are repeated.

The cloth consists of two panels, joined at the place in the middle where three brown strips are followed by a sequence that consists of brown–double red–brown, and bounded top and bottom by a white strip. There are eighteen white strips in all, and they divide the cloth into nineteen sections, the largest of which is the one in the middle that strides the two panels. The top of the cloth is absolutely regular: a section consisting of brown—double red—brown stripes is followed by a section consisting of three brown stripes. This sequence occurs a total of five times.

The bottom is much more complex. It has two sequences that are repeated and three that are not. The two repeated sequences are the same ones that occur five times in the top of the cloth. Defining the configuration of three brown stripes as A and the other one as B, the overall pattern of the bottom part is A-B-C-A-B-A-B-D-E; the dashes here indicate the places where the strong white lines divide off the sections. The total effect is more nearly symmetrical, however, than that way of depicting the overall pattern suggests, for three reasons. First, the C section actually consists of the A pattern plus a shortened version of the B pattern. Second, the D section consists of a shortened A plus a shortened B. And, third, the E is a shortened section of A. Letting A′ stand for the shortened A and letting B′ stand for the shortened B, the overall pattern can be seen to be: A-B-AB′-A-B-A-B-A′B′-A′. Now the pattern is perfectly regular except for the places where a pattern is slightly abbreviated.

Symmetry and asymmetry being equally deliberate in the design, the space as a whole seems to be regular, but the principle of regularity is in the end stubbornly elusive. Either it is the case that one cannot count on the regularity of space, or it is the case that one cannot fully discern the principles of spatial regularity. But irregularity is also ruled out. The space is such that if one has to live in it one has to live as though it were irregular even though one knows that in some hidden way it is regular. Or the same thing can be said somewhat differently: perhaps the places where symmetry breaks down are places where one has entered a different or slightly different kind of space, but the symmetry is sufficiently forceful that this "perhaps" is never upgraded to "surely," while the asymmetry is powerful enough that the "perhaps" does not go away either.

A similar sense that spatial orderliness is both promised and withheld is conveyed in Color Plate 3.8. In this case the simultaneity of offering and denying is achieved not just through the juxtaposition of colors with varying spatial forces but also through the interplay of color and motif. A two-panel huipil from Zacuala, it sets up two principles of orderliness, and contradicts each of them.

One principle is the symmetry of the color scheme in the lightning bolts across the top. In both panels, a green-white-pink bolt stands out both because of its striking colors and because of its central location. On either side of it are, first, a brown-blue bolt and then a bolt made of two shades of blue. This symmetry is, however, weakened somewhat by the appearance, in the left panel, of the brown stripes on the *inside* of the blue stripes (that is, they face the central bolt), while in the right panel the brown ignores the centrality of the white bolt and appears both times to the left of the blue. (There are also huipiles from Zacuala in which the colors on the bolts are entirely symmetrical.)

The other principle of orderliness has to do with the three-dimensionality brought about by the shading that is generated by changing the location of the weft threads vis-à-vis the warp threads. By alternating a series in which the weft threads are on top of the warp with a series in which the weft threads are below the warp, a stair-step effect is created. The zigzags in the lightning bolts follow exactly along these stair steps, confirming an orderly three-dimensionality. But at the same time the lightning bolts lack the shading that creates the stair-step effect. Their uniformity of color makes each of them occur in a single plane and thus undermine the three-dimensionality that their shape confirms. The three-dimensionality is immediately palpable, yet in the end it seems undefined. One knows at once that this space is putting severe limits on what can happen in it, but one's idea of what those limits might be is irreducibly vague.[105]

Occurring in about half the K'iche' textiles, the most commonly used mode of orderliness is that of a foreground-background distinction, which promises to organize and order the design. These textiles achieve dynamism by simultaneously making and attenuating a foreground-background distinction. The attenuation undermines the organization and withholds the foreground-background distinction, but does so without annulling or withdrawing the promise. Thus, the textile empowers and requires the viewer to make a foreground-background dis-

[105] More examples of K'iche' textiles that promise and withhold order in ways similar to those in Color Plates 3.7 and 3.8 are analyzed in Greene, *Weaving Space*, pp. 91-94.

tinction, but at the same time the weaving vitiates the very distinction it insists on. Textiles in three color plates (3.9, 3.10 and 3.11) exemplify this process. In the first case, this dynamic is the result of the interplay of color and movement; in the second it is the interplay of color with what a motif depicts. In the third, it is the interplay of color and the size of the motif.

The huipil in Color Plate 3.9 presents right-moving shapes, consisting of strong shades of green and blue. These colors are surrounded by other strong colors, namely, dark green and dark brown, which recede from the plane of the fabric, and chartreuse and pink-lavender, which advance. With respect to the force of colors, the dark shades of green and brown serve as background to the lighter shades of blue and green. However, lateral movement is also strong, so strong in fact that each group of light green—medium green—dark green and of light blue—medium blue--dark brown work as a whole in participating in the right-directed movement. The lateral force pulls the darker shades up into the same plane as the lighter shades, making equivocal the power of the former to serve as background to the latter. In short, with respect to the powerful movement to the right, there is no background, yet the vague sense of a background, generated by the play of contrasting colors, persists.

The Maya call each group of colors in this design a "bird." The term is used, however, simply as handy way to identify and refer to the motif and not because a bird is depicted or because a bird is symbolically important in this case. If a bird were depicted, however stylized the depiction may be, there would be an allusion to a three-dimensional object, and this allusion would further complicate the spatiality. Such a reference to a voluminous object is at play in the huipil shown in Color Plate 3.10. This textile depicts an eagle with wings along the sides, a pair of feet and a tail at the bottom and two heads at the top. As the representation of a three-dimensional object, the eagle is voluminous and stands out against the background. The eagle, however, is so stylized that the foreground-background distinction is attenuated. The extent of the stylization undermines the sense that there is an object requiring and creating space; the differentiation between the eagle and

the background is continuously slipping away. This effect is compounded by the play of colors on the bird's breast. Advancing and receding, these colors have their own spatiality, which further undermines the eagle's claim to foreground space.

In the tzute shown in Color Plate 3.11, the duality of having and not having a background comes about from the interplay of the forces of size and of color. The weaver has decorated her cloth, first, with horses and birds depicted in one scale and, second, with a scattering of horses and birds depicted in a much smaller scale. If one reads the latter as depictions of three-dimensional objects and lets the size of the smaller horses and birds indicate their scale, one would read them as more distant, thereby creating the sense of a background. But the color of the small birds and horses holds them onto the same plane as the large birds and horses, effectively attenuating the sense of a background.[106]

(2) K'iche' Tales

The dynamic of simultaneously promising and withholding a principle of orderliness also characterizes K'iche' storytelling. It is significant that it characterizes the K'iche' version of a rabbit-trickster story that presumably came from West Africa to the Americas,[107] though it does not show up in non-K'iche' tales of the rabbit-trickster. In the K'iche' telling, the clever rabbit persuades a dull coyote that there is white cheese in the waters of a brook and that if the coyote drinks the water he can get to the cheese. The coyote drinks the water until his stomach is about to burst, and the rabbit encourages him to keep going, for the cheese is really there, he says, and the coyote has almost gotten to it. The narrator explains that there is no cheese, only the reflection of the moon in the sky. The explanation

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[106] More examples of distinguishing and not distinguishing a background from the foreground are offered in Greene, *Weaving Space*, pp. 87-91.

[107] Told in the village of Sicapa to Paul Holland and Pedro Sánchez, who translated it for *Guatemala Maya Texts*, ed. Paul G. Townsend (Guatemala: Instituto Lingüístico de Verano en Centroamérica, 1980), pp. 191-93.

is repeated four times, stretching out the story but also creating the impression that the coyote really cannot be brought to understand how appearance can be different from reality; if a wheel of cheese appears, it must be there where it appears. For the coyote, what is promised cannot be withheld. For him, reality is seamless; it is bound together by inviolable principles, and when a phenomenon violates these principles, he is completely helpless to understand. His helplessness makes him susceptible to the rabbit's manipulation and abuse. The repetitions, whose explanations of how appearance and reality can part company never actually improve, also have the effect of suggesting that the rabbit does not understand it either. The rabbit can see that the cheese in the water is not cheese and that it is somehow the moon, though it is not the moon either. He can see that there are appearances and there are realities, and he suspects there is a connection between the two so that reality is in fact orderly. But he does not understand the connection, so he also does not really understand the orderliness either. What he does understand is how to exploit the very real appearance of disorderliness for the purpose of tricking the coyote.

"The Crooked Tree,"[108] another K'iche' story, differently exemplifies the K'iche' intuition that reality is orderly but that the principle of its orderliness is inapprehensible. "The Rabbit and the Coyote" is a story about what happens when one (wrongly) thinks one knows the orderliness of reality and about what one can do when one knows (rightly) there are limits to one's knowledge. By contrast, "The Crooked Tree" builds orderliness that is undermined but still somehow real into the structure of the telling itself. The crooked tree is the story's organizing principle. It is a metaphor for a boy whose mother would not let him go out with his father to learn to cut firewood and in that way internalize the need to work generally. When the father dies, the mother has to ask the boy to cut firewood, but he refuses, because he does not want to and also because he does not know how. When his mother scolds him, he takes her to an old crooked tree and tells her to

[108] Told in the town of Cantel to David G. Fox, Pedro E. Chuc and Rosalio Ruiz, who translated it into English for *Guatemala Maya Texts*, pp. 143-44.

straighten it. He threatens that if she cannot straighten the tree, he will kill her. Of course, she cannot; while the tree could have been straightened when it was little, now it is too late. So he does to her what would be done to any crooked tree: he cuts her into pieces. He then takes the meat home, and tells his sister to sell it, which she does.

The crooked tree works in two ways to organize the story, and the two ways undercut each other's effectiveness. Although the tree is a metaphor for the youngster, what happens to a crooked tree is a metaphor for what happens to the mother. As a metaphor for the boy, it is used by the storyteller to express disapproval of the boy and what he does. Censure for the useless boy is also conveyed by phrases like "his share of the firewood," confirming that the boy is morally wrong to refuse to do "his share." The storyteller is horrified by what the boy does to his mother; shock is expressed near the end by the comment, "She [the boy's sister] didn't know that it was her mother that she was selling!" At the same time, the storyteller more directly and openly censures the mother for allowing her son to become a crooked tree, and sees the punishment, however horrifying, as somehow just. More importantly, the story serves as a warning to parents: make your children obey when they are still young: "That's what a certain boy did to his mother, a boy who was not made to obey when he was still small." The two directions in which the metaphor moves work against each other, and the two directions of censure also work against each other. If the crooked tree is an apt metaphor for the boy, what happens to it is not an appropriate metaphor for what happens to the mother, and vice versa. If the boy is justly condemned, then the mother ought not to be, and vice versa. The effect of each is to hold back on the other's promise of consistency and narrative unity. By undermining each other, they make the story teeter on the brink of incoherence. It never regains (or gains) its balance, but it never falls over into chaos either.

"The Man from Estancia"[109] is about a man who is walking alone in the mountains near Estancia at night and is frightened by he knows not what. He takes several different paths to avoid the thing, but over and again it shows up in front of him. Finally, he reaches the village, and the villagers, to help him, go looking for the frightening thing. But they don't find anything. The man goes to the hospital; a medicine is sought.

On the one hand, the story makes sense as the telling of an evil spirit or a person or an animal that was in the mountain, but eluded the villagers. On the other hand, the story also makes sense as telling of how a man is excessively or inappropriately frightened and incapacitated by his fright ("...if there isn't any [medicine], he will suffer more fright if he is frightened again by an animal"). In the one, the world of the evil spirit invades the human world, and that the two are not coordinated works to the ill of the man from Estancia. In the other, the two are coordinated, but the first way of hearing the story weakens the force of this putative coordination. In view of the way the textiles treat their organizing principles, the scheme of using two principles each of which undermines the other emerges as the most salient characteristic of the story's structure. This story, like "The Crooked Tree," takes place in a world in which, one is certain, various spaces are coordinated and order prevails, but the certainty is not matched by anything like a firm grasp on the nature of the coordination or of the order.

This attitude can be traced back at least as far as the *Popol Vuh*, a post-classic Maya document that exists today only in an eighteenth-century copy of an alphabetized version that goes back to the sixteenth century. Its stories make clear that the gods and spirits are in the background of all human space, but the foreground-background relation is never secure. Its problematic character is present in stories in which the gods go walking in human space. Since these gods have turned to stone and reside in human temples, one must say that it is the *spirits* of the stones that go walking. In one story, they go walking in the forms of the three adolescent

[109] This story was told in K'iche' in the town of Sicapa to Paul Holland and Pedro Sánchez, who recorded it and translated it into English. It is published in *Guatemala Maya Texts*, pp. 203-05.

boys "as a way of revealing themselves"; but as soon as anyone spots them they vanish.[110] The sense that there is some sort of elusive background to every foreground is most pithily expressed when Dennis Tedlock, an anthropologist, says of a certain spirit, "Yes, she *re*appears, and who knows who or what she is between her representations?"[111]

The sense that all space—the space of gods, spirits, heroes, humans, animals—is unified is articulated in the *Popol Vuh*. When humans were successfully created, it says, their vision was complete and perfect:

> [P]erfectly they knew everything under the sky, whenever they looked. The moment they turned around and looked around in the sky, on the earth, everything was seen without any obstruction. They didn't have to walk around before they could see what was under the sky; they just stayed where they were.
> ...
> As they looked, their knowledge became intense. Their sight passed through trees, through rocks, through lakes, through seas, through mountains, through plains.[112]

Dennis Tedlock, whose translation of the *Popol Vuh* is quoted here, comments on this text that the limits of humans' vision "were those of the world itself. The only thing such beings might miss would be something that lay outside what sky and earth could comprehend. ... Whatever space may have been for them, it was no more than turnings and twistings of their heads; there was no need for the measures of hand or foot."[113] With vision of this sort, the original humans could talk with the gods as a matter of mere conversation.

That they "sighted the four sides, the four corners in the sky, on the earth"[114] did not, however, please their makers, who worried that they would become "as great as gods. ... Their deeds would become equal to ours," breaching their nature

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[110] Dennis Tedlock, *Breath on the Mirror* (San Francisco, 1993), p. 46.
[111] *Ibid.*, p. 52. Tedlock's italics.
[112] *Popol Vuh*, tr. Dennis Tedlock (New York, 1985), p. 147.
[113] Dennis Tedlock, *Breath on the Mirror*, pp. 2-3.
[114] *Popol Vuh*, p. 166.

as "works" and "designs."[115] So the gods decided to take away the humans' perfect vision. Still, they recognized that they were dependent on the humans' praise and worship, and the humans, in order to be able to offer rituals to the gods, needed to see at least what was nearby. Wisely, the gods decided, "We'll take them apart just a little." And so it came about that the humans "were blinded as the face of a mirror is breathed upon. Their eyes were weakened. Now it was only when they looked nearby that things were clear. And such was the loss of the means of understanding, along with the means of knowing everything."[116]

One could say that space did not change; only the original humans' ability to see what was in space was affected. The metaphor of the breath on the mirror, however, is unstable. On the one hand it suggests that the eyesight itself was clouded over, and on the other the metaphor suggests that what is there to be seen is clouded over. The difference between the two can be negotiated by saying that before there was no difference between near and far, yet there was a distinction. After the change, space became measurable; near and far were different as well as distinct. What the gods see, like their mode of seeing, is unchanged, but what humans see is what they see when they look at a mirror that has been clouded by the breath of the gods.

That what is seen changes for humans, and not just their organ of seeing, is less ambiguous in the story of the first dawn. At noon, the sun placed a mirror at the center of the sky and then headed back to the east. People saw, and have continued to see, the sun only in the reflection. What looked like the sun moving westward was in fact the reflection of the sun returning toward the east. Only the reflection was seen, not the movement eastward. It is not clear whether today one sees the sun itself half a day and its reflection the other half, or whether all that is seen now is a reflection of what the sun did only once. Space, then, is not the sort of thing in which reflections have to be co-temporal with what they reflect.

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[115] *Ibid.*
[116] *Ibid.*, p. 167.

(3) Textiles and Tales: Imagining the Space of Community

The kind of space and the kind of seeing in which there is a distinction between near and far (the sense of a background is confirmed) but not a difference (it turns out that what is near is no closer than what is far) is only abstractly conceivable, if even that. Color Plate 3.11, however, gives a concrete example of a wholeness of reality in which there is a distinction but not a difference between near and far. This is the unity that the *Popol Vuh* ascribes to divine and primeval human space and seeing and that contemporary K'iche' shamans or daykeepers can recover. For the ordinary person, however, what the 3.11 textile is imagining is the confusion of reality, not its wholeness.

Apart from shamanic practice, K'iche' people today experience the wholeness of reality, but they experience it ambiguously. The vagueness of the background in the textiles presents this ambiguity in a different medium, and it presents only the ambiguity, not the wholeness of reality nor the occasion of the fogging. The qualification is crucial, for the textiles replicate the structure of the narrative, not the narrative itself. To the extent that the K'iche' understand themselves in terms of their foundational story, they see that everything that happens takes place against a background of divine and cosmic reality, but the contours of this background are so vague that the fact of the background is itself vague. Similarly, in a sense the K'iche' see and the textiles' viewers see a foreground-background relation clearly and powerfully. But, being destabilized, this vision is fleeting; it cannot be captured, pinned down in a discursive form and put at the disposal of the viewer as a reliable tool for coping with life's challenges.

One also finds in the *Popol Vuh* instances when two principles of order are in operation, but as in the textiles in Color Plates 3.7-10 and as in the story of the crooked tree, the two principles undermine one another's validity. The most striking example lies in the way the *Popol Vuh* orders events. For European and many other cultures, a chronological ordering is the one that would most readily comport with the book's stated goal of recounting and thereby replicating the origin of

the K'iche'. Yet the book partly sticks to chronological ordering and partly sets it aside. Tedlock points out that the chronological principle is partly superceded by a spatial one. Events, all of whose outcomes are to make the sky and earth safe and suitable for humans, take place either on the surface of the earth or in the underworld. The above-ground events are grouped together and told before the underground events, even though in chronological terms the events in the first set more or less alternate with those in the second. One of the effects of occasionally disobeying the chronological organization is to make clearer that the mythic events replicate celestial movements that are still occurring.[117] In other words, there are two organizing principles, each of which to some extent attenuates the other.

The resulting vagueness of the order and its principle is no more accidental here than it is in the textiles, for if an ordering toward a specific mythical-historical goal were the only principle, the K'iche' sense that every event replicates celestial events and thus in a significant sense has already happened and also continues to happen would be completely overridden. The one principle of order presupposes and validates rectilinear time—time moving forward in a straight line with unique, unrepeatable events leading to a goal. The other principle of order relates itself to curvilinear time—events occurring cyclically. The *Popol Vuh* affirms both kinds of time and thus each undermines the other as a principle of orderliness, with the result that the orderliness is destabilized; the principle of order is unsteady.

While the K'iche' textiles do not deal with time, they do confirm and presuppose that orderliness here as in the *Popol Vuh* can be both palpable and elusive. In both the weavings and in the text, there are principles of regularity and a dimly visible orderliness, but what these principles might be is dark. Both take their viewers into a world in which one has an idea of what to expect, a notion of what

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[117] *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

can happen, an idea that it would be folly to deny. But it is also a world in which it would imprudent to count on this idea too much.

Imagining oneself moving into the space generated by the K'iche' textiles—letting their space be the space in which one is and one's community is and from which one imagines the nature of another's space—is an exercise in equivocation. That the K'iche' imagining of their and others' space is equivocal in this way is indicated by the stories they tell and even more explicitly by their foundational document. Of the nature of the space in which they exist in order to exist at all, it can be said that it is orderly and rational, but since the principle of orderliness is impossible to pin down, either the apprehension of the orderliness is somewhat but hopelessly loose or the nature of the order itself is irreducibly unstable. And one must equivocate in deciding between these alternatives: it is not clear whether it is space itself or one's apprehension of it that is equivocal. The K'iche' imagine the space of gods, spirits and animals to be continuous with the space of the K'iche' community, but the principle of continuity is vague. The K'iche' do not imagine these other spaces as different kinds of space (as do the Kaqchikel), but equivocate either about their relation to the K'iche' or about the clarity with which they understand this relation.

In the contemporary K'iche' stories, there is a principle ordering the relation of different people and different objects, and this principle affects the foreground. But while the reality of this principle is never put into question, in one way or another it is undermined, and so the relation is vague. How can one locate the frightening Other if one does not know whether it is an evil spirit, an animal or nothing at all? Can the difference between the lazy, bad son and the good K'iche' youngster make sense against the background of moral obligation if one cannot know where the moral failing occurred? If one is left asking whether the difference between the moon and its reflection is the same as the difference between cheese that is obtainable and cheese that is not, one is also not very sure that any event whatsoever involves a clear contrast between reality and appearance.

This equivocation with respect to outlying space applies also to the space of non-K'iche' communities. Unlike the Kaqchikel they do not imagine outsiders' space as basically different or necessarily problematic, but there is a wobble between seeing it as the same as K'iche' space or as part of the background to K'iche' space. Most often, other communities are seen collectively as the background, the more comprehensive context, in which K'iche' community takes place, but the sense of background or context is insecure—firmly insecure. The Tedlock reading of the *Popol Vuh* suggests both that other ethnic groups (including the Spanish) collectively form the background to K'iche' community, and also that they do not, for the vagueness of this background cannot be overcome.[118]

5. K'ICHE' AND KAQCHIKEL IMAGES OF OTHERNESS IN TEXTILES, IN TALES, AND IN PRACTICE

The substantial difference between the Kaqchikel and the K'iche' spaces in their weavings and stories can be summarized as follows. The difference in the way they handle the juxtaposition of contrasting spaces indicates that a corresponding dissimilarity runs between the way the two groups are imagining the contrast between "our space" and "their space." They are differently imagining the accessibility of one space from a different kind of space. They model different attitudes toward the juxtaposition of contrasting kinds of spaces. For the K'iche' it is space itself that cannot be made intelligible, though it persistently promises to be orderly in some way. For the Kaqchikel, by contrast, it is the juxtapositions of spaces that is unintelligible and not to be rationalized; from the magic conveyed by these impossible juxtapositions comes an awareness of the magic of space itself.

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[118] *Popol Vuh*, pp. 33, 71.

Another way to describe the divergence is to say that otherness is differently imagined. That is, the sense in which the Kaqchikel regard the K'iche' as "other" is not at all the same as the way the K'iche' imagine the otherness of the Kaqchikel; the asymmetry in their attitude toward and treatment of each other is of a piece with the dissimilar ways the textiles treat contrasting spaces. It is not clear that either group is aware of this asymmetry; more likely, the Kaqchikel think that the K'iche' think of otherness the same as do the Kaqchikel. If "otherness" is in fact experienced variously by the two groups, then the particular imagining of otherness is itself is part of the otherness.

That neither group is aware of the asymmetry is confirmed by the treatment of other kinds of space in the folktales. While the stories work from a lively sense of spatial irrationalities, each group's response to these bristling gaps between spaces is quite unselfconscious, as though theirs was the only reaction there might or could be. Indeed, the stories usually present the incommensurability of the spaces in such a matter-of-fact tone that the contrast as such might go unnoticed. In both the K'iche' and the Kaqchikel stories, the spatiality is somewhat hidden behind the narrative, and it is easy not to notice the difference between the two groups' apprehension of space. In the weavings, the emotional excitement of the spatial juxtapositions is more conspicuous; at least it is if one pays attention to what the arresting colors are doing to space. Seeing the juxtapositions in the weavings may make it easier to notice them in the stories.

The fact that all the weavers within an ethnic group generate and approach space similarly to one another and differently from weavers in other groups has already signaled that the spaces imagined in the textiles are indeed modeling lived contrasts of spatialities. The homology between the textiles and the tales further strengthens the indication that the contrast of space imagined in the weaving is a way of imagining the contrast between "our space" and "other space."

In imagining that the space of other communities is at least ambiguously continuous with K'iche' space, the K'iche' imagine less contrast between their space and Kaqchikel space than a Kaqchikel sees between his or her space and the space

of the K'iche'. A comprehensive description of the ways this difference is enacted would be the topic for a sociological investigation. Nevertheless, a few examples can be offered. One is that the K'iche' are in fact less hesitant to imagine that all Maya are similar. At least they are ambiguously similar, for the K'iche' wobble between seeing a continuity between themselves and all Maya, on the hand, and seeing themselves as standing out among all the Maya, on the other. They imagine the *Popol Vuh* as being foundational for all Maya, not just the K'iche', but as it is a K'iche' document, they are likely to imagine that their interpretation of it is more secure. All this fits with the fact that the K'iche' is the largest single indigenous Maya group in Guatemala today.[119] It fits also with the fact that Rigoberta Menchú, a K'iche', in her autobiography is conspicuously willing to speak for all Maya, and is unself-conscious about doing so.[120] When she ran for President of Guatemala in 2007, she expected all the indigenous people to vote for her. In fact, while her candidacy was not very well supported within the K'iche' community, she got almost no support at all from other Maya ethnic groups.

The equivocation between seeing non-K'iche' either as continuous with or as background to the K'iche', or both, is also to be found in Menchú's writing and speeches. Sometime Europeans and European Guatemalans are spoken of as part of a context hostile to K'iche' aspirations and other times she sees and appeals to an underlying humanity that characterizes them as well as the K'iche', though the latter, she apparently believes, exemplify it more forcefully.

The difference between the Kaqchikel spatial treatment in textiles and tales, and that in the K'iche' suggests that the latter imagine fewer options for locating the outsider who comes into their community than do the Kaqchikel. The K'iche' way of imagining the space of community makes it hard for them to put a positive

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[119] According to the *World Factbook* published by the United States Central Intelligence Agency, the K'iche' are 9.1% of the total Guatemala population. The Kaqchikel, the second largest indigenous ethnic group, is 8.4%.

[120] This aspect of her *I, Rigoberta Menchú* is frequently noted and may well be related to the controversy surrounding the factuality of its content. See, among others, Arturo Arias, ed., *The Rigoberta Menchú Controversy* (Minneapolis, 2001).

value on otherness. Nevertheless, there are a couple options. One is for outsiders to cease being outsiders, and make K'iche' space their own and assimilate into the K'iche' community (which is an option far less likely to be imagined by the Kaqchikel). Another option, enabled by the K'iche' ability to tolerate ambiguity, is for the K'iche' to expand their imagining of what is not-other (an option that, like the first one, the Kaqchikel imagining of space rules out). While they cannot tolerate the non-K'iche' as readily as the Kaqchikel can the non-Kaqchikel, the K'iche' can move the boundaries of K'iche' space outward so that it becomes more inclusive, embracing as K'iche' the space of persons who had previously imagined themselves as non-K'iche'. But if neither of these options is exercised, the K'iche' tend to treat the outsider as a person who distorts the nature of human space and is unacceptable within the K'iche' community.

Moreover, the equivocation in the K'iche' grasp of the nature of space means that the second option is exercised only ambiguously. In believing that difference and otherness have a meaning but being only almost able to discern what they are, the K'iche' know they are seeing a befogged mirror. Perhaps it is partly because of just this imprecision about the meaning of others and otherness that K'iche' are famously distrustful of outsiders, particularly the Kaqchikel from Sololá. Not knowing exactly how to categorize outsiders, the K'iche' are uncertain how to deal with them. There are many cultures in which people prefer the evil they know and fear it less than the evil they don't know or know only partially, even if the latter is actually less threatening. Of course, there are good historical reasons, including violence and treachery, going back to pre-colonial times, for the K'iche' to have ambivalent attitudes toward their Kaqchikel neighbors, and these reasons are reflected in, reinforced by, and carried forward in the *Popol Vuh*. The ambiguities of the way the textiles relate contrasting spaces to one another make sense, then, as a re-imagining of exactly these attitudes.

The Kaqchikel, in both their story-telling and their weaving, envision a space that is so completely contrary to some other space that the two are completely irrelevant to one another except that they may be joined in some non-rational way,

like the connection by color in the lavender band to the band of flowers in the Comalapa textile. In a sense this connection explains the contrast between the two spaces (the non-rationality of the point surmounts and takes into itself the non-rationality of the juxtaposition), but it does not reduce the contrast between them. Quite the contrary, in fact: it seems to bring into the open the impossibility of co-ordinating the two kinds of spaces that might or might not be hostile or irrelevant or inaccessible. This aspect of the weaving fits with the fact that Kaqchikel towns and villages (conspicuously Sololá) permit non-Kaqchikel to live among them, but they are barred from holding office in the religious-political hierarchy.

Thus, the K'iche' can imagine the non-K'iche' person living in their midst only as a new member or as a suspicious visitor or as an unwelcome outsider or as an intruder. By contrast, the Kaqchikel, imagining the non-Kaqchikel as living in a contrasting kind of space, can imagine all but the first of these and some additional ones: guest, honored outsider, resident alien with a special role.

That the Kaqchikel and the K'iche' misunderstand each other and, because they misunderstand each other differently, misunderstand the nature of the misunderstanding does not set them apart from other groups. It is not unusual for groups to imagine outsiders in a way that fits with other features of the group's imagining and hence differently from the way the outsiders imagine them. That being the case, the pertinent questions become, Are the imaginings hardening into concepts that stiffen as more evidence accumulates to validate them? and, When they imagine the outsider, is there a dynamic toward wishing or even longing to understand the outsider, while still respecting her or his place, namely precisely that of outsider?

6. RE-IMAGINING COMMUNITY: THE MEETING AND BLENDING OF IMAGININGS IN DIFFERENT MEDIA

Asymmetrical misunderstandings not only characterize communities vis-à-vis one another, but also subcommunities and individuals. Mostly famously, men and women are puzzled by the other's particular mode of misunderstanding. Karl Barth leads his reader into helpful considerations in this regard when he writes,

> Among the immediate data of existence there is certainly no greater riddle for man than the fact of the existence of woman and the question as to her nature. And on the other hand the same applies to women. We need not think that a man can exist without encountering this riddle and being occupied with it, nor need we think that he has already solved it. To live humanly means never to escape the astonishment of one's own sex at the other, and the desire of one's sex to understand the other.[121]

To love a person of the other gender is to recognize the fact of the riddle and to enjoy rather than fear or resent it. Otherwise, non-understanding distorts into misunderstanding. For a community to "live humanly" with another community correspondingly means to recognize the fact of otherness, to respect the other precisely in its otherness and, above all, to take delight in the fact of otherness.

Thinking about these questions makes one realize quickly two things about the imagining of community taken up in prior chapters. First, the depth of the non-understanding between the Kaqchikel and the K'iche', serious though it is, is considerably surpassed by that between the Maya and the Spanish in their respective experiences of the decorations of the colonial Spanish churches in Antigua.[122] Though the Maya-Spanish misunderstanding seems close to total, it too is not absolute. If complete misunderstanding were a possibility and not a pole that, like complete understanding, is approached asymptotically, but never reached, it is

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[121] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, volume III. part 4, tr. A. T. Mackay *et al.* (Edinburgh, 1961), p. 167.

[122] See above, pp. 62-69.

hard to see how one person's or group's imagining could prompt another to do a re-imagining.

Second, in light of the asymmetry of the Kaqchikel and K'iche' takes on otherness, Wer's imagining looks a little different. It now becomes clear that his vision of two intermingling communities that share the same space, but remain two distinct communities, seems indifferent to the issue of basic underlying differences. He does not focus on underlying causes (such as differing apprehensions of otherness based on differing fundamental apprehensions of an inside/outside contrast), which may have separated communities in the past. Instead, he centers attention on re-imagining the present by imagining a future in which sharing more than space blunts the sharp edges of distinctiveness while taking advantage of its enlivening qualities and powers. The duality or "againstness" that he projects in the relation of the Spanish and the Maya does not seem to be as deep-seated or as thoroughgoing as the sort of mutual mis- or non-understanding that is discernible with respect to colonial church decoration. The entities set "against" one another seem to exist in the same kind of space for Wer, quite unlike the far more radical Kaqchikel imagining of otherness.

This indifference to what some regard as basic cultural assumptions is a reminder that no imagining of community is comprehensive or final. Every imagining is ready to be expanded, re-imagined or scuttled as soon as it is made. In Wer's case, the effect of indifference to the role of mutual misunderstanding is to focus attention on the desired outcome of reciprocal sharing of cultural components. From the point of view of this focus, it does not matter how the mutual isolation came about; the important thing is to get beyond it.

Conventional wisdom says that one must always deal with causes and not only with symptoms. Just the same, Wer's indifference may be benign. It may be that basic cultural differences can be tackled only obliquely, not directly. Wer is not upset if againstnesses persist, no matter how deep-seated they may be, so long as they are not destructive (as, for example, the ice-cream/malnutrition is). Oth-

erwise, he is not only content but glad to leave them in place even while they are joined, because they enrich and enliven community.

In addition, Wer's success in constructing joinings is relevant in a new way. As Chapter One pointed out, his joinings take elements from both sides of the seventeenth-century Spanish and Maya non-understanding, so that the sharp contrast between conversion-integration (the Spanish colonial attitude) and addition-interpenetration (the Maya attitude) is blunted. His work suggests that the contrasting attitudes on otherness that divide the Kaqchikel from the K'iche' can be joined by taking elements of each. His work can serve as a model for assessing such a joining.

For in fact the reciprocal borrowing of the other culture's motifs is already occurring among the Kaqchikel and K'iche', including and most interestingly in the textiles themselves. Kaqchikel are buying and using K'iche' weavings, and they are weaving some K'iche' motifs and aspects of space into their own textiles. At the moment, these borrowings seem to be thoroughly "Kaqchikelified"—that is, made to belong to the style of a Kaqchikel weaving. They are used in such a way that they contribute to the Kaqchikel creation and juxtaposition of contrasting spaces, not the K'iche'. If the process continues and intensifies, however, the spatial treatments may assimilate each other. That is, as the Kaqchikel space is re-imagined it may become less and less different from the K'iche' space. This is an especially interesting prospect for anthropologists, suggesting as it does that weaving may be a concrete way by which a community (namely an emerging Kaqchikel-K'iche' community) re-imagines itself. One hopes that, as this community emerges, it, like the community Wer imagines, will be one in which the sense of amazement is enlivened, not one that crushes the miraculous and stomps out gratitude.

In this context the nature of marimba performance suddenly has a new kind of bearing on Guatemalan community imaginings. Chapter Two emphasized the role of the "abstract performer." Enacted by but not identical with the actual person using the mallets, it has the role of infusing new energy into the musical flow

from outside that flow. The abstract performer is anonymous, while of course the person enacting the role is not. But the individual traits of that person do not matter, for he or she is expected to play as the music is to be played. The energy infused into the music is not the actual performer's energy (although, of course, in a different sense of expending energy, the music would not take place without the specific performer's energy). The performance may deviate slightly or somewhat from the tradition, but only within limits acceptable to the tradition and not in a way that is expressive of the individuality of the particular performer. It makes more sense to say that the abstract performer expresses the tradition of marimba performance itself than to attribute the excellences of the abstract performer to the actual performer. It is the tradition itself that is responsible for whatever change and growth in the tradition that occurs in the performance. In these several and important respects, the marimba performer is like the Maya weaver, for her work also is the work of the tradition; it expresses the tradition; it changes within the bounds set by the tradition; the tradition, the community as a collective, is in a real sense the weaver.

This powerful similarity makes the following difference important. The abstract marimba performer expresses itself simply by the infusing of energy, and not by the particulars of what that energy accomplishes. The expression implies that floating somewhere in the process is an obligation for the accomplishment to be worthy of the energy, but neither the abstract performer nor the energy infused by this abstraction sets the criteria of worthiness or the shape of the accomplishment. It limits the accomplishment only in the sense that creating it cannot spend more energy than the abstract performer has infused. Among other things, the textiles tradition, operative through the weaver, expresses the nature of the relation between inside and outside space. Like the infusion of energy, this expression is also open to various futures, but only to those futures. Whether they are open to a future that is impossible yet nevertheless may happen (Kaqchikel) or whether they express the reality of coordinating the present with the future but the impossibility of a clear view of that coordination (K'iche'), the co-presence of possibility with

impossibility severely attenuates the openness to the future in a way that the infusion of energy in marimba performance does not.

The contrast between the imagining that goes on in connection with marimba performance and that with color-generated space in the weaving pushes the following question to the surface: What happens when the imagining that goes on with marimba performance intertwines the imagining with the textiles? What happens when each of these occasions the re-imagining of the other? The open-ended energy of the marimba performance prompts such a re-imagining, and the ambiguity of the textiles' juxtapositions of deeply contrasting kinds of space is an openness to this prompting, though there are limits on that to which this openness may lead.

This statement makes explicit what was implicit at the end of Chapter Two. The infusion of energy is not limited to the replication of working to humanize material objects by making them serviceable for human use; it can also replicate the injection of new energy into human relationships, new energy into imagining the nature of otherness, a willingness to begin something new, a disposition to extend the tradition. Near the end of Chapter Two, the description of marimba performance brought to light the fact that the energy infused into ongoing processes during marimba performance does indeed work toward connecting the space of the dead with the very different space of the living as well as the space of men with the space of women. In addition to replicating the infusion of energy into human relations, it literally works toward creating a bond where there had been otherness—a togetherness where there had been a potential for antagonism between the living and the dead, between men and women, and between Achi and non-Achi. To be sure, it may well be easier to imagine moving from physical to spiritual space than from inside Achi to outside Achi space, but the dynamic for movement of this sort is built into the marimba performance.

The universality of the popularity of marimba performance in Guatemala indicates the universality of this dynamic toward joining disparate kinds of space and consequently joining people who live in mutually Other spaces and are there-

fore potentially antagonistic. In addition, wherever it is heard, and it is heard literally everywhere, people of different ethnic groups can enjoy the same thing, namely the infusion of energy into a flow that would otherwise become static. Enjoying the same thing, in this case as in the pleasures that Wer paints, creates a new space in which people from the different ethnic groups all participate equally and puts the sense of otherness into a new, somewhat subordinate, position.

Looking at the weavings and the stories by themselves, one may well feel that the impossibility of joining or coordinating contrasting spaces overbalances the other side of the ambiguity, namely that the joining, though impossible, happens or that the coordinating, though always a failure in concrete terms, is still somehow invisibly true. But looking again, now with the echoes of marimba music lingering in one's ears or the memories of Wer's re-imagining of the present by re-imagining the past or the future, one is invited to allow the other side of the ambiguity to have more weight. Or rather, one is encouraged to give the other side the weight that the textiles and tales in fact give them.

But to realize that possibility balances impossibility is not to lose touch with the sense of impossibility. And so, listening to marimba music again, now with the memory of juxtaposed woven spaces lingering in the mind's eye, one may see the vision of community that marimba performance replicates as somewhat unrealistic. While it may be easy to be enthusiastic in imagining a community whose source energizes and empowers without guiding and shaping, the past is still stubborn. The otherness that traditions enshrine are going to survive this enthusiasm. The confrontation with impossibilities in the textiles is a reminder that a sense of otherness is not immediately going desist from guiding and shaping. While the community that marimba performance involves is a community that requires participation on the part of its members, and always requires that one who participates also transcends the community, the persistence of the otherness of outsiders is going to go on requiring of insiders that even when they transcend the community they must also continue to participate in it.

To think along these lines is a specific example of the kind of back-and forth thinking described at the end of the first chapter. It is not as though the various imaginings were being comprehensively synthesized. Rather, they are allowed to correct one another and occasion re-imagining. One's concrete encounters with various imaginings of aspects of community prompt one to imagine community in ways that newly blend disparate elements, and then to modify them again. This prompting comes from all over the place, not just from weavings, stories, music, paintings or architecture, though it surely comes from all of these. It comes from other people's imaginings, political stresses, the impact of changes in the weather, natural disasters, unmotivated acts of kindness, and responses to illness, accidents and death.

If a community that is listening to performance of marimba music and also wearing textiles and also hearing folktales is a community that is re-imagining its space and its relation to Others and their space, then something of the same sort must be happening with tourists who visit Guatemala and are enchanted by its music and weavings. They may be finding in the textiles some aspects of their own spaces imagined. For example, the kind of juxtaposition and contrariness that they are already feeling between their moral space and outsiders' Newtonian space may be played back to them concretely for the first time. This rapport is one side of the immediate appeal and fascination that the textiles have for them.

The other side is a sense of mystery, a sense that something is going on in these weavings that is uncanny, something for which their own experience has not prepared them. The overlap between the juxtaposed contrasting spaces imagined in the textiles and the juxtapositions of partly joined spaces in their own imagining of community is not complete. The strength of the appeal and fascination is a challenge to amplify and re-imagine the spaces in which they had thought they lived. Their confrontation with the various arts of Guatemala is an exercise in becoming intimately acquainted with a people through hearing and seeing their re-imaginings of their community. It is also an exercise in doing for themselves what they see and hear the Guatemalans doing.

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