

## Borderlands Epistemologies in *Hombres de maíz*

RISHU SHARMA

Amity School of Languages, Amity University, Gurugram (Haryana) India

### ABSTRACT

The present article seeks to demonstrate the presence of Borderlands epistemologies in *Hombres de maíz* by Miguel Angel Asturias. It postulates that some decolonial aspects of the novel closely correspond to the decolonial process suggested in the Borderlands theory propounded by Gloria Anzaldúa. It aims to identify those decolonial methods advanced in the novel, which are similar to the decolonial process illustrated in the Borderlands theory. It argues that the novel exhibits, to some degree, the same process of decolonizing the inner self, which is proposed in Anzaldúa's theory. As the novel precedes the theory, this work is a discursive attempt to analyse an old work from theoretical tools of a relatively contemporary theory. The idea is to give a fresh expression to this work of Asturias by underscoring the decolonial elements of the work through the application of modern theoretical tools. Due to the lopsided focus on the novel's elements of magical realism and mestizo identity, the implied aspects of decolonization have largely gone unnoticed. Both Borderlands theory and *Hombre de maíz* (as an *indigenista* work) derive their subject matter from colonialism. They expose the malevolent elements of colonialism to substantiate the deleterious ramifications colonialism has had on the native population. Today, we are in a position to critically analyse decolonization and understand it through much more nuanced theoretical frameworks. To analyse a relatively old fictional work within a modern theoretical framework resuscitates the work by underlining and explaining those elements which have been overlooked due to the lack of appropriate theoretical foundation. It also gives us an opportunity to appreciate those elements of the work which were overlooked in the past.

**Key Words :** Borderlands theory, Borderlands epistemologies, *mestiza* consciousness

### INTRODUCTION

While *indigenista* novels have been exhaustively read and researched for its contribution to the cause of the indigenous communities, little to no inquiry has been done to understand its contribution to decolonization. Written in an era of intense Latin American nationalism, arguably relying on elements of western epistemologies to formulate arguments, their decolonial essence could not be underscored more than that of their willingness to raise the issues of exploitation and discrimination against the indigenous communities. While the reliance on western-centered inquiries can be noticed in the first half of the *indigenista* tradition in the novels like *Aves sin nido*, *Huasipungo*, *Tungsteno*, *El indio*, *Raza de bronce*, the second half transgresses the forms of

representation based on western knowledge system. Led by *Hombres de maíz* and *Yawar fiesta*, the second half of the *indigenista* novels of the *indigenista* tradition tried to frame Latin American indigeneity, dismissing the elements of the western theoretical corpus. However, the fantastic and mythical aspects of the novels overshadowed the other aspects of the works, mainly their contribution to decolonization.

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Today, when the voice for decolonization is being raised by indigenous theorists themselves, applying indigenous epistemologies, it is worthwhile looking back at those decolonial methods which were the precursors of contemporary decolonial theories. To select old works

with possible decolonial elements and compare them with more advanced theoretical articulations against colonization and coloniality helps us highlight the similarities, shortcomings and deviations in the earlier decolonial texts.

Gloria Anzaldúa's decolonial theory fits well in the context of *Hombres de maíz*. Like the decolonial theory of Anzaldúa, which focuses on the inner-self of the colonized individual, *Hombres de maíz* focuses on exploring the colonized minds and concepts, and the strategies such minds use to overcome psychological coloniality. However, we must understand that this study will not be able to decipher all the meanings implied by the author in his work. It is impossible to tap entirely the decolonization methods present in Asturias's writing. Some ideas analysed within the theoretical framework will be valid, and some will not.

### **Borderlands theory:**

The Borderlands theory is one of the most renowned decolonial theories of contemporary times. Gloria Anzaldúa propounded it. In her book, *Borderlands/ la frontera the new mestiza* Anzaldúa critically analyses her own complicated position as a person who is a part of two distinct cultures and the same time not completely a part of either of them. She explains what it is like to be positioned between two different cultures. She examines her position of ambiguity and seeks to carve out her own identity, being a *Chicana* woman in a dominant Anglo-Saxon society. She puts forth the Borderlands theory as a project to find meaningful ways to decolonize the inner-self of a person positioned in a Borderland(s) situation. She outlines her complicated positioning, "Alienated from her mother culture, 'alien' in the dominant culture, the woman of colour does not feel safe within the inner life of her Self. Petrified, she cannot respond, her face caught between los intersticios, the spaces between the different worlds she inhabits" (p.20).

For Anzaldúa, every identity is created based on a certain kind of difference. In her opinion, however, the way forward in a pluralistic society is to recognise and accept the differences and pluralities within one's self and in the society at large. As Hammad summarizes Anzaldúa's idea of Borderlands, "Anzaldúa's Borderlands exemplifies the articulation between the contemporary awareness that 'all' identity is constructed across difference and argues for the necessity of a new politics of difference to accompany this new sense of self" (p.

303). This unity in differences that she espouses is what she calls a border consciousness, which makes this theory constructive and integrational. Today her Borderlands theory is applied in many academic disciplines such as Chicano studies, cultural studies, and women's studies.

To sequentially understand the stages of decolonization in Borderlands theory is a difficult task because it is theorized in a nonlinear manner. In *Borderlands Theory: Producing Border Epistemologies with Gloria Anzaldúa*, Orcozo takes up the task of sequentially explaining the processes of Borderlands decolonization. Orcozo explains the concept like *nepantla* and *laconcienciadela mestiza* with an attempt to make the theory more intelligible. He arranges the processes involved in a sequential manner from *nepantla* to *la conciencia de la mestiza*. He quotes Anzaldúa to explain the concept *nepantla* "people who are in the process of cross from one class to another, one country to another or one identity to another, go through a transition *nepantla* state, which is a part of Borderlands (quoted in K. Urch, 78).

He later elaborates,

*we infer that Nepantla is a Borderland process, more typically called nepantla state where the self is going through a process of transiting inside the mind, the psyche and the spirit simultaneously... we need to go through Nepantla in order to understand that there are many ways of knowing, that epistemologies also exist outside the western ideology and that we have many processes of learning, being, and expressing outside the rigid categories that aim to construct people's identity in one particular way (p. 46).*

Both Anzaldúa's and Orcozo's explanation of *Nepantla* implies that in this phase one goes through the realization that there are multiple forms and ways of knowing and acquiring knowledge. This stage reveals that there are choices, as opposed to epistemic determinism of the western knowledge system. It is a journey towards knowing who one is; it is a journey towards endorsing oneself and selecting and rejecting by one's own choice. He further elaborates on the *Coaticue* stage, the most painful in the whole journey towards *mestiza* consciousness. It is the stage wherein realization made in the *nepantla* stage is absorbed. As he continues, he quotes Anzaldúa yet again to reveal the importance of this stage in attaining *mestiza* consciousness "when

you are in the midst of *Coatlicue* stage, you're hibernating or hiding you are gestating or giving birth to yourself. You're in a womb state. When you come out that womb state you pass through the birth canal, the passage I call *nepantla* (Anzaldúa and Keating quoted in Orozco, 2000: 225)". He explains to us using the above quotation that this is the stage where we kill the colonized identity. It is the questioning stage. It is when both imposed and desired identities are scrutinized to recognize the source and site of oppression. Then comes the *Coyolaxahuqi* stage, as we begin to make sense of all experiences and rediscover ourselves; it is the stage of self-acceptance. He explains that *Coyolaxahuqi* is not only about having a coherent understanding of one's 'Self' but also in the context of our surroundings: social, economic, and political. This is the state wherein one recognizes the multiple aspects of the 'Self'. One acknowledges the multiplicity of one's own identity (being influenced by many other cultures) and the vanity of claiming 'a single self'. It is from here one gets ready to move towards *mestiza* consciousness. It is the final stage where one no more thinks or acts like 'colonized'. One speaks, defines, and theorizes for oneself. This is how she describes the new identity:

The new *mestiza* copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. She learns to be an Indian in Mexican culture, to be a Mexican from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode nothing is trusted out, the good the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only she sustains contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else (Anzaldúa, 1987: 79).

We note from the above statement that in this final stage, the person is born anew. Things that pursued like a shadow, in the past, no more haunt, trouble, or unsettle. There is a complete acceptance of one's 'Self'. The marginalized upon reaching the *mestiza* consciousness gains voice, demands, and contests. It is not only a stage of awareness of who one is but also a stage to speak out to and to voice one's feelings.

### **Contextualizing Borderlands theory:**

To understand a possible correlation between the Borderlands theory and the idea of decolonization in *Hombres de maíz*, one of the *indigenista* novels, we need to look at their direct relation with colonialism. Both the theory and the novel derive their subject matters from

colonialism, as we already mentioned earlier.

Although, the theory underscores its contemporary relevance, it certainly has a colonial context. Anzaldúa herself re-examines the colonial myths imputing the present troubles of the colonized minds to the narratives and practices of the colonial times. It is during these times borders began to be drawn, shaped, and reshaped.

We know that the conquest of Latin America was carried out on the premise of European superiority and Spaniards' moral responsibility to civilize the New World. However, one questions: What compelled the successors of the same conquistadores to drive out the Spaniards from Latin America? What possibly led such a disdain for the Spaniards? In Anzaldúa's theory we find a new answer to the above questions: the Borderlands. She "remaps our understanding of what a border is, presenting it not as a simple divide between here and there, us and them, but as psychic, social and cultural terrain that we inhabit, and that inhabits all of us" (Anzaldúa, 2007).

The *Peninsulares* felt superior to the *criollos* and thus acting as per their notion of relative superiority, they sowed the seed of Latin American independence. The *criollos* loathed the European notion of superiority, which had once driven their ancestors to conquer the entire continent of Latin America. The *criollos* and the elite *mestizos*, struggled to find recognition and equal opportunities in the colonies ruled by the Spaniards. They felt discriminated against and marginalized. Although the colonies were politically an integral part of the Spanish Kingdom, the psychological border was drawn with time by the peninsular officers who oversaw the highest offices in the colonies. In addition, the policies of Spain did not create a favourable environment for the *criollos* and the *mestizos*. It was then, the idea of Latin America began to germinate. The *criollos* and the *mestizos* could sense a divide, a Borderland that suffocated them.

It was partly a struggle against their 'Self' because the European values were still at the core of being *criollos*, or upper-class *mestizos*. They were compelled to look elsewhere. The values and cultures of communities at the periphery which were overlooked before, began to gain a favourable place. Little by little, they began to theorise their existence independent of their inherited European identity. As the notion of being equals to *Peninsulares* began to dwindle, to value oneself, there was a need to value everything that constituted Latin America.

The elites began to reconsider their association with European identity. While there was a sense of pride having achieved independence, a perpetual crisis of identity loomed over them. If they were neither Europeans nor Indians, who were they? How would they position themselves in terms of identity? For this rediscovery of Latin America, it was important to look for values and beliefs which could establish Latin America as an epistemologically independent space.

The Borderlands were created by the *Peninsulares* by underlining the geographical border that lay between Spain and its colonies, and the psychological border between the ones born in Spain and the ones born in the colonies. Though the Spaniard left, the first Borderland created by the Spaniards (during the times of conquest) remained in place: the divide between the European roots and indigenous roots.

Now the question was: would they go back in time to present with pride their Spanish ancestry, or would they finally associate themselves with the native population whom they disparaged to feed their notion of superiority?

Another dimension of the Latin American war of independence that is often rebuffed is the fact that the *criollos* were not treated as badly as the mainstream history tries to portray. Tomas Perez Vejo did an interesting study on this subject in his article *Criollos contra peninsulares: la bella leyenda*. He points out the exaggeration of the narrative of discrimination and bias by the *peninsulares*. He accentuates that the political position of the *criollos* was not as bad as the historiographers often portray. He cites the example of the liberator himself who, when in Spain was very close to the people of the King's inner circle. He was never treated with disdain based on him being a *criollo*. Borderlands was thus not entirely the *Peninsulares'* work. The powerful *criollos* who wanted to seize power had a fair share in advancing the narrative of discrimination.

The material and psychological advantage of being the sole owner of America did not provide them a sense of identity. In this sense, we can say that, to some extent, the Borderlands existed not only when the *peninsulares* were ruling the colonies but even in their absence. While leaving, the *peninsulares* had taken away with themselves the European pride. The *Criollos* were left to search for themselves, things they could call their own; things that could constitute their identity, well beyond the one of being the offspring of the Spaniards.

This was a tricky endeavour. It was difficult for these elites with their new found power to suddenly accept the elements of the indigene.

As for the indigenous population, initially, independence was an event of no consequence. At the socioeconomic level, they remained excluded and at the margin. However, Latin American independence jolted the stagnant idea of (*buen*) *salvaje*. The elites (*Criollos*) knew that it was not possible to ignore the elements of the indigene, if they wanted to carve a non-European identity for themselves. It was the time to revise the idea of the *Indio*.

The *mestizos* who earlier shied away from their indigenous roots began to gradually see their indigenous connection in a positive light. To rescue their own identity, for them, it was important to rescue the indigenous one. It is in this positive vein that the *indigenista* writing began. Though indeed, the Borderlands experiences (not specifically talking in a spatial sense) were different in the context of the indigenous population, it was the *criollo-mestizo* duo who, based on their experiences of Borderlands, began to revise their approach to look at the indigenous communities.

The *indigenista* writing began with a sympathetic outlook toward groups that were left at the periphery. These writings tried to raise their issues and concerns. With time, the non-indigenous population began to discover their association with the elements of the indigene.

*Among these indigenista novels, Hombres de maíz has the distinction of being the first work of its kind, which portrays Latin America from a distinct non-European epistemic approach.*

The analysis of *Hombres de maíz* from Anzaldúa's theoretical framework has its limitations. One could argue that Anzaldúa's experiences are regional and gender-specific that do not encompass the concerns of other indigenous communities in conflict with other cultures.

However, we must understand that Anzaldúa does not present her experiences as an isolated case. She speaks for all marginalized communities around the world. She never loses sight of the bigger picture. She underlines that her own experience is not singular but general as Orozco accentuates "while the ideological dimension of the term is not associated with any particular cartographic space... but rather they can exist everywhere" (p. 2). When she talks about the borders, she does not refer specifically to the Mexico-US border. She says that the borders shift continually, and when she talks of

Borderlands, she does not refer to the spatial borders alone rather she also incorporates ideological dimensions of the borders.

Between the binary of the *indigene* and the European, *Hombres de maíz* came up as a synthesis of the two distinct epistemologies. While the European aspects of Latin America were accepted without shying away, the indigenous elements were underscored.

The article identifies two ways of tracing the Borderlands epistemologies in *Hombres de maíz*:

First by finding out and analysing those elements used in the novel which reconfigures meanings, concepts, and categories appropriated during colonial times; second, by ascertaining whether if the processes from *nepantla* to *mestiza* consciousness (*la conciencia de la mestiza*) find their way in the writing of *Hombres de maíz*.

In colonial Latin America, one of the ways of creating a Borderlands situation was by completely down playing the existence of indigenous epistemologies. In the first part of the analysis, therefore, we will focus on those elements which Asturias brought back to fore, which were subdued by the western epistemologies. Later in the second part, we will examine the process from *nepantla* to *mestiza* consciousness that the novel presumably exhibits.

### Curse:

Curse as a weapon of revenge reinstates the indigenous knowledge system. Curse is central to the creation of the plot of the novel. The material superiority of the colonizers makes the indigenous population vulnerable to oppression and abuse, but still, the indigenous community has a weapon in curse. The western mind, with its scientific bent, spurns mythical elements as worthless, which makes the indigenous revenge unexpected. If we look at how the wizards take revenge on the destroyers of Llóm, we notice that their death comes in a planned manner. However, in their haughty ignorance, they never take notice of their inevitable end. Without any inkling of death nearing them, they carry on (indifferent to the curse) till death strikes them. Asturias is conscious of the fact that colonial oppression is still in continuance, and the time-tested methods of exploitations of the colonizers are still in vogue. The upper echelon of the society might have repelled the *Peninsulares* but they have kept the colonial institutions of oppression alive. By highlighting the potency of the curse, Asturias underlines the shield (in the form of their belief systems) of the

oppressed sections of the society. The death of all who were involved in the destruction of Llóm comes as a lesson that the indigenous curse is of no laughing matter. The indigenous curses are no less fatal than modern weapons.

### Notion of time:

The nonlinear notion of time is central to the indigenous belief system. The novel exposes the failure of the western sense of reason to understand that in the indigenous culture, the past carries itself in the present. The indigenous way of thinking sees a circular pattern in events. The story of Gaspar Llóm is the example with which the novel tries to relate the uneasiness of the indigenous people who have been forced into a social system in which the concept of time is linear. The indigenous cyclic sense of time leaves the natives perturbed in a class-based society in which desire to progress overshadows the importance of heritage, past, and customs.

### Nahual:

While parallels of the concept of nahual can be drawn in western culture, the system of nahual is unique in many ways. It tells that indigenous communities are simply a part of the rest of the natural world. Nahual reveals the deep sense of association that the Indigenous communities have with the world around them. The anthropocentric approach of western culture faces inherent difficulties in understanding why the native communities attach so much importance to other living things around them. Western culture fails to understand the natives' intrinsic relationship with nature. The *Ladinos'* excesses against the nature affect the indigenous minds directly. *Hombres de maíz* is the first novel of the *indigenista* tradition in which we are led into the mind of an agitated native: "Gaspar se estiró, se encogió, volvió a mover la cabeza de un lado a otro para moler la acusación del suelo" (p. 7). Gaspar is agitated, perturbed and furious.

It is a perspective from the other side. Asturias puts the native point view in proper perspective. He models it in a way that the readers from the West can understand Gaspar's disquiet and uneasiness, without finding anything exotic. Moreover, his feelings are the result of external disturbances created by a culture known to cause such uneasiness even within its group. A psychological inquiry of the native minds also shows that the natives are a

thinking being. The notion that natives were savages without the capacity for logical thinking dissuaded any kind of inquiring into their thought process. The fact that there was another way of looking at the world, the indigenous way, was put forth by Asturias.

The question is: How do the above three elements that are accentuated in the novel find their place in the Borderlands theoretical framework? We know that in the sites of Borderlands, be it psychological, political, or geographical, different groups compete for social, cultural, and economic dominance. Borderlands are created to ensure exclusion and difference. It is the idea of exclusion and difference that justifies oppression and discrimination. Therefore, one can say that the Borderlands are sites of discriminatory practices. The three elements that we highlighted are those elements which were subdued and ignored in order to create a border between the colonial and the indigenous population. The curse is the last resort of a helpless being who has no other way to resist the wrong. The curse is powerful not because of the strong choices of words but because of its associations with the forces much more powerful than human beings. We must consider the helpless situation in which the indigenous communities were during the conquest's times. While the suicidal conquistadores had nothing to lose apart from their life, for the indigenous people, everything was at stake. It was not a conflict between two armies but between native civilians and a foreign army. In order to compensate this mismatch, the indigenous communities sought the intervention of their gods. These curses did not rely on the power of the words uttered but on the power of those gods whom they thought had the ultimate say. By exposing the dominant society's indifference to these curses, Asturias demonstrates the stubbornness of the western mind, which thinks itself as the centre of all knowledge. Chalo Godoy epitomizes this presumption. His words and actions exude ultimate wisdom. He portrays himself as a man of superior wisdom who has unmatched mastery of his profession. He praises Gaspar Llóm only to prove that he is better than the legendary Gaspar himself.

Both Anzaldúa and Asturias directly defy the western sense of linear time. Neither Anzaldúa in her book nor Asturias in his novel show any inclination towards linearity of time and themes. They go against the western notion of categorization and classification of knowledge. Non-linearity of themes and time is again a reinforcement of the ways of expression which are

unfamiliar in the context of western epistemologies.

The third element, the *nahual*, portrays the *mestiza* consciousness of the author. The characters like Nicho Aquino and Goyo Yic are people who experience multiple cultural influences regardless of their indigenous background. Notwithstanding their non-indigenous way of life, their *nahual* remains with them all along. Their *nahual* remains along their side in their multiple cultural experiences. Asturias's portrayal of city-based men still in association with their *nahuals* shows Asturias is conscious of the influence of multiple cultures on the identity of a person in a colonized site and that the idea of single Self does not hold in multicultural spaces. An indigenous person will continue to have different elements of different cultures which will influence her or his identity.

### **From *Nepantla* to *Mestiza* Consciousness:**

If one compares how the plot in *Hombres de maíz* begins, develops, and sums up, with the colonization of entire Latin America, one is sure to find similarities. One can argue that the story of Llóm is a story of many Latin American villages.

In a post-conquest period, in a village named Llóm, the military arrives to save the *macieros* from the indigenous onslaught. The Indigenous community believes in sustainable farming and conservation of natural resources, which they consider sacred. They yet again face a situation wherein they must respond violently. The greedy *macieros* ignore the warnings, and conflict begins. After a bloody conflict with the rescuers of *maiceros*, Llóm meets the same fate as hundreds of other indigenous villages in Latin America. With the death of Gaspar, the indigenous community disintegrates. Llóm is destroyed, so is the social structure of the people of Llóm. The disintegrated indigenous community is left on its own. Everyone is left to confront his own identity; and this is when their journey towards *La conciencia de la mestiza* begins.

With the passing of time, and Gaspar from a real character becomes a legend. People talk about him in passing, unsure of what exactly happened in Llóm, "La guerra sigue. En Pisigüilito, según dicen, son bastantes los que no creen que Gaspar Llóm haya hecho viaje al otro mundo con sólo tirarse al río" (p.53). The colonizers erase the history of Llóm, and the community wanders in a society and system foreign to their way of life. Out of the indigenous organizational setup, the community gets

dispersed, and they all fend for themselves in the same chaos which Anzaldúa theorizes.

The indigenous community in reference goes through the Borderlands experiences after the fall of Llóm. Anzaldúa talks about multiple actors in the Borderlands. In the novel, too, we come across many individuals and groups who are different from one another in their psychosocial makeup transact and interact among themselves. The indigenous 'Self' is influenced and shaped by external actors. After the death of Gaspar Llóm, Llóm falls, the forest is cleared, and apparently, the indigenous population is displaced. Outside Llóm, with no social structure to hinge on, they come across people different from them. As Ariel Dorfman explains, the situation of indigenous people after the disintegration of Llóm: "... are uprooted, lose their roots, not only in a metaphorical sense but also becoming vagabonds upon the earth, denier sacred vegetable growth." (1991, p. 3) Their wandering exposes them to many other cultures, eroding little by little a single self with which they start the journey. Anzaldúa sees this presence of multiple individuals and groups in a positive light. For her, this difference is not the reason to disassociate from one another. She advocates that for achieving the Borderlands consciousness, it is necessary to recognize the differences. Asturias, too, portrays these contacts with other cultures as a natural process. He presents these interactions without exaggerating the so-called "encuentro". The thing that Asturias does highlight as a result of these contacts is the change in the inner-self: from a calm to an uneasy self. The characters are unsure of their identity, who they are, and where they fit in? This *nepantla* stage is epitomized in Goyo Yic and Nicho Aquino.

Later, in these two characters, we notice a heightened sense of confusion, a painful situation which Anzaldúa terms *Coatlicue* state. Both Goyo Yic and Nicho Aquino begin to struggle with their identity. The absence of their wives creates an uneasy void in them. Nicho Aquino goes out in search of his wife and ends up in the *inframundo*. "Por la noche subieron los conductores del veneno a darle muerte, en medio de una fiesta. Sus labios chuparon de un guacal de aguardiente el veneno blanco, sorbiéndolo por poquitos con el licor. La Piojosa Grande, su mujer, se despeñó al verle los labios salóbregos de veneno. El Gaspar quiso matarla, pero llevaba a su espalda el bulto de su hijo" (p. 223). This is where probably el Curandero justifies the escape of

Nicho Aquino's wife. She just like Piojosa Grande, María Tecún and for that matter, like many other *Tecúnas* runs away to seek continuity. We cannot tell for certain that Nicho Aquino reaches that enlightened state, the *conciencia mestiza*, but the words of el Curanderodocalm down Nicho Aquino. Nicho Aquino realizes that his wife was not a disloyal woman (she had simply died on her way home) nor were those who had fled. He accepts his new identity, and to start life anew; he goes elsewhere instead of returning to his village. As for Goyo Yic, he does go through a stage where he confronts all his identities: as an uprooted *indígena*, as the husband of a runaway wife and as a jobless man in a class-based society. After his eyes are restored, he realizes the uselessness of his eyes in recognizing María Tecún. He wanders in vain, struggling to figure out how he will be able to recognize María Tecún. In this helplessness, he indulges in adultery, and his *nahual* leaves him. Time changes him. He transforms into a new person. He confesses to Domingo Revolorio, about his fading memory of María Tecún and the numbness he feels within. "Pero ha pasado tanto tiempo, que ahora ya no siento nada. Antes, compadre, la buscaba para encontrarla; ahora para no encontrarla". He is no more the same Goyo Yic. He has a faint memory of the Goyo Yic of the past, as if that Goyo Yic was not him but a different person. The passing away of time breaks him; he ceases to be who he was. Ariel Dorfman underlines this transformation of Goyo Yic and the rest of the character of in the work "Goyo lives a specific experience of forgetting, all subjectivity being absorbed by the picaresque action of time. It is the same thing that happens in the rest of *Men of Maize*, where something is lived through so that later it may remain encapsulated in the future word, distancing itself from its true form at the same time that it reflects it..." (In *Men of Maize*, p. 401).

Although Dorfman mentions this in the context of creation legends in the novel, we find it equally true in context of Borderland experiences in which with the passing of time and with new experiences, the single Self of the past is lost. There is a clear loss of the original identity of the past. Goyo Yic confession of having lost the desire to find his wife can be equated with the *Coatlicue* stage of his Borderland journey.

After María Tecún, runs away, we do not know much about her whereabouts, her life's journey, till we read the conversation between Hilario Sacayon and

Benito Ramos where we get to know that she married Benito Ramos after fleeing away from Goyo Yic. We also learn that she is no more that homely wife who stoically bore the rants of Goyo Yic; she is a guerrilla fighter now. We notice all the other indigenous characters go through, in some way or the other, a kind of identity transformation.

The legend of *Tecúna* and the constant running away of wives in the novel is symbolic in a way, as Dorfman puts it “the same situation circulated through the novel three times, in a different distinguished form each time, each time contributing to the legend, to the need to relate in atemporal form, the fact of separation, the loss of the past and one’s origins, the need to make oneself a stone against time.”(In *Men of Maize*, p. 407)

One may wonder how does the return of Tecún family to start the indigenous way life all over again fits into the Anzaldúa’s theoretical framework. As per her theory, the *conciencia* comes when one is ready to accept what is irreversible without any feeling of remorse. For her the *conciencia mestiza* is to accept that hybridity, which is the result of the painful transactions of the past. There can be various interpretations of their return. From an essentialist perspective, this return might signify ‘the return to the original’ (the pre-Columbian ways). It might mean rejection of all that they have appropriated during contact with other actors.

In order to understand what Asturias meant by the return of the Tecún family to the village of their origin (which is now called Pisigüilito, a hybrid space, instead of Llóm), we must look at Asturias’s opinion on the indigenous communities. He was opposed to the manipulation of indigenous communities in the name of progress and nation building. He recognized the fact that they were exploited and tortured, and the colonizers were corrupting the pure indigenous soul. The vices such as adultery and alcoholism are picked easily by the indigenous people in search of refuge to escape from their troubled state (which Asturias highlights in *Hombres de maíz*). Asturias was not an essentialist; rather, it was the exploitation that the indigenous communities suffered while in contact with the non-native population was something that bothered him. It is the *conciencia mestiza* of the author which makes him understand the damage done to the indigenous communities. In order to make amends for the injustice done to the Indians, he advocates non- interference in indigenous communities’ way of life. Throughout the novel, he elaborates on the ills of class-

based society in which a village-based community struggles to survive. He is aware of the impossibility of returning to the idyllic past that is why the Tecún family returns to Pisigüilito, a modern village, instead of Llóm (the indigenous village) which disintegrates forever after Gaspar’s disappearance.

The search for María Tecún and Isabra is symbolic. It symbolizes the indigenous wish to re-establish the broken link with their way of life. Loss of their women typifies the loss of the source of continuity. In the desperation of Nicho Aquino and Goyo Yic is engrained the restlessness of the community in general. It is the desperation to start all over again. Their peaceful return to Pisigüilito means that they happily seek a new beginning and are ready to leave the past behind; they have reached *the mestiza* consciousness (*la conciencia de la mestiza*) state.

### Conclusion:

Examining *Hombres de maíz* within Anzaldúa’s theoretical framework of Borderlands theory has, to a degree, revealed how ways of knowing appear discursively before they germinate into full-blown epistemologies. Much before Anzaldúa theorized the path towards the *mestiza* consciousness, in *Hombres de maíz* Asturias, using the knowledge of his pre-Columbian literature, proposed similar ways of decolonization. Though we cannot say from our finding that there are striking similarities between the two processes of decolonization, what we can say is that a few elements of decolonial process proposed in the Anzaldúa’s theory find their presence in *Hombres de maíz*. While Anzaldúa theorizes decolonization, Asturias through his fiction establishes that it is unnatural for human mind to sustain colonization. It is a human instinct to free one’s mind from subjugation. The theory as well as the novel tells us that human mind is instinctively free and when subjugated, it naturally strives to find its way to freedom. We saw that some characters of Asturias’ novel follow the path laid down by Borderlands theory. Characters like Goyo Yic, Nicho Aquino María Tecún, they all go through a painful journey before they attain the freedom of mind.

From the above study, we can conclude that new theories serve us well in extending existing knowledge. We can also conclude from the above analysis of *Hombres de maíz* that works of old genres (not in vogue anymore) can be presented in new light with application of new theories.

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