Fall 1996

Giving voice to the spirits: Storytelling in the service of Belizean literacy

Gerald Joseph Kelly
University of New Hampshire, Durham

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholars.unh.edu/dissertation

Recommended Citation

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Scholarship at University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctoral Dissertations by an authorized administrator of University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. For more information, please contact nicole.hentz@unh.edu.
Giving voice to the spirits: Storytelling in the service of Belizean literacy

Abstract
This dissertation examines the participation of indigenous storytellers in a textbook project undertaken by Belizean educators. A qualitative study of these narrators, who contributed both traditional stories and personal narratives, extended from February 1991 until February 1996 in Belize’s Toledo District. Featured narrators were interviewed and audio-taped by the author throughout this time period, as they contributed their oral lore to the project.

This investigation reveals the complex interrelationships of anthropological salvage and cultural renewal. Certain contemporary scholars decry what they perceive as the limited pastoral dimension of salvage, which may suggest that the true value of traditional stories lies primarily in the ‘golden’ past, rather than the dynamic present. Although the Belizean project includes a story collection dimension, this research demonstrates that local narrators frequently target contemporary audiences and engage in the selective maintenance of community cultural knowledge.

Observations of the Toledo storytellers indicate that their improvisational and emergent performances often result in the adaptation of traditional stories to contemporary audiences and issues. Profound moral and spiritual their moral and spiritual teachings to the active maintenance of peaceful communities and sustainable living on the land.

Certain Toledo storytellers are also providing for the multi-lingual insertion of their cultural knowledge and political views into the contested public arena of newly independent Belize’s national discourse. Many Creole, Garifuna (Black Carib), and Mayan narrators are adapting Belizean Creole English and English to make meaning and knowledge for cultural renewal. As a result of these expanding discursive activities, the textbook project potentially offers the foundation for a viable program of ideological literacy, one based on the local context and directed toward positive community action for cultural renewal, care for the environment, and community self-determination.

Keywords
Education, Language and Literature, Education, Sociology of, Anthropology, Cultural

This dissertation is available at University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository: https://scholars.unh.edu/dissertation/1912
INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

UMI
A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700 800/521-0600

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
GIVING VOICE TO THE SPIRITS: 
STORYTELLING IN THE SERVICE OF BELIZEAN LITERACY

BY

GERALD J. KELLY
BA, Catholic University of America, 1967

DISSERTATION

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire 
in Partial Fulfillment of 
the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy 
in 
Reading and Writing Instruction

September, 1996
All narratives used by permission of the authors, who retain any and all rights.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

© 1996

Gerald J. Kelly
This dissertation has been examined and approved.

John S. Lofty
Dissertation Director, Dr. John Lofty
Associate Professor of English

Richard E. Blot
Dr. Richard Blot, Assistant Professor of Education
Herbert H. Lehman College (CUNY)

Fabian Cayetano
Fabian Cayetano, Senior District Education Officer
Stann Creek District, Belize

Thomas R. Newkirk
Dr. Thomas R. Newkirk, Professor of English

Pearl Rosenberg
Dr. Pearl Rosenberg, Assistant Professor of Education (Emeritus)

Paula Salvio
Dr. Paula Salvio, Assistant Professor of Education

May 24, 1996
Date
DEDICATION

In memory of

Thomas Teul

who cared deeply for

his family, his people, his country, and his friends from afar.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study reflects the determination, compassion, curiosity, and caring of many people in Belize and at home who have actively supported Belizean literacy efforts and my research project.

To the narrators, whose interests are perhaps best served by anonymity, I offer my sincere thanks for sharing their stories with me and potentially for the children of Toledo. Their hope and confidence in the region's youth have continually been inspiring to me as a teacher and a parent.

I offer heartfelt thanks to all those Belizeans who welcomed me to their communities, their classrooms, and their homes. Educational leaders, including Julius Casimiro, Roy Cayetano, Hilda Gutierrez, and especially Fabian Cayetano have encouraged and counseled me throughout the entire project. I am grateful to the many teachers who shared their visions with me, especially Gregorio Chee, Eduard Higinio, Angelina Nicholas, Moses Palma, Joan Palma, Orlando Vernon, and Jeffrey Zuniega. Louis Cucul offered his knowledge and advice to me at every step of this process.

Members of the Toledo Mayan Cultural Council, particularly Leorardo Akal and Thomas Teul, have advanced my work and reviewed my transcriptions. William (Chet) Schmidt has been one of my best teachers, never hesitating to share critical information or challenge my hasty assumptions. I am thankful to Damien, Willy, Lucille, Silvano, Micala, Emerita, Solomon, Pablo, Virginia, Olympia, Mark, Winnie and Nolan, Alfredo and Yvonne for their many acts of kindness. I offer my deepest thanks to those people who have welcomed me into their homes, particularly...
the Acks in Columbia, the Miss family in Laguna, the Shos in Santa Cruz, Mrs. Arzu in Barranco, and Miss Francis Gonzalez, Mr. John Paulino, Miss Olivia Sentino, and Emmanuel (Petey) Jacobs in Punta Gorda.

I am truly fortunate to have close personal friends who lent their ears, eyes, and critical judgment to this effort. Nancy Brown, Ray Demers, Alice Meatey, Dick Meatey, Fred Metting, Richard Polonsky and Robin Read all shared and encouraged my interest in the region and this project. At Exeter High School, Superintendent Bill Clancy, Doris Bordinghaus, Ronan Donohoe, Cassandra Donovan, John Ferguson, Maryellen Morse, Terry Moher, Doris Pailes, Carlo Nittoli, Dean Scott, and Julian Whipple have continually provided me with assistance and inspiration. My special thanks to Dean for his excellent map of the region.

I am appreciative of the special friendships I have made as a member of the Belize-New Hampshire Teachers Program. Sheila Adams, Bert Cohen, Lisa Geelhood, and John Mullins created this experiment in citizen diplomacy and continually encouraged my efforts. I have traveled to Belize in the company of many fine educators, and I owe special thanks to Karolina Bodner, Subhana Bonner, Regina Byrnes, Enid Kelly, Gini Littlefield, and Brenda Whiteley for sharing their wisdom and companionship.

My sincere thanks are extended to US Ambassador George Bruno, an energetic supporter of Belizean literacy efforts and an ongoing provider of valuable information, even regarding issues that we view differently! Both the textbook project and I owe thanks to Princeton's Stephanie Fryberger for graciously sharing her research on traditional Mayan stories. Professor Barbara Tedlock of SUNY Buffalo provided early assistance with my work on visionary narratives.
As a member of the Reading and Writing Instruction Program, I became a member of a scholarly and caring community at the University of New Hampshire. Cindy Cohen has been my colleague and mentor in the pursuit of stories that affirm and renew. Val Aubry, Francisco Cavalcante, Carol Hawkins, Doug Kaufman, Lisa Lenz Bianchi, Andrea Luna, Carol Mulligan, Joann Portalupi, Kathe Simons, Kathy Staley, Donna Qualley, Cyrene Wells, and Carol Wilcox have all lightened my burdens along the way.

Many others at UNH have offered valuable assistance to this project. Jane Hansen welcomed me to the Reading and Writing Program and provided a valuable perspective as a former Peace Corps Volunteer. Tom Schram initiated me into the discipline of ethnographic research. Pat Sullivan, John Carney, Grant Cioffi and Bill Wansart were all there when I needed their help and guidance. At the Writing Lab, Elizabeth Lane has helped me 'navigate' the reefs and shoals of UNH.

I am truly fortunate to have worked with a dissertation committee that positioned me as a member of a research team. Tom Newkirk has encouraged my efforts for over ten years, always listening and occasionally probing my work with the pointed questioning of a Zen master. Paula Salvio spent countless hours with me, talking through every aspect of my research and providing continual enlightenment regarding the evanescent nature of performance. Throughout this cross-borders study, Pearl Rosenberg continually helped me to examine my research methodology, ethical choices, and personal responsibilities. Richard Blot, of Herbert H. Lehman College (CUNY), has been a rich source of anthropological scholarship, and tutored me in the rigorous discipline of ethnographic research. District Education Officer Fabian Cayetano has done double duty, guiding my efforts in Belize and helping to ensure the validity of my research as a committee member at the University of New Hampshire.
UNH. John Lofty, my dissertation advisor, has been an extraordinary mentor, and through our collaboration I have been transformed as a student, a teacher, and a person.

My family has endured my distractions, obsessions and absence during my years of research. My mother, Madeline, as well as Mary Ellen and Jim Kenny have bolstered my efforts throughout this project. My children, Erin and Sarah, have encouraged me and served as continual reminders what this study is all about. Maryellen, my wife and collaborator, has furthered my efforts and offered me ongoing personal support. A social worker by training, she has discussed the research issues with me throughout this effort and done much to ensure the integrity of this study. Her cooperation is woven into every page of this document.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**DEDICATION** ........................................................................................................ iv  
**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS** ......................................................................................... v  
**ABSTRACT** ........................................................................................................... xiii  

1. **GIVING VOICE TO THE SPIRITS** .................................................................. 1  
   - Hunting and Gathering Stories ...................................................................... 4  
   - Emerging Issues ............................................................................................ 6  
   - The Research Project ................................................................................... 9  
   - The Research Design ................................................................................ 12  
   - Purpose ........................................................................................................ 13  

2. **BACKGROUND CONSIDERATIONS** .......................................................... 16  
   - Geography .................................................................................................. 16  
   - History ....................................................................................................... 18  
   - Belizean Educational History .................................................................... 21  
   - Language .................................................................................................... 28  
   - Language History ....................................................................................... 28  
   - Multilingualism .......................................................................................... 30  
   - Creole ......................................................................................................... 31  
   - Language and Identity ............................................................................... 37  

3. **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY** ................................................................. 41  
   - Participant Observation ............................................................................... 43  
   - Research Techniques ............................................................................... 45  
   - Border Crossings and Reflexivity ............................................................... 51  
   - Critical Analysis ........................................................................................ 51  
   - Orality, Cognition, and Community Knowledge ........................................ 55  
   - Emergent Storytelling .............................................................................. 57  
   - Giving Voice to Ancestral Spirits ............................................................... 61  
   - Giving Voice to the Earth Spirits .............................................................. 64  
   - Research Summary ................................................................................... 67  
   - The Storytellers ......................................................................................... 68  

ix
4. CO-AUTHORS: IRMELINDA AND HER FAMILY’S STORYTELLING TRADITION

The Amerindian Peoples................................................................. 72
Irmelinda and Her Family............................................................... 75
Four Generations of Storytellers.................................................... 92
A Family of Co-authors................................................................. 99
Educational Implications.............................................................. 101

5. CULTURAL CONFLICTS: THE NARRATOR WHO WOULD NOT ALLOW HIS STORIES TO SEE THE LIGHT OF DAY

July 21, 1993, Daytime................................................................. 104
Nighttime, 7 PM........................................................................... 107
Spirit Voices.................................................................................. 108
Spirit Visions................................................................................ 115
A Cautionary Body of Knowledge................................................ 119
Educational Implications.............................................................. 126

6. WALKING WITH JESUS, DANCING WITH THE DEVIL:
BLENDING NATIVE AND WESTERN SPIRITUALITIES

"This Knowledge is Very, Very Deep"......................................... 131
A Vision of Jesus........................................................................ 140
Dancing with the 'Devils'............................................................. 144
Educational Implications.............................................................. 149

7. LIFE STORY: A WOMAN'S HISTORY EMERGES THROUGH HER STORYTELLING

The Market.................................................................................. 152
The Bush...................................................................................... 157
The Hearth................................................................................ 167
Educational Implications.............................................................. 178

8. HUNTER'S CODE: TRANSMITTING THE MESSAGE OF SUSTAINABLE LIVING

Creoles – Nation Builders from Africa and Asia.......................... 179
Bush-guide, Spirit-guide............................................................... 180
The First Story Session, July 1991.............................................. 181
Narrative and Moral Roots......................................................... 196
Emergent Performances and Bush Wisdom.............................. 209
The Cultural Renewal of His Bushcraft.................................... 214
Educational Implications.............................................................. 217
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. ANCESTRAL VOICES: RENEWING COMMUNITY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEYOND THE PALL OF DEATH</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Garinagu</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The World from Miss Annie's Porch</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Arts and Work</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garifuna Language Renewal</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving Voice to Ancestral Spirits</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Implications</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. VISIONARY TESTIMONY: SPREADING THE HILL SPIRIT'S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CALL FOR RENEWAL</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juan's Narrative in the Pan-Mayan Context</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Mission of Juan the Catechist</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Dimensions of Cultural Renewal</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Juan's Account and the Local Narrative Tradition</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Juan's Visionary Narrative in a Pedagogic Context</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Juan's Narrative in the Context of the Earth</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Implications</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. AFFIRMATION: IN THE &quot;DANCE HALL OF THE SPIRITS&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where Will the Howler Monkeys Go?</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerging Voices</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voices of Reconciliation</td>
<td>307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Voices</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. UNDERSTANDINGS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Context of Independent Belize</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvage, Renewal, and Creativity</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Language</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Literacy</td>
<td>328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Performance</td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Textualization</td>
<td>335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Cultural Knowledge</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications and Understandings</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Final Personal Note</td>
<td>347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLOSSARY</td>
<td>348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCE NOTES</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

GIVING VOICE TO THE SPIRITS:
STORYTELLING IN THE SERVICE OF BELIZEAN LITERACY

by

Gerald J. Kelly
University of New Hampshire, September, 1996

This dissertation examines the participation of indigenous storytellers in a textbook project undertaken by Belizean educators. A qualitative study of these narrators, who contributed both traditional stories and personal narratives, extended from February 1991 until February 1996 in Belize's Toledo District. Featured narrators were interviewed and audio-taped by the author throughout this time period, as they contributed their oral lore to the project.

This investigation reveals the complex interrelationships of anthropological salvage and cultural renewal. Certain contemporary scholars decry what they perceive as the limited pastoral dimension of salvage, which may suggest that the true value of traditional stories lies primarily in the 'golden' past, rather than the dynamic present. Although the Belizean project includes a story collection dimension, this research demonstrates that local narrators frequently target contemporary audiences and engage in the selective maintenance of community cultural knowledge.

Observations of the Toledo storytellers indicate that their improvisational and emergent performances often result in the adaptation of traditional stories to contemporary audiences and issues. Profound moral and spiritual dimensions frequently emerged in the performance of oral narratives. Storytellers addressed
dimensions frequently emerged in the performance of oral narratives. Storytellers addressed their moral and spiritual teachings to the active maintenance of peaceful communities and sustainable living on the land.

Certain Toledo storytellers are also providing for the multi-lingual insertion of their cultural knowledge and political views into the contested public arena of newly independent Belize's national discourse. Many Creole, Garifuna (Black Carib), and Mayan narrators are adapting Belizean Creole English and English to make meaning and knowledge for cultural renewal. As a result of these expanding discursive activities, the textbook project potentially offers the foundation for a viable program of ideological literacy, one based on the local context and directed toward positive community action for cultural renewal, care for the environment, and community self-determination.
CHAPTER ONE

GIVING VOICE TO THE SPIRITS

Punta Gorda, February 1990

"Are you a person of the evening star or are you a person of the morning star?" Gerineldo asked me this question at the seaside home of Nancy Brown, a mutual friend and Peace Corps health educator serving in Toledo, Belize's remote southern district. Gerineldo, a Kekchi Mayan farmer and health worker, had met his share of North Americans and probably suspected that I might waffle in my response.

"Well, I often stay up late and other times I rise early ... I like both ends of the day." I replied, sensing that he wanted a more direct answer.

"You are either one or the other! You cannot look at the evening star in one part of the sky and see the morning star at the same time. It can't be done," Gerineldo simply but emphatically stated as we sat talking after a fried fish supper in Nancy's kitchen. He said that some other time I must hear the old Mayan story of the birth of the sun and the moon.

I knew I had failed his initial test on this our first meeting, but I was relieved when he indicated that he was willing to work on the education district's textbook project in the future. As a board member of the Toledo Mayan Cultural Council (TMCC), the representative group of Mayan peoples in southern Belize, his insights and support were critical. When I later asked Gerineldo if he would tell me the story of the sun and the moon, he replied that it could only be told in one long sitting, and it was too late that evening.
As a farmer, he had to rise the next morning at 3:30, a little before the morning star.

**Changes in Latitude**

Though I have talked with Gerineldo many times since that first meeting, we have not yet found the time for him to recount his tale of the sun and the moon. However, since the focus of this study is storytelling, I am, in the words of Emmanuel Jacobs, an elder Creole hunter, "going to give you a story." My story is the account of the special opportunity to spend time with remarkable storytellers such as Gerineldo and Emmanuel in the service of a Belizean educational endeavor that offers inspiration beyond the borders of this low-profile country. This document is also the account of my research into the cultural renewal dimension of local storytelling, an effort I began two years after my first visit to southern Belize.

I begin with a short account of the circuitous path that has led me to the Caribbean shore and foothills of southern Belize. For the past six years, the Toledo district has proved to be the endpoint of a long trajectory of personal interests and travels that have spanned the last three decades. Raised on the New Jersey Palisades, I grew up with Cuban and Puerto Rican classmates and neighbors. First attracted by the rhythms of Latin music, I traveled to the Caribbean and Mexico after college and quickly developed an interest in Latin American literature. I read widely through the seventies and eighties, took on the responsibility for world literature courses as a classroom teacher at Exeter Area High School, and, whenever possible, complemented my reading of the region's literature with visits to meet people in the southern latitudes.

As a college student, I worked in the 1966 Mississippi Freedom Summer and later I began my teaching career in the coal fields' schools of Eastern
Kentucky. When I came to New Hampshire, I worked for seven years in adult education and community organization programs. Consequently, I became interested in innovative rural educational programs, and that interest later extended to exploring educational experiments in Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean.

Over the past twenty-five years, I have worked construction in Cuba, stayed at the Montego Bay YMCA with young men from the Jamaican countryside, and joined a fact-finding tour of Nicaragua during the Contra offensive. Though my Spanish became passable, I learned from the Miskito Coast Indians and the Zapotecs of Mexico that many people in this region still rely on tribal languages. The common use of Creole and English was one critical consideration in my decision to return to Belize for the purpose of listening first hand to stories similar to those I had only encountered in the fictional works of authors such as Isabel Allende, Amado, Asturias, and Garcia-Marquez.

In the winter of 1990, I made my first extended trip to Belize, culminating my travels as a guest of Nancy Brown in Punta Gorda (known locally as P.G.), Toledo's market center. I immediately recognized the special quality of this visit because I had the opportunity to spend long hours talking with coastal residents and farm families in the hills. At the very same time, educators affiliated with the University of New Hampshire (UNH) were touring Belize with the purpose of establishing a graduate course designed to place New England teachers in close contact with peers who lived and worked in another cultural setting.
Hunting and Gathering Stories

In July 1991, the UNH educators invited me to join their program, scheduled for the following February school vacation. I accepted the offer and was pleased to learn that I could contribute my English teaching skills and amateur folklore background to a story collection project that was designed by Toledo District educators. Shortly after Belize's independence in 1981, teachers began researching, authoring, and publishing their indigenous TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) textbooks, based on the narratives contributed by local people, which they generally divided into the categories of life stories and traditional tales. District educators were publishing literacy texts that affirmed local self-identities, contributed to ongoing cultural renewal activities, and provided a textual forum for the exchange of information by the region's various ethnic groups. They had printed a first series of texts and, at the time I joined the endeavor, they were collecting stories for a planned second generation of readers.

Since 1990, I have visited Toledo eleven times and worked with district teachers in interviewing, taping, transcribing, editing, and printing local stories for future district textbooks. In response to the invitation from district educators, I have collaborated with local teachers, exchanged story-collecting techniques, and contributed to the TESOL program's ever increasing reservoir of oral stories. Working closely with rural teachers, I have recorded stories from over fifty different people in eleven rural villages and towns, often staying with families for days at a time. While usually relying on introductions from district educators, I have also obtained some of the best oral contributions serendipitously, around a family's hearth or at a community gathering place such as the market or a bus stop.
In the course of this project, I also began to learn the local distinctions regarding types of stories, as well as the many uses to which people put their stories, including entertainment, instruction, inspiration, edification, persuasion, devotion, consolation, and healing.

In the seven chapters devoted to profiling storytelling performances, I direct my attention to a small number of narrators. First, I describe a year-long project with a young Mayan woman, Irmelinda, in the context of her family's devoted attention to traditional stories. Next, I recount two remarkable evenings spent with Mayan men. On an early visit, Eduardo, a community leader in a remote village, shared the special cautionary tales that are often reserved for nighttime. The following chapter considers Gerineldo, a recognized spiritual leader, who actively promotes the deep study of traditional beliefs. Next, I introduce Mariana, a Mayan woman, who is structuring a new life within the domains of the hearth, the bush and the modern commercial sector. Emmanuel Jacobs, a Creole hunter, explains his code of ecological sustainability in the next chapter, followed by a description of Garifuna women engaged in cultural renewal activities. The final storytelling chapter addresses one narrator's cultural renewal 'mission' among the Mayan people.

In addition to contributing to the corpus of Toledo stories, I expanded my work with one storyteller, Emmanuel Jacobs, to include the writing of his life history. Louis Cucul, a teacher in Aguacate, and I have co-authored an article concerning how authors depict the native inhabitants of rainforest environments. In 1993, Toledo educators commissioned me to put together a book of traditional Mayan stories that could foster and reinforce cultural renewal activities for older audiences. Over the next year, Louis Cucul,
Thomas Teul (a leader of the TMCC) and I prepared a book of Mayan tales entitled *Stories in the Air*.

**Emerging Issues**

Like their African-American counterparts in the United States, Belize's native inhabitants and imported laborers have been 'invisible' men and women. Faced with five centuries of oppression, exploitation, and ethnocide that began with the Spanish invasion, Creole, Garifuna, and Mayan peoples have renewed their cultural heritages, while adapting the protective coloration of the jungle and hiding themselves from prying eyes. As a result of this secretiveness, modern myths have developed in the technological world. Some claim, "The contemporary Mayans are a people with no 'culture' compared to the splendor of their ancient forebears." A Garifuna leader reports that he overheard at a conference of indigenous people that, "The Caribs are extinct." He relished the opportunity to explain that he and his community are very much alive!

Set against these racist and historical distortions, the enlistment of indigenous narrators for the TESOL project is a striking pedagogical innovation. It is also an historical act that has encouraged a growing number of Toledo residents to speak out, providing them entry into national discourses for the first time by means of their verbal arts and writing. I began to examine this project in the belief that it is critical that these processes of oral expression and inscription, encompassing both elements of salvage and cultural renewal, be researched and documented. This study provides a rare glimpse of storytellers, whose cultural traditions and ways of knowing are largely encoded in narrative form, presenting, indeed projecting, their lives,
knowledge, spirituality and political agenda beyond their village boundaries for the very first time.

As I watched Toledo storytellers perform, it became increasingly clear that Creole, Garifuna and Mayan narrators are giving voice to critical agendas which emerge from their faithfulness to ancestral and earth spirits. These storytellers are currently addressing substantive issues, including aboriginal land rights, wildlife management, corporate logging, and the sustainable use of their sacred earth. While some educators in other locales are designing model consciousness-raising texts, these Belizean narrators speak spontaneously of renewing their cultural heritage for these times. A failure to document this process is an opportunity lost forever, as Belizean education makes rapid strides, and regional development, including rural electrification and the spread of mass media, brings about irreversible cultural transformation.

As my involvement with the project progressed, I began to investigate both the content of the stories and the full intent of the TESOL program. My initial impression of the textbook project, that it served as a rescue operation for the ancient treasures of oral folklore, was soon challenged by numerous contemporary references in many of the collected stories. Clearly, local storytellers, some of whom may not have initially understood the full intent of the TESOL Program, were applying many of their narratives to current issues regarding their lives, their communities, and their land. This questioning attitude led me to consider contemporary scholarship concerning cultural salvage and cultural renewal.

In recent years, anthropological salvage, the focusing of attention on vanishing lore, has been under scrutiny, with researchers such as Rosaldo (1993) characterizing the act as a manifestation of "imperialist nostalgia" (69).
Clifford (1986) criticizes the emphasis on inscribing the knowledge of old people, and he questions the assumption, "that with rapid change something essential ("culture"). . . vanishes" (113). While not denying the etymological 'saving' root of salvage, critics including Clifford, Rosaldo, and Raymond Williams (1977) especially decry the pastoral dimension of salvage, a research move which may suggest that the 'true' value of traditional stories lies primarily in the 'golden' past, rather than the dynamic present and fast approaching future. For indigenous narrators and for outsider researchers, the question of selective agency emerges as a crucial consideration, since each involved person continually shoulders the responsibility for deciding which traditions are essential for retention.

I began to realize that an emphasis on cultural renewal was equally as complex a consideration as anthropological salvage. While renewal implies a maintenance or revival of traditions, one again encounters the subtle and often invisible issue of selective traditions (Hobsbawm, 1983; Taylor, 1996). Certainly, people in many cultural groups applaud the ongoing reverence and appreciation that are directed to long-standing values and works of art. However, the promotion of particular cultural values demands an examination regarding which specific aspects of cultural heritage are encouraged to flourish and which ones are allowed to wither and die. Furthermore, there is the question of agency -- who gets to select or neglect particular traditions? This is a particularly complex issue, since currently an array of local and international entities, including families, villages, indigenous organizations, churches, educators, funding agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGO), and government are engaged in the deliberate or accidental promotion and diminishment of Toledo traditions.
As the years progressed, I began to pursue these questions as an ethnography in the hope that my representations of the narrators and my understandings of the textbook project might prove valuable to educators, particularly Belizean teachers. Eventually, as I came to establish long-term collaborations with a number of storytellers, I was able to focus a research question regarding the viability and power of the narrators' contributions with regard to local literacy and cultural renewal efforts.

**The Research Project**

While recording Toledo storytellers, I came to appreciate the wide range and spiritual depth of their accounts. Narrators and local educators demonstrated that this story collection effort far exceeded the initial intent to salvage traditional narratives, a practice currently criticized for its oft-time limited focus on "golden-age" cultural material. I observed narrators performing their stories, adapting their tales to both immediate and implied audiences. I watched storytellers consistently forging local ways of knowing, grounded in their deep-rooted beliefs in ancestral and earth spirits.

In addition, given the region's variety of ethnic first languages, I became intrigued by the storytellers' use of English and Creole. While there is a long-standing regional tradition of multilingualism, I realized that it is critical to understand if the increased fluency in English and Creole represents an expansion of language abilities or a corresponding loss of first languages. In view of all these experiences and reflections, I began to pursue answers to the question:
Anthropological salvage and cultural renewal are two possible interpretations of government educators enlisting local storytellers to contribute their narratives to the TESOL textbook program. What is the implication of each interpretation for the efforts of Belizean educators as they seek to represent indigenous cultures and languages within national education and language policies?

I believe that by researching the performances of the TESOL narrators, Belizean educators and their foreign counterparts stand to learn from this special collaboration between literate educators and primarily oral narrators. A careful study of regional performances potentially offers profound insights into the improvisational adaptation of traditional knowledge to contemporary social issues. Consideration of the narrators' use of languages informs teachers about the extent and status of local linguistic repertoires. In addition, an examination of the entire program provides information on the unique construction of a local literacy program. As I began to pursue the research question, the following areas of investigation unfolded from my original query:

1. LANGUAGE: The impact on ethnic first language use as Standard English and Creole are employed in cultural renewal activities.
2. LITERACY: The creation of a local literacy program encompassing an agenda of cultural renewal and interethnic understanding.
3. PERFORMANCE: The emergent performances of Toledo storytellers resulting in the adaptation of traditional stories, particularly those of ancestral and earth spirits, to contemporary audiences and pressing social issues.
4. TEXTUALIZATION: The creation of texts from oral narratives for the purposes of salvage and cultural renewal.

5. CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE: The multilingual insertion of Garifuna and Mayan cultural knowledge and political views into the contested public arena of Belize's Standard English national discourse.
The Research Design

As a guide to readers regarding the major considerations of my research project, I present the major areas of interest that have evolved from my underlying question in outline form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Starting points</th>
<th>Processes</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educators initially intended to salvage traditional stories.</td>
<td>They primarily used writing and audio taping.</td>
<td>It became clear that most stories were adapted and targeted toward contemporary audiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A wide range of local narrators</td>
<td>Have been engaged in:</td>
<td>Consequently, narrators are lending their voices to the ancestral and earth 'spirits.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Improvisational storytelling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Emergent performances</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What had previously been private local discourse is now expanding to reach new audiences,</td>
<td>thereby extending local values and issues into the arenas of public discourse.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People narrate their stories in their ethnic first languages, Creole, or English.</td>
<td>Writing, transcription and printing are currently done in English and Creole but may expand to ethnic first languages.</td>
<td>Indigenous textbooks now exist primarily in English. Multilingual books are possible in the future.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Purpose

Myths, and the characters whose stories they are, live in the quiet of mountains and valleys, forests and meadows, rocks and springs, until someone comes along and thinks to tell them. They have other hiding places too, inside the language we use every day, in the names and places where they happened, or the names of the trees or days on the calendar. Sometimes myths try to catch our eye, looking at us through the holes in a dancer's mask or the glass eyes in the face of a saint. In dreams they show us their scenes and characters directly, but only long enough to make us wonder, afterward, which story we were in (Dennis Tedlock, 1993, ix).

I trust that this research project fulfills its potential as a useful ethnographic study, providing Belizean educators with an outsider's perspective and analysis of the complex interrelationship of language, performance, textualization, and the articulation of an agenda for cultural renewal. I believe that the consideration of the textualization process, within Toledo's localized literacy, may also serve as an inspiration and a prototype for other literacy educators, particularly those working in areas of ethnic diversity. We stand to learn how district educators engendered cooperation from different ethnic groups, why hard-working narrators chose to share their time and stories, and how changes in meaning and potential impact take place as a story moves from a fluid oral medium to fixed text. Observation and consideration of numerous storytelling sessions provide a window on the special dynamics of emergent performances, perhaps the key acts that effect cultural renewal. Furthermore, a thorough examination of the storytelling performances, the inscription process, and the Toledo texts serves as an invitation for other researchers to investigate similar projects in other areas.
Fabian Cayetano, an early proponent of the TESOL program, offers a Belizean perspective on the value of indigenous stories to the region’s children. Fluent in Kekchi Maya, Cayetano is a Garifuna, a community whose members share with the Mayans their belief in spiritual protectors of the earth and sea. In a 1995 conversation, Cayetano discusses exposing students to the visionary teachings of Juan the Catechist, a Kekchi man who is currently preaching his message of sustainability throughout Toledo’s ‘outback’.

JK: The stories of the mountain valley [Mayan hill spirit]—when stories like this go into a textbook, how do you see a story like this enhancing a child’s identity as a Kekchi?

FC: Some beautiful things happen, Jerry. One... the Kekchi firmly believes that everything has an owner. He also believes that he’s owned — he has an owner as well. The trees have an owner...the rivers, the fish, the animals, the mountains, the land, the precious corn. They all have owners -- they are owned.

There’s also harmony in nature — that’s also believed. The Kekchi spiritual relationship with his god, or with the owner of the mountains and the animals — it’s not one of a distant relationship. It is a relationship whereby I can COMMUNICATE with this owner, confident that he will respond to my request by giving me a piece of meat, a piece of fish, a curassow [game bird], a peccary. Before I even leave my hut, the shelter and comfort of my house, let me pray, let me ask, let me trust with the faith and sincerity that I request also.

Two things turn out there. The spirituality of the Kekchi is integrated with the life of this person. It’s not a catechism, written thing, where this is what you do on Sunday. NO! This man lives his spirituality, lived spirituality, practically integrated into this man’s life.

There is also the respect for the sanctity of life. We don’t go shooting all the peccaries. We look for the good sized ones -- three. We shoot three, we know you can only bring three back. We’re not going there to pleasure hunt. [He laughs.] We only want for our meat.

Then there’s the sharing. The head hunter could have said, "OK, I claim all. I give you a piece, I give you a piece. To hell with you. The rest is mine." [He laughs.]
No! The head hunter says, "Cut up everything. What we will sell, what we will share, how we will share the money that we get. So! Concrete sharing, actually is the experience there.

JK: What happens when a child reads about that?

FC: The child see sharing concretized -- in the hunterman's life. The reading strengthens the sharing attitude. It reinforces the sharing attitude. Better yet, if the class teacher could grasp this story and bring out the spirituality of the prayers, of the asking in faith, and the thankfulness, gratitude -- the world needs much more of gratitude nowadays. And the spirit of the sharing of the hunterman.

Here is the text that the teacher can actually use. There is the aspect of conserving the animals. You don't shoot all the animals. You shoot three and leave the rest, so you conserve. And of course, the joy of sharing also reinforces the friendship. Next week, the boss man wants another trip, we are more than ready to accompany him, knowing that if we find one, we share that one. If we find none, we have none to share! [laughing]

Cayetano makes it dear, as Juan does in his testimony, that true caring for the earth and living things must be accomplished in community. The ideals set before today's Kekchi children in the TESOL texts are not merely anti-littering campaigns or superficial calls for moral rearmament. Rather, Juan's story, like many Toledo narratives, promotes a vision of communal identity, wherein people live in harmony with each other and the earth.
CHAPTER TWO

BACKGROUND CONSIDERATIONS

In order to appreciate the special nature and qualifications of the TESOL storytellers, it is important to consider a number of critical factors that have impacted and continue to affect life in southern Belize. Geographical, political, and economic isolation are hallmarks of Toledo existence, as well as the historical legacy of colonial rule. In this regard, I examine British policy making on education and language issues, including its prolonged influence on Belizean society in the wake of the colonial era.

Geography

Gubegubeti fulasu (Garifuna) -- "The place is muddy."

At sixteen degrees North latitude, the Toledo District is nestled in a corner of the Gulf of Honduras, just at the mouth of the Bahia D' Amatique. The jagged Maya Mountains rise over one thousand meters in the district's north and west, while limestone plain, savanna, and mangrove swamps occupy the coastal zone. Numerous reefs and the lack of deep harbors have discouraged large ships, while rivers were prime means of access to the Toledo interior until the mid-twentieth century. Toledo is the most isolated and least populated of the six districts in Belize, a country that the explorer Stephens noted, "was the last place made."
Uxbentka ('ancient place'), the Mayan ruin in Santa Cruz Village, offers graphic testimony to the ravages of nature that have periodically scoured this region. Centuries of hurricanes and earthquakes have turned this twelve hundred year old ceremonial center into a jumble of quarried rocks. Toledo is the second rainiest region in the hemisphere, and seasonal flooding often damages crops and inundates the district's few highway bridges.

In spite of its remoteness, loggers have penetrated portions of Toledo over the centuries, felling and extracting logwood, mahogany and other hardwoods. In the district's interior there are still areas of high-canopy rainforest that, along with other ecosystems, provide safe haven for the wide variety of tropical wildlife, including vampire bats, pit vipers, jaguars, Africanized bees, chiggers, malarial mosquitoes, and a host of parasites that have so far discouraged the development of any Cancun-style tourist industry. Toledo entrepreneurs are currently developing a small-scale ecotourism network that beckons bird watchers, snorkelers, fishermen, and those who are interested in the region's Mayan heritage.

Periodic attempts to cultivate sugarcane and citrus have lasted as long as there was an urgent demand on the world market. Ultimately, the sailing distances and lack of deep-draught harbors have limited the exploitation of monoculture farming. For over a millennia, the Mayans have practiced a slash and burn, milpa form of agriculture, with maize as their primary crop. Currently, traditional Indian land use is threatened both by governmental moves to privatization and multinational timber concerns. It comes as no surprise then, that Toledo Mayans are looking once again to their hill spirits that inhabit both a physical and mental geography (Brody, 1981) for spiritual guidance and moral strength.
History

"In this great future you can't forget your past."
-Bob Marley, "No Woman, No Cry."

The Making of History

Hundreds of years of border crossings by native peoples, colonialists, explorers, ex-Confederates, soldiers, missionaries, slaves, loggers, fishermen, and modern day tourists have created a patchwork history for the Toledo District. Interspersed throughout this study, I will present background accounts that acknowledge the various complementary, and at times competing, histories of the peoples who have settled the region, citing Creole, Garifuna, and Mayan sources, as well as Western writers. Western history is privileged not only by the tradition of the academy, but also as a result of a long history of the destruction and appropriation of Mayan historical documents and artifacts.

For Toledo natives, the issue of their history is one of interpretation as well as a lack of available data. The Western scholarly construct is only one way of viewing archaeological evidence such as ruins and potsherds. Leonardo Akal, a Mayan spiritual leader in San Pedro Columbia notes:

There are many things when the archaeologists and the scientists are trying to dig out from the Maya. They... find what they want to make the world believe, from their research of maybe one thousand years ago, they make that belief because they felt that it is so. But it collapses. It falls down. They meet something that is not so. Even though our legend is so, it is the same. They won't believe because they prove what they prove and see what they see. They try to change the world. They should be more truthful than that. (1993)
While five hundred years of European interference has taken its toll, the region's Amerindian and Afro-Caribbean people have continually adapted. Deep in the jungles and tidal swamps, the Garinagu (the preferred term for the Garifuna people) and Mayans, as well as some Creoles, have lived in communities of resistance throughout much of this era. At times, they waged armed struggles against their aggressors, but most often they retreated to the "high bush" (climax rainforest) just as the Jamaican Maroons disappeared into their Cockpit country and Surinam's Saramakas vanished in their mangrove mazes.

Those indigenous peoples who were enslaved or elected to live and work among the Europeans were often silenced. Their codices destroyed, their drums quieted, their temples ransacked, the native peoples learned to hide and secret their sacred beliefs, often under the guise of Christianity in a manner similar to the syncretism of Santeria, Voodoo and Mexican folk religion. Likewise, Garinagu often retreated to remote locales to practice their indigenous religious beliefs. These traditional bodies of knowledge survived as secret or hidden discourses, and it is only in recent years, particularly with Belizean independence and more wide-spread movements of cultural renewal, that some Toledo residents have chosen to bring their age-old beliefs into the light of day. The textbook program is one of today's vehicles for this spiritual and moral renewal.

The History of Europeans

At this juncture, I will address the history of the European colonization process due to its primary impact on the Belizean educational system, a critical factor that must be understood as a backdrop to current literacy efforts in Belize. The first historical record of European incursion into this region is
a report of Cortez passing through the southwest portion of Toledo in 1525 (Educational Task Force [ETF], 12). All indications are that the Spanish were not especially interested in this inhospitable region. One of the only accounts of Spanish missionaries attempting to proselytize along Toledo's Moho River indicates that in 1684 the local Manche Chol Maya martyred three Franciscan priests (Thompson, 1988, 35). Sporadic Spanish military incursions and imported diseases undoubtedly reduced the population substantially, however, "No Spanish force penetrated Belize before the attempts to dislodge the Baymen in the eighteenth century" (6).

Throughout the seventeenth century, pirates and adventurers frequented the cayes and coastal Belize. In 1670, the Treaty of Madrid signaled the end of widespread piracy and many former buccaneers took to cutting logwood as a source of valuable dye. These Baymen, primarily from the British Isles, joined with British naval forces to battle the Spanish from 1717-1779. The Baymen sought to utilize the Indians as manual laborers but, once again, most fled into the hills. Logging interests prevailed throughout most of the nineteenth century, and they were successful in preventing agricultural interests from ever achieving a substantial foothold in Toledo. With the economic collapse of the 1930's depression, British Honduras entered a period of economic stagnation that has persisted to the present day. Modern multinationals have developed a few citrus plantations in central and northern regions, but climate and isolation have prevented Belize from becoming truly competitive on a world market. This lack of sustained economic development has resulted in a 'benign' neglect for the indigenous populations, keeping most rural Belizeans in a subsistence economy.
**Belizean Educational History**

Early on, the British colonialists sent their children to Europe for their education, and in 1816, the Honduras Free School was established for those who could not afford to study abroad. Education spread to native peoples when the Methodists established a school in Dangriga in 1834 to educate the Garinagu, and the Jesuits arrived on their apostolic and educational mission in 1851 (F. Cayetano, 1995).

While British Honduran laws requiring compulsory education and the preparation of local men and women as teachers began in the mid-nineteenth century (Hamshere, 1972), both these innovations were mostly underfunded throughout the years (ETF, 61). Churches continued to fill the void and their religious education efforts resulted in pockets of well developed literacy, particularly among the Creoles of Belize City. Likewise, those efforts, such as the early Jesuit work among the Garinagu of southern Belize, initially designed to serve commercial or governmental enterprises, resulted in a tradition of high literacy and locally educated workforces which persists until the present day.

In 1850, the government enacted the first Education Act which outlined proposed curricula, later followed by the 1915 Education Ordinance that directed compulsory education for children from 5-16 years of age. The 1935 Easter Report upgraded education efforts, particularly teacher education, and 1970's education ordinances gave more direction to the educational effort (F. Cayetano, 6). While some contemporary writers (Bolland, 1988; Hamshere, 1972) are critical of the former British educational apparatus for teaching Belizeans "how to be good British subjects," by methods that stressed memorization over critical thinking (ETF, 49), English Methodists in Belize City gradually contributed to a literate Creole population. In addition, the
Jesuits instituted St. John's College and a credit union system that were both major factors in producing a "new educated class" who were the promoters of the nationalist movement (Showman, 201).

**Modern Literacy Education**

It is only time, experience, and emotional maturity that teaches some pioneers to graft the best of the old onto the best of the new.

—Zee Edgell, *Beka Lamb* (90)

Throughout the final days of colonial status, Belizean educators looked to newly independent West Indian countries for educational direction, particularly in the field of literacy. When Belizean educators first began to turn away from Euro-American readers, they were rejecting texts that presented images of their colonial masters, as well as life-styles that were foreign to Central America. Their first move was to embrace regional alternatives such as *Nelson's West Indian Readers.* (1977).  

Nelson's set of nine basal readers contain a mixture of poetry, short stories, and folk tales, as well as regional historical and political sketches. Nelson's #4 tells the teacher, "It is fitting at this stage to begin to instill in our children an awareness of the literature of their own people." Commenting on the non-fiction entries, the editor notes, "The child is introduced to outstanding West Indians who have contributed... to the development of their respective countries. Children can thereby begin to realize that heroes are to be found not only in foreign countries, but also nearer home, and one can take pride in their own people and their achievements" (vii).
In addition to the Nelson's series, there are currently a variety of Caribbean reading texts that primarily introduce students to the traditions of Afro-Caribbeans, though there is some material on the Aboriginal and Indian traditions of the region. Currently, Caribbean readers are an integral part of the available textbooks for Toledo schools. Undoubtedly, they represent an improvement over the "Dick and Jane" readers that must have mystified and perhaps unduly attracted a generation of Belizean children. For the Creole and the Garinagu along the coastal zone, these Caribbean readers describe a common heritage and landscape. For the Mayan children, living in the interior, the readers present a reality miles closer than North America's 'main street.'

Shortly after independence, the Ministry of Education's Curriculum Development Unit began work on a set of indigenous Belizean textbooks. Linda Moguel and Faye Gillett devised the TESOL readers and skills books which indicated an initial commitment on the part of the Ministry to continue to promote and teach English as the unitary (sole and unifying) language of the country. The first texts were printed and distributed by 1985 and, since the populations of the various ethnic groups varied by region, the audience to whom the texts were directed was a homogenous construct of the "typical Belizean student."

Far from the Ministry in Belmopan, educational outlooks in Toledo were changing as dramatically as the tumultuous arrival of the rainy season. The region's rural schools are almost exclusively Church schools, primarily Roman Catholic. With the coming of independence, Roy Cayetano, a member of a local Garifuna family noted for its commitment to education, became District Education Officer. Cayetano took on the unique responsibility of
trying to effect change in a school system that had been badly neglected by the colonial regime.

In 1984, Cayetano set out to investigate the educational system in Toledo. The extensive geographical scope of his study is neatly summed up in the title of his account, "A Report on a Tour of Toledo Villages on the Trail from Blue Creek to Aguacate via Crique Sarco." Traveling by foot and dory through regions of high bush, scrub, and mangrove swamp, Cayetano journeyed to the far-flung, outpost schools. His pointed comments indicate the desperate state of educational affairs in the remote villages:

Mabilha: "Basic textbooks are scarce and the teacher just has to make due with little or nothing that is available."

San Benito Poite: "There is a dearth of suitable textbooks — one copy of Nelson's Infant Book #1."

Conejo Creek: "The school does not have any textbooks at all!"


Cayetano described the severe isolation and neglect that rural teachers felt, such that there was a "staff shortage and lack of qualifications," and "teachers rarely stayed for more than a year." Cayetano notes wryly that, "Even masochists can find easier ways for satisfying their psychological aberrations."

A reader of the report also learns that there was a "great deal of interest in schooling and education in the villages in the Toledo hinterland." Independence, the increasing use of portable radios, and the opportunity to learn English stimulated these educational interests. In addition, Cayetano points out that certain changes in Catholic church policy were fostering increased interest in literacy:

Two recent developments... provide people with a practical reason to read and write. Firstly, there is the availability of the Bible, hymn books, and other literature in Kekchi, and the
increased use of the vernacular in church services...Catechists and other persons who play a leading role must definitely be literate and those who follow can participate more meaningfully if they can read. The second development, referred to above, is the Radio Belize Program, "Kekchi Half Hour."

While the report contains distressing information, the author shifts his focus to an action plan for improving the rural schools in Toledo. Cayetano's report suggested a three-pronged response to the situation, that includes the promotion of bilingual education:

1. Materials should be produced to make pupils literate in English as well as Kekchi.
2. Teachers must themselves learn the language and become literate in it.
3. Teachers should seriously consider giving adult classes. Some villagers are interested in their English language skills. Others want basic literacy, to learn sound-symbol correspondences. Once they learn these correspondences, they can go on to read Kekchi, since the orthography is more 'phonetic' than English, and therefore easier to learn.

As a result of this initial appraisal of Toledo needs and resources, Cayetano became particularly concerned with the remote Kekchi schools. To meet these needs, the Toledo Rural Education Project (TREP) was founded and relevant textbooks became an early priority. Roy Cayetano and his cousin Fabian, who succeeded him as District Education Officer, worked to form an organization that included outside resources in order to meet these needs. The Cayetanos enlisted the Canadian Organization for Development (CODE), the British High Commission, and the US Peace Corps in a supportive alliance that enabled the TREP to begin work. In 1991, this cooperative effort resulted in the spiral-bound TESOL readers, textbooks which were targeted at the region's unique ethnic composition and designed to counter moves toward cultural assimilation.
Roy Cayetano, in his forward to the 1991 edition of the readers, noted, "This series of TESOL reading materials is a very important contribution to the stock of educational materials available to the district's most disadvantaged schools." Cayetano also pointed out that the TESOL project "demonstrates that people (and this includes teachers and pupils) can do a lot to help themselves since the stories were written by pupils and teachers."

Since these early assessments, the variety of textbooks available to Toledo schools continues to grow. Government schools continue to use Nelson's Caribbean Readers, while the Roman Catholic schools increasingly provide their students with phonic-based material produced by the BRC Publishers in Benque Viejo, Belize. Scott Foresman texts can be found in some schools, while certain teachers prefer to rely on the TESOL readers. Currently, some educators are assembling more varied school and classroom libraries, thereby laying the groundwork for more individualized learning that is often part of a whole language approach to literacy.

From 1993 till 1996, budget cuts and layoffs have stalled progress on the proposed new generation of TESOL readers. Meanwhile, inspired by professional study, national curriculum modifications, and the influence of outside technical assistance, many Belizean educators are beginning to incorporate aspects of a whole language reading and writing approach into their pedagogy. At this point, many people believe that another generation of TESOL primers is not necessarily the first or best choice. Educators are increasingly considering the potential for publishing a variety of high-interest books based on Belizean themes, as supplements to the existing readers. The same reservoir of stories, once destined for primers, can also be utilized as a major narrative source for a whole range of new books composed by students, teachers and reading specialists. A number of New Hampshire teachers have
begun personal and professional friendships with Belizean teachers, and together they are creating and exchanging an array of student published texts. Other Belizean teachers are designing model story and nature books, which in turn are stimulating further student publishing. Ultimately, the postponement of the TESOL program and the inclusion of a whole language philosophy in curriculum design changed the course of those energies devoted initially to the TESOL program.

**Educational Alliances**

Belizean pedagogy continues to develop according to a two-tier process wherein educational philosophy and innovations emanate from the Education Ministry in Belmopan and the Belize Teachers College (BTC). BTC continues to perfect the delivery of its training programs, recently beginning its Distance Program, an extension program that complements on-campus studies. Belizean educators also continue to rely on foreign assistance, primarily through World Bank funding. The complex negotiations with the World Bank require a separate study, but suffice it to say that the loans and grants are not without foreign expectations.

The Toledo District continues to depend on CODE for printing assistance and the Peace Corps for teacher support and training. The Belize-NH collaboration is in its seventh year, and in August, 1995, the International Reading Association (IRA) began a pilot "language through literacy" program in two Toledo schools. This program utilizes specialized text-sets to further a literature-based whole language reading program so that Belizean educators may acquaint themselves with this approach by first hand experimentation, thereby providing them with a laboratory model to monitor and judge for possible further utilization. Wary of neocolonial intrusions by foreign
governments and private agencies, district educational leaders stress that local control and sustainability are two prerequisite needs for any partnership with external agencies.

**Language**

We are the sea turtles of Belize.
Somos las tortugas marinas de Belice (Spanish)
We dah de se turtles of Belize. (Creole)
Wagia wawamu ha lan Belisi. (Garifuna)

-Conservation poster in Laguna School

**Language History**

Language is a dynamic factor in contemporary Belizean society and a key dimension of this entire study. Belize's history of settlement, commerce, invasion, resistance, border crossings, and modern nationalism is also the chronicle of constant linguistic evolution, competition and conflict. Belize's linguistic history stretches back over two millennia to the pre-Classical Maya who comprise several linguistic groupings. The Spanish, initiating the period of "gunboat linguistics" (Donoghue, 1981, 12) in 1525, eventually pursued interests to the West, and the British Baymen occupied the region in the mid-1600's, establishing the English presence and language. Cooper (1989) describes the historical legacy of colonial boundary setting on the subsequent language issues in a country such as Belize. "Linguistic diversity is in part a product of imperial conquest, which brought together diverse ethnolinguistic groups within a single political administration" (21).
During the colonial period, the British maintained the facade of a unitary language by imposing Standard English (SE) on the British Honduran government, commerce, and educational system. To succeed in school, to gain regular employment, to engage in substantial commerce, one had to be competent in written SE, as well as exhibiting the ability to speak, mimic, or code-shift to British English. For two hundred years, language planning and literacy functioned as means to exercise British control throughout the country (Cooper, 1989; Fabian, 1986). Though US media made inroads into Belizean airspace since the 1940's, the BBC and Radio Belize bolstered and reinforced the unitary language program, maintaining the centripetal pull that continues in a somewhat diluted fashion until the present day.

Since 1981, Belizean language planners have engaged in "status planning," allocating the uses of various languages (Cooper, 1989, 32), and are thereby maintaining SE as the nation's unitary language in the belief that this policy assures a national stability and provides the best access to international business and economic interests. This political determination to promote monolingualism has been reinforced considerably by Belize's significant realignment with US interests in the region. While in some newly independent states critical educators such as Freire (1985) and Ngugi (1986) have promoted a wholesale return to ethnic languages for speech and text, there has been no concerted effort in Belize to eliminate English and return to the exclusive use of ethnic first languages.

Although there is a strong monolingual faction, others are promoting a language policy which approaches that of the West Indian countries with their adherence to the English syllabus of the Caribbean Examinations Council which,
recognizes the rights of the people to use their own native speech, encourages artistic expression especially in the vernaculars while at the same time stressing the appropriateness of different varieties and the unchallengeable role of SE as the language of formal instruction, public business and international communication (Roberts, 1988, 171).

**Multilingualism**

In Belize, with its "mosaic of languages" (Bolland, 1988), the centrifugal language forces have been far more varied and just as resolute throughout the country's history. The Creoles have maintained their ever evolving patois, while many Garinagu and Mayans have likewise been determined to raise their young in their ethnic first languages. Surrounded by Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico, Spanish speakers have easily retained their language. Thus, while ensuring the cultural survival of a tribal or ethnic tongue is a unitary move in itself, the tendency in the Belizean national context has been a pulling and tugging at the dominance of SE.

Independent Belize remains engaged in a creative tension between the exclusive centripetal promotion of SE and a widespread embrace of multilingualism, that for any individual might well include fluency in an ethnic first language, Creole, English, and Spanish. Multilingualism is a long-standing phenomenon, and the Belizean experience reinforces the worldwide research which indicates that children are both capable and adaptable to such multilingualism when encountered at an early age (Hakuta, 1986; Porter, 1990).

What contemporary Belize reveals is the ever-present truth that, beneath powdered wigs, regimental garb, and studied London accents, "Language is never unitary" (Bakhtin, 1981, 288). All the while the professional class has tried to hold on to SE, the Creolization process has been taking place in
markets, bars, restaurants, washing spots, lumber camps and in bed. Belize's endlessly mixing cultures are living proof that languages, like people, "cohabit" (291). Fortunately, as Geertz (1973) points out in his analysis of new states, "Language differences need not in themselves be particularly divisive" (262). He cites Tanganyika, Iran, and the Philippines as new nations that avoided social problems ascribed to linguism, despite a "confusion of tongues."

**Creole**

"Weh di money deh?" (Where's the money?)

- Newspaper headline in "Amandala",
  6/30/1995

Creole languages (or creoles) are commonplace throughout the Caribbean in the wake of the "linguistic violence" (Muysken, 1995, 4) brought about by the plantation systems that subjugated African captives to European masters. Creoles, whose origins can usually be traced to a particular historical moment in time (6), are often related to pidgin languages that were created when different peoples came together and no communication was possible in any of the existing mother tongues (Voorhoeve, 1975, 273). However, unlike pidgins, a creole develops to the point where it functions as a vernacular with native speakers.

The diverse sources of a creole are often debated, and while a particular creole might appear to have one major linguistic source, it may also be influenced by other contact languages which might effect its sound, vocabulary or syntax. Roberts (1988), in his study of Caribbean creole dialects, presents this explanation:
It is normally used to refer to a dialect or language which is the result of contact between the language of a colonizing people and the languages of a colonized people. The language itself is characterized by many reductions in the word forms of the language of the colonizers with many sound, phrase and sentence patterns which are typical of the original language[s] of the colonized people (13).

Hancock (1971) describes Belize Creole English (BCE) as the first language spoken in the country's urban areas and the lingua franca used in rural areas. Most Belizeans speak BCE, and Holm (1989) observes that, although it has received "little official recognition, it is the real common language of this multilingual country and an important unifying force in the newly independent nation" (478). This creole, which began among the Creole people of Belize City, has now spread throughout the country and, "What was once regarded as the idiosyncratic rule-less broken Negro English of the logwood cutters and fishermen who settled at the mouth of the Belize River, is today coming to be regarded as the real language of a new nation, with its own rules which are distinct from those of English" (LePage, 1985, 13).

It is worthwhile to consider some characteristics of Belizean Creole (hereafter referred to as Creole), as spoken by the narrators featured in this study. Though only one of the storytellers, Emmanuel Jacobs, grew up speaking Creole as a first language, the other narrators, like most native Toledo residents, are capable of code-switching to Creole in multiethnic settings such as the market. Their code-switching was apparent while performing for the textbook project, as the storytellers often initially accommodated their speech to their North American interviewer and then gradually shifted to the Creole vernacular as performances and conversations continued, a subtle shift that LePage also observed with storytellers in Belize's Cayo District (102).
Throughout Belize, the colonial lexicon is very much in place, and Creole speakers employ many distinctively British residual terms such as "tea" (dinner), "hail" (call) and "vexed." LePage demonstrates that Belizean Creole has been in continual contact with Spanish, Maya, English, Carib, as well as Lebanese Arabic. My own research with Toledo's Creole speakers indicates that Jamaican Creole is gaining in influence due to widespread attention given to Reggae music (Young, 1988), particularly the spiritual messages of Bob Marley. Today, Creole speakers employ a catholic array of loan words from four different continents (Africa, Europe, North America and South America), including: *chicolero*, *escabeche*, *chibango* (Mexican Spanish), *woula* (Arawak), *junkanoo* (Bahamas), *grupa*, *punta* (Garifuna), *yampi* (Mopan), *Rasta* (Jamaican), *tuba*, *wiwi* (Miskito), *obeah* (Yoruba), and *anansi* (Ashanti). As will be seen in subsequent chapters, this linguistic convergence is often overlaid by cultural and religious syncretisms that emanate from the same four continents.

Local Creole phraseology offers the wider world figurative phrases such as boil-up (stew), fire hot (cooking fire), bamboo chicken (iguana), water dog (otter) and rat-bat (vampire bat). For many, an endearing feature of Belizean Creole is the use of personifying nicknames (Young, 24) such as Johnny Filda (fiddler crab) and Tommygoff (a pit viper). The reduplication that occurs in many creoles (Arends, 1995, 33) is a local staple with terms such as: tie-tie (a vine used for weaving), say-say (gossip), and wee-wee (leaf-cutter ant). Likewise, adverbial and adjectival reiterations are used for intensification ("hot, hot"/ very hot, "dead, dead, dead"/ dead beyond doubt!), while verbal doubling indicates a sustained activity ("He hunt, hunt all night.").

Emmanuel Jacobs (Petey), born in Belize of Jamaican and East Indian parentage, speaks Creole and English. A master storyteller, his performance
speech mode is aptly described by Arends, who notes that "[Black] Belizean Creole speakers, most of whom control a complex linguistic repertoire..., develop the ability to switch between codes and variants when appropriate without abandoning their native creole variety" (62). Petey employs a colorful vocabulary, spicing his speech with archaic terms such as grog (rum), cutlass (machete), and privateer, words that echo back to the buccaneer days of the Baymen.

Petey's syntax is typical of creole speakers in general, most often employing a subject, verb, object (SVO) structure. He frequently makes use of a common syntactical form of the local Creole, the serial verb construction (SVC), wherein a subject is used with multiple verbs in series:

*I clean that animal, take skin, embalm it, fix the color clean.*
I cleaned (gutted) the animal and skinned it, then I embalmed it to fix the skin's color clean (so as not to fade).

*The meat was fresh, never spoil.*
The meat was fresh and it never spoiled

*I get scratched, peeled, walking through the bush.*
I got scratched and my skin was peeled while I was walking through the bush.

These sentences also highlight another structural aspect of Creole, the use of telegraphic condensation, whereby many auxiliaries are deleted. Other examples of this pattern that are found in Petey's narratives include:

*Sometimes, he no bathe.*
Sometimes, he does not bathe.

*He born a rat.*
He was born small as a rat.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Various creoles are also distinguished by special verb patterns. The use of the double negative in not uncommon in BCE, as found in Petey’s dramatic rendition of his sister’s Rosita’s exclamation, “”Ma, we don’t have no babies that walk around here!” Unique patterns of TMA (Tense, Mood, Aspect) markers that precede verbs, also suggest syntactical substrata that may well go back to African languages. It is beyond the scope of this study to describe in detail all those patterns that are unique to BCE. However, Petey’s rendering of his mother speaking Creole provides examples of the local verb structure. As LePage also observed in Cayo (120), Petey moves quickly to Creole when imitating his mother’s use of this language:

She say, “Me going to tell you. Look here? You see that boy there? That boy was nothing. He born a rat. When he born, his little mouth just like a little fish in the creek, they call poopsie. He was a little poopsie with a little mouth. My breast’s nipple was too big for his mouth. When he born, I was sleeping. When I wake, he already come out. You see him now -- big yellow.

Holm describes the special characteristics of Belizean Creole, particularly "its use of wa (perhaps from English want or CE gwain 'going to') as a future marker which can combine with the anterior marker: me wa 'was going to.' While I occasionally heard this pattern in P.G., it rarely appeared in storytelling performances for the textbook program.

The Belizean historian Assad Showman (1994) provides insights into the analyses of Creole by Belizean cultural commentators, some of which are not always in agreement with Western linguists. He observes that one of the "enduring examples" of the synthesis of African and European cultures was the development of the "Belize Creole" language, which Andrew Lopez calls "creolized English", adding that "although the vocabulary and grammar of
this Creole are predominantly English with a number of words and constructions of African and archaic or dialectic English origin, the phonology differs greatly from the received pronunciation of standard English." Sylvana Woods goes further, arguing that Belize Creole has all the identifiable characteristics of a language. What is certain is that Belize Creole is a synthesis of European and African elements developed by the Belize Town residents on the basis of their life experience (146).

A long standing prejudice against the Creole language, that began with the English and the Creole elite who "tended to regard it as an unworthy corruption of the English language" (Showman, 146), persists, so that, even today, Creole is not even listed on the national census forms (Bolland, 197). Elements of these same elites still persevere in an attempt to demean Creole, as a recent "Alliance" editorial (10/11/1995) indicates:

Do we teach in Creole. Take exams in Creole: Is the business of our National Assembly conducted in Creole: So what is this all about Creole as Belize's first language — ludicrous to say the least.

The true resolve of the Creole-English conflict might be achieved by surveying answers to Roberts's rhetorical, yet guiding question (1988), "What language do people use when they lie down at night and reflect on their life?"

While the debate over the viability and validity of Creole is likely to persist, Creole is the language that people most commonly speak at work, play, market, sports, and in friendly conversation. Garifuna educator and linguist Roy Cayetano observes, "If a Kekchi meets a Mopan Maya, and one of them doesn't know the other's language, the logical choice of language is Creole, not English. One of the reasons is that English is not perceived as the language of everyday intercourse; it is more associated with formal situations."
Roberts describes the coexistence of Creole and English as a "diglossic relationship — that is, with Standard English performing the 'high' functions and Creole English the 'low' ones" (82). Roy Cayetano explains this high-low division in this way:

I guess we don't teach colloquial English. We usually teach a more formal English, more associated with formal situations, the kind of English you would speak when you get up and talk at a gathering, as opposed to nice easy banter, easy chattering English.

The transcription of many oral stories told in Creole serves as a graphic indicator of Belize's current state of Creolization. As the modern media penetrates the Belizean outback, and Garinagu and Mayans travel more extensively, they are both re-asserting their traditional languages, and embracing the new national identity through the use of Creole (LePage, 182). In this era, when Creoles and Garinagu are emigrating in large numbers to the US, and Central Americans and ex-patriots are settling in Belize, Creolization is perhaps the ultimate example and trope for the process of blending blood, ethnicities, and languages.

**Language and Identity**

A key underlying consideration of this research project concerns the self-identity a speaker creates by drawing close to a certain speech community (or communities) and focusing her/his language usage on the perceived community norms. LePage and Tabouret-Keller (1985) consider those "acts of identity," wherein "individuals create the patterns for their linguistic behavior so as to resemble those of the group or groups with which from time to time they wish to be identified" (18).
These authors focus on the recent coming to identity that many Belizeans have manifested since independence. Formerly, the country was British Honduras, and many people subscribed to older identities that "were more clear cut: 'Spanish' or 'Guatemalan' or 'Mexican'; 'Bay-born' or 'Creole'; 'Carib'; 'Maya' or 'Kekchi'; 'Waika'; 'Irish'; 'American.'" Each of these identities had their own language, and, as the authors point out, their origins and cultural connections reached out to Central American and beyond. Today however, for many "these identities have crumbled and are being replaced by concepts of 'mixing' and being a Belizean; (and) Belizeans speak 'Creole" (183).

LePage and Tabouret-Keller's description of 'focusing' is useful in understanding how such variations on SE derive and maintain. According to the identity theory, speech acts can be seen as "acts of projection," the speaker "projecting his inner universe, implicitly with the invitation to others to share it" (181). "By verbalizing as he does, he is seeking to reinforce his models of the world, and to share his attitudes towards it" (181). In time, personal and group language behavior will become more focused through modification and accommodation.

Market day is a living example of intergroup harmony, and Bakhtin's language 'carnival' an appropriate image since the author argues that words have "taste!" (293). People compete, sell, seduce, cheat, harangue, cajole, beg, trade, gossip, proselytize, politic, and talk football in whatever tongue is most useful. Code-switching is a way of life as one moves through P.G.'s market, buying fruit from Kekchi villagers from Aguacate or Mopan speaking farmers from San Jose. Women from Barranco converse in Garifuna by the fish stall; local merchants discuss politics in Creole; East Indians sell their yogurt; Cobanero traders peddle inexpensive clothing in Spanish; while Jamaican
Reggae often provides the soundtrack. Local residents constantly bridge these "language zones," (150) as they gossip, trade crop information, promote their political parties, and swap small talk. In this rich mix of voices, people continually develop their personal and communal selves. Martin (1986) states that "The ideological becoming of a human being... is the process of selectively assimilating the words of others" (150). In a reference to illiterate European peasants that has its echoes in Toledo, Bakhtin maintains that each person is capable of and endlessly makes use of several language systems (1981, 295).

**Language in Toledo**

In order to understand the storytellers' performance modes, it is essential to consider the narrators' language selections and code-switching abilities. The region's ethnic groups are rapidly responding to the new world of Belizean discourse. Toledo's ethnic communities have long maintained at least tenuous connections with representative groups that conduct business in their various ethnic first languages, thereby engendering the linguistic and cultural links which support the processes of ethnogenesis (given detailed consideration in Chapter Ten) and cultural renewal.

Notwithstanding, most Toledo narrators reflect the same multilingualism that is commonplace throughout the country. Many Kekchi and Mopan Mayans use their native languages for domestic and village discourse, while maintaining Creole or English as a second language for wider communication and print. The dual language usage of ethnic first language and Creole or English parallels the "special diglossia" that Daniel McLaughlin (1992) describes among the Navajo. McLaughlin studied Navajo schooling and describes a preference for the use of Navajo in most oral situations, while
at the same time noting that younger Navajos usually employed English for reading and writing. He considers Navajo literacy to be an ideological model of literacy (Street, 1984), noteworthy for this special bidirectionality (19). His in-depth study suggests that modern, younger Navajos are "bilingual, biliteral, bicultural and bicognitive" (129). McLaughlin's analysis seems particularly apt for understanding the Kekchi and Mopan narrators who have made a conscious decision to speak in Creole or English so that their stories may be inscribed in these languages.

It is important to recognize that the publication of narratives in Toledo textbooks demonstrates a new objective equality among Creole, Garifuna, and Mayan contributors. Since the oral narration of stories in English results in English texts, there is demonstrable evidence that all Toledo residents are not only capable of articulating their people's interests in English, they are also assertive about their growing English literacy. The move toward public self-expression and inscription in English or Creole is particularly significant for the Mayan peoples who have traditionally distanced themselves from national discourse and remained silent. While these school texts serve a primary purpose for literacy education, they also demonstrate that all of the region's ethnic groups have entered the national arena and will be heard from in all linguistic forums.
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Since February 1991, when district educators encouraged me to collaborate with Toledo teachers on the story collection project, I have used formal and informal interviews, audio taping, video taping, and field notes when observing and recording the TESOL narrators. These techniques have allowed me to contribute a substantial body of material for the benefit of the textbook project, data that now also proves useful for this study of storytellers and their contemporary agendas.

I came to an ethnographic study in the service of this project, by informally engaging in methods associated with the discipline, including observation, interviewing, data collection, and analysis. Upon entering the doctoral program, I sought out opportunities to refine, discipline and focus this methodology so that my observation and study might accurately represent and "evoke" (Tyler, 1986) the storytellers' techniques and contributions. In keeping with the UNH traditions of examining the methods by which people achieve literacy (Graves, 1982; Hansen, 1987; Murray, 1985; Newkirk, 1992), a major thrust of this study is an analysis of storytelling performances, processes best studied through the patient and sharply focused lens of ethnographic study. I realized also that it would be critical to learn how local residents perceived the qualities, characteristics, and range of oral performances (Gossen, 1974; Sherzer, 1990), a task that required Geertz's "thick description."
The first years of observing storytellers, accompanied by discussion with local educators regarding improvisation, adaptation of stories to particular audiences, and commentary on contemporary issues led to a search for suitable interpretive tools. The writings of Richard Bauman (1977, 1984) on "verbal art as performance" are of particular value in establishing the utility and appropriateness of ethnographic research, as opposed to a more traditional folklore approach which considers verbal arts as text-centered. Bauman argues that, "The essential task in the ethnography of performance is to determine the culture-specific constellations of communicative means that serve to key performances in particular communities" (22). He takes note of Dennis Tedlock's (1972) work among the Zuni in urging verbal arts researchers to attempt to understand the "specific conventionalized means" such as "rate, length, pause duration, pitch contour, tone of voice, loudness, and stress, (20)" that are unique to a cultural group.

In researching storytelling, I am faced with the same paradox that researchers of reading, writing, and orality have faced elsewhere, that to artificially separate the story and the telling may be likened to "splitting the atom," a process that reveals constituent parts but dissipates the energy. I therefore attempt to describe and analyze Toledo storytelling in a holistic manner, striving to catch glimpses of the elusive moments of emergence wherein storytellers project their personal, spiritual and/or critical agendas into the broader local or national discourse.

I should note that in 1992, when I began to formally engage in research, complementing my 'pilgrim' role with that of 'cartographer' (Geertz, 1988), I explained this additional status to my Belizean coworkers and informants. It appears that since my activities did not perceptibly change in their eyes, this new dimension of my work was deemed to be of little consequence. I
continue to explain my research role to Belizean informants so that they may understand the potential ramifications of publishing research findings. While Belize has been a peaceful island in the turbulent sea of Central American politics, history and current ethnographic rethinking demonstrate that there is always the remote risk that an informant's notoriety can lead to exploitation, jealousy, and even violence.

Participant Observation

The TESOL project began in the late 1980's with a casual approach to collecting peoples' narratives. Partially as a rescue or salvage effort, local teachers asked their students to write down stories they had heard at home and in the village, or the children were to ask adults to contribute traditional or life stories, following a simple explanation of the textbook project. By extending a wide net for conversational possibilities, educators have swept up a very varied story catch. Over the years participants from all the regional ethnic groups have contributed recipes, planting information, herbal remedies, astronomical information and sightings, hunting stories, bush lore, dog stories, dreams, explanations of rituals and religious celebrations, stories of jealousy, infidelity, anger and passion, traditional stories told at wakes and holidays, ancestral tales, and stories of the hill or earth spirits.

Addressing my own research, it is important to consider Roberts's (1988) distinction between a "performed tale," one that is directed toward an ethnographer, and a "genuine tale," performed in a ritual cultural context (151). While a significant number of Toledo performances and stories fit the definition of a "performed tale," the special prompting given to narrators regarding the educational direction of their contributions suggests that
narrators have local children (an implied audience) as well as the interviewer in mind at the time of their storytelling.

Having begun my work in a technical assistance capacity, I was a formal participant in literacy endeavors and an informal observer of village life before I began deliberate research as a participant observer. Personal introductions by local educators have proven invaluable in enlisting participation and building trust among potential informants. I am aware that this entree has provided me with a very special opportunity to gain trust on short notice and move quickly beyond an initial research status that Geertz likens to a "gust of wind."

A significant methodological factor regarding my participation is the timing and length of my visits to Toledo. I have made visits to Belize of ten to fourteen days approximately every six months since February 1990. While I in no way claim the knowledge that accrues to long-term resident researchers, I have gotten to know people and visited them over an extended period of time. A special feature of this timing of visits to southern Belize is that, while I am privy to key national discourses, I have not been pressured to make commitments to one or another political group.

The educational leadership has encouraged New Hampshire teachers to collaborate with local teachers in an activity designed in part to break down the "fantasized gulf between the West and the 'Other' "(Tsing, 1993, 13). Toledo educators have invited us to meet them at the crossroads of cultural borderlands (Behar, 1993; Giroux, 1994; Rosaldo, 1989), a site where we may engage in a collaboration that is transcultural in nature, providing experiences that entail both benefits and the risks of misunderstanding and exploitation. Thus, the textbook project and this research project offer "the possibility of intelligible discourse between people quite different from each
other in interest, outlook, wealth, and power, and yet contained in a world
where.... it is increasingly difficult to get out of each other's way" (Geertz,
1988, 147). With this on-going collaboration in mind, I have researched the
storytellers' contributions with two distinct audiences in mind: the academic
community and Belizean educators. Throughout, I have attempted to act
according to principles of "negotiation, reciprocity, (and) empowerment,"
ideals that Lather (1986) suggests are essential to ethical research that is of
value to one's collaborators (257).

With my sun-burnt skin and Boston Celtics baseball hat, I am not an
invisible presence on the streets of Punta Gorda. Throughout this project, I
have striven to restrict my influence to teaching technical and fieldwork
skills. On occasion, district educators have invited me to join in discussions
concerning sensitive issues such as censoring stories or the use of SE versus
Creole. Relying upon my community organization background, I have made
every effort to transfer the information and skills I possess as quickly as
possible to avoid the neocolonial rut of dependency. I am aware that I have
contributed in my own small way to local oral lore, as the person who swam
deep into the Blue Creek Cave, the teacher who enthusiastically follows the
P.G. summer basketball leagues, and the foolish gringo who almost put his
head into a nest of Africanized bees!

**Research Techniques**

On my first visit to Belize, I took field notes and later used them to
reconstruct and transcribe oral stories. For the past six years, I have kept a
journal and audio-taped open-ended field interviews and storytelling
performances as the primary means of obtaining data. Belizean informants
are generally at ease with a tape recorder, and there is rarely an abrupt break
between conversation and an interview. I am confident that audio-taping presents less of a barrier than note-taking, as the seemingly non-tangible nature of taping elicits very little response or fear (Jackson, 1987, 82). It is still an open question if such taping shapes or alters performances by narrators. My experience with narrators that I have known for years, and with whom I spend casual time, indicates no special self-consciousness when performances are taped.

In many instances, story-sessions have moved easily from one subject to another due to the conversational, "non-directive" (96) interview style that I have employed. Encouraged by my UNH collaborator Cindy Cohen, I have also made use of the projective technique (Fetterman, 1989, 65), wherein I may ask a narrator to hold a picture, keepsake or a found object to stimulate reflection and narration. This technique has proved invaluable in extending interviews and opening up new paths of investigation. For example, one entire interview with seventy-five year old Emmanuel Jacobs was occasioned by the tender grasp of his father's dancing shoe and his mother's hand wrought 'bangle' (bracelet).

Following the TESOL protocol, modeled after traditional basal reader lay­outs, I have transcribed most stories in a paragraph format. I have also provided Toledo educators and the TMCC with alternative transcription styles for their consideration. A number of scholars and translators (Burns, 1983; Swann 1992; D. Tedlock, 1983) are experimenting with ethnopoetic formats because of a "concern for vocal quality of verbal art performances," and the "realization that a non-Western repertoire of oral literature can be understood only as it fits into a native system of the conception of speech" (Burns, 16). Tedlock (1983) emphasizes that a poetic rendering of oral narratives challenges the tendency by some to judge verbal arts as
"primitive," as well as highlighting stylistic features such as repetition, parallelism, dramatic pauses, rhythm, and the loudness and/or softness of speech (51). While not advocating one particular approach, I have presented a variety of publication models for Toledo residents to consider as alternative formats for transcribing their verbal arts. (See Chapter Nine for the use of one model format.) As a result of negotiations with district educators and TMCC leaders, most narratives are transcribed verbatim, utilizing SE spelling and the individual storyteller's SE or Creole syntax. We regularly correct severe grammatical errors that reflect negatively on the narrator, as well as common regional mistakes such as the gender confusion regarding personal pronouns. I estimate that final drafts of narratives are 95% + verbatim.

I attempt to return all transcripts to narrators for editing and, in many cases, informants have been thrilled to see their stories in print. However, most are usually reluctant to edit what they perceive to be 'finished' products. I also present all transcripts to the local educational and ethnic group leaders for review and ultimate disposition.

**Interviewing the Narrators**

Most of the recorded stories have emerged in a conversational model (Burns) or "extended open-ended interviews" (Lavie 1990, 17), shaped and stimulated by the context and timing of the individual or group interview. Sitting around at day's end with Simeon, who has spent his day chopping bush, most often leads to stories of forest pests, snake sightings, the coming rainy season, or perhaps the cracked foot pad of a favorite dog. Thus, conversation functions as "social transaction," and "verbal collaboration" (Moffett, 1968, 72).
Employing a conversational approach, relying on natural curiosity, and sharing my own personal experiences as a parent, cook, fisherman, gardener, teacher or student, I have at times encountered a narrator who has an area of particular expertise. I have been straightforward in asking if that person would share his experiences, thereby engendering a process of step-by-step explanation similar to that found in popular folklife studies, such as the *Foxfire* series (Wiggington, 1985) and Maine's *Salt* magazine. This reversal of postures, making the narrator the teacher and the teacher the student, creates a different, more equalizing dynamic (S. Price, 1993) that usually encourages narrators to break down the components of a specialized activity. At times, as with Emmanuel Jacobs and Anna Lopez, interviewers have assumed the reflective relationship of an apprentice to a master.

In a few cases, teachers have introduced an interviewer to a potential narrator with the express purpose of pursuing a certain line of inquiry deemed essential for the textbook project. One such person was Margarita R., the contact person for one of the few groups of Garifuna women to prepare cassava bread in their traditional manner. Over the years, I taped the cassava rituals and witnessed the camaraderie of the women, sweating, working, and singing as they extracted the toxins from the raw cassava and prepared the bread dough. Alarmed that this arduous manual production method may be a doomed enterprise, and aware of technological progress in other Garifuna settlements, Margarita is attempting to adapt the traditional process by introducing a mechanical, low-tech grater in order to ensure the continued local production of cassava bread. As part of the textbook project, we are documenting the story of this change together.

While many of the foregoing examples involve apprenticeships and the world of practice, another line of inquiry is the solicitation of traditional
stories. Stories of the 'Old Maya' have emerged throughout the project, often as narrators recount an earlier hearing of a story performance at a work site, a wake, or during the Christmas holiday season. Throughout Toledo there are aging storytellers and their younger apprentices, telling and retelling stories at the ritual moment, and now, increasingly upon request, as cultural renewal efforts complement the thrust of indigenous education.

The focused activity of recollecting traditional fixed stories often involves the process of performance (Bauman, 1984; Finnegan, 1992; Hymes, 1992), as narrators consciously or unconsciously attempt to replicate prior performances by themselves or elders. Certain Toledo residents treat the 'Old Maya' stories as fundamentalist Christians might view their scriptures — texts to be taken literally and without reflection or questioning. The spiritual dimension of these stories requires extreme delicacy on the part of outsiders, as well as the passive respect that avoids labeling the 'other's' truths as the observer's 'myths' (Bierhorst, 1990; Gossen, 1974).

**Triangulation**

Validity is crucial to both the TESOL Project and my own research. Triangulation is an essential part of ensuring the validity of ethnographic research, allowing the researcher to test "one source of information against another to strip away alternative explanations and prove a hypothesis" (Fetterman, 1989, 89). As I have collected stories throughout the years, a number of opportunities for triangulating data and ensuring validity have revealed themselves. Aldous Huxley once said that, if the world had ends, British Honduras (Belize) would be one of them. This anecdote points to the first leg of my efforts at triangulation, older texts on Belize. While the twentieth century has made its presence known in remote Toledo, many
aspects of local life-ways remain relatively unchanged, linked to much earlier renderings of these cultural groups such as Brigham's (1887) photographic presentation of Garifuna women preparing cassava and Gann's (1925) account of the Kekchi "Devil [Monkey] Dance." Likewise, the authenticity of Irmelinda's and Gerineldo's stories is demonstrated by their resonances in the Popul Vuh. These historical sources allow the researcher to establish the continuity of traditional folkways, thereby offering a perspective on long-standing traditions, as well as "invented traditions" (Hobsbawm, 1983), an issue that will be considered in the course of this study.

A second form of triangulation for my research resides with the representative groups of the region's indigenous peoples. Throughout the project's duration, I have cleared all aspects of my involvement with members of the National Garifuna Council and the TMCC. I have taped most of these conversations because I know that the crossing of so many boundaries of race, ethnicity, region, and culture makes the possibility of misunderstandings increase in likelihood. The widespread local interest in these stories assures a litmus test that can distinguish indigenous stories from more recent arrivals.

A third mechanism that encourages triangulation is the local publication of Toledo stories and the opportunity for intertextual commentary. Publishing the stories in the district guarantees that there will be an on-going local triangulation of the narratives that find their way into print. These are not the texts, gathered for importation into the academic and publishing factories of the US and Europe (Behar, 1993). These are home-grown stories that are finding a new life in books that are designed to engender cultural renewal and cultural interchange among Toledo's varied peoples.
It appears that my own triangulation considerations, in concert with the broader regional cultural renewal efforts, are all part of an emerging public discourse in Toledo. This district-wide conversation is directed toward the renewal of traditional folkways, as well as the assertive expansion of ethnic awareness and self-determination.

**Border Crossings and Reflexivity**

During the times that I have worked in 'foreign' settings and especially in my work with US and Belizean teachers over the past five years, I have come to recognize some of the insidious dangers for the good-willed but unwary. While I aspire to and recognize my tenuous identity as a "concerned benevolent person who is free to come and go" (Spivak, 1990, 70), there have been pitfalls that I have viewed up close and personal, as I sought help to extricate myself from blunders. Race, religion, gender, privilege, economics, formal education, literacy -- a host of issues rear their troublesome heads to be considered. Throughout this project I have been fortunate to have both Belizean and US educators to rely on for their counsel and criticism, while facing a number of problematic issues. Time, educational postures, and 'progress' are three potential sources of misunderstanding, that if recognized, addressed and negotiated, potentially offer the hope for more genuine collaboration between Belizean educators and US teachers. These issues are addressed in detail in the Appendices.

**Critical Analysis**

Initially, my interest in Belizean storytellers led me down a familiar literary study path, as I sought out collections of Mayan folklore (Bierhorst,
1986; Montejo, 1991; Sexton, 1992) in an effort to broaden my appreciation of the genre. As I read Bierhorst's (1990) analysis of Amerindian storytelling, I was confronted by the dramatic evolution of current ethnographic scholarship which gives balanced consideration to context and performance, as well as story content. Though earlier scholars (Gann, 1925; Charnay, 1887; Morley, 1946; Thompson, 1932) still offer valuable historical contexts and a wealth of Mayan narratives, it is the work of contemporary scholars (Burns, 1983; Finnegans, 1992; Hymes, 1974; Swann, 1992; B. Tedlock, 1992; D. Tedlock, 1993) that convinced me of the critical necessity to research storytelling as the performance of a social act.

As an educator, I have also been enlightened by the wide range of current literature that considers literacy from various ethnographic perspectives. Contemporary literacy researchers (Heath, 1983; Lofty, 1992; McLaughlin, 1992; Moffett, 1988; Scribner and Cole, 1981; Street, 1984) have delineated the complex interweaving of language acquisition and expression within specific cultural contexts, particularly the family and community, explaining the advantages and obstacles that differing social settings present to learners. Other scholars (Brown, 1993; Newkirk, 1992; Wolcott, 1967) have examined the same issues primarily within the school setting. As I began to spend an increasing amount of time with a small number of narrators, it became clear that qualitative investigation offered a more fruitful path than any quantitative or literary examination of collected stories.

An additional incentive to pursuing the ethnographic approach came from a close reading of those authors who are currently engaged in the reconsideration of ethnographic writing. Clifford and Marcus’s Writing Culture (1986) has proven to be a seminal book for my entire project, particularly the work of Fisher, Tyler, and the editors. Likewise, the ongoing
discussion concerning ethnographic authorship (Farella, 1993; Geertz, 1988; Rabinow, 1977; Rosaldo, 1989; Van Maanan, 1987; Wolf, 1992) offered me not only a new lens to view Toledo storytelling but also the outlines of new vessels with which to contain the vibrant voices of these same storytellers.

As was mentioned in the introduction, many of these same ethnographers are among the critics who are currently examining tendencies toward cultural salvage and cultural renewal. While the cautionary critique regarding the elevation of older, pastoral material provides valuable guidelines, salvage has not been totally disregarded. Marcus and Fisher (1986) maintain that, "The salvage motif as a worthy scientific purpose has remained strong in ethnography to the present" (24). Instead of rejecting this approach, they point to the method's limitations, noting, "The cultures of world peoples need to be constantly rediscovered as these people reinvent them in changing historical circumstances" (24).

'Reinvention' is the cue to consider cultural renewal, the other pole of this salvage - renewal tension. Williams (1977) insists that culture, an elusive concept that often simultaneously refers to both inner sensibilities and a collective sense of the arts, can only be defined historically. Due to the "complexity and variability of its shaping forces" (16), it is possible only to portray or describe a particular culture at one moment in time. Therefore, since any culture is an evolving collective enterprise, it may be influenced by forces of deterioration and renewal concurrently.

It follows then that cultural renewal is not mere reduplication or a charging of aesthetic batteries. It is a reinvention, a conscious and/or unconscious selecting of traditions, where, "from a whole possible area of past and present, in a particular culture, certain meanings and practices are selected for emphasis and certain other meanings are neglected or excluded"
Vansina (1985) argues that the "time depth" of a particular tradition and the act of instilling 'permanence' through writing influence this selectivity considerably. However, the issue of choice ultimately begs the question of ideology (191) and power (Williams, 116) — who is making the selections? As Hobsbawm (1983) points out, the persons who claim the legitimate voice of tradition are thereby able to invoke the "sanction of precedent, social continuity and natural law expressed in history" (2).

I have organized this study around a small number of narrators from the region's ethnic groups. While these narrators are not presented as typical, in the sense of displaying the most common characteristics of specific groups, they are representative of certain long-standing traditional patterns that are often associated with a particular cultural group, for example the Creole teller of Anansi stories or a Mayan healer's explanation of herbal remedies. Utilizing both historical and cultural analyses, it is possible to determine if a specific story is part of an authentic tradition, perhaps the echo of a Popul Vuh episode, or if a narrative may be an original creative act or even a recently "invented tradition" (Hobsbawm). Currently in Toledo, the authority for selecting and evaluating traditions is both diffuse, spread out among numerous citizens, as well as centralized in both the education system and the indigenous organizations, thereby ensuring a degree of authentic cultural renewal.

In southern Belize, there is not necessarily a conflict between anthropological salvage and cultural renewal. As narrators look back to their ancestral and earth spirits for guidance and inspiration, they preserve a continuity with spiritual values. As these same narrators look ahead to the newly encroaching political and technological society, they are improvising
traditional narratives and structuring appropriate story-cycles to address pressing political and social issues, particularly for their younger audiences.

**Orality, Cognition, and Community Knowledge**

Contemporary scholarship relating to orality offers another appropriate lens with which to view Toledo storytelling. Ong's (1982) *Orality and Literacy* provides a historical review of oral poetry and stories, and his treatment of Lord (1960) and Parry (1971) sheds considerable light on the improvisational nature of oral artistic performances throughout time. Ong considers those bards who did memorize and recite verbatim, but also promotes an appreciation for, "the set phrase, the formulas, the expected qualifier" employed improvisationally in the Homeric poems (23).³

Ong ultimately articulates a limited view of orality as a performative oriented (171) form of expression, where knowledge has to be repeated or lost (24). He challenges the cognitive dimension of orality, claiming that those who primarily depend on orality tend to be situational rather than abstract (49), have difficulty with articulate self-analysis, and possess a personality structure that is both communal and externalized (69). He dismisses a host of human capabilities, stating that, "abstractly sequential, classificatory, explanatory examination of phenomena or of stated truths is impossible without writing and reading," (11), a clear statement of the "Great Divide" analysis also promoted by scholars such as Olson (1977) and Goody (1976).

Brian Street (1993) challenges the absolute boundaries of the "Great Divide" and provides an alternative conceptual analysis for researching and discussing orality. He describes a dynamic continuum, ranging from primary orality to complex literacies, rather that the gulf separating the oral have-nots from the literate haves. Street's literacy continuum credits the technical skills

---

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
and cognitive aspects of reading and writing, but he claims that "the relation of oral and literate practices differs from one context to another" (8).

Street distinguishes between Autonomous Literacy, which he considers artificial and devoid of cultural and historical context, and Ideological Literacy, which operates with specific peoples in their current life-worlds that are, "saturated with ideology." Thus, an ideological literacy not only addresses technical and cognitive skills, it also attempts to, "understand them as they encapsulated within cultural wholes and within structures of power" (9).

Street recognizes that the potential of an ideological literacy to promote social change involves "challenging a given form of (dominant) discourse and the production and assertion of other discourses within new material conditions" (16).

A strong promoter of literacy, Street claims that, "Anthropologists and folklorists have demonstrated that members of oral cultures—however defined—share all of the cognitive qualities attributed to literacy within the autonomous model" (10). Certainly, the documentation in recent years of highly sophisticated bodies of oral knowledge, such as the open ocean navigation systems of Polynesian navigators (Gladwin, 1970; Lewis, 1972), among other studies, shrinks or eliminates the spatial metaphor of the "Great Divide."

Bruner (1990) considers orality and narration from a somewhat different perspective with his exposition of folk psychology and cognition. He too cites examples of non-literate classification systems, including the Subanun (Philippines) taxonomy of skin diseases and ethnonavigation studies among the Marshall Islanders in the Pacific (Gladwin). Bruner champions the context specific nature of cognition as he asks the question, "Could one render the experience of the Puluwat navigator into the language and thought of the
Western anthropologist?" (37). Bruner's contention is that a folk psychology must be at the basis of any cultural psychology (39). Furthermore, the organizing principles of many folk psychologies are "narrative in nature rather than logical or categorical. Folk psychology is about human agents doing things on the basis of their beliefs and desires" (43). This last contention not only provides an alternate way of viewing cognition, it touches on the character and approach of Belizean storytellers as they transmit their spiritual agendas by means of oral performances. As Bruner observes, "To tell a story is inescapably to take a moral stand" (51).

At this moment, the "Great Divide" theory is being challenged by a growing number of studies that focus on oral performance, cognition, and literacy throughout the world. While the purpose of this study is not to contest the "Great Divide," it is essential to consider that Toledo's oral narrators are currently performing, adapting, transmitting, and articulating a folk wisdom or psychology that is grounded on tradition but also directed to the people and issues of contemporary Belize. Furthermore, they are creating appropriate language paths to meaning by the very same process.

**Emergent Storytelling**

If, as Bruner suggests, the oral narrative is to be considered both the mode of transmission as well as a prime means of constructing knowledge, it is essential to study the preparation, performance, local perception, and reception of Toledo's oral narratives. In this section, I will describe contemporary scholarship regarding the processes of Amerindian and Afro-Caribbean storytelling, giving particular consideration to improvisation and interpretation as essential components of the narrator's performance skills. I believe that these storytelling performances are part of a broad process of
projection, an expanded notion of Tabouret and Keller's projection of identity in language, wherein the narrator thrusts forward the community's underlying cultural values into the contemporary national arena. Furthermore, for most Toledo narrators, this is a profoundly spiritual act, as they give voice to spirits of the ancestors and the earth.

Williams's (1977) exposition of "dominant, residual and emergent cultures" provides the foundation for a timely understanding of Bauman's conception of emergent performance. In Williams's "epochal analysis" of culture and literature, he delineates the dominant, "effective" culture of a period, which in turn is contested by residual and emergent cultural elements. "Available elements of its past," such as organized religion, comprise residual cultural forms, and may still be an "effective element of the present" (122). Challenges to a dominant culture may well up from valued aspects of a residual culture, a move that is characterized by

a reaching back to those meanings and values which were created in actual societies and actual situations in the past, and which still seem to have significance because they represent areas of human experience, aspiration, and achievement which the dominant culture neglects, undervalues, opposes, represses, or even cannot recognize (124).

Such opposition, which is very much a part of the Toledo cultural renewal effort, may well produce a humanizing, emancipatory move against the dominant culture, particularly the residue of colonial oppression.

The author asserts that an emergent culture is recognized as "radically different." "Emergent," according to Williams, means that "new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationships are continually being created" (123). An aspect of emergent culture that may
particularly relate to Belizean culture is Williams's insistence that "it depends crucially on finding new forms or adaptations of forms" (126).

Bauman's description of "verbal arts as performance" is predicated on this analysis of emergent culture. Bauman challenges the traditional salvage move of folklore, that concentration on remnants of the residual culture, suggesting that in this way folklore "anticipates its own demise, for when the traditions are fully gone, the discipline loses its raison d'être" (48). Against the complex processes in Toledo, wherein cultural deterioration and cultural renewal contest, both Williams and Bauman affirm the emergent aspects of the present cultural experience which are vibrant and evolving. Bauman stresses that performance "constitutes ... a point of departure, the nexus of tradition, practice, and emergence in verbal art,...able to comprehend much more of the totality of human experience" (48).

Bauman lodges much of the emergent quality of a performance in skills of those performers who are capable of establishing "prestige" and "control" (44). These qualities, in concert with a "collaborative expectancy" of the audience (16), set the proper conditions for the exercise of power by a speaker who may represent residual, dominant or emergent forces. Those performers who are best received and most effective as agents of an emergent culture are also those who are most capable of producing an "enchantment of experience," "heightened intensity" in the performance, as well as "participative attention" and "energy" within the audience (43). A last consideration regarding the effectiveness of a performer in furthering an emergent or residual culture concerns the goals of the performer, whether he or she is intent on promoting a spiritual agenda or social change, certainly a hallmark of many Toledo storytellers. Gunn neatly sums up the Native American view of emergence and cultural renewal in this way, "Through the sacred power of
utterance they seek to shape and mold, to direct and determine, the forces that surround and govern human life and the related lives of all things" (1992, 56).

Dennis Tedlock offers a regional example of the emergent performance in his most recent analysis of verbal arts among the Zuni (1991). He describes a critical distinction between reproduction and interpretation. Canonical texts, those that are memorized and repeated verbatim, are reproduced, while "oral formulaic composition" and what he refers to as "ordinary spoken folk narrative" are considered interpretive." He acknowledges the contributions of Lord and Parry and offers his own description of oral formulaic performance as a "hearthside interpretation...partly given by tradition, partly redrawn, or resounded, edited and elaborated by a particular narrator" (310). 6

Throughout his analysis of the Zuni teller of tales, Tedlock echoes Bauman's "enchantment of intensity" by illuminating many of the storyteller's interpretive moves, including: holding back, fixing attention, appealing to common experience, summarizing, creating tension and glossing. In a description of social narratives that appears to encompass Toledo narratives, he notes that, "Tales have no canonical versions...They exist only in the form of interpretations, and it takes a multiplicity of voices to tell them" (338). Each storyteller performs with a number of subtle tools including voice, gesture, tone, diction, "giving shifting shades and colors to their words." 7

In the next two sections, I consider the processes by which Toledo storytellers project their communities' residual and emergent agendas out to the larger world. I refer to the research which describes the emergent quality of performance in neighboring cultural groups in order to contextualize how Belizean narrators engage in emergent performances, lending their voices to
the spirits of the ancestors and of the earth. I maintain that the social responsibility of storytelling extends to allowing these ancestral and earth spirits to use narrators' voices as the conduits for contemporary moral messages that are steeped in traditional values. Just as the Garinagu consider ancestral wisdom in their critical decisions concerning the use of agricultural chemicals, so too Mayan hunters refer back to the earth spirits in adapting their bush codes to modern technology and weaponry. In addition, I offer a preliminary analysis suggesting that this distinction between voices of the ancestors and of the earth also functions as a local folk taxonomy (Gossen, 1974; Sherzer, 1983).

**Giving Voice to Ancestral Spirits**

The popular attention given to Mexico's Day of the Dead has alerted Westerners to the special ties that many Mesoamerican people maintain with their deceased ancestors. Communication with the ancestors by means of bereavement, dreams, visions, storytelling, and glossalalia (speaking in tongues) is a critical aspect of ritual for many Toledo residents, particularly the Garinagu.

While there are recognized channels for interpreting ancestral messages, such as the Garifuna buyes (spiritual leaders), many local people believe that an ancestor may choose to give voice through any member of the community, including children. Research (S. Cayetano, 1993; Gonzalez, 1988; Valentine, 1990) and local testimony regarding Garinagu bereavement rituals offer a profound and complex profile of the broad range of performative events within this community, extending from the narration of traditional Anansi stories (Kerns, 1983, 155), to ritual wailing (152), to the performance of mourning rites that have both Christian and Garifuna inspirations. Ancestors
may appear in dreams or speak through mourners at rituals such as the dugu. Giving voice to the ancestors is a spontaneous event, however it is often a speech act that is marked by ritual aspects such as timing, drumming, and a collective spirit of remembrance. Garinagu give voice to the ancestors in the hope that the community will receive healing and guidance from the emergent voices of their members on the other side of death.

Focusing on the highland Maya, Dennis Tedlock (1992) describes those underlying creative processes of structuring oral performances that involve a "folding back" or interweaving of plot elements from the same story or different stories. He recounts listening to a highland narrator who began to tell a story about Adam and Eve and their crucifixion, and later makes reference to a serpent. Tedlock describes his curiosity regarding the apparent Old Testament/New Testament convergence of Adam and Eve and a crucifixion, as well as questioning whether this is the serpent in the Garden or some new world snake that has entered the story. He realizes that, if he continues to listen, his curiosity will probably be rewarded as ideas and themes slowly emerge because, "People who live in these mountains are always folding back stories upon themselves, and chances are that he'll come to this place again" (146). Tedlock's "folding back" image provides one means of understanding how Toledo storytelling performances encompass and signify on layers of ancestral voices (residual cultural elements) that have left little trace but an oral gloss here and a verbal reference there.

Richard Price's (1983) work with Surinam's Saramaka sheds light on Toledo storytelling's ancestral voices, since the Saramaka possess a history that is similar in many ways to both the Garinagu and the Maya. Like the Garinagu, the Saramaka were transported to the Caribbean by European slavers, and they rebelled shortly thereafter. The Saramaka have kept their
"First Time" lore alive by means of the collective memory and discourse regarding their war of liberation. "The Saramaka collective identity is predicated on a simple opposition- freedom versus slavery- the preservation of the First Time is a way of saying never again" (11).

Price develops the close interpenetration of current events and the oral memory of First Time, an interrelating of the emergent and residual cultures. He describes Saramaka songs that interweave the ancestral past and modern events which are as mundane as a domestic squabble. He says that, "Saramaka history somehow epitomizes for me a prototypically Saramaka way of humanizing (or individualizing) and celebrating their distant collective past" (177). Modern Saramaka storytellers give voice to ancestral values in a manner that is directed at current social agenda.

Sherzer's ethnographies (1983, 1990) of Panama's Kuna people consider this same adaptation of ancestral values to modern times by focusing on connections between language as an "active force" (1983, 67) and social roles. Sherzer notes that an elder who performs an ancestral story may accommodate his telling to his audience such that, "When chanted, 'the story of the hot pepper' is flexibly adapted and especially interpreted as relevant to current issues in Kuna life" (87), an example of a native people combining residual and emergent themes by means of an improvisational performance of ancestral stories. While the story could appear to be performed for amusement, a "clever chief" might draw one or several "moralistic interpretations" at the same time. Thus, a storyteller attains popularity by this improvisation with traditional stories and his use of "creative, innovative and often indirect language" (87). As with the Kuna, Mayan stories are also saturated with moral lessons that allow for the adaptation of traditional narratives to contemporary issues.
Many Toledo narrators employ the same referential and normative use of ancestral stories. Skilled storytellers improvise and adapt ancestral stories to contemporary social, moral, and political dilemmas. Their performances often take on a particularly dramatic intensity at those times, as they lend their voices to ancestral words and messages, thereby giving voice to their ancestors.

**Giving Voice to the Earth Spirits**

The primal inspirational source for many Belizean storytellers is the earth or 'bush', with its endlessly intense cycle of life, death, seismic activity, and intense weather. It is in the bush that the spirits of the animals and plants live, those spiritual "masters" and "owners" of the different species that are hunted and gathered by local residents. I now present research that describes how native peoples in the Americas give voice to these earth spirits, thereby articulating narrative constructs of ecological knowledge that continue to guide their management of natural resources.

Richard Wilson's (1995) research on the Mayan resurgence in Guatemala spotlights the Q'eqchi' (the official Guatemalan spelling of Kekchi) fusion of communal identity with the local hill spirits, *tzuultaq'as* (mountain-valleys). He explains that these "earth gods encompass the whole of a sacrilized landscape," (51) noting that the mountain spirits are "sentinels, guardians of plants, people, and forest animals" (54). Wilson stresses that, "Villagers interact most with the mountain spirits who dwell in caves around their communities. It is with this local sacred geography that they have a personal and moral relationship" (56). Furthermore, in concert with the thrust of this study's findings regarding cultural renewal, Wilson asserts, "The mountain spirits are not some fossilized legacy of the pre-Columbian period. Instead, the
tzuulaq’a figure has been constructed out of pre-Columbian, colonial and post-colonial experiences” (58).

Barbara Tedlock (1992) has worked recently among the Kekchi, focusing particularly on the role of "dreams and visionary narratives in Mayan cultural survival." She examines the testimony of spiritual leaders including catechists who have encountered the mountain-valleys in visionary journeys, and returned to preach their cautionary messages. Juan, a Guatemalan catechist, whose story is detailed in Chapter Ten, speaks to Mayan gatherings throughout the region. His testimony, giving Christian catechetical form to traditional Mayan spirituality, is a contemporary example of the religious syncretism that marks the region. Tedlock addresses the residual and emergent dimensions of cultural renewal, maintaining that the dialogue between traditionalists and catechists "will continue to validate Mayan traditionalism, while simultaneously facilitating cultural innovation." The increased emphasis on dreams and visions in the region, resulting from Guatemalan violence and inter-Mayan communication, enables "them to stay in touch with their own ancestors and the sacred earth on which they live" (471).

Chapman (1978), who researched the oral traditions of Honduras's Tolupan Indians, describes the spirits of the animals and plants as "master(s)," who protect them and take vengeance on the human hunter if he kills in excess of his needs or on the cultivator if he harvests plants before they are mature." These "masters" are regulators of the kill and the harvest, and are known by many other words when translated into English, including "mistress, spiritual owner, lord, guardian, protector, proprietor, boss, spirit of the forest, elder of the species or elder of the kind, chief, king queen, father, mother, elder brother, and so on" (282). Chapman focuses on one storyteller.
and his repertoire of 'master' stories, describing how the telling of these stories, with their regulatory function, helps establish the Tolupan harmony between change and tradition.  

Evers and Molina (1987) describe the Yaqui Deer Songs of Arizona and Sonora, an improvisational performance mode that draws from a canon of over five hundred songs, while allowing for individual structuring of song repertoires (86). Singers describe their verbal arts as "enchanted talk," which allows contact with a parallel universe, the "flower world" (7). Like spiritual contacts in other traditions, the deer singers give voice to the animals of the flower world. Their song sequences are interpreted by the singers and directed toward contemporary audiences. These authors dismiss the salvage critique, noting that their experience suggests that:

Yaqui deer songs and the traditions that surround them are very much alive and that more than sixty years of recording and printing versions of them has complemented and reinforced more traditional oral modes of continuance, rather than contributing to their disappearance" (14).

These ethnographic descriptions of Amerindian peoples giving voice to the spirits of the earth have their resonances among the Toledo narrators who frequently articulate the actions and intentions of their neighboring earth deities. In their storytelling performances, Belizean narrators are also likely to comment on current environmental and land-use issues while making reference to their traditional spiritual beliefs. Thus, it is the adaptive and improvisational license of their emergent performances that enables them to apply this ancient body of knowledge to the present.
Research Summary

Toledo storytellers are giving voice to traditional ancestral and earth spirits as the various communities renew their traditional life-ways and navigate their futures in contemporary Belizean society. In spite of the oncoming wave of Western mass media and consumer society, many narrators project guiding voices which are grounded in the residual cultural wellsprings of their ancestors. However, as they select appropriate stories and perform their tales for today's audiences, including the textbook program's implied audience of future students, their performances often offer evidence of emergent values, adaptations, and contemporary political stands. Persuasive testimony that echoes the spirits of the earth offers guidance as modern-day Mayans negotiate their land rights in Belize's new political structure.

Numerous Toledo residents give voice to the collective wisdom of the earth, as hunters and fisherman find ways to manage their stocks under the pressures of new laws and competition from multinational corporations such as Malaysian logging companies and the Red Lobster restaurant chain.

In the seven chapters that follow, I profile different storytelling processes that are currently employed in 1990's Toledo. An understanding of these modes of narration provides insights into the local construction of the self, tying together and enmeshing an individual in the broad fabric of social interrelationships, the process of constructing both individual and societal meanings. These processes are representative of the ways by which many storytellers give voice to ancestral and earth spirits as their communities place their social and political agendas in the national arena. The story collecting project, while making a profound contribution to localized literacy
efforts, is also functioning as a catalyst for greater participation in national discourse and therefore, potentially in emancipatory political activities.

In the TESOL collection project, the "story-telling self" becomes "enmeshed in a net of others" (Bruner, 114), a phrase that is reminiscent of the metaphors of woven nets and tapestries used by contemporary scholars, that echo for many Vygotsky's (1962) "web of meaning." I believe that the web of meaning that Toledo storytellers outline does not resemble an exclusively residual or reactionary vision, which might be likened to the static weaving of a tapestry. Rather, the constantly emerging voices, values, and issues of Toledo storytellers resemble the slow semiotic changing of the cat's cradle in the hands of a master storyteller.

The Storytellers

Each of the seven chapters that follow focuses on one particular narrator or group of narrators. I have worked with each of these narrators for at least three years and in some cases as many as six years. While some of these individuals recognize their special storytelling abilities and others do not, each narrator is a talented storyteller. I first met Irmelinda when she was age thirteen, while Antonia, Annie, Gerineldo, and Petey are recognized within their respective communities as accomplished performers of verbal arts. I am personally grateful to each of these storytellers and the other volunteers who have donated their valuable time and efforts to the TESOL project.

Considering the region's diverse population, it is a difficult task to adequately describe a representative sample of storytellers from varying backgrounds. Nevertheless, since one of the goals of the TESOL program is the inclusion of a wide variety of narrators, I labored to interview a diverse
group of storytellers. Consequently, these seven chapters describe female and male narrators of all ages. In a distribution that is somewhat representative of local populations, five chapters are devoted to Mayan storytellers and one each to Creole and Garifuna narrators. The judicious reader who wishes to be selective regarding the array of data may consider the following sketches in guiding her or his reading. All of the narrators have been protected with pseudonyms, with the exception of Emmanuel Jacobs who insisted that he always welcomed new visitors, and they would have to know his real name!

Chapter Four, "Co-authors," surveys a number of visits to a family wherein storytelling has long been valued as a collective social enterprise. I learned of Irmelinda's story journal by accident, and gradually came to interview three elder generations of family storytellers who prized and co-authored their traditional tales of "tricky animals." My time spent with this family has also provided important background information regarding the "folding back" of stories, as well as the seasonal and ritual contexts for storytelling performances.

The next chapter, "Cultural Conflicts," describes an evening spent with Eduardo Miss, a farmer and active community worker in remote Santa Cruz. Nighttime stories are the focus of this profile, as our spontaneous late evening conversation provided an occasion for the emergence of a long story-cycle concerning the spirits of the night and the bush. Eduardo offered me stern counsel regarding the spiritual geography that overlays everyday life in the bush and village.

Chapter Six, "Walking with Jesus...," recounts another long evening spent with a male storyteller, Gerineldo. It took two years to arrange this taping session, and, while I had plans to tape key traditional Mayan stories, Gerineldo chose this occasion to share his view about the dangers of a salvage
approach. He stressed that those who seek true understanding must move beyond the superficial plot levels of stories and penetrate the age-old interior truths. In a striking polarity of narratives, Gerineldo described his personal vision of Jesus, as well as his performance as a 'devil' spirit in the ritual Monkey Dance.

In the next chapter, "Life Story," I consider a woman narrator, noted for her high level of community involvement. Over time, Mariana Cho gradually revealed to me her stories and beliefs concerning daily life in the domains of the village, the bush, and the modern world of craft marketing. Mariana's stories coalesce to form the outlines of a life story, the account of one woman clearly guided by traditional spiritual beliefs, while at the same time navigating a new life in the restless waters of modern times.

Chapter Eight, "Hunter's Code," profiles Emmanuel Jacobs (Petey), a well known Creole bushman and storyteller. In an extended set of interviews, Petey describes the underlying moral code of the traditional hunter. Petey's world view as a bushman is grounded in the same hill spirit consciousness that guides the region's Mayan hunters. By means of his extensive storytelling repertoire, Petey establishes himself as a competent guide to the worlds of the bush and the spirits.

Next, in "Ancestral Voices," I consider the pressing issues that are currently permeating Garifuna community discourse. I primarily recount discussions with three Garifuna women who are not only friends, but also community members intimately involved in the cultural renewal of Garifuna lifeways and bereavement rituals. In addition to these two timely topics, the active renewal of the Garifuna language is another major consideration that emerges in this community portrait.
The final storyteller profile, "Visionary Testimony," is devoted to the storytelling processes which are related to the deliberate spread of a Mayan visionary narrative throughout the region. In recent years, Juan, a Guatemalan catechist, has been testifying about his visit with a hill spirit, who sent him on a mission of cultural renewal. The expanding course of this narrative journey is tracked through my association with Thomas Teul, a board member of the Mayan Council, and a man determined to contribute to the spread of this profound spiritual message, with its significant ecological and political dimensions.
CHAPTER FOUR

CO-AUTHORS:
IRMELINDA AND HER FAMILY'S STORYTELLING TRADITION

The Amerindian Peoples

During the later part of this century, archaeologists have unearthed evidence of the paleo-Indians who preceded the pre-classical Mayan civilization over twenty-five hundred years ago. Perhaps these were ancestors of the Olmecs who might have extended their empire south from the western Yucatan, inhabited coastal areas, and traded with peoples to the South. Archaeologists are also currently excavating the Belizean Cayes in search of signs of Arawak and Carib expansion from their homelands in the Orinoco and Magdalena delta regions of South America. There is evidence that these sea-going Indians farmed sectors of the Caribbean region for over nine thousand years (Olsen, 1974; Rouse, 1992). Likewise, recent archaeological investigation indicates that the pre-conquest Maya used the Northern Cayes as trading centers (Shoman, 1994).

A selection from the beginning of the Quiche Mayas' *Popul Vuh* describes a Mayan conception of their beginnings as a people:

Of course there is the sky, and there is also the Heart of the Sky. This is the name of the god, as it is spoken.

And then came his word, as he came here to the Sovereign Plumed Serpent, here in the blackness, in the early dawn. He spoke with the Sovereign Plumed Serpent, and they talked, then they thought, then they worried. They agreed with each other, they joined their words, their thoughts. Then it was clear, then they reached accord in the light, and then humanity was clear, when they conceived the growth, the generation of

72

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
trees, of bushes, and the growth of life, of humankind, in the blackness, in the early dawn, all because of the Heart of Sky, named Hurricane (D. Tedlock, 1985, 73).

The Mayas of southern Belize were particularly active during the classical period, extending from 250 AD - 900 AD. Four major hill country ruins, Lubaantun, Nim Li Punit, Pusil Ha, and Uxbentka provide silent testimony to the architectural skills and ceremonial life of the Classic Maya. Archaeologist Norman Hammond (1975) suggests that the Toledo Mayans were prime producers of cacao beans during the classic period, and it was this crop that enabled them to integrate into the wider Mayan world. Artifacts indicate widespread trade with coastal people and the highland Maya of modern day Guatemala. Hammond describes Lubaantun at the height of its prosperity:

Once established, the realm of Lubaantun would seem to have been a prosperous and viable economic entity, possessing large areas of good agricultural land on which a population of up to 50,000 could have been supported by milpa farming of maize and beans. ...A surprisingly large part of the protein supply was obtained from the Caribbean, from fishing, and from gathering shellfish on the caps and in the deep waters beyond (133).

Although the decline of the Classic Mayan civilizations extended to Toledo early in this millennium, contemporary Belizean historians believe that a number of Mayan groups continued to inhabit the area without interruption until the present day, an issue of significance since there are those political and development opportunists in contemporary Belize who would deny Mayan land-rights. Beginning in 1508, the Spanish sought to extend their rule to Belize during the earliest wave of European colonization and struggled with the Chol, Itsa, and Mopan Maya, ultimately pushing many of them into the Guatemala's Peten region and southward along the coast toward the Sarstoon River, modern Belize's southern border.
While the dominant history since the European arrival is articulated as a story of conquest, there is ample reason to consider the Mayan accounts of their habitation of this region as a history of resistance. Rather than do battle with the well-armed Spanish, as well as the pirates and the British who followed, the Mayans retreated to the bush and resorted to armed conflict only when they were cornered. There is no shortage of accounts in this region of armed Mayan resistance to European and Mestizo attempts at domination throughout the centuries, extending to the Mayan caste wars in the nineteenth century Yucatan, and the modern armed uprisings in the highlands of Guatemala and Mexico's state of Chiapas.

Geography and weather have joined forces with a hostile environment to keep outside influence on Toledo's Mayans to a minimum. The Mayans have seen the region's valuable hardwoods exploited over a protracted period, and in recent years, they were always reminded of Belize's Commonwealth status by encountering British forces practicing jungle warfare training in the high bush. Only the Catholic church has maintained a long-term contact, and, even today, weeks may pass without a priest's visit. More than the government or multinational corporations, the church schools are the key link between outside forces and inhabitants of this remote region. Even so, while the colonialists attempted to suppress the Mayan spiritual, political, and community discourses throughout the entire period of Spanish and British invasion, the oral lore of Toledo and other sectors of the Mayan world indicates that the success of this silencing was always restricted.
Irmelinda and Her Family

The teller or receiver of stories can discover connections between self and other, penetrate barriers to understanding, and come to know more deeply the meanings of his or her own historical and cultural narrative (Witherell, 1991, 94).

This chapter initially focuses on one young woman's efforts to preserve traditional stories, and expands to encompass a family portrait of Mopan storytellers and their honored narrative tradition. Thanks to a village teacher's writing assignment, which directed students to transcribe a traditional story from an older relative into English, I was able to meet and interview four generations of one Mayan family who are engaged in the intertwined processes of salvage and renewal. Family members consider themselves responsible for maintaining, transmitting, and co-authoring the ancestral stories of their people. Though the meaning and impact of the family's shape-shifting stories remains elusive, and may contain coded content, clearly these family members believe that their traditional stories possess a timeless veracity that continues to impact on contemporary listeners.

Throughout the early years of interviews, I was impressed by the younger family members who cherish their living elders as well as their more ancient ancestors. I came to see Irmelinda positioning herself as an enthusiastic guardian and transmitter of ancestral stories, both within her family and her community. Likewise, while her family's stories are entertaining, they are also cautionary and instructive, illuminating the liminal space where humans and bush spirits interact, sometimes a danger zone, and on other occasions a locale of fantasy and magic.
San Antonio, February 1992

Three fifteen on a muggy tropical day, and the effervescent cries of Mayan children being released from their classrooms suggest one of those suspect universals concerning human behavior — school's out! Younger siblings wait for older sisters to take them by the hand for the walk home; ten or twelve students slowly make their way down to the new one room library, and a group heads off to the field kicking a soccer ball. Sitting on one of the stone walls that encircle the school, I watch fifty or more students, some sporting the neon backpacks that have just become fashionable, as they make their way to an aging Blue Bird school bus.

Cautiously, two older girls, probably sixth standard, approach Karolina, a colleague from New Hampshire. Irmelinda and Angeles make eye contact and approach slowly, calling "Karolina... Karolina!"

They embrace, all smiles. I am introduced, and the girls explain that, alerted by Karolina's recent letter, they had been anticipating her visit. I sit quietly sweating after the two hour market-bus ride to San Antonio, and listen. It is a relief to learn that the girls' families live just down the hill from Estrella, a woman we had also hoped to visit this afternoon.

Both girls have written Karolina the past fall, asking for financial assistance, money to buy books so that they might continue to attend school. Unable to respond to all such requests, Karolina had hoped to meet the girls and talk with them about the prospects for continuing their education beyond the village elementary school. She tells them that she might be able to meet a portion of their needs by buying some woven belts or taking weavings and baskets to sell in the US, thereby avoiding an outright handout.

We decide to walk toward their home, and I listen as the others catch up on the doings of the past half year. Approaching our destination, Irmelinda

76
points out the path to her house which crosses a fast-flowing stream, then leads through a small grove of palmetto and banana before reaching a wider stream used for washing, just fifty feet below a long, thatched Mayan house. At the doorway a young girl, wearing a magenta dress, reads a story to two younger boys from a tattered reader that I may well have used in the fifties.

A quiet pandemonium is taking place within the two room house.
"Visitors! American visitors! Are they Peace Corps or working with one of the churches?"

The older girls explain that we are teachers, a respected occupation and one that provides some clue as to why we are here. When Karolina’s name is heard, the connection is made — she is the woman who visited before at the school and maintained a contact through letters.

Karolina introduces me and explains that I am accompanying her on this visit and working at collecting stories for a textbook project that the school district people down in P.G. are creating. Serafina, Irmelinda’s mother, is immediately curious, "What kind of stories?"

"All types of stories," I reply. "Stories like those found in the TESOL readers, stories of hunting and planting, and ceremonies like the deer dance... stories from the Old Maya, and stories told at the holidays."

Serafina’s eyes brighten, "The storybook! Irmelinda got the story of the Sesimito and one woman — in English! The story is from the old people. The old people died and the new people don’t know the stories but my mother and my grandmother — they tell us."

While I come to learn later that Serafina considers herself a person without storytelling abilities, she proves to be the reflective link in the familial chain, the person who is most consciously dedicated to renewing her family’s four generation narrative tradition. She invites us to take seats on
some small stools and serves us cocoa as we are surrounded by children and newly hatched chicks. Although I am anxious to see this storybook, I sit tight and patiently listen as Serafina goes on to describe her grandmother with great pride. She tells how her grandmother would sometimes frighten them as children with tiger (jaguar) stories and by making tiger sounds.

Rosalia, Serafina's sister, volunteers that she had seen a tiger recently, a red tiger (puma). She offers to recount the story of her sighting that occurred just as she was beginning labor with one of her children. I switch on my tape recorder amidst much laughter, and Rosalia tells her story in Mopan Maya, with Serafina providing the English translation. It is the story of a silent tiger prowling outside the sister's house, white and black in the moonlight, and Rosalia somewhat afraid but also annoyed because she wants help from her mother and sisters with her impending delivery. Finally, the tiger passes on, and she can continue with her labor. We all laugh at how tigers can simply be annoying, and not always the fearsome beasts of bush lore.

The discussion turns to grandmother, Josephita Sho, now eighty-five years old. She gained fame as a woman hunter for she was forced to live a long time in the bush by herself and learned by necessity how to shoot gibnut, deer and peccary. The two sisters are reverential as they describe the marvelous abilities of their grandmother who not only mastered bush craft but also dealt effectively with the modern day malady of alcoholism within her marriage and family.

Irmelinda comes in from beyond the cooking area carrying a small marbled notebook. "These are my stories for school," she says, opening the book and pointing to a four page, hand-written story, entitled, "The Gorilla and the Lady."
I learned this story from my great-grandmother. Our teacher asked us to learn and copy a story from one of the older people. I asked my grandmother and she told me this story one afternoon, and I copied it into my notebook.

I ask if I might see her story. Irmelinda passes it delicately to me, as if the age of the traditional story might make the text itself fragile. Her script is clear and disciplined. Locating narrators has been easy due to the entree that I have received from the school district personnel, but I realize immediately that this is a very fortunate occasion. This notebook entry is already in text and one of the longest stories I have seen or heard to date. I ask Irmelinda to read the story into the tape recorder but she shakes her head and looks down shyly. Her mother volunteers to read the story. (It should be noted that gorillas are not indigenous to the Americas and the term “gorilla” is used locally to refer to a hairy denizen of the jungle, also known locally as the sesimito.)

The Gorilla and the Lady

Once upon a time there was a lady who went to cut banana along with her husband. Her husband told her to sit down and wait. While the husband was cutting and planting, the woman was sitting, awaiting her husband. Suddenly, she heard a loud voice and thought it was her husband making the sound. So, she answered the voice. She heard the voice coming close to her as she was sitting, and she kept answering the voice till it came close to her. Then, she saw the big gorilla!

At that time, she knew the voice was not that of her husband. So, the big gorilla took her, and she started to cry. Her husband headed home because he thought his wife had gone home. He didn’t know that the gorilla took his wife.

For a while he was looking for her. He didn’t know where she had gone and so he forgot her. He finally stopped looking for her.

That lady went into a cave with the gorilla. When she reached the gorilla, he frightened her. He tore off her clothes, so she stayed naked with the gorilla. Then, the gorilla started hunting to give food for the lady to eat, but the lady did not want to eat. The gorilla got vexed because she did not want to eat the
meat. He told her he was going to kill her and eat her. The lady started to cry since she did not want to eat the raw meat.

The next morning the gorilla went to hunt again. Any time the gorilla went out, he put a big, big stone over the entrance to the cave so that the lady couldn’t come out of the cave. Finally, the lady tried to pull back the stone but she couldn’t take it out of the way. The stone was very big and heavy.

She passed a whole year in the cave and suddenly she got a baby son. She started to feed the baby boy with the raw meat. The baby gorilla started to grow fast. When the baby had grown about five years, his mother told him about her and when she went into the cave. She told how it was that she got in the cave and she told the boy to try to eat the raw meat. She wanted to come out of the cave but at this time she could not lift the stone because it was very big.

The baby gorilla told his mother, "Tomorrow morning, when my father goes, we must try to lift back the stone."

The baby gorilla was very strong. His mother told him, "When the father goes out, hurry and try and lift the stone a little bit."

Early the next morning, the baby gorilla told his mother, "We must try to move the stone."

Soon in the morning, the gorilla went out. The mother and the baby hurried to try and lift the stone. Finally, the stone did come out because the baby was so strong. They came out and went to run naked, passing the whole day by the river.

As soon as they crossed the river, they heard a loud voice coming. The voice sang, "Hey ho."

When they looked back, they saw that the gorilla couldn’t pass the river. He had been cutting a planting and couldn’t cross there. He was standing there crying. He came back again when he couldn’t find a way to pass the river and he was still crying.

The mother told her baby that she was going home to her village, and she reached it after a time. The witch in her village knew where her husband was and led her home to the yard. The lady and her gorilla baby sat down in the yard. She saw her first son and called him, "Come here! I want to talk with you."

But her little son got frightened and went to tell his father about the naked lady and her baby. The son said, "Go and see who that is."

When the father got close to the woman and her baby, he saw that it was his wife. He hurried to go get the clothes for his wife and he brought his wife to their home.

The lady started to tell her husband about the gorilla. Her husband told them to stay.
The baby gorilla started to go to school. At school the gorilla would fight and one day he gave one punch to a child and broke a bone. So, the little gorilla had to stop school. He then went off to another country and that is the end of the story of the gorilla and the lady.

A hush fills the room, as Serafina closes the book, and the only sound is the peeping of the baby chicks. Eyes look to me for affirmation and comment.

"That's a wonderful story. It's one of the longest I've heard and I think it's the only one where a gorilla is described as talking. Thank you very much. That's a great project for school," I respond enthusiastically. Irmelinda's smile glows within her restrained body.

Serafina is proud of her daughter's efforts and her grandmother's storytelling. She confides quietly but cogently:

That's true. It's not only a story. That happens...from the old people, the memories of the Old Maya. The teacher asking her for the story... that's why my grandmother started to tell her and she is writing it. That's why she got the story. She's old and likes to tell us what she do from the beginning. Well, we keep it and we share it with our daughters.

Serafina asserts her confidence in the truth of the narrative, insisting, "It's not only a story." She expresses a fear of bush spirits that still persists in the villages of Toledo. Passed down through generations of ancestors, a persistent and underlying belief emerges, that encounters between villagers and bush creatures are not only possible, they can result in intimate and profound transformations such as incarceration, pregnancy, and the birth of a bush-baby. More than a curiosity or an artifact, "The Gorilla and the Lady" is a cautionary tale, a complex and remarkable story in many respects.

In spite of the woman's faithful vigil for her husband, the half-human, half-animal bush creature abducts and rapes the woman. She bears him a
gorilla baby, then waits to use her wits for eventual escape. Her real husband is accepting of her in spite of her liaison with the gorilla, and a final moral appears to be tacked on by noting that the gorilla boy could not mix successfully with his fully human counterparts. He carries too much wild blood within him for the school to tame him. Perhaps this institution is a later addition to a more ancient story, but in any case the baby gorilla must be segregated. While there is a certain ambivalence concerning the woman's intimacy with the gorilla, the ending appears to signal that the prime danger is contamination through the mixing with bush blood.

I realize that this is a story, pre-existing in text, one that I have not influenced by the leading questions I sometimes ask or the special audience I often provide for a storytelling performance. This long story is striking for its tight narrative quality, the sudden plot shifts, and the many unresolved issues that may prompt audience questions and commentary.

The conversation moves on, and crafts become the topic as the afternoon passes, approaching supper time. Within half an hour we bid good-byes and make our way up the hill to supper with a friend. I promise I will send Irmelinda a typed copy of her story in the mail and ask her if she will write down another story for my visit next summer. She promises she will try, and says, that on the next visit, I must meet her great-grandmother.

**New Hampshire, March 1992**

As soon as I have the time, I get to work on Irmelinda's story. A number of aspects of the story are striking: Irmelinda's age and role as story transcriber, the complexity of the story, and the fact that it has been composed within their world without a prompt or influence from a Westerner. The teacher's assignment made for an easy transition from the oral tradition to text.
Irmelinda's great-grandmother was immediately willing to collaborate in the writing of her story in response to her granddaughter's school assignment. Unfortunately, I am unable to make contact with Irmelinda's teacher on my next visit to San Antonio. I note that this is a person who should be complimented for his assignment and enlisted in the TESOL project if he is not already a part of the effort.

As I go over the story of "The Lady and the Gorilla," I consider a number of issues. Why did great-grandmother select this story to tell to her thirteen year old relative? Certainly, there are a number of cautionary messages that great-grandmother may be aiming at her great-granddaughter. There is the prime message, that one must always be wary of the malicious spirits of the bush. In addition, early in the story, it is also suggested that a woman cannot necessarily depend on her husband in this environment, and must learn to fend for herself, as the mother does later by escaping. Could it be that great-grandmother is advising her female listeners that they too must learn to take care of themselves in the bush, just as she once was forced to do in her youth? Serafina provides her own pithy affirmation of cultural renewal with her commentary, "We keep it (the family story tradition) and we share it with our daughters."

I believe that a close reading of the story is suggestive of a certain geographical and behavioral determinism. The characters act in modes that appear appropriate to specific domains: village, bush, cave, and school. It is only when the characters cross boundaries between these domains, such as the village-bush liminus, that trouble ensues. Each character, including the gorilla and the boy of mixed blood, is treated with a degree of sympathy, as long as they know and find their respective segregated places in the geography of this traditional story. I suspect that this fictional geography is analogous to
the spiritual geographies described by Eduardo and by Gerineldo in a later chapter.

As promised, I send copies of the story to Irmelinda as soon as I can, knowing that it will be particularly important for her as she considers enrolling at the district high school, Toledo Community College. I know that the typed versions will in some small way enhance her status within the family, among her peers, and within the school community. Likewise, there's the chance that this printed version will serve as a stimulus for the further transcription of her great-grandmother's stories. I resolve that I will make a real effort to visit her and her family during my summer visit.

San Antonio, June 1992

It's four months later, and both Karolina and I have set aside two days to see many of the same people in San Antonio. Arriving on the 2:30 market bus, we sit by Bol's store and drink some cokes. A magnificent purple bloomed tree rises just behind the store, and 20-30 hummingbirds are twirling around the blossoms like the cartoon spirals used to illustrate fireworks. I accompany Karolina as she visits Sophia, a church worker and crafts organizer in the cool of the church's cobble stone basement.

Around 4 PM we head down to visit Irmelinda and her family and are pleased to find everyone at home during the slight lull just before the work of evening food preparation begins. Irmelinda thanks me for sending her the copies of her story in the mail, and I reach into my pack and give her an additional five copies to share with her friends and relatives. She is delighted with the extra versions for copies are a rare and valuable commodity in Toledo. I ask her if I got the story right, or should we make corrections, but it is perfect as far as she is concerned. Once again, this is not an area where
editing and redrafting are high priorities. For people in Toledo, does the act of printing confer on a particular version of a story an inviolability? Or, since I am transcribing with care from the tapes, is that reason enough not to tamper with the first draft? Irmelinda is very pleased and tells me she has another story that she will read for me in a little while.

Irmelinda, Angeles and the other younger children excitedly show their drawings to us, and as their activity moves outside, Serafina invites me to join her in the kitchen. She is tending a chicken caldo, the traditional stew of the Maya. I ask her what herbs and spices she uses to season her caldo. She seems surprised that, as a male, I would ask, but smiles and explains that she includes onion, cilantro, garlic and mint.

I mention that we have two types of mint, spearmint and peppermint that grow wild around our house. She asks if we cook caldo and include mint? I explain that chicken stew is a family favorite but that we do not use mint. We do use 'Irish' (their term for white) potatoes which seems to elicit a surprise. I feel that I have been made welcome in her 'kitchen,' and am glad that I know a few things about cooking.

Irmelinda appears with her storybook and stands waiting quietly. The younger children are attuned to her new confident presence and they sit quietly on the floor as she prepares to read us "The Story of the Owl." On the first visit, she refused to read her story and depended on her mother. Today, she is more relaxed and, smiling at her attentive audience, she begins to read, clearly and with confidence.

THE STORY OF THE OWL

Once upon a time there was a boy and a girl, and they liked to go to church. The boy liked to go to church and the girl liked to go to church also. The boy thought to marry the girl
because the girl looked pretty. The boy told his grandfather to go and engage this girl. The girl agreed to marry the boy.

When they married the boy did not know about this girl but after a year passed, a friend of the boy began to talk about the girl.

"You check your wife in the night because in the night she is not a woman. She comes out in the night about 11:00 in the mid-night," his friend said.

This boy did not believe it was true. His friend said that he must check her out because she turned herself into a white horse. She is very wild woman; she goes galloping, galloping in the road at night. She made a noise, "Ha, ha, ha." She does not want to eat that which her husband hunts. The only thing she eats; she eats behind her husband -- dead bones, like the bones of the dead humans from the graves and cemeteries. That's why in the night she goes and hunts the bones. Only that she eats.

One night they go to sleep together, and the husband wanted to see if all this was true -- if she came out in the night. This man made himself look asleep but not fast asleep because he wanted to check her.

When the lady heard a snore, she thought that her husband falls asleep. She came out slowly and made a noise like her, "Ha, ha, ha." When the man heard this, he took his flashlight and flashes her. When he looked at her, her whole body was gone. When he looked at her again, her whole was there but he could not see the head.

The man went to his grandfather to ask what he should do now. His grandfather said, "Go get ashes and put them inside her neck where her head comes out because her head is gone now."

They were waiting for the time when she would be back, and then she came back, galloping on the road. So, this man went back to sleep again. He wanted to see how this lady would put her head back inside again.

She had come back to her house and she was going to get in now. She got in slowly but she couldn't push her head inside her body again. She came back crying, crying, lying on the top of her own house. She started to cry and she started to make a noise, "Boo, boo, boo."

She turned into an owl.

"That's a very powerful story. Where did you hear it?"

Irmelinda is beaming. "My grandmother told it to my mother."

I am wondering aloud, "Did she explain the part about the bones?"
"Where the dead humans are buried..."

"The cemetery, the graves?" I ask.

"Yeah."

"We call that an eerie story. My students at school will love to hear a story like this. Why did you choose this one to write down and tell me?"

"Because it is a ghost story, a good story to hear." Irmelinda sits down, smiling as her brothers and sisters maintain their silent attention.

Serafina has been listening proudly to the entire reading and exchange. She looks up from the *caldo*, "They ask me a story sometimes."

I wonder why Irmelinda picked this particular story? I try again to get an answer but perhaps my expectations are skewed. Why not accept the answer she gave me, "It is... a good story to hear." The psychosexual dimensions of this "sleeping with the shape-shifter" story are perplexing, but further analysis will have to wait. I consider how easily a flashlight appears in a tale of the old Maya, just like the school in "The Lady and the Gorilla."

When I return to the States and check Dennis Tedlock's translation of the Quiche Maya *Popul Vuh*, I learn that owls are messengers from *Xibalba*, the underworld of the Old Maya. The owl in Irmelinda's story bears a striking resemblance to Skull Owl, who journeys back and forth between earth and the underworld with only a head (D. Tedlock, 1985, 109). Such references suggest that this story reaches back through ancestral time to deep Mayan traditions, and is in fact the type of story that is especially prized by those who salvage stories for folklore studies. However, in the context of this particular family, I suspect that its entertainment quality is complemented by its contemporary function as a cautionary tale. When Irmelinda performs her great-grandmother's story, she is warning her siblings about those spirits who
freely cross the boundaries between the bush and domestic domain, even the intimate confines of the marriage bed.

As Irmelinda goes to return her storybook to safekeeping, Serafina begins shelling and sorting red beans in a large shallow basket by the *comal* (hearth). I watch as she pauses, her countenance brightening with a memory. Then, she spontaneously shares her recollection of shelling beans and learning stories as a young girl:

> When I was a little girl like she, my father and my mother used to beat beans. In the night they would peel the beans and my father doesn't want us to go to sleep soon. Well, he start to talk about the old stories. The old men were there helping my father peel the beans. They would keep the children awake till ten or eleven at night so that we would help peel the beans. They started to tell us about the stories: what the old people do, not like now. It was very different in the beginning. He didn't want us to miss the stories from our old grandmother and our old grandfather.

> My father said, “We want you to hear them. One of these days you will have children and you will talk about the stories to your daughters or your sons.” That's why I got to know the little bit of stories, but it is my father that mostly has a lot of stories.

As her present shelling of the beans draws up this earlier memory, she performs her account with heightened intensity. Her voice rising, she portrays the urgency of her father's injunction to renew the stories. Her account of the work party provides sharp insights concerning the transmission and co-authorship of traditional stories through four living generations. Serafina's father made it clear that their storytelling was intentional, and that there were expectations that Serafina would carry on the tradition when she gave birth to the next generation. I ask Serafina if she remembers any of the stories that she heard as a child, sharing the family's labor.
Yes, I got some stories... I could start to say it, but I can't finish it because I haven't learned it from the beginning or to the end. I can't just start it. I just remember a little bit.

I share with her that I remember songs in this way. I know parts of hundreds of songs but very few entire songs.

Suddenly, while watching the boiling caldo and sorting the beans as she once did as a young child, she remembers back to hearing "The Story of the Frog." I ask her if she will share it with me, but she declines, saying that she cannot remember the ending. After a bit of encouragement, she agrees to tell me what she does remember of the story:

I hear of a man who wanted to marry but he couldn't get any letter from the one that he liked. One time he went to a party and when he started coming inside the house they were playing marimbas. While he was there he heard the sound of a frog outside and it was very good and very nice to hear. The man said, "I want to see that frog. Where is that frog?"

The frog was jumping outside while inside the people were dancing. Then the frog started to talk. "Oh, I hear that you want to see me. Here I am now." he said to the man. The frog continued, "I want to marry you. If you could please hold me, hold my hand and hit me three times, I will stand up to a very fine woman."

"I never know if you could talk," the man said.

"Yes, I heard what you said. Just hold my hand and hit me three times and I will stand up to a beautiful woman."

"Is it true?" the man said.

"Yes, only three times and we can dance together." That's what the frog said.

And so, the man said, "OK then" and he hold the frog and hit the frog three times. Then the frog stand up into a beautiful woman. He take the woman. She went home with him.

The man said, "Let me show you to my mother and father so that we can get married quickly." But the woman had again turned into a frog and started to jump again.

The frog said, "I am going to jump behind you and as we reach your home, then you hold my hand again and whack me three times, then I will stand up like a woman."
“OK then,” said the man and they started to go home. When they reached home the man’s mother said, “Why is that frog following you?”

The man said, “Oh, that is my wife.”

“How are you going to stay with that frog? Why do you tell me that is your wife? How is the frog going to work? Is the frog going to wash, going to cook, going to do anything you want?” the old lady asked the man.

“Yes,” he said.

“Well, hurry and kill the chicken and make a little party.”

the mother said.

You could see what was going to happen now.

“This is my beautiful wife.” That is what the man said.

“OK then” said the old lady and they killed the chicken and they started to make a party.

After midnight the frog told the man again, “I want you to hold me and hit me three times. Now is the hour for me.”

“OK” said the man and the old lady was frightened when the frog started talking because she never knew if the frog would talk.

The frog was dancing in front of the man. The man held his hand and hit the frog and he stood up into a beautiful woman. The mother and the father of the man were afraid because they didn’t believe that the frog could turn into a woman.

After delivering this story in a quiet contemplative mode, as if reaching back in memory, Serafina suddenly stops, apologizes, and says she knew she couldn’t remember the ending. I assure her that she has presented the textbook project with a significant fragment of a traditional story, as well as a mystery to be solved. Two months later, when I transcribe this story, I listen again to her lilting voice, accompanied by the sifting of beans in the wide-weave basket. I realize that this was a resonant moment, as Serafina peeled beans once again and allowed her memories and the story to emerge. The tape provides an opportunity to glimpse a powerful synesthesia, a unique reach into time and cultural connections, similar to field recordings of
African call-and-response work-songs, performed as singers pound their root crops with mortars and pestles.

Serafina explains that parents have traditionally told this story to children so that they will not harm frogs.

_The frog could turn into a woman. You don’t know, but we know it because that happened. That is true. It doesn’t happen now but in the beginning it happened as they said. We heard that story from my father and from my old grandfather. He’s very old, without teeth and he must walk with a stick. He’s from San Antonio but I don’t know how he got to be here._

In his introduction to _Writing Culture_, Clifford refers to the partial record of a culture’s stories and the constant move to fill the gaps (1986, 7). Perhaps, Serafina’s frog story and the partial glimpses I receive of the Sho family’s oral lore function as a metaphor for the work that story collectors are doing here in Toledo. We work with others to gather entertaining and enlightening stories to publish in school texts. While each story we tape and transcribe may only be a partial story or one personal version of a particular tale, what is significantly different, considering the contemporary anthropological critique of writers such as Clifford and Price (1983), is the ultimate audience. At least at present, the task of interpretation and filling in the gaps falls to the teachers, school children, and their families who study these stories in school. It is the local knowledge of Toledo, not the outside knowledge of the academy, that will help fill in the gaps. Nevertheless, on a personal, non-scholarly level, I want to find the end of the frog story. As with any good story, I am eager to hear the ending, the resolution.

Serafina says that her father and grandmother know many old stories, such as "The Story of the Frog" and "The Story of the Sun and the Moon." Perhaps her father will recollect the ending to the frog story. She suggests that we
might also ask her grandmother to tell me a story and says that she still likes to hear the stories told. I'm hopeful that we might be able to do this, and she proposes that we try the next morning. As Serafina prepares to serve caldo to the children, I take my leave. Karolina and I promise that we will return in the morning to meet Serafina's father and grandmother.

Four Generations of Storytellers

It is 8:30, the older children have left for school, and Serafina is waiting with her two toddlers attired in Disney t-shirts and gym shorts. After some morning pleasantries, we follow a path through the scrub, while Mexican Jays and grackles scream at us from the heavy brush. A small Mayan house rests on a gentle slope, and at first glance there is little sign of life. As we approach, an old man with a blue work-shirt and straw hat, a caballero, appears at the doorway and waves. It seems as if we are expected. Upon entering the dark common room, we are told that great-grandmother is still getting ready in the other room but she does not feel that well today.

I explain the TESOL program to grandfather and mention how pleased we are with the stories that Irmelinda has prepared for her school lessons. I describe the partial story that his daughter had told me the night before about the frog.

Grandfather looks puzzled, and I suspect that it is partially my New Jersey-New Hampshire accent.

Serafina realizes that perhaps he doesn't know the term "frog" and interjects the Mopan term, "The mooch."

Grandfather smiles, "The mooch!" He grins widely at Serafina and they both roll back with laughter at the thought of the mooch.
I look grandfather in the eye, "She told me the whole story and couldn't tell me the end. I don't want to go all the way back to the United States, to New Hampshire, and not know the end of the story!"

Serafina's father chuckles, "Ooooh." He and Serafina converse awhile in Mopan about the story, presumably getting to the point where her memory lapsed.

Grandfather sits, stares and composes himself, searching for the narrative threads. He talks softly, dredging up the memory:

I get to hear it myself. I don't know how true it is. Three men together, three young men, and one of the oldest brothers gets a girl for a wife. The one gets a girl and she is a blind lady. The other one get one, a lame one. The last one, he get the frog. The last one is going worser because he doesn't marry to a woman. It's a frog! Heh, heh!

Afterwards now, this frog told the man, that is her husband, that he must flip the frog three times and throw it on the floor. When the man had done that, the frog raised up into the prettiest woman, more than the two other brothers got. And now, from then on, the old lady, the mother of the man, liked that one the most because she looked very pretty. And before [that] time, she doesn't like it, because it was a frog. But afterwards she became a woman when she get down three times on the floor. She stand up a pretty lady.

Now, the man married to that woman. When she wanted to sew her blouse, she made it very pretty. She made everything pretty and she became a soprano, a singer.

All those things I get to know... It's a long story, an old time story. We don't know how it happens but you know when you just hear a story, you can't explain it all.

I realize that grandfather has begun to move out of the frog story, and I am not sure if we have gotten to the elusive ending or not. I ask, "What happened? Did she stay a woman or did she change back into a frog?"

Oh no, she's a new woman. She cannot turn back into a frog again. But I think, not only because he wanted to do this because I get to hear that when the frog was making noise [He raises his voice.] in the woods, the boy gone and look for the frog

93
that was making noise. He get it and it is a frog. It has a singing;
it could be singing when it make that noise [He imitates a frog’s
calling]. He carry it home; he bring it home.

Maybe that happened a long time ago. Nobody knows, you
know. Plenty old people used to talk about the story. I don’t
know about now, but before time, [the] old time, when we are
working that way, some people like to talk long story. Yes,
especially the frog stories. All those are... they are tricky animals,
you see!

Toward the end of his storytelling, grandfather begins to narrate his tale in
an animated fashion, perhaps pleased to have completed the story or happy to
be sharing stories again. The Shos apparently have a family tradition of tricky
animal stories. I think back to the gorilla who ran off with the lady, and the
wife who was an owl. In this latest transformation, there is also the possible
change of sex, from male frog to a lady. I'm not sure if this is the local
pronoun confusion or a transsexual frog! It is also still unclear whether
grandfather ended Serafina’s version of the story, and I must wait until I get
home to transcribe both parts and see if they knit together.

Weeks later, they appear to be a match. It is striking that in Serafina’s story
the frog is drawn to the sound of the dance, and sings as in concert with the
marimbas (Many tropical frogs make sounds far more musical that the
temperate zone’s "croak."). Music is a social link in Serafina’s telling, and
music is found at the end of grandfather’s story. He describes this lovely
woman who is also a beautiful soprano. She can now accompany or inspire
her husband. In many Mayan stories about frogs, music is the key link, for
frogs have long been the chorus that announced the coming and passing of
Chac the rain god. The Yucatec Maya tell a story of Chac expecting guests and
asking a boy to clean his home. The boy says he did but he had to keep chasing
frogs away. Chac exclaims, "Those were my guests and musicians" (Bierhorst,
1986, 68). The underlying message that frogs are to be respected is a common
element of both stories and part of deep Mayan tradition. It is also an ecological message that the Sho family had deemed worthy of cultural renewal.

I ask grandfather if he has a tricky animal story, one that he would like to have read by children someday in the school books. I suspect that he has a hundred, but he stands looking out the doorway toward the shimmering heat on the high grass. When he speaks, both his demeanor and posture suddenly shift, as when Serafina told her bean story. Grandfather has "warmed up" and he begins to animatedly perform a story for us all, a tale he heard for the first time perhaps fifty years ago. Later on, when I listen to the story again and again, prior to transcribing, I am struck that it is an old man's dream story and once again a tale that carries a cautionary message.

I don't know about now but before time a lot of people like to talk a lot of stories, especially rabbits and all those tricky animals. One old one, they said that a farmer used to plant some pepper trees. This rabbit always used to go sleep beneath the pepper trees. The rabbit always used to go there and the old man said that he was going to put him in the trap and he caught that rabbit. When he caught that rabbit, the old man said that he was going to beat that rabbit.

"Don't do that papa," the rabbit said. "Don't do that. I am going to do you a big, big favor."

So, the old man never did kill the rabbit. He carried it home in an old hat. Then he reached there -- the old man was very poor. They say that he got one old house. Maybe, like this one!

The rabbit tell the old man that if he had the time he would look for a wife for the old man because he wanted a mother right now. [He laughs.]

The old man said, "What you are telling me now rabbit, I cannot do that because I am a poor old man. I am old and poor and I cannot ask anyone to take care of me."

"No," the rabbit say. "No worry. We will get something, a yellow plant and turn it into gold," he say.

That rabbit is smart. The old man get a yellow plant and the rabbit change it into gold, pure gold. The old man just get
frightened. He don't know how this thing come to pass, but the rabbit does.

Now, this same rabbit, they gone together with the king. They are not going together with the old, with the poor people. When they reached the king, the rabbit started talking with the princess, so that this princess is going to get married to the old man. So, the rabbit went around and got a stick, but it was not a stick, it was a long gold stick.

When the rabbit explained all this to the king, the king get frightened. The king did not know if what this rabbit say was true or not. The king told the rabbit that he should make the old man go along with him now to his home. The old man get afraid. The rabbit, when he reached home, told the old man, "I want you to go along with me because the king tell me that he wanted to see you. If he is to see you, we have to buy your coat; we have to buy your shirt, your pants, your shoes, your hat and everything."

But, the old man didn't know; he didn't know how to use the shoes or pants or anything like that. Maybe he used it before, but maybe a different style. The rabbit tell the old man they had to get it and they gone.

Then the old man and the rabbit gone now, they reach the king and the rabbit is smoking. When he is smoking now, he only light the cigarette and he throw it one side. He no finish smoking all the cigarettes and keep it. He throw it! He just start it and throw it, start it and throw it. And then he take some money out of his pocket, that had been yellow corn, now it was pure gold.

The king say that these people are very rich. They are very, very rich he said. So, he let go the princess along with them. But after all, when they married now, they married and they all come together, the rabbit say that he like to see his father like that. He call the old man "father" and he want to see his mother like that when they stay together.

But after all, I get to hear that they started to mess up themselves; they started to mess up the bed and everything. The princess is getting tired cleaning up the bed. This rabbit is smart and he started to mess up, mess up himself and the bed.

But after all, I get to hear that they kill the rabbit because they got tired of the rabbit. When they kill the rabbit, everything done! The old man find that he is still sitting on his seat in the old house wishing nothing good again, no wife, nothing. Everything disappeared.
He smiles, relaxed and pleased with himself and his attentive audience. He has told yet another story of transformation, only this time it is the human who is transformed through the magic powers of the trickster rabbit. Does an old Mayan man like grandfather still dream of romance and wealth? Do listeners seriously consider the sobering critique about attempting to employ magic to achieve such ends? Locally, there are still those who will cast an enchanting spell for a fee. Is this a timely cautionary tale or just an innocent trickster story?

A unique combination of ethnic elements converges in this story. The characters are Mayan, the tricky rabbit (similar to Brer' Rabbit of the US South) echoes back to the Anansi stories of West Africa, and the rabbit's 'Midas touch,' along with the king and princess, suggest European fairy tale elements. Whether cultural diffusion is the key to this particular story or not, the "folding back" (Tedlock, 1993) of the tricky rabbit themes functions emblematically for the multiethnic cultural mixing that has historically taken place in this region. Mayans in Toledo have shared this land with Creoles and Garinagu for over two hundred years, absorbing and assimilating African cultural characteristics such as agriculture, diet, language, and religion. Creole Anansi stories and Garifuna music are long-term streams flowing into the river of contemporary Belizean culture. The Toledo Mayans have also been sandwiched between the German coffee growers of Eastern Guatemala and the British colonialists for over one hundred years, and European fairy tales are still part of traditional elementary education. However, when grandfather's story is carefully examined, one enigma remains. I have no clue regarding the rabbit's messy bed as the key to everyone's downfall!

"That is exactly the type of story that children will enjoy," I tell grandfather, and he laughs.
Oh yes, they could enjoy that story because when we are taking a rest in the bush sometimes we like to talk, to tell the old, old stories. I think I still know some more but I cannot remember it [them] all the time. Some are very long to talk about [tell] I think I would have to take time to myself before I could tell the long stories again, then I could tell Irmelinda.

"She has done a good job writing the stories down for school, to save them."

"It's good. It's only good like that, just to remember them. When they mention them sometimes, then you know exactly how the story goes."

Luis Sho at age sixty-five, looking back fifty years to retrieve the tricky rabbit story, looking forward to a time when people might appreciate a written version of the tale — what would he make of the salvage issue? Though it is not the final word, his last comments offer an insight into how members of one family value both the traditional stories of the Maya, as well as the ability to co-author them over the ages. Luis apparently believes that through publishing people will safeguard their narratives and continue to know "exactly" how a story goes.

I do not have the opportunity to ask him about improvisation or the different local versions of a story, but clearly he believes that it is critical that the stories endure, and that inscription is a potential help rather than a hindrance in maintaining local Mayan culture. I suspect that for Luis, Serafina and Irmelinda it is a matter of agency. As long as they are in charge, they appear willing to utilize tape recorders, computers, foreign school teachers, whatever aids are available to maintain and disperse these stories.

Josephita Sho emerges. She is a tall, straight but very thin, elderly woman. Her traditional white blouse is radiant in the sunlight and her skirt of Macaw scarlet hangs loosely on her slight body. She wears her hair in a high bun,
reminiscent of a Spanish style I associate with colonial days or Flamenco dancing. I realize that this tiny elegant lady is the hunting woman of earlier renown. Having worked on the life story of a Creole hunter (Chapter Eight) for the past few years, I suspect that she is probably also a compendium of bush lore and hunting knowledge. She smiles and offers greetings, explaining that she just does not feel up to stories or socializing on this day. She politely offers that we might come and visit another day. She is pleased to stand outside her home with her son, grand-daughter, and great grand-daughter for a picture — four generations of active storytellers. With a smile and a handshake she withdraws inside her house.

Louis Sho offers his good-byes, "Well, maybe when you come again we can help you --more stories."

**A Family of Co-authors**

I have visited after these early meetings, but I realize that, as often as I might visit with the Shos, I would only come to know a small portion of this one family's oral lore. Though I have intervened and created a situation where the printed texts of stories have had some indeterminate impact, the processes of preservation and intergenerational transmission of stories were well underway and of key import to the Shos. What began with the teacher's rescuing of traditional stories proceeded to reveal a timely and proactive restatement of traditional prohibitions regarding the bush. The children who gather to listen to their older relatives' performances of ancestral stories are reinforced in age-old cautions regarding the mysterious and menacing bush. For the Shos, stories from their communal past maintain their power as stories for today.
Native American writers (Gunn, 1986; Momaday, 1989; Silko, 1981) affirm this model of an ongoing narrative community, stressing that the story of a people is social, collaborative and unfolds in an ongoing fashion throughout the ages. Gunn describes the intimate relationship between personal and communal identity, observing that, "The artistry of the tribes is married to the essence of language itself, for through language one can share one's singular being with that of the community and know within oneself the communal knowledge of the tribe" (55). 1

Momaday, while explaining his use of Kiowa origin stories in his novel, The Way to Rainy Mountain, notes, "The imagination that informs those stories is really not mine, though it exists, I think, in my blood. It's an ancestral imagination" (57). For Native American authors there can be no artificial isolating of a singular author, only the reliance and celebration of the group identity. Each cultural group presents an on-going social world, replete with roles and other peoples' stories. Each person negotiates his or her way in this social context, inevitably caught up in any number of these on-going roles and stories.

Co-authorship best describes the posture of Irmelinda and others who have contributed stories to the textbook project. The status of co-authorship explains the positioning of those who tell ancestral stories or individual stories of life around the hearth, in the bush, and within the community. These are stories that echo long historical traditions; stories that are replicated in essence by other villagers and family members. 2

The school teacher and my involvement have somewhat altered Irmelinda's posture toward the traditional family stories. She is no longer just a listener; she is now a published co-author, a novice performer, and an indigenous Mopan folklorist. The stories she has written down and is just
now beginning to perform are Toledo stories, Mopan stories, family stories, Irmelinda's stories. On conscious and subconscious levels, she is assimilating and integrating these tales into her life, as a young woman poised to become a traditional wife in her village, or ready to move to the coast and break new ground. Will the stories help her decisions or have an impact on the paths she chooses?

In Writing Culture, Michael Fisher, considering the incomplete and partial selection of stories in Maxine Hong Kingston's Woman Warrior, writes:

Kingston's text is developed as a series of fragments of traditional stories, myths and customs imposed by parents, but not adequately explained, at critical points of her childhood, which thus are embedded in consciousness to be worked out through, and integrated with, ongoing experience (1986, 208).

The answers to questions about personal cultural renewal and Irmelinda's integration of traditional wisdom and modern values will only be answered over the ensuing years. Thanks to three prior generations of family narrators, she begins her path to adulthood on a solid foundation of shared cultural wisdom and a newly earned status as an apprentice storyteller.

**Educational Implications**

These oral narratives offer evidence of a shared cultural knowledge that is grounded in an intimate co-authorship. The Sho family's stories, sometimes rehearsed and often retrieved from their collective memory, provide a window on the ongoing collective maintenance and formulation of a narrative way of knowing. This family relates stories that have their roots in
traditional ancestral sources, and, in addition, their tales demonstrate the long-term syncretistic relationship of Toledo's ethnic groups. Extended observations indicate that the Sho family renews their storytelling for its entertainment value as well as the coded cautionary messages that are handed down generation to generation.

Irmelinda is a storyteller in training. Urged on by her teacher, encouraged by her mother, and assisted by her great-grandmother, she is learning and writing stories with care and precision. Family members affirm both the archival value and the dissemination benefit of Irmelinda's efforts to print their family stories. Furthermore, Irmelinda has moved beyond her initial reluctance to perform, and is now willing to read her stories before a family audience, along with North American observers. Lastly, there is evidence that Irmelinda may well be internalizing her family's narrative education and using it for her own personal guidance. This intimate relationship between performer, stories and audience suggests the potential for utilizing indigenous stories for moral and cultural education, and expanding Toledo's basic literacy curriculum to include an ideological dimension (Street, 1993).
In July 1991, I traveled upcountry to stay with families in three different villages. The rhythm of agricultural life and the intimacy of peoples' homes provided a setting particularly conducive for long conversations and elaborate storytelling performances. One July night in Santa Cruz, a village in the southern foothills of the Maya Mountains, Eduardo Miss clearly manifested the sharp distinction between daytime and nighttime stories that characterizes storytelling throughout much of Mesoamerica. Perhaps he crossed some unspoken narrative demarcation, as darkness offered its leisurely quiet after a day's labor. Maybe, I was being entertained according to the local customs befitting a guest, or it could be that a portal to ancestral and bush knowledge was opened because I had passed some unspoken tests of persistence and respect.

Eduardo is Mopan Maya and a leader within his village community. A former soccer coach, he currently leads a development group that has successfully established a small national park and an ecotourist guest-house program. During our daylight conversations, these were the topics of our conversation, and Eduardo disavowed any interest in his people's old ways. As darkness fell, we sat in his home, and our talk dramatically turned toward healing, strange bush creatures, ancestral spirits, magic, and the special syncretistic relationship between modern day Christianity and the traditional
beliefs of the 'Old Maya.' While Eduardo would deny that day that he knew any traditional Mayan stories, the 'stuff' of salvage, his nighttime stories indicated a vibrant belief in the age-old spirits of the ancestors and the bush.

It became apparent that, for some, spiritual issues are more clearly revealed and easily discussed in the Belizean night. As Bierhorst (1990) suggests, there is a particular potency to the nighttime stories, referred to in Spanish as delicado which can mean both sensitive and dangerous (2). In the night, when all but a few hunters and lovers move inside to find safety from night predators, Eduardo demonstrated that the content of stories may expand dramatically, as the storyteller allows deep personal and community themes to emerge.

Our conversations during my stay in Santa Cruz also revealed the initial, somewhat cloudy, outlines of a local way of spiritual knowing. As narrative built on narrative, and Eduardo interpreted his experiences and beliefs, crucial considerations were repeated, including the active acceptance or rejection of belief as a condition for spiritual efficacy. In addition, time, place, and ritual were also critical parameters for this local way of knowing. At visit's end, it was apparent that Eduardo and his family were struggling with the dual forces of cultural deterioration and cultural renewal. As we rested in our hammocks that July night, Eduardo's nighttime storytelling performance exposed me to the guiding powers of both ancestral spirits and the spirits of the Belizean bush.

**July 21, 1991, Daytime**

There are a dozen or more gilt and chrome soccer trophies arrayed on the rough hewn mahogany plank in the entry room, surrounded by machetes, rubber boots, pig-tail buckets, drying herbs and about three bushels of green corn. Except for a large variety of multicolored, plastic storage containers and
a small portable radio, there is little other sign of the twentieth century in the thatched home of the Miss family. I'm not sure if an array of sports trophies should appear incongruous or not, but I soon learn that my host Eduardo has long been coach of the village team, at least since his own football playing days ended with an injured knee.

Eduardo has invited me to stay over night with him and his family in their home since they are considering working on a village guest-house. This program would allow tourists to be housed in the village and to eat with local families. The Miss family is curious about what it is like to have a foreigner visit for more than a passing half hour conversation on the way to the local ruin. I'm not sure who is more curious about whom as the children examine my small back pack, cassette tape recorder, canteens, and size 12 hiking boots.

It is four PM on a humid July Saturday afternoon, and I am pleased when Eduardo offers me a "hammock to rock." He has had an intestinal sickness since he recently traveled to Belize City, and I currently suffer from the same malady. Rosa, his oldest daughter, brews us both steaming cups of ginger tea. I learn from my host that hot liquids are used locally to heat the blood which might have been cooled by bad winds. Eduardo says that he was in town during the recent high winds and that he doesn't like it. "Too many mangoes [falling] on the zinc [roofs], falling every second!"

Eduardo takes out the current copy of one of the country's weekly newspapers. He points out one of the front page stories, the US weather service's 1991 list of names for hurricanes. The family is fascinated by names that they have never heard before: Carl, Gisselle, Nathan and Stephanie. Will Mayan children sometime in the future be named after hurricanes in the same way that some US children are named after movie stars and sports
heroes? The Mayans have supplied the Western world with the word hurricane. Is this our way of returning the favor?

We talk a bit about a proposed guest house for tourists, and it doesn't take long for me to learn that there are mixed feelings in the village about such a proposition. Eduardo says that some people are jealous and "throw words" about those who are organizing the project, even though a portion of the funds is to be slated for village education and health care. He insists that he is not interested in politics but in his grandchildren. The market-bus ride and a three mile walk have been wilting, and I am quick to respond when it's suggested that we might go for a swim at the falls.

Eduardo and his twelve-year old son Juan lead me through Santa Cruz, winding up onto the rise where the school, a small store, two churches, and the soccer field form the community center. Eduardo proudly points to the new wells and modern privies, the only signs of government intervention in this remote village. As we walk down the forest trail, I explain the textbook project to Eduardo and inquire if he learned any of the traditional Mayan stories as a child. He assures me that he is a modern Mayan, interested in sports, tourism, and community development. He explains that he is an Evangelical Christian and has little interest in traditional stories or the "old ways," except how they might be presented as folklore when tourists come to his village. I realize later the irony that it is he who initially promotes the salvage model of fixed and 'packaged' stories!

We walk on as Juan demonstrates his accuracy with a sling-shot. Suddenly, Eduardo switches back to my earlier question and confides that, while he does not remember any stories, a short poem that he learned as a child just came to mind, and he shares it:
Where is your mother?
The dog has gone to find her.
And, where is the dog?
Water carried the dog.
And, where is the water?
Hummingbird drank the water.
And, where is the hummingbird?
He has gone to the tree.
And, where is the tree?
The tree is burning.
And, where are the ashes.
The deer ate them.
And, where is the deer?
The deer is gone to the mountains.
And, which mountains are they?
The mountains that go up and down and up and down
and up and down...

He explains that parents often used this poem to distract a child who had hiccups. It seems that the poem either explained the hiccups (up and down, up and down...) or was used to draw the child's attention from the affliction. I wonder at this sudden glimpse at the "old ways." In spite of Eduardo's disavowal of local traditions, could there be more oral lore such as this poem? I'm ready for a swim!

Nighttime. 7 P.M.

We've finished supper. I'm refreshed from the dip, a very small meal, and some special time talking with the children. Eduardo takes me outside and shows me the site for the potential guest house. We discuss the virtues of a thatch hut versus a zinc one, and just what type of sanitary facilities the contemporary ecotourist might expect when braving the Belizean bush. Dusk comes quickly at latitude 17, and we move inside. I recline in 'my' hammock as darkness takes over. A small church choir is practicing just down the hill, and the animals are settled in, dog fights over for the day. Eduardo brings me
some ginger tea, and takes a hammock nearby, cup in hand. His wife and children sit on two bunk beds, and we listen quietly as a log-jam of Eduardo's personal feeling and narratives suddenly bursts loose.

**Spirit Voices**

There is a sudden and startling transformation, as the person with whom I spent the afternoon seems to dissolve, supplanted by a man who speaks with the intensity and commitment of a Southern Gospel preacher. His voice rising in pitch, Eduardo begins what will become a long testimonial by describing the situation in a neighboring village whereby a jealous woman and her father put a curse on his daughter's husband.

> There are people there [a border village], Kekchi people, and they come over from Guatemala. You could wave a girl, or kiss, far a kiss [throw a kiss], "Hi, hi. How're you going?"

I think my son-in-law do that because that's how young people go. I do that when I am young too. When I see a pretty girl pass, I wave her or kiss her far. I hail her or whistle her. I think that's what he do in his own village when he young, no married or engaged.

When he come here, he want my daughter. She was the only one. His father come and engage, courting and courting until we have an agreement. And, they married. He take my daughter to San Benito.

In San Benito there was a man, the one against [my son-in-law], the one that has a daughter. Maybe that girl's the lover. She will want that boy to her because he is a godson. And you know, that man, he get my daughter. Her father is an obeah man.

Well, he say, "Why that man go to that other village and get a girl and a wedding and come back here. Nothing good -- then we'll kill the boy!"

He started to do things behind my son-in-law and they [magic] drop on him. It [the magic] catch. And now, my son-in-law is sick. He's trying to get cured everywhere. He's tried black magic.
And the girl [Eduardo's daughter] get incense and go to church and pray for my son-in-law now. My son-in-law is very sick. We go to a bush doctor and he try and try. We pay a hundred dollars to get cured. We had the doctor, but he say, "No sickness."

So, we go to the black magic [In San Benito] Black magic man tell him, "You go get a young girl, and she no want you. She got a lot of boys in Santa Cruz. That's why this boy has obeah."

My daughter is innocent. She is innocent and when black magic tell him that, my poor daughter get knocked [criticized], get knocked every day, morning and evening because the other daughters got a boy friend. I get a message about this from San Benito, and I walk [there]. The bush doctor came right here. People say a lot of things but I don't believe it. I tell him that I think that he got a bad spirit -- double faith. You know what's faith -- what he's believing. He believe this; he believe that.

But, he's come here and he's cured just two weeks ago. He's good now. He's kind of hurt but he's good. Some people say that if you return to your home, you still get the same sickness. But, if you leave your home and stay in a different part, you're well. Something like black ghosts are by your home. Maybe there are black ghosts there. That's why he is here now!

Eduardo's shadowed face is dark and intense in the candle light. Quick as a TV remote, he has altered the nature of the day's conversation. It is the time for night stories. He offers no explanation for this profound change of topics, and for the next few hours Eduardo embarks on a narrative journey that extends to curses, the evil-eye, obeah, black magic, spirits of the dead, and denizens of the bush. This man, who in daytime talked of commerce and sports, is now willing to offer to his listeners a glimpse of more urgent narratives of belief and unbelief.

Thirty miles from the coastal population of Creoles and Garinagu with their African heritage, Eduardo speaks of obeah, an Ashanti term derived from two words meaning 'child' and 'to take,' referring to the final test of an obeah sorcerer, the malicious taking of a child (Barrett, 18). This West African term has made its way over time into the vocabulary and belief system of the
modern Mopan Maya. The religious syncretism, found throughout much of the region, embracing traditional Mayan beliefs and variations of Christianity, is even more catholic in its southern Belize embrace. In a cultural mix similar to their Belizean Creole, the contemporary faiths of many Mayans are constructed out of an interweaving of beliefs, emanating from four different continents. The indigenous Mesoamerican beliefs, with their deep roots in both North and South American cultural traditions, are complemented by Westernized Christianity and obeah from West Africa. The syncretistic relationship between African beliefs and Christianity is found in Caribbean spiritualities such as Haitian Voodoo and Cuban Santeria, as well the condomble of Brazil. Southern Belize is unique for this particular meshing of belief systems from four different continents. In Eduardo's story, obeah manifests the magic and cursing power that is often considered to characterize Voodoo in both its real and stereotypical perceptions.

Eduardo visage tightens, as he offers a gloss on the story he just related:

If you tell me, "Eduardo tonight you be dead," I'm going to cry for the whole night. And when I say, "I don't believe it. It's a bunch of lies. It's too much words." That's what he believes and that's why he gets double sickness and double minded. We come here and can die any time. We cannot know when our life [might end]. If you get cured, you get cured.

My host explains the foundations of some of the beliefs involved in this story of sexual perdition. A threat ("you be dead") is to be taken seriously. In the story of his son-in-law, a threat is deduced by the sickness that befalls the man. Since the woman in San Benito is jealous and her father is an obeah man, he is the logical cause of the misfortune. Attempts at countering the curse by obeah and "black magic" (his term for the more uniquely Mayan form of spiritualism) are of no avail. It is only when the son-in-law removes
himself from the scene of the curse, that he begins to return to health. However, as Eduardo explains, the corresponding belief or disbelief of the affected party is an additional factor. By not believing ("I don't believe it. It's a bunch of lies. It's too much lies."), the victim might also evade the efficacy of the obeah. This is a theme regarding belief that Eduardo will refer to throughout the night. Likewise, he will provide additional information about the 'geography' of magic and belief.

Eduardo follows up the narrative of his son-in-law's affliction by moving into a more performative mode and relating another family story which explains the relationship between belief and sickness:

One time my daughter was sick. Let's say that I am an evangelistica, me -- I go evangelize to the people, to tell them the good news, not to overcome my people but to give them the good news, what I believe and what I see. And, one time, one Sunday, this young girl is dead. She's green, green, green. All the sisters, and all my neighbors they are crying. I come down and my wife tell me that my daughter is dead. [He dips his head as if in sorrow.]

I say, "Why is your daughter dead. What do you believe? Do you put your faith in the dead?"

I want to hold the girl. I hold the girl and I have a sweet in my pocket and I take it out like this [He reaches into his pant's pocket.] and my little girl accept. She not sick! She had no sickness; she had no nothing. My baby started to walk. [Smiling, he looks over to me.]

Throughout the evening, he elaborates on this key theme, that if one allows oneself to believe in the possibility of one's own or another's sickness or death, such a tragedy may come to pass. He indicates that when he arrives, his daughter appears dead (Employing the intense Creole reduplication, "She's green, green, green."), and that both his wife and the neighbors believe that she is dead. Eduardo has prefaced this account by noting that he is an evangelical Christian, whose task it is to "tell them the good news, what I
believe." This testimonial speech act is a critical element as he challenges his wife and the neighbors about their beliefs, "What do you believe? Do you put your faith in the dead?" Since he refuses to believe in the girl's death, and treats her routinely by offering a sweet, she revives. He proposes both speech and belief, a "sympathetic magic" (Knab, 1995), as powerful antidotes to the powers of sickness and death.

He quickly moves on to describe the sickness of his oldest son, an incident when conversely Eduardo allowed himself to fall victim to believing in death:

One time, I was crying. Here's my little boy, his hand is broken. It's 1984. I gone to the hospital with him. I cry because he's my first son and I really love him. The doctor come and say, "What [do] you believe?"

I tell him I don't want my son to be dead. The doctor say, "If you don't want him dead, don't bring him here. He's getting better. Bring him back home. If you say he might be dead, he'll be dead because you tell him he be dead. You're killing your son. Don't cry on him. Satisfy him. Make him laugh! Give him something to eat because he's not sick. Only his hand is broke. You are the person who makes him sick. Why you cry?"

In both of these instances involving his children's health, Eduardo enumerates three essential considerations: symptoms, belief, and the spoken word. His daughter was so sick that she appeared dead, and his son had undoubtedly injured his arm. In each case, when a parent allowed her or himself to believe in death's power, the danger of death appeared imminent. In the first case, it is Eduardo's outspoken evangelical faith, telling "the good news," that challenges the death-watch beliefs, while in the later case, it is a doctor practicing Western medicine who suggests, "If you say he might be dead, he'll be dead because you tell him he be dead. You're killing your son." According to this Mopan way of knowing, the spoken word possesses the
efficacy to bring about death, and the physical and spiritual domains appear to be separate but interrelated.

In a fashion similar to the doctor's warning, Eduardo, on at least five different occasions during this protracted description of the relationship between sickness and the spiritual domain, describes the power of word used with the intent of bringing about the death of another. (Chapter Eight describes Petey's story of his father, the duende, and a reversal of this potency.) Following the story of his daughter's illness, he sits up in his hammock placing his feet on the ground. He leans forward and looks me directly in the eyes, and proceeds as in a dramatic performance:

*If I tell you, I come behind you and BWAP* [He makes a quick hand motion in the air like a judo chop.]. *If you are not strong, you will get shocked and you're dead. Maybe not dead sudden, but half dead. That sometimes will happen like that. If I tell you," Tonight you're going to dead [die] here." Now, you're supposed to run out of my house and go somewhere, because you're afraid of death.*

While I feel in no way threatened personally, I am struck by the intensity with which he acts out these threats in a martial arts fashion, forming his body into a concentrated weapon. Each time, he catches my eye, holds it, and waits for me to respond with a nod or a word. Eduardo manifests the verbal power (and magical potency?) he feels with his causal, "If I tell you," immediately followed by its lethal effect, 'Tonight you're going to dead here.'

His perceived power resides in the 'word,' the utterance, and what would be the ultimate, terminal speech act.

Given the inter-related belief systems of the old Maya and Christianity, his dramatic exposition of the spoken word's perceived potency comes as no surprise. In both the Old Testament and the New Testament (whose reading in the vernacular is much more accessible through evangelical religion and
the reforms of the Vatican Councils), the 'word' is considered powerful and
divine. The Bible relates, "In the beginning was the word, and the word was
with god and the word was god." In the Popul Vuh, the word comes "in the
early dawn." When Heart of the Sky's word came to Sovereign Plumed
Serpent, "They agreed with each other, they joined their words, their
thoughts." From this explicit joining and speaking of words came about the
creation of the Mayan world (D. Tedlock, 1985, 73). In both traditions, each
reaching back nearly two millennia, the word maintains the power of life,
and conversely of death, into the present day.

As Eduardo relates his stories (and from subsequent conversations), I come
to understand that he believes that this power to promote death is widespread
and not reserved to obeah men and practitioners of black magic. It is a power
one must always be wary of as a transmitter or receiver. Though I sense it this
evening, I do not realize till later that I am not only being taught and
informed, I am being warned. I have crossed many boundaries to visit this
remote village. During this stay, I am swimming powerful streams, hiking in
the bush, and visiting the ancient spiritual grounds of the Mayan ancestors. I
will go out this night to relieve myself. I will sleep in their house, and, with
the onset of the rainy season, we may cover up in our hammocks against the
night winds. I could encounter a villager who is jealous of the Miss family
entertaining an affluent (any Westerner) visitor from the US. Tonight,
Eduardo is gently and persuasively acquainting me with the spiritual
landscape. It does not seem to matter to Eduardo that I am not Mayan. I have
come to his village and can thus be touched by the local spiritual forces, just
as I am affected by the cosmic forces that are currently being displayed in the
form of six to eight hour rainy season thunderstorms. Eduardo is not just
providing folkloric entertainment in a salvage mode by telling some 'Old
Maya' stories, he is utilizing his nocturnal performance to make personal meaning for me about my own safety.

**Spirit Visions**

Eduardo goes on to explain that, over the years, he has learned to be careful about many other types of communications that may be projected in one's direction. Such communications may come in visions and dreams, as in this story of the night apparition of an old lady.

One time, me and my wife just married, one old lady, close to us maybe three or four blocks, I tell my wife I would go because I hear some music... they have a tape there, singing. I tell my wife I wanted to go. My wife say, "Don't think that." But, I wanted to go.

Well, we gone to sleep and I am not really asleep... I see the old lady's come way [close] to our door. I see the vision. I see the lady's coming. I open my eyes and nothing. I smell the incense because when a person is dead, they pass the incense. I smell [He whispers.] and I say to my wife, "What's that?"

She say, "It must be the old dead person."

I say, "No, let's sleep together."

I believe what my father say and I put my cross [make sign of the cross]. I gone to sleep and I see it again! It's coming and I tell my wife, "Oh my, I see the lady right by the door."

My wife sit down and go to sleep again. I tell my wife, "No sleep!"

My wife gone to sleep and I hear my wife start to talk. I say, "What happened?"

She say that she see the lady right by the door, right in the door.

"OK," I say, "Better we run right now, catch us next door."

And we gone! We run. Oh my! And it is true because we believed that she was coming to this door. We believe it. Nobody tell us, and that dead person don't hear us at home. But, who hear us? I wanted to go out with them that night but I never gone. Since I never gone, they started molesting my home, giving me trouble. I no sleep. I gone; I run away. I go to my father-in-law.
JK: Who was this lady? Who was the spirit of this lady?

EM: This lady was M., Irena M., She just died, this lady. That's what I see. I know her and all the people here know me. She was a friend. That's what we believe and it come to happen.

This is an older tale, a memory piece, and Eduardo delivers it in a relaxed fashion, unlike some of his earlier accounts. He describes the siren call of the lady and his own vulnerability, thankful that his wife sensed the danger and shared the security of their bed. The smell of incense suggests the immanence of death and heightens their fear. Eduardo relies on his father's ancestral guidance and the sign of the cross, but both he and his wife ultimately "run away." Once again, Eduardo relates the dual experience of a threatening apparition and the corresponding interdependence of the viewers' belief ("We believe it!").

I turn and survey the hot jungle night through the same doorway, just six feet from my hammock, where Eduardo and his wife confronted the vision of the dead old lady. I wonder if the Mayans have a practice like the Garinagu and their eminently wise ritual of the dugu, a ceremony that provides a vehicle for the family and community to respond to troubled ancestral spirits. I wonder too at the spiritual power of the nearby ruin, the domain of ancestral spirits for over a thousand years.

Night is the time in these villages when one must be wary of seduction and perdition. The threats are multiple, and as in many other Belizean nighttime stories, they may involve a shape-shifter. Eduardo goes on to relate another incident that befell a friend:

The same thing with the ghosts in the road. One time, some people were passing by in the road. I hear the man dead, right there. He see one ghost -- a sheep is kissing on the foot, on the man's foot. It's not a real sheep; it's a ghost. It was kissing a living man.
They say the man dropped down. He started to bawl but he get down. He wasn't killed but somebody tell him, "Don't go when something is in the road."

He shock, himself.

While this strikes me as a unique narrative in its own right, it is particularly surprising since sheep are an uncommon domestic animal in this region. In any case, the warning is clear, "Don't go when something is in the road." Story by story, Eduardo is slowly describing the area's spiritual borders and boundaries. These ghosts manifest themselves in a special nocturnal and spiritual geography (Wilson, 1995). They stay close to a home base and make use of the roads. They tend to travel at night, and they inhabit certain locales. By learning the places, times, and manners of apparitions, a wary person may take care to avoid these spirits.

In this era, villagers are also circumspect about nighttime locales for more political reasons. Santa Cruz is just down the road from the Guatemalan frontier, and most residents avoid the local roads at night due to the refugee traffic and the perceived threat of pursuit by the Guatemalan military and death squads. There are many levels of threat that lead Eduardo to caution me about the nightscape. He continues to suggest that death and its spiritual representatives can sneak up not only on an intended victim but also those who might cross its path:

I tell you this new story. Maybe six years ago this old man was very sick. Maybe for nine to twelve years he's crippled on his whole body. I used to care for him by the church. He's my good friend and I kind to the person. He tell me that he cannot talk again but he want to talk. I love his heart; I love his body, but I can't help him. He knows me good and every time he sees me, he waves. He want to talk but he cannot. I not supposed to say, but every once I give him a little something, a little dollar or something. I'm very sorry for him and the poor man start to tear [cry] sometimes.
The poor man come to time. He’s dead. Well, all the whole family that’s house close [lives nearby], they gone somewhere. I used to go to church on the top of the hill and I used to come down. I no hear nothing when I pass to the front of the house, right there, side of the road. That night, not too late, maybe nine o’clock, I was coming in front of his house and I think, when this old man is still alive, he’s always sitting on the door, watching, but now he’s not watching -- he’s dead. I was just thinking this, when my ears... I don’t know what started happening to me. When I get close, I hear a stoning from the house, a stone coming at me. At that time I run because the man is really stoning and nobody is there. All the members of the house are gone because the man is dead. It’s spirit. All of them run. I say it must be spirits and I run home. That’s what I just saw but it’s come to happen. I try to believe that it’s not true. I don’t want it to happen again.

Some people say it’s just a bad hour. Not every hour [does it] happen. It only happen to me when this man stone me and when I see this dead person come ahead of me. Only that I take, that I believe.

There is anguish in his voice, as my host adds another element to his warnings and his own indigenous triangulation — time. He recalls that it was precisely at 9 PM the stoning occurred, what some consider a "bad hour." Eduardo outlines spiritual activity of a kind that has long been described in this region (Freidel, 1993; Gann, 1926; Morley, 1946; Thompson, 1932), though he primarily identifies these spirits by their function, location and timing, and not by ancient name or physical description. While some might dismiss these tales as ghost stories, curiosities that lend themselves to the salvage mode, their modern day impact is such that they help shape a world-view that regulates and normalizes behavior such as travel, behavior in the bush, and postures toward the deceased. Clearly, one night’s listening is not sufficient to learn all the dangers that must be avoided. However, those prohibitions and geographical markers that do emerge through Eduardo’s performance demonstrate how narratives are used to outline a spiritual
landscape by accretion and reinforcement. In addition, my host is beginning to lay out a rudimentary code of action within the bush and at night, a code that is renewed and expanded as new threatening incidents occur within the village.

A Cautionary Body of Knowledge

Narrative by narrative, Eduardo has slowly constructed his cautionary body of knowledge, informing me about those spiritual threats that potentially lurk in the bush, along the roads, and close to home, but especially those that loom in the night. His cycle of stories relating to death, threats of death, and the posture of those who are threatened, culminates with two stories that concern himself at the site of death. He first describes his questioning response at a wake held in his house for an unnamed deceased. He collapses time dramatically, admitting, "I'm a little crazy," and, "I am a bad boy." In light of his diurnal dismissal of the old ways, it is significant that he reflects on his parents' laxity concerning traditional burial customs. By story's end, he and his parents once again see the wisdom regarding the ancient prohibitions on the night of a wake:

I will tell you this story. Maybe I am eleven years old. I am an innocent boy. I'm a little crazy and at home there are only two, father and mother. When the time of day come like that, I see them prepare. But I am happy. I am going to eat everything, new things — not [available] every day too. What is first for them [the deceased], the rest is for us. That's what I love -- every food.

My father say to prepare a desk [table], get incense, and call, "Come, come home."

He call them [the deceased] by name. I think to myself I will watch [for] them. I am a bad boy. I tell [ask] my mother why she not watch close because nobody come up. I sleep there on the hammock by the door and I study because there is plenty candles there.
When one finish, put another one there — all day and all night. I study to watch and about nine or ten o'clock at night my father started nerves. They all started nerves. Then I started changing my mind. I close my eyes. I get nervous of them! I open up my eyes again and when I see the table, it looks like somebody started to shake the table. Every table, all the things, they started to shake. But, nobody shake it. I say, "Dad, dad, dad!"

He say, "What?"

"The table is shaking!"

"No, now stop making that noise."

It looks to me like the candles drop off but nothing drop off — just something like a vision. Nothing drop off. I started yelling and running. I chased them [the spirits] because I listened to them. But, I tell them, "No, they're dead; they're dead!"

My dad say to get out. People believe that you should leave it [the food] there and not be there, not hang your hammock there. You have to take your hammock out and close the door for them.

I don't know. I don't believe much, but I see things!

When you start to believe, it show you true truths.

Eduardo's short drama is a chronicle of the deterioration of ritual, an instance when he freely admits his family's growing laxity about the need for following the full regimen of mourning rituals. His parents prepared for the wake, burnt the ceremonial incense, and set out the candles, but neglected to remove Eduardo from the site of the wake. After the experience of the shaking table (which happens at or about the previously noted hour of 9 PM), his father reaffirmed the full validity of the old beliefs. Compliance with only some of the ceremonial protocol was not sufficient. The entire ritual had to be carried out in order to bring proper rest and respect to the deceased. Eduardo, whose own ambivalence regarding the old ways appears to evolve from certain deviations in his parents' ritual practice, returns to the tangible. "I don't know. I don't believe much, but I see things," he tells me, reminding his wife and children who are silently listening as well. In this world of spirits and wavering belief, events sometime occur that recall people to belief, and by
extension to ritual behavior. This evening, Eduardo's emergent performance gives voice to the ancestral and bush spirits that he has encountered, such that his entire narration calls for a renewal of traditional codes, a return to "true truths."

This story appears to mirror in a less dramatic fashion the vision of "Juan and the Hill Cave," a matter that will be fully analyzed Chapter Ten. When Mayan people begin to drift away from ritual practices, select individuals may experience visions of ancestral or bush spirits that beckon them back to the prescribed adherence to traditional ritual practice. The directed or implied duty of such a witness is then to take on the mission of testifying within the community about the need for cultural renewal. His children are a key audience for this reminder as we all sit and listen.

By finishing his account with the statement, "When you start to believe, it show you true truths," Eduardo hints once again at a tenuous causality that is at the heart of his belief system. He appears to suggest that, if a person refuses to believe (As in the death of a loved one, such as his daughter or son.), that act of negation may in fact turn the tide of a sickness and reverse the influence of a bad spirit. However, once one elects to believe, then one must be prepared to follow the spiral toward "true truths" that occurs in the material world.

Eduardo's final story in this regard is the sad tale of his father's death. This personal loss presented for Eduardo, the modern Mayan of the daytime and the traditional Mayan of night hours, a critical choice between ritual and independent action. A prescribed traditional rubric laid out the proper procedure for disposing of his father's possessions. Eduardo elected to go against these customs and the will of his wife, using reason to make his case.
After hearing the story of the shaking table, I asked him about his father and his beliefs:

JK: You talk a lot about your father. It sounds like he was very important to you.

EM: Yes, he believed in it [the old ways]. He learned it. That's why he want to do that but we don't believe it. He want to make me do it but we don't do it. He just get sick and weak. He get old and die.

Eduardo goes on to describe his father's painful aging, his move to live with his family, and the slow, sad decline in health that led to his death in old age. Reflecting on the mourning ceremonies, Eduardo first mentions the presence of his evangelical minister. He then solemnly outlines the essential procedures for moving the deceased's possessions out of the house, "so that he will not come back and visit you."

One of my neighbors is close to me, right by that tree there [about twenty feet from the house] and he's our preacher man. I am not a preacher but I read my gospel. Any time a person dead, anything that he have, you have to send behind him. Make him take it so that he will not come back and visit you. Take old things that he have -- pick it, throw it in his tomb. He [Eduardo's father] just buy a new light and new boots, new brown boots....and one new hammock.

Well, I tell my wife, "I'm not going to throw this hammock, throw these boots, not even this light. He don't need these again. I'm going to throw these in the ground -- for what? My father was going to give me his remembrance if I keep it."

My wife say, "No, no. Why man?"

"I need this. He don't need nothing again. I want the hammock. I want the boots. I want this light. Because he no give anything to us. He sell everything that he have. I keep that."

My neighbors ask about lodgings because when someone die, you move. We used to hear that. You should move and ask for lodgings. They buried my father this evening. And tonight, I hang up his hammock. I gone and lay there. I just tell my god, "God, if I did wrong things to my father, god see it. If I love my father, god must protect me."
That's all what I say. I tell my wife to say that too. If we did wrong with my father then we must receive our warning. If we love him, god will protect us, and he know that we are not treating bad. For me, I am the son. That is my prayer. I say that and I gone to sleep.

My children go along as me. My children don't know that -- if there is some evil spirit. They don't know because I don't tell them. I don't teach them. They are not afraid. They go in and out of the room [at night]; they go in and out of the room at nighttime to take something that they want. They are not afraid. They don't know about if we have old ghosts... something's coming...

A man ask me, "Eduardo, are you going somewhere?"
"Where?" I ask him, "Where?"
"You no going to put your lodgings somewhere else because your father is dead?"
"No, I am not killing my father. God carried him back, not me. I no kill him. How is he going to chase me? I supposed to live in the bush? I am at home."

He say, "I know, but maybe you come and stay with me."
My wife say, "Maybe we go?"
I tell them, "No, I'm sorry. If you want to go, you go. I'm staying home."

I stay home --nothing, nothing. I no hear nothing, not even a rat. I hear no noise. Only god answer my prayer. Nothing -- I no hear no strange noise, nothing.

That's why I don't believe in something, in a spirit. If you're dead in a hammock, you're not supposed to come again tomorrow night! [He laughs.] You're gone. You're gone!

But, if I believe that it will be happen, it will happen.

JK: So, that's the danger. The danger is believing it.

EM: The danger is believing, serious believing. If I believe, it happens.

JK: Right, I understand. You said that before but I think that it's only as you've said it again that I understand what you were really saying, and that's something that's new to me.

EM: Yeah, I never really believe the things in life. Somebody really believe it. But, I don't want my children to believe because then you get shock of it. I don't want them not to go outside when they are free to go.
A renewed discussion of belief ends this tale of anguished decision-making about the valuable possessions. As Eduardo is telling the story, I can't help but wonder if he is speaking from his genuine reconsideration of traditional customs and a life of need or whether I am hearing a rationalization for keeping the new flashlight and boots. There is a moment when his voice softens, and his story appears to take on the characteristics of a confession, but as he comes to an end, that admission is eclipsed by the larger issue of belief and his entire family. He then switches to his children, and speaks across national and ethnic boundaries to considerations that mean so much to me as a father. While I respect and even revere certain traditions, I do not want my own children raised to respond unthinking to ancient rituals, acting only out of fear. Like Eduardo, I feel strongly that children have the right to a live in a place where they are not afraid to "go outside" or enjoy the night. I too want children "free to go." Perhaps ironically for Eduardo, both danger and hope are lodged in "serious believing."

Our nighttime hours in the hammocks subtly shift from performance, to teaching, to warning, and then to conversation between two men with the shared experience of fatherhood. As a stranger, I do not always know how to respond. At those moments when I feel a common bond with my host, I indicate my assent. I realize that much of what he has told me these hours may not find its way into the elementary school textbooks. The story of the shaking table might be submitted, but I suspect that contemporary, first-person stories of obeah curses are probably not what district educators have in mind for the early grades, though undoubtedly some children might relish such tales. I mention to Eduardo that we may not "use" all these tapes, though they will be saved. Apparently realizing that his performance of
intimate warnings is over, he shrugs, smiling as if it makes little difference either way.

Over the years, I have come to find that many people in Toledo have vast storehouses of rich and vibrant stories. Ruth Behar suggests that Esperanza, the woman whose life story she renders, "had already thought of her life as a text, telling and retelling her life story to her children and her woman clients" (1993, 10). As my contacts with Eduardo continue over the years, I realize that he too retells his life stories from a storehouse of personal experiences and reflections. In subsequent conversations, he indicates that on that summer evening he was telling a number of stories which he had related many times before. However, the particular selections and their order were unique, designed to teach and warn me, as well as in response to my questions as their first time visitor. Considering my novice understanding, he felt obligated to instruct me regarding the hidden dangers of the night and the bush.

The extended interview time, the relaxed setting of the Miss family home, and the heightened focus of a single kerosene lamp in Toledo's vast darkness provided the setting for a revelatory evening. This was my first experience of a storyteller performing an improvised sequence of tales, allowing directed and personalized themes to emerge in the free-flow of our cross-cultural discourse. Eduardo used the narratives to cumulatively present to me and his family a structured way of knowing and perceiving (Sherzer, 1983), particularly concerning an unwritten code of conduct and the delicate interplay of belief and nonbelief. While his daytime world is one of community organization, nighttime provided the occasion for introducing me to spirits of the deceased, as well as those bush spirits who surround and geographically overlay the village of Santa Cruz. As Eduardo is the spokesman for his fellow villagers, people who are adapting their lifeways to
new government programs, so too he lends his voice to the spirits of the ancestors and the bush when describing his family's delicate balancing of cultural rejection and cultural renewal.

**Educational Implications**

Telling stories that are primarily based on personal and family experiences, Eduardo illuminates a body of cultural knowledge that many Toledo families retain and share in a narrative mode. Eduardo's stories demonstrate traditional sources, deriving from Mayan ancestral and earth spirit beliefs. His language usage and many of his tales also indicate the complex interrelationship of other cultural influences such as African obeah. While certain of Eduardo's accounts are cautionary stories, similar to the Shos' tales, he demonstrates another dimension of cultural knowledge as he instructs his listeners about the means to avoid the dangers of disease and/or malicious spirits.

Eduardo is a skilled dramatic storyteller who uses his body in the restrained yet potent manner of a martial arts expert. His nighttime performance was finely tuned to his small audience and the immense jungle night. His storytelling manifests a special, and largely unreflective, emergent quality related to this nighttime environment. Unable or unwilling to relate traditional stories in the daytime, he is unrestrained in describing malicious apparitions and the local spiritual geography while safely at home. This mental geography, lodged in a narrative matrix, might well be considered as the basis for developing future local curricula relating to personal narratives, local history, and ecology.

126

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Lastly, Eduardo's evening performance offers ample evidence that the limited nine-to-five collecting of Toledo stories would leave potential readers and listeners forever shortchanged!
CHAPTER SIX

WALKING WITH JESUS, DANCING WITH THE DEVIL: BLENDING NATIVE AND WESTERN SPIRITUALITIES

I'm a man of the past.
I'm living in the present,
And I'm walking in the future.

-Peter Tosh, "Mystic Man"

Before encountering Gerineldo, I never met a person who had seen Jesus and danced with the devil. Gerineldo Pop has done both during the forty plus years he has lived in the village of San Pedro Columbia. I met Gerineldo on one of my first visits to Toledo, but it took us three years to arrange the proper setting for telling stories and discussing those issues that were pertinent to the textbook project. Gerineldo was busy with family and community responsibilities, as well as his work with the TMCC. Furthermore, he deemed it essential that we have both the proper occasion and the necessary time to examine some of the issues that he believed were critical for the integration of traditional Mayan stories and literacy work. Gerineldo's insistence on a proper setting for storytelling complemented the view of contemporary scholars (Burns, 1983; Jackson, 1987; Swann, 1992) who stress that the context is as important as the collected story or song. So it was with Gerineldo one summery dusk, as he stressed the need for the textbook project to extend beyond the collection of "external" stories and enter into the heart of the timeless Mayan belief system.
San Pedro Columbia, June 1993

A loud THWAK — then the air shudders with the vibrations of a large shaft of metal shot into a wall of the Mayan house. I stare at the spear, stuck shivering in the hardwood plank, then I turn to the doorway. Gerineldo stands smiling in the entrance way as he puts down the inner-tube sling he used to shoot his fishing spear at the wall. Celia, his wife, and two of the smaller children are watching by the small cooking area, set off from the one large room in the home. It is a dramatic entrance, and the children seem to enjoy it as much as Gerineldo. I am still a bit startled and confused. Gerineldo hands Celia the bag of the silvery trout-like tuba that he caught in the Columbia River just an hour before. For a respected guardian of the old ways, he presents a strange cross-cultural sight in his traditional milpa work-clothes, baseball cap, and holding his underwater goggles!

Three years have passed since we first met, and, though we've talked since, this is the first real opportunity we have been able to set aside to work on the textbook project. We have both been busy since before dawn, and I know that this day I myself have added a story to the local village lore on my way over to Gerineldo's.

I am staying with the Acks, a family I've known from my first visit to this village when I came to work with the oldest daughter Ramona on a play about tourists. Though I knew how to get to Gerineldo's house, my route would have been by the main road, a roundabout approach. Simeon Ack asked his twelve year old son Marciano to lead me through the bush to Gerineldo's home. Marciano led the way past the well and the clothes washing stones by the creek, and then up a winding path. Straggling a bit behind him, I passed a large tree that was hollowed out at ground level and there I heard a sound like falling water. I stopped, turned and found my
attention drawn to the tree, though I saw no sign of water dripping by the tree or on the path. I walked back to the tree and was poised to stick my head into the opening where the sound seemed to emanate, when I heard a sharp "Pssst!" from Marciano. He pulled me away -- "Killer bees!"

I know that he will enjoy telling his family and friends of Jerry, the foolish teacher, who was just about to poke his head into a buzzing swarm of Africanized bees. I think to myself how much they sounded like falling water, but I know that I was in momentary denial. I had been pretty stupid. If anything my sessions with hunters such as Petey had taught me about the Belizean bush, it's, "Don't ever put your head in a dark hole!"

I tell Gerineldo about my close call with the swarm. He laughs and then describes his day's work. He had labored in his plantation under a torrid sun, then put on his goggles and gone underwater to fish — a day of the opposite poles in Mayan geography, up and under. It is now dusk, day moving to darkness, and, as we settle down to talk, lightning erupts in the West over the Mayan Mountains. Gerineldo asks a few questions about the story project and then critiques a story I had given him a few days before in P.G. "The Three Bulldogs" is a long Kekchi narrative that I had transcribed for Louis, a friend from a distant village.

Gerineldo comments that some things are missing from the story as he had learned it in his youth. He assures me that his sources were sound:

I speak to the older people in my time. The last older people I speak with was Mr. Jose C., very, very old. He had 105 years when he died. He keeps the secrets of the Mayan knowledge, planting, incense. He knows everything.

Gerineldo establishes his training and frame of reference with the "last older people." Unlike many contemporary Mayan storytellers, he believes
that there are canonical versions of certain traditional stories. This is the first time that I see one storyteller criticize another's offering, and I consider that perhaps Gerineldo feels a responsibility for the versions that village elders have entrusted to him. Then too, his twenty years seniority compared to the "Bulldog" author may account for this posture.

"This Knowledge is Very, Very Deep"

Suddenly, Gerineldo makes a dramatic shift and changes whatever course I have anticipated the evening's events might follow. From a posture of levity and welcome, he turns to a good-hearted challenge:

I think you are only interested in the external complex of the Mayan knowledge. When I say external, that is just like the skin, the outside of a human being, not the real internal, because it has everything there. These teachings of the Mayans -- when I was a young child they usually teach at Christmas time and also at Easter.

I am taken aback at the quick switch of focus and the appraisal of Gerineldo regarding my approach to the story collecting project. He kindly and abruptly challenges what he perceives to be my salvage or collection posture regarding traditional Mayan stories. Since he is a member of the TMCC and a recognized spiritual leader, I am unsure concerning his judgment or objection. I respond that the story I had given him, "The Three Bulldogs," had been told to Louis by his father during over the Christmas holidays years before.

Confident that he has my complete attention, he continues:

The legends, the stories, they are the external part -- they force you to go deeper. If you go deeper, you will know the good and you will know the bad. The god of heaven is divided but this is one body. You are one being and you can see the right and
you can see the left. Sometimes the Western religions explain about Adam and Eve. Women want man and man want [to] have woman. Everything is like that.

The moon has a role to play with us, with the species of animals, with human beings because we are all creatures in one, because we are more human, more different than the creatures around us. The moon, the sun and the rest of the stars -- this knowledge is very, very deep. The legends about Jesus Christ, about Moses -- these Mayan stories are like that.

There are many things when the archaeologists and the scientists are trying to dig out from the Maya. They are trying to get back the Maya. They say this and that, and they find what they want to make the world believe. From their research, of maybe one thousand years ago, they make that belief because they felt that it is so. But it collapses; it falls down. They meet something that is not so.

Even though our legend is so, it is the same. They won't believe because they prove what they prove and see what they see. They try to change the world. They should be more truthful than that.

You see -- life and death is different and the other world is so. The Mayans know all these things from the time when the world was dark. They have all the legends and the stories about these old times.

Gerineldo has chosen to preface our session with his cautionary analysis about how Westerners, "archaeologists and scientists," construct their knowledge of the Maya and Mayan spirituality. Uneducated in the academy, Gerineldo explains that the "track record" of Western enthusiasts for Mayan culture is questionable, for they have created a description of the "old Maya" that, "they want to make the world believe." Gerineldo recognizes from his readings that the scholarly depiction of the Mayans, current and past, has often been a false or partial construct by Europeans and North Americans.

Living close by the Lubaantun ruin, Gerineldo has seen a generation of "Mayanists" dig the soil and then use the artifacts and untranslated glyphs to describe their 'scientific' versions of Mayan spirituality. Like the early translators of Mayan glyphs, many of these scholars have failed to learn the
Kekchi and Mopan language or bothered to talk with the current carriers of the old traditions (Friedel, 1993; Schele, 1990). Gerineldo signifies his own local version of deconstruction when he claims that these scholars "make a belief. But it collapses; it falls down."

Gerineldo states emphatically that this blindness to the Mayans' "deep" cultural heritage and understanding of their traditions cannot be excused. He is critical not only of faulty scholarship but also of the ignorance these Western scientists exhibit of the profound knowledge beneath the "externals." His performance and analysis regarding the contemporary relevance of the traditional stories' inner spiritual truths offer sharp contradictions to anyone who would settle for merely a salvage operation. My host asserts that this traditional knowledge, should it be allowed to emerge, can have a profound political impact by offering peace and an end to the violence in places such as neighboring Guatemala:

I just see that the world has to meet. We have to come as one. That's the only answer; that's the only solution to all this violence. I know right here we have the key. It is said by the Maya that right here is the heart of the world, in this country. This part survived the floods that punished sin.

When the new sun came and brought creation to the earth, the old Mayans looked to the sea to find peace because peace did not grow here. It doesn't grow here - you won't find that seed here [He laughs.]. If that sea would dry, then other forms would come. You wouldn't see the same kind. And, so it was in the belly of the darkness when there was no sun -- in those days the legends say that there were many dragons, serpents, animals that were so great, big. They were very terrible.

And trees were there - legendary trees that bear all kinds of fruits - only one tree. In those days everything was very different.

Gerineldo interweaves stories from Biblical tradition and the stories of the Old Maya into his analysis. He refers to the land of Mayan ancestors as having escaped the Old Testament flood that was sent to punish sin. It is on that pure
land that the World Tree took root. Gerineldo also engages in the "folding back" of stories and references (D. Tedlock, 1993) when he makes reference to Adam and Eve, the deluge, and later on to Mary and Jesus, all within the context of the Mayan creation story, an account that overtly challenges an easy Western interpretation.

Gerineldo made his own spiritual 'dig,' deep into the realm of the "Old Maya," and has moved past the archaeological depictions of god K or god L to the central axis of Mayan cosmology, the World Tree. According to tradition, this is the fully laden tree that preceded the universe as we know it, bridged the darkness and the light, then dropped its fruits of creation. This was the tree that centered the four cardinal directions, penetrated the underworld and reached toward the sun. The World Tree was the ancient Mayans' tree of wisdom and knowledge, and a tree that they have fed with ritual and offerings for over two thousand years in hopes it would bear more fruit, perhaps those that carry the seeds for peace (Freidel, 1993).

The form they gave the Raised-up-Sky and the central axis of the world was that of a great ceiba tree. The Maya continue to re-create the world and to feed the tree and its sprouts so that humanity will continue to prosper...Maya traditions and communities have sprung up all around their ruined past, each sprouting into a newer version of the Classic vision, each rededicating itself to the future by transforming and honoring the past (Freidel, 256).

In a situation similar to my long nighttime conversation with Eduardo, Gerineldo and I are talking just down the road from Lubaantun, the ceremonial gathering place of the old Maya that has stood in silent testimony for over a millennium. Poised on a hilltop, Lubaantun's stone monuments are shaded by the rainforest canopy. This setting suggests that there is perhaps no better trope for creation and renewal than the Old Mayas' image of the
World Tree. Multiple symbols are embedded within the tree image, suggestive of growth, renewal, fruitfulness, the creation in the garden, and the tree of the cross, the final step before renewal.

Gerineldo continues his story of the earliest days.

- When the sun appeared, it changed everything. The climate, everything destroyed those same dragons and their bones are still under the earth.
- You see we have this legend but it seems that nobody really wants to share this point, perhaps because of their religions -- what really happened. But maybe the time will come. It would be good to share -- the affairs of the sun. We have religion when the sun come, the relation of the sun, the moon and the stars. Everything we have right now, working the same with the thirteen forces, the thirteen currents.

The cooling dark of night has covered over the village, and Gerineldo speaks passionately of the central awakening of Mayan creation that accompanied the sun, and the thirteen forces that emerged from the darkness. Significantly, he uses the word "legend" to describe the story of the sun and notes that there is reluctance to hear this story because of religion, presumably those Christian sects that he will comment on a bit later. He expresses his faith that the time will come again to spread this knowledge which is primordial, the source of Mayan religion ("We have religion when the sun come.").

I begin then to understand the nature of his challenge (and critique of salvage's limitations) – that I am not to think I understand anything of value if I walk away with a bag of taped stories, any more than the archaeologists can hope to understand more than externals when they leave only with a bag of shards. He is pushing me, and by extension the textbook project, beyond the externals and the superficial. He tells me in no uncertain terms that the beliefs in his village are as old as the new sun and as current as this July.
evening. Gerineldo is suggesting that if I (and by extension, the students) wish to understand a traditional Mayan story, I must first perceive the traditional way of knowing, a local epistemology.

He goes on to stress that locally people who really want to know about the old Mayan beliefs must be wary of certain modern religions. Some Christian belief systems, he notes, might create barriers to true comprehension, and in a Mayan paradox, they may also offer the hope for greater understanding. He emphasizes once again that his hopes for our literacy work extend beyond decoding to include the moral realm and the search for the elusive seeds of peace.

Gerineldo pauses to consider our conversation, "I'm just telling you these points — not everything. To tell you this, it would take us about three months."

I acknowledge his caution and indicate that, as a teacher, I too understand the critical dimension of time as it applies to real learning. We discuss whether there are stories that penetrate beyond the surface and get to the heart of the traditional beliefs. Gerineldo explains that there has never been an easy path, and that it is similar to one who wants to go to the heart of the bush. That person must know about "the stickers and the dangerous things." The task of a seeker of Mayan knowledge is to know all, to know everything. And, as with the person who would safely penetrate the bush, one must be prepared and take time. There are no short-cuts.

_We know that heaven has thirteen layers, like the thirteen layers of Mayan knowledge. We know the good. We know the bad. A perfect gentleman will learn till he gets old. Such a person is a priest, a doctor, in everything, not just halfway. He need to know everything, everything. That's why when I sit down and talk to you, I am going to tell you something that is unbelievable._
Sometimes, you might say it's that you are too short to understand, ignorant, or you might say that I am crazy. But this is very important. You have to know the good works and the bad works, everything. That's why I tell you that the stories are just an external to the knowledge.

Gerineldo has so much to say, and we have just a little time. I am humbled by his belief in life-long learning ("A perfect gentleman will learn till he gets old.") and the vast amount of knowledge that must be learned, succinctly described as "everything." I reflect on all the stories I have heard which instruct the listener how to behave according to a moral code for hunting and farming. This accomplished teacher is pressing a point that I want to believe and may have taken for granted. Will printed versions of these stories prove capable of leading students to do "good works?"

I inquire, "Even if a story is an "external," couldn't it serve as door, a passageway to something a child wouldn't otherwise know about or care about?"

Gerineldo responds:

I think that little glimpse could be a story -- after these stories are given, legends of the past and everything. It would take long, not just one night, not just two. It takes long, long. Then we would start to go past the externals and get to know deeper.

Gerineldo is a teacher, and, like many Toledo narrators, he generously offers his time to try to bring those who will listen back to a deeper way of knowing and the wellsprings of Mayan spirituality. He is clearly joined with other leaders, healers, and educators throughout the Mayan world in the process of ethnogenesis, that evolving ethnic discourse extending beyond national borders which encourages the sharing and renewal of common traditions. Twenty miles from the terror in Guatemala, Gerineldo joins his
fellow Mayans in placing peace in the forefront of the ideals he hopes will emerge from the renewal and adaptation of traditional beliefs. Like Juan the Catechist, Gerineldo refers back to the hills, places of power, and describes his dream of an education center for the renewal of Mayan traditions. He suggests that such a center will serve as a space

where people who wish to hear, come to hear in that place special. I know the kinds of hills, that are not just like these [He gestures to the small rises in his part of the village.], because the hills represent the power that is in them. It is better to learn there in the hills -- these secret things.

I see it as a mission. The force is right here -- this is a holy place, most holy. Right here the word is alive to share with people, with you. Within these thirteen forces is the power to vitalize, to strengthen, to reinforce, to rebuild, to restore that division. What the Mayans have enjoyed -- and I don’t wish to destroy or to weaken any other kinds of society, any kinds of culture. What I wish we should have is that knowledge as bright as our eye can see. We need to see and to feel so that everyone is one, oneness, unity, love, and joy. These beliefs are yet alive, still the same as the past. We know that our Mayan ancestors are still alive on the earth.

What would be best is to get about seven hundred acres special as a conservation place. It would have to start as a project where the hanging gardens of the Mayans would be settled. We have to act before this land is parceled out and sold. It would be a place where we can get the medicine that we can share for the welfare, spiritual materials to help people who want to get natural healing.

As Eduardo outlined a geography of night spirits, so Gerineldo explains the necessity of locating a traditional learning center in a "holy place," the hills. "The hills represent the power that is in them. It is better to learn there in the hills -- these secret things." Though Gerineldo is not a catechist like Juan, he too perceives his life and his teaching as a "mission." Unlike catechists, whose duties take them on extensive travels, Gerineldo has determined that his mission is rooted on home ground, where "our Mayan ancestors are still alive on the earth."
alive on the earth." He continues to develop his belief in a spiritual concurrence of time, indicating, "Right here the word is alive." I sense, that for Gerineldo, this is not a metaphor or personification. Acutely aware of the life around him, in the sky, the bush, and while fishing beneath the river's surface, he states that this is the place where the word of the Old Maya truly lives, and the appropriate place for a center of traditional learning.

I reflect that it is no wonder that his prime message has been the need to care for ancestral words. Over the course of our meetings he is gradually outlining a number of essential conditions befitting to words that he considers both 'living' and 'holy'. The thirteen 'forces' promise knowledge for those who will take the time, travel to this special place, and study. The promise is for knowledge, "as bright as the eye can see," the aforementioned peace, and finally the promise of healing. For this evening, Gerineldo has taken on the role of teacher and he is describing the foundation of Mayan beliefs, as well as outlining his plans and his goals.

For my host, this living power of the word is the element that escapes those Westerners who focus too exclusively on the semiotics of ancient glyphs, particularly those of the salvage 'stripe' who bemoan the 'disappearance' of the ancient culture. A grand age of classic architecture has come and gone, and those who look for modern temples as the homes of Mayan spirits will be disappointed. For many of today's Mayans, their guiding spirits dwell in the bush and in special locales of power such as the ancient ceremonial sites and the thirteen hills, homes to the masters of the animals.

It should be noted at this juncture that I only came to understand a good deal of what was discussed that evening when I transcribed our conversation. One factor, common throughout the area, is that Gerineldo speaks English as a second language and frequently retains certain elements of Kekchi syntax.
such as placing the modifier after a noun. In addition, Gerineldo employs a rich, concentrated and poetic manner of speaking. He often folds back his narratives and makes sudden shifts that can be confusing on first listen, especially for someone unaccustomed to Toledo speech patterns. A deeper comprehension of references, such as the World Tree and living word, is possible only when one has the time and ability to study a narrator's stories and instruction. Gerineldo represents both the medium and the message that one must be prepared to listen hard and study in order to understand the 'living' words of Mayan teachers.

A Vision of Jesus

The site of the proposed school has a special personal history for Gerineldo, and he explains his long-felt sense of mission regarding this school for traditional Mayan teachings. He credits "God," presumably a god that Christians would recognize as their deity, as the stimulus for this endeavor:

I have been seeing this for a long time. I don't know how I reached there [the idea of a school] but I know why I reached there. God really wanted me to do this. I'm not a perfect man but I think god wanted me to do something before I died.

He abruptly rises to dramatize a transformative personal experience that occurred there, his visionary experience of Jesus, an event that has propelled him on his life's mission. His animated narration of this mystical experience, which begins with a statement of his unwavering devotion to his traditional prayers, outlines the often seamless mesh of his traditional Mayan and Christian beliefs:

When I was fifteen years old, I had a vision. I heard about this Jesus, they talk about. Well, I just respect the idea. I don't
have to say it's bad like some old people -- but I did continue to pray like I was taught by the old, old people I know. And not a bit of the singing of the words that I learned disappeared from my brain.

When I was fifteen years old, I didn't believe with my eyes when I saw that person, Jesus. With my sight I saw that person, just like how I'm seeing you there. He had a white garment. I don't know why he had a white garment but that man did. That man had a face right here [He points in front of him.] and his eyes are not full, just like our eyes. His hair was long and not red [Gerineldo points to the crucified Christ figure on his wall] but black and it had the same line [He demonstrates how hair would be parted down the middle.] and it moves in the breeze, blowing hard, like this [He mimics the movement of the hair.].

He appeared to me just like lightning. Then he pointed like this [He points at me as the vision had pointed at him.] and the garment he has was very white like the clouds we can see over the hills. I did not say a word. He just pointed like this [He points again.], then I hear a voice like it's in a cave. I looked around but didn't see anybody to make this voice, except that standing on the cloud, the cloud under feet about a foot and a half above the ground -- it is a human, a person! Yes, I see it. I can remember.

He had that pillar of cloud there, and the breeze is blowing and I saw the bores, the places where the nails were [He points to the nail wounds on the crucifix.]. I didn't see this [He points to the wound on the side of the figure on the crucifix] because he was wearing the garments and the garments were not square in the neck like in some of the pictures -- it was just long. And the rope he always has at his center [waist]. The breeze is blowing and it was drawn around him [like a belt]. I don't know what kind of rope, a rope like this size [He points to a narrow diameter rope like clothes line.]. One end [of the rope/belt] is longer than the other.

That is what I saw that time, not so far just over by that river, close to that point [He points to the potential site for the school.]. I don't know but that [visionary person] just disappeared. That's all. He come and I see.

I tried to remember the words that he had said. I used to know because he speak. I didn't ask a question. And then it just disappeared like ice when it melts. I don't know what it is by myself but I saw it. So, I don't know what I have to do before I die. I don't know, but I never forget the religion of my past. My hope is that the world, that the world really loved itself as one -- the same teaching that my ancestors taught.
We sit in darkness, as Celia Pop brings in some tortillas and a bean paste. I am glad for a pause that allows me to consider Gerineldo’s moving performance and graphic description of his vision of the post-crucifixion Jesus. The approaching storm draws our gaze toward the apparition site, as I absorb Gerineldo’s striking visionary account. I am mindful that there has been a qualitative shift in Gerineldo’s verbal arts as the narration of his vision contained many of the elements of a rehearsed or oft-told performance. During this portion of our conversation, he has been considerably more animated, making a variety of hand gestures that correspond throughout his testimony to illustrate position, detail, and dimension. He narrated this experience in a fluid fashion, and, given the special subject matter, I can only conclude that this is a story he has performed on many times, rehearsing and refining his description before various audiences.

The latter part of this July day has been filled with the opposites of high sun and underwater, nurturing plants in the field and killing fish under the water, darkness and lightning, Mayan and North American. Staring out at the charged weather front, I consider clouds as a recurrent theme and background throughout this night’s stories, particularly the scene of Jesus on a “pillar of clouds.” What happened to Gerineldo on that day in his late teens? What did he see that set him on his mission? The vision’s geography is significant. Gerineldo segued from his plans to establish a school for traditional education locally, to indicate that his chosen spot is the site across the river where Jesus had appeared to him. While he does not make the explicit connection, Gerineldo has described the appearance of the wounded Christ at the place where he also suggested the presence of the lone tree.
Gerineldo's experience provides a double confirmation. There can be no doubt that this personal vision of the post-crucified Jesus, presumably the resurrected Christ, offers him indisputable evidence of his appointed mission. Likewise, the location appears to confirm Gerineldo's more recent decision to promote the traditional learning center. The proposed site overlays a portion of the Lubaantun ruins, the domain of ancestral and hill spirits, thereby offering a geographical analog of the local syncretistic belief system — Jesus shares but does not overwhelm the site of ancient beliefs.

There is an emergent element regarding Gerineldo's status with regard to this particular complex of narratives. While the vision happened decades ago, and Gerineldo's idea for a school is not a new idea, it is only at this point in time that he has attained the standing and respect that allow him to consider this as a practical possibility. He is testifying to his visions, beliefs and ideas at this time in order to promote a school that would address the issues of cultural renewal and survival. Gerineldo's intense performance asserts his status and his sense of mission. His emergence as a leader within the TMCC provides him with the "prestige" (Bauman, 1977, 44) and the audiences' "collaborative expectancy" (16) that empower him to reassert traditional beliefs as well as his own visionary experience.

While Gerineldo had time to prepare for our focused conversation regarding traditional Mayan stories, he appeared to respond spontaneously to the questions I have been asking. In this instance, as if to answer questions I might have about such an extraordinary sight, Gerineldo offers an explanation for this and other visionary experiences:

That to me was a real vision -- distinct. That time I fly. Since that time I start to float. I sometimes lay down in my bed but I am not right there — my spirit is gone. There was a time, one time not long ago, I went to see how this lightning is shaped
when the clouds are like that [He points to storm clouds and lightning on the horizon.], thundering. Why did I go and do that? I am gone. I can't come back. I am right over there -- all over on top of the mountain, and I'm right here. It's just like a hallucination, this disappearance. I didn't take any drugs. I just went to see -- I like to see.

Dancing with the "Devils"

We discussed many other issues long into that night but the narrative of Gerineldo's participation in the Monkey Dance deserves attention as the polar opposite of his vision of Jesus, a classic example of the Mayan tension between balancing opposites. This dance, one of the Kekchis' primary ritual celebrations (reported locally by Gann in the 1920's), has long been criticized by Christian churches because of its perceived connection to the devil. When Gerineldo mentions the evangelical church's persecution of Kekchi rituals, including traditional dances, I ask him if he has ever seen the Monkey Dance in his youth?

I used to dance the Monkey Dance. When I was younger I played harp [the traditional Kekchi harp which is built onto a sounding chamber for rhythm] music. Our traditional harp music is more far than any new music that is wild! The music now tells how the world is, positive and negative, and I think it is mostly negative.

The Monkey Dance represents the people who...well, the monkeys represent the negative side. They represent the Western teachings to the Mayas, to our religion. It is showing what happened long ago and why it happened because the monkeys were said to be human long ago.

But when the blessed mother, the queen of heaven, came among them like a poor widow one day, amongst the Mayas from house to house, everything was going very bad. She revived them, bring them to an awareness that they are going in the wrong direction, not like the old. They were tested, how they treat people, because that's the mother that came from heaven and represented all the mothers of this earth.
And so, what happened as the legend said, when that woman was in the form of anybody else, like a poor lady passing by, sometimes people were in their houses, maybe eating, and they wouldn't share. She tried to beg them but they just don't care. She was treated bad and left no blessings with those people. That is a whole lesson by itself and I'm not sure if I should start. It is so long.

Gerineldo's description of the appearance of "the blessed mother, queen of heaven," provides another striking example of a narrator folding stories back on themselves, what Gerineldo will later refer to as "mixed up." In the midst of a long-ago story, when monkeys were human, the "blessed mother" suddenly appears as the agent of renewal. Dennis Tedlock indicates that such narrative folding-back "moves" are common for people who refer both to an Old World Book (the Bible) and a New World Book (the Popul Vuh, or by extension traditional beliefs). This is a point where I suspect Gerineldo believes I must "dive" beneath the story's externals, which for me appear as contradictions and incongruities, and attempt to ascertain the essential message.

He explains that there was a dancer who portrayed the poor lady or "blessed mother" in the Monkey Dance, as well as other dancers who took the parts of the monkeys. He says that the dance-monkeys represented those people who were selfish, and that this dance was performed to teach, and to penetrate beyond the externals, another indication of the emergent potential of performance:

These are the people who like to joke, make fun of her when she was passing by... All these things were mixed up in that same legend. You need for each to have their mask so that you can see what they represent.

The Mayans used the dance to teach. There were people, high knowledgeable people, who knew the wisdom of everything, that taught the children to be attentive, not to laugh because it is serious. You begin with the externals then go
internal, step by step. To bring things to a perfect teaching there is a graduation and you must have a certain wax from a certain bees. To bring such a dance or education into a perfect teaching, you need to collect those bees, a kind of bees we call "ah us." Those are blessed bees, not like other bees that collect dirty things.

Gerineldo pauses his long discussion of cultural renewal to pointedly address a case of cultural extermination, the cessation of the Monkey Dance which he attributes to the coming of the evangelicals. He says that a preacher, Larry Smith, came to Columbia over twenty-five years ago and he "preach and preach and preach." One of the things that he preached against was the wearing of the masks:

I used to dance when I was about nineteen. That mask, that sets of uniform, used to stay with Mr. Coy. Since that time, because of what that man [Smith] did...he traveled to Laguna, Santa Cruz, Santa Elena, Pueblo Viejo, San Miguel, and ALL ABOUT! [loudly]

He goes from house to house preaching, telling that these sorts of dance is no good, and that burning incense is no good. He destroyed completely the dance and all the young people that go to church, they don't tell them anything about their culture.

That dance had thirteen people and thirteen masks and if you tried to go and find thirteen people to dance, you would have trouble to find them. I danced one of the monkeys, I was one of them. The king of the monkeys was danced by a man that died. Finally, they sold the masks for the Monkey Dance to the archaeologist, Mr. Leventhal. The masks for the Morro Dance were also sold when a man became a Nazarene.

The dance usually takes about four hours because each one of the dancers has to dance and had different music. All these dances are sacred. The dance is the learning of the external. The story about being generous to whoever comes to your door, that is the internal. When you learn the externals, you know how to handle yourself. You will control the power to get mad, to control the evil power. You continue to live a positive way and that dance, after you learn it, you know what this means and that means, and you take it as sacred. It's like the Bible -- it will tell you this is this and that is that. But you have to learn how to live.
The outlines of Gerineldo's epistemology and pedagogy are becoming clearer. Ample time (and perhaps the special time of night) is needed to listen and learn, as well as a special place, one that has a spiritual significance in both the Old Maya and Christian worlds. To penetrate beyond the externals of artifacts, art, and stories, a learner may find enlightenment by a vision, education by a teacher, or the performance of a traditional ritual such as the Monkey Dance. Gerineldo suggests that this method of learning promises values such as peace-making, controlling anger, and the vigilant generosity to "whoever comes to your door."

Thomas Gann, the English archaeologist, described the attempt to eradicate the Monkey Dance during the twenties:

It was many years since the Monkey Dance had been performed openly in San Pedro, as, being a relic of former idolatry, it was strictly forbidden by the Roman Catholic priests, and the Indians found it greatly to their advantage to be on good terms with the Church.

There merest skeleton of the original tradition pertaining to the origin of the dance was now left, which was as follows. It would seem that the monkeys and their father the devil had at one time a very considerable influence in the affairs of men, and were especially powerful in assisting or retarding the growth of corn, and the rainfall at the time when rain was most needed by the plantations.

For this reason the monkey dance was held at the time of the planting of the milpas, as a propitiation to the devil and his monkey brood in order to ensure adequate rains at the proper time and a good crop.

During the dance, offerings of corn, beans, tobacco, chili, and other fruits of the earth were placed before each of the individuals wearing the masks (1926, 160).

Gann's description of Catholics' attempts to stop the dance confirms the modern history of conflict between Westerners and Mayans. While his outside appraisal of the dance's connection to the devil should not necessarily
be taken at face value, it does indicate how it was perceived by outsiders earlier this century. Gerineldo's account indicates that, while the dance apparently was driven underground for a period of time, it was resurrected sometime prior to the late 1960's, when it came under its most recent attack from the evangelicals.

In an earlier work, *Mystery Cities: Exploration and Adventure in Lubaantun* (1925), Gann elaborates on the mission of the monkeys-as-devils, "visiting every village and town on earth, dancing to music, singing lewd songs, drinking, and introducing everywhere amongst men, lust, drunkenness, hatred, greed, dishonesty and death till the whole world was corrupted" (204).

Once again, a local story folded back into another story, for the Monkey Dance may have originally been the Devil Dance. Like the Catholic saints that provide the outward manifestations of Africa's Yoruba *orishas* (spirits) in other parts of the Caribbean, the monkey masks may have been perceived as visages of the devil. The deterioration of this particular ritual tradition is such that I am unable to adequately establish the locally perceived symbolic nature of the Monkey Dance. The textbook program and Gerineldo's efforts at establishing a school for cultural renewal are examples of the local efforts underway to preserve, reinvigorate, and unravel the changing perceptions of beliefs — selective traditions at work!

I realize now, as I understood then, that this was a brief initiation session into the true learning beyond externals. Years later, I am little closer to understanding the apparent contradiction between serving god and devil, yet I sense that this apparent contradiction is part of the "dance" of opposites that begets Mayan communal values. This leisurely nighttime session with Gerineldo has also been the occasion of a warning to engage in cultural
renewal work with care, much like Eduardo's cautions about the geography and spirits of the night.

Hours have slid past and it's late, even by my schedule. Gerineldo will probably get only about three hours sleep, and it will be time to get up and head for his farm. I assure him that I can find my way back to the Acks' home by way of the main road. As I go out into the moonless night, now cleared of the earlier storminess and lit by "the road of sea shells," the ancient Mayan description of what we call the Milky Way, I hear a "BZZZZ. BZZZZ."

Marciano had been sent by his father to bring me 'home' and has waited silently for me to finish. I know he will not let me soon forget my foolishness earlier in the day. Has he been listening to Gerineldo's exposition of traditional ways? I ask him to let me try to find my way back through the bush by means of the well-trodden trails and starlight. I can't quite find his house, but, for a twelve year old, he is very kind about giving me guidance a second time that day.

Educational Implications

The cautionary tales and spiritual geography described by Irmelinda and Eduardo are reinforced by Gerineldo's deep Mayan pedagogy. He is more reflective than the previous narrators regarding his role and the importance of traditional beliefs, and he consciously assumes the role of teacher. Gerineldo challenges the limitations of academic scholarship as they pertain to Mayan history and affairs, and states that certain scholars are responsible not only for misrepresentation but also for underestimating the potency of traditional Mayan wisdom. He, along with many members of his community, believes that the traditional truths associated with the world tree and the
sacred earth, continually renewed for millennia, promise real and lasting peace for all people. This Mayan teacher directs those who want real knowledge to dig deeply into the inner truth of the Old Mayas' stories. Only by the vertical move of serious investigation into Mayan cultural knowledge, rather than the lateral move of collecting more stories, will true learning and peace be achieved. Potentially, a careful study of Gerineldo's harmonious message and his insistence on deliberate study could have a significant effect on local instruction and curricula.

Gerineldo performs his stories with the "dual sense of artistic action and critical reflection" (Salvio, 1995, 4) that makes him a potent and respected teacher. His reverential gestures, as when he performed his vision of Jesus, beckons his audience to concentration and a similar respectful attention to this mysterious presence. By his performances, his testimony, and grasp of his peoples' ancient wisdom, Gerineldo is projecting Mayan spiritual and moral values out into the wider world of Belizean society. His performances and his stories challenge those who would only salvage traditional stories and they set higher standards by elevating the entire pedagogical and literacy agenda to the issue of people living in peace and harmony.
CHAPTER SEVEN

LIFE STORY:
A WOMAN'S HISTORY EMERGES THROUGH HER STORYTELLING

We live in a lattice of myths. Stories which manifest the meaning of our lives and at the same time define for us the circumference of the imaginable world. What is it we are free to imagine?

-Susan Griffin (1993, 189)

Griffin speaks for many of today's Mayan women who inhabit gendered roles that reach back to pre-Columbian times. For millennia, a Mayan woman's activity has radiated out in tight concentric circles from the comal, the hearth, where each day before dawn she stirs the coals to life and prepares tortillas for her family. Even today, most women's lives are circumscribed by their immediate household, with daily trips to gather water, to wash clothes at a nearby stream, to visit family and friends, and occasionally to purchase foodstuffs at a small store. However, in recent years, a few Kekchi and Mopan women have begun to stretch both the geographic margins of their worlds and the psychic borders of their imagined lives as they move out of their villages to a wider world.

In this chapter, I focus on an energetic Mopan woman, who at the end of her child-bearing years, is extending her influence beyond the hearth by working to organize a women's crafts co-op. Mariana Cho is expanding her reach outside the village of San Antonio through her travels and contacts with the larger crafts network. Though Mariana keeps pressing these physical and psychological boundaries, it is clear from her stories and conversation
that she remains grounded in her traditional beliefs in the ancestral and earth spirits. Her personal stories chronicle the ways in which she intertwines traditional Mayan beliefs with both her daily duties and new career as a crafts co-op organizer. Her prepared narratives for the textbook program, as well as her incidental life stories, suggest that, like Eduardo, Mariana too has "already thought of her life as a text" for telling and retelling. While she does not present herself as an "exemplary feminist heroine" (Behar, 1993, 269), these stories document her courage, initiative, and vision for current and future generations of Mayan young women who seek to be "free to imagine."

The Market

No one comes to Punta Gorda by accident. Many Belizeans have never had a reason to endure the dusty, pounding ride by Zee Line school bus from Belize City. It can take ten hours to travel the washboard hardpack of the Hummingbird highway, past the Jaguar preserve, the mahogany sawmills, and the immense marshes. On its final leg, the main road swings around the bend at Cat Landing, offering the traveler a calm vista of the Gulf of Honduras with the Guatemalan mountains in the distance, until it finally stops at the Punta Gorda cemetery – the end of the road!

P.G. is the road's southern terminus and the traveler can either turn around and go back or take a ferry to Puerto Barrios in Guatemala. In recent years, Maya and Tropic airlines fly their nine-seaters in and out of P.G. a few times a day, ever watchful for dogs and school children on the runway that the growing town has come to surround.

Belize has staked much of its economic future on ecotourism, and, while Hong Kong money develops the northern cayes, southern Belize remains devoid of up-scale resorts such as Club Med and Sandals. During the last two
decades, a small group of local entrepreneurs and foreign investors has created a modest tourist industry, promoting the Mayan and Garifuna cultural heritage, the pre-colonial ruins, and the extraordinary natural beauty of the rainforest. During this time period, a small and growing number of Mayan women and their children have adapted their home crafts, originally developed for the production of domestic clothing and utensils, to the creation of folk crafts for the fledgling tourist market.

Since 1990, the bus traffic between P.G. and the many outlying towns has increased dramatically, as the Wednesday and Saturday market schedule expanded to include three additional days. Every time a market bus comes to town, it likely carries a few women and children who make their rounds of the guest houses, restaurants, ferry terminal and the central market in hopes of selling a basket or embroidery. Young girls in plumage-colored dresses inquire in hushed tones of the visitor, "Do you want to buy a basket?"

This deliberate production of crafts for the tourist market reprises the salvage critique in a different venue and provides another opportunity to examine the salvage-cultural renewal polarity. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to consider in detail the many adjustments and conflicts created by diverting domestic time for crafts production and marketing, it is important to outline the vectors of this cultural change. Though the new crafts industry promotes the survival and creative expansion of traditional handicrafts, it also leads potentially in the direction of artificiality and the misleading valuation on the material culture of past generations. Likewise, the true significance of peoples' creations may well be lost, as "these objects are forcibly uprooted from their historical context, the specific function and their original meaning" (Paz, 1974, 17).
In Toledo, this cottage industry production of crafts has grown in response to an increasing demand for the "ideological package," combining a visit to an exotic locale with the "material remains of (Indian culture) that can be... purchased and taken home" (Stephens, 1991, 133). This demand for crafts' production (often copies of "golden-age" art and artifacts) has had dramatic effects upon community and home life, especially for many Mayan women. Mariana Cho is a woman who was quick to realize that selling crafts could substantially benefit her family, as she and her husband struggled like most rural villagers to pay for seeds, tools, medicine and school books. Since virtually all Mayan families live a subsistence existence outside the cash economy, only when there is a surplus of a particular crop do villagers have the opportunity to earn extra cash at the P.G. market. However, the sale of crafts not only provides additional income, it is also altering the status of Toledo women within the family unit and the community, as it has in other areas of Mesoamerica (Babb, 1989; Chinas, 1973; S. Price, 1992). For the first time, women are making as much, if not more, cash in a year than their farmer husbands. Locally, little research has been done about this change or the corresponding response of males, but there is considerable talk regarding some women's newly found purchasing power and concomitant status as wage earners.

One Woman's Dream

Mariana is a Mopan Maya woman in her mid-forties, whose children range in age from toddler to young adult. She lives with her three youngest children on a hillside, adjacent to her aging mother's small house, perhaps a half mile from the center of San Antonio. In 1990, her husband died suddenly, and Mariana was better positioned to survive this tragedy than
most Mayan widows due to her background in making and selling crafts. For five years she had been organizing a women's crafts co-op in an attempt to reach out to new markets beyond the Toledo District. Mariana was suggested to me as a potential storyteller due to her "gateway status" and history of contact with outsiders. Community workers also recommended Mariana because of her assertiveness and altruism, qualities that seem to lend a person's energies to an effort such as the textbook program. After we met, I sensed that Mariana might also have a personal story that many contemporary Mayan women and girls could identify with, as they accommodated their labor to the growing influx of foreign tourists. As her personal accounts demonstrate, Mariana is telling the story of her move beyond the domestic duties of the home to an awareness of the spiritual realm of the bush and the wider society of commercial markets beyond.

**Market Forces**

We first met on a February evening in 1992 through a mutual friend from the States. After introductions and a short conversation, Mariana goes in to tend to the younger children and prepare supper. Marcus, her thirteen year old son, has recently set up a basketball hoop attached to rust-red mahogany planks. He and I shoot into the dusk, his eyes closely watching my US jumpshot style. Following a supper of rice, beans, and cocoa, Mariana proudly shows me some prototype brief cases, woven from *jippy-jappa*, a local reed. A young woman in the Belmopan Tourism Department has commissioned fifty such cases, each of which can be sold for $30-40 B. While I am hardly a crafts expert, it is clear the creation of these prototypes must have required considerable planning and weaving skills. Mariana describes how they achieved the attaché case shape, deftly woven with the hallmark Toledo tight
pattern. Even with cooperative labor, future production will require many, many hours for each case.

Kekchi and Mopan basketry is distinguished by their close weaves and painstaking care. The three briefcases appear similar at first glance, but upon inspection, each one is of slightly different dimensions and employs variations of a toggle design as fasteners. Mariana shows great pride in her ability to travel and make contacts outside the district. She is likewise pleased at the group's talents for creating these new designs and moving to production on short notice. This evening, our talk moves on to other issues, and I promise that I will try and return.

**Disappointment**

Five months later, I again stop by to visit with Mariana. Her children are at home, and Juana, the oldest, is heating tortillas for her two younger siblings. I am welcomed, and I sit by the doorway in the gathering dusk, listening to the chorus of orapendolas settling in for the night. Having visited a friend, Mariana arrives just after dark and prepares some pork and cabbage, rare alternatives to the ubiquitous rice and beans. We talk about family and friends, and she is animated until I ask about the briefcase project.

Her face and demeanor shift suddenly, and Mariana sits dejectedly by the *comal*. She explains that, with forty of the planned fifty briefcases completed,

> The woman in Belmopan does not like our straw. We made them exactly like she wanted, and we sent some to her. Now, she will not take them. It will be hard for us to sell them in P.G. Tourists want the small baskets that fit in their backpacks.

There is little I can say to assuage her disappointment, and we move on to talk about how the vagaries of marketing crafts are not unlike the unknowns
of farming. If the rainy season comes too soon or the hot dry season lasts longer than usual, there can be severe problems. So too with the briefcases, and with those up-country business people who make promises and then break them.

She is stunned by this breach of promise, a disappointment that unfortunately reflects on her efforts to reach beyond the local market to wider horizons for the good of the group. As success may benefit all the members of the co-op, so too failure and discouragement can fan out in a similar fashion. However, as with the farming analogy, Mariana and her friends are conditioned to adversity. She explains that she knows that she cannot trust the commitments of all her associates in San Antonio, and so it would be unwise to expect strangers to live by higher standards.

The disappointment, occasioned by these economics of cultural renewal, appears to be slowly passing, and there is still hope that they might find someone else to purchase the briefcases. I am not sure if and how this episode might appear in a TESOL text, but clearly there are crucial lessons to be learned from Mariana's bold new moves. Certainly an adult audience stands to benefit by learning about the technical aspects and morality of this new craft enterprise. To her credit, Mariana is forthright about her failures and her successes, and this candor can only benefit her peers and future business ventures.

The Bush

While the current direction of Mariana's life is pointing toward the expanding crafts market beyond Toledo, she has not severed her ties with the traditional life and spirituality of the bush. As a mother, Mariana is familiar with the early generation of TESOL readers and she is aware that we are
presently interested in a wide variety of potential stories. Her first contributions to the textbook program are historical and personal renderings of the spirits of the hills.

One July evening, Mariana tells me that she has prepared some accounts of the founding of her village, stories of place and history that she considers very important for the education of Toledo's children. These are stories that she has told previously in other settings for family and community audiences, accounts that renew local history for each generation. A highly social person, Mariana often has the opportunity to exchange news and stories with family, co-op members, church workers, bus riders, and market visitors. For this evening's taping, she has culled these seminal founding narratives from her vast array of local tales.

Rocking gently in a faded nylon hammock, she recounts the initial settlement of Santa Antonio a hundred years ago and the frequency of death in those early days:

*People started to die. They just died sudden deaths and they believed it was the gods of the mountains that were bothering them. Children started to die! The gods didn't like that they came and settled where the gods were living. So, the settlers said that they had to make a special peace so that they can worship their gods, telling them that they want to live like them, but they want to live on earth. Late at night they began to burn incense and then they came together and they said that they needed the saint's statue so that they can keep it for their safety.*

Mariana's beginning narrative exposes a sharp rift in the usually harmonious union between traditional Mayan and Christian beliefs. This first mention of the hill spirits reveals them in a threatening light, though she clearly addresses the intrusive nature of the village's foreign settlers. She indicates that the village founders understood the need to adapt, to "make a special peace," if they were to live in harmony with the hill spirits.
Significantly, she mentions the villagers' incense burning, a practice that has dual roots in traditional Mayan and Catholic ritual practices. While the settlers' goals were land, appeasement, and "safety," they also wished to live like the mountain gods, "to live on earth."

Swallow-sized moths circle the flickering kerosene lantern, and Mariana goes on to recount how these early settlers at first neglected to carry with them their *santo*, the statue of their home village's patron saint. Threatened by the "gods of the mountains," the villagers reconsidered the statue's talismanic power and made forays back into Guatemala until they succeeded in establishing the *santo* permanently in their first church. The Guatemalans feared the border then, as they do now, and did not pursue the statue into Belize. In that way, peace came to the village for a short time. Today, the *santo* may also be considered a symbol of the early villagers' conflicted identities as Mayans who had converted to Spanish-Catholicism, the "Hispanic malediction: of being, by obligation, heirs to something: to some crown, some empire, some culture" (Traba, 1982, 82).

Mariana proceeds to further develop some of the early conflicts between villagers and the hill spirits:

"My mother used to tell us the story of the village, when they first settled here from Guatemala. The first place that the people who came went to first was where the church is now. It was all high bush. They came on the feast of San Antonio because she was the patron saint. They would celebrate her feast till midnight and people would come and they would dance and they would eat with the local people.

But then they realized that they were not people! They are people from the hills. They just borrowed the shape of the people that are living so that they could show themselves, that they are people too. But, when they come out of the house, they just disappear!

That's what my mother used to say, and I think it's true because my mother-in-law used to go to the plantation which is three miles from here. In the night, when you go hunting, you
can hear somebody talking. They talk and they listen like a person. But, when you go and follow the steps, then you would start to go fainting because that was the evil person that’s walking around the bush. In Maya, they are called “cha’il.” They say that they are people but they always donned themselves invisible. If they want to show themselves, they borrow peoples’ forms and they come, but people wouldn’t know they are invisible people, until they start to get sick or things like that. Then, they know that person is not a real person.

The spirits come from the hills. That is where people experience them. They have big holes where their footprints go inside and they just go and disappear there.

In this ancestral story, her mother told her of a group of malevolent spirits whose identity was in question, both in the story due to their shape-shifting, and even now as the story is retold. Are these “people from the hills,” the cha’il, beings that exist in opposition to the hill spirits, or are they those very same spirits in defensive postures? While the mountain spirits are usually viewed as benevolent beings and placated by local residents, Wilson (1995) notes that the mountain is also regarded as the physical body of a mountain spirit, and when people disturb the mountain by disruptive acts such as clearing bush for a village, the spirit feels pain (53). As sentinels and guardians, the hill spirits may show their threatening faces when assaulted by uninvited settlers, instead of the beneficent face that provides abundant crops and game.

Mariana brings this conflict even closer to home and this era with an account of her husband’s meeting with a malevolent spirit while hunting the bush. Mariana outlines the dual natures of both the bush, which contains game and danger, and the hill spirits that may be harmful or helpful. As she tells this story, she becomes more animated and shifts into a performance mode, whistling on cue and imitating her husband’s characteristic expressions. It appears that she becomes more dramatic with stories that she
knows intimately as real life accounts, rather than tales she heard as historical narratives. Likewise, the memory of her recently deceased husband appears to elicit an endearing imitation of his ways:

One time my husband was hunting around a mountain for gibnut. When he came around a second time, he heard a person whistling to him. [She whistles.] Usually he hunted with another person, but his time he went all by himself. He said that when the other person wants to know how far the other hunter is, they whistle together to know how far the partner is.

That’s what he heard that time when he was all by himself. He heard a whistle on the other side, so he whistled back. [She whistles on cue throughout the rest of the story.]

He thought that somebody that he didn’t know came hunting also. When my husband whistled, the other whistle came closer. He whistled a third time, and the other whistle came even closer.

When the whistle was about fifty yards away, he began to feel numb. He couldn’t move; he couldn’t even fire his gun. He was cold and he realized it wasn’t a person. It was a bad spirit.

He said that he prayed and he took the garlic and rubbed it on himself. His father taught him to mix garlic, pepper, and salt and wrap it in a bush and put it behind him and say to the spirit, “This is for you. Leave me alone!”

So, he left it and hummed. The spirit left him alone.

I explain to Mariana that I do not always have my bearings when people describe spirits and strange beings in the bush. I ask her whether these bad spirits have their origin in Mayan beliefs exclusively or can they be associated with the Christian devil?

She responds immediately:

No. It is like they act like people, but they call them spirits because they may want to harm you. They call them “cha ‘il” in Mayan [Mopan], and they are common, especially during the Lenten season. Some, they make noises in the bush, especially down Mafridi area [the next village to the east], in the high bush. Our ancient people believed that Christ is dead so that he doesn’t look at people any more. So, the spirits are still looking to harm them [the people]. We believe that every year Jesus dies.
I realize that she is talking about the time period that extends from 3 PM on Good Friday until Easter morning. Mariana confirms that "our ancient people" passed on the belief that this is a key interval when "Christ is dead," and the bad spirits are free. Significantly, a number of Creole informants in P.G. also concur that people must be wary during this ritual period of Jesus's entombment which gives license to bad spirits, indicating that these beliefs regarding sacred time have been transmitted and renewed among the region's ethnic groups.

Once again, my Western attempt to analytically dissect the Christian and Mayan strains of belief skips off, an analytical stone barely skimming the deep waters of Toledo belief. Mariana does not respond to my question because apparently, in her understanding, it makes little sense. Her beliefs, presented from the emic perspective, are, in an extension of my water imagery, in perfect solution, not separated like the oil and water of my academic analysis. I am learning, though very slowly!

Mariana continues, bemoaning the fact that some of today's young people do not believe in the ancient spirits, and go out and taunt the spirits to see if they are there. Then, in a sudden narrative move that brings balance to an understanding of the hill spirits' duality, Mariana begins to recount the story of Juan the Catechist who has been testifying locally about his visionary experience (Her entire account may be found in the Appendices). Though Mariana has been lively and expressive in telling her previous stories, she moves to a new level of performance as she recounts this story, becoming what Behar describes as a "one woman theater of voices," through her use of dialogue and impersonation:

We have heard a story just recently from close to Guatemala. One Indian came to speak, and I think [that] Ack [a store owner in the village] has the tape recording of it. It is a story from a
man, he is a catechist. He is supposed to be traveling from village to village... So, I went and heard the story [on tape]. I ask Ack, "I want to hear the story."

Mariana then relates the testimony by Juan, whose entire speech at the village of Crique Sarco is contained in Chapter Ten. Essentially, it is the story of a Guatemalan catechist, who meets a "small child" while he is on his way to a wedding. The child transports the man, as if by magic, to the center of a hill, described as a "beautiful house." There, the catechist (who by his vocation represents the Catholic religion) meets the child's father, the "god of the mountain," or hill spirit. The hill spirit exhibits animals that have been wounded by careless hunters and the corn destroyed by negligence. He then sends the catechist home on a mission to rekindle the ritual ways of hunting and planting among the peoples of the region. As will be detailed later, Juan's story is a clear example of a spiritual narrative functioning as a guideline for ecological management and sustainability. Clearly, by her account, the ecological values that underlie Juan's narrative resonate with Mariana and provide her inspiration and orientation.

Mariana's account of Juan's story is significant in a number of respects. She gives dramatic voice to the hill spirit, quoting him throughout the narrative as he explains the ecological crisis to the catechist. At the onset, it is noteworthy that the hill spirit stresses the critical distinction between learning by means of a "story" or a "true thing," thereby providing an insights into both the local epistemology and the severity of the problem:

> The old man said, "I sent this child to bring you for I want to tell you a story."
> It was not really a story but a true thing so that the man could come back to his people and tell them what is happening.
Having established that this experience cannot be dismissed merely as a story, the hill spirit sees to it that the child escorts the man past the different "tents" that contain currasows (game birds), gibnuts and snakes, as well as the wasted corn. This ruinous situation is so critical that words alone are insufficient. It is essential that Juan personally view the maiming and destructiveness of modern convenience. Mariana continues to dramatically give voice to the hill spirit as he speaks to Juan and his future audiences beyond the hill cave:

"People must hunt with care in the old ways and not ruin the animals. All the food now that you see, which is spoiled, that is the food people throw away and don't want again. But, they shouldn't be throwing the food away. They should be feeding their animals from it, not wasting it. So, all this hurts me....I want you to go back to the villages to tell people what you have seen."

When she exclaims in anguish, "All this hurts me," Mariana's performance allows the listener to feel the hill spirit's pain at the local ecosystem's wanton destruction by modern ways. Though this retelling might be twice-removed from Juan's actual testimony, the sadness, that the modern waste and carelessness occasions, emerges through Mariana's vivid, dramatization of the visionary experience. With this narration, Mariana rises to the high level of performance that Bauman describes as the "enchantment of experience," much like Eduardo's enactment of the "evil eye" and Gerineldo's description of the visionary Jesus. She emphasizes that it is the hill spirit's will and the driving force of the vision that have led Juan to testify about his experience throughout the lowland villages of Belize and Guatemala. He is a man on a mission:
He had been closed somewhere that he didn’t know and he had been told to tell the whole story that he saw and what he was told.

He has been going from village to village in Guatemala telling the story. And when the people here in this area heard about the man, they went to get the man and brought him to Crique Sarco and other villages closer and they have big ceremonies, and then they have him tell the whole story. So I think Mr. Ack went to one of the places to tape the man’s story. He said that he wanted plenty of people to know what the man had saw.

Mariana not only provides an account of Juan’s vision, she describes how the people in her village continue the evangelical spread of these contemporary hill spirit beliefs. As my tape spins, and her three youngest children listen, she personalizes these beliefs once again, moving back in memory to her own childhood education:

This is a strong belief that we all have. Because I remember when I was small, my mother would lash me when we would throw corn all about, walking on them [the kernels]. She said that the spirit of the corn would get mad at us and he would not make the corn bear fruit again because you are hurting them. So, I think it is the strong belief that people still have. But, the younger generation don’t believe. They just laugh. But, it still happens -- the harvest sometimes is very poor. I wish we could have someone translate that story in English and that somebody might have cassettes going around telling people about this story.

Mariana is assertive about the need to reach the children with these seminal narratives, as well as the value of English and modern technology (cassettes) for expanding the reach of these stories. She believes that she has the pulse of changing attitudes and sees the value of stories for this time ("It still happens."), much as she learned from them throughout her childhood. I tell Mariana that I first heard this story a year before from Thomas Teul, a health worker in P.G.
"Yes, that's the same one," she replies. She says that she believes that Juan had his vision about a year ago. At this juncture, I realize that Juan has been crossing the border for over a year and visiting the remote villages of Toledo, especially the Kekchi villages. I learn later that Juan believes that he has limited time to spread his message and so he encourages people to spread his word by modern means such as printing and cassette recorders. Clearly, socially active people like Mariana will also spread this story throughout the community and beyond.

Two years after hearing Mariana's account of Juan, and one year following my transcription of the English translation of his talk in Crique Sarco, a friend informs me that Barbara Tedlock has been researching in these same Toledo villages. My friend directed me to the revised version of *Time and the Highland Maya* (1982, 1992), where, in a new afterward, Tedlock notes that, "Mayan catechists in Belize have recently taken a serious interest in the prophetic visions of Guatemalan Kekchi catechists, concerning the proper care of sacred corn and the worship of the earth deity, Tzuultak'a (Mountain-Valley)" (212). Tedlock explains that this is part of the cultural renewal and exchange that is sweeping the Mayan region. She cites a Guatemalan catechist who is currently working with the Academia de las Linguas Mayas in Guatemala City:

I used to speak against the traditional religion. We can be the worst destroyers of our own culture. But now that I am more involved, I understand the barbarity I've committed and the need to support our traditions (212).

Steeped in the traditions of the hill spirits, aware of their dangerous aspects as well as their spiritual guardianship, Mariana makes use of her position as a village leader to spread the word about Juan the Catechist's vision. Although
she is engaged in the modern world of marketing and sales, she has not lost track of the essential balance that must be maintained concerning the cultivation of crops and the hunting of game. At this point in her life, though a Christian, she finds the time to renew this spiritual and ecological message throughout the village's web of conversation and storytelling. Although her daily life has expanded to the domains of village and town and she neither hunts nor farms, she maintains her concern for the critical ecological and spiritual territory of the bush. Like Juan, the Guatemalan catechist, Mariana is committed to promoting a ritual and communal life in harmony with the animals and plants that share the sacred earth.

The Hearth

Though Mariana's current life leads away from the bush and toward participation in twentieth century commerce, the main part of each week is still devoted to life at home, performing the endless domestic cycle of family chores. While her stories of past and future offer valuable historical and spiritual lessons to today's students, her testimony regarding life as a contemporary Mayan woman, contending with centuries of traditional expectations, is perhaps the most timely and ultimately the most profound contribution to Toledo's youth.

Preparing to catch an early ride one summer morning, a fellow teacher and I sit by Mariana's hearth as neon sunbeams laser through the cohune frond roofing. My friend wants to make a last check regarding some earring posts and wires that she will purchase in the states for the co-op. As we talk, the children dress and gather their books for school. Mariana brews ginger tea, pats tortillas, and remarks that the children have not done all their chores. While the distraction of two visiting North Americans is probably the main
reason for these shortcomings, she does not lose the opportunity to tell us all a story and thereby get her message across to the children. I watch as the children pack their school knapsacks and attune themselves to the story that she entitles, "The Lazy Man."

The story is about a man and a woman, a couple. The young man got a wife but he was lazy, very, very lazy. Every morning the woman got up very early to make tortillas for him because he said he was going to work in the plantation [small family farm], chop the plantation, or do other types of work. But when he reached the bush he doesn't do anything; he only finds some place to rest and to sleep. He sleeps the whole day and when it is time to come back home he gets up and comes back home and tells his wife that he is very tired because he did enough of work.

When time comes for the lady to need some things for the kitchen, she asks him and he says, "It's not ready. It's not ready yet."

The woman got tired of it and said, "Why? How long do the plants take to produce?"

He says, "I don't know but it's not ready."

At that time he said it was time to do some planting and he took some corn and he said that the lady should kill some chicken for him and fix some good meat for he was going to plant. So, the lady did everything and he went back again to the plantation.

But the lady was starting to get angry now because he was just wasting time and bringing home nothing from the farm. So the lady waited when he went, and two or three hours later the lady prepared to go and look for him. When the lady reached the plantation where she knew that the man was working, there is no plantation, no chopped bush, nothing! The bag of corn was right beside him, and he was sleeping. What the lady did was to search around for some ant-hills. She took a big pile of ants and she poured them over the man.

The man was sleeping very hard and he didn't feel what was happening to him. When he did feel that the ants were biting him all over he did jump up and he started to run. The lady started laughing at him and she said, "You see, I came and caught you now. You said that you were working but you were sleeping. You are lazy."

That's why the olden people when I was young, anytime you didn't want to do a small errand for your parents, they would lash you and put you to sit in the ants. They said that you must
learn not to be lazy. You must learn to be fast in everything. I first heard that story from my mother, Esmeralda Díaz.

There is no mistaking the humorous message designed for potentially lazy children, nor is there much doubt that this is the type of didactic tale that mothers and fathers have told for generations in a gently threatening manner. Beyond the cautionary message, a critical dimension to this story and one that might explain why it is part of Mariana’s repertoire, concerns the initiative of the wife. The lazy man’s wife does not share his vice nor is she content to remain by the hearth’s domestic domain. The wife follows her husband to his plantation in the bush, thereby asserting the expansion of a woman’s place beyond the homestead. While women have always occasionally traveled to plantations, to work and bring food, this lady does not hesitate to venture out to the bush, select a potent species of ant, and take care of business! This simple story of warning contains another critical message, that women will not be limited by danger or prohibition from crossing the domestic threshold and moving freely in the bush.

Mariana manifests a resonant awareness concerning the power of stories. As we have gotten to know each other over the years and conversed about marketing crafts, raising children, or making chicken stew, she sometimes pauses and checks to see if my tape recorder is running. She reverently narrates these traditional, oft-rehearsed tales that are shaped by the memory of earlier performances in her youth. As the mother of seven children, she is also alert to the special characteristics of the modern school-shaped children’s story. It is clear that she firmly believes in the cultural power of her Mopan heritage, both in the past and for the present. Stories such as the "The Lazy Man" offer a glimpse into the moral education of Mopan children.
Late one winter afternoon on another visit, I sit talking with Mariana and fingering a small mortar and pestle, the bowl glazed a cafe au lait tone, with the pestle's iron-red handle shaped like the head of a cat. Our conversation, which is about crafts and sales, takes a turn when I ask her if anyone in the village has ever tried to sell pottery. She explains that the fragility of the local pots makes such items a hard sell, but a few years ago a Peace Corps woman, who was a potter, came to the village in an attempt to revive the local pottery tradition. There was a rush of community interest at the time, but Mariana is unsure if anyone is still making the local pots, noted for the sparkle of the crushed fresh-water snail shells that are used as the hardening agent. Mariana brightens as she reflects on the pottery skills that she learned as a young woman and tells me about her training:

The first time when I was small I remember that my mother was a good pottery maker. She made different types of pots for cooking and for using for feasts and things like that. Baked pots were the only things that people used before to cook their food. They made different sizes and different shapes. They have a shape that is round to the bottom which is like a kettle. They used that to cook deer inside. They had big ones, round ones, flat ones and they cooked different things in them.

They used big ones to cook a caldo. That pot was about twenty inches high and about thirty inches around. I have one of those in the other house that I just keep for remembrance. I didn't want to break it and sometimes I still use it to cook, but the problem is, it is very heavy when you put something inside.

My mother used to get the clay by the river side, right nearby. But, I think that they dug so much that the clay got spoiled near here. It got messed up so now we have to go far to find a good clay to make pots. Now though, people don't want to use clay pots because they break easily if you use too much fire wood. The pots are so thick that you had to keep putting firewood on till the water boiled. Once it started to boil, there was no problem. The old Mayas say that the taste of the food was very nice from the clay pots. These modern types of pots don't cook very good, pure food so some of the old people still like the old pots and the flavor of the food.
Right around here you could find the light red clay and the yellow clay. Sometimes my mother would go far into the bush and she would dig for the greenish clay. I think it was the old people who knew what types of clay to use for the pottery because many of the new clay pots crack and don't work good. The good kind of clay must be sticky like chewing gum.

We would pick snails in the creeks for food and then my mother would burn the shells in the fire. When they got white, white, white, then she mashed them and grinded them on the grinding stone. It would be very fine, fine, fine. Then she used that to put in the clay when she was kneading the clay for the pots. The snail shell mixture gave the pots strength so that they would not crack. You have to know just the right amount of grinded snails to put in the clay.

There are two types of river snails, the small type and the big type. The big ones have thick shells, almost like the conchs. They are still small, but longer than the small ones. People prefer the bigger meat of the larger snails and make it into a small soup. They mix the snail meat with fresh leaves and garlic. The meat is taken out of the shells by sucking it out. During the rainy season is the time we eat the snails. People say that during the dry season the bodies are thin so we only eat them from June till December.

When my mother burned the clay pots, she put three stones, one in each corner. Then she placed the pot upside down on the stones with the bottom up. She would get a big pile of com cobs and then place the pot over the fire and cover the pot with cohune leaves. This tent of leaves was made after the pot was warmed a bit. She kept feeding the fire with corn cobs until the pot was done. She knew just how long to do it so that the pot wouldn't crack. The biggest pots took about two hours to bake but it needed a lot of fire. The fire would be as big as a bonfire and when she saw that the pot was all red, she knew that the pot was ready. Then she waited till everything burned to ashes and wouldn't pick the pot till everything was cool. The fire burned everything so that only the pot was left.

She would know if the pot was breaking while the fire was burning. The pot would slowly make noises and you would know that part of the pot was cracking. Then she would get mad and say, "It's a waste of time. It's cracking!"

In these times I don't like to make pots. I only make mashers for crushing seeds. Now if I make a small pot and it cracks, I use varnish to hide the crack. Most women who do not have small children still make some pottery.

When I was married we did not have a lot of money so my mother made three clay pots. They were small pots that I could
cook small food inside. The food tasted nice, especially the beans inside the clay pots.

Mariana frequently refers to her mother, thereby demonstrating the familial links in the chain of tradition that is now being passed on to twelve year old Juana who listens patiently. I realize that Mariana has not only given me a complete lesson in the local method for making pottery, but she has also supplied an additional natural history and nutritional look at the local river snails. In Toledo, it is not uncommon to find elements of zoology, economic geography, and cultural history embedded within such a description of a craft or food preparation process. In addition to the snail lore, Mariana has commented on feasts, the locations of different clays, the taste of food, and marriage customs. This emergent narrative form could be complemented with the type of step-by-step photography that Foxfire employs in enlightening readers about Appalachian Mountain crafts. Her narrative might well expand to include other cultural renewal projects such as motivating a school class to investigate local clay deposits, contemporary pot makers, different styles of pottery, heritage pots, as well as other oral tales about pottery and similar crafts.

This pottery lesson reminds me of another evening I spent at Mariana's as she prepared a caldo. She described her particular recipe for cooking a chicken caldo, grinding the herbs with her home made bowl and masher, then stirring and talking. As she outlined her cooking method, she ventured beyond the domestic domain and provided valuable economic and anthropological insights.

Considering the need for fresh garlic, she noted that:

The fresh garlic is the one we buy from the people in Guatemala. We tried to raise our own garlic, but the places here
couldn’t raise good garlic. When it come up here, it is very small. In Guatemala they may raise it high in the mountains where it is cooler. We buy it from the people who go around from house to house selling the garlic.

In this short account, the listener learns of the illegal but openly tolerated illicit trade with Guatemala. Mariana goes on to indicate that the relative height of her foothill village, looking down on the coastal plain, is not of sufficient altitude to grow good garlic. By means of a brief aside in this dense narrative style, the listener learns that in spite of the modern Central American geopolitical strife, the Kekchi and Mopan are resourceful enough to obtain premium garlic!

Mariana reflects on the different sizes of caldo she has prepared and the relative times spent cooking, "When the chicken is young it takes half an hour and, if it is an old chicken, we cook it for two hours!" She enumerates all the vegetables that might be used in season (cabbage, pumpkin, yams, and chocho) and then goes on to enunciate a wisdom born out of arduous living, "If we don’t have any vegetables we eat it with tortillas, and if there is no chicken, we just eat tortillas."

Mariana reminisces about an earlier time in her youth:

We used to make a lot of big caldos when the men were planting corn. The women would all come together in a house and start to fix some meat. Sometimes we would cook a big amount of corn and we would grind it and make plenty of tortillas. Some women would go to the plantation to give the tortillas to the men, but mostly now they’ve stopped. The men come home in the evening to eat. It all depends on how far the plantation is. These days the plantations are about eight miles. When people make plantations closer, the women go.

Just at the end of this recipe, the listener gains an insight into the changing communal customs at this point in village history. As the regional
population grows, and land is increasingly used for cattle raising, citrus
cultivation, and lumber operations, farmers must go further out into the
bush to develop their plantations. In conversing with Mariana, even about
her caldo recipes, she provides striking insights into the evolving roles of
Mayan women and men with regard to agriculture. What emerges from
discussions with people throughout the district is the image of modern
Mayan women, still centered in the domain of the hearth and family, but
beginning to break with the centuries-old pattern of supporting their
husbands on the milpa. However, just as women in the past like Serafina’s
mother hunted the bush, some of today’s women are stretching their
presence into the commercial domain, as well as altering the equations of
family time and work.

Seventy years before, in a passage that helps establish an ironic
triangulation of data regarding gendered roles, Thomas Gann (1925) described
the early morning labors of the Indian women of this part of Toledo:

The Indian woman’s life is not an easy one, as the corn would
not be ready for an hour or so, and she would have to be up at 3
A.M. next morning to grind it into paste on the hand grindstone,
literally watered with the sweat of her brow, as she bent double
over the stone, for the manufacture of corn cake for her lord’s
breakfast before he started out to work, and these operations
have to be repeated every day of her life without intermission,
from the time she is old enough to wield a brazo, or stone corn-
rubber, till the day she dies (128).

Aware that even now Mariana is schooling her daughter in these
traditional tasks, I listen as she goes on to talk very personally about her
mother and herself, two Mayan women of different eras. The description of
her mother’s life echoes Gann’s timeless portrait of the Mayan woman,
frozen in a specialized gender role:
In the past when things were bad, there were women who had to work in the bush. I remember when my mother raised me. I was seven when my father died and I didn’t know my father very well. It was very hard for her to raise the four of us. The baby was three years old and my mother couldn’t get any job. Sometimes during the year she would pick some rice or cacao. She would only earn a dollar a day. She couldn’t afford to buy clothes for us. She could only buy clothes for us every year or every two years because we had to eat.

She had to buy the food. She couldn’t work in the plantation because she couldn’t cut bush and we didn’t have any brothers. It was very hard and most of my sisters got married when they were very young, thirteen.

And it was sad to hear after a while that they were treated bad, and the three of them left their husbands and went away. It was the first time I experienced people going away. But, I was afraid to travel at that time because I didn’t know where to go.

Though earlier writers such as Gann often described Mayan women as the stoic faithful domestic servant, it was usually in the context of the archetypal Indian family. However, as with many social and ethnic groups throughout the globe, the nuclear family and the equally 'classic' extended family may not have always been as ideal or as widespread as their interpreters would have us believe. In addition, San Antonio is one of the few southern villages where store owners have been licensed to sell rum for decades. Many villagers, particularly men, have fallen prey to alcohol, perished in the bush, or left the region in hopes of better jobs. Women have often had to fend for themselves in a country that has no history of personal aid or welfare. Families and churches might offer some assistance, but women like Mariana’s mother, Serafina’s grandmother, and Mariana herself have had to find ways to survive in a subsistence economy. Until the recent birth of a crafts industry, there has been little opportunity for women to earn a living wage.
Mariana continues with the story of her life, as she grew up in her mother's house and came to marrying age. It is at this point that Mariana's deep personal story emerges, manifesting itself in the charged timbre of her voice, her animated countenance, and the vocal defiance against the unfair constrictions of the old gendered patterns:

When I got married, I was fifteen. I finished school, standard six, and I think I got a little, good education. I could write a bit and know my numbers and when I was married, I stuck with it so I would be able to do other things outside the house. When I was first married, I had to stay home. Our husbands said that we could not come out to meet other people. You had to be a housewife forever!

When I realized that I liked meeting people and talking to them, and when I saw my sisters and the experiences they had and the lives they led, then I realized I had to make a better life than this. I started talking to my husband, "I do not want to stay home. I want to come out!" [She laughs.]

So, I started coming out of my house seven years ago now. At that time I had plenty of children [at home] and it was very hard for me to come out of the house. I had to find somebody to take care of the children for me. The thing I love most is traveling, so I think I carved out a hobby for myself.

When I wanted to come out my husband understood some, but mostly he started to treat me bad. When he would listen, I started talking to him and telling him that when I come out I was not doing anything behind his back that he wouldn't like. I am doing some things that I know I will rely on in the future and I am learning some things that I didn't know when I was young. I knew that I still needed some education, things that I can do for myself. Still, he treated me bad for three years.

But after that time, he couldn't keep me in the house. I had to go to meet other people and get other ideas. Then, after a while, he got to realize that it was true. I started taking him along with me to meetings and other things around the country. Then he said, "I think that this is the right thing for a woman to do because I know that if a husband dies, the wife will be able to manage for herself."

So, that is what he experienced and he didn't bother about me. Sometimes, when he was at the plantation, I would get a message about a meeting. When he would come home, I would be gone. When I came back, he didn't bother. I think I appreciate the both of us doing that.
"I had to," "I had to..." Mariana's imperative repeats like Sojourner Truth's "And ain't I a woman." She does not refer to foreign influences, or outside inspirations. Her cry comes from deep within, "I had to..." Susan Griffin's header quote asks the question, "What is it we are free to imagine?" Mariana imagined her life moving beyond the household, an existence that stepped away from centuries of gendered roles, a new status for a woman in a newly independent and rapidly changing country. Mariana made her choice, and, as her husband tragically predicted, she did so just in time to establish some independence for herself before he died at an early age. As can be seen with the other female narrators, each woman creates her life within the narrow confines afforded the vast majority of women who live at subsistence levels throughout Belize.

While the extended family is a functional unit that has endured in this tropical environment for centuries, there is no denying that the times, especially for women, are slowly changing. Greater numbers of teenage girls are following the path that women such as Mariana blazed by staying in school and getting an education. Many young women are now marrying two and three years later than the previous general average. Birth control is no longer a taboo subject, and some women are electing to limit family size. Women such as Mariana are now entering the work force and enjoying new status as wage earners. Mayan, Garifuna and Creole women are just beginning to learn leadership and management skills that are useful in modern times. Women are traveling outside the confines of their villages and southern Belize for the first time.
Educational Implications

When Mariana testifies about her personal deliverance, she potentially offers inspiration to female listeners and a challenge to many in her male audience. Her performances take on a particularly emergent character as she comes out of the restrictive territory of the hearth to occupy a public space long reserved for male discourse. Mariana has contributed many significant stories concerning ancestral and spiritual wisdom to the textbook program, but no story is more powerful than the ongoing story of her life.

In her village, she is not without detractors, and she does not make herself out to be a "secular saint" (Behar, 269). Nevertheless, Mariana's life story is part of a newly emerging history of women in post-Independence Belize. Her eloquence, while telling her stories and in their published form, outlines and inspires alternative paths for Toledo's young women to consider. From the perspective of cultural renewal, Mariana's life story is noteworthy because of her enduring maintenance of traditional ancestral and earth spirit beliefs, as she proceeds to make her way into the world of modern commerce.

Her stories and her life story, offered to the region's children for consideration, promise an expanded curriculum and a new stimulus for serious discussion. This storyteller is exposing Toledo students to the basic conflicts of her life, a modern personal history that complements the traditional history of famous men. Mariana and other Belizean women are making history by applying their traditional beliefs to orient themselves for these times. In spite of all the traditional and social pressures, Mariana lives her new life because as she so eloquently stated, "I had to..."

178
CHAPTER EIGHT

HUNTER'S CODE:
TRANSMITTING THE MESSAGE OF SUSTAINABLE LIVING

Creoles — Nation builders from Africa and Asia

As with the other British Caribbean possessions, slavery was the ready answer for a serious labor shortage in Belize. The first account of slaves occurs in 1724 (ETF, 18), and, while there few written records, testimony suggests that most slaves were imported to Belize from modern day Angola, Nigeria, and Zaire. Baymen used slaves to cut and move logwood until the trade died out, then the exploitation of the land switched to tropical hardwoods, particularly mahogany. Belizean slaves, like their counterparts in Jamaica and Surinam, often escaped into the bush, and there were four major slave revolts from 1760-1770. In those situations, when remote logging concerns were threatened by the Spanish, Baymen sometimes armed the slaves and granted them a measure of freedom (Donohoe, 1946, 32). Since there was not a plantation economy, some slaves were freed and worked alongside the Baymen in the forest, though currently this alliance is being criticized by Belizean historians as a selective rendering and a romantic notion (Bolland, 1988; Shoman, 1994). Emancipation for all slaves under British rule came about in 1838.

As in many British possessions in the Caribbean basin, the colonialists took advantage of their powerful status to engage in sexual relations with women of African, Asian, and Indian heritages, ultimately creating a people of mixed bloods, known collectively as Creoles. The Creoles, like the Europeans, tended
to settle along the coast and in Belize City. The Creole urban work force, augmented by an influx of East Indian laborers, organized in the early twentieth century and began to promote the causes of workers' rights and fair wages. These predominantly Creole labor organizations organized protests that resulted in violence and 'riots' on a number of occasions, particularly in 1984, 1919, and 1934 (Government Information Services). Creole labor unions were the prime founding organizations of the modern political parties and major promoters of the nationalism movement that resulted in Belize's 1981 independence. Belizean Creoles are a very diverse group, and this featured narrator represents only one small steam in the nation's on-going Creolization process.

**Bush-guide, Spirit-guide**

*You will find ways of understanding from the earth.*

—Emmanuel Jacobs

I have been meeting with Emmanuel Jacobs, known to his friends as Petey, for five years now. In over ninety hours of taped interviews, as well as countless hours of conversation, Petey has entertained me, enlightened me, and provided me with in-depth accounts of his hunting experiences in the Belizean bush. He is an accomplished storyteller, who performs with innovation and grace, and a master bush-guide, who teaches inductively, telling pointed stories that echo past traditions and serve as the foundation for elaborating more extensive lessons and truths.

A Creole man and lifelong Toledo resident, Petey's knowledge of the bush is grounded in family teachings, Christian beliefs, and the seminal spirituality of the Mayan hill spirits. The corpus of his stories manifests not only the
range of his bush knowledge and experience, but also offers insights into the actual construction of that knowledge through his family instruction and bush experience. When considered as a composite, this knowledge, articulated primarily in narrative form, reveals an underlying ethical code that has guided him throughout his hunting career according to principles of discipline, respect, moderation, and sustainability.

In this chapter, I detail our first story session which has functioned through the years as a compass heading for an on-going exploration of bush wisdom and morality. I then examine his understanding of the profound impact of the traditional knowledge communicated by his father, mother, and sister. Lastly, I analyze those patterns that have emerged in our conversations which coalesce as a code of bush knowledge, grounded in traditional regional belief systems and continually renewed by this guide to the domains of the bush and the spirits. Unfortunately, transcribed texts and contextual background hardly do justice to this extraordinary storyteller. Whether his message is urgent or entertaining, he performs in a variety of continuously emerging voices and gestures that dramatize his former and present roles as son, father, lover, hunter, guide, soldier, farmer, herbalist, and bon vivant! While performing his stories, Petey often rises to moments of dramatic intensity, utilizing his whole body as an animated and innovative teaching tool.

**The First Story Session, July 1991**

I first met Petey when the rainy season had just begun and there had been no travel up-country for three days. Each night the thunder, lightening and cloud-bursting rains continued for six to eight hours. The Southern Highway's six-mile bridge had been underwater for days, and market buses
were unable to make it to Punta Gorda. Chet, my host at Nature's Way Guest House, offered to take me to meet a well-known, former contract hunter — Petey. Late one afternoon Chet drove me around the airfield to Petey's one-room, wooden shack where we were greeted by his small pack of scrawny hunting dogs.

Petey sits on his cot, ears cocked to the dogs' commotion. He is lean and sinewy from over six decades of manual work. White curly hair contrasts against his ebony skin, shiny with the light sweat of his siesta nap. Petey's home is a one-room bush cabin, that lists slightly to the west, indicating the prevailing direction of the *chibangos* (line squalls) that blow in regularly off the sea. A cot and a stool are his only pieces of furniture, and his possessions are limited to clothing, a radio, some gun repair material, and a few cooking utensils. A peeling iguana-skin banjo hangs on one long wall. Out back is the cook shed where Petey often uses pieces of white plastic buckets as tinder to make his evening tea of hard-boiled eggs and toast. The ground is littered with fish scales, small bones and water bowls, signs of the dogs that spend much of the day escaping the heat under the cabin's floor boards.

His face brightens as we approach, and he offers us two plastic buckets as seats. Chet introduces me as a teacher and explains my interest in both traditional and life stories. As he leaves, Chet encourages me to ask Petey if he would tell some ecological stories about how old time hunters took care so as not to deplete the game stocks in the bush.

Housekeeping is not Petey's forte, but he takes great pains to see that I am comfortable and that my tape recorder is well positioned. He says that he has told his hunting stories occasionally to 'Americans' over the years, and, seeing that I am settled, he asks me to clarify my work with the textbook project. I explain the project's goals and mention Chet's request for ecological
stories, an enduring local theme that would surely contribute to a genuine local ideological literacy. Petey composes himself and begins to talk about worms:

There is a story with information about worms. There is [what] worms like to eat and there is animals like to eat the worms. Animals like the armadillo feed off the worms, dig after them. They feed off the live worms and the worms eat off the earth. Every action of this story is about the soil of the earth, massaging by the animals, the worms, who are a great part of the feed of the birds from the trees. The birds have a part, singing, and the trees have a part, when you're resting at night by sighing in the wind. There you find ways of understanding from the earth, right through in the wind up to the nature of humans. [It is connected] but you have an all different understanding about it, a higher interesting part of the world. These things come through praying and visions, through the Lord.

"Massaging the soil," Petey's metaphor for the action of the worms, is a striking image and seems to imply that the earth possesses a living character. In this prologue, he acknowledges the earth as one of the sources of his learning, "You will find ways of understanding from the earth." He goes on to suggest Christianity as a second syncretistic source of enlightenment, "through praying and visions, through the Lord."

Offering little time for me to reflect on the worms, he proceeds to explain how his East Indian father, Alec, met his Jamaican mother, Victoria, while working on that island. From there they emigrated to southern Belize about 1900. Alec and Victoria forged a homestead out in the jungle, six miles up the Joe Taylor Creek. Petey's first story is a striking early memory of those early days in the bush. He points and gestures, as he relates his family's experiences with the "Ashers of Pompeii."

When I was young my old parents used to speak about a little people that live in the mountain here. They call them "Ashers of Pompeii" 'Babies' too. But they don't wear clothes; they move with a spiritable force. They call them Ashers of Pompeii; their
track is just a baby track. They always eat ash; that's what they feed off.

My parents used to have a place up at the top of Joe Taylor River where we were born, called Jacob's Land. A lot of our people [lived there]- we used to have a big family. The second big hill, west from Punta Gorda, was called Jacob's Hill, right in the front was the river and the creek run down between so. That was where I was born. I had a sister [Rosita] and my dad used to teach her to shoot. In those days there was not much school.

I can remember a morning my sister waked up, early, early. It was just before the sun rise, part darkness. We used to have a big palm tree where my mother, who was Jamaican, used to bake and cook on the ground. A lot of ashes there! My sister used to wake early in the morning and when she come out she say, "Ma, we don't have no babies that walk around here! Look at baby tracks. [He points]."

I call her Tita, she's my older sister, who raised me. I call her, I say, "Tita, where it is? You say this is a baby track? I want to see that little baby. [His eyes track back and forth]."

She say, "What? No, I cannot show you that. That's spirits!"

Well, about two weeks after, my sister said, "I'm going to make a trap to catch one because they come every morning to feed and go back to the hills."

My dad had a .44 revolver, a .44 Winchester, a Durval .12 gauge, a sixteen and a twenty. My dad used to have a lot of guns - there was nine brothers and my older sister.

The morning I remember, she waked up and when she waked, I wake at the same time. You know in my rest I got in my mind what she speak about when she want to catch that baby. She wake up and she get the gun and she opened the door slightly, went out and fired the gun, "BOW!" [He aims his bamboo cane at the ground.]

We heard a little noise like, "mmm, mmm," a little hailing. My sister called to my mother and dad, "Here is one of them! Here is one of them."

It was a little lady. I wouldn't know the age but she has not much hair on the head. It was a light brown color like this [He points to the floor board] , but more lightly toward flesh [colored]. When I looked, its face is round! - but it is different looks in the face than human. The nose is flat, the mouth a little wide and the lips were very thin, not like we features. The hair was covering [parted in middle] but very short and straight over the [sides of] head. It had hair covering right around like a 'baboon' [howler monkey]. It was like these Carib people, cutting the hair around and around. Up to here [He points to the back of...
his neck] it just like a boy's head [haircut]. It didn't have long hair but it was a little girl.

It had no clothes on, naked. My mother wanted to put clothes on it but by the time she wanted to hold her, she grinned the teeth and snarled [Petey snarls.] but my sister had shot her on the foot. Shot her on the foot and she couldn't run away.

There, we cover it and my father hold Rosita and say, "Oh, pity girl. Why did you shoot it? It's a sin. What will we do with this animal? And after all I don't know what they do. They tie it up and took it to the mountain. I don't know if they kill it or just let it go. It was something very, very interesting for us to see.

Petey dramatically performs this happening of a long ago dawn with conviction and attention to detail. He has risen to tell his story, his eyes slowly looking about as he performs the different parts. Gesticulating, using props, snarling, he enacts his story with an emotional force which suggests that something extraordinary must have occurred one morning sixty years ago at the head of Joe Taylor Creek.

Petey notes at the beginning of his story that, "They move with a spiritable (sic) force," a judgment that his father appears to contradict when he refers to the female Asher as an "animal." Nevertheless, Alec Jacobs chastises Rosita, noting that, "It's a sin" to shoot the Asher. He then insists that she accompany him on his trip to return the small wounded "lady" to the bush. This story of strange bush creatures ends with the implied prohibition that forbids the shooting of that which one does not recognize. Petey was denied the final fate of the Asher, and his audiences must be content that this story of strange bush creatures ends with a moral lesson and a note of mystery. I briefly reflect that I have just witnessed a short drama performed by a highly proficient and energetic storyteller.

I have no hint at this first meeting that Petey and I will come to spend countless hours talking and taping a wide variety of stories over the ensuing years. Though he rarely repeats a story, Petey does relate this story on more
than one occasion, and in February 1993, I make use of an available camcorder to record a video version of "The Ashers." These multiple versions offer insights into Petey's stylized storytelling techniques, particularly his mix of memorization and improvisation, somewhat akin to Parry's (1971) "oral formulaic" approach. I am struck in the later telling by the performative aspects, including his use of different dramatic voices, spontaneous utilization of props, and eye contact with audience and camcorder. When Petey performs "The Ashers" before the camcorder in his backyard, he blocks and stages the story as a frontier mini-drama.

Bill, a younger friend, briefly stops by to pick up a rifle stock that Petey has customized for him. I am introduced, "This is a teacher, coming around to find a little story and thing like that. I'm trying to give him a little part of understanding, right."

We shake hands and I listen as they talk of a coming hunt for night-walkers (kinkajou). Then Petey returns to his story telling. He takes up a tattered *National Geographic* photo of an enormous boa constrictor and says that in earlier days hunters would encounter snakes of this length and girth. He appears to indicate by his use of the title, "The Mother of Snakes" (cf. Chapman, 1992, 189), that he is again going to tell a rehearsed and oft-told story. This supposition is apparently confirmed by the story's tight story-line and Petey's adroit use of dramatic gestures:

*The mother of the snakes was about this stout. She were around [He moves both hands to illustrate how she was nestled in a circle.], with the head covering like that [head over tail]. She made a circle with her body and inside the round of that, it was a little hill of pure, pure, pure snakes, a round little hill! It was pure snakes and not one smaller than this around [1" diameter] and all about six to eight feet long body. There were all types of different snakes: green, yellow, red, boa constrictor, tommygoff-the poisonous ones - all kinds and all size. That thing [the mass of snakes] was there for about three months, right up the same*
Joe Taylor [Creek], near where right now there is a man living by the name of John.

I never seen a thing like that before. It was beautiful, but it was a fright too. We went on the sea the day before when one of my brothers seen it and come and tell me about it. We went up that day and took two guns [He grabs a bamboo stick.]. When we reach there we had dogs and we chase away the dogs. I look at it from maybe twenty feet, then go a little closer. I want to see where is the head [He looks around.], and I walk around, walk around. It does not move, none move - all is there, you only see the head, the whole roundness of the head. Not one is outside, everyone is inside that round piece of the mother, big animal! Inside that animal there is millions, millions of snakes. All from the edging around, you see heads -- head, head, head, right around and all of them beautiful.

I shot it [He aims the bamboo stick.] because my friend was afraid to shoot it. We had about four bottles of gasoline and three bottles of diesel to throw on it and to light a fire. I told my friend, "Don't do it because if you light that fire they will rush out so fast and perhaps a bad one will come out and bite you."

I went down and I had a .16 gauge and I shot it [the mother snake] twice in the head [He aims again.] and she started to move off and the rest started to move out, climb all over the trees. You see all the leaves covered with snakes! They were running out between our feet and tried to climb up on you. Some went in the holes and some went off and we killed the mother.

From his animated description, it appears that, like the Ashers, he once beheld a very stunning (and to Western ears, inexplicable) sight, "I never seen a thing like that before." In both stories, Petey articulates a tension between an extraordinary bush sighting and the his tendency toward destruction. "It was very beautiful but it was a fright too." He then details how, after chasing away their hunting dogs, he and a friend exterminated the mother serpent and mass of snakes. In this region, replete with venomous creatures, there is a wide spread fear of snakes. Petey indicates in subsequent conversations that this aversion is reinforced by the Biblical reference to the serpent in the garden as the Devil. Undoubtedly, it is also grounded in the threats from
native poisonous snakes such as the fer-de-lance (locally called the 'tommygoff'), a viper noted for its deadly aggressive behavior. While some outsiders might bemoan the apparent indiscriminate killing of snakes, in Toledo many people perish from the bite of a tommygoff, often in the darkened recesses of their own homes. Petey's first story about wrongful maiming of the Asher is quickly balanced by this tale of justifiable serpentine extermination.

Petey moves to another constrictor story, excitedly describing an incident when he worked as a chicolero (one who taps chickle trees for the gum base). Early one morning the chicoleros' dogs had bolted in a chase and cornered a boa constrictor in a large fallen tree:

A chicolero usually carries a flashlight so he haul it out of his back pocket and spotted it inside. He said, "What? Man, look there! What a big animal is that?"

It was a boa, a boa constrictor and its head looked two feet across. It was about thirty feet long [Petey demonstrates the length by pointing to a tree in his yard.]. We bust up the log after we shot it seven rounds. We said that it was dead but it was not fully dead. We bust the log with some big sticks and so on, about nine of us. We get around the log and bust it to see the length of the snake.

One man, when the log, broken take a machete and cut the belly. When he cut the belly, three gibnuts come out. One was already melt [digested], entirely melt cause when you touch it, it become slime. The next one, the hair is just coming off like you would clean it.

We saw that the gibnut that the dog chase, run in over the head of the animal [snake] which was in the log, the big tree that fall. That's what the dog was barking about. The live one that went in was way to the back, squeezed. He was alive but he was so sorry!

All the families there, cousins, brothers and so on, and the rest was strangers, were watching. We got the gibnut and killed it but nobody wanted it - to eat it. We say that something from the snake had touched it so we just leave it there.

We get through those three and there was more in the belly! It look like at night he keep his mouth open and any other thing rush in there. The boys take some sticks and dig those animals
out, haul them out. We buried about three but the scent! All of us move off and take the dogs so they don't eat the meat and get sick.

Petey views the snake killing as a righteous act and exhibits no remorse, but he does signal some emotional response to the gibnut that was most recently consumed. He shakes his head as if with regret, noting, "The last one, way to the back, was alive but he was so sorry!" He begins to develop a theme of contamination that complements the dangers of venom. In telling his story, he offers another lesson. He explains that, as with the threat from the mother of snakes, they had to chase the dogs off. They would not let them eat the gibnuts. "We say that something from the snake had touched it, so we just leave it there." Though gibnut is a favored meal of dog and man alike, these particular animals have been contaminated physically, and perhaps spiritually, by their stay in the constrictor's belly. In this incident, the dogs' natural impulses to eat the gibnuts, which are usually trusted by the hunters, must be restrained due to a perceived contamination that the dogs are unable to sense by themselves.

Responding to my questioning, Petey moves on to describe some of his tiger (jaguar) hunts, explaining a good deal of general lore concerning the cats' ability to smell and hear in various weather conditions. Panting deeply, he imitates the tiger-callers that hunters made from calabashes and used to lure a tiger in from the bush. Petey jokes about his teenage days in the thirties, when he and his brothers would string the line from a tiger-caller to a neighbor's window and gently draw the bow. People would come to the window with lights and guns, terrified that there was a jaguar in their yard!

Petey goes on to explain the techniques that are employed in hunting anteaters and night-walkers. On one occasion, ten years before, he was
contracted to catch a live anteater. That night he also killed a night-walker (kinkajou) and threw it in his hunting bag. Returning home, there was great neighborhood interest in the captured anteater, and Petey dumped the bagged night-walker in a big box and forgot about it for three days:

About four days later I’m looking for this bag. I forgot about this night-walker. I don’t see it... Well, Ronny was there too and I say,” Ronny, what about the custodial [bag] we usually carry with us?"

He said, “The last time I remember, we brought the night-walker back in, it with us.”

But where I put it I don’t know. I come in at night, put down the anteater there and I throw the bag in the box, then lose it because people came to see the anteater. When I drop it in the drum and it scratch and scratch, make a lot of noise. People come with lights to look at it and I forget about the night-walker.

About three or four days after, when Ronny talk with me I say,” Oh, maybe he’s in this box.” I look in and see the bag and when I hold the bag I feel this heavy thing. I forgot about this night-walker. I say, “I wonder if it don’t spoil?”

I opened the bag and haul it by the tail and no, everything is good! Just feels light and the belly doesn’t swell or nothing. I tell Ronny, I say,” What? Boy, how long?

He say, “Boy, three days and tonight will make four.”

And this animal doesn’t smell. I say,” Anyhow, I’m going to hook it here and we’re going out. When I come back, if it doesn’t smell, I will clean it and see if the dogs will eat it.”

We went out that day and got a tiger! We got two gibnuts and an animal they call quash. We come in, clean up and everything, then I take the night-walker down and clean it. You wouldn’t believe that animal would not spoil. I had it in mind I was going to throw it away. I clean that animal, take [the] skin, embalm it, fix the color clean. I have a big iron pot and I put everything in that pot and I boil it with some flour and different kinds of things. I got a lot of dogs, big dogs. It was good. All the dogs eat with gibnut and that. The meat was fresh. It never spoil.

As with the swallowed gibnuts, there was a discussion as to whether this would be appropriate food for dogs. Petey returns to his earlier preamble about food and worms. He explains:
I think why it doesn't spoil because that animal doesn't eat anything off the earth, lone [only] fruits. You see the body of it is not a spoil body. As the Bible says, if you feed off these other things, from the earth, and don't have any fear, everything you eat becomes worm meat in your inside. The food from the earth brings the worms in the body. The Bible say to feed the best, to fit the body with the blood and pure blood - fruits! Vegetables and fruits! Part fish, but not much meat.

As story builds on story, patterns of meaning begin to coalesce for his outsider guest and potential textbook readers. Much like Gerineldo, Petey's stories are not solely about appearances. He explains that a hunter must carefully identify his prey. He also must be trained to know what is inside each species, what it eats, how it gains its nourishment from the unclean earth or the more healthy fruits of the trees. In a hot and humid region of the hemisphere that is populated by venomous creatures, poison, spoilage, and contamination are everyday dangers that must be avoided. Petey not only enunciates the prohibitions, he explains his reasoning, based on over sixty years of training, observation and experience in the bush, as well as the spiritual teachings that have guided him throughout his hunting career.

Petey elucidates a significant element in the Toledo hunting code concerning the relationship between a hunter and his dogs. Local hunters view their dogs as valued and trusted companions, particularly when they are confronting dangerous game. In southern Belize there is no shortage of threatening creatures including jaguars, vampire bats, venomous snakes, and, as he will later confide, the most dangerous threat, packs of wari (wild pigs). Here, the efficient hunter must acquire a knowledge (perhaps spiritual) that surpasses the heightened sensory apparatus of the dogs. Because of his knowledge and training, it is the hunter who is able to make the key judgments regarding what may be spoiled, contaminated, venomous, or, as in
the case of the Ashers, potentially sinful. Over our years of conversation, I come to learn how bush wisdom, Biblical lore, and the ancestral folk beliefs of Toledo have consolidated to form an indigenous hunting code that promotes a sustainable supply of game.

At the time, I do not realize that these stories, each of which strikes me with its exotic and romantic frontier elements, contains a pertinent and current moral lesson for a child or a novice hunter. Petey has responded to Chet's and my request from the very beginning, adapting, and selecting his stories, moving from one moral lesson of the bush to another. Over time, I come to understand that themes such as blood, heart, cleanliness, contamination, defilement, and diet, as well as the hot and cold variations of the body, emerge in virtually all his stories and lessons. This first meeting's chain of stories, each intricately interwoven with each other, ends with this story of the "white, white animal."

He is very hard to shoot with a gun. My old dad is East Indian; he always have [know] the secret part of these animals. When they shoot these animals that are spirits in the mountain, they always run. They are animals that not any gun can kill it. You can shoot it but you can't hurt it. There are men who have fixed the shots, that any time the shot go off, not the powder but the shot hit it and move it off by the way that the shot fixed.

One Good Friday I saw my dad going up Rio Grande by a hillside field of cane. They were ready to burn it and cut out the cane. The cane field was right up on the hillside, part of the hill. We were going up on the road and the field was on the right hand side with an American man by the name of Mr. Senn. My dad's name was Alec.

Mr. Senn said to my dad, "Alec, look at the hill. That's a beautiful deer, man. That's a white deer or a goat. Is it a sheep or what?"

My dad look on it. My dad is a tall East Indian. He say, "Mr. Senn, that is not a good animal. That is not a good thing."

He say, "How do you mean that is not a good thing? It's an animal."

He say, "Yes, but he want to show that it is an animal that is very odd." He said that he would show Mr. Senn something. He
reach in the shot bag and take out the .44 Winchester and he said, "Look at it Mr. Senn. Watch that animal." It was a big animal and white, white, white, white, white...

It was up by the side, by the edging of the mountain in the clear. It was looking down on us from way up on the hill. My father touch the trigger and "Ta-Kay!" We seen like a big blaze of smoke hit against the mountain side and we see the whiteness gone down back but where it reach we don't see it. We see all the big trees down there go shaking back and forth, like a breeze blowing them for a good while.

Mr. Senn say, "Alec, what is that?"

He said, "I told you it is not a good thing, Mr. Senn. I told you that is not a good thing."

For a good while after, Mr. Senn speak about that thing, speak about that thing and the Good Friday pass. I think it was about four months after somebody else come and tell him about the same animal that was there, on the same spot.

My dad said it was one of the masters of the animals in the mountains that was showing itself to the hunters that were passing by. Such animals would show themselves to test the hunters. Would they shoot at what they didn't know?

With this final hunting tale of the day, Petey returns full circle to the Ashers' story in confirming his father as a major teacher of bush wisdom. Petey softly confides, "He always know the secret part of these animals." As Alec scolded and instructed Petey's older sister Rosita for shooting the 'unknown' Asher, here the elder Jacobs teaches his white boss and his son about the temptations to shoot the "spirits in the mountains." Alec makes it clear that these are "animals that not any gun can kill." The final lesson that Petey shares in this day's story-cycle concerns the existence of a higher force, "the masters of the animals," or hill spirits. These masters of the animals are found in the hills and noted for their supremacy, their invincibility, and their role in testing hunters. Petey's story carries with it a certain ambiguity since Alec presumes to shoot at the "white, white animal," with the apparent knowledge that this is a test, and he will do no harm. This is a moment for teaching the uninitiated.
Early in this story, he indicates that this is indeed a special moment (cf. Gann (1926) and Mariana Cho's narrative in Chapter Seven), the period of Jesus' entombment between Good Friday afternoon and Easter midnight when it is widely believed that bad spirits may seize a moment of freedom. Alec implies that this particular "white, white animal" and "master of the animals" is a "not a good animal, not a good thing," an appropriate identity for this liminal period. It is perhaps unique to Toledo that, once again, ancient Mayan beliefs about the bush and Christian ritual converge, only this time in a cautionary narrative told by a Creole man.

Petey's final story is further evidence of the special catholic sharing of syncretistic beliefs among the inhabitants of Toledo. Just as Mayans such as Eduardo, who manifests a belief in West African obeah, Petey recalls his encounter with the Mayan spirits of the hills, noted in the story of Juan the Catechist (Chapter Ten), as well as many other narratives. In this ancient Mayan area, now a center of interethnic diversity, it is significant that the "master of the animals in the mountains" elected to reveal himself to Petey's father, an East Indian, and Mr. Senn, a North American.

Like the exposition of melodies in the opening movement of a symphony, many of the key themes of bush morality and of Petey's hunting life emerge in our very first meeting. From his initial statement regarding the worms, he began to set up the dialectics between clean and spoiled, the high, pure fruits and the low, belly-dragging 'slime' and earth. In "The Ashers," he begins to describe the unwritten rules that make up the hunting protocol of the Belizean bush. Indeed, this first story session is bracketed by the early castigation of sin for Rosita's shooting of the mysterious little 'lady,' and the tale of the hill spirit's test of the hunters on Good Friday.
Petey's storytelling performance is similar to Sherzer's (1990) description of a storychanter, weaving stories together around a central motif in the course of an evening, some as "introductory or linking elements" (89). In this way the storyteller

Begins with a basic idea, a basic theme, whether this be a myth, an experience, a 'story,' or a series of metaphors; he adapts and transforms it to fit the situation at hand or the point he is trying to make (90).

As Petey's hunting stories unfold, it also becomes clear to a listener that his hunting code is grounded not only on the pragmatic but also on a traditional spiritual discipline of what is sinful and unclean. Throughout all his stories, the shedding of blood and the dangers of contamination begin to emerge as the overarching themes for this aging Creole hunter.

Petey sits up and explains that it is time to make his tea. I thank him and marvel at the two hours of bushcraft and hunting stories that he has just recounted. I realize that he has responded to our ecological request throughout the entire session, discussing the hunter's code of discipline, care and cleanliness, and culminating with the story of the masters of the animals. He shakes my hand and invites me for a return visit. I mention the textbook project again, and he says, "That's very fine." It seems, though, that a responsive audience is vastly superior to a reading one as far as he is concerned. I tell him that I will return with printed copies of his stories in June and we part. As I walk away, purple, cumulous clouds roll in, and distant, rainy-season lightening flashes over the Maya Mountains.
Narrative and Moral Roots

If you have clean ways of going, good ways are following.

With his own hunting and instructive prowess, Petey is a significant link in the chain of local cultural renewal. Key formative influences, most noteworthy his family, his military service, his life in the bush, and the spirituality emanating from dual Christian and Mayan traditions have joined together to inform this able bush guide, who now generously serves as a mentor to those young people who seek his instruction in bushcraft.

As my own bush tutorial progresses, Petey details much of his life story, including the instruction he received from his father, mother, and sister Rosita regarding hunting, bush lore, healing, and storytelling. In this section, I examine the profound influence of these three family members, their language of instruction, and the underlying moral code that is part of what Kozol (1978, 368) refers to as "the 'peasants' book of life."

Throughout our interviews, Petey often tells bush stories wherein the moral principles of hunting emerge. His vivid descriptions of bush skills, such as setting a snare for a kinkajou or calling in a jaguar, are continually interwoven with the clear enunciation of the unwritten rules of the bushcraft. He often credits the various sources of specific instruction including family members, veteran hunters, and visions, all legitimate sources of local oral hunting lore. His reflections offer an extraordinary glimpse as to how his family members each offered a unique and complementary influence on him, as hunter and bushman. The lives of the Jacobs family offer a striking contradiction to that European tradition which
perceived hunters as "seemingly haphazard, wasteful, greedy, impoverished, and yet indifferent to material goods" (Brody, 1981, 51).

**Alec**

One year after our first meeting, Petey is instructing me about his preparation of scents for luring animals to a trap or ambush. He explains that he often "cured the ground" when hunting wari. Petey says, "My old dad used to say, 'You cure the ground for it, then only, you go and kill.'"

I ask him, "How do you cure the ground for it?"

Well, that's what I'm going to tell you. My dad used to tell us that if you shoot a wari here, right here he drop. Bow! [shooting motion] he drop - don't move it. You take the machete and you mark two foot, then your mark the other two foot then all around [in the dust] around the body you make the shape till you come all the way around to here [the starting point]. Then you can move it. You dig a little hole where the mark is and you put the foot [already cut off] right there. You dig a hole by the head and you put the head right there and then you dig out the rest of the shape and you put the guts inside: the head, the guts and the feet. Then you cover that and only you can shoot an animal there.

My dad tell me, "Don't do it always." You cure the ground. For instance you shoot an animal here, even deer. You want to shoot deer all the time on that spot. Nobody else will shoot here. You cure the ground and that makes it special for you. You will see every day or every time you go there - if I go right there from now till six and I will come with one, but you go there and you will never find one. So, I let you have the secret.

That's a cure, but remember - don't use it as a habit! The moment you use it as a habit, daily, daily, daily, you will meet the master and you won't get away. That's the master of the animals. It's a white animal just the same as the animal you are hunting, whether it was wari or deer or whatever... It will kill you!

If you go and shoot two, three quickly, and it goes away and dies in the mountain, it's a sin you're doing. You must kill an animal on the spot or pursue it. If you wound it, you shoot it too far, and you are a bad hunter. You don't want it, you only injure it and you don't want it. The moment you go two, three, four,
five for a week and you see you don’t get an animal, stop! Once, two, third time, stop! The fourth time you go, you won’t come back. You got the ground trained for it and that moment you are overdoing it. You are abusing it. It will hurt you. That’s what my dad used to tell me. That is on earth.

You have to pay for all your bad things - that is what my dad used to tell me. Anything you do bad on the earth, you got to pay for it, right here on earth. You mess around too much with women, a woman will affect you. If you have bad men against people, bad men will get you. If you have clean ways of going, good ways are following. If you have a bad heart way of going through, people will hate you. You must do the good things and let the good things come about you.

Petey’s use of the word "curing" signifies a number of levels of meaning. In his description, the curing act functions as a ritual designed to make the location enticing to a particular species. Echoing back to the very first story session and his analysis of contaminated ground, this curing act also evokes the notion of a spiritual healing and cleaning. Seemingly, Alec had embedded almost an entire moral code within his instruction for curing the ground.

The father first counsels his son regarding moderation. "Don’t do it always," Alec tells the young Petey. Curing the ground is "special." He employs the Creole superlative in stressing that, should this special technique be used, "daily, daily, daily," Petey, "will meet the master and you won’t get away. That’s the master of the animals. It will kill you." This prohibition, grounded in Mayan beliefs, carries the solemn weight of taboo. It is further reinforced by references to Christian moral teachings when Alec states that, if a hunter is hurried or careless, and "shoots quickly and it [the game] get[s] away, it’s a sin." Alec is emphatic that severe penalties are in store for the hunter who is guilty of "overdoing" and "abusing." Toward the end of this story, Petey refers to his father, Christianity, and the earth as the foundational sources of his own moral education.
This grounding of moral standards in parents, religion, and the earth is reinforced as Petey recalls his father's blessing for each day, a ritual prayer he uttered each morning. This short prayer offers further evidence of the blend of Christianity and traditional Mayan wisdom regarding the earth. Petey recalls his father's statement:

Thank you Lord for this new day. For you are in me, and I will use you for the coming day. Give the earth a sign of a cross and beg the earth to forgive you for walking on it, for this is mother earth.

This prayer is evocative of the Mayan creation story, "The Sun and the Moon," considering both the male Lord and the female "mother earth," another indication of the multitextured and syncretistic belief relationship in Toledo.

Alec was Petey's spiritual anchor. As he indicated in our first session, Petey believed that his father had the ability to see through the boundaries that separate inner and outer worlds. In a long and tragic story of his brother Don's death, Petey bemoans the fact that his father was deep in the bush and could not be located in time to dispel malevolent spirits. It is his East Indian father who also has the ability to perceive and create remedies for the unseen but highly toxic poisons of Toledo's venomous creatures.

Like Victoria, Alec had great knowledge of herbal healing. While his mother taught the children her Jamaican remedies, Petey's father instructed them in both East Indian and Belizean healing traditions. Petey never names his father as a bush doctor or an obeah man, yet it is clear throughout his stories that he saw his father as possessing learning beyond the techniques of herbal healing. Petey credits his father with powers that operated on a spiritual or magical level. He reverentially dramatizes the incident, when, as
a little boy, he accompanied his mother on a dory trip, and they saw a young man struck dumb by a bush spirit, the *duende*. In that critical moment, it is Alec who considers his rich cultural heritage and offers the last best chance for the boy’s recovery:

One of the boys who was closest to the animal, the *duende*, and he look like he got the scent. You know, the scent of the *duende* and he was throwing some little fits, foaming his mouth, and fits and trembling.

They brought him home and take him to doctor and the doctor say he don’t know what to do with this fellow. Everything is all right on the boy but he don’t know what to do. Well, the kin called my mother and my mother went there. She said that she threw in some different kinds of scent in the nose -- never did help him.

Well my daddy come, and he had a lot of small, little bitty seeds, fine like...just the size of this [Petey picks up and points to a seed pod.]. See this little white thing but a lot different color- all colors. My dad get the seeds, I think there was nine, and he open his mouth and he put them in his mouth. He take some of the same ashes [He points to the cook fire.] and he put it in his left hand with some salt. That’s what I see my dad do; I like to mess around, to keep around [with his dad]. He put it in his hand and he get a little bottle with oil; he throw it on it and hold it and put it in a cloth.

He went to the young man’s head, this the young man’s head and he hold the hair this way this way with the cloth in his hand, he hauled the hair, one, two three, and he rubbed his hand right down [Petey demonstrates holding person’s hair with one hand and doing downward rubbing motion ‘patient’s arm’ with other hand.]. He rub his hand down, he rub his hand down and he hold his toe. Hold his toe and jerk it, but he don’t let go of that cloth with the ashes and the salt. He jerk it and [Petey leans down over a board as if over head of ‘patient’] and my dad he say, “Lou, Lou, Lou! Get up! ”

The young man get right up and sit down. My dad take that cloth, dig a hole and bury it.

In a scene reminiscent of Lazarus’s return from the dead, Petey enacts his father’s use of herbs, ashes, and ritual to break the paralyzing spell of the *duende*. Significantly, Alec uses a verbal command as the final prompt, at
which point, "The young man get right up and sit down." In this story of Creole healing, the spoken word is invested with the power of life as is found in Genesis and the first chapter of the Mayan Popul Vuh. Here, a man, in harmony with the powers of belief and spiritual or magical knowledge, demonstrates the power of returning life. The account of his father's healing the entranced youth suggests a power that is the opposite, yet complementary, to the command, "If I say you are dead, you will be dead," that Eduardo of Santa Cruz attributes to obeah men. Alec ends his healing by burying the cloth used in the healing, returning it the earth, as if to avoid further contamination.

In a more recent discussion (3/2/1995), I asked Petey a pointed question regarding the power of words:

JK: ...You talk about writing and speaking. Do you think that words can have power?

EJ: The words? Oooh, I feel it from my heart. A word, from a person, when it is clean, the person himself is clean, you know, his word is powerful. his word is power. The Bible tells you so. Jesus said, "I am not... I am just a spirit. But the word from the spirit make the world." And that's power!...

He said, "While you have faith with my word I give it to you, and you will move mountain with lone [only] word. He tell about moving a house... That's power, the power in the word.

Petey illuminates both the deep cultural roots of verbal potency as well as the modern regional beliefs, as evidenced by Eduardo Miss and Alec Jacobs. Petey pointedly explains the connection between words of power and a speaker's need for cleanliness and faith. Furthermore, he refers to the affirming powers of scripture, indicating the spiritual renewal deep in his own heart. His explanation suggests that he does not restrict this special capacity to his revered father, but recognizes that it is an attribute potentially
available to other "clean" people. During this conversation, Petey also commented on the power of the written word, relating the story of his father giving him a small talismanic paper with scriptural references and adorned with nine crosses as he left for his WWII military service. Petey says that his father told him:

_Keep this paper with you. Don't believe in nothing that go bad. This paper will carry you through..._  
_Son, don't let no one read that with you. Keep it in your pocket or keep it close but don't let no other ones hold that with you. Don't even show anyone._

As a storyteller, Petey certainly knows that words have an immediate power in a given setting to entertain, enlighten, anger or endear. From his father he also learned that words have the potential to cross boundaries of flesh and bone, time and space.

**Victoria**

Victoria, like Alec, is omnipresent in Petey's stories and never far from his consciousness. Under his pillow he keeps a hand-wrought iron bracelet that once belonged to his mother. At a friend's suggestion, I once asked him to hold the bangle and tell me a story that came to mind. He immediately recalled a scene of his mother, tending a stew by the hearth, and then warmly described the jingling of her many bracelets. He says that everyone noted that special thing about her, the jingling. Sitting on his cot and fingering the bracelet, Petey went on to remember her

_jingling, jangling. She used to speak about it when she keep it on her hand. She used to say, "Girl, woman! If you take one bangle away from me, you take my husband away from me."_
According to Petey, Miss Victoria was known locally as a "doctress" and, on any walk with him, he is likely to point out certain medicinal plants that his mother once taught him. In our conversations, he often refers to those occasions when local medical doctors were unsuccessful in combating a particular ailment:

I will tell you of a lady who went to my mother's hand for healing. This lady went to the states when she was about twenty-seven or so. She and her husband came down - her husband was working in an office in Belize... At that time there was no road traffic, only boat...

At those times my mother used to work with the doctors and any time the doctors can't handle a patient, at midnight or at any time, they call my mother. She would come and say to the doctor, "Give over!" Many times.

I don't know if you know about this sickness that works by the tide [dropsy]. It swell the whole, whole body. If it's a woman, well one of her breasts would be like my whole body. It swell and the face would be like a ball. It shines; it looks shine, shine. The tide go down, the body go down.

My mother always told me about all this - that's the part that suck from the food, bring out the food and push it into blood. If the inside part, the intestinal part of the body where the food is, is not clean and it is mucky, it can't suck to give you the direct blood and the blood get weak and cause plenty of illnesses. That lady, she cured.

Clean blood and a balanced body temperature are foundations of good health for Toledo bush doctors. According to Victoria, the blood becomes weak when it "is not clean, and it is mucky." As Petey's source for these understandings, Victoria also indicates the cosmic influences of bodily well-being in the reference to the influence of the tides on a person's water retention. On another occasion, doctors called the doctress to use her special sweating techniques to treat another victim of dropsy:

What she does is use the boiling water with the smoke [steam] coming out. The doctors were there one day when she work
with a chicolero man with the dropsy. I used to work with the doctor, be the attendant boy, the one who used to keep the knife of the cutting things for them. I remember the day that the man was swelled up there was a big fat German doctor...

I remember the last person my mother treated with the boiling water about six or seven times. The last one [blanket soaked in boiling water] she put over him, she say, "Doc, do you have some milk to give him?"

I was helping get the water, helping doing the nursing, and she say, "Do you have some milk to give that man? He will get up now. He is asking for something to eat, something to drink."

The doctor say, "Do you think so Miss Jacobs?"

She say, "I'm not asking you - I'm telling you."

The doctor say, "Let's go and see." He come right up and the man sitting there and the skin all shrunk, flat, flat, flat. He say, "How do you feel?"

He say, "I'm hungry doctor."

She say, "Didn't I tell you doctor?" The boiling water sweat that cold water right out. She sweat him out, sweat him out, sweat him out. The man get a cure.

Victoria, like Alec, is credited with making a very sick patient rise up, a sign of the power of traditional healing practices that is comparable or superior to the efficacy of Western medicine. However, unlike the story of his father healing the duende victim, Victoria's curative powers are restricted to sweating treatments and medicinal herbs.

Petey's fond memories of his mother's domestic role indicate the moral principles underlying her duties as wife, mother, and domestic worker. Both father and mother saw their home as a family center and a refuge for any passers-by. Petey says that guests who wandered in from the bush were always welcome, and the children joked with their mother about her hospitality, calling their home, "Miss Victoria Hotel."

Her fire hot was about the length of this [his bed - about six feet] and she would have a big iron pot, cook rice in that. There were thirty-two children and grandchildren. My dad used to say, "Don't keep that fire easy, keep that fire burning. If a stranger come and then if the Lord come, then we will have something."
My mother always tell me, "Jesus will be passing. Remember! He will be passing and one day he coming to you to testify Always have something for a soul." You will notice that most people do that even today - keep something warm and ready.

Victoria and Alec depended on the same sources for their goodness and wisdom. Victoria based her healing on medicinal herbs, traditional purgative techniques, and an understanding of the primal forces of the earth and sea, such as the tides. Like Alec, she also looked to Christianity as a source of goodness and moral character. A reader pictures her tending her "fire hot" each and every day, always prepared, having "something for a soul," and ready to testify.

Rosita

Petey mentions his older sister Rosita with the same frequency that he credits his father and mother for his upbringing. In the tradition of many large families in Toledo, Victoria entrusted Petey to his older sister for care once she had weaned him. Petey describes how in his younger days he looked up to Rosita as a woman and a hunter:

She was the first child that he [Alec] had with my mother. At those times she didn’t go to school but went to live in the mountains. All that my dad knew, he used to train her.

She was a mighty little lady. She was friendly, you know. She was very friendly, gorgeous. Everybody used to like her. And you know after she kill a tiger and come out, some people carried it and brought it out. They give her a prize for it. They give her money or different kinds of things. Down here in P.G. they call her one of the best hunters. When you see her come from the bush, you would think she was a man cause she dress like a man. She had long hair but she roll it up and put on a hat.

Petey tells countless stories of his sister’s competence as a hunter.

Undoubtedly, she was a local legend, though as testimony by other female
narrators (Irmelinda and Mariana in Chapters Four and Seven) indicates, there were women throughout Toledo who were forced by necessity or moved by choice to hunt the bush. Petey recounts a day that Rosita took a young man to hunt wari for the first time. They traveled by dory and Rosita promised that this hunt would offer the man a test. When Rosita heard the wild pigs feeding, she alerted Mr. Rodin, the hunter. Impulsively, he stepped out of the dory and headed toward shore just as the wari rose from the high grass and charged.

He was standing on the land and holding the dory with one hand and the other the gun. When he tried to turn to the dory, three wari rushed him. He reached for the paddle and pulling back the dory and the wari reached him. "Wah!" They in the water. When he jumped in the water, two more wari jump beside. My sister swing the dory to him where he holding on and try and grab the gun. She shot one and then she grabbed the machete and chopped the next one on its head. The one that bite him first go off, but the next two hurt him. She get the next two. My sister tell him, "Do you understand? You have to take your time and look and see. But don't go close. Shoot, then go in a tree. These animal does not joke. Once you fire and one say, "Ah," they looking for you. They not looking for the one that [was] shot. They looking for you.

Rosita's counsel to Mr. Rodin, "to take your time and look and see," is reminiscent of Alec's instruction to Mr. Senn, his warning to Petey regarding the curing of the ground and the mandates of the Mayan hill spirits — a hunter must be cautious and disciplined as he prepares to take a kill shot. Rosita's directness demonstrates her knowledge of the wari. She warns Rodin that, once he wounds one of the herd, they will not be distracted by a fallen member, "These animal does not joke... They looking for you."
Petey recounts another legendary tale of Rosita's hunting skills and nerve. He begins with his characteristic, "I'll give you a story," and describes the amazing, vertical stand-off between Rosita and a wounded jaguar:

I'll give you a story about that lady [Rosita] and an eight foot tiger, an eight foot leopard. She shoot after the leopard with a twelve gauge, one shot she had. She had my brother, name of Freddy, with her. Freddy was hunting the tiger and when he shoot, he miss the tiger. The tiger was coming down from a tree with the face to him. The gun shoot full and when he pull the trigger, the shot come low and never touch no part of him, just under the seat part. He was a bull tiger too.

The tiger clawed back up and he went on a straight limb and laid down there. Rosita tell Freddy, "Take the twelve and put it up and bring dad's Winchester. Bring the Winchester with about six or seven shots." My sister cut a cohune leaf and split it and spread it below the tiger.

Now, about six men went there to see where the tiger was. Now these are the persons who speak about it later. They say that she lie down on the little leaf she had split and put down there. The blood was dropping right down by the leaf. Her head was right there too. The sweat was draining from the tiger's mouth by the tongue, the water from the head was dropping on the leaf. They say that she was directly underneath the tiger and she rest there nearly for a half an hour, looking at the tiger. She was a tough lady and this tiger already hurted.

I don't know how she did that, whether it was prayers or what. When my brother came with the Winchester she shot it. She shot it and leave it right there because she couldn't back it. It was too heavy or she never wanted to move it. And people came to see it and talk about that lady.

As he tells this story, Petey's face glows with the admiration he still feels for Rosita. There is no doubt that her courage complements her skills as a hunter, as she lies beneath the wounded cat, its life blood draining and the saliva dripping next to her body. Rosita served as Petey's surrogate mother, mentor and inspiration. On another day, Petey commented that, "The straight part of understanding hunting was with my sister."
I was trained first with my dad who learned to hunt all around the rancho area, up the Joe Taylor River... My teacher for hunting was my sister. Many of times it was with my dad and my brothers, off and on but the straight part of understanding hunting was with my sister. I grew up with her and she learned from my dad. She learned a lot by herself. She was like a man in the mountains...

Raised on a remote riverine farmstead, Petey's school was the bush where he was fortunate to learn from three excellent teachers. Throughout the early part of his life, his family mentors transmitted their collective hunting, bushcraft, and healing knowledge. Petey was raised by a father and sister who guided men and women of power, and a mother who worked alongside of Western medical doctors.

When I asked Petey on a recent visit who taught his father, he indicated that it was an "old Mayan man." Though he did not know any further details, clearly there was no need to question such a source for bush knowledge. Petey's ways of knowing, healing, and hunting are akin to his Creole blood and Creole language. As in many other parts of the Caribbean and Mesoamerica, a syncretistic relationship between different ethnic foundations has been the rule and not the exception. Petey was raised a Belizean of Afro-Caribbean and Asian stock and ways of understanding. Many of his ideas and beliefs have originated with Mayans, Caribs, Europeans, and most recently the Voice of America (VOA). Like many of his newly independent country men and women, he has learned to craft a personal unity out of this evolving diversity. Petey's practical and moral education, with its diverse and collaborative roots, serves as a model not only for the ideological literacy that the TESOL books might promote but also for the widespread cooperation among ethnic groups that Belize needs in these early days of independence.
Emergent Performances and Bush Wisdom

Don't be afraid, don't be afraid of yourself.

Petey still maintains the rhythm of the bushman's life, though he now lives within fifty yards of the P.G. airstrip. Waking before dawn, he catches the early news and football scores on Belizean radio when he is flush enough to afford new batteries. At first light, his small pack of hunting dogs calls for food and water. After washing and tidying up, he brews coffee and eats some leftovers from his evening tea. On market days, it is time to begin his walk to Front Street, often slowed down by his aging legs. His purchases are always modest: some rice, beans, a small bit of pork, and a string of snappers (fish) to cook for the dogs. Then, Petey is off to sit with his mates by the Community Center, just across from Central Park. The trip downtown brings hopes for a small job, perhaps repairing a chain saw or gathering healing herbs from his garden for someone who is sick.

Sitting in the shade of the center's low slung roof, the crew of retired fishermen, laborers, farmers and bushmen boast and joke, recall and recount for hours. They talk of women, fierce storms, the ones that got away, and what they will do if they win the lottery. As it gets toward noon and the Kekchi and Mopan make their way back to the market-buses, someone may offer a 'chop' (pint) of rum and the talk will continue, perhaps more animatedly or more aggressively. Petey's walk home under the high arched sun is slower, and a nap is sure to follow. Evening tea means cooling breezes and perhaps a visitor or two, then it's time to listen to a football match or a news magazine on the VOA.

Feeding his pups, tending his ginger, buying fish, repairing a snare, or discussing a lottery pick, Petey always has a story to give. Many of his stories
are recollections of his family's frontier struggle against the trials and adversities of the Toledo bush. The Jacobs family dug deeply into their ethnic inventories of practical and spiritual resources, sought help and guidance from their indigenous neighbors, and achieved relative success in making a good life in a hostile environment. However, Petey's stories are not limited to golden tales of the little house on the estuary!

Over the years, it has become clear that there is an adaptive and emergent quality to his story-telling and instruction. Petey's body of knowledge is not a closed system. Rather, he has gleaned knowledge from his predecessors and peers and gone on to field test an array of practical and moral tools for bushcraft. In a further examination of story performances, particularly considering those younger people who come to him for instruction, this evolving and emergent quality of his teachings will become apparent. Many of his stories, as well as his current teaching, suggest that Petey's body of knowledge is not predetermined (Gladwin, 1970, 204). Rather, he has remained open and adaptive, incorporating information regarding modern technology, the changing availability of game, a new legal system, evolving land use policy, and the general conditions of a new independent Belizean society.

As a Creole storyteller living in a Mayan homeland, Petey manifests the local speech act framework of conversation interspersed with storytelling (Burns, 1983; Bierhorst, 1988). His narratives are polished beads spaced along the shining threads of lively conversation. Always a story at the ready, Petey looks for and enjoys the sociability of storytelling with friends and visitors. His stories are gifts, treasures in their own right, that are given freely. In discussing the potential publishing of his stories, Petey indicates that he has no proprietary interest in his tales. (He would in fact be reimbursed.) Rather,
he states simply, that, should his stories ever gain a print audience, he does not want to be hidden behind a pseudonym. New audiences are always welcome, and he views his stories as a means to entertain, an opportunity to instruct, and as a conduit for making new friends.

**Language and Knowing**

Blood, heat, sweat, discipline, cleanliness (along with a rifle that shoots and brave dogs) are locked in narrative conflict with venom, contamination, defilement, sickness, cunning Jaguars, ferocious wari, and the spells of the *duende* along the banks of Joe Taylor Creek. As story follows story, the vague outlines of ways of knowing, a cognition bred and tempered in the bush, emerges in Petey's chronicle of his own life and the stories of his beloved family mentors. His bush knowledge and morality are tightly fused. Blood bathes the hunter and the hunted; hot, clean blood comes to those who avoid contaminated soil and vipers that slither their bellies on the earth; the blood of game is shed when the disciplined hunter is certain of his prey; the blood of the Lamb washes those who have good hearts and avoid defilement. Deep pools of Amerindian, Eastern, and Western cultural wisdom provide the sources for Petey's eclectic language and sagacity.

As has been documented throughout this chapter, these underlying patterns of generative words and repeated references outline a constructed body of knowledge which has both pragmatic and spiritual dimensions. The Bible and the teachings of the Old Maya fuse into that syncretistic body of spiritual teachings that offers guidance to the bushman who may encounter the devil's vipers, seductive *duendes*, and those masters of the animals who test the discipline of a hunter.
Many of Petey's recurrent images, particularly blood, venom, poison, shooting, and healing, concern substances that mediate between a person's inner and outer worlds. Since blood is a primal consideration throughout the entire corpus of Petey's oral teachings, I focus on its integral presence and significance. Petey pointedly mentions blood with respect to hunting, healing, fever, venom, diet, fruit, cooking, the sun, sexuality, race, genetics, rum, Christ and Calvary.

An example of the inter-relatedness of these references emerged one morning in February 1993. I came by as Petey was discussing a VOA feature story about blood and nutrition with his next door neighbor. As I listened, it became clear that Petey was simultaneously renewing ancient cultural knowledge as well as integrating these new views and information into his referential lattice regarding the physical potency and symbolic nature of blood:

You know when you get hurt in the cold, you feel it more.
When the warm hits that hurt, you don't feel that hurt so much.
That's the reason why we here drink this cane juice liquor. It's like fire.

We are different kind of people. I say a different kind of material - the Colored people, and with some mixture. I heard someone speaking on VOA about the food we eat here- the ways of our blood are more thicker than England, America, India, China. They have different kind[s] of feed than we. The difference isn't the red blood we all have. It's the kind of food that you eat that brings the blood.

They [VOA] were explaining again about this wedding system, you know, sexual parts. They explain a part like this, that the family, well, for instance your sister [pointing to me] and my brother, will live together, as the "royal family." But, they explain that in this time of the world, in these days, the further nation bring the cleaning blood, and your clean blood come to relation and the blood come to the mixing of it. Your blood come to my blood and my blood goes in your blood, and it goes further, further, until it get either lower or it get higher...
Having integrated the new information available to him on the radio into his understanding of the nutrition, intermarriage, and the potency of blood, Petey makes a critical jump beyond the VOA material and beyond the boundaries of the immediate conversation to the spiritual domain of Christianity and bush wisdom. In the course of his ongoing analysis, an understanding emerges that considerable potency and symbolism are embedded in the fig, a local fruit with Biblical resonances. For Petey, the fig serves as a "natural blood maker" and functions as a "conjunction," a clean food that feeds iguanas and perhaps nourishes the soul:

Well, the Lord says that all blood comes from Calvary. Well, I say a word -- do you know it, the fig, the fruit tree we have in this country? The fig is a natural, natural blood maker. If I had a fig here, I could show you. I don't have the time, but in two more days from now, I'll bring a few figs for you and I will cut the figs. If I cut the fig, I will show you the blood of Christ is inside the fig.

Sometimes, there are ones that eat that fig you know. I will teach you my understanding and experience. Now I look back - iguana feed off figs. When you cut an iguana head off and you roast the body over a fire, then you take off the thick skin... You wash it, parboil it to skin it and soak it in vinegar, and all that time the liver and the heart - you put those in a dish of cold water. And when that meat part softly, nearly time to eat, you look on that heart, pumping. The heart, sometime an hour and a half, two hours, is still pumping...

All the animals that feed off figs - they are very hard to go through their hearts. I think about these things! The Lord said, the Bible said, "The last sign I will give on earth is the fig tree."

The Book said trust in the tree. Which one is the tree? That tree? The tree had the fruit... I look on all these things and I see the leaf and he speak to me in the herb. And when I think about the people on earth, I sort of think of him first. How is it that the Lord is so?

There is, what we call, the conjunction of it - the word is powerful. We no have no power in our blood. His blood is carried on. His blood is clear and in everyone.
Petey weaves a consistent internal logic through his analysis of blood and nutrition. Good food offers rich blood and vital life to living things, and the blood of the Lord provides a superior nourishment potentially to "everyone." Blood interconnects various domains of Petey's life and consciousness, emerging as part of the underlying superstructure of his bush wisdom that encompasses healing, diet, bush craft, race, genetics, and spirituality. Petey clearly indicates the cleansing sign value of blood, both in the Biblical references and the composition of the fig. Significantly, this passage not only interweaves numerous blood references but it also reinforces the unity of his body of knowledge by reaffirming his opening commentary from our very first meeting when Petey first taught me about worms and the fruit of the trees. The scope of this paper limits the full analysis of this dense symbolism, however, I believe that Petey's brief monologue is indicative of the continual refining process of listening, consideration, speaking, and conversation by which he integrates new insights into his corpus of bush and life wisdom.

The Cultural Renewal of his Bushcraft

While much of his storytelling, particularly with peers and close friends, is for pleasure, his reputation and monetary needs are such that Petey welcomes any visitor who stops by for advice, help, or a small job, situations that provide even more opportunities for storytelling. He is willing to interpret the numerological significance of a sexual dream as quickly as he will sharpen a machete. He can carve a rifle stock, craft an iguana-skin banjo or fabricate a fishing gig. He willingly shares his red, pink, and yellow ginger, as well as a host of transplanted herbs.
Perhaps a small, glass Nescafe coffee jar serves as the best image of Petey's ability to renew and innovate, as well as his continued prestige within the community. In February 1995, I met Brian, a seventeen year old Garifuna man who was preparing to tend his first plantation. Although a norther had been blowing for days, and locals were grabbing a rare second blanket, Brian was determined to spend his first night alone in the bush. Significantly, he sought out Petey for his advice and assistance about a number of things including his need for a kerosene lantern. Without hesitation, Petey went outside to rummage in his trash heap and soon picked out a used Nescafe coffee jar. With a small file he punctured a hole in the lid, then shaped a small chimney out of scrap metal, which he then wrapped around an old piece of shirt which served as a wick. It was a simple chore but one that demonstrated a resourcefulness that young Brian did not yet possess.

I listened as Petey and Brian spoke of the coming night and Brian's wish to keep a "fire hot" and a light burning. They both reviewed sounds of the night and various ways to insure a full supply of dry wood, no matter what the weather should bring. Petey's final advice to Brian encompassed much of the richness of this man and his teachings. "Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid," he told Brian. "Don't be afraid of yourself!"

Petey instructed Brian with the same improvisational skills, economy of motion, adaptability, and directness that I witnessed in many of his storytelling performances, and which I suspect derive in part from the very same proficiencies that are essential to the professional hunter. Petey learned many of these skills from his mentors, and his working life provides ample documentation of their successful cultural transmission. In certain storytelling performances, as when he uses his bamboo cane to represent a measuring device, machete and rifle, Petey also manifests the same fluid
improvisational and efficient movements necessary to the bush hunter. Petey's dramatic performances continually affirm and evoke the personal skills he alludes to in his hunting stories.

Though Petey has not been able to actively hunt in recent years, he maintains his special authority as a hunter and bush guide, even as waves of technological innovation sweep down over southern Belize. For Petey, cultural renewal is a personal phenomenon as he adapts his knowledge and skills to the evolving regional developments, as well as to his own declining health. Secure in his peers' acceptance and called upon to share his bushcraft with a younger generation, Petey remains poised in an inversion of power that is special to a professional hunter. Though he had bosses in the army, at plantations, and on the hunt, he has often occupied a position of authority with regard to men of greater economic and social status, including white men. Petey not only offers his young Belizean acquaintances an example of someone who has acquired and adapted a body of specialized skills, he is one Creole man who has stepped out of a posture of colonial docility and servitude. The sum total of his stories, drawn and renewed from diverse traditions, is the life history of a man who stands as an equal or better to anyone who ever entered the bush. Though he is intensely proud of particular hunts and kills, he rarely brags about his special status. The performance of his stories for those who choose to listen is the historical drama of one family and one man's journey toward emancipation in a colonial society.
Educational Implications

Petey's life story, typical of many Toledo residents who have labored in the bush and sought to understand its ways, offers young Belizeans a role model of a knowledgeable, skillful, and ethical hunter. A close examination of his qualifications as a bush guide reveals his equally impressive understanding of the guiding forces of ancestral and earth spirits. When Petey's life and stories are entered into text, they will comprise a model of ideological literacy concerning a man whose life is grounded in the deep traditions of Toledo's diverse people and representative of their ecological principles of adaptability, wildlife management and sustainability.

Petey is a marvelous performer, endlessly utilizing his wide range of performative devices including his voice, hands, eyes, expression, gesture, and improvisational use of found objects. His language use provides remarkable documentation of the evolving state of Belizean Creole, reaching back to archaic terms, borrowing from African, Indian and Spanish linguistic sources, and newly enriched by the technical language broadcast by the VOA. In addition to the transcription of his stories, I believe that teachers might consider inviting Petey and other skilled storytellers to perform before their classes. Furthermore, educators can now consider preserving such performances on video tape for future reference. As North Americans are able to view the impressive past performances of Hepburn, Brando, Nicholson, and Foster on video, so too Belizeans in the future might use this newly accessible medium to refer to the high performative standards of their eminent storytellers.
CHAPTER NINE

ANCESTRAL VOICES:
RENEWING COMMUNITY BEYOND THE PALL OF DEATH

"Aniha warasa luma wereru -- walagan--
Ederegeruti woun
Hanagine bugaha warugutinu
hama wayunagu."

"Here is our culture, our heritage, our language,
Our legacy delivered to us from our grandfathers
and our ancestors" (Chuluha Dan).

In this chapter, I document and analyze a number of conversations
embedded with personal narratives that demonstrate the emergent character
of Garifuna community discourse and their profound reliance on ancestral
spirits. Parents and elders are concerned with a variety of challenging
community issues, particularly the need for the sustainable transmission of
cultural knowledge through education and by young people engaging in
traditional labor. The survival of the Garifuna language, especially among the
young, is an issue one is likely to hear discussed wherever Garinagu gather to
consider threats to their cultural heritage. Lastly, a major source of Garifuna
community cohesion and spirituality concerns their mourning and burial
rites. Through these rituals, Garinagu continue to re-form as a community
that extends across the hemisphere, and, in their beliefs, beyond the pall of
death.
The story of the modern day Garinagu is the history of an agricultural and sea-going people who were newly born in this hemisphere out of the turbulence of colonization. Emanating from the Orinoco and Magdalena delta regions of South America's north coast, Arawaks and Caribs migrated northward as early 5000 BC (Rouse, 1992). In 1220 AD the Caribs invaded and conquered the Arawaks on both the Lesser and Greater Antilles (S. Cayetano, 1993, 19). Experienced in guerrilla warfare tactics, the Caribs battled the Spanish, French and British from 1500 until 1796. On occasions when slaves escaped on the island of St. Vincent, they blended their blood and cultural experiences with the Caribs. Ultimately, they came to call themselves Garinagu (the people) who spoke Garifuna (the language).

Due to the constant incursions of European powers and the diseases that they carried, many Caribs sought refuge in their ancestral homelands on the South American mainland. In the late eighteenth century the Garinagu carried on a protracted guerrilla struggle with both the French and the British under the leadership of Joseph Chatoyer. The native forces were ultimately defeated, and, in 1797, the English navy shipped the surviving Garinagu to Roatan Island off the northwest coast of Honduras, just to the southeast of Belize. Skilled as a sea-going people and led by their 'captains,' or chiefs (Gonzalez, 1988, 48), the Garinagu immediately set out to explore and settle on the Central American mainland.

In November 1823, Garinagu landed in modern day Dangriga, an event commemorated each year on November 19th as Garifuna Settlement Day. Over the next hundred years the Garinagu, "consolidated their settlements and spread from Dangriga to Seine Bight, Monkey River, Punta Negra, Punta
Gorda, and Barranco" (S. Cayetano, 1990). Despite numerous attempts by the British to expel the Garinagu, they endured and made their living on the sea, by cutting in the forest and occasionally engaging in smuggling (Gonzalez, 1969, 24).

In the early 1920's Thomas Vincent Ramos, a visionary Garinagu leader, founded the Carib Development and Sick Aid Society (CDS), an organization that sparked the development and consolidation of Garinagu regional efforts regarding proper burial of the dead, cultural promotion, health facilities, and Garinagu reunification. From the 1950's until 1981, the Garinagu actively participated in the Belizean nationalist and independence movements.

The Garifuna Community Today

Since the days of their ancestral diaspora, the Garinagu have been a people in geographical and cultural flux. They have always been a minority population in modern nations states, and, as if to adapt, they have traditionally faced Eastward and embraced the sea, living by and from the Caribbean. Each day Garifuna fishermen supply most of the day's catch in P.G. In Barranco, further to the South, a few villagers still forsake the internal combustion engine and fish from sail boats, while Leonard (Petey) Pillo's twenty-seven foot dug-out canoe ferries villagers weekly to the P. G. market. Throughout the years many Garinagu have also found work by shipping out with the merchant marine.

As this century ends, a modern exodus of the Garinagu continues, and economic migrants have established sizable Garifuna communities in Brooklyn, Chicago, and Los Angeles. Today, there is a constant flow of transnational traffic between the US and the settlements along the east coast of Central America. Many of the new migrants retain close ties to their
ancestral homeland, and John Paulino, the eighty-seven year old dean of Toledo teachers, notes that he has never worried about the out-migration by members of his community because, "Everyone always prepared a little house and eventually returned from abroad."

Though Dangriga has the largest Garifuna population in Belize, and is historically the fountainhead of their ethnic history and culture, Punta Gorda is a key Garifuna settlement and the center of a web of family relationships that extends northward to Hopkins, Seine Bight and Dangriga, and south along the coast to Barranco and the Garifuna community in Livingston, Guatemala.

Today, there is much talk among the Garinagu about the benefits, adaptations and losses that are incurred each year as change comes quickly to towns such as P.G. and Barranco. In the interests of documenting traditional cultural wisdom and modern adaptations, senior district educators, who are almost exclusively Garifuna, have introduced me to community members in P.G. and Barranco who are deeply concerned with cultural renewal issues. In this chapter, I highlight those concerns that emerged repeatedly while recording stories and testimony for the textbook project. As both a literary device and a real-life vantage point, I primarily situate my documentation and analysis from the site of one family's hub of activity, Miss Annie's porch.

In this chapter, unlike most of the other storytelling profiles that focus on individual narrators, I attempt to capture the vital community discourses that converge on Annie's porch, just as tropical butterflies gather round a spoor. It is significant that in all my dealings with the Garifuna community, I was never introduced to or met someone identified as a storyteller. On the other hand, I never met a community member who did not weave stories in and out of their statements and conversations. Among the Garinagu, there are
certain ritual times such as wakes and holidays when rehearsed stories are performed before audiences. Likewise, the recent printing of a number of Garifuna literary works (Castillo, 1994; Lewis, 1994) indicates that storytelling is not a lost art.

While I primarily describe specific conversations that we had on and around Miss Annie's porch, I also affirm that these discussions regarding heartfelt concerns are truly representative of a wider Garifuna discourse concerning critical cultural renewal issues. Testimony and documentation by national Garifuna leaders, scholarly research, and my own brief visits to Barranco, Dangriga, and Livingston confirm the widespread community concern regarding ongoing training in traditional skills, Garifuna language renewal, and the maintenance of long-standing bereavement ceremonies.

**The World from Miss Annie's Porch**

Anna Lopez has viewed much of life's panorama from her porch. She has spent five decades plus, laboring under a tropical sun, enduring diseases, the deaths of loved ones, painful arthritis and hurricanes. Through it all, Anna, Miss Annie, has remained an exceptionally gentle and positive woman. No one is more caring of her children, grandchildren, relatives, community members and friends. Some afternoons, as she does the washing in her tattered house-dress, it is clear that she literally does give her family members the clothes off her back.

First light over the Caribbean Sea is visible each morning from Annie's porch. By midday, the northern third of the 5' x 10' porch eludes the heat from the nearest star. In the afternoons, her tiny, aging house, which may sleep up to twenty people, blocks the torrid rays. One can always "catch a breeze" on Annie's porch, as the trade winds endlessly meander in off the...
Gulf, occasionally supplanted by the more furious line-squalls. Annie's porch is a threshold, the liminus where the worlds of family, friends and community intersect and interact. Traditional Garifuna lifeways are renewed each day on Annie's porch, the spot from which she greets each new day.

In the early morning, Annie's porch serves as a jungle gym for her grandchildren and a staging area for the day's schooling at St. Peter Claver. The girls brush, plait, and tie their hair on the porch, while the young boys run in and out from play, while gobbling a banana or a piece of coconut bread. When breakfast is over, Annie will take her seat by the porch rail for the first time that day, relax her aching legs and greet friends on the way to work or returning from mass. By 7:30 she's off to market and her work as a housekeeper.

Just after noon, relaxing on her chair, she arranges her long cutting board across the porch corner to scale fish or peel ground food for lunch. One such noon in the summer of 1992, as I sit on the porch and relax, Miss Annie takes out the hanna, a heavy mahogany pounder shaped like a swollen baseball bat. Grasping the hanna with both hands, she begins to beat plantain to a pulp for the traditional Garifuna meal of hudutu. I ask her if she will allow me to tape her recipe. Though she is shy and usually does not like to be taped, she apparently sees little harm in recording what seems to be an impersonal account. As her daughter and three grandchildren surround us, she intermixes instructions for the preparation with a spontaneous and broader commentary on survival, her recipe for life.

Although district educators have indicated their preference for transcribing stories in a traditional paragraph format, I present this chapter's oral narratives in an ethnopoetic mode in order to demonstrate this alternative form of textual presentation:
We Garifuna,
we eat hudutu ...with fish.
Hudutu is when you cook the plantain in water
and when this plantain has done cooked
you take it out
and put it in a big bowl to get cool out.
Then you beat that plantain and mix it with the coconut milk.
We have a special, what we Garifuna call hanna to beat that plantain.
When we get the banana, we cook that;
we boil it, and we call it tapou.
You peel that banana and you wash it,
and then you cook it in coconut milk or water.
Some people don't like the coconut milk;
they want the banana with water and salt.
They fry the fish
and they fry the onions and have it with the tapou.
Then we have the banana that we grate it
and you make bundiga.
You got to fire a pot with coconut milk
and you take that banana
and you drop it in that coconut milk to boil.
You can eat the bundiga with fish soup or a stew chicken.
My children don't like the bundiga.
They want the rice
and the beans
and the chicken -Oh, that's a dinner,
but not the cooked banana, the tapou.

You know you have to learn to eat all kinds of things.
Sometimes, you can't afford to buy the rice and the beans
and the chicken,
but you have a banana at home,
you have a coconut at home,
you have a piece of fish.
You're going to live for that day!

When you have something to eat - you go on.
I train my children, tell them that life is hard.
Sometimes you want a piece of chicken and you don't have it.
You want to go to the store and buy five pounds of rice
and you can't get it.

When my mother was living - she had a farm
and she feed us all from that same hill
that fed other people from Punta Gorda.
Everybody had a farm then
but now we getting lazy.
But when you have a little farm
and you have bananas and you have sweet potatoes -
you got the coco, you got the sweet cassava,
you can make life.

Perhaps she only expected to relate methods and ingredients for *hudutu*,
but, as on many other occasions with Toledo narrators, Miss Annie enriches
the recipe's technical details with family history and soulful advice. Her
improptu description of the recipe offers insights into the particulars of
daily survival, as well as her philosophy of life. In the tiny realm of her
porch, Annie holds our rapt attention, as she weaves Garifuna lore, criticisms
of finicky tastes, and a brief portrait of her mother into this set of simple
instructions. Throughout this mini-performance, the medium of physical
labor is also the message, as she pounds the dense plantain, occasional drops
of sweat joining the coconut milk in the hardwood container. Traditional
wisdom is a major ingredient in today's recipe and instruction for her family
members and visitor.

After lunch and the children's return to school, there is a brief period
most days when the porch is Annie's 'salon,' a time when friends stop by to share
the day's news of family and the community. Annie may hail a neighbor down the street if they receive a call on her phone. Then, there are numerous afternoon chores, followed by a light supper and often a visit from her eldest son. As friends and family age, some evenings may be given over to bereavement ceremonies. Finally, before retiring, Annie takes a last look from her porch on Punta Gorda town.
Verbal Arts and Work

On Miss Annie's porch that summer day, three generations of Garifuna women gathered as the medium for cultural transmission and renewal. Together with one visiting US teacher, they briefly considered routine food preparation in the larger context of family lore and community wisdom. As with many ethnic groups, Garinagu often interweave lessons for life along with the task-specific instructions that are taught as people farm, fish, cook, and carry out ritual acts. Currently, many Garifuna leaders are focusing on the importance of social conversation and technical instruction, particularly as young people join elders in these tasks.

A contemporary example of both cultural renewal activities and the transmission of cultural values to the younger generations is found in the local preparation of cassava bread. In the research section, I alluded to a visit in 1992 with a group of women in P.G. who still produced the Garifuna staple of cassava bread by a ritual of arduous manual labor. On a summer afternoon in 1991, Margarita, one of the group's organizers, thought back on her formative days:

*My grandmother used to make the cassava bread a lot. Being I was around her, I got interested in it and decided to follow her. Her grandmother used to do it too. I grew up right here in this yard. Now, I'm back home.*

*For about thirty odd years I was away from here and while I was away I didn't do anything about service like this. I did other work. But, when I came back, it springs right back.*

In 1993, Margarita and her friends, who accompanied their grating and pounding of the roots with rhythmic call-and-response singing, ceased their production due to various family illnesses. After a two year hiatus, I learn
that a new group of women has begun to prepare the bread in the traditional manner.

One evening in 1995, I have the opportunity to follow up on the cassava production with Mirta Arzu, Annie’s next door neighbor. In addition to family duties as the mother of seven children and a wage earner, Mirta is actively concerned with Garifuna cultural renewal issues. When our conversation turns to work, Mirta admits to being weary from five hours of preparing cassava for baking. Within the past year, a female restaurant owner has assembled this new group of women to renew production of the traditional pan-shaped bread. I sit with Mirta after the cassava work session and inquire if she and the other women had sung this day. She describes the vibrant social activity that accompanied their work session:

We didn’t sing today.
We only run a lot of joke with people.
Yeah, we start off
and we’re running jokes,
talking about different things.
And then the sound of the talking,
like this one will answer this one like this,
"It sounds to me like you say such thing,"
and the next one say,
"OH, you think bad about me!
Well, you always say different...
Then everybody start to laugh. [She laughs.]
That’s how they do a running joke,
talking about different things.

Talking about the old times, talking about the ancestors,
their late grandmother, their late-great gran,
how they used to behave,
how they used to treat them when they was little girl.
You know,
and how their grandfather and how their granny
used to treat them,
and the grandfather never liked it when they cooked food,
and they don’t like the food,
so they tell the grandfather they don’t like the food,
and he say, "OK, OK,"
and he give them so and so.
And she say, "Oh no..."
And that's how a lot of arguments start!
Because the grandfather
is trying to please the grandchildren.
You know...
so that's what all the jokes about.

Mirta joyously imitates the various voices, allowing her male listener to 'listen' to these women joking as they work. Then, she subtly shifts time and shares the gentle conflict of the ancestors as they favored their grandchildren, these very women at work. She reflects on the continuity of verbal instruction and shared work that is essential for cultural traditions to be passed on through successive generations. Mirta describes those family members who were essential in her formation as a Garifuna woman:

My grandmother,
my late grandmother,
she used to do it.
She had her own drum, she sing her own songs.
Her three sons can play the drum.
As I say,
she bake her own cassava.
She do everything herself.
I grew up with her.
My grandmother died when I was eleven years old.
You know,
we didn't learn much about it then, at the age of eleven.
But then,
I have my aunt who continued it.
You see,
I still live with my aunt from my mother
and my aunt from my father.
You know, because they let me live with one.

My late uncle, he can make a drum.
He makes some.
Isaac G.,
I think you hear about him.
All right, that’s my uncle, 
he’s my father’s oldest brother. 
Then, you have this Valeria L., she’s in Hopkins. 
She’s a midwife. 
That’s my father’s only sister that live now. 
So, 
they can do all these things. 
My father’s name’s Marcus A.. 
He can play drum, 
he can sing. 
He can do these things.

JK: Which of these things have you learned?

MA: Well me, 
I learned a lot. 
I play the drum, 
I can sing a few songs. I could dance, 
I could grate the cassava, I could plant. 
I can make cocoa, 
I could use hoe for the tall grass. 
I could plant the cassava. 
I could root it out, 
I could bring it UP [excitedly] 
I put it on my back and load my back and bring it to town. 
You know, all these things. 
I plant yampi yam — 
any Garinagu food, I can handle it.

Mirta’s daughter Teresa has joined us on the porch and listens as her mother enthusiastically enumerates “all these things” that she and her relatives can do. Mirta goes on to describe the rigors of their hardscrabble existence by the Caribbean Sea:

I didn’t have the opportunity. 
Since I came here I haven’t been to farm. 
But 
I find people who do it—and then 
sometime they come around 
and ask me if I can go and help them. 
But after awhile, 
it’s a thing that you have been doing before
and for after awhile that you didn't do it
and you tell them your skin all broke up
and all the pain that I feel right now [She laughs.].
Ay, yay, yay, yay, yay —
after hours and hours work!

You know Garinagu food,
Garinagu life is very hard
as with today,
but I don't know.
It is very hard
but maybe that is the way it should be.
You know,
because to get a living you have to work HARD.
Everything that Garinagu eat is very hard [She laughs.].

Cassava you have to work hard.
Plantain you have to work hard on it.
Everything that you have to eat.
If you want a plantain
you have to cook it and beat it.
When you cook rice and beans
you just wash it off and put it in a pot
and you cook and you eat.

For plantain
you have to wait and BEAT plantain until you are tired! [laughing]
You have to go fishing, clean fish --
Everything we eat is very hard.
You have to eat cassava,
you have to work in the bush,
dig the cassava,
work it, bake it, you have to wait over night.

Mirta's animated refrain of "hard work" punctuates her testimony, as does her own antiphonal chorus of laughter. Seasoning her cultural wisdom with mirth and intensity, Mirta's account rises to the level of engaging performance, and it is easy to understand why she will always be a welcome coworker on any arduous task. There can be no more generative words in a cultural vocabulary than the necessity to "work hard." This message of hard work falls on both accepting and rejecting ears. While there is no shortage of
Garifuna youth who are willing to work hard, technology has made its impact with power graters, outboard engines, and cassette recorders. Mirta understands that instruction, encouragement, and intimacy are necessary ingredients in reproducing the cultural heritage of the Garinagu. Mirta explains her methods for instructing her daughter Teresa:

This one here is interested,
the girl who just came a while ago.
She's the only one.

Our children no care who teach them things
if they are not around,
because they go there, go there, go there.
She's interested because she stay around me a lot.

Because in a way,
when you do things,
like the only thing [way]
that they could know what we are doing,
that only if they come around,
like when you go there and do the work.
You have to be around
to see what you are doing.
When they are not interested,
they are not going to care what you told them.

She also suggests that children can be brought up in Garifuna traditions through their participation in ritual events and ethnic holidays:

They have to do a good work on that.
You see,
because over there maybe they have Garinagu,
good Garinagu
who can talk good Garifuna and young children...
You see
because these things here,
you have to go around,
you have to go about
and look for the Garinagu people there.
You have to study more from them.
You have to learn more from the other people there,
otherwise than what you know.
You see,
because you alone can't do it.
You see,
you have to pick up some youths,
especially when it come to the time
when Garifuna Settlement Day,
on the nineteenth of November.
You have to get so much people to sing,
you have to get drums,
you have to get young children
who can run for the Garifuna queen.
You know --
all that.
You have to have somebody who is good to train them.

Mirta's repetitive use of the imperative, "You have to..." (reminiscent of Marianna Cho's "I had to...") indicates her conviction that this is not a case of choices or options. As she testifies to the litany of things that must be done, I can only wonder at the spirit(s) that underlie her convictions. She is a very reflective person and stresses that the path to cultural renewal depends on selecting the proper young people, engaging them in ritual practice, speaking the language, studying – all under the tutelage of a proper teacher, "somebody who is good to train them." Situated as a learner in the cassava rituals and the teacher of her own daughter, Mirta is a strong link in the chain of cultural renewal, a chain that survived and triumphed over slavery's shackles.

Garifuna Language Renewal

There is concern throughout Belize, as in many other locales, about the deterioration and death of ethnic first languages. Living along the Caribbean coast, the region of Belize that is most impacted by visitors, commerce, modern technology, and the mass media, older Garinagu have watched
recent generations of their young forego the speaking of Garifuna in favor of Creole and English. While there apparently has been a long-standing concern about the loss of spoken Garifuna, it is only in recent years that some community members have developed organized language revitalization programs. In this section, I briefly describe the unique linguistic structure of Garifuna, outline some of the various factors involved in the drift to other languages, and lastly examine some of the efforts that community members are making to stimulate the continued use of Garifuna. While this section is more analytically oriented than some, the reliance on historical narratives and dramatic presentations to make meaning serves to encompass this discussion within the broader research boundaries.

The Garifuna language, like the people who speak it, is a relatively new entity in the hemisphere. In the earlier part of this millennia, South American Caribs contested the Tainos, a people with Arawakan roots, for control of the Windward Islands (Rouse, 1992). The Garifuna historian Sebastian Cayetano explains the language formation during this epoch:

The Caribs were great seamen and had the practice of trading with and raiding Arawak islands for women. In the raids, the Arawak males were killed, and the female Arawaks carried away to become wives of these Carib men. In due course this Carib-Arawak union produced offsprings who evolved a spoken language with two versions: the female Arawak version, language of the women; and the male Carib version, each distinct yet mutually comprehensible by both. This pattern has survived to this day in the Central American region (S. Cayetano, 152).

Currently, the Garifuna language is in a state of dynamic change, adjusting the unique flow of its Arawakan and Carib tributaries, as men and women readjust their relationships to contemporary times. Fabian Cayetano explains
some of the difficulties that are occasioned as contemporary speakers adapt their language to the late twentieth century:

Two languages emerged, the Arawakan language and the Carib language, but for some unknown reason the men would insist that their boys would speak the Carib language. It is the language of the men, and the women would insist they speak the Arawakan language. They would insist that the girls speak the Arawakan language. That [Arawakan] is supposed to be the language of the woman.

Even today, that persists in the culture, such that I would say, "Awii." My wife would say, "Nuguya" The 'ou' is supposed to be Carib and the "nuguya" is supposed to be Arawak. But, that too is slowly changing.

In the case of rain, the Carib would say, "Gunubu." The Arawakan would say, "Hua." But, they understand each other. We are not as strict about the man speaking the man's language, Carib, or the women speaking the woman's language, Arawakan.

But, I don't know what women have over men -- the men are letting go of the Carib language and using the women's language, the Arawakan. So, you hear a lot more of the men using the Arawakan language. It's also accepted. But, some of the die-hard old men will scold you for saying, "nuguya," as a man. You're not supposed to say, "nuguya." You're supposed to say, "awii." My generation does not stay with that any more.

Certain Garifuna commentators also indicate that the current state of language flux may contribute to the confusion of identity among young people. While reviewing an early version of this chapter, Fabian Cayetano noted that the community leader Myrtle Palacio maintains that, "An identity problem exists and is mostly experienced by children of Creoles with Garifuna mothers. If the child identifies with the father, than the child is Creole in identity" (5/1995). As will be discussed shortly, blood and language are both perceived locally as prime markers of community identity.

For years, Punta Gorda had been a Garifuna speaking town, though the Garifuna have long been known for their linguistic prowess and willingness
to speak other tongues. Today, the older generation (40-80 years) converses socially in Garifuna, while many also speak fluent Creole and English. While most members of the middle generation (20-40 yrs.) readily understand Garifuna, many have forsaken it in social conversation for Creole and English. Members of the younger generation (1-20 yrs.) are intelligent, articulate, and curious, and like many of their peers on the technological periphery, they are reaching out to embrace the world’s mass culture that is just now being arrayed before them. For younger Garinagu, there is no guarantee that the Garifuna language will be part of their lives.

**Home and School Languages**

Sitting on Annie’s porch, the children and I have talked for hours about music, sports, dance, schools, fashion and politics in Belize and the US. Annie’s grandchildren code-switch from Creole to English and write to penpals in the US, but home and school are both contested linguistic territories for the young. Creole competes with Garifuna at home since many children speak and perhaps think in Creole. However, in the schools young students are asked to sacrifice their rich oral culture and write exclusively in SE. What, at first glance, might seem to be a significant but manageable challenge, can in fact sometimes verge on linguistic puzzlement, as these Garifuna children are being pulled by an array of different languages and dialects. In addition to Garifuna, Creole, and English, Black English and mass media slang exert their cultural pulls on the young, while the Roots-Reggae culture of Jamaica competes for influence and recognition. Spinning through this constellation of languages and dialects, it is little wonder that the children on Annie’s porch are somewhat confused by parents, teachers, and cultural role models as they attempt to navigate their way in this linguistic universe.
These conflicting pulls by the unitary language, the street language, and the home language are not new phenomena. Many older Garinagu remember back to the indignities that were dispensed to those who dared to speak Garifuna in school at an earlier time, a situation similar to the punishments meted out in Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) schools in the US West (Momaday, 1976). The traditional discounting of the native cultures is also reminiscent of the cultural prejudice described by Heath (1983) in her analysis of speaking and learning in Tracktown. These strong pulls of competing languages add to students' confusion about how to express themselves in a textual fashion in schools where SE is the sole written medium.

Paths for Language Renewal

Concentrated in coastal communities and possessing a history of cosmopolitan interchange with the outside world, the Garinagu have perceived the gradual erosion of their native tongue and are perhaps the most active ethnic group locally that is engaged in the cultural renewal of their language. While there is no current consensus regarding the best path toward the renewal of Garifuna, various individuals and groups are encouraging the renewed use of the language at home and for reading. There are other Garinagu who are also promoting some degree of Garifuna language instruction as part of their children's educational experience. The neighbors who meet and converse at Annie's porch present a microcosm of these contemporary efforts.

A close friend and mentor of Miss Annie's, Miss Antonia Sanchez is a Garifuna elder and an active member of her political party. She is outspoken within her community about the necessity of speaking Garifuna in the home, as well as the merits of fluency in several languages. Even at an advanced age,
she is so busy that it took me three trips to P.G., until she had time for a protracted discussion. Throughout our conversations Miss Antonia always directly answers a question or clearly outlines a point in a systemic fashion and then goes on to illustrate her contention by personal experiences. While she is more fluent with the abstract analysis of politics and social issues than some other Garifuna elders, she explicitly filters all of her analytical positions through her personal history and experience.

One leisurely afternoon in February 1995, Miss Antonia reflects on her own trilingual upbringing:

When I was a girl,
I though I was a Honduran.
My father used to work in Honduras,
a chief clerk.
He had a cousin who was a teacher,
a Spanish teacher in Honduras,
and my mother is Garifuna.
My daddy
when he came home
talked to us in English.
When his bosses would make parties for the children,
they would invite us.

Cause he was the chief clerk,
they always invite his children.
So,
he had to talk to us in English,
so,
when we get among those Americans,
those people over there,
we can communicate with them.

Our aunt take us to school and talk to us in Spanish.
My mother talk to us in Garifuna.
So,
when I found myself,
I talk three languages.
Right now, Auntie coming home,
she talk to us in Spanish,
now and again Garifuna,
because she took us to school, 
and when we meet the Spanish, 
we would talk Spanish. 
Our daddy knew that when we were invited, 
or when the family was invited, 
we talk English. 
At home we talk Garifuna. 
So, 
I don't see why the Garifuna cannot talk Garifuna 
today at home.

Multilingual since her youth, Miss Antonia represents that segment of 
her community who believes that people must return to speaking Garifuna as 
their home language, what she calls, "the mother language." She cites the 
Toledo Mayans as peoples who have maintained their primary ethnic 
language, while learning SE and Creole through the schools, mass media, and 
by participating in the larger national society. She is harsh in her criticism of 
those, including friends such as Miss Annie, who do not speak Garifuna at 
home. Rocking that afternoon in her small cozy living room, decorated with 
photographs of family and political leaders, Antonia enacts a small drama to 
demonstrate how she raises the Garifuna language issue with the children 
who come to her bearing small tailoring jobs:

I do a little sewing. 
When the children will come here, 
"Auntie, me ma said..." 
I say, "Not here child. Not at all. 
Who's your mother?" 
"Auntie Annie" 
"Go tell Annie 
to talk in Garifuna before you come in this house. 
Go and tell Annie 
to tell you what to tell me in Garifuna. 

I am no Creole, 
your granny is no Creole. 
Your grandpa is no Creole.
Go tell Annie

They will come
and they will stand up there,
look at me
and I look at them.
They have to tell me in Garifuna,
otherwise, no business!

I am very stern about that.
I sent Annie's grandchildren from here back home.

[She spontaneously does both parts of a short dialogue between a child and Miss Annie.]

"Annie,
I don't want to go there
because she make me talk Garifuna."

"Garifuna?"
"Mmm, hmm."
"You go to Miss Antonia,
you better talk Garifuna there,
you know
because Miss Antonia Garifuna.
And when you come in to Auntie,
say hello in Garifuna."
I accept Garifuna
because you are a Garifuna.

You talk to me in Creole.
You are not Creole!

I'm very strict about that.
They do it.
That's why I say
if the parents would talk to them in Garifuna too,
demand answers in Garifuna,
they would.
They would.

Antonia is a skilled performer, shifting in and out of various voices to indicate the ebb and flow of conversation, whining like a small child and sternly pronouncing her own point of view, almost to the point of mild self satire! Antonia's mini-drama represents a heartfelt response to the fact that

239

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
many of the younger generation no longer learn Garifuna in the home. She is concerned with ethnic identity, insisting, "I am no Creole. Your granny is no Creole." Implicit in her dramatic critique is the belief that language and ethnic identity are intimately related. She is emphatic that any confusion regarding language and ethnic identity should be avoided. She brackets her small drama by insisting that elder Garifuna are not Creoles, and then at the end makes it clear to the "representative grandchild" that, "You are not Creole!"

Poised at the hub of community activity, Miss Antonia is one of many Garifuna elders who promote reflection and action concerning the renewal of the Garifuna language. While other people are taking different approaches, Miss Antonia is representative of the teachers, store keepers, laborers, and family leaders who evidence both the high level of concern and the proactive moves needed to promote and demand the use of Garifuna among the young.

**Community Language Planning**

While numerous Garinagu maintain their language on a home and social basis, other community members are acting in a more concerted fashion, making use of their affiliation with the National Garifuna Council to promote active programs for renewing the use of spoken Garifuna, and beyond that, a new Garifuna literacy. Although the post-independence decision to continue with English as the lingua franca limits the use of ethnic first languages in the broader society, there are significant countervailing forces throughout Belize that support movements for cultural and language renewal.

One significant impetus for the renewal of the local native languages has been the decisions on the part of the Anglican and Catholic churches to
utilize the vernacular in the celebration of certain liturgical services. The
daily service at St. Peter Claver is recognizable as a Catholic Mass, but
rhythmic drumming, the image of a black Jesus, and the use of Garifuna for
hymn singing clearly defines the cultural impression of the Garifuna
community. Since the majority of Garinagu are Catholic, the church's
inclusion of their language, as well as other cultural signs, has undoubtedly
contributed to the status of Garifuna within the community, though in
typical Belizean multilingual fashion, the actual liturgy is spoken in English.

Currently, the broader issue of Garifuna cultural values and church
teachings is another area where the Garifuna language is both affirmed and
hotly contested. Solomon Castillo, a community leader, offers this analysis of
the potential for continued cooperation between the church and the ethnic
community, as well as probing questions regarding the broader issues of
language and community identity:

I would hope that our Garifuna bishop would use the
opportunity to really investigate the whole culture and affirm
his own roots, find what is good about this hybrid, Catholicism
and Garifuna, and say, "This is good. Let's continue it." But, he
has affirmed the Garifuna mass, the language plus the Catholic
ritual that goes along with it. He doesn't feel comfortable with
the dugu because the Catholic Church with the earlier priests
have condemned the dugu as paganism.

I always speak my mind. If we want to get rid of that label, we
have to investigate and tell our people that this is good; it
should be continued. Otherwise, we will continue labeling
ourselves as no good and that can give confusing messages to
our children and just abandon the culture along with the
language.

Solomon follows in a long line of spokespeople from the periphery
regarding the imposition of identity by whites from the metropolis. In the
tradition of Caribbean critics such as Cesaire (Kennedy, 1975) and Fanon
(1967), he challenges the mask of "paganism" that has been imposed on the Garinagu because of their celebration of traditional bereavement rites such as the *dugu*. Throughout their history of independence and resistance to colonial authority, Europeans and North Americans have branded the Garinagu as cannibals, "Sambos," and pagans. Shakespeare's "The Tempest," is only one in a long catalogue of Western literary and historical works that have promoted a dehumanized image of the Carib and Arawakan peoples. The danger, as Fanon suggests, is that people so labeled may tend to internalize these labels and so unthinkingly consider themselves in the prejudiced terms of their oppressors.

A problematic aspect of the Garifuna identity concerns membership in the Catholic Church. Most Garifuna are raised to be loyal and devout Catholics, and this religious affiliation is an integral part of their cultural identity in Belize. Castillo is objecting to the continued imposition of the negative label of "pagan" by the Garifuna bishop who represents another outside institution. Instead, Solomon is promoting the full integration of both the Garifuna and Catholic identities. He explicitly states that to fail in this integration is to risk abandoning the "culture along with the language."

*And of course we are experiencing that today. More Garinagu are speaking Creole than Garifuna and that is due to the pressure that is being brought to bear on Garifuna from the Creole ruling class. In an effort to escape from that situation, the Garifuna has taken up Creole, but there is still many things that Garifuna is not comfortable, even as Creole.*

In modern times, the Garinagu have not only had to contend with the colonial legacy and the long term attempt at the "domination of the mental universe" (Ngugi 1981,1988, 17), there has also been the need to navigate culturally and politically in a society where Creoles have long been the
dominant political group. Sebastian Cayetano stresses that the Garifuna language is being lost in five of the six Belizean Garifuna communities, and,

Associated with this crisis is the problem of low self esteem among Garinagu, and the psycho-social problem of acceptance by the Creole dominant group. Apparently, for the Garifuna person to feel belonged in the Creole society, he/she has to shed and deny being Garifuna and just abandon anything that has to do with Garifuna roots. I find this unacceptable, yet painful just even to imagine it (156).

As Cayetano suggests, there are intense pressures on Garifuna youth, not only to absorb US, British, and Jamaican mass culture, but also these same young people receive the message that they must deny their cultural heritage if they are to be accepted in the broader national and mass cultures:

So, there is an effort now to revive "Garifunaness" and to put Garifuna where he belongs. A serious effort is now underway by the National Garifuna Council, that was born way back in 1981, with the Garifuna dictionary. Roy [Cayetano] is really pushing the Garifuna dictionary and it is a conscious effort to contribute towards making Garifuna literature as well as towards the promotion of Garifuna literacy at home, as well as in school (157).

In response to this linguistic confusion and erosion, Garifuna leaders in Dangriga have recently introduced Garifuna in both Infant 1 and 2 classes. Students study Garifuna for one half hour a day at Holy Ghost and Sacred Heart schools where it is a graded subject. This educational endeavor has immediately created pressure to develop additional Garifuna texts, and writers such as Felecia Hernandez have responded by producing a Garifuna pre-primer, Narenga ("I Say") for this program. In years to come, district educators plan to implement Sebastian Cayetano's design for workshops on the teaching of the Garifuna language. Ultimately, educational leaders in

243

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
southern Belize hope to expand Garifuna language instruction to Georgetown, Seine Bight, and Barranco.

These activities parallel efforts such as the recent publication of the Garifuna Dictionary written by Roy Cayetano. Presently, the Garinagu have an ambitious publishing program, one that began with the Garifuna Bible, and now includes five titles that concern history, biography and poetry, some of which are bilingual. In addition, cultural performances by traditional dance groups and the availability of musical performances on audio cassette complement the efforts of Radio Belize to keep ethnic first languages vibrant and a cultural ideal within Belize. Similarly, the use of Garifuna at ceremonial occasions such as Settlement Day presents the language as a cultural ideal.

As of yet, there are no clear answers for the dancing, singing, and playing children on Miss Annie's porch. As many Garifuna youth move to Creole as a first language, an assertive political awareness is emerging within the Belizean Garifuna communities. While one single point of view has not and may not prevail, the concern is deep and felt throughout the community that measures must be taken to renew the everyday use of their language. The educators, cultural leaders, political proponents, and everyday people who discuss daily events on their porches are concerned about the danger that their language may one day evaporate like rainy season puddles in a mid-day sun.

**Giving Voice to the Ancestral Spirits**

Bereavement rites function as a centripetal force that binds the members of the Garifuna community together. Each generation of Garifuna elders has
maintained and passed down both a prescribed protocol of mourning, funeral rites, and memorial services that occur within days and weeks immediately following the death of a loved one. Garifuna tradition has also provided for those occasions when there is strong feeling or belief among the living that an ancestor is troubled in the afterlife. A number of different rites are available to family members to assuage the spiritual unrest with the guidance of the buye (a spiritualist) and the assistance of the community (Gonzalez, 1988; Kerns, 1983; Valentine, 1989). Of particular interest here is the range of community discourse, including language choices, that is directed toward both the adaptation and renewal of these rituals for today's changing social and technological conditions.

Storytelling, singing, testimonials, ritual performance, and giving voice to the ancestors comprise an array of verbal arts that are integral to these ceremonial activities. Dreaming and dream interpretation play major roles in ascertaining the nature of an ancestor's unrest and the need for an appropriate ceremony. Of necessity, all the rituals must be renewed orally since rites are not performed according to a written code. English and Spanish are spoken ritually during the nine-night wake and other ceremonies, but the Garifuna language must be renewed as a living force within the community for ancestors only reveal their messages in their traditional tongue!

In her study, *Women and the Ancestors*, Virginia Kerns (1983) describes the special role of older women in maintaining and renewing these essential rites. In recent decades, there has been a passing over of responsibilities from elder males to their female counterparts. While the performance of burial rites has never been the exclusive responsibility of either gender, a number of factors, both internal and external to the Garifuna community, have brought about this significant change-over in responsibilities.
Informed sources in Punta Gorda claim that Kerns lived in a coastal Garifuna village situated between Punta Gorda and Dangriga. In addition to the prescribed rites that occur immediately following the death of a loved one, Kerns and other researchers have also documented the summoning agency of dream visits by ancestral spirits to living family members. Her scholarly inquiry, along with testimony by members of the National Garifuna Council, provides two bodies of knowledge that triangulate with the testimony of women in Punta Gorda who I have interviewed regarding dreaming and bereavement rites. While progressive dreaming and spirit discourse within dreams are not always associated with bereavement rites, there is often an essential interplay. The dream voices of spirits are frequently associated with the call for post-burial bereavement ceremonies.

Virtually all the testimony and evidence that I have collected since 1991 indicates that mourning rites which give voice to the spirits, as practiced in P.G. in the mid-1990's, are essentially the same as those outlined in earlier documentation. Concurrently, it appears that certain minor adaptations have taken place as the rites are performed in this particular time and place. In this section, I will highlight the oral narratives regarding dreaming and bereavement rites by three bearers of Garifuna tradition: Miss Antonia, Miss Mirta, and Miss Annie.

Bereavement Rites

As a Garifuna elder and an outspoken proponent of cultural renewal, Miss Antonia is as willing to share her intimate experiences with outsiders as she is to chide friends like Annie about the need to speak the Garifuna language. In accord with the local tradition of verbal arts, Miss Antonia intersperses conversations with the liberal use of anecdotes and stories. One afternoon our
roles have switched, as she presses me about issues of faith and belief. I admit to being open to unseen spiritual forces but state that I had never personally made any spiritual contacts in my dreams. In responding to her friendly interrogation, I share with Miss Antonia the powerful feelings I had two days before when I visited the Laguna school:

JK: I went to Laguna the other day and they planted flowers, they planted marigolds and zinnias. And zinnias were my father's favorite flower, and as a young boy -- I grew up in the city, but we would sometimes in the summer go up to the country. The first thing he would do was plant zinnias. When I saw the zinnias, I just...

AS: You sense your father there

JK: He was there...[I intend to say "in spirit or memory." She continues before I finish the thought.] in Laguna...

AS: YES, I know. He was there!

JK: It was so powerful...

AS: Mmm, hmmm. And, they are so powerful. They are.

She continues to stress the immediacy of the spirits by offering this short narrative about a spirit's dream visit:

And sometimes ago,
a cousin of ours,
not knowing how my mother called me --
this one live in Belize,
our relative, yes.
But she didn't know
how my mother called me when I was young.

She called me,
my parents called me, Lelu.
So,
this woman in Belize City
dreamt my mother,
saying that something is wrong about us,
something is going to happen...
she don't worry about Mary,
but about Lelu!
So, she asked, "Who is Lelu here?"

Antonia--Lelu!
Yes, it was the first time she know that I was called Lelu.

So, when she came down to P.G.,
she told, "I never know they call you Lelu."
She say, "Your mother told me that! [She laughs.] in dream."

So, they're alive.
We believe.
There are many of us.
There are still some who don't believe,
but sometimes when things happen to them,
they do not believe.
But eventually,
seeing what is taking place to them,
they are forced to believe,
and sometimes
the dream that they dream,
they have to believe.

Miss Antonia recounts the intimate act of naming as the salient point of this dream. The dreamer is not only credited with spanning the long miles from Belize City to P.G. in her dream state, she also apparently was capable of reaching back in time to retrieve Antonia's girlhood nickname. Antonia offers this dream as confirmation of the power of dreaming and the afterlife of the ancestors, exclaiming, "So, they're alive." Likewise, she is emphatic that belief among the Garinagu is a communal experience, stating, "We believe. There are many of us." Miss Antonia testifies about belief, indicating that at times a member of her community is "forced to believe," or "they
have to believe." Belief is described as an active force that must be reckoned with (As in the testimony of Eduardo Miss regarding the imperatives of belief.), not as an optional choice of religious devotion.

In response to a question about whether personal items such as organizational insignia or special clothing are routinely buried along with the deceased, Miss Antonia described an instance of communal dreaming, one that signaled the subtle adaptation to modern times that is taking place with Garifuna burial rites:

In the Garifuna tradition,
I don’t know why,
but we have never buried our dead with pin or button,
or anything like that.
Just here of late,
because, as the world is modern,
we are adopting something straight into our culture
by burying them with a hat on or a cap on,
or with their glasses on.
Because, you know,
because normally,
when a person used the glasses,
eyeglasses you know,
if that person is buried without that glasses,
we dream that person
asking that her glasses to be given to her, because,
we will dream that person cannot see without the glasses.

Take for instance
when my mother died,
my mother has been wearing glasses
for twenty or more years and then she died.
I asked to put the glasses on her,
to put it in the coffin.

They didn’t want
because they say,
"We cannot bury your mother with glasses."
I say,
"But that is her second eye now!"
It’s been over twenty years

249
that my mother cannot see without glasses, 
so I think she'll need it.
And only till now,
before the ninth day after her death, 
a little boy out of the family, 
not in the family,
came and told us that he dream —
he called my mother, "Granny."
[He] say, "Auntie, I dreamed grandma last night
to come and tell you
to please go and give her glasses
because she cannot see without her glasses."

So, what we did now was,
that it's happened,
we take that particular item
and go bury it UN-der the grave.

Both the little boy's testimony and belief in the ancestral message are particularly noteworthy in this narrative. It is apparent that community belief was extended not only to the ancestors but to this young child as well. The boy's explanation that the ancestral spirit needs her glasses to see beyond the grave prompted community members to alter their burial practices in a way that does not compromise the prior prohibition against burying items directly with the deceased. Here, an ancestral spirit provides the emergent voice that promotes ritual change. Presumably, since there is no testimony about further upset, this adaptation was acceptable beyond the pall.

When considering bereavement rites, local commentators suggest that the absence of objection or response by ancestral spirits may be construed as approval of changing practices. Recently in Punta Gorda, as many relatives have moved to the states, and the hospital's cold-storage facilities have allowed the long-term preservation of bodies, ritual guardians have changed the burial and ritual schedules. Miss Antonia indicates her view of this adaptation in a recent conversation:
It started roughly about eight or nine years ago, because once, when a person died, he was buried twenty-four hours later. But here of late, they’re held up, the body’s held up, giving the time, as Annie says, for the family to come from the states or whatever.

Now, since we have this morgue, this cold storage it’s locally called, the body is placed in that cold storage until two or three or four days before relatives come for the funeral. In earlier days, before there was this cold storage, the body was injected... injected with certain kind of fluid to preserve the body...

What happens normally, before this cold storage or whatever, the body is always kept in the house. After the injection you have two nights wake with the body, the viewing of the body before the body is placed in a coffin. JK: But, it’s very important to see the deceased?

AS: Yes, as a matter of fact, when we go to church, the body is covered. But at the burial spot, the coffin is always open for the last view. Because, there are times when the relatives do not come in time. So then, they catch the last plane, or charter a plane, even though it’s two days.... When they do come and the funeral is already at the burial ground, the coffin is always open so that the relatives can see the body. Because, that is very important to us -- seeing the body.

JK: Why is that important?
AS: So that they see the last of the person.
See,
because there is no hope of seeing them again,
so,
that is the last time you can see the body
before it goes to where it comes from.

As an elder and a woman with political clout, Miss Antonia's voice and views count within her community. She is an articulate spokesperson for many of her generation who are responsible for the deep traditions of community bereavement rites. She likewise speaks persuasively for the changes and adaptations in these rites that are taking place due to modern times and in consultation with the spirits of the ancestors.

* * * * *

Half the age of Miss Antonia and a relative newcomer from Hopkins, perhaps the most traditional Garifuna settlement, Mirta is a close friend and neighbor of Miss Annie. She is the mother of six children, though only two currently live with her. Mirta is one of the new generation of Garinagu who are outspoken and active in cultural renewal issues. A segment of this younger group of traditionalists has emerged from the more highly educated ranks of teachers and civil servants. Mirta is literate, curious and well-informed, however, the source and impetus for her cultural renewal activities is her "roots" knowledge learned in the fields and on the domestic front.

Mirta spends much of her time with her older sister and family who live nearby, and as a single woman she is ever ready to socialize evenings at a club or disco. She is drawn too by one circle of older women who maintain the bereavement rites for their concentric circles of family and friends. It may be her Hopkins' upbringing, family affiliation, open personality, or willingness
to work hard, but Mirta is welcome among her older friends and respected for her knowledge and labors.

Man-of-war birds fly north this winter evening, as I talk with Mirta on her raised porch that overlooks the noisy street full of children at play. We are discussing how she may assist in the filming of an upcoming documentary movie about the ritual life of the Garinagu. While considering the bereavement rites, she offers this view of dream messages:

The same dead people --
like when you have this thing
that sometime they call a mass,
maybe they need a [ritual] bath,
or sometime they need a dugu.
Sometimes,
they just dream them like that.
If maybe Miss Annie used to be a somebody,
so we know what she used to do, to taste.
Maybe she like to party, you know,
and maybe when she died,
you dream her in that same position that way.
Maybe that person will come and tell you ...
and you will say,
"Oh, I dreamed a dream of Miss Annie
where she was dancing!
I dreamed her in a so-and-so dress.
She was talking to me, telling me such things."

Mirta stresses the striking personality traits that are manifest when an ancestor appears in a dream. Just as Antonia noted intimate details such as the nickname and eyeglasses, so too Mirta stresses personal traits such as liking to party or wearing certain characteristic clothing. These details appear to both echo the vibrant personal nature of the spirit, as well as offering confirmation regarding the spirit's personal identity. Likewise, she emphasizes her intimate relationship to the dream spirit, noting, "I dreamed
her in a so-and-so dress. She was talking to me, telling me such things." She continues:

And I say,
when I think of her,
that's what you would say...
They have some of them,
some of them who want bath.
Sometimes they told them,
"Oh, I'm going to take a bath."
So, you know,
you were dreaming,
and you come back and tell me,
"I dream your aunt,
I dream your father.
He say that he want to take a bath."

So,
you want to think how you can give him that bath.
And sometimes,
some of them,
you dream them.
They tell you, "Oh, I'm going to church."
That means they need it.
They need that mass.
So, anyway,
you are going to SACRIFICE now
to give them that mass
to let them rest in peace.

Mirta provides an intimate first-person view of the dream messenger as she first describes the confirmation of the spirit's identity, and then clarifies the message, the call for the ritual bath. The casual nature of the spirit's message, "Oh, I'm going to take a bath," also appears to reconfirm the spirit's character and identity. Mirta describes another spirit message, "Oh, I'm going to church," a structure that indicates the purposeful activity of the spirit, which in turn acts as a catalyst for the living to perform a particular ritual. She follows this glimpse of spirits speaking with the simple equation that if, "They need it [the ritual], then you are going to SACRIFICE..." Her emphatic
“SACRIFICE” suggests both the critical need and the expenditure of resources that some bereavement rites entail for a family.

I ask Mirta if there is anything special about the voice or words of an ancestor that may appear in a dream and she immediately responds:

*The spirit in that person will talk,*  
*just like how the old ancestor [talks].*  
*Then,*  
*the one that for example*  
*who is the person,*  
*is the one that knew is it a man or a lady*  
*[i.e. a person who can identify the ancestor] --*  
*then they say,*  
*"That is the one that show us that person."*

Once again, there appears to be a double confirmation of identity. The ancestral spirit is identified by a special way of talking, which is in turn confirmed by someone who knew the ancestor well. Mirta finishes our discussion of dreaming and traditional rites by describing the most potent indicator of deliberate spirit communication, "Deep feelings in the body. Deep feelings inside."

*  *  *  *  *

In the quickening dusk, Miss Annie has quietly joined us on the porch, relaxing a hundred feet away from the demands of children and grandchildren. Though I have known Annie for four years and we have done some limited taping for the textbook project, she has made it clear that she does not like to be interviewed. Most often our talks are casual, though at times I have inquired about a bit of Garifuna lore or P.G. history. Suddenly, aware that I am recording Mirta's and my conversation about dreams and ritual bathing, Annie enters the conversation. As darkness falls, she has chosen this moment to testify:
I dreamed my grandmother.
I don’t know my grandmother,
but I know she!

JK: In the dream?

AL: Yeah,
that’s my mother’s mother,
and she’s the one,
and I told her when I dreamed
that I don’t have no money to do that.
She told me,
"You are going to get it.
You are going to find it."
And I get it Jerry.
For to bring that lady from Dangriga with her crowd here,
I chartered a bus —
nine hundred dollars.
I pay her [for] the bus —
cash!
They stay here for one week,
the bus stay here for one week.

Annie first addresses the issue of the ancestor’s spirit. She notes that she actively dreamed her grandmother, and though she did not know the woman during her life, there was immediate recognition, "I know she." I realize that Annie is responding to Mirta’s statement about sacrifice, because Annie begins to detail the efforts she was obliged to make in having a dugu for this ancestor who she did not know in life:

JK: You say you had a dream and you couldn’t pay it...
Did you have more than one dream?

AL: More than one dream [indicates affirmative].
And when my cousin get sick,
no matter what part of the night she came here,
she knock on the door, [She knocks three times on a chair.]
"Annie, open the door!"
JK: Is this your cousin Betsy?

AL: Yes, Katie [She corrects me.]
You know Katie.
Yes, as I open the door
she get in and she right at my face.
And I won't take no more rest,
I fooling with that young lady until the morning red.
Until I went to Mr. George Vernon
and I bought a pint of raw rum
and I bathed her with that,
and there she come back --
normal like I and you.
That's our medicine Jerry,
raw rum.

JK: And you bathed her with it?

AL: Yes,
you bathe her skin,
you bathe her head,
everything.
1982, in May.

JK: And did that revive her? Revive her health?

AL: Yes.
And I have my relatives in Dangriga.
Oh my,
they loved that.
They always having dugu,
from my father's side.

JK: Did you get a lot of help with your dugu?

AL: When I get my dugu?
Well Jerry,
now people get help.
Anybody who get a dugu here,
the people donate to do that.
You ask,
and they will tell you,
and you will put up $25.
They will tell you [She indicates me.],
and you will put up $25,
they will tell that one there,
they will go to all the relatives.
But,
when I made my dugu,
I go through without anybody help.
I don't know where I get the money, Jerry, but I get it.

JK: Is that a change now that people are helping out?

AL: Yes, yes. Well everybody comes right now.

Miss Annie documents another critical adaptation that is taking place among the Garinagu in Punta Gorda. She indicates that in less than fifteen years there has been a significant change in funding. What had once been the responsibility of one relative is now shared by members of the family and broader community, "Now people get help." Since she mentions money in both instances, I suspect that rising costs might be the significant factor that explains this new communal approach, but I do not think to confirm this idea at the time. I file this question for future research:

Every Garifuna comes and as I told you, they find the relative. They contact the relatives first. Before they contact anybody, they try to make a meeting with the family. And, when they set a date, they can go out and invite who they want. They invite all the Garifuna because all the Garifuna is one people. They went to Dangriga -- invite. They went to Hopkins -- invite. They went to Livingston. They went to Barranco. They went to Georgetown and invite all these people, tell these people what day they are having and what month. Maybe they have ... maybe three or four months before to notify them.

When the day come, Jerry, the temple is full of the families. Only hammocks you see -- hammocks!
I would like you to see a dugu one day here in P.G. or in Dangriga.

I remind Annie of a dugu that took place a few summers ago and of a woman anthropologist who had not made personal contacts but wanted to see the ceremony very much. People were secretive about the rite and the anthropologist missed the ritual. Another NH teacher and I were also not invited to the dugu, but Miss Emerita, the caretaker of the dbuyaba did allow us witness the day of preparation which offered us a deeper understanding of the rite. I ask Annie about the efficacy of the dugu. She responds to my question by describing the essentials of the ritual:

JK: How do you know it’s been successful?
I mean, do you know by your dreams?

AL: Yes...
No...
The day, like Saturday...
Now, it started like Monday,
that’s the day.
Friday before that,
the Friday they send the people to the Cay.
They are going to get some conchs,
and they are going to get some fish.
They are going to fish from Friday...
Saturday, Sunday.
Monday,
everybody came from the Cay.
Maybe two dory went and Monday they start.
And we call it in Garifuna,
“Webela gudaha.”
That means everybody’s coming in.
Everybody starts coming in on Sunday.
They bring fowl.
They bake bread.
They fry fish for tea in the morning.
So, you don’t have to go way home and drink your tea.
You’ll find tea there.
Everybody have their calabash.
We call it in Garifuna, rida.
So, till Wednesday,
like today, this morning...
so this morning is [would be] the last day.
And then, maybe,
they [the spirits of the ancestors] will come out.
Maybe, they can... get in --
Mirta.
She will talk.
We get it, what we call...
this is what we call a call from life,
out of Mirta...
maybe out of me
or maybe out of somebody else.

At first, Annie's description, her words, sound ironic — contradictory.
Then, I realize that Annie is engaged in Garifuna 'signifying,' describing the ancestral spirit's talk as, "a call from life." Words and ideas are reversed from their usual meanings, and she has selected this wording to testify to her abiding belief in life beyond the grave. It is also significant that the actual person chosen for agency is neither preordained or apparently of special significance beyond the knowledge of the spirit. I ask about the spirit's visit:

JK: During the dancing?
AL: Yeah, yeah
MA: And when the spirit come.
AL: It's right there. It's in somebody.
MA: The family that has the life of the spirit.
JK: And then you know.
AL: Then we know!

The few streetlights in Punta Gorda town had come on now. Annie continued to share personal experiences of dream visits from her parental spirits but I recognized then, as I do now, that people are entitled to certain
personal boundaries. Two very significant things happened that evening. First, I was trusted as a believer or as a non-believer who lived with openness and respect. Secondly, I heard the voices of the spirits, second-hand, but powerful and immediate, as they were articulated to me by Mirta, and Annie. Intricately and intimately bound to the age-old ritual traditions, the voices I heard were not voices restricted to the grave, rather they emerged from these two women, these two bearers of Garifuna tradition, as, "calls from life."

The short, three hundred year history of the Garinagu as a people is a story of oppression and resistance. Relying on the blend of their African and Amerindian heritages, they have proved to be a courageous and resourceful people. In the days of the St. Vincent wars, they perfected a hot pepper smog that routed the British. When they were exiled on Roatan, their maritime backgrounds allowed them to establish new lives along the Caribbean shores. In recent years, Belizean Garinagu have seized the opportunities of education to establish themselves as an important and productive segment of the newly independent nation. Through their bereavement rites, it is as if they have spoken out against death itself. By giving voice to their ancestors, they have challenged the robbery or taking away that is etymologically at the root of bereavement. With their ritual baths, the dugu, and the ancestral dream interpretations, they are giving voice to the deceased, eluding the finality that death pronounces in many other cultural groups. The ancestral voices are demanding voices, but they are voices that promise each generation healing and the renewal of a unique spiritual discourse that crosses an ultimate boundary.
Educational Implications

The Garifuna community's ongoing discussion regarding the vitality of their language may potentially stimulate expanded consideration in Toledo regarding the possibilities for ethnic first language and bilingual literacy programs. By researching and standardizing their orthography, publishing books in Garifuna, and teaching their language in schools, the Garinagu are reshaping language issues in southern Belize. As they move beyond linguistic theory, the Garinagu are demonstrating to the nation's other ethnic communities what is possible in terms of language revitalization. Clearly, the introduction of ethnic language instruction into the schools would have profound effects on both curriculum and instruction.

Likewise, the featured Garifuna narrators, much like their Mayan and Creole counterparts, are manifesting the profound spiritual and moral dimensions of Toledo storytelling. The exposition of their ancestral rituals and traditional cultural knowledge offers the region's youth an extraordinary vision of a community striving for peace beyond all borders. The Garinagus' harmonious message, similar in many ways to Gerineldo's exaltation of the peaceful fruits of the world tree, offers moral guidance to students and their parents throughout Belize.
CHAPTER TEN

VISIONARY TESTIMONY:
SPREADING THE HILL SPIRIT'S CALL FOR RENEWAL

Stories can become contagious. Gossip, slander, tales of jealousy and sexual indiscretion — such stories can become virulent, and break the boundaries of compassion and common decency. Tales of sacrifice, bravery, and love—these stories may also escape their geographical confines, but they may assume a positive agency in the community, providing inspiration, solace and healing. Juan, a Guatemalan catechist, is currently recounting a boundary-breaking story of just such power as he travels throughout the Mayan lowlands and testifies about his visionary experience with a hill spirit. His current preaching has become an extension of his catechetical mission, as he attempts to reinstill respect for traditional hunting codes, ritual approaches to planting, and the overarching value of the sacred earth.

In this final chapter devoted to profiling storytelling processes, I examine the widespread dissemination of a visionary narrative, a Kekchi call for cultural renewal in these tumultuous times for the Mayan people. This is the story of Juan's encounter with a hill spirit, his seven year mission to preach the 'gospel' of reverence for the sacred earth, and the enthusiastic response of Toledo residents. This is also the account of one local man's efforts to spread Juan's message of cultural renewal throughout his part of the Mayan world. This is the voice of the earth, emerging from the mountains and valleys of southern Belize.
The narrative of Juan's vision is one of the most important contemporary stories that Toledo's Mayans are sharing among themselves. As a Guatemalan catechist and a Kekchi Maya, Juan is speaking as the current bearer of a tradition that spans millennia in the Americas. His account is not a quaint artifact or object for Western appropriation and rescue. Rather, Juan is calling for a return to the earth as the source of the moral and spiritual renewal of his people, helping them "remember they are Mayans" (B. Tedlock 1992, 463).

Juan's urgent message is timely, for Toledo Mayans are currently faced with new threats to their traditional lifeways. Skidders and D9 dozers are currently logging the district's high bush, and soon all-weather roads will link most of the southern villages in a modern transport grid. Rural electrification is rapidly taking place, and today, while children in Laguna still dance to harp music by kerosene lamp, families in San Miguel are watching "Die Hard." Change, however, is not a new experience for the Maya. During the last century and a half, they have had to cope with pirates, caste wars in the Yucatan, indentured servitude in Guatemalan coffee plantations, modern agribusiness, extensive logging operations, and the recent independence of Belize. Through it all, the Mayan people have maintained many of their essential folkways, while adapting, when necessary, to modern developments, including technology, political organization, and language usage (Canby, 1992).

A particularly traumatic experience creates a pall over Belizean Mayans, as their fellow Maya suffer through the civil war and ethnocide in neighboring Guatemala. The 1978 massacre of Kekchi to the west of Toledo (Stoll, 1993, 63)
was one of the first manifestations of the Guatemalan government brutality that has exterminated over 50,000 Indian people and eliminated over four hundred Mayan villages (Falla, 1994, 8). In addition to the forcible seizure of Indian lands, the conflict between the Guatemalan oligarchy and the Indians is based in part on an effort by Protestant evangelicals and segments of the Catholic church to eradicate traditional Mayan religious practices (Perera, 1993; Stoll, 1993). As a consequence, many of the Kekchi and Mopan in Toledo have either arrived as refugees, or know people affected by the civil war. This consciousness undoubtedly affects all Indian peoples in the region as they realize that the extermination campaigns are not just aimed at political insurgents but against Indians (Canby, 1992; Menchu, 1984; B. Tedlock, 1992).

The Guatemalan civil war and ethnocide have had profound and disruptive effects throughout Belize, particularly in the Toledo and Stann Creek Districts. Early massacres of Kekchi precipitated the beginning of a constant flow of refugees to Belize, later augmented by people fleeing civil wars in El Salvador and Nicaragua. The new Kekchi arrivals have pressured village councils to make critical decisions about who may stay and who must push on to refugee camps up country, as well as creating pressures for the creation of new villages.

While many Kekchi manifest a broad political and cultural awareness, it must be noted that the state terrorism in Guatemala is so hideous and pervasive, that there is a significant public silencing in the region about the Guatemalan civil war. Though their border has remained secure, residents of southern Belize are understandably haunted and fearful that a few miles of high bush might not prove a sufficient barrier to the Guatemalan military. Only a few people speak publicly about the extermination campaign, though
some residents make oblique references to the dangers of roads at night and lights in the sky that might be military artillery.

Against this backdrop of fear and the growing ethnic awareness, Juan is giving voice to the spirits of the hills. It is a story that exposes waste, carelessness, the destruction of an ecosystem, and the turning away from the old ways. His story is a clarion call for rededication to the ritual practices required by the hill spirits. This is part of a much larger process, for as Tedlock indicates, "The narration of dreams and visions has long validated Mayan traditional religion and world view" (1992, 453).

Tedlock describes the transnational response on the part of Mayan peoples to this "violent process of uprooting and dispersion," as a process of ethnogenesis. She defines this re-birthing of a people as "a cultural and political regrouping into an ethnic nation within and even transcending the boundaries of established nation-states" (454). Ethnogenesis aptly describes the pan-Mayan consciousness that is impacting Mayan people in the nations of Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico. Radio, traders, correspondence, family visits, church retreats — these and many other mechanisms insure the growing awareness of significant Mayan activities throughout the region. Though lacking newspapers and TV, Belize's rural Mayans are aware of military maneuvers, Pan American highway construction, and the Zapatista insurgency in Chiapas (Katzenberger, 1995).

Tedlock, who has researched Juan's mission, locates the catechist's narrative in the context of the broader Mayan tradition of interpreting dreams and visions. She notes that the very fact that it is a catechist spreading his dream vision signals a reintegration of traditional Mayan beliefs with Catholic monotheism. She stresses that visionary narratives function
"simultaneously to facilitate cultural innovation while sustaining traditional culture" (465).

Tedlock isolates key aspects of Juan's narrative and compares them to stories collected throughout the Mayan world, indicating both shared traditions and the current process of ethnogenesis. The commonality of themes, signs, and structural devices found in all these stories outlines the foundation for the cultural receptivity that is present currently in Toledo as well. Tedlock points to a "conventional set of signs" (464) that interconnect Juan's visionary narrative with the transnational Mayan visionary traditions. She develops the sacred earth, or "mountain-valley," as the most significant symbol in this complex of visionary narratives:

A key symbol of pan-Mayan ethnic identity is the sacred earth. In several Mayan languages the earth is known by a term that literally translates into English as "Mountain-Valley." The earth appears frequently within Mayan myths, dreams, and visions referring both to the physical features of the landscape, including mountains, hills, volcanoes, valleys, caves, lakes, and springs, as well as spiritual beings who inhabit this sacred geography, guarding the forest and controlling the weather (454).

Tedlock goes on to cite other significant, conventional signs, including the child guide, "an old person as the spirit of Mountain-Valley," the call for a return to ritual behavior, and the inauguration of a mission. Since all three versions of Juan's story that were collected for the textbook program emanated from a common source, it is not surprising that they share these essential signs and relate as well to the broader regional tradition. The following analysis of the Juan's mission and the corresponding regional receptivity documents the current and emergent character of his message.
The Mission of Juan the Catechist

In this section, I detail my gradual involvement with the spread of Juan's testimony throughout the Toledo District. I primarily recount my ongoing cooperation with Thomas Teul, a Mopan Mayan health worker and board member of the TMCC. Following two years work on these narratives, I was asked to prepare the English transcription of Juan's story for the TMCC. As a result of this collaboration, I have witnessed the impact of Juan's call to cultural renewal as it ripples throughout the rural villages of Toledo.

February 1991

Punta Gorda's Front Street, as it curves beside the Caribbean Sea, has become one of my favorite places. Standing by the market stalls, one looks southward across the Bahia D'Amatique to the distant coast of Guatemala poking out into the cerulean blue waters. Early one winter day at the District Health Office, Thomas Teul and I relaxed in the morning's cool and conversed as the battered school buses full of Mayan families came down into P.G. for the Wednesday market day.

We relished the calm of that particular morning, for the day before, a swarm of Africanized bees had made an eight hour, unscheduled landing on the health center lawn. Throughout the day, people watched and cautiously maintained a safe distance from the pulsating basketball-shaped colony in search of a new home. Around four PM, responding to some silent impulse, the bees rose to treetop level and headed south along the coast, and the Front Street regulars relaxed.
I met Thomas on my 1990 trip to Punta Gorda, a visit that offered me my initial exposure to the rich oral lore of the Toledo District. For most of this second visit as a member of the Belize-NH Teachers Program, I had swapped stories of forest and sea with the rural teachers from the outlying schools. That morning I shared the current visit's collaborative successes and explained my transcription plans once I returned home. In 1991, there were only two computers in the entire region, and district educators had quickly enlisted my transcription services. I promised to return in the early summer with the typed manuscripts, ready for editing. I shared a few hunting tales I had recently heard, and, as stories often do, these accounts stimulated Thomas to tell me some recent stories that were circulating around his home village of San Jose.

Thomas told of two young men from his village who had penetrated deep into a remote cave one recent Sunday morning. There, in the cavernous threshold to the ancient Mayan underworld, they had pilfered some valuable jade beads deposited by their ancient ancestors. As the two thieves emerged from the cave's darkness into the blinding sunlight of noontime, they were attacked by a pack of twelve domestic cats. (See D. Tedlock 1993, 211 for similar attack.) The boys fled, striking out at the cats that mauled them, and it was not till they dropped the artifacts, that they were left alone. By then, it was too late to hide their wounds from their fellow villagers. Both youths returned home in shame, contrite for their offense, and the story had spread as far as P.G. in just a few weeks.

Thomas went on to tell his second story, one told by a catechist from Guatemala who was touring the border villages and recounting his meeting with a hill spirit. Juan the Catechist had transformed his life into a mission, one of spreading the word of his special epiphany. The following version was...
Last year [1990] a Kekchi man from Guatemala came to visit the villages around San Jose and he told his story. This year is the first year of his story-telling mission, and he has six years of his life left to tell his story.

He was a hunter who always hunted in the old ways. Before sunrise, he would burn incense and ask the twelve spirits of the hills to release animals for the hunt. Then he would go into the forest and try to make his kill sure and painless.

One day last year, he was hunting turkey along a stream when something blew into his eye. He rubbed his eye and was blinded to the outside world. He rubbed again and had a dream that he met a small boy. He closed his eye again and suddenly he was taken up by the winds over many hills until he landed on the ground. Standing there was a spirit dressed in the robe and headdress of an ancient chief.

The chief told him that he had been chosen for a special mission and that he had seven years to accomplish his mission, and seven years left to live. Then the chief led the hunter through the bush till they came to a clearing. There were pens filled with wounded and suffering animals. There was a pen of antelopes, their flanks and legs bleeding with broken bones. A smaller pen enclosed war and peccary [different types of wild pigs], their wounds covered with flies. Other pens kept jaguar, red tiger [puma], and margays. Baboons [howler monkeys] howled cries of pain. These were the animals that were injured and maimed by hunters who did not trust the old ways of hunting but only grabbed their guns and shot at whatever moved in the forest. The chief also showed him rooms filled with com, beans and rice, wasted by those who were careless in harvesting and preparing food.

The chief then taught the hunter a song and told him that he must return to the villages south of the Maya Mountains and tell what he had seen. He must tell hunters and farmers that they must return to the old rituals.

Even now as you hear this story, Juan the Catechist is visiting villages in Guatemala and Belize, singing his song and describing his vision. He has told his wife that when his seven years are up that he will return to the same place in the forest. She is not to worry for he will live and die in the hills, and care for the same wounded animals who live in the pens. When he is gone, another person will be selected by the spirits of the hills.
to tell the story of the need to avoid the waste of food and animals.

Thomas narrated this story with pride and conviction and spoke of the need for the children to read about Juan's visit with the spirit chief. My initial skepticism, which arose from cultural distancing, was suspended by this powerful call for respecting all life and promoting an ethic of sustainable resources. While the story appeared to fit a traditional mold, it was apparent that Juan's vision had a progressive future-oriented movement that runs counter to the Western analysis of visions and dreams as windows on the past (Basso, 1992, 86). Thomas was telling me that the hill god was speaking to the Mayan people now!

Both stories represented a special, spiritual form of narrative, as each account described an entry into the sacred earth, the abode of the hill spirits. Throughout much of the Mayan region the mountains, hills, and caves are believed to contain numerous spirits, including the hill spirits that watch over the land and its bounty of game and crops. Meeting these spirits is not without risk, for while neighboring mountains may serve as the homes for the guardians of animal souls (Fabrega, 1973, 260), entry by means of caves may also signal witchcraft and the selling of souls (261).

Thomas's two narratives crossed over into a class of narratives which was markedly different than the hearth and hunting stories that educators had most frequently collected for the textbook program. His accounts suggested another more spiritual category of local narratives, in line with Bierhorst's (1990) explanation of the manner by which many Mesoamerican peoples use native terminologies to divide their stories into two kinds. Thomas's stories were akin to the more serious narratives that tribes such as Nicaragua's
Sumu refer to as nighttime stories, contrasted with the more mundane tales of daytime.

At that time, I realized that these narratives represented a major shift in the subject matter that I was allowed to hear. I sensed when I first heard the story of Juan and realized it once again when I transcribed my notes at home that I had been allowed entry into a world of spiritual stories that I had no legitimate frame of reference to truly understand. Thomas apparently decided to trust me with these stories so that they might find their rightful place in the next generation of textbooks. I too was being enlisted in the spread of this urgent message.

**July 1991**

I returned to Punta Gorda with a packet of printed stories from the February teachers' workshop. Finding the storytellers wasn't always easy, and the experience for the narrators of seeing their stories in text was usually so overwhelming, that people could not consider editing their work.

Five days into that summertime visit, as the rainy season threatened to make its entry from the western highlands, I planned a trek through the hills that would allow me to visit with a number of potential narrators in distant three villages. It was on that visit that I heard a second version of Juan's story from Mariana Cho. Her account (see Appendices) is essentially the same as Thomas's version. Mariana's description of the hill spirit is perhaps a bit more personal, and at the same time threatening, as the spirit confides to the catechist, "All this hurts me. If I wanted I could kill you right here, but I don't want to kill you." The return of the catechist to the village is slightly different too, as he must respond to accusations of drinking. Juan then claims that he
was "closed somewhere that he didn't know, and he had been told to tell the whole story that he saw and what he was told."

Returning from the village trip, I rushed to tell Thomas about the spread of Juan's story. Though not surprised, he was pleased to learn about the taped version of the narrative. He told me that TMCC members were monitoring Juan's preaching throughout the region and the widespread interest he had aroused, particularly among the residents of the remote villages. He asked me to send him a copy of Mariana's version as soon as I returned home and transcribed my tapes.

**February 1992**

Returning to Belize, I found that the tropical placidity of Punta Gorda was threatened by cholera. Within a year or two of an outbreak in Peru, the disease moved across the equator, spread from the Pacific to the Atlantic, and made a dangerous foothold on Guatemala's Atlantic coastline nearby the Sarstoon River, the southern border with Belize. Though the two countries were not speaking to each other through formal diplomatic channels because of Guatemala's long held contention that Belize is Guatemalan territory, Thomas and other Belizean health workers were collaborating with the Guatemalan counterparts midstream and on the banks of the Sarstoon.

One evening, as he rested from his demanding schedule, Thomas and I sat on the veranda at Nature's Way, and the conversation shifted once again to the travels of Juan the Catechist. Thomas was excited because he had just heard people speaking of a recent talk by Juan in Crique Sarco, a village on the Temash River. I responded excitedly because we were scheduled to leave for Crique Sarco in two days. However, a four hour sea dory ride under the latitude 16 sun put me down with heat prostration, and I was unable to learn
any details of Juan's visit to Crique Sarco, other than to confirm that he had indeed 'preached' to the villagers.

July 1992

In an early meeting with Thomas, he told me that Juan had continued to spread his story throughout the region. In the late spring of that year, Thomas had journeyed to the distant village of Dolores, just after a visit from Juan the Catechist. Another health worker had taped the performance, and Thomas made a copy of Juan's speech. He was currently passing the tape around to those members of the TMCC who had not yet heard Juan in person. Furthermore, Thomas indicated that someone in the village of San Jose also had made a tape when the peripatetic catechist had passed through that distant way station. Thomas said that some Council members were interested in getting an English transcription of the talk for their archives, as well as for more general circulation. He also believed that it was critical to get a verbatim transcription for the textbook project.

When I returned from a few days up country, Thomas told me that he had gotten the tape of Juan's Dolores testimony, and that a Kekchi friend was helping with the fine points of translation into English. He asked me to help the Mayan Council by transcribing an audio-taped version of the English translation. I returned to New Hampshire and made a first draft of the transcription that I sent to Thomas. By September, our 'writing process in slow motion' worked its way through another draft, and I sent copies of the story to Thomas which resulted in the following draft that was presented to the TMCC:
The Story of Juan and the Hill Cave

One day I was on my way home from a village named Mash Cohone. On my return, something happened to me that is incredible for you all to believe. It's a true story; what has happened. It happened just for the sake of you all, concerning our corn food. So, every time I go to my work, I pray to god because he is the one who protects and cares for me. I believe that is the reason I was chosen to be taken to a hill cave.

I left my home on the sixteenth of November and returned on the eighteenth of November 1991. It is five hours walking into the high jungle and hills. I left from Mash Cohone Village at four o'clock AM. When I reached the high jungle and hills, I stopped and prayed to god for I know not what I might stop and meet on my way. On my continuation of my journey, reaching the first high, steep hill, going up, I saw a young boy coming in my direction. When I got closer to him, when we were about to pass each other, he spoke to me saying, "Sir, my father said he would like to talk to you."

He was cute, little boy, just as if I knew him before. The little boy said, "Hurry, let us go."

I felt that a piece of dirt got into one of my eyes. I quickly rubbed my eye, and when I took off my hand from my eyes, I opened it. I saw I was in a very strange place.

The person said to me, "You are now here and I want to talk to you but first go in and pass by to observe everything inside."

So, I started to go. First I saw corn wasted, torn away. Then I saw cassava, yams, potatoes, all types of grown food. Into the next apartment I saw different types of animals. First I saw a tiger in the next apartment. I saw a deer, gilmut, squash. They are animals I saw personally with my eyes. I walked among them. It's not a dream. It is a true living thing.

After I finish seeing all these things, I return to my place where I first reached, and the person asked me what all I saw. I told him everything I saw.

Now he started to talk to me. He said, "I sent for you. You are to take this message to all the people in the world, young and old. Explain to them about their corn food, how they are very careless with it. The first and second box of corn you saw — see how they wasted the corn food! Now it is getting short [scarce]. Why? Your people, when their farm is blessed by god, they have a lot of corn. What they do is, they abuse it instead. They should use it wisely. They are short of corn now. All of them are trying to plead to god but their prayers are not answered again."
So, now my father said, "You must go all over the world. Explain to the people. If they need the corn, let them do something very important to get back their food if they want. Don't force them, for you are sent to do this job for seven days only."

Seven days means seven years. So, I am living in this world for seven [more] years only. Who would not feel sad to hear and know that he is living in this world for only seven more years? After that, I am going. It is very sad to hear. After, when I am gone, there will be three more coming who will be chosen to do the same work but I do not know who, where, or when.

When we have hatred in our hearts for each other, sometimes, what we do, we destroy the person, the person's plan for other things he possesses. Everything we destroy or damage, the hill gods see it and take that away from us. Those are the same things he showed me in the hill cave. He has preserved them there.

He said that we should not hate each other for god loves us. He cares for us. What we beg from god, we receive it, here in the hill cave, as well as it is received in heaven also. This is the sound I learned in the hill cave also.

First of all, I want to tell you all. Please let us stop to hate and hurt our fellow men or our fellow brothers and sisters. Let us bind each other in love, patience and long-suffering which is acceptable to god. I am sent to tell you all, that we must learn how to use these things, what god gives us. Let us use it wisely. Let's not destroy it or waste it, whatever is thrown away because the person has a lot or may be wealthy. To own anything, instead of throwing it away, we should share it with the one who does not have. It is better to give than to receive. But we in this world, we like to receive rather than to give or share with someone else. Pleading to god for what we need is very important. As the words say, "Ask and you shall receive."

When I was inside the cave, a message reached [there] but I could not see what it was. I just heard it. Someone was asking the hill god for a deer, game. In a short while I saw the deer jump over the fence and I heard a dog bark. In a few minutes I heard a shotgun. It was the same animal that got shot. The hill god gave that person what he asked [for].

Take for example, if you have a chicken and someone comes. He starts chasing it and wants to catch it and take it without your permission. Will you give it? No, no way, because he did not ask for the chicken. It is the same thing we need to do with whatever we want. We have to ask the hill god, which is our tradition of doing, so then he will give [it to] us. Because the hill god has the relationship to god in heaven, we have to give our offering to
the hill god. Whatever we offer to the hill god, god in heaven receives it also. This is what the younger generation is abandoning. In the book of Leviticus of the Old Testament, it says, “Offer your burnt offerings to god with all your heart and soul, not without doubt.”

We need to take the word of god seriously when we give our burnt offerings to the hill god. People nowadays believe that the hills are the places of animals, places of rat-bats [vampire bats], and places of Satan. They don’t know that each hill keeps its own property, just like we have our own home where we own chickens, pigs, et cetera. They [the domestic animals] go into our houses. [It is] the same with the forest animals. They go into the hill because that is their home.

This is what I saw inside the hill named Torio Shan god hill. That’s the name of the hill god where I was taken in. After that, the hill god, Torio Shan, told me that I most go back. After a while, I was transported back, just how I was taken into the cave, except that it was one more long hour to walk from where I was picked by the little boy. And I am told to preach this message all over the world. Now that I am returning to my home with my family, I am speechless. People try to talk to me. I am speechless.

The day of my return it was raining but I don’t feel that I am getting wet. When I reached closer to my own house, then I was told that I now reached my home, except that I will not talk until tomorrow at four minutes, which means 4:00 P.M.

My wife didn’t know where I was. She thought that I was somewhere. Maybe I had gotten drunk and fallen asleep. She questioned me, “Where were you?”

All I could say was that I was taken into a hill cave. She continued to talk but I was unable to answer and hear clearly. About five o’clock in the evening, a number of people came to my house. They wanted to know where I was but I cannot respond to them. Lots of people asked me, “Say, Mr. Juan, where have you been?”

No answer! I could not be able to say an answer until the next day at 4:00 P.M.

One of the hill gods, named Cho Co thundered and all of a sudden I felt my word come in. So now, two agreeable, older persons came closer to me and said, “Now we believe that you came from the hill god. We heard the hill god thunder just a while ago, and saw you started to talk to us at that minute.”

The men started to question me. I explained to them that I am sent to be a messenger, to tell the people what they need to do concerning offerings. He gave me an example of the flower plant. The leaves are the symbols of money, donations. The flowers of the plant are the thirteen god hills, which I am going
to give you all their names: Torio Shan, Cawa Seea, Cana Itsa, Cawa Sha Canet, Cawa Chi Shin, Cawa Ca Bun, Cawa Cun, Cawa Sha Tapen, Cawa San Antone. [At the time of publication, translators had not agreed on the proper spellings for these names.]

The song that I sang for you all, I learned it at the same hill cave. A man a long time ago was taken into the hill cave, named Seea god, close to Bom hill. That man, when he was young, he was taken into that hill and he is still living. We spoke to each other. He encouraged me to do my job. He said that if I face difficulties, let me not fear. Let me not fear the song that he taught me. It is not written in any song book, none at all. So I advise you to keep all my advice in your heart. Don't forget the song. Someday I will be dead. A bad-minded person will kill me but I am not afraid of anything. My life is laid for it already. This is my twenty-sixth village visit already. I am sure that I have more to go until my time ends.

Juan's closing song: Long ago in the day of the old-time people, they honored their work in the name of their corn food. The father and the mother are the leaders. They are honored by the people. Tomorrow they will be planting their milpa. They advise their children to be obedient. They burn their incense three times a day: morning, noon, and evening. Young and old, we all give thanks and call the names of the thirteen hill gods. The young generation now, they are losing the honor of the old time people. We are abandoning our beliefs. The years of burnt offerings -- your father and mother are rejecting it. And now, the birds and insects are destroying our crops.

This story reverberated in my consciousness over the ensuing months, and I came to understand that Juan was not just promoting this spiritual message as one of inspiration and devotion. Juan was proclaiming that Torio Shan and the other hill gods demanded radical change now, a return to ritual, a renewal of the old ways, and a dramatic re-establishment of balance with the earth, so that the Mayan people could continue to inhabit a sustainable landscape. Significantly, the hill spirit did not speak out against modern technology, but instead ordered people to employ whatever tools and
weapons they might have with care and discipline, a code I had also encountered with Petey.

The transcription of Juan's visionary testimony in Dolores now provided an original base line version against which Toledo educators, Thomas, and I could compare the prior two accounts. While a thorough analysis of the three versions would provide material enough for a separate study, a careful review indicates that the two second-hand versions are generally in agreement with the transcription of Juan's speech. A number of key variables may account for certain obvious discrepancies. Thomas and Mariana each presented casual versions of Juan's talks which occurred in different settings and preceded the Dolores narration. Also, while all three versions had their origins in the Kekchi language, different people translated each version into English.

A key addition to Juan's longer account is the vision within the vision of a traditional hunter who, after offering ritual prayers, is rewarded with a deer by the hill spirit. Juan provides his listeners with this inside view of this efficient exchange of ritual devotion for needed nourishment. Juan names the hill spirit as Torio Shan and goes on to alert his audience of his all-encompassing mission, that he is "told to preach the message all over the world." It is clear from his casual border crossings that Juan does not believe in political boundaries. "All over the world" would seem to indicate the pan-Mayan dispersal, if not the broader world beyond Mesoamerica. Juan's closing song is another significant addition, wherein he summarizes all his basic teachings and promotes their practice in a dramatic ending to his testimony.

Though the story is fundamentally a Mayan story, Juan's Biblical references indicate his catechetical training, as well as the pervasive syncretistic relationship between the beliefs of the Old Maya and Christianity.
Since Juan still embraces his role as a catechist, it appears that he is promoting the ability to act in a manner that Redfield (1934) suggests is "ceremonially bilingual" in "two equally good modes of religious expression" (124).

Three Dimensions of Cultural Renewal

I now consider this complex of hill spirit stories, currently being told and retold in Toledo, and their potential for cultural renewal in three expanding arenas of discourse. The catechetical fervor of spiritual messengers such as Juan and Thomas is being felt locally in Toledo, as part of the Mayan ethnogenesis and in concert with a broader international discourse regarding the issues of land use, ecological management, and sustainability. The Kekchi and Mopan people, who traditionally have been reticent in many national arenas, are now utilizing their narrative tradition to publicly articulate their values and needs, as well as their collective cultural and ecological wisdom. By utilizing their narrative tradition, Juan, Thomas, Mariana, Gerineldo and other local leaders are reconsidering their cultural heritage, applying it to today's pressing issues, and entering wider political discourses on behalf of their people, their ancestors and the sacred earth.

1. Juan's Account and the Local Narrative Tradition

Over the last ten years, many people have gathered traditional and life stories for the TESOL project. In this section, I present three Toledo stories of the Old Maya that were collected with the assistance of Thomas Teul. These narratives, gathered as part of a more traditional folklore project, demonstrate that Juan's vision, while perhaps the most significant current account of a
hill spirit encounter, is just one part of a rich collection of oral stories that
renews Mayan beliefs and promotes cultural adaptation.

During the spring of 1993, I collaborated with Stephanie Fryberger, a
Princeton researcher, who was interested in traditional Mayan stories. When
she learned about the textbook project, she offered to share her findings with
both the school district and the TMCC. Thomas Teul responded on behalf of
the Mayan Council, and assisted Fryberger in locating narrators who still told
the Old Maya stories.

Fryberger and Teul taped this tale of "Two Hunters" which bears a
remarkable similarity to the plot and themes of Juan's vision, thereby
providing local narrative documentation in reference to Tedlock's
description of "culture pattern dreams" (B. Tedlock, 468):

Two hunters like to hunt together. One man was a much
better hunter than the other. The second man only followed.
The better hunter always gave gifts to the god of the animals. He
would always ask before he went hunting. The second man only
followed and practiced none of those things. Together they
always were successful shooting game.

One day, the follower separated himself and hunted alone. He
saw animals and shot at them but the animals would never fall.
Each time he reached the place at which the animal was shot he
could only see a stain of blood. He did this for three days. He was
continually harming the animals. He also set traps for birds but
was unsuccessful. He began to scold and curse in the forest. He
even cursed the hill god.

After three days, the hill god that owns the animals called
him because he harmed too many animals. He sent a boy to the
man and the boy asked the man, "Are you the man who is
cursing in the forest?"

The man denied the accusation but the boy said, "My father
said it was you. Close your eyes."

The man then made the journey to the hill god. The hill god
told him that he was good because he was obedient and followed
the good hunter but also said, "You are bad because you harmed
so many animals. You cannot feel that the animals do have an
owner."
The hill god then took him to see all the animals that he harmed: peccary, wari, and all the other animals. He saw the god servant who cures all the injured animals.

The man said that he did not know that the animals had an owner. "Now I know," he exclaimed.

"You know, but you were stubborn," exclaimed the hill god. The hill god then pointed to a table of food containing all the game that the hunter could not acquire. The hill god asked, "Which of these foods do you want? Or, do you want the breast milk of the female hill god?"

He pointed to the female hill god who has very large breasts. The man chose to suck the breasts. It was difficult for him to finish one breast. The god then told him that since he opted for the milk instead of the meat, that he did not really want the meat.

"Why do you shoot if you do not want the meat?" the god asked.

The man was not given the meat because the man did not have the full intention.

After he drank the milk, he was told to go back to his village and preach the message that he had learned -- the animals have an owner and rules must be followed! He took this message back to his village and began to spread it. He soon turned into a lion. He told his family to move out.

"This is my punishment," he recognized. He began to eat pig and chicken at the nearby farms. Villagers tried to shoot him but they failed. Finally, the man's mother thought of a plan to trap him because everyone was so afraid of him. When the lion was in the pen eating the animals inside, the woman took her slip, thick and white, and threw it over the lion's head. As the lion rolled over in an effort to free himself, the villagers came and beat him to death.

-Brigido C. (Spring 1993)

The narrator's description of the two hunters provides an opportunity to compare and contrast both modern and traditional approaches to hunting. The more successful hunter always "gave gifts to the god of the animals," and enjoyed success on the hunt. The second hunter was guilty of "harming animals," and could take no game. Frustrated, the latter hunter curses the hill god. The hill god then sends a boy who asks, "Are you the one who is cursing
in the forest?" as if to indicate a violation of the sacred space. The offender is transportedit to the hill god who admonishes him for his inability to "feel that the animals have an owner."

At this juncture, the story changes in structure, if not in theme. The guilty hunter is given a test involving a choice between a lactating female hill god and fresh meat. When the hunter opts to nurse with the female hill god, the male hill god determines that the hunter did not "have a full intention" of hunting meat. Ultimately, the violator is given a mission that is similar to Juan's seven year responsibility, to preach and encourage the villagers to renew the old ways. He is then transformed into an animal himself, and ironically hunted to his own death as punishment for offending the hill spirit.

"The Story of the Planter," shares many of the conventional signs and structural devices of both Juan's narrative and the "Two Hunters." A good man, who "followed all the rules to planting," including burning incense and ritual prayer, is disappointed because all "his corn seeds were scattered by rats." A young boy suddenly appears before the weeping man and interrogates him about the planting rituals. The man points to his empty field, exclaiming, "No sprouts and such damage!"

The boy tells the man to close his eyes because his father wants to see him. In an instant the man is standing before a hill god, the "god of planting." The hill god indicates that he is pleased to see the man, and in a variation on the previous stories, he shows the man "all the animals, lizards, rats, and possums that had destroyed the man's crops." At this point, the story deviates from the ecological message of Juan's narrative and takes a more personal tack, as the hill spirit admonishes the farmer:

283
"I sent for you to show you this and to remind you to take extra care. I ordered the animals to destroy the crops." The hill god continued, "It is not that you have committed any sin, but your wife has!"

When the man began to plant, his wife started to invite another man to accompany her. This was the reason the plants did not sprout. The hill god proceeded to say, "You did a wonderful job. You planted the traditional way. You asked the hill god. I cannot punish you. But, I will punish your wife."

So the hill god handed the man a piece of rope, tie-tie. The hill god ordered the man to lash his wife. "Give her three good cuts -- nothing light," he demanded.

Upon reaching his house, the man called his wife, "You have committed a serious offense. You spoiled all my efforts. Now my attention has been called by the hill god. He told me you are responsible for the loss of my field. You will be lashed. I must do it because the hill god ordered me to do it."

He then lashed his wife three times. He gave her three serious whips. The three lashes signified the three days she would live. For, on the third day, the lady died.

-Brigido C. (Spring 1993)

The hill god says that he will punish the wife but actually commands the man to be his agent in the lashing and eventual death of his wife. As an example of selective traditions at work, this story will probably not be used in the textbook program, but rather relegated to the TMCC archives due to its emphasis on spousal abuse. However, this story suggests an expanded scope of the hill god's purview and power, as he punishes the woman for her infidelity, which by extension risked the harmonious cycle of good crops. Once again, the storyteller's mention of sin signals the underlying interrelationship of traditional Mayan beliefs and Christianity.

A last Toledo narrative that provides evidence of the cultural renewal associated with the traditional hill god stories was collected from Marsedes C. Marsedes told the story of a poor man who was elected the master of ceremonies for a local fiesta but did not have the money to celebrate. After

284

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
performing the traditional rites prior to fishing, a boy invites the man to visit the Mam, "the owner of the hill." Closing his eyes, he encounters the Mam and explains his plight. "All right," replied the Mam, "I will give you plenty of fish if you agree to come and live with me after the fiesta. I will supply you with clothes and everything necessary for the dance."

The man had a successful fishing trip and revisits the Mam who promises him four assistants to help with the festivities. The Mam tells the ceremonial leader to teach people the Cortez Dance, for at the end of three days he was going to "send a strong wind to carry off the man." The man, like Juan the Catechist, tells his wife that his time on earth, his mission, is limited and that she must pray to Xulab, the stars:

At the end of the fiesta a great wind came and whisked the man and the four messengers up in the air and carried them off to the mountain called Tzumceh. They were taken inside. The woman prayed as she had been bidden. The boy came to her and told her that she would not be allowed to see her husband, but she was given presents.

This story not only reiterates the formulaic approach to the hill god, it is rich in detail concerning ritual negotiations and the renewal of the traditional Cortez Dance. This last story confirms the dual connections of Juan's visionary story to firmly rooted traditional stories both in Toledo and among the highland Maya. As was indicated at the onset of this chapter, Juan is testifying about his vision in the context of the regional validation of Mayan traditionalism. So too, the TESOL collection indicates that Juan's success in Toledo is due to a cultural resonance based on a long local tradition of hill god visions that continues to be renewed up till the present date.

Since I was not directly involved in collecting these stories, I am unable to comment on the performances or their contexts. Nevertheless, this effort not
only offers evidence of the broader Toledo cultural heritage, but it also provides further documentation of the role played by Thomas Teul in renewing and disseminating Mayan moral stories. With Juan's striking testimony foremost in my mind, I was blind for a long time to the acute responsiveness of Thomas to Juan's call for spiritual healing, as well as Thomas's own highly significant mission of healing in traditional and modern ways.

Since late 1990, Thomas had been enthusiastically spreading and promoting Juan's vision among Mayans and non-Mayans alike. Raised in distant San Jose, Thomas was one of the few Mayan students of his era to attend high school in P.G. He was reared with a knowledge of bush medicine and went on to complement that traditional background with the study of Western medicine, in particular public health. However, just as Juan's mission is one of moral and spiritual healing, so too Thomas has been working to promote cultural renewal and respect for the earth through his activities with the TMCC. He has become a leader in the promotion of interethic harmony within his community, and, during the cholera epidemic, he was on the front lines of cooperation with Belize's traditional adversaries, the Guatemalans. Thomas follows the tradition of Juan by employing the narrative as a key tool for teaching. Raised in an oral tradition, Thomas recognizes the enduring value of the spoken word, even as he has come to rely on books, reports, faxes, and computers.
2. Juan's Visionary Narrative in a Pedagogic Context

Juan began testifying about his vision at a time when Toledo's education system was beginning to develop its language and literacy programs to consider a dual language approach that would accommodate both the goals of nation building and ethnic cultural renewal. A number of educators and Mayan leaders have encouraged printing Juan's speech in English in order to reach those Kekchi who are not literate in their language, as well as other local residents. The English translation of Juan's account is included in *Stories in the Air*, which, when published, could conceivably place the story before every advanced reader in Toledo.

Translating Juan's testimony into English presents key insights into the evolving nature of language and identity for Toledo's Kekchi Maya. Since independence, many Kekchi parents, teachers and leaders have identified themselves not only as Kekchi but as Belizeans. Many Kekchi have embraced their new country since it offers safe haven from Guatemala's state terrorism, political stability, a higher standard of living, essential human services, and potential land rights to those who farm its bush. To be a Belizean is also to learn to speak English, the language that many believe provides the best opportunity for education and entry into a wider labor pool, Belizean national life, and the broader English speaking world.

For those Kekchi who are not literate in their Mayan tongue, education in SE, particularly utilizing the TESOL texts, is providing a vehicle that complements Kekchi efforts to instill a broader understanding of their own cultural heritage. The TESOL readers inform students about the panorama of Kekchi history, traditions, and spirituality, as well as reinforcing and validating these beliefs. In addition, my classroom observations and teacher
interviews indicate that the use of indigenous stories often sparks discussion and debate regarding similar stories and the existence of canonical texts.

Likewise, when students are assigned to collect oral stories and folk ways from relatives, this material adds to the growing body of Toledo oral lore and provides a significant contribution to the TMCC archives. Students report that they often hear a story first in their ethnic language, thus further encouraging the use of vibrant Kekchi. The potent vision of Juan the Catechist is one of the forces that is driving both the linguistic and cultural renewal in southern Belize.

**Generative Vocabulary**

Throughout Africa and Latin America, there have been many modern literacy programs that have attempted to integrate traditional literacy with a process of conscious analysis that Freire describes as "reading the world," i.e. providing a critical and empowering outlook on the readers' surroundings. A key aspect of such programs is the teacher's use of generative words that have existential meaning and emotional power, in addition to their potential for recombination into other useful terms (Freire, 1973, 49). Such words of analysis and power offer significant pedagogical potential for deliberate reflection and instruction.

Juan's narrative offers educators and listeners an indigenous generative vocabulary, one that emerges (even in translation) from the cultural wellspring deep in the hill spirit's cave. Juan's visionary journey to the abode of the mountain-valley returns his listeners and readers to the physical and spiritual locus of cultural renewal and care of the earth. The hill spirit, also known by names such as Mountain-and-Valley God (Colby, 1981), *dueno de cero* (Oakes, 1951), *Totilme'iletik* (Fabrega, 1973), and Earth Lord (Gossen,
1974; B. Tedlock, 1992) throughout other parts of the Mayan world, is the most significant spiritual reference in this particular complex of visionary narratives.

A litany of critical terms are contained in the different stories as some modern farmers are accused of being responsible for waste, pain, carelessness, wounding, maiming, abuse scarcity, damage, hurt, destruction and hatred. Juan weaves together an indictment against those who would abuse and damage the community, as well as the land and living things. The narrative’s hill spirit leaves no doubt that such behavior will result in scarcity, pain and destruction. In each narrative version, Juan announces that he is on a "mission;" he is a messenger and an "example." Could this be a case of Kekchi Mayan "signification" (Gates, 1988), an appropriation of the Catholic proselytizing "mission" to indicate the hill god’s enlistment of this catechist? These multilayered terms also present an apostolic frame of reference, one that Juan models as an "example" in the hopes that others will join in spreading his message.

While Juan’s cautionary vocabulary is explicit and threatening, he is equally clear about what people must do to return to the "old ways." Hunters and farmers must return to the "old rituals," praying, using game and grain "wisely," asking "permission" of the hill spirits, and acting with "honor" and obedience. At the very end of his talk, Juan sings a song that specifically outlines the path that people must follow. They must "burn their incense three times a day," "give thanks and call the names of the thirteen hill gods," and present "burnt offerings."

The rich diction of Juan’s visionary narrative is both an emergent and generative vocabulary, and echoes translations of stories from the Old Maya. These are the words and concepts that Mayan leaders are articulating as they
promote a return to ritual farming and hunting, while at the same time investigating modern innovations, such as sustainable cooperative logging operations. These words and concepts offer students their own indigenous generative vocabulary that they may use to discuss both cultural renewal and the cooperative adaptation to modern times. These essential words and concepts offer the promise of arable land, good crops, abundant game, sustainability, and community!

These various pedagogical processes, including interviewing, writing, taping, transcribing, and reading serve to validate not only traditional stories but also the ecological bush wisdom (Scollon, 1981) that both the Kekchi and Mopan have garnered and used for generations. Just as Juan's testimony about the hill spirit provokes student interest when it is discussed or read about in class, so too these emergent teachings fuel family and community discussion, bringing the cultural renewal process full circle.

3. Juan's Narrative in the Context of the Earth

Juan's visionary testimony has struck a chord in Toledo, stimulating Kekchi and Mopan people alike to recount Juan's message with friends and relatives, to tape his sermons, and ultimately for some villagers to return to the ritual methods of planting and hunting. Many people are responding to Juan's message as they come to realize that their sacred earth, the mountain-valley rainforest, is increasingly threatened by road building, corporate logging, pesticides, unchecked tourist development, and at times by their own unrestrained use of the land, water and game.

In the second decade of independence, Toledo's Mayan people are also learning that their traditional communal land management is endangered by
the promotion of private ownership by certain business and governmental forces. Likewise, just across the western border, the sacred land is threatened by coffee agribusiness and the Guatemalan government's "scorched earth" policy toward Indians (Falla, 1994, 53).

As with many native peoples, the ecological wisdom of the Kekchi and Mopan Mayas is woven deeply within the fabric of their cultures and may not always appear to Westerners as an "articulated, conscious body of knowledge" (Taylor, 1990, 191). However, their systematic ecological knowledge is expressed by means of narratives of daily life, visions, and age old traditions. The stories of Juan, Thomas, and others are all part of ecological body of knowledge that continues to be transmitted among and beyond the Toledo Mayans, with their identities as "expert environmental custodians" (194). Mayan visionary messages and the moral teachings of local hunters promote an environmental management system that wildlife biologists refer to technically as "sustained yield practices." Toledo Mayans practice an "empirically based approach to conservation," one that is based on a "practical understanding of ecological dynamics" (Nelson, 1983, 221).

While the promotion of ecological balance and sustainability is a long-term ideal in Toledo and a response to regional threats, the current re-articulation of ecological standards may also serve as a response to the impact of efficient new technology. High-power rifles, chain-saws, outboard engines, and all-terrain vehicles may all have contributed to regional overuse of the land, water, and game. The restatement of a code of caution, selectivity, precision, and ritual behavior promotes "ideological restraint" (242). This systemic body of knowledge is similar to one that Nelson describes among the Koyukon of Alaska and NW Canada, "Through this code, deference is shown for
everything in the environment, partly through gestures of etiquette and partly through avoiding waste and excessive use" (240).

Juan, Thomas, Mariana, members of the TMCC, teachers, and other community leaders are now collectively speaking out against these threats and crises. They are giving voice to the earth, testifying on behalf of the hill spirits. Deep within the rock and soil of Toledo, these earth spirits speak out for the corn, beans, rice, and the trees. Mayan leaders speak in Kekchi, Mopan, Creole and English on behalf of the gibnuts, deer, peccary, tapirs, and jaguars. While some distant folklorists might dismiss these narratives as tropes of personification, for the attentive Mayan listeners of Toledo, the voice of the sacred earth is literally emerging from deep within the mountain-valley caves. Toledo residents trust that, against the discourse of bureaucrats, lawyers, scientists, developers, and robot satellites, the sacred earth is responding, through human testimony, with its own balanced and ecological discourse.

**Educational Implications**

The timely transmission of cultural knowledge is certainly a key implication of Juan's mission and the spread of his vision throughout the region. This sense of mission can be considered by TESOL supporters as an affirmation of the purposefulness of their literacy program. Throughout the district, there are teachers and leaders who want their children to be literate, not only in reading skills, but also in the traditional ways of maintaining the earth and their communities. The efforts of Juan and Thomas to communicate the Mayan cultural knowledge of sustainable living on the earth reinforces the message and the mediums of communication and
instruction. Juan is encouraging the use of all languages and all media to expand the potential influence of the hill spirit's message. Juan is suggesting an ideological 'literacy' for people of all ages and backgrounds, providing an urgency rarely encountered in educational language and publishing issues.
CHAPTER ELEVEN

AFFIRMATION:
IN THE "DANCE HALL OF THE SPIRITS"

The opportunity to view social change and 'results' is one of the benefits of a study extending over seven years. As I began to finalize this research document, I had one additional opportunity to visit Toledo as part of the B-NHTP 1996 winter program. During that stay, I resolved a small number of research issues and visited with some of the featured narrators and other people who have been valuable resources. I quickly learned that significant events were transpiring, including a corporate logging threat to the rainforest and the revitalization of certain ritual celebrations. Consequently, I was able to learn how many of the volunteer narrators' articulated beliefs are presently being translated into action. The active roles of featured narrators and others in many of these activities confirmed the expanding social and political nature of the spirit voices. Furthermore, the enthusiasm for ethnic traditions on the part of three high school students speaks hopefully about the future of cultural renewal in Toledo. By offering evidence of the expansion of indigenous voices into the public arenas, this chapter affirms the thrust of the narrators' social interests and serves as a transition between the profiles of featured narrators and the final chapter devoted to understandings.
The white twin-engine Islander, with its green and yellow Maya Airways markings, slowly descends on its long, looping approach to the P.G. Airstrip. As the airplane banks toward the West and the brilliant afternoon sun, I get my best view of Punta Gorda's expanding 'metropolis.' This coastal town continues to push out in all its landward directions. Bounded by the sea and Joe Taylor Creek, Hopeville, a modest concrete housing development, now occupies an expanse of former mangrove marshes. To the South, a marina has been blasted out of the hard coquina, and modern housing plots extend westward into the palmetto scrub. The plane maneuvers a leisurely hook turn for the landing, and I can see the patches of newly cut bush and scars of old clear-cuts where local farmers have been laying claim to new land in greater and greater arcs beyond the town.

Much has changed since I first came to the Toledo District. In 1990, sanitation was often poor; only two or three villages had electricity; and there were few TVs and computers in the entire district. Now, high voltage wires are beginning to march into the foothills, and villages, still only accessible by dory or footpath, possess their own solar-celled microwave phone links. New roads provide better traction for all vehicles, including logging trucks and the newly hired school buses that have just begun to transport Mayan students to high school.

In this seventh year of visiting Toledo, I recognize that both the plane and I are small incremental components of the engine of modernization that is driving the expansion of P.G. and the economic development of the region. Though I may wish to see my role as an observer and advocate of cultural renewal, my presence, money, material goods, and ability to travel contribute to the allure of modern ways. The daily arrivals of tourists, business people,
social scientists, missionaries, and NH teachers are all part of this same engine of the industrial countries' exploitation, assistance, mass media and surveillance that is intruding on many parts of the planet. While the ceremonial trappings of colonial power are gone, there is no denying the dangers that good-willed outsiders pose for creating new dependencies, a seemingly benign neocolonialism that masks itself as technical assistance. I am also aware that Belizeans have seen their share of carpet-baggers, proselytizers, and conmen, and I trust that they will quickly challenge any well intentioned efforts that do not serve them well.

*Thomas*

This year's Belize-NH Teacher Program trip began on a sad and somber note. Chet Schmidt of Nature's Way had called a week before our departure to notify us that Thomas Teul, who was just completing his public health schooling in Belize City, had been killed in a motorcycle accident. We were shocked, saddened, and initially helpless to express our grief to his family at the great distance. Thomas's death was a tremendous loss to his family and to the Mopan people for whom he was one of their emerging young leaders. For those of us from the North, Thomas's death was a deep personal loss for he had always looked after our health and worked hard to broaden our vision of Toledo's peoples. And, he had been our friend.

Flying out of Belize City, I thought back to our first extended conversation, when Thomas recounted two seminal stories that addressed the issues of salvage, cultural renewal, and respect for the ancestors and the earth. His account of the twelve cats attacking two young grave robbers had been followed by my first exposure to Juan the Catechist's call to ritual planting and hunting. Though I did not recognize the full significance of these themes
at the time, Thomas obviously believed that these were key issues that local educators and their collaborators should consider for the TESOL project.

Thomas's story of the ancestral artifact thieves indicated that the notions of salvage and looting could easily be confused by villagers, who often desire material wealth as much as Westerners. While times may be changing, archaeology offers one of the insensitive models of salvage, wherein archaeologists were so bent on 'rescuing' the Pre-Columbian treasures that they removed the artifacts from their original sites and placed them in foreign museums, thereby increasing their desirability and monetary value.

Thomas also alerted me to one of the foremost active examples of cultural renewal among the region's Mayan people. Juan's mission, with its twofold catechetical and traditional Mayan inspirations, was a striking example of the indigenous impulses to preserve not only the ways of living in harmony with the land, but the very earth itself. Furthermore, as trust increased, Thomas enlisted many of us in the spread of Juan's story for Toledo and beyond. The proactive renewal of cultural teachings, by people such as Juan and Thomas, reinforces the activities of local educators and stands in sharp contrast to those who would only protect artifacts and tourist zones.

On our final approach for landing, I glance westward to the Mayan Mountains, the locale of ancient ruins and the Mayans' hill spirits. Though I will miss our long talks and exploring those hills in his old van, I am deeply thankful for Thomas's guidance and trust, both of which had opened my eyes, much like the man in Juan's story, to beauties that I had not imagined.
Where Will the Howler Monkeys Go?

During the early months of 1996, southern Belize was facing the prospect of ecological exploitation from outside forces. Alarms had sounded, and many people were discussing the threat of multinational logging. Once again, people were looking to their ancestral and earth spirits, seeking guidance from their voices in the emergent performances of veteran storytellers.

Punta Gorda

Arriving at Nature's Way, I spend some time with Chet and his wife Damien discussing mutual friends and recent local happenings. During the next few days, members of the B-NHTP and I learn about the dramatic events in the region, a locale that one can usually characterize with the legitimate stereotype of "sleepy." People explain that recently the national government conceded large portions of the Columbia Forest Reserve to a Malaysian logging corporation. While the details about this particular company are still cloudy, it is common knowledge in "big timber" areas that the Malaysians have recently begun exporting their logging crews abroad because they have so successfully plundered most of their country's rainforests.

The threat to the Columbia rainforest is not a total surprise. For years, a loose coalition of Mayans and environmental groups has waged a successful campaign to maintain this huge reserve which lies just north of Toledo's rural villages. The Belize Center for Environmental Studies (BCES) characterizes the region in this way:

The Columbia Forest Reserve has "unique ecological features" not found elsewhere in Central America, due to the richness of its tree species. It is one of the few ecosystems of its type found anywhere in Belize or Central America. The forest
provides important watershed protection to the farms along the Columbia and Rio Grande Rivers (Berkey, 15).

Much of this tropical forest ecosystem had last been logged by British concerns over sixty years ago when the contemporary equipment limited the deep penetration of the bush. A protected reserve on Crown land since the 1930's, Mayan villages grew up along the border, enabling their residents to plant and hunt according to traditional ways. These villagers, like numerous other Amerindian peoples, have been managing their forests as "extractive reserves." With their small numbers scattered across a vast wilderness, Toledo Mayans still practice milpa agriculture and in recent decades they have done some moderate logging. Unlike certain foreign conservation groups who want to remove land from human utilization, most Mayans seek both the ownership of their lands and the right to extract the resources in their traditional sustainable manner.

Though the Malaysian company had recently begun to construct an infrastructure of roads and work camps, the response of local environmental forces was slowed only briefly. Community organization efforts among the Maya, initially spearheaded by people such as Thomas Teul and Gerineldo Pop, have resulted in the formation of the TMCC and a district-wide association of village alcaldes, the one representative organization officially recognized by the national government.

Logging opponents fear the potential damage caused by the extensive removal of felled timber. Helicopters and blimps are seen as unworkable in the jagged rainy Mayan mountains, and mahogany and cedar would have to be removed by giant skidders, tearing huge gouges in the landscape with their tires, blades, and dragged logs. If loggers were to remove too many trees from any one area, the fragile subsoil would be quickly baked hard as fired clay

299

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
during the hot dry season, and many foresters say that, even with replanting, there is little chance of regenerating the complex rainforest ecosystem. That damage and the grievous scarring that tree removal causes would threaten an even greater soil depletion during the rainy season which in turn would erode the hillsides, filling the streams, rivers, and eventually silting the reef and impacting local fishing.

**Eduardo**

On Friday morning, I meet Eduardo at the market and inquire about his family's well-being. Everyone is healthy, and, with land-use issues uppermost in my mind, I ask him about the small National Park that he and other villagers have labored to establish surrounding their local waterfalls. He says that they are happy that the land is protected, but there is dissension regarding the various responsibilities for developing the area. Eduardo explains that recently a US land developer attempted to acquire land for a private tourist enterprise. Since "ready cash" in always needed in this subsistence farming region, such temptations cannot easily be dismissed.

As we discuss land-use and tourism, Eduardo is very much the modern Maya, considering if not cultivating a deal. Nevertheless, it is obvious from his dispirited tone that this business of selling or leasing land goes against his nature. Though he shares no stories of bush spirits today, his inertia regarding potentially profitable land sales speaks eloquently about the intimate relationship between the Mayan people and the earth.

When I ask Eduardo about the Columbia Reserve, he manifests the same mixed feelings. He belongs to a segment of Mayan leaders who want economic development but he also sees the tenuous control that local Mayans have had over their land slowly slipping away. For people who till
the land by hand, the scale of a corporate logging operation is foreboding. Eduardo is on the edge, lured by money and development, yet still able to hear the faint voices of the forest spirits. We talk a bit about his village soccer team, and then Eduardo must catch his bus. I promise to visit as soon as I can.

**Land-use**

My return to Toledo is colored by the news of this large-scale threat to the rainforest. At first, it seems as if this danger is far removed from educational textbooks and curricula, as well as my own research project. Yet, underlying the moves by multinational corporations are the very issues I have been tracking and attempting to interpret. There are those, particularly within certain segments of the international environmental movement, who want to 'salvage' regions such as Toledo, preserving pastoral Edens that they can visit, binoculars and Nikons at the ready, on their vacations from life in the metropolis. Undoubtedly, there are also Mayan farm families who wish to maintain their community land in a totally undisturbed fashion. However, in today's Toledo, land-use is increasingly problematic, as Belizeans of all ethnic groups labor to amass the foreign capital necessary for the expansion of education, public health, and an economic infrastructure that will allow them to live in greater health and comfort. Toledo has suddenly become one of those arenas of public contention where some promote 'progress' and others decry 'destruction.' In each and every case, the land and its use converge as the central focus of conflict.
One morning, I travel to Blue Creek and renew my acquaintance with Arcadio, a community leader and bush guide. He tells about his recent expedition to the distant San Benito Poite watershed and the seven days he spent kayaking the remote jungle rivers. He reflects that he found himself thinking about what corporate logging might do in the Columbia Reserve, as well as other pristine regions where he had often hunted and fished. As we walk along the creek, I am struck how his analysis emerges from the vast storehouse of his hunting and guiding observations. Arcadio knows the complex balance of the rainforest ecosystem as a man who lives in and from the bush. He admits that the vision of environmental degradation caused by extensive logging brings him to tears. "Where would the howler monkeys go?" he asks plaintively.

As soon as I can, I travel to San Pedro Columbia and visit with a number of people. Esteban, a serious student of horticulture, has personal reasons to avoid public political action, but he sees an important role in contributing his research to the community. He explains that the government approved a "40-40 program," whereby the logging company was granted the right to cut one of forty demarcated plots each year for forty years, when, theoretically, the first plot would have grown back and be ripe for a second cutting. He says that local residents recently protested foreign loggers felling trees at the reserve's
entrances, while the company maintains that its workers are only establishing a trail network.

Carlos, a life-long resident of the region, is also fearful that his job could also be jeopardized by political activity. Nevertheless, he does not hesitate to express his anxiety about the potential disruption to human activity that the lumbering might occasion. Clearly hunters and local residents who fish the rivers are anxious about the depletion of game stocks that the logging might cause. Carlos explains that there is also considerable anxiety throughout the village about an influx of unruly young men.

**Gerineldo**

I do not get to see Gerineldo in San Pedro Columbia, but I learn that he is an active participant in the reserve struggle. While many villagers are primarily concerned about the potential depletion of resources, Gerineldo has long given his foremost consideration to the land’s spiritual character, forever inscribed in his consciousness by his experiences at the ancient ruins and his vision of the resurrected Jesus. His faithfulness to this spiritual geography offers fellow villagers the potential for reclaiming their "colonized landscape" (Wilson, 1995, 51), as well as protecting their natural resources.

From our conversations over the years and through observation of Gerineldo's leadership role among his people, I realize that he is a major force in maintaining those selective traditions regarding the sacred geography of the land, that have deep roots in both Mayan and Christian spiritualities. Having devoted himself to study and ritual performance, he is a leader that many villagers look to for guidance when they wish to understand Toledo ways of knowing and the path to sustainable living with the earth.
Throughout this visit, I hear a great deal about Mariana who has risen to a leadership position in the Mayan coalition that is challenging the Malaysian project. She is currently the only woman member of the coalition's steering committee, and women in a number of different locations refer to her status and speaking ability with pride. Unfortunately, this visit does not coincide with any of the coalition's public gatherings, and I am unable to visit with Mariana.

Mariana has continued her co-op organization efforts over the years, and so it is significant that she finds the time to challenge these threats to the Columbia Reserve. She remains committed to each of the domains of her personal and community life: domestic, commercial, and rainforest. In spite of the lure of the 'city' and the materialistic benefits that come with her crafts' work, including money, travel, and status, Mariana has not lost sight of the need to preserve the sacred land. As an articulate leader who speaks on behalf of the hills and valleys, her balanced vision serves as a model for other women and men who are making their ways into modern times.

The development of Mariana's public speaking abilities are noteworthy and deserve to be examined elsewhere in greater detail. She is among those Mayan leaders who are aware of their regional modes of speaking and knowing. Through her participation in organized group such as the Belize Rural Women's Association and by deliberately seeking out foreigners, including NH teachers, Mariana and others have practiced their English, expanded their technical vocabularies, and come to understand the organizational modes that are employed in managing bureaucratic programs. As Ridington (1988) reflected about his native British Colombian
collaborators, indigenous peoples often practice anthropology, as they study our life-ways and modes of discourse.

As Mariana meets with those bureaucrats who might have previously proved intimidating with their management-style verbal skills, she is emerging as one woman leader who might potentially be able to link the previously male-dominated decision-making councils with the growing ranks of women who are just beginning to organize themselves around issues such as crafts, community health and education. At this juncture Mariana, more than any other of the contributing narrators, seems to exemplify the strides that local Mayans are making with regard to the significant areas of study that I have outlined in this study's introduction. Mariana's craft co-op organizational work has been the bridge that allowed her to move from the realm of private discourse, through a period of local training with women friends, to a new leadership that is overtly public and truly part of the contested national discourse. In joining the forest reserve struggle, she is working to renew the sacred earth itself through the evolving community cooperation that must now adjust its patriarchal ways to include women in its highest levels of decision making.

Laguna

One afternoon I hitch out to visit with the Pop family in the village of Laguna. A few years before, a NH colleague, Enid Kelly, had invited me to observe the school's excellent teachers and to meet a small group of young people who took great pride in retelling traditional Mayan stories, some of which are printed in *Stories in the Air*.

The night of my arrival the villagers are having a meeting to plan for protecting the forested slopes that rise steeply behind the school building and
cover the entrance to their ancient cave. Some farmers have begun to cut
milpas on a lower terrace, and there are fears that outsiders might attempt to
purchase neighboring plots for lumbering purposes. Miguel Pop tells me that
the meeting will last an hour, but it extends over two, as villagers also use the
occasion to discuss the threat of the Columbia Reserve logging. Miguel says
that he and the other villagers are determined that they will never allow
extensive logging in Laguna. Clearly, as the days quickly pass, my short and
rather random sample of Toledo friends and acquaintances indicates that the
Columbia Reserve and corporate logging are the hot and compelling topics of
local conversation.

Management Discourse and Natural Ways of Speaking

Arcadio, Esteban, Gerineldo, Mariana, and Miguel are giving voice to the
hill spirits by spreading the word, protesting, interrogating, and demanding.
Using Creole, English, Kekchi and Mopan, they are speaking out on behalf of
their sacred earth in an expanding array of forums, including Punta Gorda,
Belmopan, Belizean newspapers, and environmental journals. The
'missions' of Juan the Catechist, Thomas Teul, and others have also kept
alive the traditional call to revere and protect the mountain-valleys.

The narrators' political responses confirm the ecological wisdom and
sound moral convictions that are contained in so many of their stories. It
appears that participation in the TESOL project allowed many local people to
testify publicly regarding their communal wisdom and also to gain a measure
of community recognition for these achievements. Their current
involvement in political struggles also demonstrates that their pedagogical
contributions may well have acted as catalysts to increased entry into
contested public discourse. Clearly, many Toledo narrators do not hesitate to give voice to ancestral and earth spirits when critical issues are at stake.

As I traveled throughout the district and visited with friends, people inevitably spoke about the environmental threats and what had to be done in response to these dangers. The spread of information and opinion was remarkable in a region that depended so greatly on oral communication. In southern Belize, the narrators’ networks are interwoven in an intricate lattice of storytellers and stories. Independent of written truths, knowing is a communal discursive activity, where language and story endlessly blend, allowing people to assess, deliberate, judge, and initiate new action.

Despite the impressive powers of government and multinational corporations, the local residents’ organizations, courage, political activity, eloquence, as well as the powerful spiritual substrata of the peoples’ stories, guarantee that there will be no quick and easy corporate victories in Toledo.

**Voices of Reconciliation**

Most of those who are alarmed by the drastic threats to the district’s rainforests are also people who honor and respect their ancestral traditions. Throughout Belize, many people embrace spiritualities that honor both ancestors and the sacred earth. Therefore, I next consider the ancestral dimension of cultural renewal as a point of emphasis rather than a discrete spiritual domain. It is clear from both their prior and current testimonies that each of the following narrators fully subscribes to the region's collective environmental wisdom.
**Miss Annie**

It takes a few days to find ample time to visit with Miss Annie. One afternoon, I correctly anticipate that she will be doing her family's laundry. With one daughter and fifteen grand-children in residence this month, there is certainly a two tub load each day. I greet her as she labors in her straw hat, and we hug. Standing in the shade by her large outdoor sink, I admire the four new cinderblock walls that have risen to full height behind her aging four room house.

"By Christmas! I want to be finished and moved in by Christmas and... Oh... What a party we will have. I just need the zinc (for the roof)," she exclaims. Stepping up onto the newly poured concrete floor, I note that her grandchildren have transformed the future living area into a fine make-shift basketball stadium for the interim.

Annie tells me that she had just learned the day before about her mother's blood relationship to the Castillos, a family that is planning to convene a dugu this coming summer. They had immediately enlisted her services for the upcoming ritual, and Annie is still recovering from these sudden disclosures. She explains that, in order to honor the ancestors, she will have to immediately request a leave from her employer since the dugu will last for five full days.

A few days later, I arrive for a noontime meal accompanied by Bert Cohen of the teachers' program. Since ground-foods, including chocho, yams, and potatoes are in season, Annie serves us huge bowls of barbecue boil-up. In the course of our dinner, Bert raises the issue of the Columbia Reserve, and Annie responds immediately. She points toward the clock tower at the end of P.G.'s central park.
"They had their march there last week, the Indians...with signs and banners about their land. People came out to see them and some joined them," Annie observes enthusiastically. She notes that while political marches and rallies are rather common, this was a special occasion in P.G., since it was primarily Mayan people who were taking public political action. She sympathizes with the Mayans' efforts to control their land because successive generations of Garifuna ancestors have handed down communal farming lands in trust to their descendants. This communal plot exists today just to the west of the town's boundary, and Annie indicates that her people would go to any length to protect this ancestral legacy.

**Ancestral Healing**

Late one evening, as we drink Ovaltine around his kitchen table, Solomon Castillo, a long time resource on educational and language matters, raises the subject of his family's upcoming dugu. In the course of our conversation, I ask if I might comment on the ceremony in my research, while protecting the personal significance of the Castillo dugu. He agrees, and so I present certain insights that I gained from Solomon regarding ancestral beliefs and the dugu.

Solomon explains that the prime goal, which will join perhaps four hundred members of this family extended across the hemisphere, is reconciliation among the living and their ancestors. For the Garinagu, peace-making, conjoined with holistic healing, knows no boundaries, either of age, nationality, religion, or the grave. Aware of the separateness that intolerance breeds, the dugu committee's goals include the attempt to, "Identify and correct whatever superstitions, misconceptions, fears, misinterpretations, conflicts and contradictions that may exist between our Garifuna Dugu and our Christian faith." The celebrating family also hopes to "use and enjoy" the
dugu to "heal psychologically, emotionally, physically and spiritually" all ailing family members and ailing relationships.

I learn that blood kin from all eras are welcome at the dugu. "I invite my great, great grandfather... my generation is involved, and our children will come. They are the future. The spirits of our ancestors will come with us and our children...together symbolically for one week." Smiling as he points to the planning list, he expresses his faith that, "Other spirits of the ancestors will be there to support me!" He looks forward to the formal rites, the drumming, the visiting, and the stories. "The end product is a healthier relationship among relatives."

While the expansiveness of ancestral time is a critical dimension of Garifuna beliefs, so too is the significance of the earth. The family's planning includes ongoing physical preparations at the dugu site. It is from a central location on the dabuyaba's (temple) earthen floor, representing the new land where Garinagu have buried their family members for the last two hundred years, "that the voices of the ancestors are supposed to emanate" (Foster, 1986, 43). As with the Mayan people, the earth itself is a spiritual homestead, a source of food, the place of burial, and a portal for the spirits.

Reconciliation, a prime goal of the upcoming dugu, appears to move back and forth in time like some genealogical helix. The ancestors have practiced and passed along their traditional beliefs to ensuing generations who in turn extend their rituals to past ancestors in an effort to foster reconciliation throughout an entire family, extended both in geography and in time. In a world where many Westerners are still intent on labeling tribal people and people of color as the 'other,' one need only look to the Garinagu's faith in their ancestors to consider a more inclusive model of human interaction. The Garinagu do not believe in an ultimate metaphysical separation of people.
good and bad, righteous and evil. All their people, living or passed on, are
destined for the same final resting place in Seiri. Those who have led anti-
social lives here on earth may need considerably more time on their journey
and additional assistance from the entire community, but the Garinagu's
ultimate vision is of one harmonious people, with no excuses for division,
subjugation, or exploitation.

Solomon tells me about the dramatic increase in the observance of dugus
throughout the region. He believes that these communal celebrations are
providing new social and political openings for the Garinagu to emerge from
the oppressive judgment of Christian churches (Foster, 47). By bringing the
dugu out of the hiding that ensured its survival, Garifuna leaders are
gathering their people more often to celebrate this seminal rite and related
rituals such as the nine night wake, thereby enhancing the cultural renewal
of numerous aspects of traditional Garifuna culture including: farming,
fishing, building, healing, music, dancing and storytelling.

Petey

Throughout this February stay, I visit with Petey on almost a daily basis.
His bout with arthritis and a flu is ongoing, and he shows me a stockpile of
Billyweb bark that he regularly boils for poultices to treat his aching knees. He
is pleased with my gift of his favorite 'medicine' from the outside world,
saltwater taffy.

Despite his month long illness, Petey is well aware of current issues such as
the Columbia Reserve logging thanks to his trusty portable radio. He knows
the reserve region from his family's employment with the Topco corporation
many years before and, though he has cut his share of trees, he too expresses
worry that logging on this scale could get out of hand.
Late one afternoon, Petey and I hang blankets along his cabin’s walls as a raw norther dips down from Mexico’s high plateaus. It is uncomfortable to sit short-sleeved as tea time approaches, and Petey prepares for an even chillier night’s sleep as the temperature continues to fall. As we talk, Petey’s memories drift back to La Favorita, an old P.G. dance hall, where, long before the construction of the town’s civic center, Creoles, Kekchi, Mopans, and Garinagu gathered for dances, weddings and other festivities.

Petey tells of the Garifuna man who built his house on a plot of land and then began to construct this large hall. When the project appeared too great, his brother joined him, and soon others pitched in to finish La Favorita. Listening to his vivid description of party nights, I can almost hear the guitars and drums, see the dancing shadows, and smell the hot fragrant mix of bougainvillea, fried fish, and raw rum. Petey goes on to describe a “spirit tree” that once occupied a corner lot adjacent to the dance hall. He says that people were wary of the tree late at night as they exited the hall. Petey wistfully describes the emotional response he still feels for the old site of La Favorita, just one street up from the sea, "I still feel them there... the girls, my friends... the music at that hall..." As with his Garifuna and Mayan counterparts, Petey identifies a convergence of ancestral spirits at certain spiritual power places.

As darkness moves over us, Petey lights a small kerosene lantern, and I describe the progress on the textbook project and my own research. I mention the excitement I felt when I first began to perceive the spiritual dimensions of the many narratives we have recorded. The books are rich with stories of ancestral spirits and spirits of the bush, and children are now able to share these powerful traditions among themselves.

"Just like La Favorita," Petey exclaims. "It’s like the dance hall... those books, it’s a dance hall for the spirits... all coming together in one place." He
smiles, as if at his own inspiration or perhaps at the image that has suddenly entered his thoughts of old friends still partying in a spirit world at the dance hall's old site.

His metaphor stops me short — a "dance hall for the spirits." I visualize images of Mexican Day of the Dead skeleton-sweets, wind dancing on market wires. At first, it seemed like a figurative reach to me, but, as I reflect, I sense the significance of Petey's metaphorical jump. For true community sharing, for the renewal of soulful energy, it might appear necessary to have a critical mass of spirits, a place for them to gather, lest they lose their sometimes tenuous bonds to the living. Just as La Favorita, the textbook project is a site for the narrative gathering of peoples' important spiritual contacts, a place to testify, a place to engage in ritual, and a place to improvise and let the spirits flow ... a dance hall for the spirits.

**Future Voices**

My final considerations concern the future of the storytelling medium, the storytellers themselves. Ethnobotanist Mark Plotkin (1993) recently reported on his work with Amazon healers and their medicines, some of which may prove beneficial to people worldwide. Ultimately, Plotkin realized that the enlistment of indigenous healing apprentices was perhaps the most critical long-term concern if that region's healing wisdom is to endure. So too in Toledo, if the Creole, Garifuna, and Mayan collective traditional knowledge is to persist, there must be new storytellers in training. Fortunately there are positive signs that the mentorship of potential storytellers is proceeding within the region. I conclude this study's field research section with brief portraits of three young people who are finding their ways as emergent
storytellers, or perhaps amateur ethnographers. Each of these teenagers attended village elementary schools, and each of these enthusiastic proponents of traditional life-ways is a credit to the combined efforts of their families, teachers and community leaders.

Pablo

While visiting Laguna village, I spent time with Pablo, a third form student at TCC and a young man deeply interested in the cultural survival of the Kekchi people. The year before, as I was trying to locate a fluent Kekchi translator for the creation of a prototype ABC book, Pablo overheard me discuss this need with his father and volunteered to write a sample book. He set right to work, and two days later a fellow student delivered the first draft to Nature's Way.

Pablo is watching the small family store when I arrive at his home. For a time, we talk about cultural renewal activities in Laguna, including Kekchi harp music, dance, and a medicinal plant trail that is being created by members of the village's TEA guest house cooperative. Pablo is aware of my taping activities over the years, and since he is in possession of a new cassette recorder, he questions me about my methods. I describe certain of my techniques, encouraging him that his motivation and curiosity about traditional beliefs are his best tools. He explains that his grandfather and two other prospective narrators speak primarily in Kekchi. Pablo plans to record them in their language and provide a simultaneous translation. If that approach proves too difficult, he will make additional tapes of their translated stories or he will transcribe the stories into English. His father Miguel agrees to help him with the subtle points of Kekchi translation, and early the next
morning I leave on the market bus excited by the prospect that Pablo will be recording bilingual stories for the project and his village.

**Mark**

Early in the summer of 1995, I met Mark through Brenda Whiteley, a NH teacher who was hunting paperback novels for him. An avid reader at age 15, Mark needed to study at home since he had missed a year's schooling when his father seriously injured his leg and his mother became ill. For the previous year, Mark tended the crops and helped around the homestead, while both his parents recovered. We found him a few books, and I later learned that Mark had returned to TCC in the Fall.

In February, Mark and I converse at Nature's Way, and he excitedly reports that he was one of two teenagers selected to dance the Deer Dance the previous August. Many people are thrilled about the renewal of this special event for the dance had not been performed in San Antonio for eight years. Mark shows me photographs of the elaborate and colorful costumes. Holding a photo where he is dressed as one of the chase dogs, Mark describes the choreography in great detail.

Mark explains that the dance festival had been an outstanding success. He describes the long nights of dancing, eating and listening to stories from the older men and women. Clearly, this occasion spurred his interest in the rich treasure-trove of oral stories. Listening, I consider how much this situation resembles Gerineldo's descriptions of his initiation into deep cultural traditions when he danced the Monkey Dance as a youth.

Like Pablo, Mark too has caught the 'fever' and wants to tape some of the older performers and celebrants. We make arrangements about obtaining a recorder and tapes from the program, and I ask Mark how he will handle the
languages? He says that he plans to record both in Mopan and English. Furthermore, he will keep tapes in Mopan and provide English translations either on tape or in transcriptions. He says that he would be thrilled to see his collected stories and interviews in print.

**Irmelinda**

Just as I was about to depart P.G., I received a note and two-page story from Irmelinda. I last saw Irmelinda and her family in July 1995, sharing her grandmother's small home in P.G. I had lost track of them for over a year, and during that time there had been a parental separation, followed by the sudden move to the coast. In spite of their difficulties with finding jobs and surviving in town, Irmelinda had continued to pursue her interest in family stories and had passed some of her transcriptions on to the education office. She sent me this story as a sample of her recent work.

Irmelinda's two-page tale of a hill spirit, "The Old Lady and the Boy and the Thunder Man," describes the intercession of a thunderspirit when a boy is unsuccessful with his hunt. I had not come across this story before and I look forward to the occasion when I might talk with Irmelinda about her choice of story and its meaning to her. As with many of the hill spirit stories, it includes a meeting between a hunter and a spirit in the bush. The boy asks for help and the spirit tells the boy to close his eyes. The spirit gives the boy the formula of asking three times for food. After the boy risks asking a forth time, he agrees to follow the ritual faithfully, thereby ensuring continued game for him and his grandmother, the old lady.

On this occasion, however, it was the medium that impressed me as much as the message. Despite family and economic pressures, Irmelinda continues to compose her family's stories in the quiet moments of her life. I was pleased
that, having missed me during my stay in Toledo, she still found a way to show me her latest work. I wondered if the return to her home village might be one positive factor in enabling her to compose this traditional story. Remembering her early shyness at telling her stories, I pondered if writing might still be her favored mode of expression. Her story was detailed, dramatic and interesting, and she wanted an audience! While Pablo liked to write and tape, and Mark was excited about the prospect of using a cassette recorder, Irmelinda probably wrote her stories in quiet moments when chores were done and her younger sisters slept. She was doing her best to lend her voice to the hill spirits, finding readers and listeners wherever she could.

I end my account of Toledo storytellers, confident that at this time the region’s narrators continue to dip into their cultural wellsprings, refreshing their families and friends with the area’s life-affirming wisdom. Narrators continue to delight their audiences, spinning tales as the ‘spirits’ move them. In coming years, it seems likely that veteran and apprentice storytellers will persevere at rituals such as the dugu and the Deer Dance, where they have so long been part of the ceremonial coming together of people in community.
CHAPTER TWELVE

UNDERSTANDINGS

In bringing my analysis of southern Belize’s ongoing storytelling and educational activities to a close, this study offers understandings based on seven years of observations and interviews. The purpose of my conclusion is to serve as a prism, concentrating much of the study’s ethnographic description in an effort to offer interpretations and insights in response to my research question. The study’s investigation of Toledo storytelling presents evidence of the narrators’ persevering promotion of local knowledge and traditions, particularly those that are grounded in the region’s ancestral and earth spirit beliefs. To this end, I have featured storytellers who regularly use improvisational storytelling for the exposition of their traditional belief systems at home, in their communities, and, most recently, in their new nation’s political arena.

Furthermore, a long view of the TESOL project’s interrelated activities, including enlistment, conversation, performance, taping, transcribing, editing and publishing, establishes the complex process of composition. Composition entails continual choice and selectivity, and, under the right circumstances, composition is a truly creative process. I believe that a thorough evaluation of these composition activities offers evidence not only of salvage and cultural renewal but also of a creative process, the flowering of emergent performances and themes that are grounded on traditional beliefs and adapted for Belize’s new era of political growth.
The Context of Independent Belize

The completion of my research coincides with the midpoint of Belize's second decade of independence. However, the promise of this country's true freedom is more than merely nominal but less than fulfilled. Belize remains in both the economic and commonwealth orbits of Britain, though the Union Jack has been retired. Increasingly, Belize has also been drawn into the hemispheric web of US interests. Belize maintains a dual loyalty to these two world powers because of the advantages that accrue from their spheres of influence, and also because both the UK and the US's military might has prevented Guatemalan expansion which has long appeared to be the most real and immediate threat to Belizean sovereignty.

Belizeans are not unaware that US military power and economic influence have been used during the past forty years against virtually all their neighbors, particularly Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico and Nicaragua. Belizeans are also mindful that money and influence from distant nations such as Hong Kong, Kuwait, and Taiwan currently affects Belize's internal political stability. Against this dynamic geopolitical backdrop, Belize continues to undergo massive population shifts, as the emigration of Creoles and Garinagu continues, while Mexicans, Central Americans, and, most recently, Taiwanese enter the country in increasing numbers.

Though the impact of US trade policy and World Bank economics may not always appear intelligible or tangible to the average manual laborer, Belizeans are sensitive to world economic shifts as well as the export of popular culture by surrounding countries, particularly the US. Nowhere is cultural impact felt more than in the blanketing of Belize by US television.
Only the Roots/Reggae culture of Jamaica has made its effect felt in a similar, and often equally subversive, manner.

Nevertheless, despite ethnic and linguistic differences, many Belizeans are proudly engaged in shaping identities as citizens of this new nation. Unlike many of its neighbors, Belize is peaceful, safe, free, and currently provides a healthy quality of life for most of its citizens. Independent Belize is also experiencing a cultural renaissance. Creoles, Garinagu, and Mayans are once again free to dance, drum, celebrate religious rituals, speak, write, act politically, and engage in nation-building. The indigenous people and those that were brought to Caribbean shores in shackles have maintained their secret discourses and belief systems throughout the long night of enforced silence and colonial oppression. Nourished by ancient well-springs of belief and forged in the crucible of resistance, Belizeans are once again free to articulate their cultural histories and identities, thus providing the validation and security that will allow them to create their new nation. This study has documented some of the creative and emergent means of articulation that Belizeans have chosen since independence.

**Salvage, Renewal, and Creativity**

When I began my research on the textbook project, I set out to examine two possible interpretations regarding the narrators' contributions. For six years, I investigated the storytellers' performances in order to recognize, document, and interpret their cultural renewal and salvage dimensions. I ultimately came to understand that my search for distinguishing characteristics which suitably describe and differentiate both processes was as
frustrating as my attempts to divide and unravel the syncretistic relationship between indigenous spiritual beliefs and Christian teachings.

For the storytellers I observed and interviewed, the dual processes of salvage and cultural renewal are as interwoven as their spiritual beliefs. Toledo residents construct knowledge and view the world in their special ways, as their cultural goals and needs mesh in the day-to-day world of building community. In their storytelling performances, the narrators are simultaneously engaged in the dual functions of salvage and cultural renewal, thereby protecting and furthering their cultural heritages.

Salvage and cultural renewal are the same process, the proactive saving that is based on recognizing what cultural material is of enduring value to a community. For the indigenous members of the TESOL project, the salvage and cultural renewal of traditional narratives and life stories is whole cloth. When a teacher rescues a story, that person is also renewing cultural knowledge, and, when a storyteller improvises a traditional tale, that narrator is engaged in a saving act.

The analytic concepts are valuable to the degree that they offer different outlooks on intent. The concept of salvage can help identify those people whose intent it is to remove valuable cultural art and artifacts from circulation. Likewise, the term cultural renewal signals a vibrancy that is not always associated with museum displays. The terms are also useful to indicate the issue of agency. Salvage may be accomplished by outsiders and insiders, while only indigenous people can renew their cultural values and traditions. This is particularly significant since a key goal of this study has been to outline the degree of local control in the Toledo literacy efforts, as well as the potential dangers of letting that control slip into the hands of outside researchers, publishers, and media outlets.
A review of the TESOL narratives and their uses indicates that storytellers are engaging in cultural renewal by projecting their deep-rooted spiritual and moral beliefs into the current educational discourse. This experience offers narrators the opportunity to practice personal and community self-expression, receive valuable reinforcement and criticism, as well as enhancing their status within the community. Consequently, they are using this assertive participation in the textbook program as the launching pad for expanded entry into the arenas of national discourse.

An additional consideration concerns the improvisational, emergent, and ultimately the creative dimension of Toledo storytelling. Occasionally during their storytelling performances, narrators rise to special moments of individual creativity, which, Lavie and her collaborators (1993) in *Creativity/Anthropology* define as a process of "human activities that transform the existing cultural practices in a manner that a community or certain of its members find of value" (5). The first part of this definition outlines the intimate relationship between cultural renewal and creativity, confirming that Toledo storytelling is part of the cultural rebirth that is emerging from long-standing veils of enforced silence. It is the community valuation that may be likened to descriptions of Native American storytelling (Allen, 1986; Momaday, 1976; Silko, 1981), which is always perceived as part of the dynamic, evolving, and creative story of a people. The region's narrators are not just contributing to an educational project, they are weaving their stories into the emerging fabric of their community's ongoing history.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into five sections, each one of which concerns one of the five sub-areas of investigation prompted by the research question. In each area, I address the implications of interpreting local storytelling in terms of both salvage and cultural renewal. While certain of
these topics are indivisible in life, I conduct this analysis in chronological fashion, establishing the language and literacy policies that provided the context for the TESOL performances and publication, which in turn have exposed the webs of community knowledge to a larger audience.

1. Language

As with many other nations in the wake of colonialism, Belize is in the midst of multilevel conflicts regarding its language future. From the vantage point of Toledo, there appear to be three main parties to the national language struggle: 1. Unreflective speakers of vernaculars, 2. Promoters of SE, 3. Advocates of bilingualism.

The first and perhaps the largest group, largely unreflective about language concerns, is composed of villagers and city dwellers who mature and raise families in their ethnic first languages. As the country makes strides towards universal literacy, these children are eventually exposed to SE and vernacular forms of English in their schooling and through the mass media. Garinagu, Mayans and others who grow up with their ethnic tongues also usually learn Creole through the linguistic osmosis of metropolitan contact and the media. Creole remains the nemesis for promoters of SE, for, while it is not taught, it is most often peoples' first choice for interethnic communication, and it is everywhere! Children raised in a laissez faire milieu often grow up to be multilingual but testing and classroom research indicates that many lack competence in their SE language skills. Observations and discussions with teachers suggest that many children are also confused as to which language is appropriate in a particular setting.
The present national government, as well as various business and cultural interests primarily located in Belmopan and Belize City, comprise the second language force. They promote SE because of its perceived utility as an integrative factor with outside interests, especially the UK and the US. These language managers are outspoken and exercise formal control over language, promoting SE throughout the entire public domain. This group champions SE based on the colonial convention and due to its value for international access. Certain members of this group undoubtedly recognize and wish to maintain the elite privileged status that SE fluency provides them. The SE group primarily promotes monolingualism, though in recent years they have begun to concede to both the internal and external needs for Spanish.

Children raised according to this priority often demean those Belizeans who speak different languages or other dialects of English.

SE proponents receive support from those members of ethnic groups who recognize English as a tool of upward mobility and access to political power. Numerous Garinagu have demonstrated the efficacy of learning SE, thereby becoming integral parts of the civil service, attaining political positions, and establishing satellite communities in US cities. Many Mayans are currently following this path since they see SE as essential to holding jobs in Belize's metropolitan centers, as well as having their interests heard in Belmopan. They recognize that SE promises an opportunity for immediate access to central government dealings and they are unwilling to wait for any linguistic restructuring that would allow them to be heard in their community languages.

The third force is informed and reflective regarding linguistic concerns. Its approach to language empowerment places a primacy on the home and community use of ethnic first languages in order to renew cultural identities.
Many of the Garifuna and Mayan leaders in southern Belize strive to maintain their languages community-wide and advocate their instruction in schools. Since Belize has a long-standing tradition of multilingualism, members of this group usually encourage children to learn SE and other languages after the foundation of the ethnic first language has been firmly established. Many children raised in this manner are capable, clear, and deliberate regarding their multilingual capabilities.

Bilingualism in Toledo appears to function according to McLaughlin's (1992) analysis of the dual usage of Navajo and English. Garinagu and Mayans use different languages for a variety of different purposes. A number of Garinagu have stated that English technical vocabularies enable them to understand and better communicate certain subjects such as power mechanics and electronics that their limited ethnic vocabulary frustrates. Nevertheless, many also recognize that the Garifuna language is vastly superior for the expression of spirituality and "what the heart says." Certainly, the potential of bicognition deserves considerably more study at a time when some are blindly promoting monolingualism.

Many cultural renewal workers are promoting this third path of multilingualism. Belizeans of different ethnic backgrounds have long grown up speaking two and often three languages. Realistically, as long as the population remains relatively rural and dispersed, this multilingual trend is likely to continue for functional reasons. It is of special significance that most of this study's featured narrators fall within the third group that champions ethnic first languages, while entertaining the utility of Creole and English. This third approach to language learning accounts for both the predisposition and willingness of many of the narrators to contribute to the program.
The Threat of Language Death

Many Belizeans, particularly Garinagu such as Miss Antonia, increasingly sense a very real danger that looms in the near or distant future — language death. If the language planners and proponents of SE and other forms of English have their way over a protracted period, to the exclusion of other languages, they will undoubtedly erode the use and usefulness of minority languages. While ethnic languages are currently vibrant among adults, the danger of language death is particularly acute for children and teenagers who are responding to the allures of US mass culture and the educational pressure to speak only English. Although many people encourage learning SE for unitary purposes, in what they consider the best interests of all Belizeans, ironically those who demean Creole and ethnic first languages are creating division and jeopardizing ethnic identities.

Because the Garinagu and Kekchi are part of larger regional language communities that extend beyond Belize's border, their languages may not be in immediate danger. While not minimizing the risks, it is also well to consider that the experiences of certain of Belize's neighbors. As they have tried to enforce unitary language policies, their efforts have often proved ineffectual. Successive Mexican governments have failed to impose Spanish on many of that nation's Indian populations, while both the Somoza and Sandinista regimes in Nicaragua were unsuccessful in their attempts to promote Spanish among the Miskito Indians of the Atlantic Coast. Indeed, just this year Guatemala reluctantly recognized the Garifunas' rights to cultural integrity and language protection.
Future Language Planning

Remote from linguistic centers of power including Belmopan, London (publishing), Hollywood (movies) and Rome (Catholic Church), Toledo teachers are nonetheless affected by political dictates that travel down the chains of influence that Foucault (1980, 96) has described as "capillaries of power." Currently, Toledo educators are following national curriculum and language guidelines and are in concert with Belmopan's directives.

Nevertheless, in recent years there have been concerted local efforts (both inside and outside the school system) to create the foundations for publishing in native languages. According to certain national education officials, there is currently a window of opportunity to begin school-based ethnic first-language instruction programs in the absence of any codified statements regarding language in Belizean education.

Recently, Belizean educators and community cultural workers (with the assistance of Canada's CODE) have standardized orthographies and written dictionaries in an effort to lay the groundwork for beginning literacy efforts in Garifuna, Kekchi and Mopan. The National Garifuna Council and the TMCC are both engaged in advancing ethnic first-language education in the schools, and these efforts are likewise supported by many teachers and community members in both the Stann Creek and Toledo Districts.

At this juncture, there is a pressing need for readable texts in Garifuna, Kekchi, and Mopan. The Garifuna community has made great strides in publishing a variety of Garifuna language and bilingual texts over the past five years. Efforts are currently underway to locate additional Garifuna texts in neighboring Guatemala and Honduras. Likewise, since Indian students are educated in Kekchi in Guatemala's adjacent Coban region, there is a potential reservoir of Kekchi texts that might be used to encourage reading and future
writing in Kekchi. With all ethnic groups, the Bible, evangelical and political issues notwithstanding, presents the single best avenue for introducing first-language literacy because of people's prior familiarity with Biblical stories, as well as the opportunity to rely on English translations to clarify words and meanings.

Educators have collected stories and printed textbooks, while many Belizeans continue to debate the relative values of English and Creole. There are those educators and ethnic leaders (especially within the Mayan community) who believe that it is critical that all textbooks serve as models for SE grammar and spelling. Other educators and cultural workers are promoting the archival and cultural renewal values of unadulterated texts. Initially, much of the taping for the TESOL project was conducted primarily in English and Creole, though certain efforts such as the Fryberger-Teul collaboration were done bilingually. Increasingly, textbook workers are attempting to record narratives in both the language of origin and English or Creole. Throughout the project's duration, original versions of narratives are preserved both on audio tape and in verbatim transcription for archival storage.

2. Literacy

Regional Approaches

In the Caribbean Basin, a number of countries have engaged in massive literacy campaigns during their early years of independence. Mexico made its massive push during the twenties and thirties (Heath, 1972). Cuba initiated its literacy campaign in the 1960's (Kozol, 1978) and Nicaragua began its literacy "crusade" in the early 1980's (Miller, 1985). Each country made this effort in
an attempt to diversify their economies and build infrastructures that enlist indigenous participation, as opposed to long-term foreign dependence. In each of these countries, politicians and educators saw widespread literacy not only as the attainment of decoding skills (autonomous literacy) but also as an essential ingredient for progress and as a step toward the sophisticated political participation that would insure future political stability (ideological literacy). Those who were systematically denied literacy, especially peasants, indigenous peoples, and African-Americans, were early targets for national literacy campaigns.

Literacy has often been an early goal of newly independent states because it allows the speedy delivery on political promises and does so with little demand on local or foreign capital. Literacy is an entry point for those who have lived lives of exclusion. In recent decades, many countries have adopted Freire's (1985) popular model of the "cultural circle," wherein citizens can be brought into the social world of literacy, learning in a natural setting like a child at home. Ideally, the cultural circle enables a literacy that raises group consciousness by the use of generative or "active" words (discussed in Chapter Ten). In the Cuban campaign, educators promoted terms "associated with emotion, love or longing, ecstasy or rage, among the campesinos (agricultural workers) and workers" (Kozol, 350), while Nicaraguan literacy crusaders advocated an adult reading curriculum devoted to "key themes," including "history, current affairs of the nation and international relations" (Miller, 34).

**Belizean Literacy**

While many Belizeans share a nationalistic fervor similar to citizens of neighboring states such as Cuba, Jamaica, and Nicaragua, their decentralized
management has not lent itself to a nationwide campaign-style program. Belize is creating its own approach to literacy, and initially its liberal arts national curriculum may appear to approach the autonomous model. In fact, throughout Belize there are many hardworking teachers who are dedicated to instructing a 'pure' autonomous literacy, teaching decoding skills that enable students to read fluently and appreciate the aesthetics of fine literature.

However, a closer examination of Belize's complex political situation reveals an evolving ideological agenda for current national educational efforts. As Street cautions, the "apparent neutrality of literacy practices disguises their significance for the distribution of power and for authority relations" (1993, 2). Nationwide, much of what might seem to be autonomous literacy is intended to prepare peasants for the agricultural, service, and technical job skills that are required by multinational corporations, a situation not without ideological and life-altering implications.

Belize's post-independence literacy efforts serve not only outside interests but also increasingly a number of internal concerns. Nationwide, much of the SE curriculum and even certain experiments with vernacular literacies (i.e., Bible translations) are directed toward Christian religious education. The recent use of Caribbean textbooks has been one step in the direction of affirming regional identities. Some aspects of individual curricula appear to serve national interests such as the portion of the natural sciences' curriculum that is devoted to ecotourism and sustainable resources. As Street suggests, "Literacy practices are saturated with ideology" (9).
Toledo Literacy

It is within this complex and shifting international arena that educators in southern Belize have followed the lead of the Belizean Curriculum Development Unit, and striven to create their own localized approaches to education. The political pressures and shifting allegiances have provided rocky soil for home-grown pedagogy, but some vibrant shoots have risen and are just now beginning to thrive.

The efforts of many local people to promote cultural renewal and multilingualism are also complemented by the deliberate encouragement of interethnic understanding. Politically astute leaders recognize that there is a pressing need to contend with the long-term competition and rivalries between various ethnic groups that were fostered by the colonial system. Literacy programs offer one avenue for leaders to encourage the formation of a people living in harmony and united against oppression. While Belize has been a peaceful island of interethnic cooperation, there are still deep-seated racial, ethnic, and cultural conflicts that need attention.

The TESOL books, along with other indigenous texts, suggest ways that reading and decoding can be integrated with Freire's "reading the world." The printed narratives that now document each ethnic group's heritage and contemporary lifeways serve to validate and illuminate those histories that of necessity often had to remain hidden during the colonial era. Furthermore, the new Belizean texts that illustrate the histories, values, and cultural characters of the nation's ethnic groups provide the foundations for enhanced interethnic understanding at a time when many multiethnic nations such as Bosnia and the Sudan are increasingly factionalized.

As has been seen in certain regional narratives such as "The Story of Juan and the Hill Cave," local stories often contain extensive generative
vocabularies that potentially allow young readers to 'read' their worlds in a critical fashion. Juan's story offers students terms that allow deeper understandings of waste, carelessness, and disrespect, while at the same time promoting principles of respect, care, patience, and moderation. Garifuna community discourse provides the analytic tools for people to consider the dangers of overfishing and poisoning the land with agrochemicals. Accounts such as Mariana's "I had to...," which describe self-determination on a personal scale, are also of considerable value as younger people renew and rethink traditional lifeways. Lastly, the discussion of the earth itself is indeed timely in an era when Indian land rights and multinational threats to the rainforest are key political conflicts in southern Belize. In short, the opportunity for students to discuss these and other issues through the agency of the textbooks provides the rehearsal and stimuli for more active emancipatory discussion and action in the public arenas beyond the classroom, the essence of an ideological literacy.

3. Performance

It is within this dynamic educational enterprise that Toledo educators and their collaborators solicit and record indigenous narratives for the publication of local literacy texts. Regional educators enlist narrators based on their presentations of community knowledge and standards, as well as an appreciation of their performative skills and eloquence as storytellers. In this section, I consider the narrators' orientation to ancestral beliefs in order to examine the emergent nature of their performances and to address the cultural depth and impact of these performances.

332
The ancestors, as well as the spiritual voices that emanate from the sacred earth, are never far removed from the consciousness of the Toledo narrators that I have interviewed. The Mayan contributors, Eduardo, Gerineldo, Irmelinda and Mariana, all continually look back to their immediate ancestors for knowledge, inspiration, and solidarity. These storytellers speak as well of the Old Maya, the collective 'inherited' memory that still maintains its presence in Toledo's shadowy rainforests. Petey describes his family heritage in great detail, while virtually all of the Garifuna contributors trace their familial roots deep into the past, considering as well those ancestors who are still undertaking their final journey to Seiri.

It is especially in storytelling sessions that listeners may experience a narrator's skillful attempt to create the contemporaneous dimension of ancestral presence. I have witnessed moments of exquisite performance as storytellers employ a wide range of verbal skills, sound effects, props, and physical gestures to create an almost mystical sense of ancestral closeness. When Serafina sifts her beans, remembering back to her youthful experience as a member of a late-night work party, her listeners are witnesses to an intense drama of past days. As Petey dramatically acts out his father's healing of the young boy entranced by a duende's spell, his viewers sense that they are only one step removed from this past experience, so talented is this skilled performer.

It is through these creative performances that the ethnographer or casual listener can best perceive the threads of cultural renewal that lead back not only into particular families, but also to the broader and deeper pools of cultural heritages. Richard Price's (1983) Surinam research concerning the performance of traditional "First Time" accounts provides a useful construct for viewing both the ancestral and ideological dimensions. He describes the
contemporary song-making that interweaves the Saramaka collective identity, founded on resistance to slavery and modern events that require analysis and commentary by ancestral sources. For the Saramakas, this "First Time" lore is kept alive by means of collective memory, community discourse, and improvisational performance, thereby affirming the underlying unity of salvage and renewal.

Sherzer's (1983) description of the story-cycle format among the Kuna is similar to Toledo performance practices since with both groups storytelling sessions often last for hours, and involve audience participation. Frequently, Belizean narrators such as Eduardo and Miss Annie creatively link one ancestral story to another as a means of providing both familial and historical contexts that can be used to comment on current behavior. Gerineldo, Thomas, Petey, and Miss Antonia, among others, continually move back and forth between accounts of familial history and modern occurrences. Thus, these improvised story-cycles function in a normative fashion, reminding listeners of those ancestral experiences and values that have proved useful in coping with hard times in an often hostile environment.

Perhaps one must experience the intimacy of a small tropical village in order to understand the community dimension that both stimulates memory and storytelling, as well as providing a constant chorus of neighboring voices that safeguard the accuracy and integrity of fundamental community stories. While Gerineldo and Louis may debate certain minor variations of "The Story of the Sun and the Moon," there are numerous other storytellers and community voices to protect the essential message. Furthermore, it is just such debate, some of it concerning TESOL stories, that continues to foster an ongoing community conversation regarding traditional beliefs and standards.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Modern Drama and Ritual

During the last three decades, with the exception of ritual church celebrations, drama has not been a major part of Toledo community life or the school curriculum. Recently, Mayan cultural leaders have revitalized their traditional dances, rites that were long persecuted by Christian churches, as documented by Gerineldo. The contemporary performances of the Deer, Cortez, and Monkey Dances offer the stimuli for still more dramatic productions in this region. While to date there are only stirrings in this regard, the enthusiasm, exhibited by younger people such as Mark, that has greeted the traditional dance revival, the ritual celebration of Garifuna Settlement Day, and the newly inaugurated district cultural festivals, promises increased venues and training for veteran performers and students who wish to lend their cultural renewal energies to dramatic performances.

4. Textualization

There are currently important discussions in both anthropological and pedagogical circles regarding the advantages and dangers of transferring oral performances to text. While there are those who see the issues surrounding publication as a return to the either-or of the "great divide" viewpoint, it is Street (1993) who points out that most societies today are neither exclusively oral or literate. Rather, most communities employ a range of oral, written and multimedia communication.

As has been indicated throughout this study, the act of transcription is not a neutral, automatic activity. There are difficulties in producing verbatim transcriptions, creating appropriate formats, as well as capturing many of the contextual and performative aspects such as purpose and audience response.
Nevertheless, in the long view, the current move to printing Toledo transcriptions, particularly Mayan traditional stories, signals a return to the traditional balance of written and oral literature that preceded the European invasion. The Old Maya were a literate people who valued the codifying and inscription of their history and traditional teachings, as evidenced by their enduring glyphs and the few existing codices such as the *Popul Vuh*. These codices were inscribed in a manner similar to many of the world's great religious books, inspirational and historical texts that are valued by believers and scholars. The current move to publish traditional teachings may help to reestablish once again a balance that was destroyed by Europeans.

Nevertheless, it is critical for Toledo educators and their collaborators to consider both what is lost and gained from the printing of stories that have long resided in webs of primary oral cultures. Since my work and the setting are somewhat similar to Richard Price's Saramaka research, I have continually consulted his work for guidance. Price (1983) clearly delineates a number of important issues that surround the publication of oral lore. He cautions against the potential negative impact of printing material that relates to a community's system of knowledge, stressing that writers and editors inevitably select (and thereby privilege) some versions of stories, while ignoring others. This selectivity creates the "risk of establishing a 'canonical' or authorized version" of community stories or beliefs that may be unintended by the community (1983, 23). Underlying this issue is the basic issue of power or control — who is editing a particular publication? Of major importance to most Toledo efforts is the fact that control resides in the hands of local educators who regularly consult members of indigenous organizations. The concomitant issue as to whether the publication of oral
material enhances or diminishes traditional knowledge systems can best be addressed by Toledo representatives.

As Toledo educators have published their textbooks, these efforts have been encouraged, assisted and monitored by the indigenous organizations that value cultural renewal and are responsible for controlling "access to culturally sacred material" (Van Maanan, 1987, 4). The priorities of these organizations ensure that, while one goal is the collection and transcription of traditional stories and folkways which are "slipping into darkness," the entire project will not be limited to a shelving operation, an act that certain anthropologists dismiss as salvage. Furthermore, these organizations serve as additional or ultimate arbiters regarding what material is appropriate for publication. As they promote values such as ecological management and sustainability, and downplay long-standing manners of male spousal abuse, these organizations are engaged in the selective renewal of traditions that is simultaneously adjusting to shifts in contemporary mores.

The publication of orally performed stories always results in a reduction of the dramatic effect and power of the performances. Even the most sophisticated and detailed ethnopoetic renderings of oral performances are unable to do justice to subtle effects of gesture, movement, sound, and personality. Many Toledo educators are increasingly becoming aware of the limitations of textualization and have no intention of substituting their texts for oral performances, a move that would risk the cultural renewal project. As the TESOL effort progresses, educators and indigenous organizations are taking steps to preserve audio and video tapes of accomplished storytellers for archival purposes and potentially for tape libraries that will supplement written texts.
Considering textualization, Price also emphasizes the responsibilities of both the author and the readers, characterizing his work as an "incomplete and early attempt" at making meaning. Price notes that his publication is "intended as a celebration" (24) of a more expansive oral genre. Furthermore, he published his book with the support of community elders and in the hope that it would contribute to the encouragement of "a whole new generation of Saramaka historians." Price cautions readers that they must read with care and that the Saramakas' history "must not be discussed lightly." He also suggests that, though caution is necessary, the hundreds of years of sustained oral transmission demonstrate that Saramaka orality is resilient and often more truthful than the written record of Westerners! I am indebted to Price for his compass heading in the early stages of my research and I am likewise grateful to Belizean educators and cultural workers for their counsel and guidance. Furthermore, since I added a research dimension to my work in Toledo, I have been fortunate to work with teachers and a dissertation committee who have provided both generous support and probing questions. Lastly, not one of the featured narrators has ever shown any hesitancy in ascertaining my goals or discussing my methods.

New Forms of Self-representation

In addition to the adaptation of community knowledge and values to contemporary issues, the decision by educators to publish local oral stories reveals other potential dimensions of an ideological literacy. One unique function of the TESOL texts is their ability to represent many of the beliefs and lifeways of members of neighboring ethnic groups to young children as they are learning to read. This step toward interethnic understanding offers hope,
not only for the young people of Toledo, but potentially for others who choose to experiment with the TESOL model.

Another long-range possibility is more theoretical and speculative. Ten years of cooperatively publishing the new school texts has resulted in printed works that might aptly be described as "jointly told tale[s]," (Van Maanan, 136). While enhancing literacy is the primary use of these texts, it is perhaps not too great a stretch to consider their potential as indigenous anthropology texts, replete with folk tales, traditional stories, bush lore, agricultural data, kinship analysis, life stories, and spiritual renderings. Toledo educators are breaking new ground by expanding the function of their literacy texts as they encourage local narrators and writers to compose contemporary ethnic self-portraits for regional audiences and the wider world.

In the post-colonial era, the anthropological endeavor of constructing bodies of knowledge that presume to describe ethnic communities throughout the world has increasingly been scrutinized by native and Western commentators. Said's criticism of 'Orientalism' demonstrates how the Western descriptions of the East have been used for subjugation and a foundation for racist logic (Conrad's 'brutes'). Geertz says that one academic tradition was to treat native societies as "natural laboratories," and a result of this posture was the portrayal of these peoples as "fun house mirrorings" (1988, 115).

Many researchers (Behar, 1993; Clifford, 1986; Crapanzano, 1980; Geertz, 1988; Rosaldo, 1989; Shostak, 1981; Van Maanan, 1987) are radically reconstructing authorship in order to achieve understandings that might allow peoples to live together, rather than be further pushed apart from one another. Geertz suggests that, if an ethnographic text is to have any use in the future, "It will involve enabling conversations across societal lines—of
ethnicity, religion, class, gender, language, race -- that have grown progressively more nuanced, more immediate, and more irregular" (147). While Toledo teachers are most concerned with the immediate needs of their students, they might well consider the ground-breaking nature of their innovative literacy texts and their potential to articulate genuine public self-representations for local use and a wider world. These self-representations are perhaps the most potent antidote to centuries of racist descriptions of Indians and African-Americans.

5. Cultural Knowledge

With the region's ongoing publishing of indigenous texts, a significant body of spiritual and ethical knowledge, unique and special to the people of Toledo, continues to emerge. As Gerineldo Pop suggested regarding the stories of the Old Maya, when one probes, there are indeed deeper truths to be found within many local stories. The documentation and analysis of the narrators' ancestral and earth spirit beliefs further suggest the outlines of local ways of knowing that are rooted in narrative discourse. Neither the TESOL texts nor this study presume to fully represent these complex and enduring bodies of knowledge. Rather, both the local textbooks and this document strive to evoke or suggest certain special attributes of Toledo's cultural wisdom, particularly the narrators' reliance on ancestral and earth spirits. In a similar fashion, both publishing endeavors offer evidence that a preponderance of the region's stories promote tolerance, hard work, and discipline, as well as guidelines for living in sustainable harmony with the environment.
While their reflectivity regarding narrative skills may vary, regional storytellers direct their emergent and adaptive performances to specific audiences, thereby disclosing cultural material that they consider relevant to current situations. The license to improvise traditional stories ensures both a degree of cultural continuity and a contemporary suitability. For example, the stories told by Gerineldo, Thomas, and Petey that relate to the traditional moral codes of hunters and farmers are constantly being adapted to consider the advantages and disadvantages of modern technology such as that employed by the logging industry and modern agribusiness.

The region's evolving body of environmental knowledge is similar to that described by Taylor (1990), who compares the folk wisdom of the Amazon's Kayapo, a hunting and gathering tribe, to Western environmental science. A number of their stories, what some Westerners might characterize as 'myths,' function as ecological advisories. Taylor calls their beliefs in eels and fire ants "oblique" but provides ample evidence of their enduring efficacy. Their communal faith in an enormous supernatural electric eel, the ru-ka-uk, keeps fishermen away from important fish spawning grounds. Thus, what for them is a narrative can be seen to function in our terms as a concept of ecological management. As Taylor notes, "The beliefs and practices in question contain and communicate important ecological wisdom, but they are expressed by the Kayapo as myth or supernatural belief" (193).

Toledo storytellers often promote a code of caution, selectivity, precision, and ritual behavior through the emergent voices of the earth spirits, and thereby encourage "ideological restraint" (Nelson, 1983, 242). This systemic body of knowledge with its moral imperatives is similar to one that Nelson describes among the Koyukon of Alaska and NW Canada:
One of the principles emerging from the Koyukon ideology—perhaps the basic principle—is that a moral system governs human behavior toward nature. The proper forms of conduct are set forth in an elaborate code of rules, brought down from the Distant Time. Through this code, deference is shown for everything in the environment, partly through gestures of etiquette and partly through avoiding waste and excessive use. In the Koyukon world, therefore, human existence depends on a morally based relationship with the overarching powers of nature (240).

It is the emergence of deep-rooted moral and spiritual agendas that demonstrates the manner by which the Toledo narratives have exceeded the initial TESOL goal to record and print traditional narratives. The narrators' improvisational license allows them to engage in emergent storytelling performances that break through age-old barriers erected during the colonial regime. Rather than hide their spiritual communion with the spirits of the ancestors and the land, Toledo narrators speak out in ways that potentially disseminate their deep-rooted value of sustainability to much wider audiences.

In the long-term, the determination to encourage the emergence of this body of local wisdom may have a profound impact on the curriculum in Toledo schools. While national testing (a program whose origins are to be found in other Caribbean countries and England) currently shapes school curricula, many Belizean educators are not only rethinking that design but also adapting their existing curricula to achieve the current goal. Educators are presently restructuring approaches to literacy that include literature-based reading, that both complements and expands the existing educational canon. Toledo stories are easily adaptable to individual picture books, as well as history, science, and ecology texts. Potentially, reading, writing, and speaking efforts devoted to Toledo lore and stories could well permeate the entire
curriculum, thereby offering a greater potential for linking education to the exigencies of everyday life.

As has already been demonstrated in individual classrooms, the whole-group reading of traditional Mayan stories often engenders written and oral responses that supplement and expand the body of local knowledge available to all children. Stimulated by a jaguar sighting story, other students are quick to tell their stories and/or write about their experiences with the regions' wild cats. While always considering the risks of textualization, there is little doubt that printed versions of local stories frequently "prime the pump" for an outpouring of additional oral lore and community knowledge.

Toledo residents have begun to speak out, putting aside their previously silenced and silent lives. Since Independence, there has been a significant growth of indigenous organizations, such as the TMCC and National Garifuna Council, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) including the BCES. Local residents are writing letters to the editors and government representatives. People are beginning to forge links to universities and environmental organizations by means of personal contacts, correspondence and computer links.

Many Toledo residents are beginning to give voice to demands for land rights and environmental safeguards. These may be demanding voices or words of protest. However, the message of sustainable living is also arising out of the region's forests. Local healers, including Gerineldo, have begun to organize themselves to protect their communities' intellectual property rights and to promote the long-term economic alternative of extractive reserves. The traditional and ancestral knowledge that has served them well over time, now offers other paths to those who wish to exploit Belize's natural resources.
Implications and Understandings

For seven years, I have viewed Belizean storytelling performances and educational programs from my perspective as a North American high school teacher. My own pedagogical philosophy has evolved over the years, as I have endeavored to move beyond the "banking concept" of education which Freire describes, wherein students are treated as receptacles of knowledge that need only be filled with 'important' facts and opinions. Increasingly, I encourage student participation in designing curriculum and I endeavor to create situations where students may take charge of their own educations, especially as they prepare to finish high school and live on their own. It is from this reflective and continually evolving position that I offer the following key considerations and implications to other educators, particularly to those teachers who are striving to integrate their literacy efforts with the more expanded agenda of "reading the world."

Language

1. The community and educational forces that are encouraging Belize's longstanding tradition of ethnic first languages are thereby also promoting cultural renewal and ethnic identity. Likewise, this approach provides the linguistic foundation for expanding to a multilingualism that can enable Belizeans to continue their outreach to the diverse language communities within and beyond their national borders.

2. As a person who continues to investigate his Irish heritage, I believe it is critical for Belizeans to recognize that the exclusive promotion of English, particularly its standard forms, may contribute to the long-term death of ethnic first languages. Since personal and ethnic identities are intimately...
linked to language, the widespread loss of cultural identities could ultimately result in a breakdown of social ties that would adversely affect the national community.

**Literacy**

1. Toledo educators have enlisted local storytellers who continually perform entertaining traditional and life stories that potentially expand the public body of community knowledge. This indigenous participation provides the base for an ideological literacy program that will allow students to comprehend the written word and potentially to begin a literate and informed analysis of their surroundings.

2. There is a clear consensus among district educators that it is critical for Toledo teachers to receive adequate preparation and instruction for employing the TESOL texts and all other new literacy programs. With this training, teachers also have the potential to encourage self-identity, transmit community knowledge, empower students as active citizens, and promote interethnic cooperation within the region.

**Performance**

1. Toledo storytelling is an intrinsically creative and interactive process, wherein spiritual, moral, and political viewpoints emerge during the performances and can thereby become engaged by the audiences.

2. Performers, educators, and cultural workers continually employ a selection process (often creative) that may enhance certain traditional beliefs and activities, while at times diminishing others. Reflection concerning this selection process should be encouraged.
3. The TESOL storytellers are part of the larger post-colonial cultural renewal movement that includes the revitalization of local storytelling, music, dance, crafts, rituals and celebrations.

4. Toledo storytelling potentially offers useful training, information, and guidance regarding local cultural wisdom to the narrators and other community members, as they engage in political issues such as land rights and deforestation.

Textualization

1. The publication of oral stories risks the misrepresentation of cultural knowledge, particularly when it shifts power from the collective expression to a small number of authors and editors. Conversely, publication can serve to positively enhance cultural identity, contribute to indigenous archival salvage, improve interethnic understandings, and provide a catalytic increase in local creative ventures including storytelling, writing, art and drama.

2. I am acutely aware that the dramatic impact of actual performances is lost when oral stories are published, even with the best transcriptions. Efforts to document performances by means of detailed printed accounts, audio tapes and video tapes could well provide important supplementary cultural material to educators and indigenous groups.

3. The educators who are composing and publishing the indigenous textbooks are experimenting with new forms of authorship and self-representation that offer the promise of greater understanding of regional values and life-ways.

4. The enlistment and active participation of local people in every aspect of the TESOL effort potentially contributes to cultural renewal efforts throughout the entire process, from the initial narration to classroom instruction.
Cultural Knowledge

1. The publication and informed use of TESOL texts continues to provide the impetus for further artistic, creative, and folklife efforts within Toledo classrooms.

2. Through their participation in the TESOL program, narrators potentially gain experience and recognition that can contribute to their confidence and determination in speaking publicly on critical issues.

3. TESOL narrators are giving voice to traditional knowledge regarding sustainability and ecological concerns that is of great value to all people who wish to live in harmony with the earth.

A Final Personal Note

To paraphrase Petey, I have given you a story. I have not heard the voices of Belizean spirits, but I have had the opportunity to listen to Belizean storytellers as they narrate tales that reveal their priorities. Toledo narrators continually promote their children, interethnic harmony, and sustainable living on the earth, priorities that benefit and enrich their communities.

While Belizeans are not without their material wants, including stainless steel pots, cassette recorders, basketballs, guns that shoot straight, and brave dogs, they have not yet succumbed to the constant static of celebrities, sound-bites, consumer goods, fashion, and flash of the industrial countries. I will forever be indebted to my friends and coworkers in Toledo for sharing their hospitality, their stories, their priorities, and their community wisdom.
GLOSSARY

ARAWAK -- Native peoples of South America who settled the Caribbean
BABOON -- colloquial term for the howler monkey
BELIKAN -- a cool drink
B-NHTP -- Belize-New Hampshire Teacher Program
BOIL-UP -- local stew
BTC -- Belize Teacher's College in Belize City
CALDO -- Mayan stew
CARIB -- Amerindians originating in South America.
COBAN -- the Guatemalan region that is the Kekchi homeland
DANGRIGA -- cultural center of Belize's Garifuna Community
DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICER -- superintendent of schools
DUENDE -- a creature of the Belizean bush with seductive powers
DUGU -- Garifuna rite of healing and thanksgiving
GARIFUNA -- a new people descended from Caribs and Africans
GARINAGU -- the Garifuna term for the people
GIB NUT -- a large rodent hunted as game
IRA -- International Reading Association
JAGUARUNDI -- a wild cat that often marauds villages for chickens
KEKCHI -- A Mayan people whose homeland is in nearby Guatemala
LIVINGSTON (Labuga in Garifuna) -- a Guatemalan coastal town with a significant Garifuna population
MESTIZO -- people of mixed Spanish and Indian heritage that have emigrated from Mexico
NIGHTWALKER -- Kinkajou
MISKITO -- an Indian people from Nicaragua's NE coastal region.
MOPAN -- A Mayan people that have emigrated from the NE
PCV -- Peace Corps Volunteer
POPUL VUH -- the spiritual book of the Quiche Maya
RED TIGER -- the colloquial term for mountain lion
SESIMITTO -- the mysterious little old man or gorilla who walks through the Belizean bush backwards
TCC -- Toledo Community College, P.G.'s local high school
TEA -- Toledo Ecotourism Association
TESOL -- Teaching English to Students of Other Languages
TIGER -- the colloquial term for jaguar; a red tiger is a puma
TOLEDO -- the southern district of Belize
TOMMYGOFF — the colloquial term for the deadly fer-de-lance pit viper (also called the Yellowjaw)
WARI — wild pigs
WATER DOG — river otter
YUCATEC — Those Mayans that originate in the Yucatan peninsula
REFERENCE NOTES

Chapter 2

1. In this case of the former colony, the inscribed history is primarily that of the colonizers and a breed of scholars who created their field of Mayan studies. Until recent decades, these "Old Central American hands," akin to Said's Orientalists (1978), styled themselves as an elite intellectual club and the sole arbiters of Mayan history and culture.

2. One goal of the TESOL textbook project is the attempt to supplement the dearth of inscribed history, as well as acknowledging the vibrant verbal arts, music, dance and material cultures of Toledo. As has been noted, the inclement climate of the western Caribbean is so harsh that the only inscriptions that have hope of survival are those that were carved in high relief on the Mayan stellae. Currently, translators are making tremendous leaps forward in the interpretation of the previously incomprehensible Mayan glyphs (Freidel, Schele & Parker, 1993; Schele & Miller, 1986). The contemporary cooperation of Western and Mayan scholars may soon provide a new understanding of the history and cultural background of the "Old Maya."

3. Produced by an English multinational publishing firm, this set of basal readers reflected the Pan-Caribbean cultural revival which has been taking place recently among the former members of the British commonwealth.

4. Cayetano did not hesitate to consider a number of powerful building blocks for literacy and community education. The report indicates that the "tremendous popularity enjoyed by Pedro Cucul's program, 'Kekchi Half Hour,' (aired by Radio Belize) and other Kekchi radio programs from across the border, demonstrates the great potential that radio has for communication with the people." Ever vigilant for active literacy, Cayetano recorded that, "Women and children write letters to Pedro Cucul to make their requests for their favorite song, for their favorite people."

5. CODE supplied finances, paper and equipment. The rural teachers collected stories from their students, village members, and fellow teachers in creating the initial pool of stories from which the first generation of TESOL readers was produced. College educated Peace Corps volunteers, only some of whom had classroom experience, worked as teacher trainers and did the desk-top publishing.
6. The latter marker can also be used after the equative copula da ("mi papa da me fishaman"; my father was a fisherman.), whereas in Rama Cay Creole anterior mi precedes equative da ("mi papa mi da wan fishaman"; Assadi 1983: 120). (Holm 478)

7. These authors have analyzed the youth community of primarily West Indian ethnicity that speaks the form of English/Creole known as London Jamaican (LJ), a special type of linguistic behavior that relates "to a constellation of cultural forces." The acts of identity that are described relate in "solidarity or imitation" to peer-group West Indians or "more distant models," such as the Rastafarians, ... or the late Bob Marley" (155). Many of these teenagers are apparently capable of code-switching from conversational LJ, which serves black peer group identity, to other forms of English such as London Standard English and Black London English.

Chapter 3

1. Particularly in rural areas, many potential narrators are parents and villagers who are knowledgeable about the school and the TESOL readers, and they have been content with the briefest of explanations concerning the future publication goals.

2. Witherell (1991, 94) promotes the prolific use of narratives in teaching because, "The teller or receiver of stories can discover connections between the self and the other, penetrate barriers to understanding, and come to know more deeply the meanings of his or her own historical and cultural narrative."

3. He moves beyond European boundaries and considers African storytelling and the novels of Achebe, making reference to the "thought patterns of orally educated characters who move in these oral, mnemonically tooled grooves" (35).

4. Scribner and Cole's (1981) work among the Vai of Liberia provides insights into the characteristics of an ideological literacy. The authors avoid the "static capacity" of an autonomous literacy and claim that "following Vygotsky, we adopted a functional approach and placed greater stress on the active use to which literacy skills were put" (18). As Street suggests, their study was interdisciplinary, adopting "methods from a variety of social science disciplines," (vii) and included statistical tests designed to "predict possible effects of background influence on cognitive performance" (48). The Vai study provided evidence that challenged the existence of a "general literacy phenomenon" (132) and substantiated Street's oral/ literate continuum.
5. Burns's analysis of Yucatec Mayan storytelling details a process of conversation, interlaced with narratives that illustrate or teach small lessons, which is similar to the mode of storytelling in Toledo. Formal storytelling sessions are reserved for ritual moments, while all day, every day people intersperse their conversation with personal and traditional narratives, thereby presenting and promoting their folk psychology.

6. Tedlock says that native peoples also employ another improvisational and interpretive mode of oral performance, "the ordinary spoken folk narrative." Tedlock contrasts and distinguishes the three different processes in an ethnopoetic format:

   They transmit some things verbatim
   typically songs, more often lyric than narrative
   and they compose other by means of oral formulas
   typically orations rather than narratives
   and when they tell stories
   myths, tales, legends, anecdotes
   they move into regions where they are finally no more formulaic
   than human speech in general is.
   Spoken narrative is not really
   a genre among other genres.
   Typically it is replete with quotations from the characters
   and can therefore contain examples of all other genres (311).

7. Tedlock too addresses the oral-literacy continuum when he notes, "The liberation of the heteroglossic potential of language from the authoritative, monological voice of the epic does not wait for the coming of written prose fiction" (338).

8. The oral tradition of the Tolupans is noted for its "faith, morality and real sentiments" (273), and though spirit communication is in decline, Chapman offers hope that it will reemerge through textualization and current experimentations with "theatrical presentations." Such performances might "well have a positive affect, encouraging greater solidarity in the community and pride in the heritage" (57).

9. Deer singer Loretto Salvatierra "describes the way he thinks about the sequence" he sings in this way:

   When we are moved, we sing the beginning songs...Then during the hours of the dusk, all the wilderness flowers will be sung.
   When it falls to night, the animals in the wilderness: the mountain lion, a little cottontail or a jackrabbit, even a little rat,
all the ones that are alive and walk around, they will start to sound. The animal that has come sees them, and they will be sung from there until the world turns...All that he should talk about, that is what we sing, that is it. He does not talk, but he talks in an enchanted way (86).

10. Their description of the "Essayist literacy" of whites and the native "Bush consciousness" offers a sharp contrast between two very different, culturally-determined forms of orality and literacy, as well as the difficulties for understanding across cultural boundaries. For the Athabaskans, face-to-face interaction is the basis of discourse, communication and the structure of their narratives. They compare the volubility (15), dominance (16) and role of the summoner(23) as embodied by whites, with the taciturnity and reticence of the native. The native characterization that the "English speaker talks like a book" (52) offers an insight into two different speech communities with accompanying ideological literacies.

Chapter 4

1. In like manner, Silko, also a woman of Laguna Pueblo heritage, observes:

As with any generation
the oral tradition depends upon each person
listening and remembering a portion
and it is together -
all of us remembering what we have heard together -
that creates the whole story
the long story of the people.

2. The Peruvian novelist Vargas Llosa aptly describes this social web of storytelling in his novel, The Storyteller, "Talking the way a storyteller talks means being able to feel and live in the heart of that culture, means having penetrated its essence, reached the marrow of its history and mythology, given body to its taboos, images, ancestral desires, and terrors" (1989, 244).

Chapter 10

1. In 1993, I learned that Barbara Tedlock had recently researched visionary narratives in southern Belize. I immediately wrote to her and sent along the three versions of Juan's narrative. Barbara was kind enough to respond, and informed me that Juan's visionary narrative, "closely resembles a Kekchi myth collected by Jon Schackt nearly twenty years ago." She noted that I would find that reference in her recent article, "The Role of Dreams and Visionary Narratives in Mayan Cultural Survival," which she included in
her correspondence. I am indebted to her kindness and scholarship in the shaping of my analytical framework for assessing the significance and meaning of Juan’s narrative.

2. A structural analysis, one that examines “conventional signs,” demonstrates that each version begins with a journey. Juan describes his journey as homeward bound while in Thomas’s the catechist is going hunting and in Mariana’s he is heading to a wedding ceremony. Each account introduces a young boy or child who precipitates a rubbing or closing of the eyes that begins the visionary journey to the abode of a spirit “person” (J), also referred to as a “spirit chief” (T) or an old man (M). Juan narrates his travels throughout the “apartments” in the “hill cave” (“ground” (T), “big house” (M)).

The heart of Juan’s message concerns the “corn wasted, thrown away,” as well as the “abuse” and “careless” treatment of animals. The other two accounts invert the concerns, placing the “wounded, suffering animals” (T) and the “wounded glibnut” and “injured big snakes” (M) before the wasted corn, grains, and “prepared food” (T). Juan tells his listeners that the hill spirit demands that they must use their corn and animals “wisely,” and “not destroy or waste it.” Furthermore, they should “share it with the one who does not have.” He goes on to quote the Biblical adage, “Ask and you shall receive.” Juan’s catechetical training again manifests itself as he cites Leviticus.

3. This traditional story was collected by Victoria C, who taped her grandfather in the village of San Antonio. Chris Drake, a Peace Corps volunteer, provided the transcription. While C. performed his story in Toledo, his title, “The Mam and the Cortez Dance” suggests a unique connection with the highland Mam of Northwest Guatemala, where the term mam means grandfather or ancestor (Oakes, 1951, 256).

4. This connection to the Mam Maya is borne out by the similarity of the Toledo story to a story told by Rafael Gomez and recorded by Maude Oakes in the late 1940’s. In that story a young man had exhausted all his money by renting costumes and rehearsing for a dance. Suddenly, he is approached by a dueno, possibly a mountain guardian, who promises a great costume in exchange for future servitude. After an admirable and elegant performance, the young man is whisked away by a “sudden gust of wind like a whirlwind,” (Oakes, 221) in a manner similar to the Toledo story.

5. Currently, the Cortez dance is celebrated sporadically in Toledo. The references to the highland Mam are significant because Toledo Mayans have traditionally rented costumes from the neighboring, Guatemalan Maya. It may be that a lull in the Guatemalan civil war currently provides a window of opportunity to renew this essential Mayan ritual.
A: Map of the Toledo District

APPENDICES
B: BORDER CROSSINGS AND REFLEXIVITY

Time

An expanse of time, as vast as the limitless tropical night skies, is central to Mayan cosmology. Those wise elders who practice healing, divination, and preserve traditional wisdom are also know as "day-keepers." To know time is to understand today, as well as to be in contact with the foundational beliefs of the old Maya. While use of the ancient Mayan calendar is not widespread in Belize, people still adhere to the primal rhythms of the rainy and hot-dry seasons. Time is told by chopping bush, planting, cultivation, and harvests. Market days and the liturgical cycle also mark the passing of time. In recent decades the arbitrary school calendar has been introduced and Belizeans have learned about Western time schemes such tourist seasons, pro-sport schedules and media time tables.

Whether the US visitor is spending two years as a PCV or two weeks with the B-NHTP, their timescapes are formed in a different society and they inevitably risk confronting many Belizean residents with misunderstanding (Lofty, 1992; B. Tedlock, 1992). Two obvious and critical differences loom for both peoples. There is a world of difference between agricultural/seasonal time and the pace of an electronic, technological society. Second, the pacing of the production/technological society may serve to overstimulate its residents, particularly through contact with electronic media. Consequently, those North Americans who travel to Central America must acquaint themselves with the agricultural lifestyle if they are to understand the local people and the pace at which educational change might be accomplished.

For Belizeans, this citizen to citizen exchange offers an opportunity to pass beyond US media stereotypes and meet people who come from a more aggressive and ever-changing society. In both cases, the hopes and aspirations that educators from each country may bring to such an interchange are conditioned and regulated by entirely different timescapes.

Student-teacher posture

The recognition that US residents are socialized in a different set of values is essential to creating an openness to seeing and perhaps understanding that our Belizean hosts may be different people, formed in a foreign and more elemental crucible. A continual source of potential misunderstanding is the ever-changing issue of who is the teacher, student, or cooperative learner?

The initial posturing is in certain ways determined by the decision to travel to a developing country such as Belize. The Teachers Program falls within the bounds of what bell hooks (1992) refers to as "cultural tourism" (17). There is no denying that for some there may be a certain "fascination with the primitive" (22). Hooks also suggests some other forbidden fruit that the tropics may seem to offer – the desire for the other, and the opportunity to "establish bonds of intimacy," so that visitors might write about racism and
their own transformations. I believe that there is a seductiveness not only to the beauty of the land and the people, but also to a vestigial neocolonialism whereby certain Belizians (particularly some older Mayans) treat white North Americans deferentially. To the unwary, this can produce a very warm snugly racism.

Another problematic aspect of cultural tourism is the danger of "imperialist nostalgia," (Rosaldo, 1989, 68) wherein the Western visitor longs for the very forms of life that their people or nation intentionally altered or destroyed (69). The notion of the "vanishing savage" (81) can in turn lead to the misguided posture of "cultural salvage" (Clifford, 1986, 113) which purports to save a dying culture, while in fact denying the very viability it wishes to preserve.

Travel to a less technologically developed area may also unconsciously signal the visitor that he or she might be able to 'aid' the native people. White skin, relative wealth, SE verbal skills, and the very ability to travel across national borders may subtly signify a certain superiority on the part of the North American visitors to their hosts, as well as the visitors themselves (Crapanzano, 1980). Many first time visitors to a developing country are unaware of the relative wealth that provides them with a plane ticket, vacation time and the modest possessions that fill a back pack (Where a camera may equal one half of a family's yearly cash income.). Likewise, some visitors are surprised to learn that they and their possessions are being studied as assiduously as they are examining the natives' homes and folkways. Both are positioned subjects!

For those educators who decide to live with people who are currently enduring and resisting poverty and or oppression, Freire (1983) stresses the obligation for "reconversion" (78), the need for foreign aid workers as well as local intellectuals to "die as a class." While this injunction may put off many, it does point to Freire's recognition that real transformation must take place on the part of teachers if they are to move from a posture of authority and the "myth of superiority" (81) to one of collaboration. Freire explains, "those who are called to teach must first learn how to continue learning when they begin to teach" (9).

"Progress"

While every aspect of boundary crossing research requires observation, listening, humility and dialogue, the issue of progress is among the most problematic. In spite of the fact that certain New Hampshire teachers may embrace the simple ways of the Friends or live close to the land back in New England, as North Americans, each person comes to Belize bearing living witness to certain advantages of material progress.

Most Belizians are now encountering twentieth century Western society through television, magazines (Consider the Mayan women hoarding "Better Homes and Gardens" magazines in the movie "El Norte.") and foreign visitors. Each Belizean is continually faced with the question of whether to adapt or acculturate to US and Western culture. How then do those educators
who come to learn from Belizean educators, while also attempting to assist them, negotiate the issues of progress?

It is well to examine certain issues of public health and hygiene that appear to be clear cut (Freire, 1983, 31). Encouraging the penning of livestock reduces the contamination of ground and run-off water, thereby reducing the incidence of dysentery and infectious diarrhea. Prohibiting people from engaging in the long-standing practice of cleaning recently purchased fish in the sea waters adjacent to the town, decreases the potential incidence of cholera. In each case however, these new, modern and 'progressive' moves may in fact challenge ritual and traditional folk wisdom. Pigs have long run wild, not because local residents are primitive, but rather because large boars and sows present a first line of defense against marauding jaguar, puma and other predators. In a similar fashion, the washing of fish in the sea is a long-standing ancestral ritual for the Garifuna, one not easily dispensed with when threatened by invisible bacteria.

Both the move toward 'progress' and a dubious sense of understanding can be very seductive. Coming from the US context that includes libraries, the Discovery channel, America on-line, and the National Geographic, it is all too easy to presume to understand what is happening and what is best for others.

C. Mariana Cho's Account of Juan the Catechist

There is a man who is a catechist who is traveling from village to village. The man who told me this heard that the catechist was going to a wedding ceremony since one of his relatives was getting married. The village was about fifteen miles from his home.

He was climbing hills, up and down in the high bush, and he was midway up this hill when he saw a small child coming down toward him. He wondered what the child could be doing out by himself. When the child came closer, it was not a real child. The child had been sent by the gods of the mountain. The child came closer, talked to the man and asked him where he was going. The catechist said that he was going to a ceremony, but the child said that he didn't have to go there. The child said that his father sent him to meet the man so that he would come to meet the child's father who had things to show the man. The man asked how far they had to go and the child said that it was not too far -- you only close your eyes.

The man did it; he closed his eyes and then he was in a big house which was very beautiful. The man didn't know if he walked there or just disappeared. The child held his hand and he walked inside the house. He reached an old man in a corner who was the boy's father. He asked the old man, "What do you want from me?"

358
The old man said, "I sent this child to bring you for I want to tell you a story." It was not really a story but a true thing so that the man could come back to his people and tell them what is happening.

The old man told the catechist to go all around the big house to see the different types of animals, different types of foods and the different types of other things that they owned. The child took the man all around, from tent to tent. He came to a tent where all the wounded currasows were packed, a tent where all the wounded gibnuts were packed, and another tent where all the wounded big snakes were packed. There was all the hurt game in the bush. When they went to the last room, there was the corn that the people throw away (the burned ones, the old ones, the rotten ones). It was all packed right there and, when he came back, the old man said, "Did you see everything?"

And the man said, "Yes."

Then the old man said, "This is the thing that I want to tell you. Please go back to your people and tell them that every animal that they shoot, which they don't kill, those animals come back and tell me that somebody hurt them. I have to be taking care of every one of them. And the snakes, you know the snakes are my belt and I have to be taking care of them. I don't want people to shoot the snakes because I sent them. People must hunt with care in the old ways and not ruin the animals.

All the food now that you see, which is spoiled, that is the food people throw away and don't want again. But, they shouldn't be throwing the food away. They should be feeding their animals from it, not wasting it. So, all this hurts me. If I wanted, I could kill you right here. But, I don't want to kill you. I want you to go back to the villages to tell people what you have seen."

And the catechist was in the mountains for one or two weeks, but he didn't realize that he was there for that long. The old man said that the child would take him back to where he came from. The child took him to the entrance and the old man said, "Just close your eyes and you will go back home."

When he got to know himself again, he was walking back to his home. When he reached his home, his wife was very angry because she thought he had been drinking at the feast and just wasting his time. And when the man reached his home, he began to cry and say that he was sorry that he didn't attend the feast. He didn't see anything about the wedding feast. He had been closed somewhere that he didn't know and he had been told to tell the whole story that he saw and what he was told.

So, he has been going from village to village in Guatemala telling his story. And when the people here in Belize heard about the man, they went to get him and bring him to villages like Crique Sarco, and they have big ceremonies and then they have him tell the whole story.
SOURCES CONSULTED


360


   Montreal: Provincial Publishing Co. Ltd.


Dunier, Mitchell (1992). *Slim's Table: Race, Respectability, and Masculinity.*
   Chicago: University of Chicago Press.


   Belize City: Sunshine Books Ltd.


Fabian, Johannes (1986). *Language and Colonial Power.* Berkeley:
   University of California Press.


Froebel, Julius (1859). *Seven Years' Travel in Central America.* London: Richard Bentley.


365


369

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.


