

Weaving Mestiza Geographies: An A/r/tographic Allegory
on Cultural Identity Through the Lens of Vernacular Textile Traditions

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Abstract

Weaving Mestiza Geographies: An A/r/tographic Allegory on Cultural Identity Through the Lens of Vernacular Textile Traditions

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In *Weaving Mestiza Geographies*, I use Mexican vernacular textile traditions as the foundation for a self-study focused on my cultural identity. This project departs from my creative practice and asks: In what ways may the aesthetics of Mexican vernacular textile traditions influence my art making and my teaching as a visual artist trained within Western educational contexts? At a theoretical level, I draw on aspects of feminist epistemologies and geographies, and Mexican history as well as postcolonial theory. I work with a/r/tography, a research methodology that weaves the practices of the artist/researcher/teacher together through a complementary dialogue between image (art) and text (writing). Based on the idea of *allegory* as a practice that uses symbols to reveal hidden meanings, combining visual and text-based symbols allows me to develop a decolonizing praxis consisting of (un)hiding the Indigenous legacies that form my *mestiza* (or mixed) identity.

Weaving Mestiza Geographies also addresses issues that relate to contemporary craft theory and practice. I approach the craft object as an embodiment of local, communal, familial, and cultural histories as well as of personal memories. In other words, vernacular textiles become gateways for me to review my relationship to people and places in Central México. In the studio, I reflect on the implications of merging practices of the handmade (weaving, stitching, collaging, assembling) with digital media (photography, digital imaging, printing, and stop motion animation). The knowledge gained when fusing these two ways of working supports the design

of three pedagogical strategies (*life crafting*, *digital-craft*, and *subversive cartography*); these are conceived as third spaces in which groups, that may have experienced some form of marginalization can access educational experiences that are reflective of their cultural backgrounds and personal histories. Future paths of inquiry will involve participatory art and a/r/tographic action research methodologies with applications in community art and social research that address the *identity* and *body politics* framing textile making and other craft practices within the contemporary global economy.

With my work, I want to pay a personal homage to the lives of the 43 Mexican rural teacher-students from Ayotzinapa, Guerrero who went missing in September 2014. May their efforts not be forgotten by Mexican people. May the memory of this heart-breaking event prompt all Mexican citizens to build a more fair society.

I also want to dedicate my work to all the women in my family, including those who are gone and the ones to come. May the latter continue to be courageous.

Particularly, I want to dedicate this thesis to my Mother and to Aunt Marielena who have showed me through their own life experiences to never give up my dreams.

*Aunt Marielena passed away on August 11, 2013
in Mexico City without me being able to say goodbye.*

Tía Querida, este sueño se ha cumplido.

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Prelude: A Short Story of My Life as an Entry Point to This Research Project

I was born and raised in the rural eastern area of the State of México. My parents were a socially conscious, middle-class, university-educated couple: my mother, an environmental psychologist who does research on rural housing and the living conditions of Mexican farmers; my father an agricultural engineer specializing in corn production. Both of my parents' professional activities revolved around the research centres associated to the Universidad Autónoma de Chapingo (UACH), an agricultural university located an hour from México City (<http://www.chapingo.mx/>). Our home was in Texcoco, a town adjacent to the university. Texcoco is located in the México basin and in the plateau of a chain of mountains known as the Texcoco Sierra.

The flat areas of Texcoco Sierra's plateau are dedicated to the production of corn. I know these fields well because as a child I used to accompany my father when he participated in the corn harvest with rural workers. I also became very familiar with the customs of the Texcoco Sierra because my father built a small house in the village of San Miguel Tlaixpan. By spending my weekends in the sierra with my father, I learned how to walk in this kind of landscape and became familiar with the local culture. My father also introduced me and my brother to the processes involved in honey production and the picking of seasonal flowers and fruits to be sold in the Texcoco markets. *Refuge* (Figure 1) is a metonymic/metaphorical (re)construction of the memories of the world of my childhood in our house in San Miguel Tlaixpan. The small scale of the child (my niece) in comparison to the baskets on which she is stepping helps me to communicate the feeling of being completely immersed in a world of natural fibres. Spending time in the Texcoco Sierra with my father, and my family, allowed constant contact with natural fibres such as dry leaves and flowers, tree trunks, hay, and firewood as well as basketry items.



Figure 1. Refuge. Digital collage (2.5" x 3.5"). This is a still image retrieved from the stop motion animation *San Miguel* published in the first issue of *Voke*. Copyright 2013 by Verónica Sahagún. Full animation available at <http://www.vokeart.org/?p=343&spoke=1>

Furthermore, looking back at that time in my life, I now understand that many aspects of Texcoco's rural culture also permeated our household since the local produce and the local traditional meals made their way into our house. My Texcoco house was decorated with handmade objects created by the vernacular traditions of Central México, my father's native state of Jalisco, and Oaxaca, the birthplace of my maternal grandmother. I grew up literally surrounded by clay pottery, handmade basketry, wooden masks, miniature sculptures, and, more pertinently to this project, handmade textiles. When visiting San Miguel Tlaixpan, my family and I used baskets and wooden containers to collect and store the fruits of our orchard. This group

activity showed me the practical function of the basketry items that decorated our house. In other words, I saw the intrinsic connection between nature and vernacular crafts. This understanding awakened a sensibility that has become my aesthetic compass as an adult artist. The research project presented in this document has been about consciously reconnecting with that sensibility. As I look back at those memories, I realize that the Texcoco Sierra nurtured my growth as a child in more than one way; I now think of the little house in San Miguel Tlaixpan as a *Refuge* for the soul.

A way for me to further strengthen the spiritual connection that I have to the Texcoco Sierra, has been to review the history of the region. The rural culture of the Basin of México is rooted in the Indigenous traditions that emerged many years before the Spanish conquest. My father explained to me that he acquired the land property in the San Miguel Tlaixpan village because it was designed following the terrace system, which is an ancient pre-Hispanic agricultural practice used to gather and to channel water falling down the mountains. At present, the villagers living in the nearby hills continue to use the terrace system implanted by their Indigenous ancestors. This explains why, the Texcoco Sierra was, and continues to be, known as source of water for the nearby towns. Indeed, in one of the sierra's main mountains, there once was a temple dedicated to Tláloc, the Nahúa god of rain and thunder. In the fifteenth century, Nezahuálcóyotl, the king poet of Texcoco (see Martínez, 1996), built an aqueduct in order to bring the spring water of the sierra into the plateau. In the hill of Texcotzingo (little Texcoco), one still finds what used to be the king's private baths.

While culture embodied by these natural and historical sites as well as the local rural traditions permeated my daily reality when growing up in Texcoco, I was also exposed to a very different world during those years. When the time came for my brother and me to attend primary

school, my parents made a decision that influenced the rest of my life. Aware of the professional advantages that speaking English could bring to our lives, our parents decided to enrol us in a primary bilingual school. When my parents decided that my brother and I should have a bilingual education, they were not necessarily thinking that we would later study outside México. They were thinking rather that bilingualism would increase our chances of finding a job in our own country. My parents predicted that knowledge of English would be a requirement in just about any professional environment, given the gradual implantation of a neoliberal (or global) economy in our country—proven by the progressive establishment of transnational companies in the early 1980s. As teenagers, exposure to the international educational contexts—as our classmates were the children of rural researchers coming from diverse parts of the world—established within Mexican society, resulted in my brother and I considering the possibility of pursuing studies abroad. Thus, when we finished our undergraduate studies, my brother undertook studies in England and I moved to the United States, and later, to Canada.

My Educational Journey With/in North American Territories

Experiences of estrangement in both North American societies led me to ask questions about Mexican history, my cultural legacy as a Mexican woman, and about hybridity. Having acquired a Bachelor in Visual Arts in the Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas (ENAP) (<http://www.fad.unam.mx>) of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) in México City, these questions first manifested themselves in my art practice. For example, during my stay at the Master of Fine Arts program of the San Francisco Art Institute (<http://www.sfai.edu/>), I developed a series of hybrid abstract fibre sculptures that fused aspects of minimalism with the Mexican baroque and the use of colour by the *pueblos originarios* (First

Nations Peoples) of México. My experience in Montréal, Québec, on the other hand, signifies the end of my journey within the Western educational system. Therefore, my academic endeavours in this city attest to the emergence of a new (and hybrid) professional identity.

This transformation was ignited by a crisis experienced at the start of my stay in the Art Education Program of Concordia University. At that point, the possibility of developing educational research within unfamiliar environments and/or populations seemed unproductive and unrealistic, simply because I was unsure of what was expected of me when taking on the role of the educator. In this context, I experienced the challenge of balancing my activities as an instructor in the Art Education undergraduate program, on the one hand, with an active studio practice, on the other. What made it difficult for me was that the curriculum to be covered in my classes had little to do with my own studio interests, which still revolved around fibre-based practices. In addition, it was necessary to think about how both experiences could inform my educational research activities as a doctoral student. Based on these experiences, I required a research approach that reflected my strengths—as a Mexican artist and studio instructor—while providing me with insights into what my potential contribution could be—as a teacher and researcher—to Canadian educational contexts. This was akin to Rogoff's (2000) assertion that assuming one's own state of "un-belonging" as a critical attitude may lead to the development of "an epistemological structure in which 'difference' rather than homogeneity determines what we know, how we know it and why we know it" (p. 5). Hence, I decided to develop a self-study focused on my cultural identity.

My main purpose then was to understand the ways in which my cultural heritage may have determined my ways of "becoming-Other" in the world (Deleuze, 1994), and consequently, how it may have influenced my practice as an artist, teacher, and researcher. Most important,

throughout the last two years of my doctoral research activities (during which I developed my self-study), I have realized that my early childhood experiences in Central México provided me with a form of education radically different from that obtained throughout my years of formal education. Wane (2013) makes clear distinctions between Indigenous and Western ways of teaching and learning, with the latter generally focusing on an individual's achievements. In Wane's view, this system emphasizes originality and productivity; in so doing, it gives rise to competitive attitudes that separate the members of a community. In contrast, Wane asserts that Indigenous knowledge is present in everyday life and within the environment. In Mexican Indigenous traditions (as in many others), learning takes place within the community and through the voices of adults and elders who share their stories. Yet, this form of teaching and learning has not been acknowledged as valid educational practice since the colonization of many Indigenous territories by European empires began at the start of the sixteenth century (Shaw, Herman, & Dobbs, 2006). *Weaving Mestiza Geographies* attests to a personal process of decolonization that seeks to (re)evaluate the worth of the lessons learned through my overall exposure to the rural Indigenous cultures of México.

For example, "walking and talking" is a practice shared by the Indigenous communities of Southern México. In particular, the members of the guerrilla movement known as the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN)—which is now a civilian movement—use "walking and talking" as a way of building trust bonds with those people who do not belong to their communities, who come to visit their camps in the Lacandon Jungle (Muñoz Ramírez, 2008). Through walking, the visitors become familiar with the land. The visitors talk; the Zapatistas listen and acquire insights about the visitors' intentions. This helps the Zapatistas determine whether it is safe to let them in and/or if the visitor will bring positive input to their communities.

Looking back at the time I spent in the rural areas of the Texcoco Sierra, I realize that my “walks and talks” with my father made me receptive to vernacular ways of being in the land and of creating personal/communal bonds. In *Weaving Mestiza Geographies*, I examine the messages I received through vernacular ways of teaching and learning in order to integrate them into my new professional practice. With this, I create an in-between space in which Western academic practices become part of a dialogue with Mexican Indigenous aesthetics.

Rooting My Research in Mexican Indigenous Textile Traditions

At the end of my first year of studies in Canada (August 2010), I travelled to a conference in México where I had a pivotal conversation with a Chamula¹ woman artisan. I met Margarita Ramírez during a one-day forum designed and organized in collaboration with the Museo Textil de Oaxaca (MTO) with the purpose of fostering dialogues among Mexican textile artists, artisans, and designers (<http://www.museotextildeoaxaca.org.mx/>). Our conversation made me aware that the aesthetics of Mexican vernacular textile traditions had continued to be present in my studio work after my stay in the San Francisco (2002-2004) as well as throughout a five-year stay back in México City (2004-2009). Most important, Margarita made me see that this influence was something that I would benefit from exploring further. In the forum, I presented abstract textile sculptures that included work produced at the start of my stay at Concordia University. These pieces had MP3 players embedded in them and were inspired by the creative research projects taking place at Studio subTela in Hexagram-Concordia (<http://subtela.hexagram.ca/>) that incorporated digital technologies into fibre works. The puzzled faces of my audience made me think that I was presenting work possibly having very little to do with Mexican reality, which I now see as symbolic of the transformation (or hybridization)

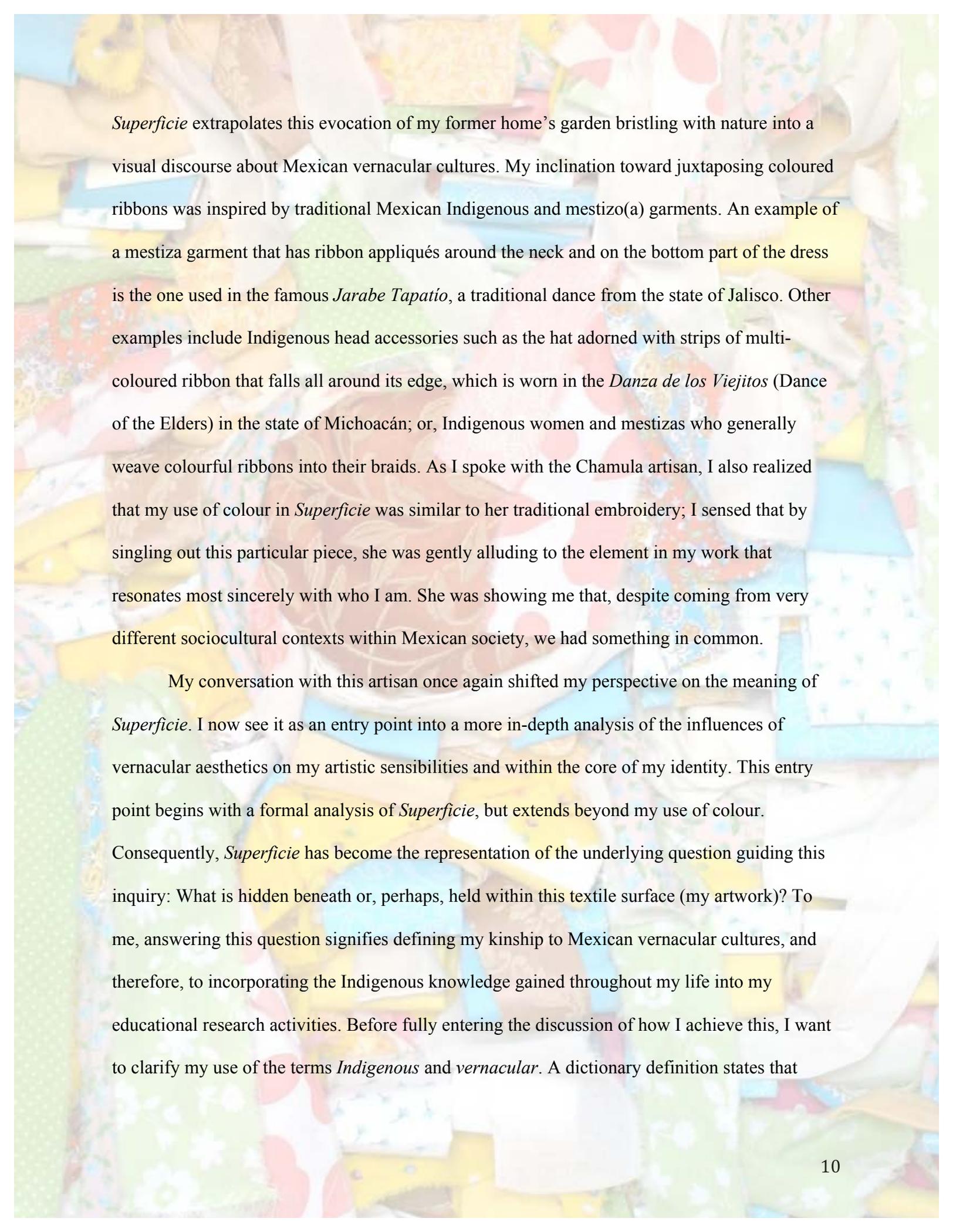
¹ Indigenous group located in the highlands of the state of Chiapas (Southern México).

experienced during my stay in Canada. This intuition was confirmed during the coffee break. Margarita approached me and said laughingly, “What is it that you do?” I responded: “Why? Do my sculptures seem strange to you?” She said “yes,” and with a smile she proceeded to tell me which of my works she thought were good: the simpler (and earlier) textile structures with vibrant, contrasting colours. She particularly liked one called *Superficie / Surface* (Figure 2), a work that was conceptualized as a fusion of painting and fibre art, and which had undergone a somewhat unique evolution during its execution.

In the early stages of this piece, I had decided to replace paint with multi-coloured and multi-patterned fabric and ribbons. Layers of fabric were added onto the canvas with the intention of transforming its rectangular shape. I did this as a way of transforming the function of a white canvas, which I interpret as iconic in relation to modern discourses that champion painting as one of the most evolved artistic mediums. I wanted to transform its rectangular shape into a more organic form. My original intention was to add as many layers of fabric as possible, until the piece became sphere-like. But a friend who is a curator soon pointed out that, if I continued to add more layers of fabric, the emerging, compelling shapes and colour contrasts would be hidden or lost. As a result, my conceptualization of *Superficie* began to shift. I let my responses to the canvas become similar to my way of working while I was taking an abstract painting course offered during my undergraduate studies at ENAP UNAM. At the back of my mind was the image of a brick column from my childhood garden in Texcoco—I could picture the intense red of the bricks piercing through the green velvety layers of moho growing on them. The vines falling down the column as well as the grass and flowers nudging against the bottom of the column added a more depth to this visual image (memory).



Figure 2. Superficie / Surface (2005). Fabric on panel (31.5 x 39.37 in).



Superficie extrapolates this evocation of my former home's garden bristling with nature into a visual discourse about Mexican vernacular cultures. My inclination toward juxtaposing coloured ribbons was inspired by traditional Mexican Indigenous and mestizo(a) garments. An example of a mestiza garment that has ribbon appliqués around the neck and on the bottom part of the dress is the one used in the famous *Jarabe Tapatio*, a traditional dance from the state of Jalisco. Other examples include Indigenous head accessories such as the hat adorned with strips of multi-coloured ribbon that falls all around its edge, which is worn in the *Danza de los Viejitos* (Dance of the Elders) in the state of Michoacán; or, Indigenous women and mestizas who generally weave colourful ribbons into their braids. As I spoke with the Chamula artisan, I also realized that my use of colour in *Superficie* was similar to her traditional embroidery; I sensed that by singling out this particular piece, she was gently alluding to the element in my work that resonates most sincerely with who I am. She was showing me that, despite coming from very different sociocultural contexts within Mexican society, we had something in common.

My conversation with this artisan once again shifted my perspective on the meaning of *Superficie*. I now see it as an entry point into a more in-depth analysis of the influences of vernacular aesthetics on my artistic sensibilities and within the core of my identity. This entry point begins with a formal analysis of *Superficie*, but extends beyond my use of colour. Consequently, *Superficie* has become the representation of the underlying question guiding this inquiry: What is hidden beneath or, perhaps, held within this textile surface (my artwork)? To me, answering this question signifies defining my kinship to Mexican vernacular cultures, and therefore, to incorporating the Indigenous knowledge gained throughout my life into my educational research activities. Before fully entering the discussion of how I achieve this, I want to clarify my use of the terms *Indigenous* and *vernacular*. A dictionary definition states that

indigenous (with lower case *i*) is an adjective used in order to refer to something or someone “produced, living, or existing naturally in a particular region or environment” (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online*). That is, to be indigenous means to be native to a place. From this perspective, everyone has a place of origin, which in turn, influences his or her way of being in the world. However, since the beginning of the colonial era, the term indigenous has been racialized and has become associated with non-white people, or those who were deprived of their land by European empires (Shaw et al., 2006). As a result—and like Shaw et al. (2006)—in this dissertation, I use the term *Indigenous* (with a capital *I*) in order to respectfully refer to the *pueblos originarios* of México, whereas my use of the term *vernacular* applies to the Mexican local aesthetic expression produced by Indigenous artisans. Finally, as discussed, exposure to Mexican vernacular aesthetics has also largely shaped my identity, and it is precisely this understanding that allows me to claim my own *indigeneity* (or, my belonging) to Central México, even when I do not directly form part of an Indigenous community.

Chapter 1

Embracing A/r/tography in Research Centred on Cultural Identity

In its conception, my self-study required that I adopt a flexible methodology that would allow me to weave my origins and past life in México into my present academic activities in Canada. This is how I came to a/r/tography, an arts-based educational research methodology “informed by feminist, poststructuralist, hermeneutic and other postmodern theories that understand the production of knowledge as difference” (Irwin & Springgay, 2008, p. xxi). A/r/tography is a methodology of “enacted living inquiry” (Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2005, p. 899) in which knowledge is shaped through the practitioner’s personal experiences across the fields of art making and educational research (Irwin & Springgay, 2008), and thereby, is viewed from multiple (or rizhomatic) perspectives (Irwin, 2010). A/r/tographic knowledge is enhanced, and delivered, through the juxtaposition of image (art making) and text (writing) in a complementary manner (Irwin & Sinner, 2013). Applied to my work, this image/text dialogue has been achieved by combining autobiographical art making and writing inspired by a number of Mexican vernacular textiles that have formed part of my family history and traditions. From this perspective, Mexican vernacular textiles become gateways into my cultural heritage and my a/r/tographic research (or living inquiry) has been about engaging with the following questions: How do Mexican vernacular textiles, as the basis of an autobiographical contemporary studio practice, provide a lens that interrogates aspects of Mexican cultural identity and the notion of hybridity? Why does the practice of craft-contemporary art open a third space of inquiry for artists, researchers, and teachers? And, what are the implications of craft-contemporary art in relation to place, and specifically, in relation to the processes of learning for self and community?

As my living inquiry evolves, stories relating to Indigenous and mestizo(a) garments depicted in family photographs connect me to my female Indigenous ancestry. Meanwhile, two textiles—a woven mat or *petate*, and an embroidered garment known as the *Nahúa blouse*—produced by an Indigenous group spread widely throughout my native Central México and known as the Nahúas,² inspire a studio practice in which I explore my relationship to specific locations within this area. Finally, the reflections stemming from the “hands-on” stage of my living inquiry facilitate a transformation of my professional practice. Not unlike Slattery (2003), I now “believe that I am only effective and competent as an artist, researcher and educator when I holistically integrate all three of these dimensions of my work” (p. 195).

Transitioning Into Professional Hybridity

Broadly stated, a/r/tographic inquiries include having an active studio (or aesthetic) practice, teaching, and collaboratively pursuing research within an academic community as well as working with social groups outside academia. Most important, what distinguishes a/r/tography and other socially informed arts-based research practices is the inquiry process itself.

A/r/tography is driven by a highly self-reflective spirit that allows its practitioners to create balance between theory and personal practice. The notion of *currere* plays a key role in the articulation of such a vision. Irwin (2010) defines *currere* as “a living practice that lingers in the in-between of binary notions such as theory and practice” (p.44). I have experienced *currere* as the ability to interpret and to engage with a learning experience (visual art practice, in my case) from the perspective of the learner as well as that of the facilitator (Irwin, 2010). This has translated into developing my ability to concurrently embrace my creative practice while

² Nahúa is the name of one of the largest Indigenous groups established in Central México. It is also common knowledge that the Aztecs belonged to this group and that Nahuatl was their language.

mapping out the means for fostering similar learning experiences among other learners (Irwin, 2010). This multifaceted dimension of a/r/tography is further theorized by Irwin (2004); she defines a/r/tography as an academic “metonymic métissage” (p. 27), or a hybrid methodology that provides space for the construction of unconventional or hybrid professional identities. For example, as I will explain later in this chapter, the hybrid professional identity that this dissertation puts forward is that of the *mestiza* a/r/tographer; a Mexican artist/teacher/researcher whose main research interest consists of pursuing socially conscious craft-contemporary practice and pedagogy. To support her view of a/r/tography as a hybrid research methodology, Irwin (2004) brings attention to the Aristotelian categories of thought and establishes correlations between these three different professional identities, as follows: artist (*poesis*), teacher (*praxis*), and researcher (*theoria*). According to Irwin (2004), a/r/tographic (and hybrid) identities emerge through learning to address the foreseeable tensions, and even the contradictions, stemming from setting these three different ways of being in the world into dialogue. In this way, the use of slashes in the name “a/r/tography” is reflective of the dialogue between poesis, praxis, and theoria for which a/r/tographers aim. Irwin, Beer, Springgay, Grauer, and Bickel (2006) state: “The slashes in a/r/tography (and other related words) purposefully illustrate a doubling of identities and concepts rather than a separation/bifurcation of ideas” (p. 70).

My own process of making my activities as artist, teacher, and researcher converge in a holistic practice has first required me to acknowledge the disciplinary (and epistemological) differences between a contemporary studio art practice and educational research. jagodzinski and Wallin (2013) critique a/r/tography by asserting that the Aristotelian categories of thought are irreconcilable. With this, they are suggesting that a/r/tography is a self-enclosed practice that is far from making real contributions to educational research. Similarly, Pariser (2013) elaborates

on the differences between artistic and scientific endeavours as a way of showing that these are two practices that cannot be merged into a sole inquiry. With this argument, he is suggesting that art-based research methodologies cannot be considered either scientific research or art practice. From my perspective, a/r/tography— a fairly new methodology, along with other arts-based educational research practices—is questioning previously established conventions, and in so doing is redefining the meaning and purpose of educational research. As a result, I agree with Piantanida, MacMahon, and Garman (2003) who suggest approaching arts-based practices as “a commitment for exploring the intricacies of engaging in aesthetic modes of inquiry into compelling educational phenomena” (p. 189). Along these lines, Siegesmund (2012) offers an analysis of a/r/tography through the lens of Dewey’s seminal work, *Art as Experience* (1934). In his analysis, Siegesmund asserts that both science and art are disciplines that demand a critical practice and rely on the disruption of pre-established disciplinary paradigms with the purpose of transforming our future interpretations of time and space. For Siegesmund, “where art and science diverge is an opening where a/r/tography emerges. Science focuses on the manipulation of symbols; a/r/tography spins an aesthetic sensory world, that communicates outside of the semiotic discourse, to the imagination” (p. 104). In other words, a/r/tography draws on sensory, creative, or aesthetic understandings with the purpose of challenging reason. This approach is more compatible for someone like me who is transitioning from the world of studio arts practice and instruction into the world of educational research. As a working artist in México, I was generally concerned with adapting art mediums and techniques to conceptual frameworks through which I could define an honest (or genuine) art practice that, in addition, aligned with contemporary visual vocabularies. This applied to my own art and the art of my students. Now, in contrast, I know that the field of educational research is more ample. There is certainly room

for “hands-on” practice, yet the field also demands further theorization. Art educators are expected to take into consideration cognitive processes and motor skills according to age as well as the sociological and cultural particularities of the learning contexts in which they may act as facilitators. In contrast, studio arts instruction—especially at the university level—is more invested in producing art that responds to the current trends marked by the contemporary art institutions (or the job market) than to the actual learning processes of students.

It has now become clear that I was not entirely satisfied with this way of teaching art. At that point, I intuitively knew that to be an effective instructor I had to continue developing my studio practice in a way that would communicate my passion for learning through the arts. In my view, that spirit would inspire my students to find their own artistic (and learning) paths. I now see myself reflected in Irwin’s (2003a) descriptions of her studio/aesthetic inquiry and how it allowed her to be a more empathic leader within her community of art educators. For Irwin, aesthetic awareness allows us to remain connected to and aware of what is happening in the world that surrounds us and to be an empathic part of it. It now makes more sense to adapt my way of being an artist to a praxis that provides others with new opportunities to learn and grow through the arts rather than to abandon (or deny) that aspect of my identity. I am also certain that my professional transformation will be complete when I switch from playing the role of student back to the role of educator in my future communities, while also seeking the egalitarian forms of interaction inherent to a/r/tography.

In a/r/tography, communal spirit has been theorized about based on the metaphor for the multidirectional and horizontal growth of the rhizome as a model for democracy posited by Deleuze and Guattari (1987). Thus, a/r/tography aims to build *communities of practice* that operate under horizontal, rather than hierarchical, forms of interactions. Irwin (2008) suggests

that an “a/r/tographic community of practice is a community of inquirers working as artists, researchers and pedagogues committed to personal engagement within a community of belonging who trouble and address difference” (p. 72). This exchange makes it possible for a/r/tographers to become aware of the ways in which their individual (or unique) aesthetic inquiries may affect the academic and artistic communities in which they may reside. In *Weaving Mestiza Geographies*, combining my ongoing dialogue with my mentors and the aesthetic (in)sights (Irwin, 2003) emerging within my studio practice led to reflections regarding how to build a pedagogical design that fosters cultural identity (re)construction and/or representation while considering an individual’s relationship to place.

Throughout my living inquiry, I acquired a more expansive perspective on the notion of *cultural identity* (or *cultural identities*), a term that has become common within the field of curriculum studies (Nieto, 2010). Nieto (2010) claims that the “term *cultural identities* refers to the way that individuals or groups define themselves” in relation to a set of “beliefs, traditions, rituals, knowledge, morals, customs, and value systems” (p. 166). In other words, cultural identities are constructed through exposure to an environment and through the socio-political interactions taking place within it (Nieto, 2010). *(My) Place* (Figure 3) is a photograph of the house built by my father in the Texcoco Sierra and to which I have conferred a symbolic meaning. In many ways, this image represents the values with which I was raised and the people who instilled them. As a result, I associate the environment depicted in my photograph with a sense of safety and belonging. Yet I have also learned that I can let this feeling grow within me, anywhere I go (Korwin-Kossakowski, 2013). This certainty has allowed me to view my temporary dislocation as an opportunity to acquire new perspectives and to expand my own capabilities. As a result, I now understand that the building of a cultural identity is not a once-in-

a-lifetime experience. Cultural identity is instead recreated when we insert ourselves into new cultural/geographical environments.



Figure 3. (*My*) Place (2011). Photograph of the house in the village of San Miguel Tlaixpan Village (State of México).

The Mapping of My Cultural Difference and of My Hybridity

In *Weaving Mestiza Geographies*, my work with vernacular textiles helps to examine the ways in which my relationship to place—understood as an environment of ecological, social, and cultural components (Anderson, 2010; Lippard, 1997)—has influenced my ongoing process of becoming an artist/teacher/researcher (Sinner, 2008). Borrowing from Sinner’s (2008) reflections on the *geographies of self*, I define this self-study as an “[artful representation and negotiation of understandings] of [myself] within a new physical and socio-cultural environment” (p. 278). In this case, I map my relationship to past locations in México with the purpose of finding new ways of being in my current location, Montréal. This process of becoming (Sinner, 2008) a

mestiza a/r/tographer has included creating a theoretical framework grounded in feminist epistemologies and geographies, postcolonial theory, and Mexican history. With this theoretical weave, I enter reflections on what it means to belong and to un-belong (Rogoff, 2000) within a number of Mexican and Canadian sociocultural landscapes. This process has led me to develop a relational perspective on hybridity. Coming to this relational perspective becomes possible due to my use of what Narayan (1997/2013) calls “double vision,” an ability developed by non-Western (or Third World) feminist scholars when conducting academic work in Western (or First World) contexts. This double vision consists of being familiar with the language and the cultural ways of the periphery or minority as well as the language of the centre. In my inquiry, using this double vision consists on positioning myself in relation to *mestizaje* (or *métissage*), a key trait of Mexican culture, as well as what it means to be the Other in Canada.

Furthermore, my dual perspective (Narayan 1997/2013) soon shows me that the notion of hybridity brought forward by postcolonial theory applied more to Canadian society than to the Mexican. A brief review of its history tells us that postcolonial theory begins to take shape when the last English speaking colonies achieved their independence in the mid-twentieth century. The period of *political decolonization* (Betts, 2004) that followed is characterized by the start of new processes of migration and of cultural mixing. Betts (2004) asserts that at this time, the migration happened in a reversed manner, that is, the people migrating were citizens of Third World countries (or former colonies) who were in search of jobs and/or political asylum in the First World countries (or former colonial centres). The latter group includes countries like Canada, and the United States that transitioned early on in their respective histories, from being British colonies into becoming independent, and developed countries. Looking at this overall context, Bhabha (1994) creates the notion of the *third space* as a way to introduce a more egalitarian

space of negotiation between the local and immigrant populations. In this space, cultural, and racial boundaries are blurred, allowing for the emergences of new hybrid identities.

As I review the scope of historical events and ideas informing postcolonial theory, I soon realize that my experience of living both in Canada and the United States certainly could draw on Bhabha's third space. However, this concept's theoretical framework was not enough for me to focus my inquiry on Mexican *mestizaje*. Salvatore (2010) contends that having emerged within a different historical and sociocultural context, postcolonial theory does not acknowledge the early contributions to the formation of "Western modern civilization" made by the Portuguese, and Spanish colonies (now Latin America) in the sixteenth century (p. 336). *Mestizaje* understood as a process of democratization and integration of early multicultural societies (Quijano, 2008) would be an example of the kinds of contributions. In this way, reviewing Latin American successes as well as failures in their attempts to construct egalitarian multicultural societies through the notion of hybridity may very well be helpful to countries currently undergoing processes of cultural syncretism.

Focusing on the Mexican case, hybrid identities surfaced early in the Mexican colonial period (1521–1820) due mixing of European, African, Asian (Vasconcelos, 1925/2010), as well as Jewish and Arabic people (Fuentes, 2000) who migrated to the New Spain. This intense ethnic mixing taking place in the New Spain gave place to the design of a complex caste system (composed of 52 castes) that regulated the social interactions in the New Spain (Katsew, 2004; Martínez, 2008). However, the most prevalent mix was that of the Amerindians with the Spaniards. After the Mexican Revolution (1910–1920), Mexican *mestizaje*—understood as the syncretism of the Amerindian and the Spanish cultures—emerged as the true expression of Mexican national identity. This term has provided a sense of inclusion, and of belonging to a

majority of the Mexican population. However, research into Mexican contemporary history shows that mestizaje as an ideological disposition did not entirely achieve the goal of creating a democratic modern republic. For example, as a fair-skinned *mestiza*, I have better chances of being assimilated into the higher classes, whereas if my skin was darker, I would be more closely associated with the Indigenous, and therefore, to a lower social status (Basave, 2011). Taking this into consideration, a main concern for me throughout this self-study has been to first clearly define the roles that I have played within Mexican mestizaje before entering reflections of what is to be a hybrid identity seen from a transnational perspective.

Identifying Myself as a Mestiza A/r/tographer Within a Transnational Context

Identifying myself as a mestiza a/r/tographer means that I will face a series of contradictory situations in the future (as I already have) and as Chicana Gloria Anzaldúa did when identifying herself as a mestiza writer/scholar/educator within her own time and place (1987/2012). Early in this living inquiry, I become aware of the contradictions raised by the use of the term *white-mestizaje* or *white-mestiza*. On the one hand, using the hyphenated term *white-mestiza* positions myself as an outsider to Mexican vernacular traditions. On the other hand, omitting the white or Western aspect of my mixed identity translates into an erasure of part of my experience growing up in Central México. Because Mexican mestizaje continues to favour populations with a predominant Spanish or European heritage, I rarely go unnoticed in the Mexican public space. This means that due to my fair skin I have received special, at times positive and at times negative attention. For example, I have received better treatment in public institutions and offices or working environments. Similarly, I have experienced verbal aggressions from strangers, classmates, or coworkers who, for diverse reasons, personally

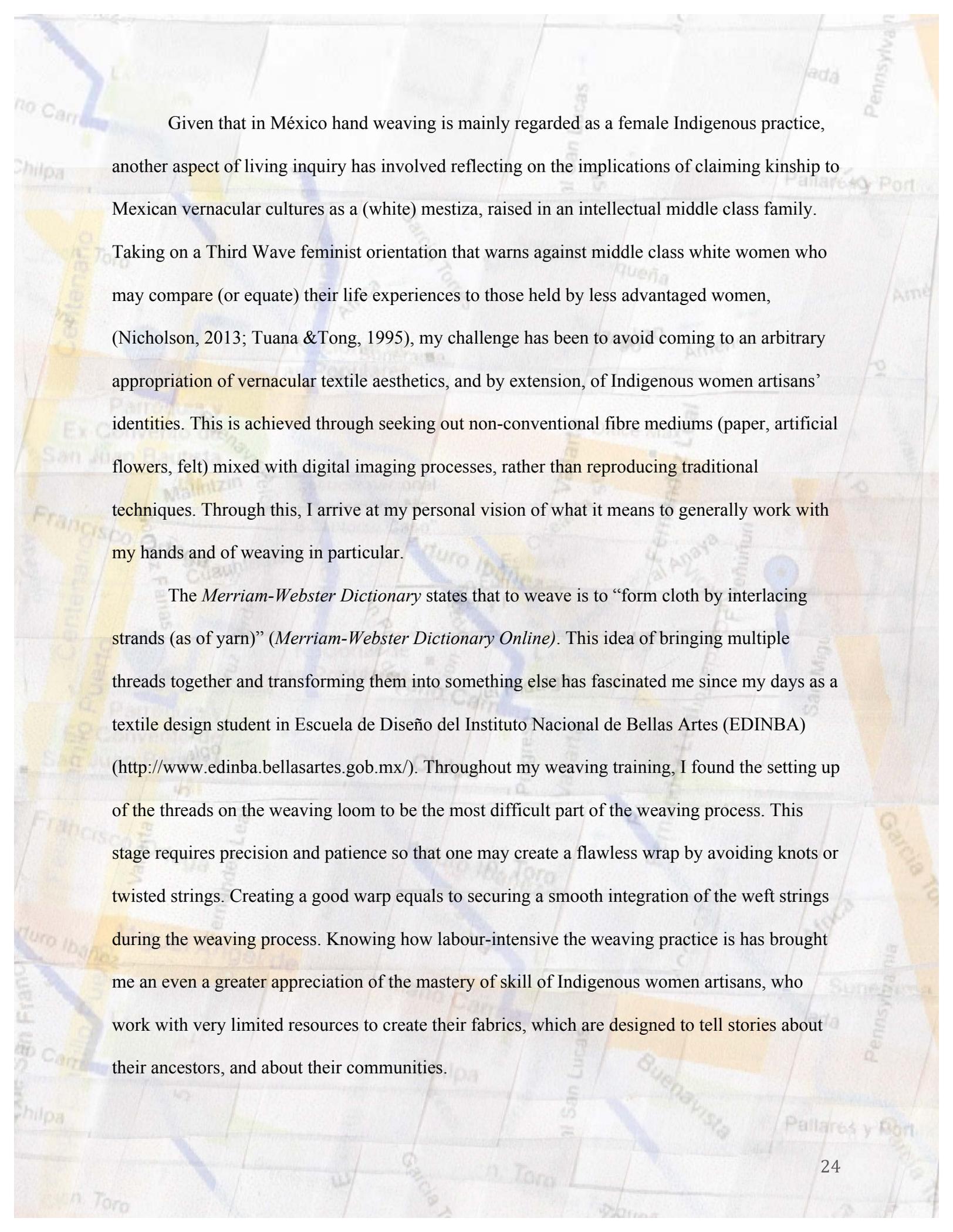
resented the racial distinctions that favour white-looking mestizo(a)s in México. It is precisely this experience of having been a target of this kind of resentment, in combination with the socially conscious values transmitted to me by my parents, that prompts me to voluntarily let go of the position of privilege that Mexican white-mestizaje grants me. I now see that conferring too much importance to the white part of my mixed identity is a way of participating in this collectively inherited colonized national practice. And, because Indigenous ways of being do not feel foreign to me, I see that assuming the position of a mestiza a/r/tographer is the most genuine way of expressing my new transcultural/personal/professional identity.

This shift in my self-perception and self-identification also signifies a challenge to my future scholarship. Having pursued research on Mexican vernacular textile traditions from a mestiza stance renders me vulnerable both in First and in Third World societies and academies. In México, I may be accused of being a fake mestiza because of my fair skin and transnational education. In Canada, assuming my identity as a mestiza scholar equates to identifying myself with the *Latina* or *Hispanic* category, a minority group that inhabits this country. In countries like Canada or the United States, the Hispanic label is often used to distinguish white-European populations from mixed-ancestry populations from Latin American Spanish-speaking countries (Blocker, 2005). Yet there is not a clear understanding of our Indigenous background. When I claim that I am the result of a mix of Spanish and Indigenous genes and cultures, I am bringing this blurred Indigenous background forward. The problem is that I do not relate to Mexican Indigenous cultures the same way other immigrants living in Canada, or Canadians themselves, may relate to their own vernacular cultures. I see in this situation a potential source of confusion when interpreting my research. Furthermore, my dual perspective or double vision (Narayan, 1997/2013) tells me that this ethnic blurriness limits my educational contribution to both México

and Canada. In Canada, I may easily fall into the trap of solely lecturing to Canadians about Mexican culture, thereby complying to the exoticization of my persona, as one of many dimensions I represent. In México, it may seem desirable for me to teach the ways of working that I learned in Canada, and thus become part of the colonizing disposition of Mexican white-mestizaje. It is the latent discomfort of intellectually residing in an in-between location, and realizing that I may end up fitting neither within the Mexican nor within the Canadian academies, that prompts me to take a *relational ethical* stance in my future mestiza a/r/tographic praxis (Springgay, 2008). I now understand that relational a/r/tographic ethics constitute a third space that will enable me to develop a socially conscious scholarship (see Chapter 6).

Using Vernacular Textile Traditions as Lens: The Meaning of Weaving in This Inquiry

This shift in my self-identification first takes place in my studio practice when I replace my use of industrially made fabrics by a practice of hand weaving. A majority of my weaving projects are developed as paper-weavings (background image), which I now see as symbolic of my process of transitioning from being a working artist to becoming a scholar. In turn, the experience of creating hand weaving projects sparks my reflections on the implications of incorporating the craft into educational research activities. Throughout my process, I focus on the learning experience provided by developing handmade projects. But, I also bring my attention to the notion of the handicraft as a cultural object. Seen from a material culture perspective, the vernacular craft is an “artifact production that embodies the historic and symbolic relevance of a community or region’s occupations, social relations, and environmental interaction” (Chiappara, 1997, p. 399). I apply this idea to my research through reviewing memories of people and places that I associate with the petate and the Nahúa blouse.



Given that in México hand weaving is mainly regarded as a female Indigenous practice, another aspect of living inquiry has involved reflecting on the implications of claiming kinship to Mexican vernacular cultures as a (white) mestiza, raised in an intellectual middle class family. Taking on a Third Wave feminist orientation that warns against middle class white women who may compare (or equate) their life experiences to those held by less advantaged women, (Nicholson, 2013; Tuana & Tong, 1995), my challenge has been to avoid coming to an arbitrary appropriation of vernacular textile aesthetics, and by extension, of Indigenous women artisans' identities. This is achieved through seeking out non-conventional fibre mediums (paper, artificial flowers, felt) mixed with digital imaging processes, rather than reproducing traditional techniques. Through this, I arrive at my personal vision of what it means to generally work with my hands and of weaving in particular.

The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* states that to weave is to “form cloth by interlacing strands (as of yarn)” (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online*). This idea of bringing multiple threads together and transforming them into something else has fascinated me since my days as a textile design student in Escuela de Diseño del Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes (EDINBA) (<http://www.edinba.bellasartes.gob.mx/>). Throughout my weaving training, I found the setting up of the threads on the weaving loom to be the most difficult part of the weaving process. This stage requires precision and patience so that one may create a flawless wrap by avoiding knots or twisted strings. Creating a good warp equals to securing a smooth integration of the weft strings during the weaving process. Knowing how labour-intensive the weaving practice is has brought me an even a greater appreciation of the mastery of skill of Indigenous women artisans, who work with very limited resources to create their fabrics, which are designed to tell stories about their ancestors, and about their communities.

In this dissertation, I will extrapolate the idea of fabric as a form of narrative, and the relationship between narrative, and a conceptual grounding in a/r/tography. A more elaborated definition of weaving states that to weave is to “make (a complex story or pattern) from a number of interconnected elements” (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online*). The vision provides an intersection, or an opening for me to set the Mexican vernacular into dialogue with a/r/tography as a Western research methodology. Parting from the idea that a/r/tography “is a process of double imaging that includes the creation of art and words” (Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2005, p. 899), in this inquiry, I engage with weaving both from a “hands-on” perspective, and through my writing. My writing, in turn, becomes a narrative of the formation of my new identity as a Mexican woman, a middle class (white) mestiza seeking her Indigenous roots as an entry point to a more holistic way of being an artist, teacher, and researcher (Biggs & Büchler, 2012).

Weaving an A/r/tographic Allegory on Cultural Identity

The emerging visual and textual narrative is the fabric of my new hybrid identity and is conceived as an allegory. The Latin root of allegory, *allegoria* stands for the “description of something under the guise of something else” (*Oxford Art Online*). This practice of (un)hiding has a long-standing history within Western artistic and literary traditions; it unfolds through the incorporation of symbols (or ideas) that might make reference to past cultures, values, or histories throughout the compositional process (*Oxford Art Online*). Applied to my research, it stands for making my mixedness as a Mexican mestiza become visible. This unveiling of my Indigenous roots, in turn, supports my creation of a new professional identity as a researcher and teacher. In allegory, dialogical relations between symbols (or ideas) are meant to foster critical

ways of thinking and seeing. In my a/r/tographic allegory, the juxtaposition of symbols that reference my life history in México help me to construct a critical perspective of my cultural legacies while progressively expanding my perspective of what it means to be living as a hybrid identity. By the end of my inquiry I also transition from the sole identity of the arts practitioner into that of the artist/teacher/researcher.

The textual component: Adding layers of meaning through personal narratives and semiotics. In this self-study, writing becomes the space of reflection where I can analyze the emotions emerging when reviewing my relation to people and places. In other words, autobiographical writing becomes a tool for me to get to know myself better. Saito (2009) advises that in order to avoid the risk of simply writing self-indulgent narratives that do not signify a real contribution to knowledge, life writers should act as observers of their (our) own text. Through applying this auto-critical dimension to my writing, I am able to discern whether I am solely writing (and drawing) on my emotions or whether I am integrating a more critical perspective of my own cultural heritage. It is through the practice of self-observation that I progressively translate my self-consciousness to paper (Saito, 2009). Being that English is my second language, however, I am also confronted with the challenge of producing English texts that accurately reflect a concept in Spanish, my native language.

As my mastery of English language improves, I also make use of a specific semiotic resource to further support my process of (un)hiding cultural meanings and to emphasize my current state of (cultural) dislocation. A/r/tographers have previously elaborated on the slash (Irwin, 2003b; Irwin, Beer, Springgay, Grauer, & Bickel, 2006) or the hyphen (Sinner, 2008) as representing the space that exists between the identities of artists, teachers, and researchers; in

Weaving Mestiza Geographies, my use of parenthesis represents that in-between space. However, my use of the round brackets also responds to an act of resistance. The *Canadian Style Guide* states that parentheses, like the dash or the comma, serve to insert information that amplifies the meaning of the overall sentence. The difference is that “they are generally used for words that are less closely related to the rest of the sentence” (1997, p. 133); whereas in my case, I usually integrate comments that somehow question or nullify a particular idea. By adding an underlying meaning, I progressively let my idiosyncrasy as a Mexican (and Latin American) woman to permeate my scholarship. For example, in my own work, I adopt the term (post)colonial as a way to introduce my position as a Latin American scholar in relation to postcolonial theory. Like Moraña, Dussel, and Jauregui (2008) I use the parenthesis to cancel the *post* in the term *postcolonial* and to support the idea that Latin America (México in my case) continues to operate within coveted colonial systems. As a result, adopting the position of Latin American (post)colonialism denotes a more radical perspective: it brings forward an anticolonial posture (Coronil, 2008). In this sense, my self-study seeks to identify, and to progressively eliminate colonial(ized) attitudes within myself so that I may foster similar processes within the educational communities in which I may introduce myself in the future, whether in México or Canada.

The visual component: Locating my art within Latin American allegorical practices.

I contextualize the visual component of this a/r/tographic allegory of my cultural identity within Latin American artistic traditions. Baddeley (1994) states that Latin American artists have regarded allegory as a suitable means for the representation of hybrid identities. According to this author, being an ancient European tradition, allegory made its way into Latin America early

in the colonial period through Catholic evangelization paintings. However, local artists soon adapt this tradition in order to inquire into the power-based relations represented by mestizaje with these allegories often grounded on the notion of a fertile America (the continent) being raped by the European colonizers. In Baddeley's own words: "the [I]ndian mother taken by force by the European father, giving birth to the illegitimate, mixed race, 'mestizo' culture of Latin America" (p.11). The most well known Mexican allegory of mestizaje is that of Malinche and Hernán Cortes. Numerous historical sources, amongst them Miralles (2004), contend that Malinche was the slave, lover, and translator of the Spanish Conquistador Hernán Cortes. She then also becomes the mother of the first Mexican mestizo, Martín Cortes (Miralles, 2004). According to Baddeley, this kind of allegory falls within a patriarchal perspective of mestizaje in which Indigenous women's bodies are regarded as passive (land) and European men as the active (or civilizing) agent.

My allegory, however, is meant to provide a feminist version of a Latin American allegory on mestizaje. My work, therefore, has similarities with a feminist example of an allegory provided by Baddeley later on in her text: the painting titled *Las Dos Fridas / The Two Fridas* by Frida Kahlo (1939). This is a self-portrait that depicts two Fridas sitting next to each other and holding hands. On the left, there is the Spanish Frida wearing a white-lace dress. On the right, there is the Indigenous Frida wearing the traditional daily garment worn by the women of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in the State of Oaxaca. Both women's hearts are exposed and connected through a catheter-like vein. The most obvious difference between the two is that the Spanish (or colonial) Frida appears to be sick; she is using her left hand to cut her own exposed vein with a set medical scissors. In contrast, the Indigenous Frida is holding a shell, which is a symbol of spirituality for Mexican pre-Hispanic traditions, and her veins are intact. In Frida's

painting, the scissors and the shell are symbols that complement the individual portrayals of the Spanish Frida and the Indigenous Frida. The allegory of Frida's mestiza identity comes together when we see that these two women are the same person. In the painting, it appears as though the healthy Indigenous Frida is sustaining the Spanish Frida through the catheter-like vein that connects their hearts. Through this allegory, Frida is claiming Indigenous kinship or (un)hiding her Indigenous identity. I identify with the sense of strength and spirituality depicted in Frida's allegory. Going back to my Indigenous roots has equated to building on my internal strength, and in so doing, coming to a new dignified way of conducting myself within transnational identities. Like Frida, I also work with references to vernacular textiles as a way to establish that connection to Indigenous cultures. My way of constructing allegories, however, differs from Frida's in the sense that my art practice is grounded in conceptual and contemporary approaches that favour the use multiple art mediums (photography, digital printing, fibres, and time-based media in my case) in order to appropriately communicate an idea.

Reading Renderings: A Guide for Interpreting This A/r/tographic Allegory

The key to accurately interpreting this a/r/tographic allegory is to have a general understanding of the a/r/tographic process. Springgay et al. (2005) offer six conceptual frameworks or *renderings* (*living inquiry*, *contiguity*, *openings*, *metaphor/metonymy*, *reverberations*, and *excess*) that support the construction and delivery of a/r/tographic knowledge. A/r/tographic renderings stand for “methodological concepts” (Springgay et al., 2005, p. 900) rather than fixed procedures. They are conceived as “embodied understandings and exchanges between art and text and between and among the roles of artist/researcher/teacher and the viewer/reader” (Springgay et al., 2005, p. 900). In other words, the renderings as open-ended

conceptual frameworks (or broad guidelines) offer unlimited creative possibilities for a/r/tographers' engagement with aesthetic/educational inquiries as well as the analysis and communication of their findings (Irwin & Springgay, 2008a). This perspective provides the flexibility necessary for the weaving together of interdisciplinary interpretations of a learning experience. Consequently, renderings are not to be treated as fixed formulas; a/r/tographers have the option of adapting them to their own inquiries and, therefore, making their own contributions to this aspect of a/r/tographic research (Springgay et al., 2005). Two examples of contributions made to the rendering of metaphor/metonymy are synecdoche (Bickel, 2008) and paradox and parallax (Sameshima, 2007). Allegory is my own contribution to the work done with the renderings, and as it will be further explained in later on in this section, it also largely develops via the rendering metaphor/metonymy.

As a way to provide a clear perspective of how my a/r/tographic allegory is constructed, I want to refer to Bickel's (2008) view of what it is like to work with the a/r/tographic renderings. Bickel compares the experience of engaging with a/r/tographic renderings to the experience of walking in a labyrinth. She states: "an a/r/tographer may enter the inquiry through these guideposts or allow renderings to emerge out of the inquiry process" (p. 47). Bickel's metaphor of the labyrinth applies to my allegorical weave in both aspects. Firstly, in *Weaving Mestiza Geographies* the renderings of living inquiry, and contiguity act as overarching concepts that overlap with the rest of the renderings as my research develops. Secondly, each of this dissertation's chapters corresponds to my engagement with a particular rendering. And, each chapter in turn may be regarded as a symbol within my allegorical construction. I will first address the role played by living inquiry and contiguity in *Weaving Mestiza Geographies* and then move on to describe the content of each chapter.

Living inquiry has been defined as “an aesthetic encounter, where the process of meaning making and being are inextricably connected to an awareness and an understanding of art” (Springgay et al., 2005). This for me represents creating a connection between my life history and my way of doing art and of writing about my art making process. My living inquiry has been about going back and forth in time through memory work. I review memories associated to my chosen textiles to then translate them into an up-to-date version of what these textiles represent for me through my art and my writing. Living inquiry for me also stands for the personal responses to developing this “life writing, life creating experience” (Springgay et al., 2005, p. 903) in the interstice of Mexican mestizo(a) and Canadian multicultural landscapes. It is precisely this experience of living in virtual borderlands (as México and Canada do not share a physical one), which has helped me see how hybrid identities can also be agents that rupture conventional views of dialectical (or complementary opposite) relations. This is, therefore, how I create the link to the rendering of contiguity.

Contiguity is about exploring complementary-opposite concepts such as “process and product, text and person, presence and absence, art and audience, teacher and student, author and reader” (Springgay et al., 2005, p. 901). Contiguity for me represents the in-between space in which I bring art and text into a dialogue in order to create third spaces for the interpretation of dialectical relation such as female(male), Indigenous(Spanish), rural(urban), local(global), and tradition(innovation). In this sense, my a/r/tographic allegory seeks to rupture the postmodern and (post)colonial notion, of centre-periphery through my autobiographical writing and studio work. In the context of the Mexican local, I address the tensions between the dichotomies Indigenous(Spanish), female(male), and rural(urban). This self-study project supports the process of locating myself as a Mexican scholar within North American contemporary art cartographies

from a local-global perspective. And, finally, it is within the realm of my autobiographical (art)craft practice that I rupture the dichotomy of tradition (vernacular textiles) and innovation (digital media).

Moving on the remaining renderings/chapters/symbols, Chapter 2 corresponds to the rendering of openings. Openings have been defined as “acts of violence and disruption” that “[remind] us that living inquiry is difficult and that it is filled with discomfort and loss” (Springgay et al. 2005, p. 906). The rendering of openings is about seeing what is there with a critical perspective so that we may transform it. In Chapter 2, I offer a critical historical perspective on the meaning of terms such as *mestizaje*, *métissage*, and *hybridity*. I then provide an overview of the relationship between Mexican *mestizaje* and Mexican arts and crafts. Within this perspective, I focus on the role played by Indigenous women textile artisans within Mexican society, and I see the privileged location that I have had as a *mestiza* in relation to Indigenous communities of textile makers. As a result, the openings chapter is about bringing transparency to my inquiry. I establish my location within Mexican society, and this allows me to address my ongoing experience of cultural displacement.

In Chapter 3, I focus on the rendering of living inquiry as the basis for my own a/r/tographic method. My methodological conceptual framework essentially combines feminist epistemologies with postcolonial theory applied to life writing (Chambers, Hasebe-Ludt, Donald, Hurren, Leggo, & Oberg, 2008; Lionnet, 1989; Moore-Gilbert, 2009; Sameshima, 2007) and to art making (Jefferies, 2007; Rowley, 1999). At a practical level, my method consists of visual/textual memory work, personal visual/textual narratives, and artistic mapping.

Chapter 4 is my reverberations chapter. Reverberations are understood as movements that favour the emergence of new perspectives or new meanings in our subject of study (Springgay et

al. 2005). I consider Chapter 4 to be a core stage of data collection in my self-study. This is achieved through creating a visual/textual family album in which I review my family history in relation to Mexican mestizaje. Echoing within this review of my family history, I have found my own location within vernacular textile traditions. Finding this location helps supports my transition into a craft-contemporary art practice stage.

Chapter 5 is dedicated to the rendering of metaphor/metonymy. This is the space where I address one of my core motivations for me to pursue doctoral research, and to later adopt a/r/tography as my methodology; to make a successful transition from studio arts instruction, and practice into a life dedicated to the research of art education. One of my main concerns has been to maintain my view of art practice as a valid way of generating knowledge. Biggs and Büchler (2012) communicate similar concerns, stating that a/r/tography's "holistic understanding of the artist/teacher/researcher" is similar to their own view of the "artist as an holistic agent who resists having to divide his or her activity between what is traditional research and what is art practice" (p. 35). In this way, Chapter 5 represents the artistic aspect of my a/r/tographic identity, and as such, this is the space where the visual component of my a/r/tographic allegory comes to fruition. This is the site in which I am able to respond to the intuitive question motivating my work with vernacular textile traditions, and which is embodied in my textile work *Superficie / Surface* (2005). To achieve this, I build on Owen's (1980) postmodern interpretation of allegory in which metaphor and metonymy are complementary steps in the process of creating allegorical works. I combine metaphorical and metonymic artworks in an exploration of the Mexican local, which also implies rupturing the divide between the dichotomies of Indigenous(Spanish) and female(male) brought forward by a patriarchal white-mestizaje. Metonymy is the means through which I enter into an a/r/tographic cartographic praxis (Springgay, 2004). Because metonymy

operates as a “displacement in the subject/object relation” (p. 904), my a/r/tographic mappings become metonymic representations of my memories of place. In turn, since metaphor is a “substitution of signifiers” (Spinggay et al. 2005, p. 904), it serves to conceive craft-contemporary art as a site of self-inquiry where I consider what happens in the studio to be reflections of my own character.

Chapter 6 (excess) focuses on the educational significance of *Weaving Mestiza Geographies*. Excess stands for the transformations undergone throughout the inquiry. Excess is the stage (space) where I complete the overall a/r/tographic allegorical construction as I finally think of my Self as a “pedagogue who is also an artist” (Irwin & O’Donoghue, 2012, p. 222). Excess also signifies the integration of a relational approach (Springgay, 2008) to my emergent craft-oriented pedagogy. This pedagogy mainly consists of three strategies: life crafting, digital-craft, and subversive cartography. Lastly, the main goal motivating my pedagogical design is to produce educational experiences that acknowledge cultural difference.

From Mestizaje to Métissage: Autobiographical Educational (Re)Search

As stated in my contribution to the first edition of *Voke*, for Bhabha (1990) (see his interview with Rutherford), the term *cultural diversity* responds more to a politically correct gesture of showing tolerance for people who might be different, while also expecting the same people to operate within the rules set by the dominant culture. When people from diverse cultural backgrounds adjust to these conventions, it is easy to ignore the differences between individuals. In contrast, the use of the term *cultural difference* shows aperture. According to Bhabha, using this term also represents adopting a new area of dialogue or negotiation. In this

space, there are no rules set by a hierarchy or pre-established ways of doing scholarship. Instead, the interactions are dictated by the differences amongst individuals (Sahagún, 2013).

The question then is what strategies might educators adopt in order to generate a safe environment in which students are able to engage in this sort of dialogue? Hasebe-Ludt et al. (2009) propose the use of life (or autobiographical) writing in order to create a *literary métissage*. The purpose is to generate a communal dialogue that begins with the sharing of lived experiences as a way to initiate empathic connections amongst communities of students and educators. This praxis is a calling out to people in other disciplines to join this literary *métissage* by creating autobiographical works. Hasebe-Ludt et al. (2009) state: “By speaking, writing and doing autobiographical research, curriculum scholars and teachers become interpreters and translators of human experiences and provocateurs of individual and social change” (p. 37). *Weaving Mestiza Geographies* as an a/r/tographic approach to literary *métissage* will therefore generate narratives about my past (México) into my present location, Montréal.

My inquiry has now produced a form of a/r/tographic excess, an overlapping of cartographies through geographies, and of ways of making, and ways of being. My identity as an artist, teacher, and researcher is evolving into a third space, a space in which geographical boundaries as well as cultural and/or national identity are no longer perceived as a potential limitation to my personal, and professional development. From an educational perspective, the idea of eliminating the boundaries that may be separating individuals living within the same physical location for me translates into a commitment to social change. Finley (2008) suggests that arts-based research projects may serve as vehicles that promote egalitarian values, and interactions that benefit minority populations and I extend this notion to my a/r/tographic practice. For example, O’Neil and Tobowlesca (2002) offer an arts-based exemplar of empathy

as an educational resource through participatory art projects that combine personal narratives with art making projects that “represent the experience of being in exile, a refugee, an asylum seeker in the UK” (p. 147). According to these authors, artworks emerging from this project “attempt to challenge myths and stereotypes, and remind the viewer of the fragility of peace and possibly our own taken for granted assumptions about our lives and lived Cultures” (p. 155). As someone coming from a country currently experiencing armed confrontations (due to the Drug War³), I feel a strong need to support processes in which immigrants coming from countries undergoing social duress are able to voice the anxieties provoked by leaving their culture and community, and my intent is that my self-study serves as a mechanism for such mediation of self in relation to geography.

At a personal level, this anxiety stems from an undercurrent of feeling that I have deserted my own people by leaving México in a moment of deep crisis. One of my main concerns is that the social crisis underway in México will bring more distress to the vernacular traditions and Indigenous populations, in direct opposition to the many years of Indigenous peoples’ resistance, social, and armed movements that have sought the transformation of Mexican society. *Weaving Mestiza Geographies* is my way of bringing attention back to the Mexican vernacular through contemporary art practice, and, in so doing, keeping these roots alive. At the same time, my inquiry into cultural identity provides me with the experiential knowledge required to later help foster similar processes amongst potential students, regardless of their nationality.

³ For further information pertaining the Drug War, refer to the book entitled *Mexico: Narco violence and a failed state* by Grayson (2010).



Figure 4. Superficie / Surface (detail # 1).

Like the rhizome (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987),
hybridity extends in (un)predictable patterns.
Hybridity has hidden and multiple roots.
(Un)expectedly, those connections signify the
essence of our communal life as society.
How can this be? Or better yet, what does this mean?
The answer is held in the (un)known (or the gap) separating us.
My personal practice of openings (into hybridity)
is about learning to see through and beyond the (illusory)
breach that separates you and me.
(see Figure 4)



THE RENDERING OF OPENINGS

Openings are often like cuts, tears, ruptures or crack that resist predictability comfort and safety. It is here that knowledge is created as contradictions and resistances are faced, even interfaced with other knowledge. Meanings are negotiated by, with and, among a/r/tographers as well as their audiences. It is in these conversations that multiple exchanges co-exist and reverberate together. (Irwin & Springgay, 2008b, p. 118)

Chapter 2

Exploring the Interstices of Hybridity

In this chapter, I use the rendering of openings as my entry into a deeper understanding of what it means to be a hybrid identity. Springgay et al. (2005) define openings as a practice of seeking new perspectives within knowledge that is already there. To make their point, they create a metaphor for fabric as knowledge. They state: “Openings are a foundational part of the cloth—its fibres woven and strands joined together with spaces in/between. There are openings like holes worn with time, reflecting the fragility and temporality of meaning” (p. 906). If I apply this metaphor to my own process of becoming an artist/teacher/researcher, my practice of openings entails paying attention to the intersections between strands that constitute the fabric of my emerging identity: hybridity, gender, and craft. To achieve this, I question the historical processes that have shaped my cultural heritage as a Mexican woman. This has enabled me to progressively move into a relational, professional praxis that ruptures (or creates openings in), conventional views of what is valuable knowledge and who is entitled to access it.

My overview of hybridity has shown me that hybridity is a concept in flux (Laplantine & Nouss, 2007). Hybridity is always changing. Hybridity is always becoming (Audinet, 2004). Indeed, terms such as *mestizaje*, *métissage*, *syncretism*, and *hybridity* have been used interchangeably to refer to genetic and cultural mixing (Acheraïou, 2011). However, each of these terms has emerged within particular historical contexts and has therefore embodied different meanings. Audinet (2004) views *mestizaje*, which is a term associated to the racial mixing that occurred in colonial México, as a *paradigm* of human nature. For me, *mestizaje* is a form of enacted openings since it stands for the drive for finding, learning, and being exposed to new landscapes, ideas, and peoples. Indeed, a few years ago, I deliberately sought an opening, a new

beginning in my professional practice, by deciding to leave what was known and familiar to me—my home, my family, and my community in México—to pursue graduate studies in the United States and, later on, doctoral studies in art education in Canada. My tearing away from the mantle of my community translated into a state of estrangement, which turned out to be the trigger and context for my research (Sahagún, 2013). If I contextualize my experience of displacement within global mobility life styles, it is easy to see that *mestizaje* is a contemporary phenomenon that represents a full cycle in the history of human kind (Audinet, 2004).

Audinet (2004) and Acheraiou (2011) contend that, during the early stages of Western imperialism, *biological hybridity*—understood as crossbreeding between colonizer and colonized—was seen as a political tool that allowed statesmen to consolidate their empires. In contrast, during the postcolonial and global eras emphasis has been placed on *cultural hybridity* as a way of avoiding racist interpretations. A practice of openings for me will be to show that both aspects are related and that denial of the historical or biological origins of hybrid identities and cultures is the cause of further discriminatory behaviours. From my perspective, this has been the case in México. My position stems from the relatively recent revival (since the late 1990s) of the debate of the role played by *mestizaje* within Mexican society. This debate questions whether the *mestizaje universalista* (Mora, 2007) of the Mexican government has provided a truly democratic and pluralistic social structure for all Mexicans (Gall, 2013). It emerges as a response to the (up)rising of the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) on January 1, 1994. This movement protested the conditions under which México was joining the North American Free Trade Agreement. The Zapatistas' manifesto stated that these conditions would bring (and had already brought) a severe deterioration of the living conditions of rural Mexican Indigenous populations (Fernández-Kelly, 2007; Muñoz Ramírez, 2008). As a

result, the Zapatistas demanded constitutional amendments that acknowledged Indigenous peoples' rights as Mexican citizens to access "work, land, housing, food, health, education, independence, freedom, democracy, justice and peace" (Muñoz Ramírez, 2008, p. 106). The EZLN's reality check pushed a considerable number of contemporary Mexican intellectuals, educators, and artists (of which I am now a part of) to insist that a first step towards the real decolonization of México is mestizo(a)s' acknowledgement that, within a Westernized Mexican culture, they (us) have been more privileged than Mexican Indigenous populations (Basave, 2011; Fuentes, 2000; Villoro, 2010). This movement has also prompted mestizo(a)s to acknowledge their (our) Indigenous roots and to seek justice for Indigenous peoples (Basave, 2011; Fuentes, 2000; Villoro, 2010).

In *Weaving Mestiza Geographies*, this acknowledgement is achieved by paying attention to the role that Indigenous women artisans have played throughout the previously described social crisis. With this in mind, I want to build on feminist Mohanty's (2003/2013) view of existing social equality within contemporary global society. She states that separating contemporary global society into First and Third Worlds is limited. There are Fourth Worlds, which for Mohanty are the Indigenous populations within the First and Third Worlds. She particularly advocates for girls and women who, according to her research, have historically constituted the population most vulnerable to the negative effects of capitalism (or imperialism). México is not an exception. Indeed, as I will explain later on, Mexican Indigenous women's history is intrinsically related to the history of mestizaje. In this way, adopting vernacular textiles as a medium to explore Mexican mestizaje in my art practice responds to the long-term goal of developing socially-conscious educational research projects that support the sustainability of living Mexican textile traditions and to produce cases of advocacy for Indigenous women textile

artisans (see Postlude). In this thesis, I symbolically concede that the life experiences that Indigenous women artisans have faced to produce and commercialize their works are different than mine as a (white) mestiza artist. It is not my intention to speak for Indigenous women. On the contrary, I see this mapping of the differences between Indigenous women artisans and myself as a necessary first step towards the decolonizing spirit that characterizes this self-study.

In this way, the content of this chapter offers a brief overview of the concept of *mestizaje* or *métissage*. I then explain how the *mestizaje* concept has served as the foundation of the modern Mexican state. This is done by discussing the role played of Mexican arts and crafts in the dissemination of *mestizaje* as an apparently democratic cultural disposition. Finally, I locate my own practice as a mestiza a/r/tographer within the interstices of contemporary Mexican *mestizaje* and transnational hybridity.

The Colonial Period: Métissage as Genesis

A first step in my openings practice is to review the notion of *métissage* as a foundational aspect (or process) of modern and contemporary Western history (Acheraïou, 2011). From this perspective, the colonial period stands for the genesis of hybridity in the Americas. Acheraïou (2011) provides a historical overview of the role played by *biological métissage* or *mestizaje* in the building of European empires. Focusing on the Mexican example, marriages between Spanish settlers and local women took place before the defeat of the Aztec empire (1521). In 1516, Cardinal Jiménez de Cisneros ordered Spanish settlers dedicated to agriculture to marry the daughters of the *caciques* or local chiefs (Basave, 2011). However, when the colony was established in the New Spain, *mestizaje* spread outside of marriage, in many cases through rape (Audinet, 2004). Acheraïou (2011) argues that conqueror Hernán Cortés enforced this practice

amongst his soldiers and settlers when it was time to distribute the *encomiendas*, or land expropriated from Indigenous peoples, amongst the subjects of the Spanish crown. Indigenous men and women and the mixed race descendants of the latter were forced to work in the *encomiendas* for the new Spanish owners.⁴

Furthermore, Quijano (2008) asserts that the European empires subjected the newly dominated races to exploitation and experimentation. In this context, women of colour were at an even greater disadvantage than men. Indigenous women were seen as simple vessels for, or potential carriers of, the bastard children, who would culminate the colonization process (Acheraïou, 2011). *Métissage* or *mestizaje* was sought “to create a hybrid offspring that would later serve as connective agents between Europe and its colonized Peoples” (Acheraïou, 2011, p. 70). In most cases, this half-breed agent would form part of the local population and would facilitate the understanding of local ways. The half-breed would also help to bring in an ostensibly peacefully manner the imperial culture into the community.

Audinet (2004) suggests that the mestizo(a) is also associated with the history of *social inequality* because the mestizo(a) represents imperial domination. The author states: “soldier, merchant, laborer, or slave, the mestizo[a] is the Empire’s flesh” (p. 65). Thus, whether openly declared or not, the mestizo(a) is a slave. The half-breed is an instrument of imperial power, not a desired daughter or son. From this perspective, the half-breed is the product of violence. As such, the half-breed turned out to be a double-edged sword for the empire. Being forced to remain in one place and play one role has led those of mixed origin to rebel. Examples of such rupture would be that of Métis peoples of Canada reclaiming the Red River area as their native land (O’Toole, 2013), or Mexican mestizo(a) populations fighting in the War of Mexican

⁴ For further information on contemporary issues related to land property and class in México, refer to *Ethnicity and Class Conflict in Rural México* by Frans J. Schryer, 1990, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Independence (1810–1821). Using fictional prose, and through the voice of *Malinche*, Fuentes (2000) summons the deceptive and rebellious nature of the Mexican mestizo(a) as follows:

Speak low, my child as befits a slave; bow, serve, suffer, and build a secret, hateful rage for the day of your revenge; come out of the womb of this land of misery, and opulence that you inherited, in the same way as you are now coming out of my womb, and speak loud, take confident steps on this silver, and dusty ground, sing, ride my son, ride your father's steeds; burn your father's houses like he burnt the house of your grandparents, nail your father against the walls of México, like he nailed his God against the cross, kill your father with his own weapons; kill, kill, kill, you son of a whore, so that they do not kill you again.⁵ (p.81)

This passage by Fuentes provides a restless, violent, and to a certain degree hopeless characterization of the Mexican mestizo(a). This description coincides with Laplantine and Nouss's (2007) description of métissage as an active and creative form of negativity. For these authors, métissage is contradictory and therefore both rebellious and critical; métissage is a rejection of everything that is uniform or homogenous (Laplantine & Nouss, 2007). At the same time, this rejection of the establishment is the cause for hybrid identities to be constantly seeking change (Audinet, 2004). The mestizo(a)s are shape shifters, bridge builders, or connectors of worlds (Anzaldúa, 1992/2013). Métissage is the root of many identities. Métissage is ubiquitous. Métissage is war, movement, and human pain. Métissage is genetics, identity, and politics. Métissage is individual and collective history. Métissage (or mestizaje) is the genesis of Mexican (and my own) cultural identity.

Mexican Mestizophilia—From Modernity to Globalization

Basave (2011) provides an optimistic view of the role played by mestizaje within the formation of the Mexican modern state. In his view, mestizaje has occurred along a

⁵ Translated to English from the original text in Spanish by Verónica Sahagún.

phenomenological and ideological continuum within the history of Mexican society. Mestizaje has evolved from a strategy of control exercised by the white elites to a key component of a still-unfinished decolonialization project. As a result, mestizaje has been scrutinized by many disciplines in Mexican academia. This scrutiny started in the midst of the Mexican Revolution (1910–1920) and, throughout the past hundred years, has manifested itself in political documents, historical overviews, and sociological and anthropological critiques as well as artistic and literary productions.

Focusing on the historical context in which Mexican mestizaje emerges, Funes (2006) states that the postrevolutionary Mexican political leaders, military men with limited instruction, sought the support of Mexican intellectuals in the process of developing an ideology that would legitimize the new State. A key figure in this process was José Vasconcelos (a lawyer, philosopher, and writer), who became Secretary of Education (1921–1924) during the presidency of Alvaro Obregón. Vasconcelos is mostly known for his essay *Raza Cósmica* (1925/2010), in which he argues that mestizaje has been part of the history of many civilizations. He criticizes postures that focus solely on the racial aspect of mestizaje, and instead he chooses to emphasize its cultural-spiritual aspect. Discussing the rich cultural heritage of Indigenous populations destroyed by the Spanish conquest, he suggests that Mexican mestizos need to (re)evaluate that legacy. Vasconcelos is responsible for bringing mestizaje from the theoretical (and political) arena to actual praxis. Mestizaje for Vasconcelos represents the democratization of education. In Vasconcelos's view, this would be achieved by integrating Indigenous peoples into the now predominant mestizo(a) culture. As a result, Vasconcelos promotes the construction of libraries and rural schools. Vasconcelos's early deeds in the rural world set the foundation for later generations of intellectuals, like my parents in the early 1970s, to continue seeking the

development of rural México. However, contemporary authors like Sámano Rentería (2004) and Gall (2013) have criticized Vasconcelos's approach for not respecting Indigenous peoples' cultural difference. Funes (2006) provides another perspective on this issue by suggesting that, in Vasconcelos's view, the inclusion of Indigenous people in the Mexican educational system—and not their segregation from the rest of Mexican society—is democratic.

In the cultural and artistic arenas, Vasconcelos engaged with the painters Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros, amongst others, in a public art project: they painted murals in government buildings so that everybody could have access to the visual arts (del Conde, 1997). Influenced by Marxist historical materialism, these artists created a series of murals depicting several stages of Mexican history, showing how the oppressed classes liberated themselves. Two female counterparts to the Mexican muralist movement include Frida Kahlo and María Izquierdo, who make a point of wearing traditional Indigenous garments as a way of stating their affiliation to the Mexican Indigenous world. Their work includes self-portraiture as well as a series of paintings depicting imagery from Mexican folk arts.

Regarding the participation of the intellectual classes in the formation of the new Mexican state, Sámano Rentería (2004) asserts that Vasconcelos, along with the lawyer and ideologist Andrés Molina Enríquez and the anthropologist Manuel Gamio (1916/2010), laid the foundations for the establishment of an *indigenismo institucionalizado* that promotes the integration of Indigenous peoples into a Mexican mestizo(a) culture through the educational system and labour. For Sámano Rentería, this approach to social inclusion prevailed between 1936 and 1982. Rather than attending to Indigenous peoples' needs, however, it became the cause of a progressive exploitation and isolation of Indigenous peoples. Furthermore, Gall (2013) contends that *indigenismo institucionalizado* is largely mediated through the Mexican School of

Anthropology. After the Revolution, numerous anthropological studies were made to support the narrative of Mexican history and of México as a mestizo(a) nation, not to honour and support Indigenous living traditions. Gall interprets this approach as the early post-Revolutionary Mexican governments' response to Darwinist and Spencerian discourses, which enforced the idea of the superiority of European races (from the late nineteenth century to the end of World War II). Mexican mestizaje responded by celebrating our mixedness; unfortunately, this was done at the expense of the Indigenous peoples. Bonfil Batalla (1996) asserts that there are two Méxicos. One of them, the real México, is composed of a large number of mestizo(a) and Indigenous rural populations. The other, the imaginary México, consists of the (white) mestizo(a) elites who have imposed a distorted or westernized vision of Mexican Indigenous traditions. I locate myself in between these two worlds as I have lived in and been exposed to Indigenous rural cultures in my childhood, whereas the majority of my adult years I have been exposed to Mexican Western and urban educational contexts.

Mexican Arts and Crafts as Embodiments of Mexican Mestizaje

I contend that Mexican arts and crafts can be interpreted as embodiments of mestizaje and therefore as embodiments of contradictory attitudes towards Indigenous cultures. Mexican anthropological research supports the construction of an official version of Mexican national identity—a version that nurtures the Mexican educational system as well as public cultural institutions. Another measure taken by Mexican government agencies in the creation of this meta-narrative, or this official version of Mexican culture, is massive investment in the production of vernacular handicrafts. According to García Canclini (1993), México has the largest population of craftsmen and women of any country in the Americas. Drawing from

Gramsci's theory of hegemony, García Canclini argues that in México, Indigenous artisans are subalterns, or labourers, creating cultural products that validate the legitimacy of the Mexican state and directly support the Mexican economy. García Canclini also argues that the interest of the Mexican government in fostering the mass production of Indigenous handicrafts translates into an added attraction for international tourism. Indeed, in the 1990s, the period in which the Mexican economy fully entered global trade, I witnessed the proliferation of government-sponsored marketplaces specialized in crafts and easily accessible to tourists, especially in México City. At an internal level, the commercialization of Indigenous handicrafts within the average Mexican mestizo(a) population enforces the idea that Mexican pre-Hispanic roots are being preserved and form part of Mexican peoples' daily lives. According to García Canclini (1993), this explains why Indigenous crafts have become Mexican *popular cultures*, a term that encompasses material productions as well as communal rituals and public festivities.

Other authors like Iglesias y Cabrera (2011) and Bartra (2008) use the term *popular arts* to refer to the material aspect of Mexican popular cultures. Bartra states that this term has widely spread in Latin America and is used to refer to the creative productions of the lower or "subaltern classes" (2008, p.10). This label arguably provides Indigenous creations a lower status within a Mexican Western-based fine arts structure. For Bartra, however, the label of popular arts may also help reclaim Indigenous peoples' cultural difference. It is important to note that the emergence of Mexican popular arts is not strictly related to post-Revolutionary Mexican mestizophilia. Indigenous craft traditions have undergone multiple syncretic processes and were part of Mexican material culture before Mexico's colonization. Iglesias y Cabrera (2011) states: "Spanish conquerors contributed to the already existing rich Indigenous craftsmanship. Their contributions included new techniques like glazing, and some instruments like the pedal loom

and the lathe, as well as other tools made of steel or iron” (p. 149).⁶ These handicrafts, as well as other more ephemeral artisanal productions such as bread and candy, were sold in marketplaces and at public religious celebrations during the colony. And, many of them continue to exist within contemporary Mexican colonial or historical sites.

Turok (2002) uses the example of the *Day of the Dead* celebration to show how Mexican popular cultures have continued evolving over the years. This celebration is partly a syncretism of European All Saints’ Day and Indigenous religious traditions of honouring ancestors. However, this celebration has gone from being a family and communal practice to a touristic attraction, particularly in the rural areas of urban centres, such as México City. Turok describes how ritual objects, such as the censers decorated with skulls reminiscent of pre-Hispanic representations of the god Mictlantecutli (the god of death), or sugared bread in the form of the skulls traditionally presented in the altar offerings of the Day of Dead have been sources of inspiration for early artistic productions such as the skull prints of José Guadalupe Posada (1852–1913). Posada’s prints are conceived as satires of the high classes of pre-Revolutionary México (Gretton, 1994). Other not so positive appropriations of the skull imagery include reproductions of Posada’s famous print titled *Catrina*, which in Mexican slang stands for *rich lady*, in the style of American pop culture. These works go against the artist’s initial political intention and signify an erasure of the meaning of the pre-Hispanic tradition of making offerings to the ancestors. Furthermore, García Canclini (1995) provides other examples of Indigenous traditional handicrafts undergoing transformations due to commercialization, such as the political clay pottery of the Ocumicho artisans in the state of Chiapas, the metal mermaid produced by Purépecha artisans (in the state of Michoacán), and the paper works known as *papel amate* produced by the Nahúa communities of Central México.

⁶ Text translated to English from the original version in Spanish by Verónica Sahagún.

In response to the issues raised by the transformations of vernacular craft practices, del Carpio Ovando and Freitag (2013) argue that even when Indigenous artisans adapt their craft productions to satisfy the demands of contemporary markets, they remain aware of the relevance of continuing the tradition of their ancestors. As a result, contemporary artisans' works reflect subjective experiences that push the boundaries of their own tradition. The problem is that within the Mexican economic system, Indigenous artisans infrequently receive fair remuneration for their work. Thus, even when popular arts are the source of inspiration for Mexican mestizo(a) artists, their works are conferred a lower status within the Mexican cultural system.

These unbalanced and hierarchical relations between Mexican arts and crafts became most evident in the social crisis of the 1990s. Secco (2010) argues that in this period, the Mexican government supported a series of international exhibitions of Mexican art with the purpose of reinforcing a strong image of Mexican cultural identity at a time when Mexican citizens were feeling threatened by México joining NAFTA and were questioning the state's policies towards Indigenous communities. It was a way of assuring Mexican citizens that their rich Mexican cultural heritage would not be lost to the consumption of American or Canadian products. The other side of the coin in this enforcement of Mexican art was that the Mexican state was supporting exhibitions by Mexican artists in order to produce "Mexican identity for export" (Secco, p. 48). Amongst these exhibitions, the most relevant is *México: Esplendores de Treinta Siglos / México: Splendors of Thirty Centuries*. Other contemporary art exhibitions included *El Corazón Sangrante / The Bleeding Heart*, *Mito y Magia en América: los Ochentas / Myth and Magic in America: the Eighties*, and *Parallel Project/New Moments in Mexican Art* (Secco, 2010, p. 49). These exhibitions feature works that reference the imagery produced by the

Mexican muralists, Frida Kahlo as an iconic figure, and the imagery coming from Mexican popular arts, such as the Virgin of Guadalupe and the Sacred Heart (Secco, 2010).

From my perspective, this contradictory behaviour on the part of the Mexican government has raised critical awareness amongst new generations of Mexican artists, of which I am a member, who have sought more socially conscious ways of incorporating references to Mexican popular arts into their art practices. First, it is necessary to mention the case of Mexican artists of Indigenous descent like Francisco Toledo (see Epinosa de los Monteros, 2005) and Demián Flores (see Kling, 2011) who have incorporated traditional Indigenous imagery and craft techniques into their artistic productions. Both artists have gained international exposure while sharing their success with their communities by contributing to the further development of the arts and crafts in their home state of Oaxaca.

Other approaches amongst mestizo(a) artists include Betsabee Romero's *Ayate Car* (1997) (see Epinosa de los Monteros, 2010), which incorporates imagery of colonial popular arts while addressing issues pertaining to illegal immigration to the United States, and Abraham Cruzvillegas's project exhibition *Artesanías Recientes / Recent Craftmanships* (1998), which also incorporates a series of works inspired by vernacular crafts (see Cruzvillegas & Mendoza, 2013). Cruzvillegas's works focus on the actual hands-on aspect of craft making, rather than appropriating vernacular imagery. His most recent projects, *Autodestrucción / Self-destruction 1, 2, 3* (2012–2013) and *Autoconstrucción / Self-construction* (2011), are metaphors of personal identity construction situated within the context of the migration of Mexican rural workers into México City (see Kim, 2005). Meanwhile, Josefina Anaya Morales' (known as Yosi Anaya) video piece *Relato II: Wondering Tehuanita* (2005) documents her own experience of walking the streets of London dressed in the traditional garment of Indigenous women of Tehuantepec, in

the state of Oaxaca. With this piece, Yosi Anaya (re)enacts the displacement experienced by Indigenous women who come to the urban centres of México to sell their textile products. These two artists' works are sources of inspiration for my self-study (and my art practice) because rather than reproducing Indigenous imagery, they seek out creative processes that allow them to come to an empathic understanding of Indigenous peoples' realities. Most important, these artists' living inquiries seek contact with a sense of alterity that characterizes the mestizo(a) identity and which, from my perspective, has been systematically unattended to (or denied) within a Western(ized) Mexican society.

Centring on textile-based practices. Yosi Anaya and Teresa Margolles are two Mexican artists who have sought textile-based collaborations with Indigenous women. From my perspective, their work has moved us towards fostering ethnic and gender equality in favour of Indigenous women. Their work has also provided inspiration for my long-term goal of creating arts-based educational research that supports the growth of Indigenous women artisans. Bartra (2007) offers an overview of the exhibition project *Bell Women: Harmony of Tradition and Modernity*, conducted by Yosi Anaya, in collaboration with the clay artisan Chavela Hernández. This project consists of an installation of sixty-six female-shaped clay bells dressed in miniature digitally printed garments that evoke the *huipiles*, which are traditional dresses worn and created by Indigenous Mesoamerican women. Chavela Hernández made the clay bells, and Yosi Anaya produced the garments. Complementing the installation were videos of the bells being rung, as well as videos of water and waterfalls, which operated as metonymic representations of Indigenous women's voices. Bartra (2007) interprets the bell-woman project as “a song about difference within equality” (p. 102), because even though each bell sounded and looked slightly different from the rest, they were all made of the same materials.

Teresa Margolles's piece entitled *Tela Bordada / Embroidered Fabric* (2012) is a collaborative project conducted with a community of female Maya artisans from Guatemala that addresses issues related to the loss of numerous women in recent genocidal processes (Sanford, 2008). *Tela Bordada* is made of a piece of industrial cloth stained with the blood of Indigenous women found in the morgue; the Maya artisans embroidered the fabric with traditional Maya motifs such as birds and flowers in a symbolic gesture of communal healing. This piece, along with a documentary video of the Maya artisans communicating the meaning of honouring their dead through their traditional textile practices, was recently presented at the National Gallery of Canada, in Ottawa. Stauble (2013) describes this project as "a multi-layered story of systemic violence, oppression, exploitation and poverty in Central America" that "also addresses positive notions of communal labor, ritual, healing and transformation" (para. 5). In my opinion, with this piece Margolles brings our attention to what the culture of violence has entailed for Indigenous peoples, particularly in the southern region of México (the Zapatista land) and at the borderlands of México and Guatemala. Maya groups on both sides of the border have undergone massacres at the hands of military and paramilitary groups. These took place in México in the 1990s during the EZLN uprising (Cavise, 1994; Muñoz Ramírez, 2008) and in Guatemala starting in the 1970s (Roth Arraiza, 2006). Margolles's project provides a segue into Mesoamerican Indigenous women's realities and therefore into the context in which beautiful vernacular textiles, embodiments of the ancestral traditions of México, are being created. Along these lines and to provide insights into the resilience of Indigenous women artisans, Bartra (2011) uses the example of the transformations that handmade rag dolls produced in the state of Chiapas underwent during the Zapatista uprising. She states: "due to the armed struggle, tourism fell off drastically and the craftswomen had serious problems selling the objects they were making" (p.

130). In this scenario, claims Bartra, the only available consumers where the journalists coming from different parts of the world following the armed confrontations between the EZLN and the Mexican army. According to Bartra, the Catalan journalist Joaquim Ibarz propagated this idea amongst Indigenous women artisans; he said to one of them “that if she were to turn the [regular] dolls into Zapatistas he would buy them all” (2011, p. 130). This is how Indigenous artisans started to create rag dolls dressed in the Zapatista’s signature garment: a rifle and a black balaclava or a red handkerchief covering their faces. Consequently, they soon began creating dolls of the EZLN spokesman, Subcomandante Marcos (one of the few mestizos in the army), and Comandanta Ramona (Bartra, 2011).

Bartra (2008) furthermore states that Indigenous women and their craft productions tend to be ignored in publications on Mexican fine arts and popular arts. In the case of the latter, there is a tendency to give more exposure to male artisans by presenting their pictures and full names. For Bartra, the lack of acknowledgement from popular arts publications is particularly worrisome because statistically Indigenous female artisans outweigh male artisans. Bartra also argues that theorists of the fine arts in México have ignored popular arts because they do not consider them “great art.” There are two exceptions to this tendency. First, there is anthropologist Martha Turok, who has documented diverse Indigenous textile traditions. An exemplar piece is *By Warp or by Weft: the Paths of the Serpent* (2001), which analyzes the intersections between serpent iconography in textile making and Mesoamerican Indigenous women’s identities. There is also the visual artist Yosi Anaya’s research, including her doctoral dissertation, *Mi vestido somos nosotras: Addressing Huipil: A Study in the History, Significance, and Use of Mexican Indigenous Textiles Through Makers, Wearers, and Frida Kahlo* (2006) and her most recent publication, “Voices through time in Mesoamerican textiles” (2012), which

elaborates on the idea that Indigenous women's garments are forms of woven text that document the voices of many generations of Indigenous peoples. At present, and due largely to the efforts of Zapatista women, feminist scholars who have engaged in studies that may benefit Mexican Indigenous women's textiles traditions operate within fields such as anthropology, sociology, and rural development.

Vernacular textiles, a gendered craft: Looking into the lives of indigenous women from México. Millán (1997) elaborates on how Mexican Indigenous women have been systematically marginalized by three different power systems: capitalism, the Mexican state, and patriarchy. According to Millán, in México, the highest percentages of malnutrition, monolingualism, and illiteracy are found among indigenous women populations. Authors like Rovira (1997) and Millán (1998), however, provide insights into how the active participation of Indigenous women both during the formation period of the EZLN (1983–1994) and during warfare signified a process of empowerment for Indigenous women of Chiapas. Zapatista women took care of their children, fed their family, produced embroidered textiles, participated in communal tasks, and trained as guerrilla soldiers. These experiences showed Indigenous women that they had been neglected in many ways and not only by Mexican society, but also by the male members of their communities. More significantly, they saw that they were capable of transforming their reality. As a result, Zapatista women organized themselves to ensure gender equality became part of the EZLN agenda. According to Martínez (2011), in 1993 Comandantas Ramona and Ana María consulted the women of six Zapatista communities: San Cristóbal de las Casas, Ocosingo, Las Margaritas, Altamirano, Oxchúc, and Chanal. The information gathered served to prepare the *Revolutionary Law of Women*, read on January 1, 1994, the day the EZLN launched their offensive. In essence, this law established Indigenous women's right to determine

their level of involvement in the Revolutionary movement and to occupy leadership positions within it. This law condemned the abuse and rape of Indigenous women and established their right to choose a life partner. It also emphasized Indigenous women's right to receive a salary for their labour and to access health services for themselves and their children, as well as to access education. After this document came *Women's Rights in Our Traditions and Costumes* (May 1994) and Comandanta Esther's speech *International Day of the Rebel Woman* (March 8, 2001), as well as her speech directed to the Mexican Congress on March 28 of the same year. In short, this process led Zapatista women to assume leadership in the ongoing emancipation processes of Indigenous women across México and the rest of Latin America (Speed, Hernández Castillo, & Stephen, 2006; Dellacioppa & Weber, 2012).

The issue of fair pay for work is closely related to the conditions of production and commercialization of Indigenous women's textile creations, since textile making is one their main occupations. Bonfil Sánchez (2011), as well as del Carpio Ovando and Freitag (2013), asserts that the process of creating and selling handmade textiles is strongly connected to positive identity-construction processes of Indigenous women. Because producing handmade textiles is directly related to remembering their ancestors and to preserving their culture, fair pay for Indigenous women's work translates into a positive reflection of who they are in society. Bonfil Sánchez (2011) describes the challenges that Indigenous women have to face to achieve this goal; even when the sales of vernacular textiles translate into a financial income for their families, Indigenous women often lack the support of their partners and other family members in this endeavour. Nielsen (2006) recollects the experiences of three generations of Purépecha textile makers in the community of Cherán, Michoacán, in the process of commercializing their productions. The first generation faced the criticism of their community because they broke with

the conventional views that women have to stay within the community and at home. Outside, in the marketplaces, they felt discriminated against for speaking poor Spanish or dressing differently. Regardless, Purépecha women did not give up and continued to find ways to sell their textiles. Eventually, subsequent generations became the primary providers of their household. According to Nielsen, this raised Purépecha women's confidence and overcame the remorse they felt for having left their homes and communities.

Another difficulty for Indigenous women textile artisans face is finding the right commercialization context for their products. In this respect, the implementation of a neoliberal economy within Mexican society has also resulted in a transformation of commercialization sites for Indigenous textiles (Stephen, 2005; Nielsen, 2006). The smaller number and size of local and town marketplaces has generally forced Indigenous peoples to seek access to stands in government-sponsored marketplaces located in urban centres. Because these markets' clientele consists of international tourists, Indigenous peoples in general have also been forced to learn English (García Canclini, 1995; Stephen, 2005). Needless to say, it is those (mostly male) artisans who speak both Spanish and English, and who are more familiar with Mexican mainstream culture, that have a greater chance of accessing these areas. As previously mentioned, amongst Indigenous peoples, it is women who have the lowest rates of literacy. This limitation often leads Indigenous women to sell their crafts to mestizo(a) intermediaries at very low costs. Regardless, Indigenous women have started to create networks and cooperatives to collectively produce and commercialize their crafts (Bonfil Sánchez, 2001). Reporting on the successes of women Zapotec weavers from the community of Teotitlán del Valle, Oaxaca, Stephen (2005) describes how the weavers have created cooperatives for the production and exportation of their textiles. The majority of these organizations are women-dominated

cooperatives. This has resulted in a concomitant change of power dynamics within the actual community due to Indigenous women assuming leadership roles within the community and even outside of it.

I want to conclude this section by reviewing the idea that handmade textiles are a means through which Indigenous women construct their individual and collective identities. In the case study of vernacular textile production in the Tzotzil Maya community located in the town of Ilusión (in Chiapas), del Carpio Ovando and Freitag (2013) report a decline in the sales of textiles. Younger generations of women prefer to wear Western clothing and to produce amber jewellery because it is more profitable. At first glance, this might appear to be part of a process of acculturation. However, del Carpio Ovando and Freitag explain that some of these young Indigenous women have continued to learn how to make textiles thanks to the teachings of their grandmothers. Thus the young women are aware that these textiles represent a way of connecting with their traditions and their ancestors. Based on my own experience as an artist, I interpret this as younger generations of women gaining more independence and agency rather than merely becoming acculturated. They have found new ways of negotiating their cultural identity as Mexican citizens, and this is largely possible due the practices of resistance of their mothers and grandmothers.

Creating an Opening for My Aesthetic Inquiry Into My Hybridity

The question emerging at this point is how do I relate to the previously described scenario. And, most important, where does my a/r/tographic inquiry fall, ideologically and politically? In a way, this is partly what this self-study is meant to find out. Setting out from the idea that my affinity to Mexican Indigenous cultures is partly due to the mestizaje-oriented

values spread by the Mexican state through its educational system, part of my decolonization, then, entails coming to my own perspective of what it is to be a mestiza. In this way, examining the overall scenario of Mexican mestizaje, at this point of my research, serves the creation of a framework for my upcoming life writing and autobiographical (art)craft making. In the case of the latter, I align my approach with that of two seminal authors in postcolonial theoretical frameworks applied to fibre arts, Sue Rowley and Janis Jefferies. Rowley (1999) brings attention to the challenge of developing art that engages in a dialogue with vernacular traditions. According to this author, in a Western conception, art stands for innovation, whereas craft represents all that remains the same. In other words, craft stands for tradition. From my perspective, artists with an interest in incorporating the vernacular into their art have the responsibility to acknowledge this epistemological difference. Like Rowley, I am certain that making this distinction involves recognizing that vernacular crafts are embodiments of the culture of a group that has been marginalized by a hegemonic power. Jefferies (2007) complements this perspective by stating that it is also necessary to develop creative practices that attest to the life experiences of vernacular textile producers. Jefferies's position would favour collaborative art making with Indigenous artisans themselves (examples of this being the works of Teresa Margolles and Yosi Anaya). However, because I am developing this inquiry outside of México, I did not choose this approach. I could have sought some form of long-distance collaboration, but my artistic practice is such that this would most likely have led to a superficial form of interaction, which would increase the chances of misrepresenting my collaborators' work. This thorough literature review serves to acknowledge the difference between my own creative practice as a mestiza trained in a Western fine arts context and the work of Indigenous women artisans who have been trained in the heart of their own communities and through

intergenerational instruction. This differentiation brings me back to my feelings of restless (un)belonging characteristic of a hybrid identity. Not entirely fitting in within Mexican, American, or Canadian society translates into learning to rupture conventional points of view and, therefore, learning to live exposed to criticism, a reality of the academic and fine arts worlds. In this scenario, recovering my connections with vernacular textile traditions, from a place that feels authentic, is about developing a form of resilience for creating third spaces of communication within my present and future locations and communities of learning.

These third spaces naturally emerge within my own (art)craft practice. *Shifting Territories* (Figure 5) is a stop motion animation envisioned as a virtual tile in order to produce an intervention in Montréal's public space through the opening provided by my house's street window (Figure 6). This window symbolically operates as the interstice in which I locate myself as a Mexican a/r/tographer living in Montréal. I have developed a postmodern and hybrid conceptual framework that allows me to externalize this in-between vision. I combine reflections related to Rogoff's "unhomed geographies" (2000) and Deleuze and Guattari's geographic metaphor of the "smooth and striated space" (1987/2012). The latter being a vision that I adapt into my art(craft) as a form of true knowledge stemming from a particular Mexican Indigenous group (the Huicholes) as well as a formal reference to one of Mexican popular arts. As I develop my piece, I further reflect on what it is like to now live in-between Mexican and Canadian cultural geographies, with the United States silently in the middle. Rogoff (2000) elaborates on how a state's governing rules and conventions determine belonging to a place. For Rogoff, the notion of "unhomed geographies" stands for personal circumstances that have determined our relationship to place. Despite having spent five years in Montréal, my status as international student legally places me as a temporary resident, or a visitor in Canada.



Figure 5. Shifting Territories. Street documentation # 1.



Figure 6. (In)Between (2014). Inside view from Verónica Sahagún's street window in Montréal.

Even though I have filed taxes, developed a community, and established professional ties, I legally remain an outsider. But as I contemplate the possibility of returning to México, I am also struck by a feeling of uneasiness. I am aware that as a woman, I do not fall within the conventional gender roles of Mexican society. According to Mexican middle-class standards and values, at this point of my life, I should be married. I should also have a good job and own a house. Yet my professional credentials do not guarantee me security within the Mexican job market. And in terms of finding a life partner with whom I can create this life, I feel certain that my academic qualifications and professional orientation may well be perceived as a flaw and not a quality by some (conservative) Mexican men. From this perspective, remaining in Canada, or seeking a new location in which women's professional achievements have a history of being more openly acknowledged and valued, seems like a more suitable option to accomplish a dignified living situation. But taking this route means learning to live, at least for a few years, as a citizen with restricted rights, or learning to live unhomed (Rogoff, 2000).

I now want to consider my current nomadic state in light of Deleuze and Guattari's (1987/2012) fabric metaphor. They state: "Smooth space and striade space—nomad space and sedentary space—the space in which the war machine develops and the space instituted by the State apparatus—are not of the same nature" (p. 179). The smooth space offers an open horizon in the nomadic journey that is outside conventional social structures. The striade space is, in turn, the territory of the state where rules and histories affect us directly. In my study, the war machine stands for the conflicts stemming from being unhomed or becoming a nomadic entity. Canada for me represents the smooth space (as the rules that govern this country are not the ones that I was raised with), whereas contemporary Mexican society as just described (and which I have just left behind) stands for the striade space. In Deleuze and Guattari's (1987/2012) metaphor,

Inspired by the ethnographic and autobiographical writings of anthropologist Carlos Castaneda (1968/2008) on Mexican shamanic practices, my friends and I visited the desert. I compare the experience of walking in the desert to my becoming a nomadic entity in the wider sense. My coming to Canada is reflective of the same drive that motivated me to walk in the San Luis Potosí desert: a desire to learn more about myself and to see the world through experiences that pushed the boundaries of my capabilities and skills. In this way, this rendering of the empty land of the San Luis Potosí desert is reflective of a state of mind and of internal strength. As I project this virtual tile through my house's street window in Montréal, I assert my physical presence in Montréal. My street window functions as an opening between my emotional life—largely rooted in memories of México—and Montréal's public life. By projecting my virtual tile through the window of my Montréal dwelling, I join the Montreal tradition of regaining public sites taken over by winter's snow and darkness through projections of lights, videos, or animations within these spaces (Figures 8 and 9).

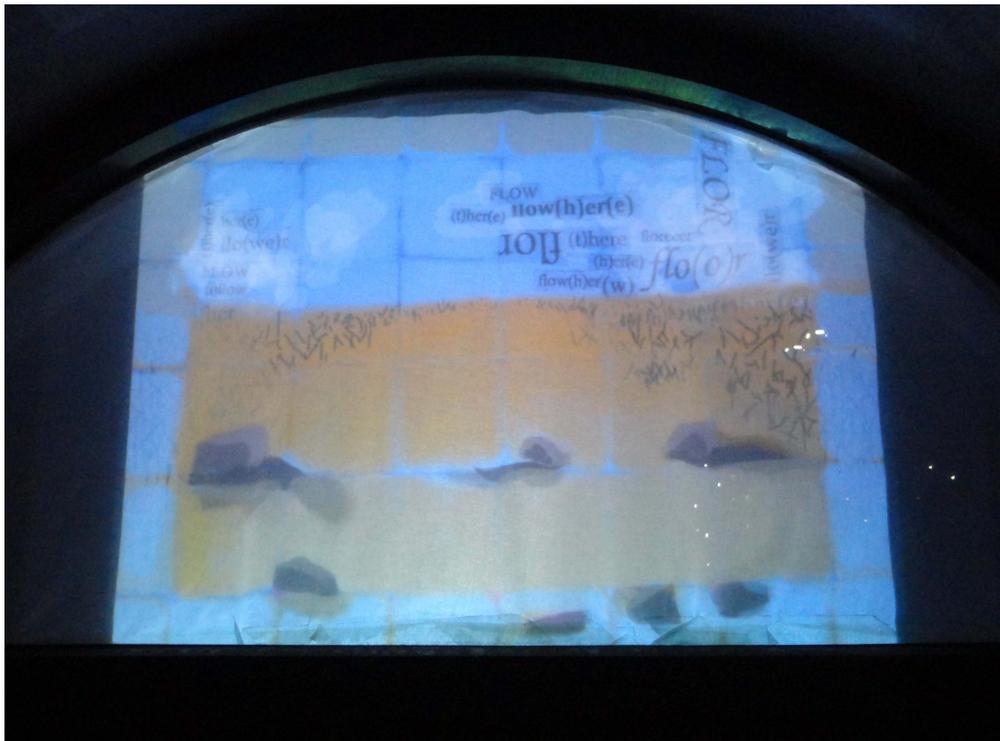


Figure 8. Shifting Territories. Street documentation # 2.

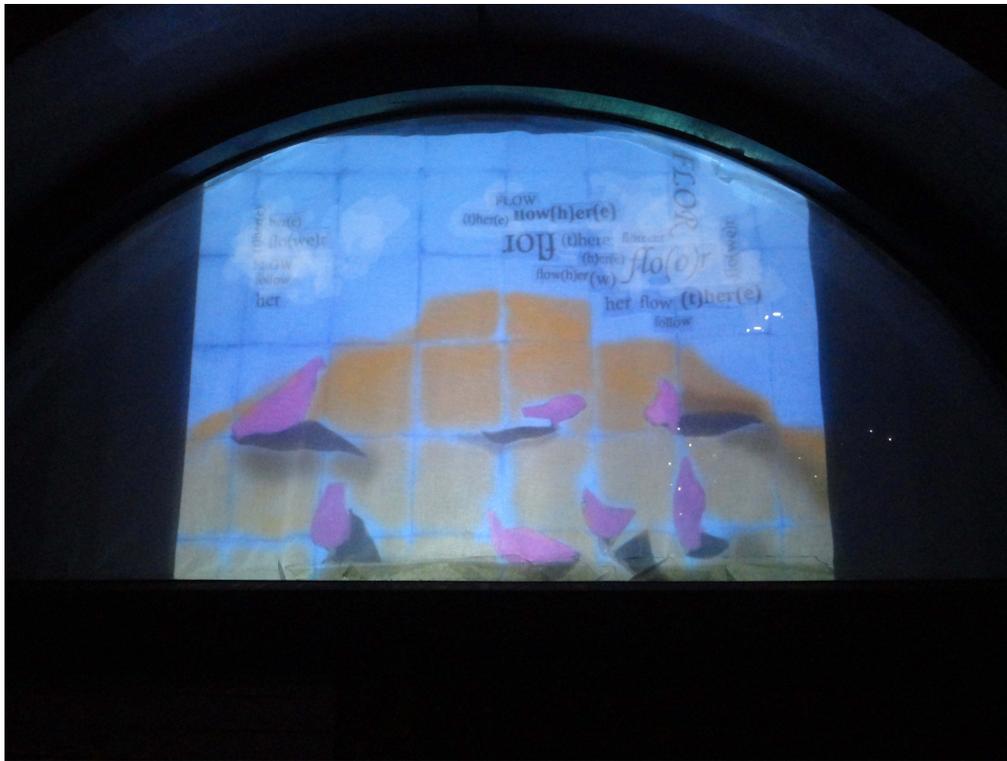


Figure 9. *Shifting Territories*. Street documentation #3.

Shifting Territories also offers insights into my experience of transitioning in-between linguistic landscapes. I use English, Spanish, and French variations of the words *tree*, *flower*, and *sky* as I (re)create my memory landscape (Figure 10). This aesthetic decision is inspired by a nomadic Indigenous ritual of the Huicholes, one of the few remaining nomadic Indigenous groups of México. Every year, they embark on a journey from the coast of Comiata, Jalisco, into the desert of the state of San Luis Potosí in search (or hunt) of the power plant—a cactus species named *Lophophora williamsi*—known as peyote (or *Hikuri* in Huichol language). For the Huicholes, walking in the desert in search of *Hikuri* symbolizes a quest for knowledge, *Hikuri* being the master that will reveal the true selves of those who seek him (Castaneda, 1968/2008). During their pilgrimage in the desert, the Huicholes engage in a ritual game (see Fulgueira, 2009). This game consists of changing the names of the objects, peoples, and places that they run

into as they walk. Through this game, the Huicholes acknowledge that our ideas of what the world is, simply that, ideas. Objects, peoples, and places change identity according to the lens through which one interprets them. As I (re)enact this game of changing names of things in my digital imaging process, I also initiate an exploration of what it means to belong and (un)belong at a linguistic level (Figures 11 and 12). And I particularly focus on what it is to be a hybrid identity within a new cultural landscape. As I do this, there is a shift taking place within my internal geographies. I no longer relate to Mexican landscapes in the same way nor do I use the same words to describe such landscapes.



Figure 11. *Shifting Territories*. Still image # 3.



Figure 12. *Shifting Territories*. Still image # 4.

Most important, I am now exposed to new (Canadian) landscapes. In the latter, I rely on my alterity—or the power that comes from knowing other realities—to create openings into what it means to belong or not to belong within both Mexican and Canadian societies. My virtual tile is finished by introducing the customary legend usually inscribed in Mexican welcome home signs: “my home is your home” (Figure 13). But it has a slight alteration: a bracketed *not* next to the verb *is*. If I were to think of the Mexican countryside as my home, there is a literal meaning emerging. The rendered landscape is not representative of a Canadian landscape, but the address depicted in my virtual tile situates me in Montréal, Québec. This insubstantial opening is representative of my current (dis)location. I use the local languages, and I adopt local aesthetic practices. Visually, however, my work does not convey a reality that is entirely familiar to the culturally diverse population of Montréal. In this sense, my virtual tile functions more like an

open-ended statement that is reflective of my ongoing transformation. This transformation entails finding third spaces to weave in the strands of hybridity, gender, and craft. Being a hybrid research methodology in its own right, a/r/tography becomes this third space. My transformation also entails learning to identify my aesthetic influences within both Mexican mestizaje and the Canadian academy and culture. Because one of my main goals has been to come to an accurate representation of my hybrid cultural identity, it was necessary for me to establish epistemological differences between Mexican mestizaje and contemporary global hybridity in this chapter.

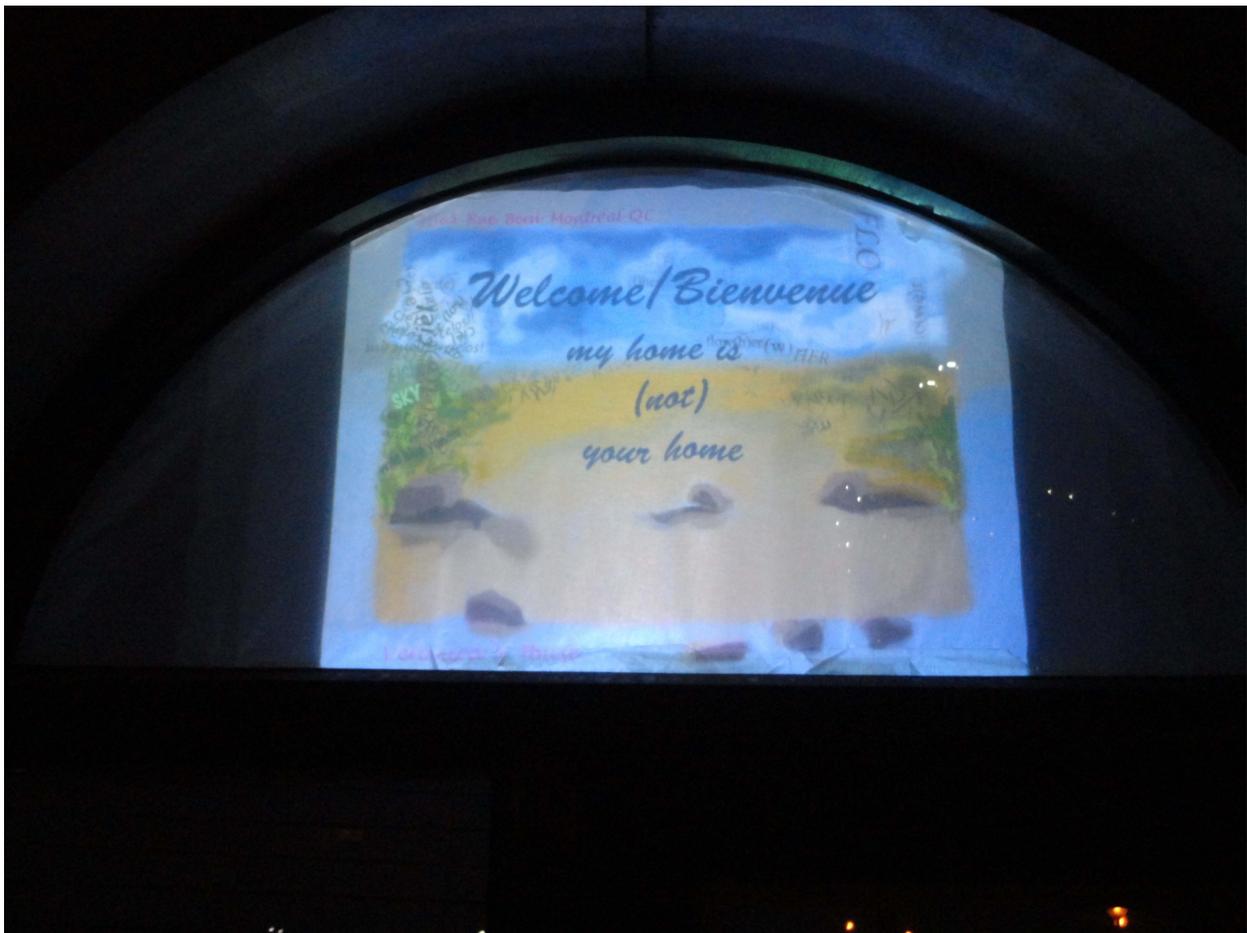
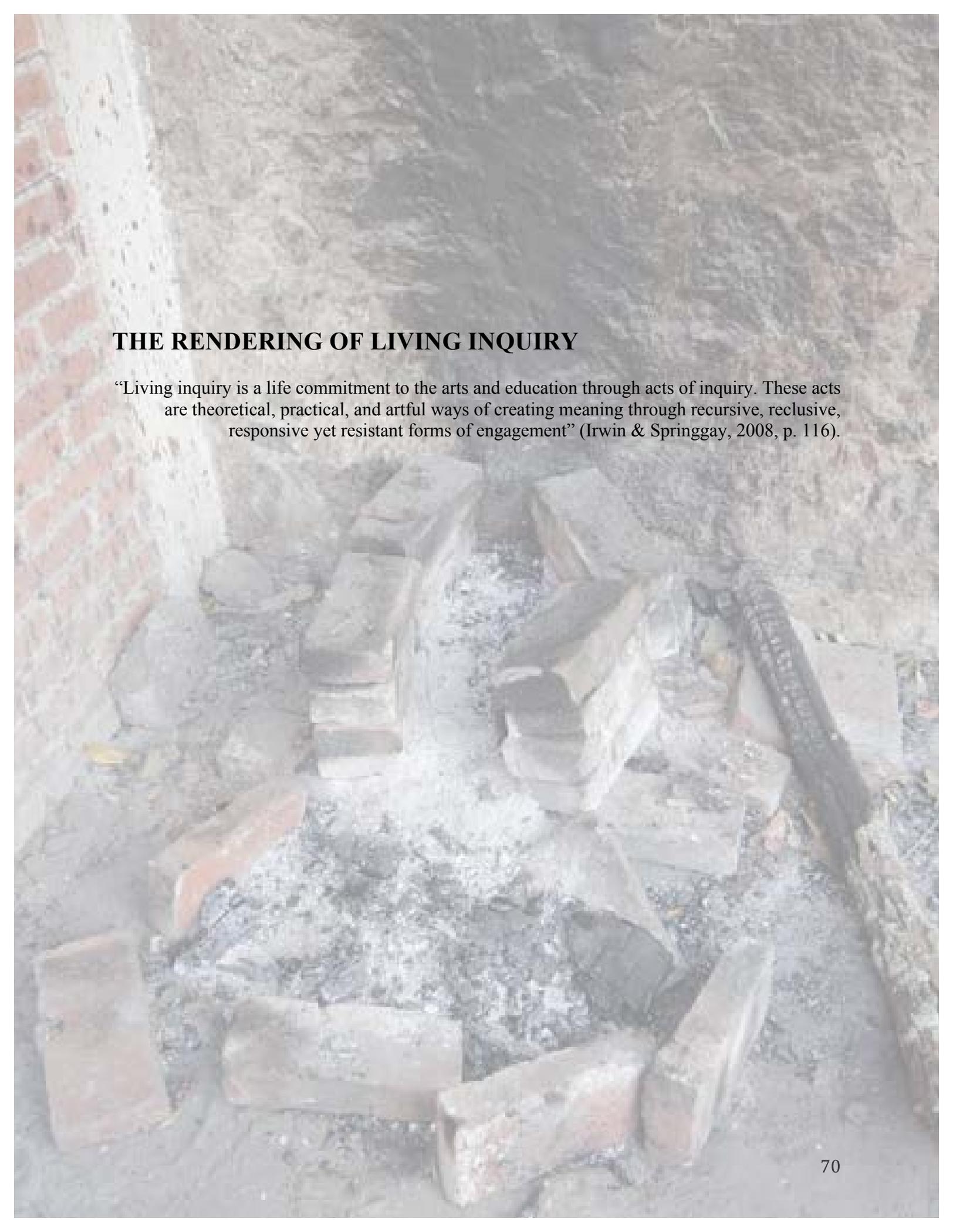


Figure 13. *Shifting Territories*. Street documentation # 4.



Figure 14. A Corner in my Dad's Garden (Heart) (2011). Photograph of the orchard in the San Miguel Tlaixpan's house published in the first issue of *Voke*. Copyright 2013 by Verónica Sahagún.

My living inquiry is an exploration of the interstices of the heart. (Dis)placement has metaphorically (and literally) disturbed my cardiac tissues. This exposure (of the heart) has brought new and old landscapes before me. My living inquiry is about going to the past in order to interpret my present. This practice of remembrance has progressively provided me with a new lens to interpret my locus. I am now capable of seeing the grand in the minimal (Figure 14). In this corner of my father's orchard, we usually create fires for family barbeques following the local traditional ways. This corner in the orchard represents my spiritual connection to the land and the culture of Central México. Fibre, flower, and soil keep the fire of my heart burning. Fibre, flower, and soil constitute the aesthetic compass that guides my way in this ongoing experience of (dis)placement. This aesthetic compass supports the process of mapping my personal geographies.



THE RENDERING OF LIVING INQUIRY

“Living inquiry is a life commitment to the arts and education through acts of inquiry. These acts are theoretical, practical, and artful ways of creating meaning through recursive, reclusive, responsive yet resistant forms of engagement” (Irwin & Springgay, 2008, p. 116).

Chapter 3

Viewing A/r/tography as a Methodology of Living Inquiry

This chapter focuses on my engagement with the rendering of living inquiry as the overarching concept in *Weaving Mestiza Geographies*. This is the space in which I introduce the research method (or the a/r/tographic tools) that allows me to transition from theory (or the literature review related to Mexican vernacular textiles presented in Chapter 2) to practice by actually reviewing my family history and my own life experiences through my writing and art making (Chapters 4 and 5). In the following lines, I provide a brief overview of the origins of a/r/tography. With this, I want to offer a more in-depth explanation of why a/r/tography is conceived as a living inquiry. My objective is to provide context to my own way of working with this rendering.

A/r/tography emerges from the joined efforts of a group of scholars in the Curriculum Studies and Pedagogy Department of the University of British Columbia that resulted in the creation of an educational research methodology combining action research and art (Irwin, Springgay, & de Cosson, 2008). Irwin et al. (2008) provide insight into the state of uncertainty that accompanied the process of articulating this new arts-based educational research framework. It is precisely this state of uneasiness that led them to envision a/r/tography as a “methodology of embodiment,” or “an enacted living inquiry” (Springgay et al., 2005, p. 899). By paying attention to the discomfort a/r/tographers understood that there was a direct connection between their worldviews, personal lives, and research topics (Irwin et al., 2008). Springgay et al. (2005) state “through attention to memory, identity, autobiography, reflection, meditation, storytelling, interpretation and/or representation, artists/teachers/researchers expose their living practices in evocative ways” (p. 903). The focus on the self unfolds by a/r/tographers combining field notes

related to on their own performance as educators with photo and video documentation of their art practices. The juxtaposition of image/text, produces a third space of inquiry where they were able to keep track of the experiences of discomfort, insights, and understanding stemming from their aesthetic and educational interests (Irwin & Springgay, 2008a). This combination of image/text also ignites reflexive processes that lead to deeper understandings and new topics for inquiry.

Seen from the perspective of the rendering, living inquiry supports a process of exegesis that favours the “evolution of research questions and understandings” (Irwin & Springgay, 2008a, p. 117), rather than the validation of hypotheses, an approach traditionally employed in scientific research. Irwin and Springgay (2008a) argue that the strength of the rendering of living inquiry is that it fosters the “continuous reflective and reflexive stance to engagement, analysis, and learning” (p. 117). Consequently, working with the rendering of living inquiry facilitates the tailoring of unique methods that may draw from a wide array of qualitative research tools as well as artistic mediums and processes (Irwin & Springgay, 2008a). Examples of such tools provided by Irwin and Springgay (2008a) include the visual and performing arts as well as qualitative (and educational) means for data collection (interviews, field notes, journaling, surveys, photo documentation, and more), and data analysis (ethnographic constant comparisons). These means of inquiry meet and blend in unpredictable ways within the individual a/r/tographer’s living inquiry.

Centring on my approach to the rendering of living inquiry, I developed a research design that allowed me to track the process in which the (self) knowledge throughout my review of Mexican history (and that of my family), my analysis of vernacular textiles, and my art practice (or aesthetic inquiry) may potentially be transformed into an educational practice. I part from the

idea that living inquiry is “an embodied encounter constituted through visual and *textual understandings and experiences* rather than mere visual and textual *representations*” (Springgay et al. 2005, p. 902). In other words, my living inquiry encompasses the concepts, motivations, and experiences that guided me to ask questions about Mexican cultural identity and hybridity as well as my personal responses to different stages of my research.

Insights Into My Living Inquiry

My living inquiry develops within the intersection between my life writing and my autobiographical art practice. My life writing practice shares similarities with genres such as postcolonial feminist life writing (Lionnet, 1989) and life writing as educational literary métissage (Haesebe-Ludt, Chambers, & Leggo, 2009). In turn, I develop an autobiographical art practice that incorporates handmade textile projects. My motivation is to acknowledge the potential of vernacular crafts to generate learning experiences. As my own learning experience with vernacular textiles in the studio progresses, I transition from a material perspective of the craft—that sees vernacular textiles as embodiments of history and tradition—to a performance of the craft (Burish, 2011). This performative aspect is reflected in a standard definition of *craft*: “to craft is to produce (something) with skill and care” (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online*). In my studio practice, engaging with the physicality of materials is equal to exploring raw emotions and ideas. As the artworks begin to take shape and my technique is refined, so are ideas and emotions. A similar process takes place in my writing. It is within the dialogical relation between text and (art)craft that I am able to shift my perspective and, therefore, to rupture conventional views of complementary opposite forces, such as (Spanish)Indigenous and (male)female, within myself. In the following sections, I address the ideas informing my (post)colonial life writing

(crafting) praxis. I then move on to provide a detailed description of methodological tools that allowed me to collect, track, and analyze my self-study data.

My life writing, a praxis of resistance. In this section, I focus on the influence of Canadian literary educational métissage in my a/r/tographic praxis. This emerging genre seeks “cross-cultural, egalitarian relations of knowing and being” (Chambers, Hasebe-Ludt, Donald, Hurren, Leggo, & Oberg, 2008, p. 142). Chambers et al. (2008) propose that a literary métissage is about metaphorically weaving vernacular languages and histories with dominant (or colonial) languages and literary traditions. In this way, as I share my autobiographical (and familial) narratives and my learning experiences stemming from my work with the Mexican vernacular, I weave my cultural difference into Canadian educational landscapes. Life writing as educational métissage has also become a powerful self-reflective tool for improving my teaching praxis. Zuss (1997) asserts that from an educational métissage perspective, a deeper understanding of the social landscapes that have shaped our identities, and even our experiences as educators, will in turn sensitize us to the experiences of our students. Writing and making (art)craft by reflecting on my personal history has become a means of self-healing, self-acceptance, and, therefore, self-growth. I now know that going through a (dis)locating experience myself as a Mexican learning in Canada, with the US in-between, has become an essential way for me to infuse my teaching activities with an attitude of empathy and openness.

Lionnet (1989) defines métissage as “the site of undecidability and indeterminacy, where solidarity becomes the fundamental principle of political action against hegemonic languages” (1989, p. 6). In other words, as those of us whose native language and culture differ from the dominant one learn to use the dominant language for self-inquiry, we engage in a praxis

of resistance. Mastery of English allows me to communicate the educational potential of craft in a way that honours my cultural legacy. Arriving to this point, however, has demanded of me an awareness of how meanings and realities can be easily erased in translation. For Spivak (1993), achieving an accurate written self-representation using our non-native language is the ultimate expression of political translation and scholarship. Throughout my stay in Canada, I have learned to interpret North American visual culture's signs of who is a Mexican person. Examples of these signs include caricature-like representations of Mexican peoples (for example, Los Tres Amigos or Speedy González) and stereotypical film characterizations of Mexican peoples as criminals or labourers (the 2011 *A Better Life* and the 2012 *Savages* are only a couple of recent examples). In Canada, I have often run into visions of México as being solely a tropical resort destination, a place for recreation for Canadian citizens. My interlocutors often comment on how disorganized and chaotic Mexican public spaces are, and the inefficiency of Mexican police. After five years of living in Montréal, my appreciation of Mexican public sites acquired a more critical dimension. Indeed, I now can see why the disorganization and neglect of Mexican public sites might stand out for Canadians. But I also understand that what bothers me about such conversations is that my interlocutors are not aware of the (post)colonial legacies and current sociological circumstances that have led to the deterioration of my country. My self-study allows me to address some of these issues by providing examples of my own life experience.

The role played by memory. Of the various existing postcolonial life writing genres, I focus on a form of writing that responds to the experience of displacement; Moore-Gilbert (2009) refers to it as the “located selves” (p. 51) category. This form of writing reflects on the influences that a place may have had in our early processes of identity construction. As a result,

claims Moore-Gilbert, authors often share childhood experiences in their home countries as a preamble to the shock or trauma experienced when inserting themselves (ourselves) in a new a cultural context. Memory plays a fundamental role in the production of such kinds of narratives. Creet and Kitzmann (2011) assert that memory is relational in the sense that it is associated to a place. For Creet and Kitzmann, memory is an in-between location that we can emotionally and virtually revisit as many times as we want. Indeed, it is within contexts of cultural displacement that revisiting memories becomes a (my) self-preservation mechanism. Creet explains that when emigrants try to insert themselves (ourselves) in an environment that responds to a different set of social codes and values, they (we) experiment a weakening or lessening of their (our) sense of identity. Memories of our lives in our native lands may help compensate that loss. Along these lines, Rosinka (2011) claims that for the emigrant there is a tight connection between identity (reconstruction), memory, and melancholy. I see coincidences of this author's view of melancholy in my own creative process. Rosinka claims that melancholy is a form of creative impulse or a motor that is ignited when the emigrant's "ego is impoverished" (p. 37). Revisiting memories of our past lives in familiar locations is a way to restore the image that we (I) may have of ourselves (myself). In my case, the Nahúa textiles that I have chosen to work with have no substance; they only exist in my memory. As I revisit them, through my life writing(crafting) praxis, I identify connections between these textiles, peoples, and places.

The gender factor. Lionnet (1989) and Moore-Gilbert (2009) elaborate on the idea that postcolonial life writing is a form of resistance or a way of making a political (or critical) statement. In my case, by engaging with a (post)colonial life writing praxis I have also developed a critical feminist perspective of Mexican society. Historical research provides a framework for

me to examine the tensions between Indigenous and Spanish legacies within my own family and personal history. Both sides of my family have a clear image of the identity of their European ancestors (Spanish and Italian); however, they have very little information on my two great-grandmothers of Indigenous descent. In other words, within my family, the identity of our Western male ancestors has carried more weight than that of our Indigenous female ancestors. As a result, honouring the memory of my Indigenous great-grandmothers is a way to produce an empowered vision of what it means to be a mestiza (Chapter 4).

I now want to refer to the fictional historical novel *Duerme / Sleeps*, by the feminist Mexican writer Carmen Boullosa (1994), as a way to describe my feeling of un-belonging (Rogoff, 2000) within Mexican and Canadian societies. When Claire, a French woman who travels disguised as a man in New Spain in the early colonial period, finds herself in a situation in which her true identity (her womanhood) may be discovered and her life is threatened, she is saved by an Indigenous woman. This woman saves Claire with healing/protection rituals and by making her wear Indigenous female garments. As suggested by Boullosa, in the colonial period, seeing a white woman in Indigenous garments automatically meant that she was a mestiza, and therefore, belonged to the exploited class. In turn, Indigenous peoples perceive Claire as a crazy white woman pretending to be a man and then a mestiza. Yet for Claire, adopting a mestiza identity is a way to save her life. I find that, in a way, my entry into Canadian academia was similar to Claire's entry into New Spain. My entry is meant to satisfy my thirst for further professional development and for knowledge. To achieve this, I have adopted a lifestyle that has prevented me from attending to the social conventions in which a woman my age (or younger) finds the right partner to create a stable family life. Living in displacement and, under an academic pressure to which I was not familiar as a working artist, have led me to temporarily

postpone this aspiration. I now interpret this experience as an exploration of the masculine side of my personality. Compensating for this temporary imbalance (or neglect my femininity) there is my work with an (art)craft medium that has historically been associated to women (see Parker, 1984/2010) as a fundamental part of this project of (re)inventing my professional (personal) identity. Most importantly, working with vernacular textiles as the basis of my studio praxis brings me to an empathic understanding of the situation of Mexican Indigenous women. It is this understanding that allows me to adopt an ethical relational commitment to them as I take on the role of a mestiza a/r/tographer (Chapter 6). Furthermore, this self-study produced a shift in my understanding of the politics of my location both within first Mexican society, and later on, in Canada.

Addressing Hybridity Through My Autobiographical Art(Craft) Practice

In my (post)colonial life writing(crafting) praxis I engage with the notion of hybridity from a local and a global perspective. Developing an inquiry into Mexican hybridity in Montréal (or within a global perspective) has meant adding a new layer of complexity to my identity construction. I am not only investigating what it means to be a Mexican mestiza, but I am also investigating how being a Mexican mestiza has affected my life experiences in Montréal. My art practice is the first space in which I see this process of hybridization happening. In this sense, autobiographical craft-contemporary art practice becomes the third space in which transnational (in this case Canadian) and local aesthetic influences (the Mexican Indigenous) are set into dialogue. Engagement with craft practice, and of weaving in particular, has helped me develop a deeper understanding of Indigenous worldviews and an ability to translate aspects of this worldview into my art practice. My reasoning has been that experiencing hand weaving myself

would provide me with firsthand knowledge of the experience that Indigenous artisans undergo when making their works. In a conversation with Jimena Mendoza, Abraham Cruzvillegas (2013) describes a similar process when visiting a local market in the state of Michoacán—from where his father is originally from—as part of the process of developing the exhibition project titled *Artesanías Recientes / Recent Craftmanships*:

My intention was just to observe, to go for a walk, without trying to disguise myself as an indigenous person or claiming that I am from Michoacán,⁷ because I am not. But in a way, I do have something that comes from there, and I am able to observe as a descendant of indigenous peoples. Trying to learn manual techniques was part of that stroll, but I could not replicate the iconography because it does not belong to me. It was distant. (see Cruzvillegas & Mendoza, 2013, p. 120)

Rowley (1999) defends the idea that a number of postcolonial contemporary artists use craft as a way to develop critiques on the contemporary global establishment and technological advances. In this context, the handmade serves to develop an inquiry about individual, local, and communal identities. Like Cruzvillegas, my manual endeavours do not aim towards the recreation of the traditional weaving techniques of either of my two chosen Nahúa textiles. I have consciously chosen to avoid doing this in order to set a respectful boundary between my work, and the original Nahúa traditions, which continue to be practised within the intimacy of their communities. Instead, I extend my art practice of weaving as a multimedia project, which addresses the issues, tensions, and contradictions emerging from the combination of the handmade with digital technologies (Jönsson, 2007). This mixing of mediums helps me to explore the hybrid condition of the Mexican mestizo(a) identity as well as my own hybridity as an artist/teacher/researcher living abroad. Through this strategy, I tap into the tensions between indigenous practices (or colonized), and the modern notion of progress coming from Western

⁷ Michoacán, located west of México City, is a state known for its diversity of Indigenous populations.

thought (colonizer), to move to a post-postmodern perspective, manifest in third-wave feminism that represented in my art practice of weaving with digital media to represent the transition into transnational ways of communicating, representing, and, as a result, of seeing.

Crafting My Living Inquiry Method

The a/r/tographic methodological design that I have defined incorporates three tools: memory work, personal narratives, and artistic mappings. My approach to memory work is grounded in visual inquiry methods that view photographs as valuable components of social research projects (Rose, 2012) and in the elaboration of autobiographical textual (and visual) narratives (Adams, 2000). Photographs prompt memories of people and places with which I associate my two chosen Nahúa textiles (the petate and Nahúa blouse). My memories acquire visibility, textual (and textural) substance, and, therefore, a critical dimension through the tools of personal narratives and artistic mapping. Throughout this living inquiry, the three research tools interact and complement each other in nonlinear ways. However, I have identified three stages that, in my perspective, characterize the general evolution of my living inquiry.

Living inquiry, stage one: Memory work and text. In this stage I focus on my family history and my personal experiences with my two chosen Nahúa textiles (the petate and Nahúa blouse). To achieve this, I build on Pryer's (2004) view of the memoir as an alternative for nomadic identities, with little material possessions, in order to engage in an identity construction process. This means that I use memorabilia such as photographs as sources of inspiration to create personal narratives. In this nomadic journey, family photographs in my luggage, and retrieved with the help of my parents, have become portals to memories of past experiences in

Central México. These photographs depict family members and places as well as my chosen Nahúa textiles. The narratives produced in response to each photograph are then woven together as my a/r/tographic (re)construction of my cultural identity develops. A first step in this process is the (re)invention of my family album. My new version of the family album also integrates stories that family members shared with me (Chapter 4) as well as narratives that focus solely on the life experiences that I associate to the petate and the Nahúa blouse (Chapter 5). The petate memory work inspires the creation of narratives of my childhood years, whereas the Nahúa-blouse memory work attests to my gendered experiences of becoming an adult woman.

Furthermore, my memory work with the Nahúa blouse also draws from third-wave feminist approaches to autobiographical writing. Budgeon (2011) asserts that the third-wave feminist *confessional narrative* has the purpose of evidencing that each woman is different, and that some women continue to undergo experiences of objectification and of exploitation that first and second-wave feminists previously stood up against. According to Budgeon, confessional writing brings those issues back to the discussion. In a manner similar to the memory work method produced by Frigga Haug (1986) and her community of learning in the 1980s, confessional writing brings therapeutic release while also contextualizing these personal experiences of abuse within a larger sociological environment (Grbich, 2013). My confessional narrative alludes to a memory of sexual trauma associated to the Nahúa blouse, and becomes an act of self-healing. I predict that this stage of my inquiry will have a positive impact in my future a/r/tographic educational research activities, specially when collaborating with women coming from Mexican minority groups (see my future directions sections in Chapter 6).

Living inquiry, stage two: Memory mappings. In this section, I attend to the non-linguistic dimension of my memory work: mapping. Harmon (2004) offers insights into the meaning of mapping from an artistic perspective. She suggests that map making is an instinct that emerges early in our lives. It is our way of tracing our path in the world. We document what we have seen and experienced so that others are able to see it as well. This means mapping is often associated with a personal narrative (Harmon, 2004; Springgay, 2007). Furthermore, from a visual arts perspective, a map can also be considered a visual narrative. In *Weaving Mestiza Geographies*, each map stands for a visual interpretation of memories with both the petate and the Nahúa blouse. In the case of the petate, each map produced in the series *Memory Circuits* stands for memories of my childhood in Central México as well as with individual members of my family. The piece titled *Childhood Weave* (Figure 15) is the first map created for my *Memory Circuits* series. This memory map embodies my emotional connection to my father, the petate, and to the rural areas of Central México that he introduced me to as a child. My initial impulse when creating this map was to produce a weave that had similar dimensions to the petate that I used to sit on as a child. I also wanted to reproduce the visual-textural memories of the mat itself. Surprisingly, upon finishing this first paper-woven map (mat), I found a metaphorical resemblance between the topographies of the Texcoco Sierra and the textures, folds and wrinkles in the map. I interpret this my map's textured surface (Figure 16) as the echoings of the visual memories of the mountains, rivers and valleys (Figure 17) that I first experienced in my father's company. In turn, the glow in *Childhood Weave*, connects me with the luminosity of the clouds populating the sky of Central México after an outburst of pouring rain. It is thanks to these kinds of remembrance moments that I become attuned to the broader definition of the term indigenous. I connect with the sensation of belonging or of being native to a place. I realize that being

mestiza is also about having that strong connection to Central México's natural landscape and to the local rural and Indigenous traditions.

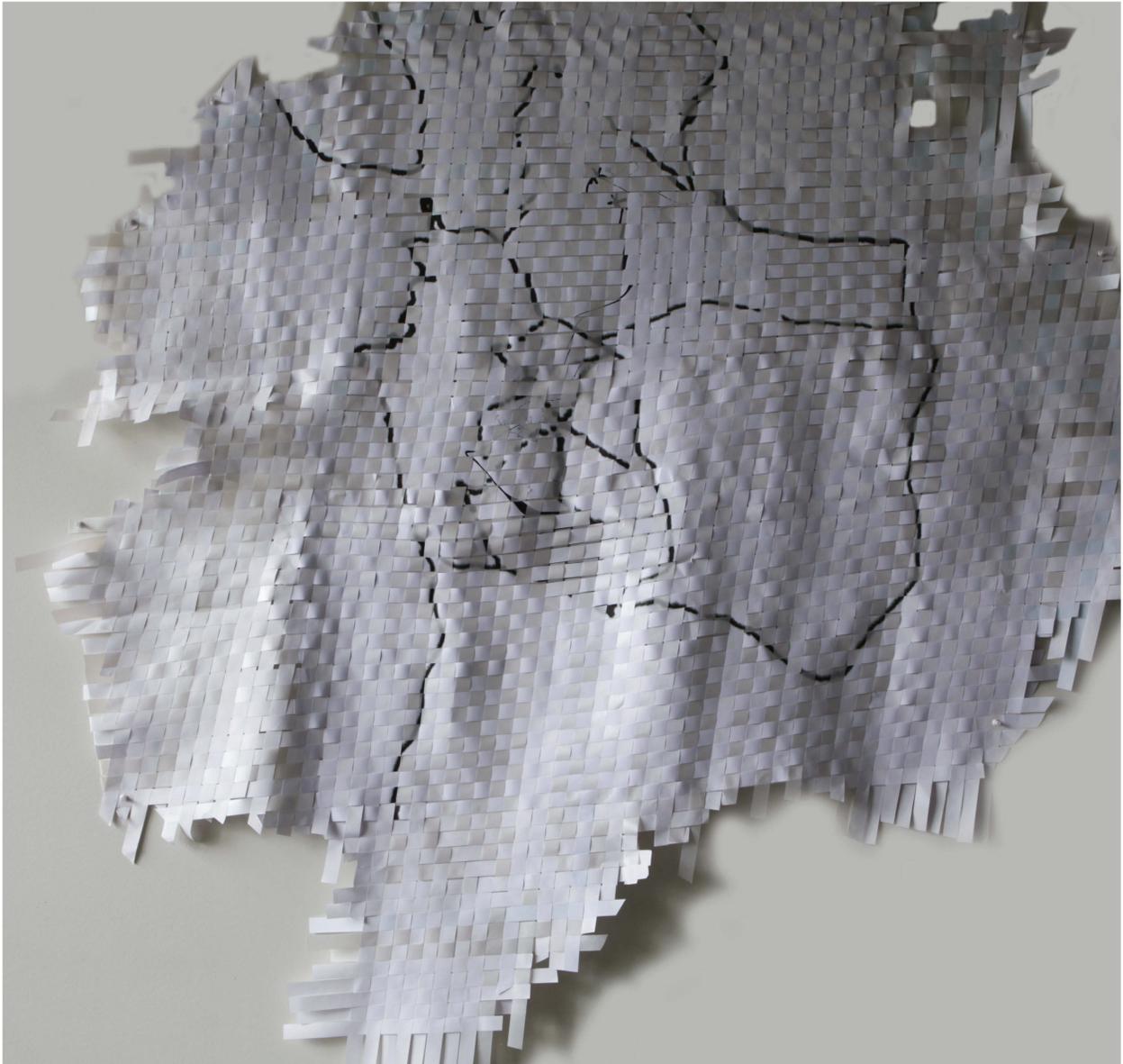


Figure 15. Childhood Weave (2012). A weave of bond and millard papers (dimensions variable between 62 and 70 in).

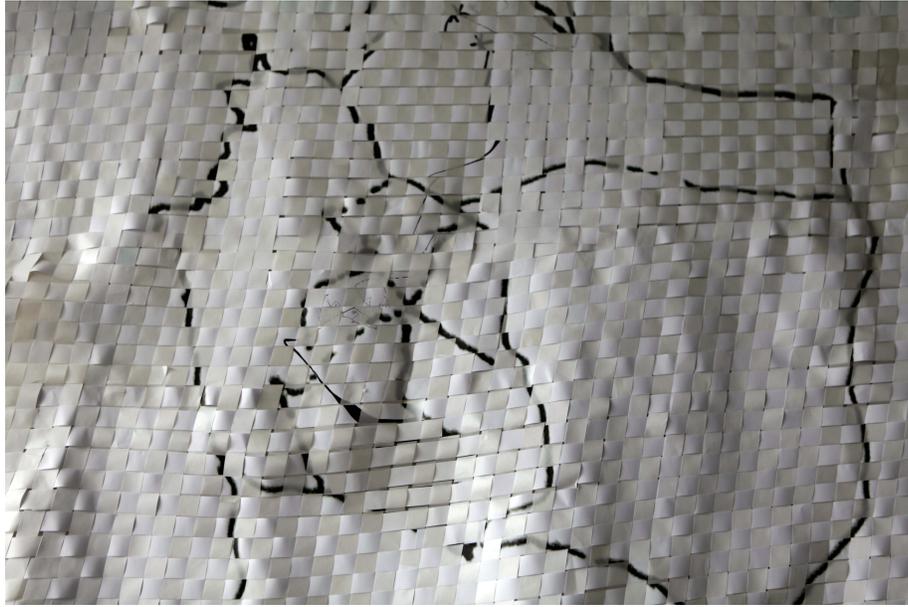


Figure 16. Childhood Weave (detail).



Figure 17. Childhood Topographies (2011). Photograph of the Texcoco Sierra retrieved from Verónica Sahagún's archives.

To complement my memory maps and to further externalize visual memories flashing back at me when creating them, I also make use of photographs. This allows me to produce what Daniels, De Lyser, Entrikin, and Richardson (2011) refer to as *geographical imagination*. These authors suggest that geography as a discipline begins to take shape by travelers trying to document their experiences in foreign lands. Historically, early forms of documentation would include maps, landscape drawing, or writing. At present, the visual vocabulary through which geographical imagination may be expressed includes “photographs, paintings, films, novels, poems, performances, monument buildings, traveler’s tales and geography texts” (Daniels et al., 2011, p. xxvi). Using photographs in the creation of my own geographical imaginary also helps me to transition between memories of Central México’s rural areas and its urban sites. For example, in Chapter 5, I bring forward a series of photographs made of the Coyoacán colonial plaza in México City. These images serve two purposes. The first is to (re)enact a particular memory of my maternal grandfather. The second is to provide an up-to-date reading of Coyoacán plaza in my analysis of Mexican mestizaje.

In this second aspect of my mapping practice, I liken my treatment of photographs and text to a *photo essay*. Rose (2012) provides an overview of how this practice may allow us to produce powerful statements about the culture of a particular location (for example, a public site). She asserts that a photo essay may have an analytical and an evocative affect on the reader. According to Rose, “to achieve either, or both, it is crucial to consider the relation between photographs and the text” (p. 322). In this case, both my photos of the colonial plaza and my narratives have a strong evocative component, as living inquiry, as I tried to reproduce the (visual) perspective that I might have had of the plaza as a child. At the same time, I also think that my narratives incorporate a critical dimension, as I directly address the question of what it

means to have been raised a woman within the sociological structures of Mexican colonial plazas. Yet the meaning of engaging in an a/r/tographic cartographic praxis serves to provoke the possibility of exploring the unconscious, and therefore, hidden thought patterns or structures (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). In this way, mapping also helps me to unveil hidden meanings and structures within Mexican culture. Mapping out childhood memories with family members that took place within Mexican colonial plazas leads me to reflect on the meaning of still using the term “colonial” in order to refer to these historical sites.

As a child, I was often exposed to the stories of how the Aztec edifices were destroyed upon the Spanish conquest. The Spaniards forced Indigenous peoples to use the remaining rocks to construct the Spanish equivalents on these sites as a way of establishing the Spanish hegemony. For instance, the Cathedral of Mexico City’s main plaza was built on top of the Aztec Main Temple. Another example of this would be that of the chapel of *La Purísima Concepción / The Immaculate Conception* (better known as La Conchita) located in Coyoacán’s colonial centre. This site has remained the property of the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH) (see <http://www.inah.gob.mx/>). In the last years, the INAH has invested in the restoration of this building’s foundations. This has led to new archaeological findings. Journalist Carlos Paul (2013) published an article stating that these findings included the remains of a pre-Hispanic construction dating back to 600-650 A.C. and a burial site belonging to the Toltecs, an Indigenous culture older than the Aztecs. Learning about these news made me go back to childhood memories of wondering what treasures could be hidden underneath the rock slabs of Mexican public gardens (colonial plazas) or, in this case, hidden within the closed doors of La Conchita’s chapel depicted in this background. As an adult, I am more concerned with what these plazas represent: the start of a history of oppression of Indigenous peoples. Upon the

establishment of the capital of the New Spain, the colonizer's endeavours focused on expanding the colony's territories. Ackerman (2009) asserts that in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, the empires of Portugal and Spain pioneered producing cartographical studies of the Americas. The purpose behind this was to "support public work projects and military operations" (Ackerman, 2009, p. 1). Furthermore, in times of the expansion of the European empires, mapping became a way of surveying (Nash, 2002), and, in this way, of gaining control of the recently conquered lands. This makes it impossible for me to ignore the historical correlation between colonial architecture and mapping in my art making endeavours. Furthermore, engagement, with fibre-based materials and processes also leads me to contrast the sensibilities embodied by colonial architecture and those embodied by Indigenous textile traditions. Laura Esquivel (2005) produces a feminist interpretation of the life of Malinche that depicts her as an Indigenous woman artisan and not just a traitor. This author offers an interpretation of what Malinche must have thought that embroidery represented: a good way of exercising patience. She states that, for Malinche, "patience was the science of silence, where rhythm and harmony flowed naturally in between each stitch" (p. 204).⁸ Esquivel continues by suggesting that the daily practice of this art brought a state of inner peace to Malinche. In contrast, I equate the heaviness of colonial architecture to the oppressive nature of hegemonic power. While for many Mexicans, colonial architecture may be part of Mexican cultural legacy, for me, it also acts as silencer of the other part of our cultural legacy. In Chapter 2, I elaborate on the idea that Indigenous women were the ones most affected by the implantation of colonial power. As a result, working with fibre-based materials (paper, threads, fabrics) and processes (weaving and stitching), for me represents the possibility rectifying Indigenous women's ways of being. For me, disrupting maps through fibre-based practices has revealed as a symbolic way of seeking out

⁸ Translated into English from the original text in Spanish by Verónica Sahagún.

alternative locations and to assume my mixed identity. Assuming, my identity as a mestiza, that is, as a descendant of two Indigenous women, equals to voluntarily give up a more advantaged positioning within contemporary Mexican society. By assuming my mixedness, and therefore, disrupting the conservative correlation between ethnicity and class, I intend to develop an ethical praxis that aims for a socially-conscious art, teaching, and research practice.

Living inquiry, stage three: Developing an aesthetic compass through touch. In *Weaving Mestiza Geographies*, fibre-based materials and processes offer me the possibility of producing a feminist critical perspective aligned with Rosika Parker's (1989/2010) vision of textile practices as inherently female traditions with the potential to disrupt a patriarchal order that has marginalized mestizas and Indigenous women. In this section, I focus on how engagement with fibre materials signifies an opportunity for developing "an aesthetic way of knowing" (Irwin, 2003b, p. 64) or an aesthetic compass that guides my way within this mestiza feminist a/r/tographic praxis. In order to explain the role played by the handmade, and particularly weaving, in this living inquiry, I draw on Springgay's (2004) vision of *body knowledge*. Springgay defines body knowledge as the kind of information that can be gathered through the senses, and particularly through the combination of sight and touch. She draws on Merleau-Ponty's views of the flesh as mediator between the self and the world and surrounding people, showing that touch allows us to collect, access, and/or produce knowledge. This is supported by Ackerman's (1995) description of how the skin is the largest sensory organ in the human body. It detects temperature as well as texture and it may very well substitute sight. In the absence of light, "touch teaches us that life has depth and contour" (Ackerman, 1995, p. 96). Touch is intrinsic to textile making. Mitchell (2012) elucidates on writing and textile making as

two different forms of cognitive skills. She claims that textile making represents another, perhaps more complex, form of intelligence emerging from our actual engagement with materials. It offers solutions for overcoming the materials' resistance. It is through touch that I have become familiar with the qualities of fibres and strands. As I explore such possibilities, I develop dexterity, which allows me to play with meanings and forms. The more skilful I become, the more confident I become in this living inquiry. Danto (2013) elaborates on how in Greek mythology and philosophy weaving is regarded as a desirable skill for politicians or statespersons in order for them to become effective leaders. He draws on the notion put forth in Plato's *Republic* that the skills that come with weaving endeavours are compared to the skills of governing a nation. This includes having an all-encompassing perspective of the woven structure (nation) so that she or he is able to predict the impact that her or his actions might have on the individual sections of the fabric. This capacity allows the leader to calculate his or her actions according to the expected results. In my case, the aesthetic attunement produced by weaving (Irwin, 2003b) also leads me to think of the craft from the perspective of the educator, as well as that of the researcher. Based on my own familiarity with materials, I can envision potential participatory art projects and the development of further research questions. In other words, craft making allows me to create new openings while also acting as a grounding element of my inquiry. This aspect of my inquiry will be further discussed in Chapter 6.

Living in the Interstice: Activating My Aesthetic Compass

As a way of concluding this chapter, I want to discuss the process of creating the miniature collage titled *Open Heart* (Figure 18). This creative process is a representative example of my overall living inquiry into my cultural identity and of hybridity. Part of the work

that informs this piece has already been published in my contribution to the first issue of *Voke* (see Sahagún, 2013). When making *Open Heart*, I discovered that collaging may also be a strategy for disrupting maps; I used collaging to metaphorically transform an urban site in Montréal that I was exposed to on a regular basis. The emerging fictional space helps me to more accurately communicate my emotional responses to the experience of studying and living in Montréal. To expand on this idea, I want to refer to Korwin-Kossakowski's (2013) insights into her own aesthetic journey. Korwin-Kossakowski produced a series of life drawings integrated into a mandala. For her, the mandala's circular shape metaphorically becomes a space of stability and of safety that she associates with the concept of home. In my case, vernacular textiles as cultural objects, my "hands-on" engagement with fibre-based materials (textiles and paper), and particularly the emergence of floral imagery, show me the way back to my mestiza legacies every time that I feel lost in my navigation of in-between geographies, cultures, and disciplines. In a way, the title itself, *Open Heart*, is reflective of this practice of trusting my aesthetic compass as I learn to live in the interstice between Mexican and Canadian geographies.

Open Heart is the product of two walking experiences in two very different locations. The first walk takes place within a historical site in a rural area of southeastern México City, and the second walk takes place in a historical site in Montréal, the Old Port. In the southeastern area of México City, I visited Xochimilco, a former port area in pre-Hispanic México. As I state in my *Voke* online project, *Xochimilco* is a Nahúa word that means "sowing land in blossom" (*Delegacion Xochimilco*). The Xochimilco channels are the last remains of the great lake of Texcoco, where the Aztecs built the City of Tenochtitlán in 1325. Xochimilco forms part of World Heritage List posted online by the UNESCO. In the list, Xochimilco is described as follows:

[Xochimilco] is the only remaining reminder of the lacustrine landscape of the Aztec capital, where the conquistadores destroyed the monuments and drained the canals. On the edge of the residual lake of Xochimilco (the southern arm of the great dried-up lake of Texcoco where the Aztecs had settled on a group of islets linked to solid ground by footbridges), and in the midst of a network of small canals, are still some chinampas, the floating gardens that the Spanish so admired. This half-natural, half-artificial landscape is now an “ecological reserve.” (UNESCO, *World Heritage List*)



Figure 18. *Open Heart*. Digital collage (2.5 x 3.5 in). Still image retrieved from the stop motion animation *Nativitas* published in the first issue of *Voke*. Copyright 2013 by Verónica Sahagún. Full animation available at <http://www.vokeart.org/?p=343&spoke=1>

My connection to this place goes back to my years as an art student at the Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas, UNAM (<http://www.fad.unam.mx/>), located just a few minutes from the Xochimilco channels. Fellow students and I would navigate the channels in search of natural landscapes that would inspire our drawing and painting practices. We would usually take one of the *trajineras* (wooden boats) from the Nativitas dock (Sahagún, 2013). Similarly, my stay in Montréal is framed by the experience of being on an island surrounded by a great river. In my collage, I juxtapose cut outs of photographs of flowers and cacti sold in the Nativitas traditional flower market (see Figures 19 and 20) with an image of a historical building in Montreal's Old Port. My visits to the Old Port substitute my Sunday walks in Central México's colonial plazas. As I walk, I surround myself with people and noises characteristic of family recreational outings. I feel at ease. This aspect of Québécois culture, as well as this historical landscape, offers me a familiar experience and a sense of belonging to Canadian collective life. I particularly enjoy walking near the water and the green areas, for they connect me with the pleasurable sensation of being in touch with nature even when inhabiting an urban location.



Figure 19. Flowers stand in the Nativitas flower market (2011). Photograph retrieved from Verónica Sahagún's archives.

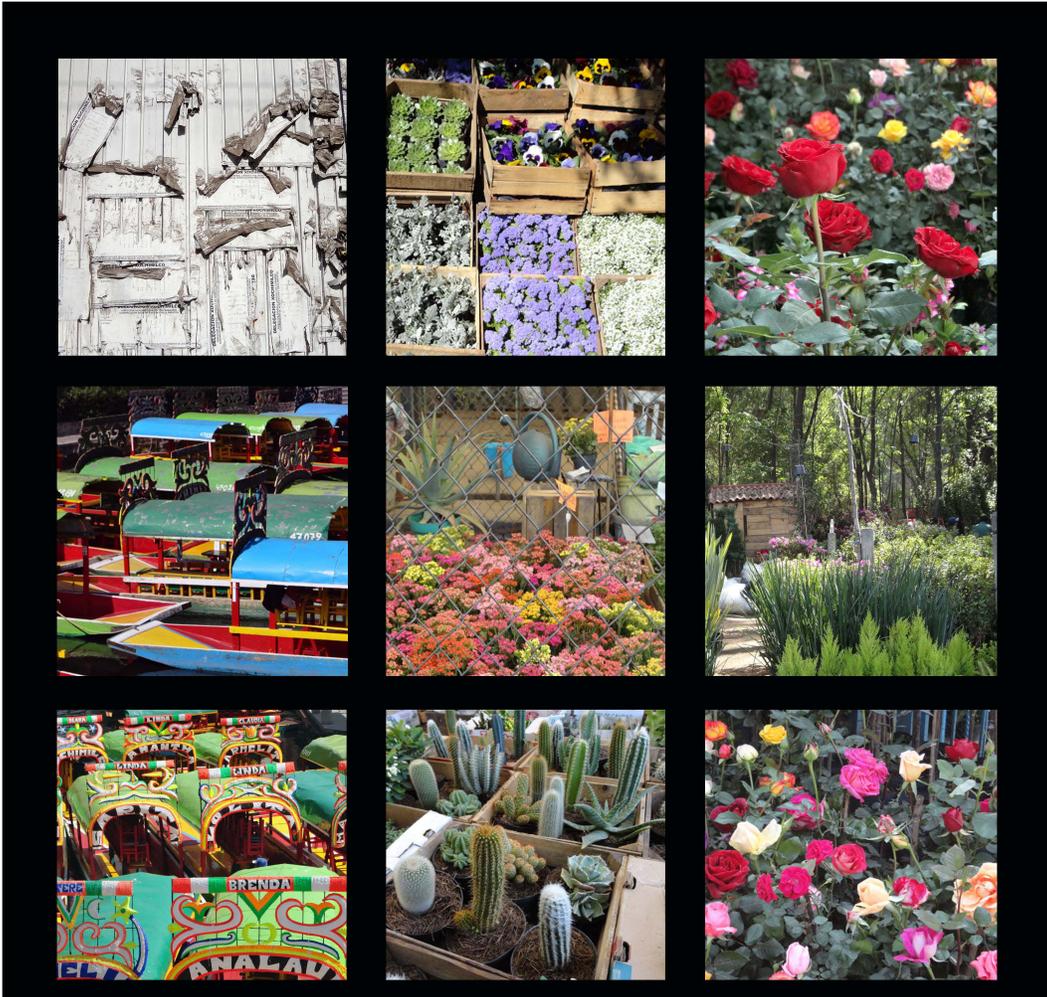


Figure 20. Nativitas port and flower market (2011). Thumbnails retrieved from Verónica Sahagún's archives.

Open Heart represents a journey in which holding on to my culture has allowed me to arrive to a feeling of belonging, or of being at home in Montréal, even though at some point I have felt lost. This creative experience resonates with Vaughan's (2009) educational applications of collage making. This author states:

I proposed that "home making" might be a learnable skill that can be adapted to an individual's circumstances and needs, that could make a difference to those who for a host of reasons do not feel at home in the world. (p. 4)

In other words, I now understand that home exists within myself. This miniature collage provides a portraiture of my current internal geographies. Within these internal landscapes, Xochimilco and Montréal's Old Port have become one. The flowers and cacti sprouting out of my collage's dark background are metaphors for my regular transits as processes of cross-pollination taking place within my learning community in Montréal. As I manually insert the flowers into this miniature living inquiry composite, I get a glimpse of what my future a/r/tographic praxis could be like. I become aware of my potential as a transformative agent in any learning environment that I may form in the future. Yet the content and orientation of my educational activities will be largely shaped by the (post)colonial life writing(crafting) experiences described in the next two chapters. As I see it, these two chapters represent the core of my inquiry into Mexican culture and history, which I analyze through my autobiographical writing and art making. Please join me on this journey into memories of my past life in Central México.



Figure 21. Superficie / Surface (detail # 2).

Deleuze (2006) states that the fold is an activity, rather than just a visual shape. As such, the movements of the fold reverberate both in the material and the spiritual worlds (Deleuze, 2006).

The shifts of the fold signify a fluid communication between the tangible and the intangible, making the invisible become visible (Deleuze, 2006). To accurately interpret this (in)material relationship, claims Deleuze, one needs to learn to see beyond the surface. One needs to follow the flow of the fold. Equally, a/r/tographic (un)foldings signify movements or shifts in our consciousness. These movements allow us to see the essence (or spiritual dimension) of an a/r/tographic phenomena (or the fold itself). At this stage of my self-study, the echoings (family stories) of my own folds (Figure 21) lead me to my ancestors. Family stories reveal the invisible ends (roots) of the material folds. These invisible ends tell truths about my ethnicity and my cultural heritage.



THE RENDERING OF REVERBERATIONS

Reverberations within a/r/tography call attention to the movement, the quaking, shaking, measure and rhythm that shifts other meanings to the surface. These vibrations allow art making / researching / teaching to sink deeply, to penetrate, and to resonate with echoes of each other. (Springgay et al. 2005, p. 97)

Chapter 4

Embracing Reverberations of Vernacular Textile Traditions as Part of My (Mestiza) Family Legacy

In this chapter, I take up the rendering of reverberations in order to explore what it means to form part of Mexican mestizo(a) traditions of using and wearing vernacular textiles. Irwin and Springgay (2008a) suggest that reverberations stand for a change in our perspective as we achieve more depth in our subject of study. Or, put in their own words, reverberations denote “a dynamic movement, dramatic or subtle, that forces a/r/tographers to shift their understanding of a phenomena” (Irwin & Springgay, 2008a, p. 148). In this chapter, my memory work—which consisted of assembling an a/r/tographic inspired family album—triggers reverberations into my way of relating to Mexican mestizaje. In other words, I transition from viewing mestizaje as an abstract concept that characterizes the narrative of Mexican history to seeing how mestizaje has defined my family’s identity and, therefore, my life history. This is done by combining image (family photographs) and text (personal narratives) as part of my process of mapping out the most intimate landscape of my personal geographies: my own genealogy.

Adams (2000) claims that autobiographical works often have a fictional dimension to them. This happens because in the process of articulating our narratives we largely rely on our often-blurred memories. Adams suggests that photographs and other images, depending on how we use them, may either accentuate such blurriness or else help bridge the gap between what we know to be true and what we think might have happened. Adams provides the example of the memoir by Native American writer Scott Momaday titled *Names*. In this work, Momaday mixes photographs and drawings of family members as a way to create a family tree that “autentif[ies] Momaday’s native heritage” (Adams, 2000, p. 85). Like Momaday, creating my family album serves my need to bring authenticity to my inquiry on my family’s mixed identity. The difference

between Momaday's work and mine is that there are a larger number of images that provide proof of my Spanish (or Western) roots rather than images that may verify my Indigenous ancestry (with exception of two images). It is precisely this absence that helps me analyze my family's mestizaje. Reverberations emerge, as I identify slight shifts in my family's way of relating to Indigenous cultures from one generation to the other. Photographs in which vernacular textiles are depicted hence serve as the lens that allows me to identify such shifts.

My Version of the Family Album

At this stage of my a/r/tographic inquiry, I emphasize writing as a creative activity. This is due to the images (or photographs) to which my narratives speak, being taken by other people. My narratives offer an encompassing understanding of the familial cultural and educational legacies that led me to become an artist, and later on a scholar. This exploration of my family's history has been largely conceptualized based on Langford's (2008) perspective of the family album. Langford defines the family album as a vernacular object because it is a visual/textual object/discourse usually put together by amateurs—women in many cases—rather than by professional artists. However, the family album only becomes alive, says Langford, when the family members and/or friends gather to view the album and share stories about the images held therein. In this sense, the memory work presented here is not necessarily about directly examining my artistic skills but rather about me taking the role of a daughter interested in her family history. As I examine that history, however, reverberations naturally show me the connections between the latter and on my creative practice. Furthermore, authors such as Hirsch (1997) and Kim (2005) contend that the makers of family albums somehow become the guardians of their family history, and therefore, have the power of editing it by adding or

omitting images as desired (Hirsch, 1997; Kim, 2005). In this way, I find it necessary to point out that my version of my family album is directed towards fulfilling the objective of examining my family's relation to mestizaje and to Indigenous cultures, and not necessarily represents my entire family's history.

The process of recreating my family album involved retrieving images from albums put together by my mother as well as one of my father's sisters during a trip I made to México in the winter of 2011. Back in Montréal, when refining my selection, I found the need to communicate with my parents in order to ask them for details of where and when photos prior to my birth or during my early childhood were taken. I also engaged in conversations with a paternal uncle, and a maternal aunt in order to inquire about how my grandparents and great-grandparents (whose images were not present in either family album that I reviewed) met each other. Since both my uncle and aunt are older than my parents, they were indeed able to provide information about my family with which my parents were not so familiar. As I see it, this is the moment in which the oral component of the family album brought forward by Langford (2008) emerged in my inquiry. These informal exchanges took place via email or through Skype conferences, and helped me to articulate the personal narratives that complemented my final photographic selection. This selection comprises three different kinds of photographs: (a) group photographs, (b) renderings of four generations of women, three of them wearing Indigenous garments, and (c) photographs of my family and childhood life depicting the petate and the Nahúa blouse. The combination of the three helped me emphasize ethnicity, class, and cultural contrasts amongst family members, as well as differences between my maternal and paternal family branches.

Rupturing Conventional Views on Mestizaje Through My Family Album

I work with the idea of the family album being a cultural object, and therefore, a valuable resource for historical research brought forward by Kim (2005). She states: “a perusal of this visual medium creates, delivers and reveals a socio-cultural fantasy since the vantage point of the present from which the past is reconstructed lays out both private and public imperatives” (p. 21). When reviewing my mother’s and my aunt’s family albums, reflections about particular historical periods framing the different generations emerged. As a result, my own version of the family album is meant to make such differences evident, and through this, to rupture the conventional conception of Mexican (white) mestizaje brought forward by the Mexican state. This is achieved by weaving in an oral history practice (La Porte, 2000; Ritchie, 2011) consisting of documenting the stories told by the elders of my family and complementing them with my own analysis of the images reviewed.

As I see it, within the past hundred years, the Mexican state has effectively indoctrinated Mexican citizens in the belief that mestizaje is a fundamental trait of Mexican culture and that this vision has provided a democratic social structure. This has been achieved in the history classes taught to Mexican children and youth during their first nine years of schooling. I recall having been exposed to these ideas as a schoolgirl. A review of contemporary primary and secondary curriculums shows that Mexican history courses and their official books have not undergone significant changes. At present, Mexican history is introduced in the fourth grade. The official textbook contains a section titled “Mestizaje e intercambio cultural / Métissage and cultural exchange,” which describes the process through which the Indigenous and Spanish populations mixed during the colonial period (Reyes Tosqui, Carpio Pérez, Osornio Manzano, Alatorre Reyes, & Yanes Arenas, 2014). This idea is further enhanced during the second year of

secondary school (Grade 8). In their presentation of this history textbook, the editors Alcubierre Moya, Rojas Rebolledo, Rosas, and Zuirán de la Fuente (2013) describe the book's contents as follows:

The History of México course is an overview of the Mexican past to these days. The first topics of study comprise the pre-Hispanic world and its cultural richness. Then come the processes of conquest and colonization caused the fusion of pre-Hispanic and Spanish traditions, as well as those coming from Asia and Africa. This *métissage* gave birth to a unique and unrepeatable identity: that of the *novohispano* [the new Hispanic].⁹ (p. 3)

The problem I see with this way of enforcing Mexican national and cultural identity is that Mexican *mestizaje* has been sustained by using Indigenous traditions as artistic and aesthetic referent while preserving Spanish (or Western) values, language, and educational practices as the means for achieving social and financial success. This, for me, is a coveted way of keeping the majority of Mexican Indigenous peoples on the periphery of Mexican society. Schmelkes (2013) provides statistics on the general living conditions and access to education of contemporary Mexican Indigenous populations. According to this author, 89.7% of Indigenous peoples live in extreme poverty; two-thirds of 6 to 14 year olds who do not attend public school are Indigenous. Within Indigenous populations, there is also a disparity amongst those children under the age of 15 who have for some reason interrupted their primary education. Within this group, children whose first language is Spanish have an advantage over children whose first language is an Indigenous language. This, according to Schmelkes, means that 28% of children under 15 who speak an Indigenous language have not been able to complete primary school; in contrast, only 6% of the Spanish-speaking Indigenous children have had that same problem. Finally, it is necessary to mention that, historically, within the numerous Indigenous communities that preserve traditional patriarchal ways, girls (and women) access to the Mexican educational

⁹ Translation to English from the original text in Spanish made by Verónica Sahagún.

system and, as a result, the job market available to Indigenous populations is even more restricted (Ulloa Ziáurriz, 2002). Awareness of these ethnic and gender-based social inequalities prompts me to develop a family album that ruptures the Mexican state's hegemonic version of *mestizaje*.

My version of the family album incorporates a visual/textual narrative that honours the memory of my Indigenous great-grandmothers. For this my father helped me to retrieve images in which his grandmother Julia González—a woman of Indigenous descent—is depicted wearing a *rebozo*, or a traditional Mexican shawl (Figure 22). Talking to my father about Mamá Julia helped me understand how Indigenous rural cultures shaped my father's identity, and, to a certain degree, that of my own. Consequently, Mamá Julia's photos also act as an entry point into reverberations in the ways in which the four generations of women (including myself) within my family have related to traditional Indigenous garments. A means for me to complement these narratives involved making a historiographical review on the vernacular textiles depicted in my photographs. This includes traditional garments worn or produced by my female ancestors as well as the Nahúa textiles (the petate and the Nahúa blouse) that I chose to work with as the basis for my art making (Chapter 5). Doing this produces a shift in my understanding of Mexican vernacular textile traditions in general. Within Mexican society, and certainly within my family, the habit of wearing Indigenous garments is more prevalent amongst women than men. Research by Zavala Alonso (2014) suggests that this habit goes back to the start of the colony (1521) when a variety of Indigenous pre-Hispanic garments were prohibited. Most of these prohibited garments belonged to men, and included the attire of the warrior, the priest, and that of the noble man. This had to do with Indigenous men having more direct work-

related contact with Spanish colonizers. Indigenous men were required to wear cotton European style underpants and shirts, which were suitable for labour.



Figure 22. *Mamá Julia*. Photograph taken in a photo studio in the 1950s.

In contrast, Indigenous women were not forced to give up their *huipiles* (dresses) or skirts. According to Zavala Alonso, only the women coming from regions in which the weather was hot were required to cover their torso with European style blouses and to cover their heads (with rebozos or other kinds of cloth) inside the churches. Within this tradition, Indigenous women and mestizas are the ones who acted as guardians of Indigenous cultures. As I consciously took on this role through the creation of this dissertation, I progressively became aware of the existing correlation between the use of daily Indigenous garments and social class,

as well as the ways in which this may have affected the lives of Indigenous women and mestizas. In this way, when I look at the different ways in which the women of my family (included myself) have related to vernacular textile traditions, I am also reflecting on the intergenerational transformations of my family's political ideology. Briefly put, we have progressively transitioned from a conservative white-mestizaje location, in which appearances are very important, to becoming socially conscious mestizos(a)s.

Father's Family

Within our family stories, it is understood that the Sahagún family is originally from Spain, having arrived in México in the mid-nineteenth century. According to the stories, the Sahagún family was composed of several marriages, and together, they acquired land in Atotonilquillo, one of the many rural towns surrounding the Chapala Lake, which is located in the state of Jalisco. To protect their property, the Sahagún family built a wall with a large doorway, known as the "portón de los Sahagún," or "the Sahagún's doorway". It also said that in order to avoid losing their Spanish identity, they tended to foster marriages amongst cousins or people of Spanish ancestry (see Figure 23). At the same time, the Sahagún family successfully integrated itself into the local rural economy by growing corn on their land, raising cattle, and chickens. It was usual for them to sell dairy products and eggs in the town's plaza. Later on, the Sahagún's improved their status in agricultural business when my great-grandfather, Eudoxio Castellanos Sahagún was appointed manager of the corn mill of the Hacienda of Atequiza by the end of the nineteenth century. This is where he met Mamá Julia, who was approximately fourteen years old at the time.

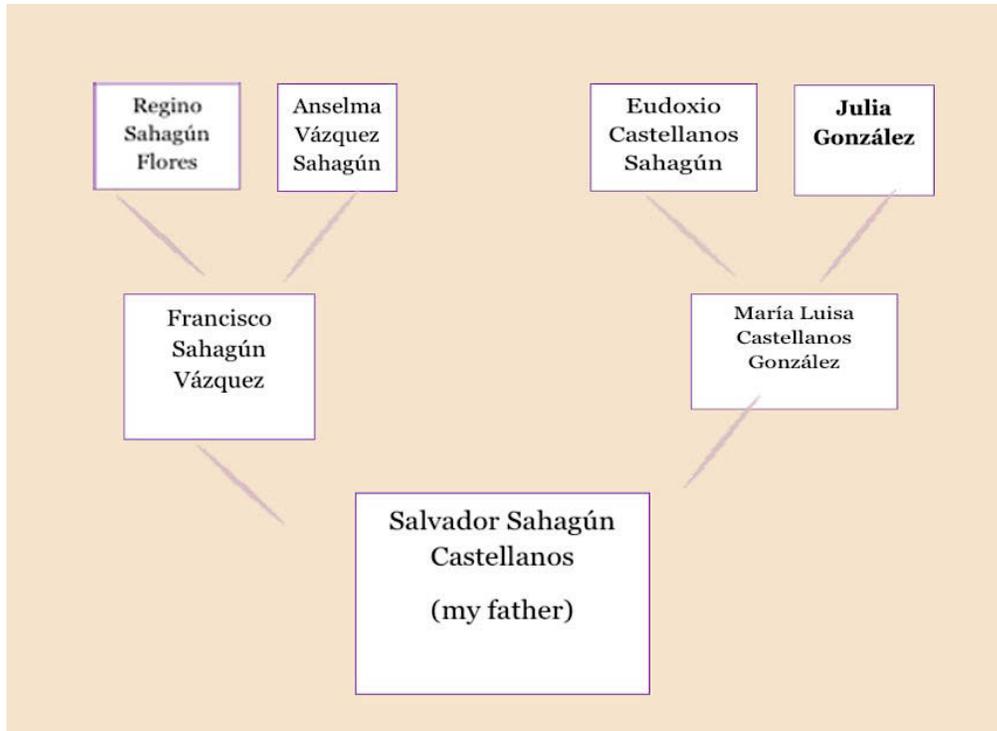
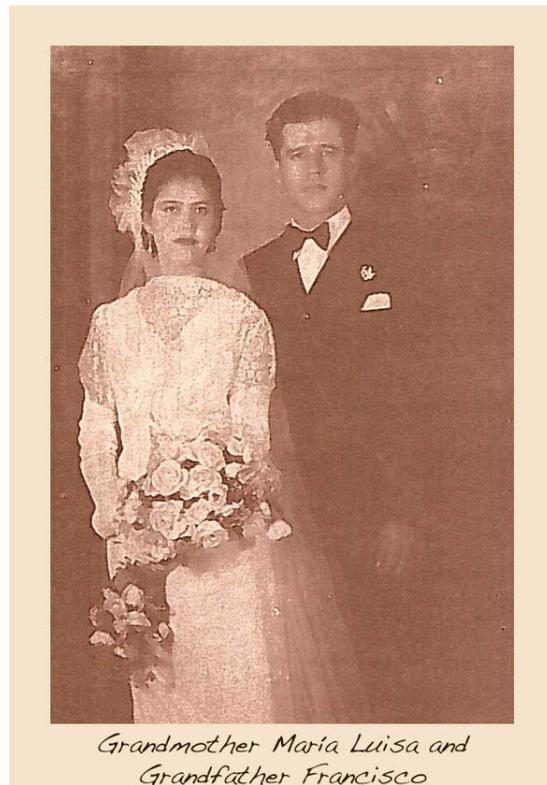


Figure 23. The Sahagún Castellanos Family Tree (simplified version).

My great-grand parents probably formed one of the first interracial marriages in the Sahagún family: my great-grandfather Eudoxio had red hair and a red beard, whereas my great-grandmother Julia had brown skin, dark eyes, and dark hair. Unfortunately, there is no way to verify what Indigenous group great-grandmother Julia could have originally come from, or where her family originated. Instead, I have had to rely on a secondary source, such as the *Atlas de los Pueblos Indígenas de México* posted on the official website of the Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas (CDI). This atlas states that there are two major Indigenous groups in the state of Jalisco: the Huicholes and the Nahúas. The Huicholes are located in the northern region, whereas the Nahúas are spread out through the Chapala Lake area (CDI, *Atlas de los Pueblos Indígenas de México*), where my great-grandmother resided. This leads me to believe that my great-grandmother Julia was most likely of Nahúa origin.

From my great-grandparents' interracial marriage, their mestiza daughter María Luisa (my grandmother) was born. Due to her fair skin and the social context in which she was born, Grandmother María Luisa had many more advantages than her mother when growing up. Mamá Julia never learned how to read and write. She was a woman dedicated to agricultural endeavours. Her marriage with Great-grandfather Eudoxio improved her position and that of her children. In turn, Grandmother María Luisa was not required to work the cornfields. Instead, she attended school and, later on, became a school teacher herself. Family stories also tell that Grandmother María Luisa was considered to be the most beautiful lady of Atotonilquillo, and therefore, she had multiple suitors. María Luisa chose to marry a member of the Sahagún family: a second cousin, Francisco Sahagún Vázquez. My grandparents' wedding took place in Atotonilquillo, Jalisco (Figure 24), where they resided until my father's birth. Soon after, they decided to move from Atonilquillo to a fishermen's town named Jamay also located in the Chapala Lake region. In Jamay, they opened up a small grocery store and raised their thirteen children. The Sahagún Castellanos family, however, made sure to pay regular visits to Mamá Julia, especially after the passing away of grandfather Eudoxio. Family members have mentioned that Mamá Julia did not speak an Indigenous language. This tells me that she already belonged to a generation removed from its original Indigenous roots. Regardless of this, Mamá Julia kept a household rooted in rural Indigenous traditions. My father told me that Mamá Julia's kitchen was furnished with traditional Indigenous cooking tools such as an *anafre* (a grill), a *comal* (a large clay platter), a *molcajete* (a volcanic stone mortar used in sauce making), and a *metate* (a flat volcanic stone destined for corn grinding).



Grandmother María Luisa and Grandfather Francisco
Figure 24. Grandmother María Luisa's and Grandfather Francisco's wedding photograph was taken in July 1940.

My father recalled having participated in a collective family activity and which involved the use of some of those kitchen utensils. He was in charge of cutting off the corn's grains and grinding them in the metate. His sisters would knead the corn flour with water. With the dough, they would create small balls so that the older women would give them the shape of a tortilla. The last step of the process was to bake them on a comal set up on the anafre. Alacalá, Rogoff, Coppens, and Dexter (2014) contend that children's participation in such kinds of family activities, helps maintain cultural practices within Mexican society. They also suggest that this form of intergenerational learning is most likely to develop within Indigenous/rural Mexican

contexts than in urban Mexican contexts. Indeed, my own exposure to the vernacular practices adopted by the Sahagún family took place during the trips made to Jalisco when visiting my grandparents. My father also created new traditions in our family location in Central México by ensuring that I was exposed to Texcoco's rural culture. The truth is, however, that I was not as exposed to Indigenous traditions as my father had been. But, reverberations of the mestizo(a) practices/legacies of the Sahagún family reach me through my father's story telling.

Mamá Julia's Rebozo

The juxtaposition of Mamá Julia's and of grandmother María Luisa's photographs (Figure 25) serves me to make the differences in life styles in-between the two become evident. Mamá Julia's photograph was taken in Atotonilquillo some time during the 1950s. In turn, Grandmother María Luisa's photo was taken between 1938 and 1939 in Guadalajara, the state's capital. Because of the blurred love note addressed to my grandfather in the photo's lower right corner, I assume that this was my grandmother's engagement gift to Grandfather Francisco. She probably planned the trip to Guadalajara to take this quality photograph in a professional photographic studio. But what stands out the most about this photograph for me is that Grandmother María Luisa is dressed entirely in a Westernized manner even when it was taken ten to fifteen years before Mamá Julia's photograph was taken. In the latter, Mamá Julia is probably dressed for attending mass as she is wearing a long sleeve dress and a dark rebozo on her head. The rebozo is a traditional Mexican shawl that emerged from and evolved during the colonization of México (1521–1821). Turok (2007) asserts that this garment represents the syncretism “of Oriental Influences (the Philippines sarong and the Hindu *xal*), with Spanish (the fringe on the Manila shawl) and the pre-Hispanic ones (the *mamatl*, consisting of two rectangular webs of cloth used to carry a child)” (p. 157).



Figure 25. Photographs of Mamá Julia (right) Grandmother María Luisa (left).

According to Turok throughout the eighteenth century, women from all castes (classes) in New Spain wore rebozos. Each caste, however, was represented by a particular combination of colours, patterns, materials, and even ways of wearing the rebozo (Turok, 2008). Essentially, the upper class women would wear delicate silk rebozos “embroidered with gold and silver” (Zavala Alonso, 2014), whereas Indigenous women’s rebozos were made of cotton fabrics and had simpler designs (Turok, 2008). Research done by authors like Turok (2008) and Castelló

Yturbide (2008) suggest that the correlation between class and the rebozo style continues to this today. The rebozo depicted in Mamá Julia's photograph on the left is similar to the "blue-and-black" (Castelló Yturbide, 2008, p. 76) cotton rebozos produced in Tulancingo, Hidalgo.

According to Castelló Yturbide, these rebozos are in high demand amongst women "who work in the countryside" (p. 76). However, the states of Jalisco and Michoacán (Jalisco's neighbour state) are also known for having a variety of rebozo production centres. Being originally from Jalisco, it is most likely that Mamá Julia acquired her rebozos within the local communities.

Perhaps the contrast between Mamá Julia's and Grandmother María Luisa's dressing style is related to their daily activities. Grandmother María Luisa being a teacher, and later on, sharing responsibility of the grocery store with Grandfather Francisco, did not have the need to wear a rebozo. When asked about my grandmother's dressing habits, my father confirmed to never have seen her wearing a rebozo. But, he did confirmed that Mamá Julia would wear her rebozo when going to the family cornfields to protect herself from the sun. At times, she would actually wrap it around her torso and use it to carry part of the harvest on her back.

My Mother's Family

On my mother's side, Grandmother Estela had a mixed ancestry. Originally from the state of Oaxaca, grandmother Estela was born outside of marriage to Rosa Ruíz and Alberto Quintanar Bonequi. Rosa was a young woman of Indigenous descent and Alberto came from the upper class families of Oaxaca City. Since their class difference prevented Grandmother Estela's parents from getting married, she was not raised by either of them. Instead, it was her paternal grandparents, Manuel Quintanar (of Spanish descent) and Josefina Bonequi (of Italian descent), who took charge of her. This was agreed upon when the parents of Rosa Ruíz came to speak to

the latter about their daughter's unexpected pregnancy. The Quintanar Bonequi family refused to support a marriage between Alberto and Rosa, but offered to adopt the baby. For them, however, the adoption would only be feasible if the baby was born white. On the one hand, they wanted to make sure that grandmother Estela was indeed their grandchild. On the other, given that Manuel and Josefina were both white, they knew that having a brown skin baby in the family could result in the slandering of Josefina's reputation within their social circle.

My mother never met Rosa Ruíz, but one of her older sisters did. She described Rosa Ruíz as a tall woman of brown skin. Based on the social history of the region, it is possible that Great-grandmother Rosa and her family were *Zapotec-mestizos* originating from the Tehuantepec Isthmus (Reina Ayoma, 2004). Reina Ayoma (2004) states that in Oaxaca the Zapotecs were the Indigenous group that underwent the most intense biological mixing during the second half of the nineteenth century. At that time, numerous English, French, and American businessmen were invested in the construction of a railway that would cross the Isthmus. Various scholars, amongst them Reina Ayoma (2004) and Hesterberg (2000), claim that Tehuantepec women had (and continue to have) a "proud and gallant bearing" (Reina Ayoma, 2004, p. 50), which made them very attractive to European investors. These entrepreneurs also brought in Chinese, Japanese, and African workers. Reina Ayoma asserts that the outcome of the Zapotec's mixing with such diverse ethnic groups gave birth to Zapotec children with equally diverse physical appearances; they stood out for having brown skin and light-coloured or Asian-like eyes, with blond or curly hair. Nevertheless, the Tehuantepec region is known to have preserved its original Indigenous traditions. Indeed, it was the foreigners who have been expected to adopt the Tehuantepec ways (Hesterberg, 2000).

As a child, Grandmother Estela was not directly exposed to the local culture of the Tehuantepec Isthmus. Instead, she was raised in Oaxaca City and enrolled in one of the local primary schools. At that time, children were taught Math, Western History, and Geography as well as Spanish and Latin. Coincidentally one of her aunts from the Italian side of the family was a teacher in this school. This led to Grandmother Estela developing a close relationship with her. Upon reaching puberty, Grandmother Estela went on to receive private instruction from this aunt. This private instruction was meant to introduce her to social etiquette so that she could in the future become a “respectable” wife. This preparation did not last too long due to Grandmother Estela loosing her adoptive parents (her grandparents) between the ages of sixteen and eighteen. This was a transitional period for my grandmother. After the death of Manuel Quintanar, Grandmother Estela moved to México City along with two of Manuel’s sisters and Josefina Bonequi (Manuel’s widow) with the objective of protecting themselves from the on-going revolts in which Revolutionary leaders would bereft the upper classes from their property. Josefina died in México City just barely two years after the death of Manuel. Subsequently the two paternal aunts took charge of Grandmother Estela. It was in México City that she met Grandfather Rafael.

Grandfather Rafael was the son of a Spanish baker (Francisco Sánchez) and a rebellious upper class woman of Spanish descent (María Uribe) in León, Guanajuato. According to family stories, when the baker courted María, her parents threatened to deny her inheritance if she married Francisco. The Uribe family did not approve of this union mainly because Francisco did not come from a “respectable lineage”; Francisco Sánchez travelled from Spain to the Americas as an illegal passenger in a commercial boat. He established himself in León and made a bakery his livelihood. María did not listen to her parents’ threats. They were married and had nine

children, all boys. The Sánchez Uribe family, however, went on to endure an array of hardships due to a combination of events. Firstly, many of their children faced health problems and died during the birth or within the first ten years of their lives. At some point, Great-grandmother María had to ask for help from her older sister, Concepción, who had inherited all the family's fortune. Concepción supported the health care and homeschooling of the remaining nephews by hiring private teachers. My family is not aware of all the scope of classes covered during my grandfather's home schooling. They are only certain that he received musical education and was also taught to speak English.

The second complication faced by the family was that the troops of Revolutionary leader Venustiano Carranza as well as other unidentified armed groups occupied the City of León possibly in 1916, when Grandfather Rafael was about sixteen years old. The latter armed groups usually perpetrated assaults on the upper classes' properties while identifying themselves as Carranzistas. This caused the majority of the rich families of León as well as people of Spanish descent to flee. Great-grandfather Francisco was the first member of the family to seek out hiding, leaving his family behind. María and Concepción took care of the remaining three children but they had to separate at some point. María stayed in León with Grandfather Rafael and Granduncle Angel. Concepción took the youngest child, Daniel, and moved to México City. After that, it did not take long for Grandfather Rafael to join the Carranzistas. He fought in the Revolution until he was shot in the leg somewhere near Pachuca City, in the state of Hidalgo. Family stories tell that, upon his recovery, he learned that his mother had died of typhus, at which point he decided to go back to León to take charge of his younger brother, Angel. Grandfather Rafael brought his sibling to Pachuca, where he worked in a silver mine, eventually moving to México City in search of their aunt and their baby brother.

Let me return to how my maternal grandparents met. Family legend has it that they met in a university social context because their aunts were coworkers in the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) (<http://www.filos.unam.mx/en/>). Great-grandaunt Concepción (Rafael's aunt) worked as a secretary to professor Antonio Caso, who became the dean of the university in 1920. In turn, Grandmother Estela's aunt, Aurora Quintanar, was secretary to José Vasoncelos, appointed the first Secretary of Education (1921–1924) when the Revolution ended. During the early years of his stay in México City, Grandfather Rafael found a job in the Consolidada Company, which specialized in metal casting and distribution, and thereby helped to support Great-grandaunt Concepción's household while also attending the Law program in the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras. As a law student, Grandfather Rafael paid frequent visits to the office where Great-grandaunt Concepción worked. Grandmother Estela would at times visit the same office. In the case of Grandmother Estela, her visits involved a sort of informal training offered by her aunt Aurora, who wanted Grandmother Estela to be able to work as a secretary in order to support herself in the future. It is not clear whether my grandparents met in that office or through a group of mutual friends, probably law students. Family stories say that in the first verbal exchange that they had, Grandfather Rafael teased Grandmother Estela about her eating too much: "I pity the man who marries you!" Grandmother Estela answered: "The good thing is that it shall not be you!" They got married in 1926 and raised their five daughters in a working class neighbourhood located in downtown México City. Their marriage lasted over sixty years (Figure 26). For a general layout of my mother's family tree, refer to Figure 27.



Grandmother Estela, Grandfather Rafael,
Figure 26. Grandmother Estela, Grandfather Rafael and Mother.
Photograph taken during Grandmother Estela and Grandfather Rafael's 25th
wedding anniversary (July 30, 1951).

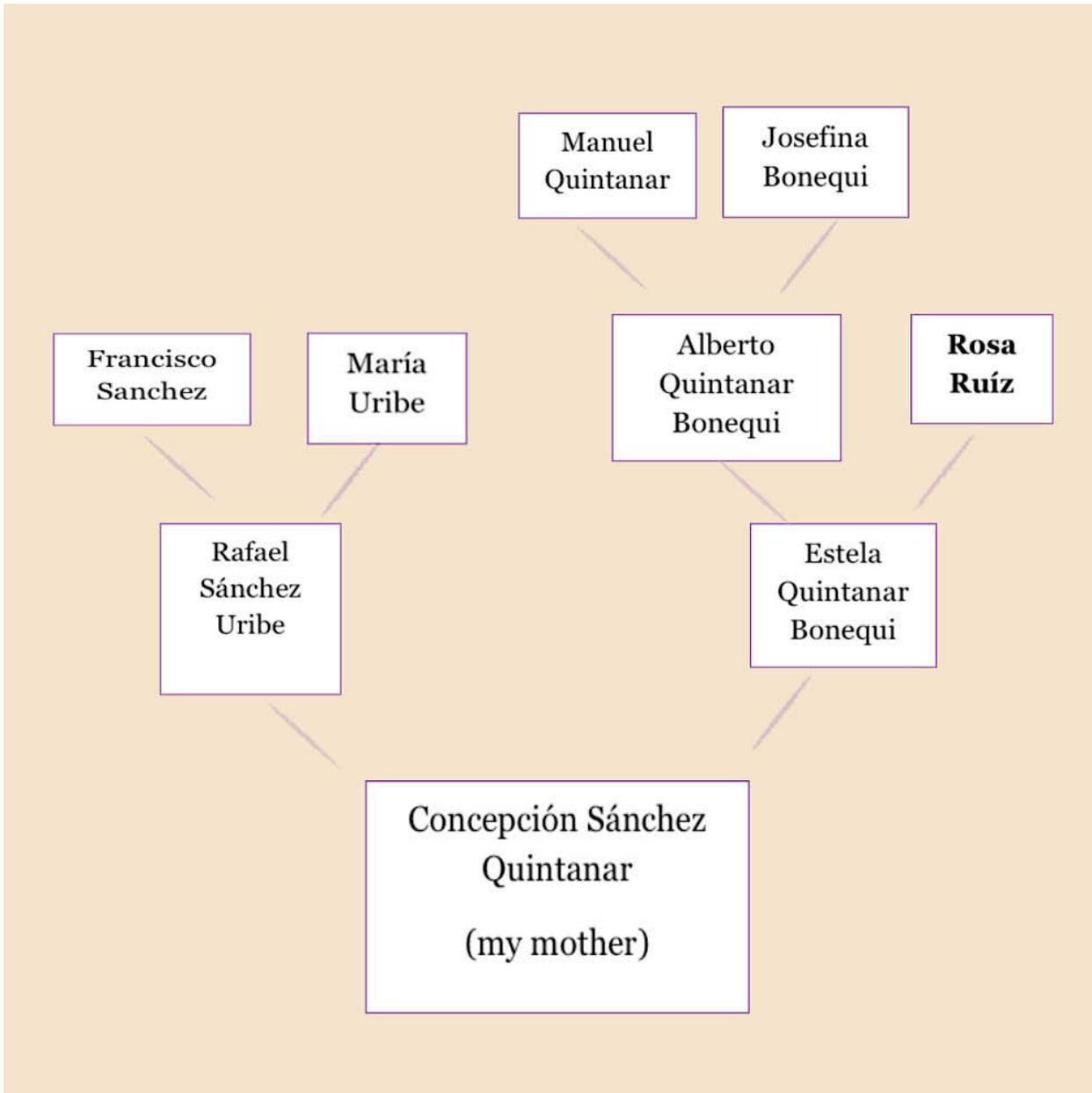


Figure 27. The Sánchez Quintanar Family Tree (simplified version).

The Life of Great-Grandmother Rosa as Told Through the Life of Grandmother Estela

Recovering my Indigenous roots partly unfolds through the female intergenerational passing along of family histories. Reverberations in my mestiza consciousness provide insights into the personalities of my female ancestors and into mestizaje's affect on their lives. Because Rosa Ruíz was not part of the Quintanar Bonequi family, my reconstruction of her identity takes place through asking my aunt questions about Grandmother Estela's life history. Her story telling offered me glimpses of the kind of connection (however distant) Grandmother Estela had with her mother. My aunt informed me that Grandmother Estela did know who her biological parents were and that she had had interactions with each of them and their corresponding families at different points of her life. Because Grandmother Estela was raised as the baby sister of her father, Alberto Quintanar Bonequi, she saw him get married. Still a child, Grandmother Estela closely interacted with the new couple living in the Quintanar Bonequi family house. Given that it was no secret that Grandmother Estela was the child of a woman of Indigenous descent, Alberto's wife often treated my grandmother with disdain and passed on this attitude to her children (Grandmother Estela's half-siblings). On her mother's side (or Rosa Ruíz's side), Grandmother Estela faced the resentment of Rosa Ruíz as well as her half-sisters. Rosa's behaviour could be interpreted as acting out over the Quintanar Bonequis's attitude of superiority towards her when she was pregnant with my grandmother. It is also believed that Grandmother Estela was envied by her half-sisters because of her manners, that of a high-class (and white) woman, and because she was married to a white man who was also a lawyer.

Because Grandmother Estela's family history was a topic often discreetly discussed by my mother and my aunts, I grew up with the need to know the entire history of how (and why) Great-grandmother Rosa gave up my grandmother. Now, I see that her story was not something

that could be easily explained to a child. As an adult, and a scholar, I have come up with my own analysis of grandmother Estela's life history. As I see it, grandmother Estela's story of orphanhood is emblematic of the Mexican orphanhood that Paz (1985) discusses in *Labyrinth of Solitude*. Paz elaborates on the meaning of the idiom "hijo(a) de la chingada." In Mexican slang, this phrase stands for "the son (or daughter) of the one who got screwed over," or as Paz claims, the phrase is used in reference to Indigenous women who were raped during the colony. Paz connects this idea to the relationship between mestizo(a)s and their Indigenous mothers through the figure of Malinche:

Doña Marina [Malinche] becomes a figure representing the Indian women who were fascinated, violated or seduced by the Spaniards. And as a small boy [or girl] will not forgive his [her] mother if she abandons him [her] to search for his father, the Mexican people have not forgiven La Malinche for her betrayal. (p. 86)

Even though Grandmother Estela could have felt rejected by my great-grandfather Alberto's family, her identity was shaped within the Quintanar Bonequi context. I assume that the scarce and negative contact she had with her mother throughout her life created some form of void in her emotional life. I never had the opportunity to discuss this with her. But I now understand that the erasure of Rosa Ruíz from my maternal family history is why my mother and her sisters mostly consider themselves white or being of European descent. My way of filling in the lack of direct connections with Mexican Indigenous cultures on my mother's side of the family has been to develop a historiographical analysis of the festivity garment the Tehuantepec Isthmus. This idea emerges when finding a photograph of my mother wearing this garment as part of her participation in a school festival (Figure 28). According to Hesterberg (2000), Tehuanas wear this huipil in two different ways and on two different occasions. In church, the huipil covers their head, shoulders, and torsos, giving them the appearance of effigies of the

Virgin Mary. Frida Kahlo's *Autorretrato como Tehuana / Self-portrait as Tehuana* (1943)

illustrates this particular use of the huipil (Pankl & Blake, 2012). During communal parties,



Figure 28. *Conchita as Tehuana / In Absence of Rosa Ruíz*. Photograph of my mother wearing a Tehuana outfit (right). A digital drawing as an evocation of Great-grandmother Rosa Ruíz is included on the left.

Tehuanas wear this garment to dance to the Tehuantepec traditional songs called *sones* (de la Cruz Pérez, 2011). To do this, Tehuanas, place the bottom part of the huipil on their heads in order to create a crown-like adornment, at which time the huipil frames their face and shoulders (Hesterberg, 2000). Hesterberg asserts that this is just one example of how Tehuanas have used their traditional garments in order to shape their bodies and create the astounding presence for which they are most well known.

In my fictional portrait, the huipil frames the absent Rosa Ruíz. In the absence of a face, the garment is all I have to create an image of my great-grandmother. This rendering of a garment without a wearer is evidence of the rupture of my maternal female lineage. The dress helps me to give shape and substance to this evasive identity. On the bright side, my mother's photograph represents a shift in the understanding of what being a mestiza between my grandmother's generation to that of my mother. Prior to the Mexican Revolution, and within a clearly white-oriented mestizaje, wearing a traditional garment on a daily basis would be equivalent to identifying oneself as Indigenous and, therefore, with the lower classes. With such a social viewpoint, Grandmother Estela would have been rejected if her skin had turned out to be brown. One of the first changes taking place within the post-Revolutionary Mexican society is that the Mexican educational system promoted school festivals in which children were supposed to perform traditional regional dances wearing their corresponding garments. The great majority of such dances are of mestizo(a) and Indigenous origin. According to my mother, Grandmother Estela had sewed the Tehuantepec garment that she is wearing in the previously discussed photograph with particular enthusiasm. Since the Tehuantepec culture was regarded as one of richest Indigenous traditions of Oaxaca, it is not surprising she would have felt a sense of pride that her daughter was wearing regional attire.

Focusing on My Nuclear Family

I use a photograph of my parents travelling in Panamá in 1974 as an entry point into a new wave of family reverberations (the history of my nuclear family). I was first drawn to this photograph (Figure 29) when going through my mother's family album for two reasons. First, in this photograph, my mother is wearing a Nahúa blouse. This kind of blouse was the first traditional garment that I myself acquired as a young adult. This triggered reverberations (or

reflections) of how my mother's influence has contributed to my predilection for traditional garments and the values that have guided my own a/r/tographic endeavours. Based on the

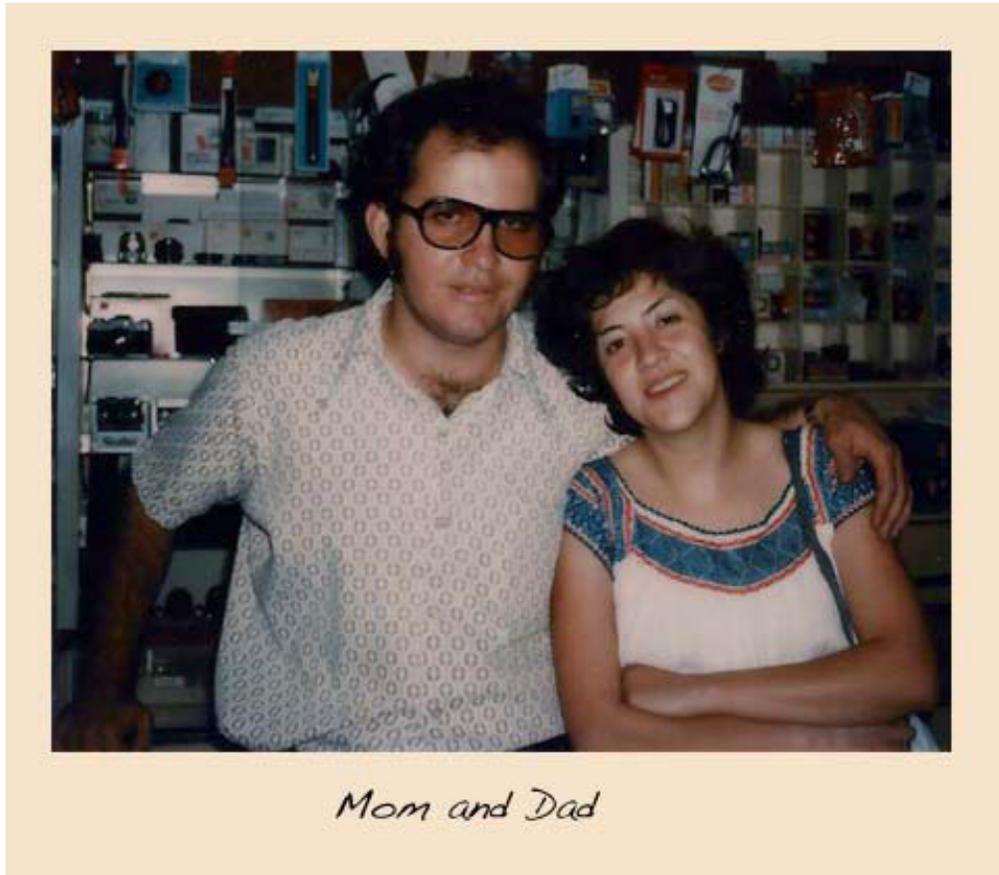


Figure 29. Mom (Concepción Sánchez Quintanar) and Dad (Salvador Sahagún Castellanos).

description of this garment provided by the Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas (CDI), I assume that both my blouse (which was embroidered with black threads) as well as the blouse that my mother is wearing in this photograph were made in accordance with the local traditions and probably would have been a garment the women selling such kinds of blouses would have worn herself. The CDI's description states that the daily attire of Nahúa

women in Cuetzalan “includes a blouse with a squared neckline and which is embroidered with red, blue, or black threads”¹⁰ (*CDI, Indumentaria Tradicional*).

The second reason for me to choose this photograph of my parents for my memory work is that it was taken at the start of my parents’ marriage, just two years before I was born. This led me to ask my parents about their personal histories as young adults. I was curious to see how two people with entirely different backgrounds—my mother being from the city, my father from the countryside—decided to join paths. My parents met in 1971 when they were both students at the Colegio de Postgraduados (CP), a research centre (<http://www.colpos.mx/>) that used to form part of the Universidad Autónoma de Chapingo (UACH) (<http://www.chapingo.mx/>). My father was doing a Master’s in Statistics; my mother a Master’s in Agricultural Outreach. However, what had brought each of my parents to UACH’s educational community was very different. My father was the fifth son of thirteen children. Despite his parents owning a small grocery shop in Jamay’s main square, their income was not sufficient to support such a large number of children, which led my father to consider leaving the family house at a young age. Enrolling in UACH’s secondary program turned out to be a good educational option for him since it had a free boarding school. In this system, which was reminiscent of a traditional Western delivery-based education, students who performed well would automatically be accepted into the university program. As a result, my father’s stay in UACH included secondary, undergraduate, and graduate studies. In contrast, my mother came from México City and an intellectual, middle-class environment. She had just finished her undergraduate studies in psychology at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) (<http://www.psicologia.unam.mx/>) and was an active member of a Catholic student organization that had been involved in the Mexican 1968 student movement. Paz (1985) argues that the 1968 student movement had a left wing,

¹⁰ Translated to English from the original text in Spanish by Verónica Sahagún.

nationalistic spirit. Students demanded that the Mexican government engaged in an open and democratic dialogue with the working classes instead of enforcing an authoritarian model that only favoured the upper classes (Paz, 1985). Regrettably, the student movement came to an abrupt end on the night of October 2nd of that year, just two weeks before the inauguration of the Olympic Games in México City: the Mexican army killed approximately three hundred students and imprisoned many others at the end of a public meeting held by the leaders of the student movement in the Plaza de las Tres Culturas in Tlatelolco, México City (Fournier & Martínez Herrera, 2009; Ruíz Serra, 2011). Grandfather Rafael had heard rumours about what was going to happen that night and prevented my mother from attending the Tlatelolco student meeting. Having experienced a civil war (the Mexican Revolution) during his early youth years caused Grandfather Rafael to adopt a radically protective attitude towards my mother. He bought her an airplane ticket and ordered her to stay with one of my aunt's family in La Paz, Baja California. My grandfather's analysis (or reverberations in his understanding) of the political atmosphere of that time, predicted that after the massacre, the surviving students were going to be under surveillance and detentions would follow. To this day, it is hard for my mother to talk about the events that ensued the Tlatelolco massacre. She has certainly communicated her frustration to me for being so far away from the people with whom she had collaborated during the activist period. Particularly, she was deeply saddened by the death of her mentor and spiritual guide, Father Mayagoitia who had died of myocardial arrest just a few days before October 2nd. It is my mother's firm belief that the stress of knowing that students that were under his guidance were in mortal danger was to blame. She has also mentioned that one of her close friends, who was one of the main leaders of the student movement, went missing after the Tlateloco massacre. My mother later on found out that her friend was incarcerated for a few days. When released, her

friend sought a hiding place outside of México City. Details of how this happened have not been shared with me.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, the Tlatelolco massacre had a strong echoing in my mother's future career choices. Determined to dedicate her professional life to serving the populations for which the student movement had acted as an advocate, she declined a scholarship to pursue graduate studies at the University of Michigan and opted instead to join the Agricultural Outreach Master's program in the Colegio de Posgraduados. Trevizo (2011) contends that many of the students who survived and/or were interested in the October 2nd massacre followed a similar path. They decided to focus their careers on the development of the Mexican rural world as a form of resistance to the government's oppression. My mother recently mentioned that at that time, many people involved in Rural Development would wear jeans combined with traditional Indigenous shirts or blouses, as well as handmade bags as a symbolic statement of resistance. She explained to me that this way of dressing responded to practical and ideological values. On the one hand, my parents and their colleagues wore traditional garments because they were resisting the current political regime, and at the same time, these clothes were practical for their fieldwork activities because these garments' original design and use are meant to endure agricultural endeavours. Wearing traditional garments also helped construct trust bonds with the local communities and was how rural professionals showed Indigenous populations respect and appreciation for the local traditions. In other words, adoption of vernacular cultures allowed my parents and their colleagues to familiarize themselves with the rural communities they were working with, and thus become more effective in their goals of serving them. For rural professionals of that time, wearing traditional garments also meant adopting vernacular traditions as part of their own cultural heritage. Barely fifty years after the end of the Mexican

Revolution—in which the rural mestizo(a) and Indigenous classes had sought an end to their exploitation—my parents' generation believed that reclaiming vernacular traditions was a personal/political gesture which supported the same goal. In short, they aspired to construct an authentically democratic mestizo(a) Mexican state through their own life style and professional practice. As I see it, one of the most significant steps taken by my parents to achieve this goal was the creation of a family life and a household incorporating Mexican vernacular (or rural) cultures and popular arts. This is how reverberations of appreciation and respect for the Indigenous/rural world amongst my brother and me.

Mother Wearing Traditional Garments: My Female Legacy

I now want to focus on my mother's habit of wearing Indigenous traditional garments and how she passed it on to me. My mother acquired the Nahúa blouse that she is wearing in the Panamá photograph during one of her visits to the Nahúa village of Cuetzalan, located in the Sierra of Puebla. She became familiar with Cuetzalan during her graduate studies and at the time, was taking an ethno-botany course that required her to do fieldwork in Cuetzalan. This location was chosen by her professor because, until this day, the majority of this village's population is of Indigenous origin and its community has managed to preserve the Nahúa traditional festivities, crafts, and language. My mother's assignment was to develop visual documentation of the produce sold in the local markets. It was in one of Cuetzalan's markets that my mother acquired the embroidered Nahúa blouse. After her graduate studies, and throughout my childhood, my mother kept the habit of visiting the local markets of the rural communities that we visited and acquiring traditional garments. I remember seeing her wear multiple embroidered blouses and dresses produced by Indigenous artisans coming from Central México, Michoacán, and Oaxaca.

Needless to say that she passed on this habit to me, and to a certain degree to my brother, by buying traditional garments for us to wear as children. For example, in the photograph depicting my father, my brother, and me (Figure 30), I was wearing an embroidered blouse probably produced by the Otomí artisans of the Sierra of Puebla. In turn, my sibling was wearing a pair of traditional *huaraches* (sandals) purchased in one of Jalisco's marketplaces. This photograph was taken during our return from Jamay, Jalisco, when we paid a visit to my grandparents.

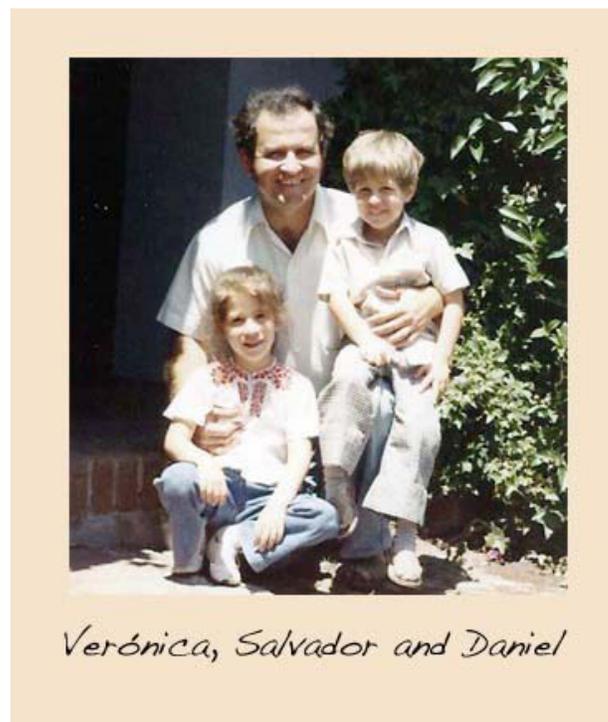


Figure 30. Verónica, Salvador, and Daniel.
Photograph taken during our stay in a hotel in Irapuato, Guanajuato in 1982.

The Last Intergenerational Shift

Based on my own lived experiences, I believe it is my mother's generation that most radically shifted (or transformed) attitudes towards mestizaje. I want to emphasize this

transformation by contrasting a photograph of my mother wearing another traditional garment for another school festival with a photograph in which I am wearing a hand-embroidered dress from the state of Michoacán (Figure 31). In her photograph, my mother is wearing a China Poblana garment, which according to Vázquez Mantecón (2000) is a mestiza garment that came into style in the mid-nineteenth century. The colours are a clear reference to the Mexican flag; the garment consists of a silk skirt (usually red), an embroidered blouse (usually white), and a rebozo (usually green). I interpret this image along with the other photograph in which my mother is wearing the Tehuantepec garment, as to a certain degree, “staged” portrayal of what a Mexican woman (or a mestiza) should look like. But I am also certain that my mother transformed this artificial construction through her wearing Indigenous handmade garments in her daily life. Reverberations become palpable as my mother transmits this more authentic way of relating to traditional garments to me. My photograph, which was taken outside my grandparents’ store in Jamay’s square, depicts a girl comfortably wearing a handmade daily Indigenous garment in a public space. I recall constantly examining the floral motifs on the *manta*¹¹ dresses and blouses that she bought for me. Because the manta garments’ embroidered flowers are usually located on the chest area of the dresses and blouses, I mostly examined them with the tip of my fingers. I recall the fascination I felt when sensing the delicacy of the individual threads and then realizing that it was the combination of multiple threads that formed the high-relief flower shapes adorning them. One of my earliest memories of wearing traditional garments goes back to when I was three or four years old. I remember wearing a red embroidered

¹¹ The *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española* refers to it as “a piece that is often part of certain regional garments” (Real Academia Española, *Avances de la 23ava edición*). Indigenous garments from México often incorporate this kind of fabric, which is made of cotton and nowadays is made industrially. This fabric is made using the most simple type of weave, “also known as the ‘tabby’, or *tafetán* (tafeta in Spanish), it is the least complex weave since the warp and weft are simple; a single thread of the warp crosses the thread of the weft (one by one)” (Mastache, 2010, p. 88).

dress from Michoacán. I was also fascinated by the intensity of the red fabric and the contrasting color combinations produced by the flowers.



Figure 31. Conchita / Verónica. Mother's photograph (left) was taken in the 1950s. My photograph (right) was taken in 1982.

These early synesthetic or aesthetic experiences reverberated in my later predilection for fibre or textile mediums. My first experiences of working with fabric go back to the age of six when I got a toy sewing machine as a Christmas gift. At that time, I immediately associated the sewing machine to Grandmother Estela as I often saw her working on her own machine to make

clothes for my cousins, my brother, and me. Following her example, I was determined to create blouses for my stuffed animals and dolls. I recall spending hours sitting with my sewing machine on the top of the bunk bed I shared with my brother in our Texcoco house. I spent most of my time trying to thread the sewing machine's needle often ending up tangling my threads. It was probably in those moments of difficulty that I first acquired respect for the makers of my beautiful embroidered dresses and blouses.

My Early Childhood Years

After my brother Daniel was born in 1977, my family temporarily moved from Texcoco, the town in which UACH is located, to my maternal grandparents' house in the Coyoacán neighbourhood in México City. The purpose of this move was to support my mother throughout her doctoral studies in Human Development in the Universidad Iberoamericana (<http://www.uia.mx/>). At that time, the university was located in the Churubusco neighbourhood, just a few minutes away from my grandparents' house. In this period of my family's history, my father commuted daily from México City to the experimental cornfields of the Instituto Nacional de Investigaciones Forestales, Agrícolas y Agropecuarias (INIFAP) (<http://www.inifap.gob.mx/>), located in the East of México City, an hour's drive away. My mother, meanwhile, adjusted her schedule so that she could concentrate on her studies while also taking care of us. She was able to do this with the help of grandmother Estela, who took care of Daniel and me while my mother attended courses at the university. In Figure 32, Daniel and I were two and four years old, respectively. Grandmother Estela sat us on the petate while hanging recently washed linen on the backyard clothesline on a spring day, the time of year when it is most warm in México City. It was my father, however, who had introduced this habit of laying a petate on the floor rather than

a blanket for my brother and I to sit and play. My father preferred to acquire handicrafts for domestic use, such as metal/wooden kitchen utensils, clay pottery and basketry items, in the traditional local markets instead of the industrially made items sold in supermarkets or shopping centers. He preferred us to be exposed to vernacular handicrafts aesthetic qualities to those of the industrially made items. Amongst these items, the petate has held a special significance for me due to the close physical contact I had with the mat's woven surface when sitting, playing, and interacting with my brother.

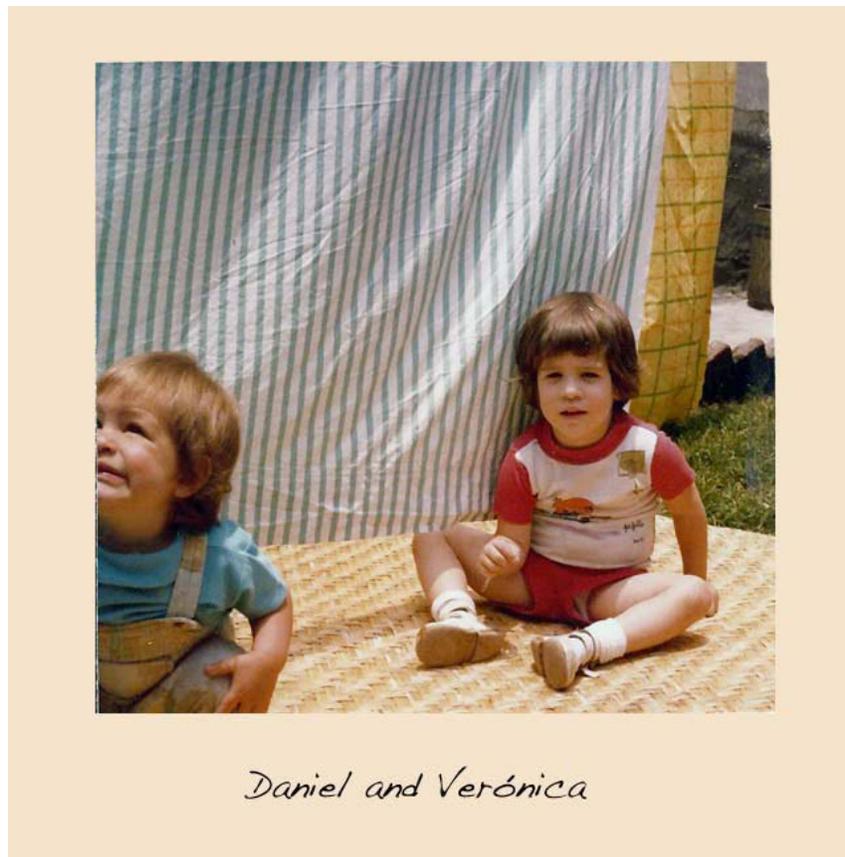


Figure 32. Daniel and Verónica. Photograph taken in our family house's backyard in the Coyoacán neighbourhood in México City in 1980.

Reverberations of touch-based memories of the petate have remained so salient that I can actually close my eyes and remember the feeling of the diagonal braids against my fingers, legs, arms, and feet. Ackerman (1995) describes how experiences of touch make an impact in our emotional lives. Cuddling, caressing, and touching other humans' flesh provides us with a sense of protection, happiness, and confidence. According to Ackerman, these and other tactile experiences, such as contact with warm, textured cloths, are particularly beneficial for newly born babies since it helps them grow faster and be happier. While I am not sure of how early in my life these contacts with the petate began, it is clear to me looking back as an adult today that those early tactile experiences stand for a period in my life in which I felt protected and loved. As Delong, Wu, and Boa (2007) assert, "contextual experiences of touch can trigger associations that influence memories and subsequent perceptions" (p. 41). For me, the petate represented a safety zone that was created for my brother and me by my father. Metaphorically speaking, the tactile memories of the petate became reverberations of my father's protection and care during the times he was away from home.

I think that my father's love of the petate (un)folds from his own memories of growing up in Jamay; the petate is one of the handicrafts produced in his hometown. The petate is made using the leaves of a plant called *tule*, which can grow to be two or three meters long. The tule plant grows in the outer edges of the Chapala Lake, where the water is around one meter high. Jamay's fishermen collect the plants and then take them to the women of the community so that they may dry them and then weave them out. During my father's childhood in Jamay, these women would often work on the petate while sitting in the front door of their houses. This is how my father witnessed the petate production process which he recently described to me as follows:

As I recall, those people who worked with the tule leaves were women. They would lay a *petate* on the floor, sit on it and start working. The first step was to organize the tule leaves on the floor. These were already dry but still flexible. The women would use a round and flat rock (the size of their hands) to give shape to individual strands while at the same time, folding and weaving them together.¹² (S. Sahagún, personal communication, September 14, 2012)

My father's description of the *petate's* weaving technique is similar to a historical description made by Fray Bernardino de Sahagún (1499–1590): “The seller of large baskets weaves them out of reeds. He soaks the reeds in water, softens them and beats them with a stone...” (as cited in Urgent, 2000, p. 256). The *Codex Mendoza* (1541) incorporates multiple depictions of the *petate* and other kinds of basketry within the Aztec society (see Berdan & Anawalt, 1997). Some of these depictions include large *petate* bundles filled with cotton, dry chilies, coffee, and other seeds. At present, one can find similar wrap-ups in rural communities and their local markets. These reverberations suggest to me that both the traditional use of the *petate* and its weaving technique have been preserved and passed on for at least four hundred years. And although my father did not directly form part of the *petate*-making tradition, he certainly fostered an appreciation for this vernacular practice by introducing me to this cultural object at an early age and sharing his memories with me.

Bonilla Palmeros (2009) and Benítez (2001) offer two examples of how Indigenous girls are formally introduced to textile-making endeavours through rituals performed by their fathers. According to Bonilla Palmeros, a tradition that is falling out of fashion in the Nahúa community of Hueyatitla involves the father taking a girl to the cornfields at the age of six. Together they search for a plant known as *Tlazomaxóchitl* so that the girl may eat its flowers. The belief is that this will enable the girl to become a skilled embroiderer. Benítez in turn offers us a written version of a Huichol myth. In this myth, the first existing woman—known as *Wenima*—is taken

¹² Translated to English from original text in Spanish by Verónica Sahagún.

by her father to the sierra in search of a snake called Simalakoa. When they find it, the father captures and immobilizes the snake. The man then passes the snake around his daughter's body so that Simalakoa transmits her own weaving knowledge to Wemina. That same night, snake-like weaving patterns emerge in Wemina's dream. She also hears Simalakoa's voice telling her to ask her father to create a series of weaving items. Once this is done, Simalakoa continues teaching Wemina how to create her first weaving patterns through her dreams. It is my interpretation that by introducing me to the petate at an early age, and later by taking me for walks in the Texcoco cornfields and sierra, my father performed a series of initiation rituals of his own. This was his way of introducing me to the things that mattered to him. Without him knowing, his personal rituals were a form of introduction to vernacular ways of doing and of being. As I see it, due to him being of mixed ancestry, my father was following his intuition and not a previously established communal practice. The outcome of this ritual, however, served the same objective pursued by the Indigenous fathers' rituals previously described: initiating the daughter to textile traditions.

Integrating My Family's Legacies Into My A/r/tographic Praxis of Reverberations

Choosing vernacular textile traditions as the basis of self-study raises awareness of how my parents' legacies have influenced my way of being in the world, including my own professional orientation as a textile artist. Generally speaking, in my a/r/tographic endeavours, reverberations of family legacies emerge as I critique the hegemonic (or white) mestizaje promoted by the Mexican state and as I propose socially conscious artistic and educational research practices (Chapter 6). This socially conscious standpoint comes from my mother's transmission of social justice values and of an appreciation and a support of Indigenous cultures.

In my early twenties, when I started making my own money, I adopted my mother's habit of buying Indigenous handmade garments in Mexican local markets. It was just something that seemed natural for me. I usually bought blouses because these garments were more affordable than the dresses or huipiles, and it was easier to combine them with Western garments such as jeans or skirts. As a young woman living in México City in the 1990s, I wore these garments with more freedom than my mother did; my wearing them was not perceived as a transgression to a pre-established order, as was the case in the late 1960s and earlier. I now see how, my mother's influence guided me to an inquiry that takes into consideration the history and values that traditional female Indigenous garments embody. This perspective is complemented by my father's legacy. Through talking to him about the petate of my (and of his) childhood as well as of Mamá Julia, I unveil hidden roots within my familiar/cultural identity. Surprisingly, these roots are much closer to the Indigenous rural world than I would have expected. This finding makes me ponder the relevance of passing on such a form of knowledge as an art educator and practicing artist.

Reverberations of my inquiry (analysis) lead me to see that being a socially conscious mestiza is about me taking a role as a guardian of Indigenous cultures in a respectfully creative manner. In other words, being a mestiza is about learning to live within the liminal spaces between tradition and innovation or what Springgay et al. (2005) refer to as the "new and the customary." A basic dictionary definition states that tradition stands for "cultural continuity in social attitudes, customs, and institutions" (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online*). In my family's case, tradition does not directly relate to the making of the textiles. Instead, it relates to the wearing of traditional garments or using vernacular textiles (the petate in this case). However, when I speak of innovation, I am referring to my own (art)craft practice. Recreating my family

album (history) through the lens of vernacular textile traditions has signified taking a step closer into defining what might be my contribution to the field of craft-contemporary art. Even when not following Indigenous traditional ways, my teaching and art practice has concentrated on the experience of working with my hands, and with weaving itself, with the purpose of communicating the positive aspects of such kinds of engagement. Reverberations into my mestiza consciousness (Anzaldúa, 1987/2012) open up creative channels for developing art work inspired by vernacular textile traditions from a place that feels coherent with who I am and which is respectful of the core of Indigenous textile traditions. Furthermore, I see my version of the family album as a postmodern meta-narrative (Langford, 2008) that preambles and complements the (art)craft practice developed in Chapter 5.



Figure 33. *Gateway* (2011). Photograph of the Coyoacán traditional market in México City retrieved from Verónica Sahagún's archives.

Now it is time for me to explore the meaning of being a mestiza by revisiting memories of place.

Through this snapshot of one of the most regularly used public entrances to the traditional market of Coyoacán (Figure 33), I symbolically enter the main art making component of this a/r/tographic allegory. There is a general ontological similarity between the overall visual/textual allegorical construction in this chapter and *Gateway*; this image has symbols (or street signs) at the forefront and other symbols (hidden) in the background (or, in this case, inside the market). Like in *Gateway*, in my overall a/r/tographic allegorical weave, there are places of brightness as well as dark passages. But they are all assembled harmoniously, and together they offer my perspective of what it is like to be a contemporary Mexican mestiza. Entering my reflections of (my) mestizaje and of place via the metaphorical entrance provided by *Gateway* represents, for me, going beyond my memories of the Coyoacán market. It is also about revisiting my gendered experiences. I embark on this journey through invoking the spirits of my great-grandmothers metonymically represented by the name of the archetypal Mexican mother, Malintzin (the original Nahuatl name of Malinche).



THE RENDERING OF METAPHOR/METONYMY

A/r/tography as a methodological process infuses understandings of metaphor and metonymy. Through metaphors and metonymic relationships, we make things sensible—that is, accessible to the senses. (Springgay et al. 2005, p. 904)

Metaphors and metonymies exist as intertwined relationships in which meaning un/creates itself.

There is at once a realization of meaning, or neither. Just as there is contiguous movement between other concepts, so too is there between metaphor and metonymy. (Springgay et al., 2008, p. xxx)

Chapter 5

Allegory via Metaphor/Metonymy: Using Memory Work to Unveil Unspoken Truths and to Heal Wounds

In this chapter I use my art practice to investigate the influences of the Mexican local on my life history. I do this by incorporating the concept of allegory into the rendering of metaphor/metonymy. Irwin and Springgay (2008) contend that metaphor/metonymy is a rendering most favoured by a/r/tographers because it allows us to give shape, both textually and visually, to our learning experiences. According to these authors, “both tropes open possibilities for meaning making; metaphor through its substitution of signifiers and metonymy through its displacement of subject/object relations” (Irwin & Springgay, 2008, p. 118). My purpose in establishing a dialogic/dialectic relationship between metaphor/metonymy as allegory is to unveil the hidden patterns embedded within contemporary Mexican culture that have also defined my personal geographies.

Owens (1980) analyzes the role played by allegory within postmodern art practices, which largely incorporate language into visual art discourses. He states that from a rhetorical perspective an allegory “implicates both metaphor and metonymy” (p. 73); allegory represents an evolution of metaphors and, therefore, a constant shifting in meanings (metonymy). In other words, allegory making is a way of working that is compatible with the notion of living inquiry as both practices develop as an exegesis-like process. The exegesis-like nature of allegory, in Owen’s perspective, allows for boundary crossing between disciplines (visual/literary) and styles (poetry/realism) with the purpose of arriving at complex modes of conveying meaning. The figures of metaphor and metonymy may therefore be considered structural elements in the process of creating a/r/tographic allegories. In this chapter, I construct a visual allegory of

Mexican mestizaje based on my life history by setting a series of artworks (and mediums) in dialogue with each other.

Metaphors and metonymies are created as I redirect my memory work from a memoir orientation (my family photographs) to a place-based inquiry, a perspective informed by Lippard's (1997) vision of place. Borrowing from Lippard (1997), I see place as the intersection between the "historical narrative as it is written in the landscape" (p. 7) and particular experiences that I have gone through in specific locations. As I interpret the life experiences held in the places in which I first came into contact with my chosen vernacular textiles, I produce a critical analysis of the location itself, as part of mapping my personal geographies. In the case of the petate, I focus on memories stemming from my early childhood years in the Coyoacán neighbourhood in México City. For my memory work with the Nahúa blouse, I focus on a trip made to the town of Cuetzalan (located in the Sierra of Puebla) in my midtwenties.

At a visual level, my memory work is articulated through the merging of digital processes and media with the handmade. I use digital photography, video, and stop motion animation to externalize visual images, experiences, and emotions that inhabit my subconscious. In this way, digital technologies are metonymic representations of my own memory. I also approach the craft object/practice as a metaphorical site of inquiry. It is within this metaphorical third space that textile-making practices such as weaving and stitching become the means through which I negotiate my relationship to place and peoples; this is done through the creation of a series of fibre-based (textiles and paper) memory mappings. Furthermore, my memory mappings act as a source for meditating on life experiences, re-enacting emotions, and healing wounds associated to specific physical locations.

(Re)visiting Coyoacán: (Re)thinking the Petate

It is the winter of 2011. I am spending the holidays with my family. I am staying at my family's house in the Tlalpan neighbourhood, in México City. It is the perfect time to revisit my childhood neighbourhood. The Coyoacán neighbourhood is just 15 minutes from Tlalpan by public transportation. Coyoacán is a word of Nahuá origin. It means "place where people own or worship coyotes." Along with the downtown area, Coyoacán is one of the oldest colonial sites of México City. After the conquest (1521) of the Aztec capital (and empire) México-Tenochtitlán, located in what is now downtown México City, the Spanish conqueror Hernán Cortés established himself in the Coyoacán area (Novo, 1962). As I take the metro-bus that will take me to Coyoacán, mixed emotions arise; I think about what happened to my grandparents' house after they passed away. When Grandfather Rafael died in 1988, one of my aunts inherited the Coyoacán house. She moved in with her family and shared the house with Grandmother Estela. A few years after Grandmother Estela's passing away in 1998, my aunt decided to sell the house to a real-estate company, which demolished the construction and created a series of apartment buildings. I decide to avoid passing by the street where the house used to be; I don't want to see the buildings that have replaced my grandparents' house. Instead, I decide to travel towards the Coyoacán traditional market, a place that I used to visit with my grandparents.

The embodied petate, In the market, I see a series of stands where basketry and wooden utensils are sold, and I immediately think of my father and my early experiences with the petate. This makes me ponder on the potential similarities between my early experiences with the petate and the uses conferred to this item in pre-Hispanic traditions. Garduño (1997) asserts that the

functions played by the petate in pre-Hispanic society included sitting and listening to the teachings of the elders, eating, sleeping, making love, giving birth, and even making houses (amongst the poor, petates were often used to create roofs and walls). In other words, the petate framed daily personal, intimate, and educational/communal experiences. This proximity explains why the petate used to be a part of the custom surrounding death in ancient Mexican society. On this occasion, the petate was used as a “burial shroud” (Garduño, 1997, p. 79), which also implied a ritual symbolism. According to Garduño, the petate was considered a protective shield, especially when it accompanied a deceased person into Mictlán (the land of the dead). I would go so far as to state that the ancient Mexicans considered the petate to be a sort of second skin. Indeed, the value that I have conferred to the petate based on the use I made of it as a child is not so far from this idea. In my artistic practice, the petate becomes a sort of second skin. To further explain my approach, I take on the concept of *intercorporeality* brought forward by Springgay (2004). For Springgay, intercorporeality stands for paying attention to our experiences of space and to our interactions with other people; this awakened state of being is largely ignited by our experiences of touch. In my childhood, the petate played the role of mediator/stimulator of intercorporeal relations and experiences, symbolically marking a safety zone provided by my father, where my brother and I could play under the watchful eye of my maternal grandmother. As I now walk in the streets of Coyoacán, I become aware of the process through which I have learned to be at ease when going beyond the physical boundaries set by the petate itself. At that time, going beyond the boundaries of the petate mostly stood for going into Coyoacán’s colonial centre with various members of my family. Consequently, I now associate the petate to Coyoacán. The petate metaphorically represents my family history and known territory.

Springgay (2003) brings attention to the role of touch in processing spatial information. She states that “touch becomes a signifier of visual culture as a mode of synaesthesia” (para. 14). As I see the textured surface of the rolled-up petate (shown as a background image here) in the local marketplace, I not only think of my childhood memories and my family, but I also connect with Mexican popular cultures (García Canclini, 1993). I connect with the (rural) locations where this vernacular craft is produced (such as my father’s native town and other locations in Central México) and the people who create the petate. More important, I connect with the practice of weaving as an ancestral Mexican Indigenous tradition. The series titled *Memory Circuits* is my entry point into this mapping of my mestiza identity as well as my early life experiences in Coyoacán. These paper-woven maps become a third space in which visual representations of Coyoacán’s colonial centre (my Western side) and tactile memories of the petate (my Indigenous side) are set in dialogue, not as a binary, but as a hybrid state, where my identity is fluid, shifting, and always becoming. I use Google Maps to trace the routes that formed part of my daily routines growing up in this Mexican historical (colonial) location. I use weaving as a way of producing a (post)colonial critique of mapping that acknowledges and (re)evaluates the presence of Indigenous peoples in Mexican public sites. On the one hand, for me, Coyoacán represents a family safety net. Beyond being mere representation of space, my maps evoke the memory of my mother (Figure 34), a maternal aunt (Figure 35), and my grandparents within a particular period of my life. On the other hand, coming back to Coyoacán as a visitor allows me to see this location with a more critical mind. With a romanticized perspective, I consider how Mexican historical sites are spaces that allow us to travel back in time, which may give us the possibility of preserving traditions, sensing belonging, and articulating hybrid identities.

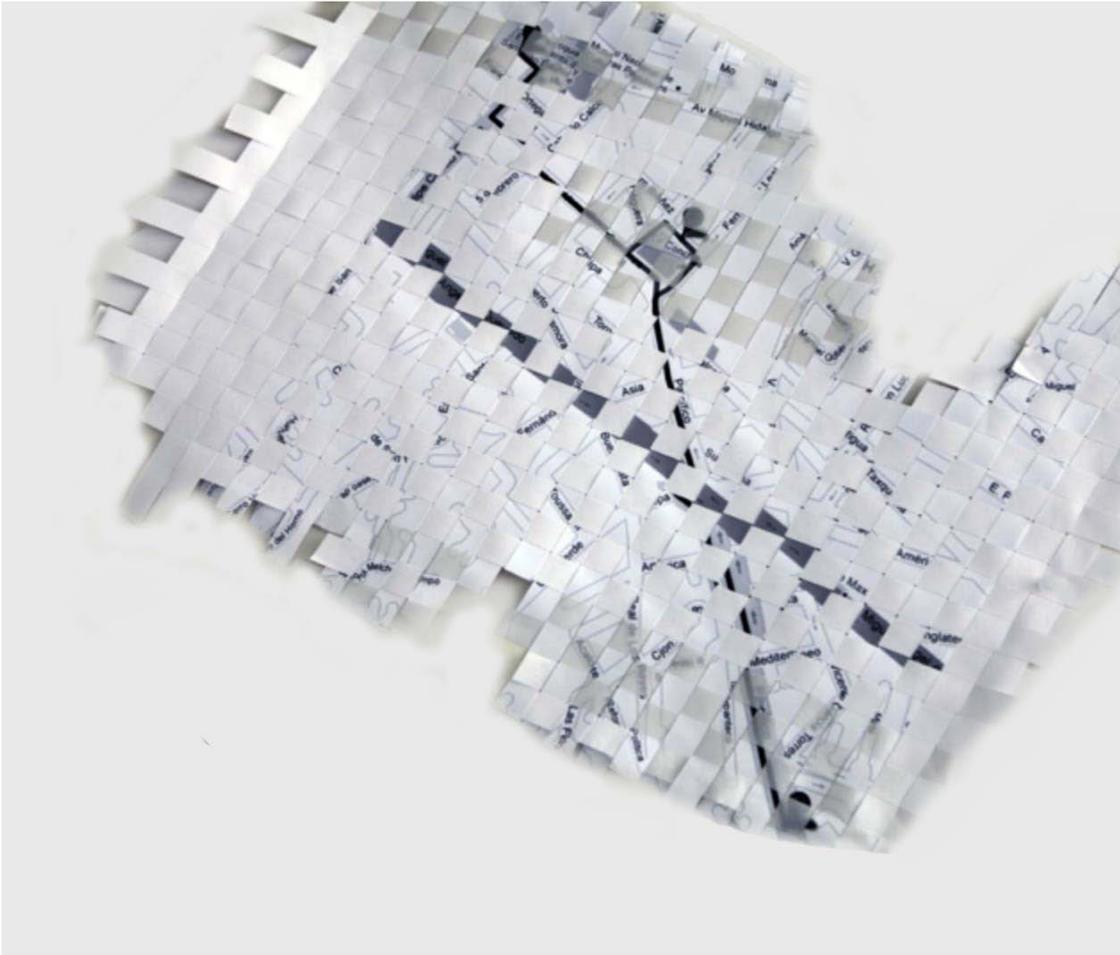


Figure 34. *Memory Circuits: Mother* (2012). Paper-weaving (dimensions variable between 7 x 19 in).

The downside to this romanticized perspective is that, in the case of México, the preservation of colonial buildings is also symptomatic of the preservation of an unfair social system in which Indigenous peoples are kept within the margins. It is common to see Indigenous artisans walking around Coyoacán's main plaza or selling their crafts outside the market, whereas mestizo(a)s and tourists treat these spaces as sites of recreation. Weaving is my way of metaphorically questioning what I regard as an unfair social system. My work does not speak for Indigenous peoples, as I cannot pretend to understand their experience in Coyoacán or any other

Mexican historical centre. However, my mappings are reflective of my in-between location as a socially conscious mestiza, or as someone who has been disturbed by the unfairness of the situation.

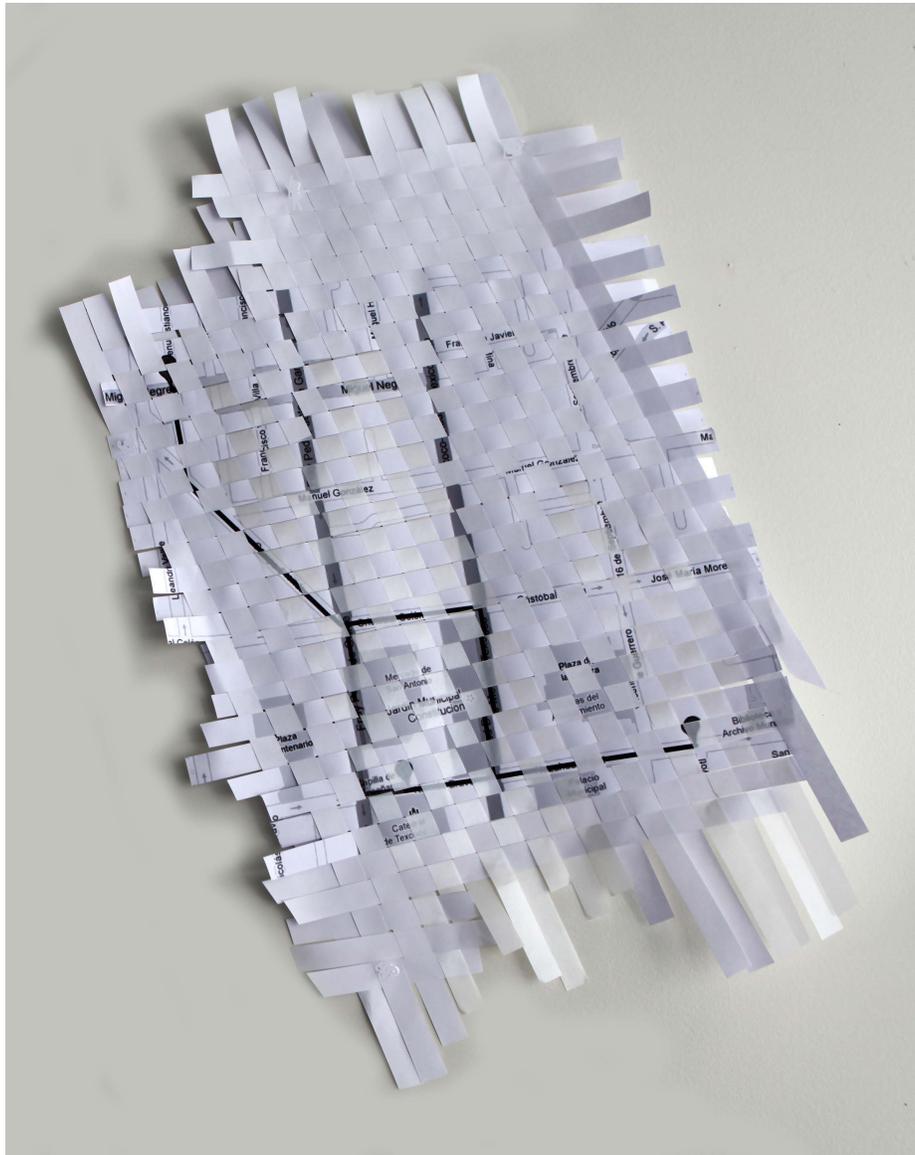


Figure 35. *Memory Circuits: Aunt* (2012). Paper-weaving (dimensions variable between 7 x 19 in).

A third-wave feminist approach to mapping would suggest that rather than being a means for representing a space, mapping should be a way of representing an individual's experience of space (Springgay, 2007). Springgay (2007) uses intercorporeality as a grounding concept to propose a shift in perception of what the maps and mapping process may represent. She states:

Rather than a view of space as an empty vessel that objects are placed within, feminist reconceptualizations link space with corporeality and subjectivity. Therefore, what we need to examine is how spaces and bodies are simultaneously created in the process of mapping. (p. 39)

Seen from this standpoint, my mapping takes place through my engagement with weaving. This labour intensive activity also brings the time factor into the equation and allows my memory work to develop more fluidly. As I weave the strands of my maps back together, there is a shift in visual representation. The map becomes a porous surface with blurred areas and unfinished boundaries (edges) that better represent my emerging mixed emotional responses to Coyoacán's historical centre. Springgay (2007) states: "Instead of mapping as iconographic deductions or representations, I want to think of mapping as engagements that are material intercorporeal becomings" (p. 39). As I weave out *Memory Circuits*, I also map out my relationships with family members. The more invested I become in my weaving, the more I realize that my mappings do not require closed edges to remain solid structures. I play with this, allowing *Memory Circuits* to acquire irregular shapes. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) conceive maps as open-ended structures susceptible to transformations; these structures may be (re)assembled or (re)inserted into other structures. Leaving my maps unfinished is my way of acknowledging that my life experiences in México and with my family are not yet finished; my memory mappings are "always becoming," (Irwin et al., 2006, p. 71) in Mexico and beyond.

At the same time, I also recognize that some of these memories of place represent core aspects of my identity and may therefore influence my way of conducting social interactions wherever I may reside. Colonial plazas are communal spaces where local families run errands, attend to mass, or spend some recreational time. It is in such contexts that extended familial and neighbourly networks are created. And, in my experience, it is within such daily encounters and activities that I engaged in my first forms of socialization as a young child outside my family house. In the following section, I analyze a memory of a Sunday family activity in which I used to participate. This memory serves as an entry point into ideas related to community and intergenerational learning that may later inform the development of a relational educational praxis.

Feeding the pigeons in the plaza. *I am sitting on a bench in the Hidalgo garden, located in Plaza Mayor in Coyoacán's colonial centre. I am trying to breathe in as much sunshine as I can. I know that when I go back to Montréal, winter will not be over. There will be a few months of wearing jackets, hats, and gloves before I can sit on a park bench in Montréal. I take out the canary grass seeds that I bought in the market to feed the pigeons in the plaza. This is a habit acquired from my grandfather Rafael. When my family was living at my maternal grandparents' house, my brother and I spent Sunday mornings with my father and grandparents while Mom stayed at home working on her doctoral dissertation. The piece entitled Memory Circuits: Grandparents (Figure 36) focuses on the activities we did together. Our day started with mass in Rosedale Church near our family house. My father would then take us to the Coyoacán market. There, we would split into smaller groups. Father and Grandmother Estela would go buy groceries for the week. My brother Daniel, Grandfather Rafael, and I would go get canary seeds*

to feed the pigeons in the plaza. In the plaza, Daniel and I would throw the seeds on the floor and wait for the pigeons to come. When the floor was packed with pigeons, we would chase after them. Grandfather Rafael would sit down on one of these benches and watch us play.

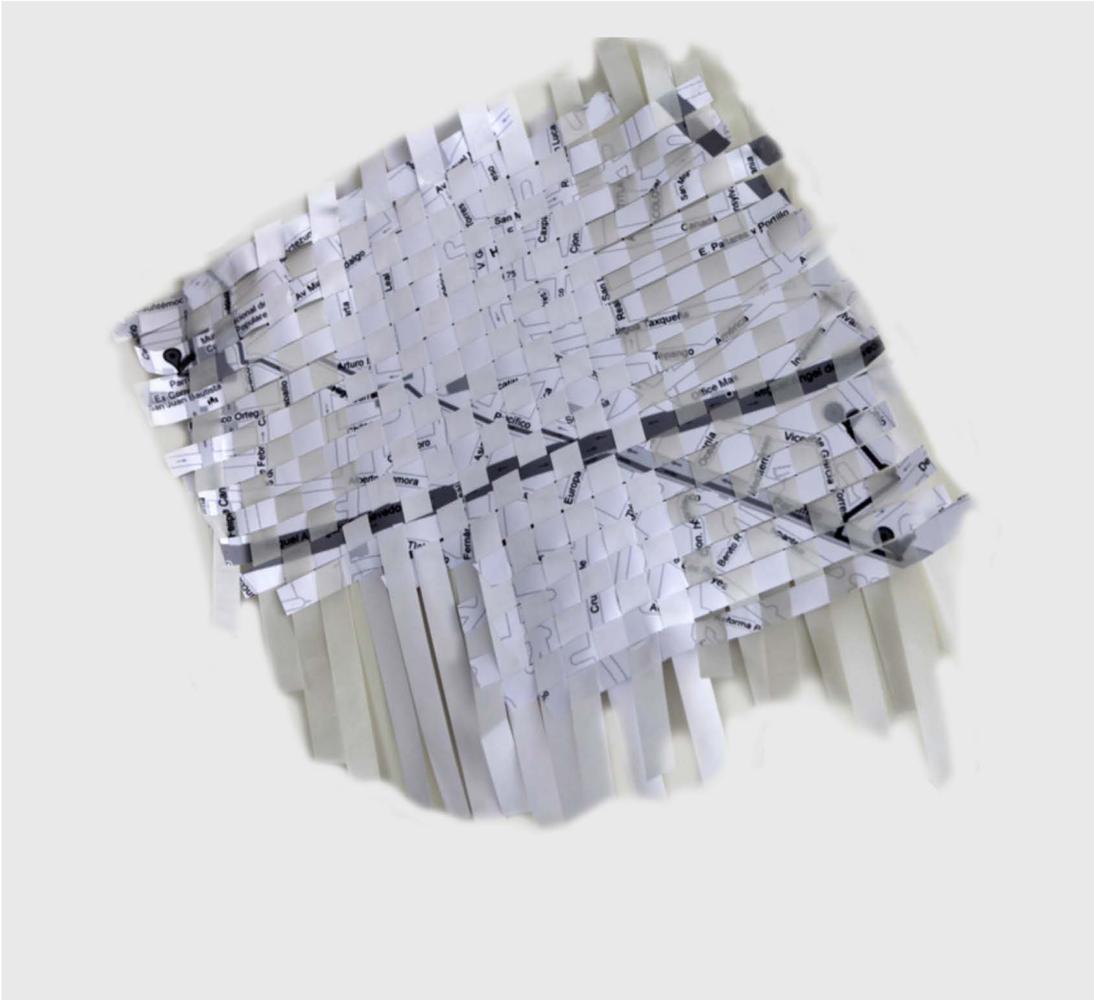


Figure 36. Memory Circuits: Grandparents (2012). Paper-weaving (dimensions variable between 7 x 19 in).

I now throw some of the canary seeds that I recently acquired in the market on to the rock slabs of Coyoacán's main square. It does not take long for the pigeons to come. I practice being in the present. I observe; I hear; I sense. The children passing by start chasing after my pigeons. The parents sit on the adjacent benches. I get the impression that nothing has really changed in

Coyoacán's colonial centre, except me. I am now playing the role played by Grandfather Rafael. Metaphorically speaking, I now see these kids as little chicks, testing their wings under the watchful eyes of their parents and the community gathered in the plaza.

The photographic series *The Other Me* is a self-portraiture project that helps me to observe myself as I take on the role of the adult that promotes children's play in the plaza. These images capture my interaction with the children, pigeons, and colonial architecture itself. In some cases, these photographs are metonymic self-portraits, as they depict children and not necessarily me. As I observe children play, I am able to contrast the person I am now to the child I was then. Feeding the pigeons in the plaza has ignited emotions of kind-heartedness within me. The girl in pink shows how imitation may be the starting point of a learning experience. She quietly approaches my bench and simply observes the pigeons next to me. I give her some of my seeds so that she may feed the pigeons herself (Figure 37). The pigeons gather near our bench. Instead of chasing after them, my companion opts to imitate my behaviour; she takes out her cell phone and takes pictures of the pigeons as they feed themselves from the ground (Figure 38). Observing my interaction with this girl continues to awaken feelings of care, empathy, and sympathy. I imagine that Grandfather Rafael experienced similar feelings when handing out handful of seeds to me so that I could feed the pigeons myself. I also realize that my best performances as an educator have taken place when in touch with such feelings. Doctoral student life has afforded me less "hands-on" teaching than studio arts instruction has. Instead I have been introduced to numerous theories and methodologies. I have concentrated my efforts on assimilating all this new information so that I may give a new orientation to my teaching.



Figure 37. The Other Me I (2011). Photograph taken in the Coyoacán Plaza.



Figure 37. The Other Me I (2011). Photograph taken in the Coyoacán Plaza.

This parenthesis (winter holidays) in my ongoing educational experience provides me with a glimpse of new, potential ways of being an educator within community or informal contexts of education. At this point, I merely have an intuition. Sandu (2013) argues that, for immigrant populations, reproducing activities that they once carried out in their native countries is a way to actively make themselves at home in their current location. Extrapolating this idea to my stay in Montréal, I realize that I have unconsciously (en)acted what Sandu describes by feeding breadcrumbs to the seagulls in Montréal's Old Port. This has also had the effect of attracting children who are curious about the seagulls. I ruminate on how a simple activity like feeding pigeons (or seagulls) in a public space may potentially translate in an educational experience and a community building activity.

Back to my interaction with children in the Coyacán plaza, I refocus my attention on the sounds of the pigeons and I recognize auditive memory patterns. After the murmur comes the fluttering of wings as the pigeons escape the children chasing them. Waves of sound and movement populate the plaza again. The scenario is transformed in a matter of seconds. Looking through the lens of my camera, I see how the flight of the pigeons metaphorically sculpts the plaza's open space. I notice that some of the kids are looking down on the ground as they chase after the pigeons, and I recall my own intercorporeal (Springgay, 2004) experience of the plaza. When I was three, four, and five, this plaza felt incredibly large. Looking up and around at the imposing, grand scale of the plaza and the imposing colonial buildings made me feel dizzy. Similarly, looking at the moving wings of the pigeons also made me feel out of balance. To avoid this disequilibrium, I focused my sight solely on the rock slabs of the ground and chased the pigeons using my peripheral vision. Part of the feeling of timelessness that I get from Coyoacán's colonial centre has something to do with the stability/materiality of the rock itself. In

the *Flight* series (Figures 39, 40 and 41), the evasive pigeons invite the child to inhabit and explore Coyoacán's historical space. Both the child's and the pigeons' movements break the monotony of the heavy rock-based architecture. They bring life to the plaza. In the *Flight* series, the plaza stands for a metaphor for family containment. This containment gave me the motivation and confidence to pursue my dreams when I became an adult. The pigeons in this video scene are metaphors for the dreams that I have chased throughout my life. Some dreams have been achieved. Others have led me to unexpected locations and situations, like that of doing a PhD in Montréal.



Figure 39. Flight I (2011). Photographic Sequence.



Figure 40. Flight II (2011). Photographic Sequence.



Figure 41. Flight III (2011). Photographic Sequence.

It is past noontime. I become aware of the effects of sunlight on the grey rock slab surface, and I try to capture them with my camera. This grey area offers a camouflage effect for the pigeons and humming birds swirling around. At the same time, sunrays falling perpendicularly on the ground generate sharp shades. I now see how focusing my sight on the ground could have stimulated my imagination as a child; some shades are static (the ones generated by benches and street lights) and others are temporary (the ones generated by people passing by). It is as if there is a parallel and ever changing world unfolding within this Mexican public square. This alternate minimalistic and ephemeral world of rock and shades of grey stimulated my imagination and, therefore, shaped my early memories of Coyoacán (Figures 42 and 43).

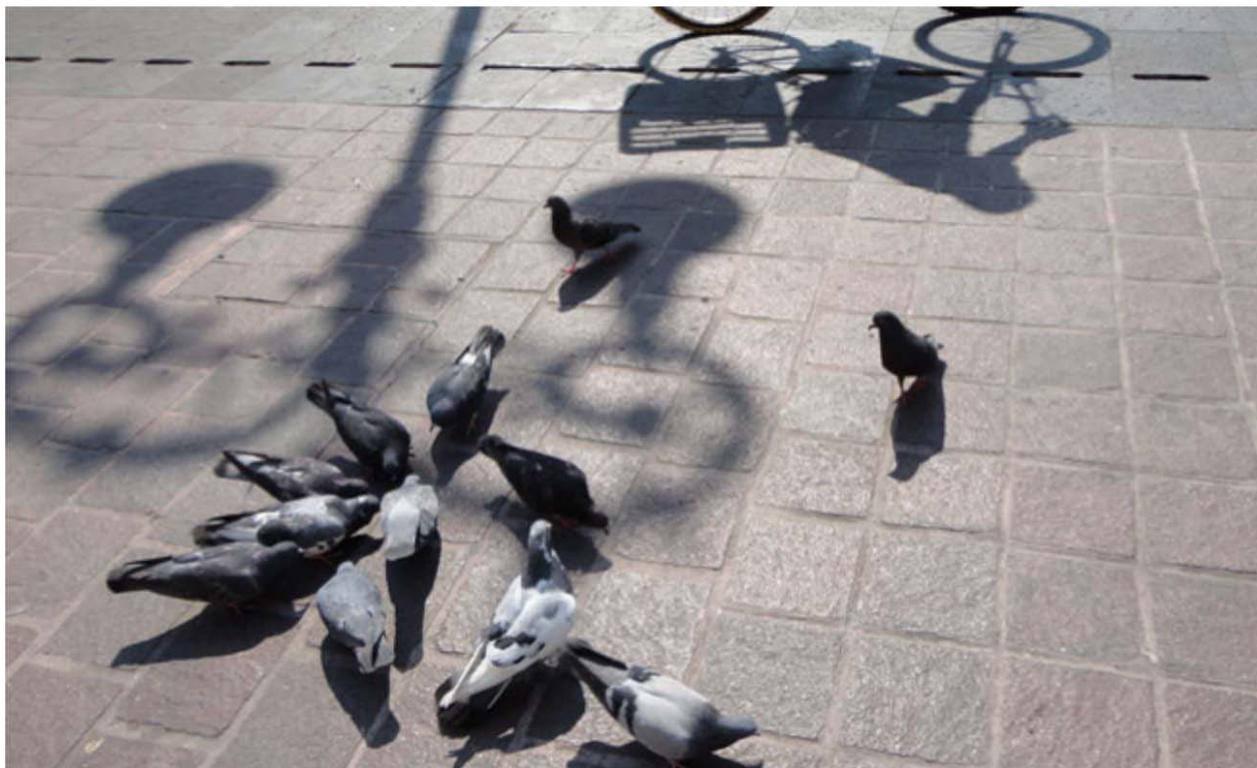


Figure 42. Time(less) Digital photograph taken in the Coyoacán Plaza. Published in the first issue of Voke (vokeart.org). Copyright 2013 by Verónica Sahagún.



Figure 43. Alterity (2011). Photographic Polyptych.

Lost in Plaza Mayor: Recognizing a Learning Moment

In this section, I discuss another memory of a life experience in the plaza and another member of the family: my mother. On this occasion, my fascination with the plaza's rock slabs got me lost. My mother brought my sibling and me to the plaza to play after having picked us up from daycare. Daniel was just beginning to walk, but he still needed Mother to hold his two hands not to lose balance. Mother realized that the slow pace at which Daniel and her were walking was making me restless. As a way to give me a bit more liberty, she pointed to the round kiosk and suggested that we meet behind it; she would go around on the left side and I would go around on the right side. And so we did. I recall walking, looking down at the rock slabs, focusing on the textured and porous grey surface. I was so absorbed by my study of the slabs that I forgot about walking along the kiosk and just kept walking forward. As I share this story,

flashbacks of my white shoes and socks against the grey slabs keep emerging. I walked as far as the entrance of the San Juan Bautista Parish. At that point, I realized that I was lost, but I was not scared. Instead, I was curious about finding out what was inside the humongous building. I decided to go inside, but I kept looking down to avoid that feeling of dizziness that I used to get from looking up at the colonial buildings. I crossed the parish's wooden doorframe and kept walking forward. I was no longer following a grey path; I was stepping on the red carpet of the parish's main passageway (Figure 44). I walked until I reached the altar. Once I got there, I did look up. I was astounded by the magnificence of the baroque gold-leaf wooden carvings that adorned the altar. Just as I was beginning to feel comfortable and to rejoice myself with the sight, I heard Mother calling my name. Almost at the same time, the priest came to me and asked me to go with my mother. At three years of age, I was having what was probably my first experience of independence. It was a moment in which I acted in response to my own thirst for knowledge, and I was not afraid of walking alone. I found out that Plaza Mayor was not just an open space for chasing pigeons. I saw the inside of one of those imposing buildings whose sight I used to avoid. After I got lost in Plaza Mayor, my mother decided to move our afterschool play activities to a smaller plaza located within Coyoacán's colonial centre: the plaza of La Purísima Concepción (or Immaculate Conception; also referred to as La Conchita by the locals). After the experience of looking inside the San Juan Bautista Parish, I was feeling curious about what could be inside this small chapel. I used to sit near its main entrance and fantasize about who or what could be on the other side of the door. Indeed, memories of trying to peek through the cracks of the tiled wooden door start coming back to me. I acknowledge that there are aspects of Coyoacán's colonial architecture that have remained indecipherable to me, yet they form part of the landscape that framed a significant number of personal experiences.

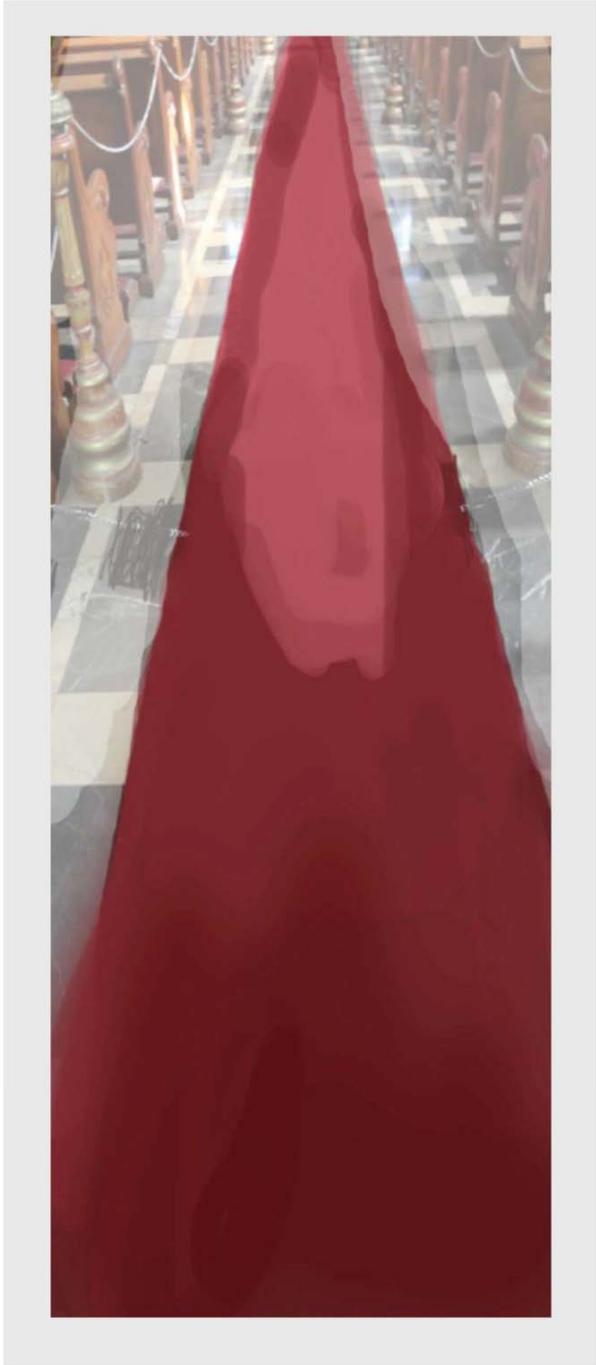


Figure 44. Following the Red Trail (2014).
Digital Imaging.

This realization helps me to see that the idea of the mestizo(a) as not quite belonging into either the Spanish (colonial) or the Indigenous (vernacular) world operates within my persona. In the same way that Mexicans have a limited understanding of the vernacular crafts sold in our local markets, we also have a limited understanding of the Spanish architecture that is considered to be Mexican patrimony. This is partly because access to historical buildings has been controlled by discretionary governmental policies (García Canclini, 1999). I also acknowledge that these visions represent forces that have co-existed in my country in an antagonistic manner. Weaving my memory mappings shows me that these opposing forces have also (co)existed within me. Furthermore, my moments of solace and of remembrance in the plaza make me realize that the restlessness that comes with being a hybrid identity is largely what led me to seek out learning experiences outside my comfort zone. This restlessness combined with a child's curiosity led me into the parish for the first time at the age of three. Later on in my life, this going beyond known territory has translated into travelling to new places, first within my own country, and later on abroad. In the next section, where I map out my memories with the Nahúa blouse, I explore one of my first experiences of travel as a young adult. From my perspective, this experience metaphorically stood out for its representation of a challenge: that of learning to protect (or care for) myself as part of the process of becoming an independent adult woman.

The Nahúa Blouse: Attending to Blockage

My memory (and studio) work with the Nahúa blouse involved revisiting memories of the Nahúa village of Cuetzalan, located in the northern Sierra of Puebla. As mentioned in the previous chapter, I visited this place in the company of a life partner when I was still an undergraduate student. I recall having chosen that particular blouse due the high quality of its

cotton threads and the delicacy with which its bird motifs were embroidered. I bought it from an Indigenous woman who had set her stand just outside the market.

The process of revisiting memories associated to the Nahúa blouse turned out to be more difficult than the work with the petate for two reasons. First, I was unable to physically revisit Cuetzalan. This means that my memory work related to the Nahúa blouse was entirely developed in Montréal. Second, and more important, I underwent sexual trauma in this place. This made it more difficult for me to find the right entry point into this work; when I tried to start studio (memory) work, my initial impulse was to recreate the silhouette of the Nahúa blouse within a sculpture project. This included reproducing the cross-stitch grid in which the embroidered motifs are regularly placed on the blouse. My intention was to create some text-based patterns and, through these patterns, to externalize the narrative of my sexual trauma. My first attempt to achieve this involved building a small-scale blouse using plastic cross-stitch canvases (Figure 45). This miniature assemblage demanded more work than larger pieces usually do. I spent large amounts of time measuring and cutting the white canvas sheets while learning to manipulate the elastic white string that brings them together. Touch-based contact with these materials showed me the complexity of the Nahúa textile makers' endeavours. Designing and creating complex embroidered surfaces requires an understanding of cross-stitching techniques, materials, and shapes that I did (and still do) not have. Yet as my experimentation with the non-traditional cross-stich media progressed, my inquiry undertook a new direction. I began to think of this miniature assemblage as a site of (self) study. The repetitive manual actions involved in assembling and creating cross-stitch patterns brought me to a meditative state of mind. This state of mind, in turn, gave me room to see myself and the emotions stemming from trying to (re)connect with the memories associated with the Nahúa blouse. It soon became clear that I was

subconsciously misleading myself in order to avoid making a straightforward allusion to memories of an experience that felt humiliating. This is how I realized that I identified with the image of vulnerability and marginality projected by the woman who sold the blouse to me. As I remember, this woman's embroidered blouses were magnificent, yet they were lying on the ground and being sold at very low prices. But I also acknowledge that the personal circumstances that led us to experiment a state of vulnerability were entirely different. This awareness influenced my decision of not referencing the Nahúa blouse in a direct (visual) manner in the memory maps. Furthermore, I realized that trying to work with media and shapes that are not part of my visual vocabulary as an artist trained in Western traditions was indeed a form of evasion. It was a way for me to remain "on the surface" of the emotional meanings that I have adjudicated to my blouse.



Figure 45. (Self) Study (2012). Small-scale sculpture made of cross-stitch canvas (dimensions variable between 1.5 x 3.9 in).

The Breakthrough: Metaphorically (Re)visiting Cuetzalan (Trauma)

When I decided to confront the problem, new ideas started to flow. I started looking for means to communicate what had happened to me without feeling too exposed. This is how I came to the decision that my studio work should still incorporate a text. This text, however, needed to play with ambiguity. Poetry turned out to be the right approach; as suggested by Butler-Kisber “in poetry, so much can be said in compelling and contracted forms ” (2010, p. 82). With poetry I could safely externalize repressed emotions. Writing poetry was the first step in my healing process, as metaphors helped me to give shape to feelings of pain and discomfort.

Images of red flowers emerge
when I think of you and me in Cuetzalan.
While you spoke fire,
silent cascades poured down my eyes.
Our sights never met.
Yet it is impossible for me
to erase your memory.
Landscape, humidity, flower, and . . . silence
The smell of vanilla is in my memory too.
Encounter and Dis-encounter
The mountain observed quietly.

The first version of this poem was written in Spanish. In the Spanish version, the last line has a more poignant connotation. My Spanish poem stated “la montaña observaba y callaba.” The variation in meaning comes through my using the word *callaba*, which literally means *to not speak*. In the Spanish version of my poem, I directly accuse the mountain (of the Sierra of Puebla) for being an accomplice (or frame) to the sexual trauma that I underwent. Now I understand that the mountain was me. I now see that the choice to remain quiet about what happened after the trip was a foreseeable self-protection mechanism amongst those who have experienced sexual trauma. At that time, I did not think that what happened to me could be

considered an aggression because I permitted it. I could not imagine what I could say that would not portray me as solely responsible for what had happened. I did not want to be judged or undergo further rejection by sharing my story. I now understand that my choice was also probably enforced by what Octavio Paz (1985) refers to as the “Mexican masks” (p. 29) or the culturally inherited habit of hiding emotions as a way of hiding our weaknesses. *Walking Secrets* is a time-based memory mapping (Figure 48) that metaphorically (re)enacts a process of loss in which my in which my self-perception and my self-confidence were damaged.

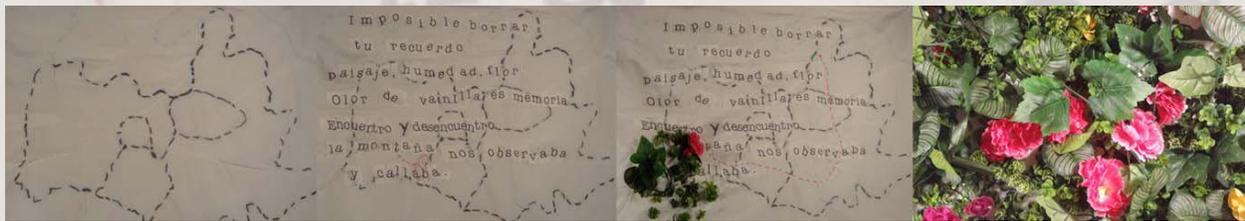


Figure 46. *Walking Secrets* (2012). Stop motion animation (1 min 25 s). Full animation available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ckIXYwMpXCM>

When doing this animation, I integrated my poem onto with a fabric map of Central México. I then used red thread to stitch the route that we followed from my family house in the Tlalpan neighbourhood (southern México City) to the Sierra of Puebla and finally to Cuetzalan, as a way of (re)visiting the memory of the trip. Kind (2011) asserts that the actions of metaphorically represent difficult passages experienced throughout life. She states: “in work emerging in cloth and thread, I see lives lived, sorrows and bereavements” (p. 50). As the red thread (trail) progressively leaved traces of the penetration of the needle, I got in touch with my repressed pain. I deliberately chose red thread for my memory mapping in order to reference that experience of walking alone in the San Juan Bautista Parish in Coyoacán. With this, I sought a

shift (or a metonymy) in what it means to take up the route of independent learning. If I were to think of my Cuetzalan trip as a learning experience, then I would have to admit that it was a painful one. I had to rely on my own resources to prevent myself from metaphorically getting lost. In this occasion, I opted for a defence mechanism that was not very effective. In the animation (Figures 47 and 48), I also metaphorically map the process through which I was able to control my emotions during the trip and pretend that nothing was happening. This process is re-enacted by progressively transforming the white fabric surface into a fertile ground. The fabric is cut open to let the grass stems as well as other plants and flowers emerge.



Figure 47. *Walking Secrets*. Still Image # 1.



Figure 48. *Walking Secrets*. Still Image # 2.

This surface becomes a metonymic representation of the humid and fertile soil that I walked on during my visit to the Sierra of Puebla. Memories of walking with my former boyfriend in the rain forest of the nearby mountains begin to emerge. There was an uncomfortable silence between us. I now understand that this silence was probably due to feelings of shame of our inexperience in sexual matters rather than to feelings of confrontation. In the *Walking Secrets* animations, the flowers and plants covering up my memory map metaphorically represent the experience of letting myself go into the landscape (Figure 49). Doing this was my way of emotionally distancing myself from him. Indeed, it was the contact with nature that made it possible for me to enjoy the trip. But at the same time it made me more conscious of my feelings of impotence. Lippard (1997) reflects on how contact with nature may become a double-edged sword for women's healing processes. She states:

Women, when alone with nature, are subject to a particularly contradictory experience, liberating on one hand, threatening on the other. For us, there is another predator out there: exhilarating sensual identification with landforms and processes is countered by social fear and oppression. (p.17)

This metaphorical merging of my feelings into the landscape also emphasized my awareness of being alone and vulnerable. Contrary to my experiences of walking in the Texcoco Sierra with my father, which were about discovery and learning with a protective companion, the isolation that I experienced in Cuetzalan weakened my will. Upon our return, I recovered my privacy, found in the protection that proximity to my family offered, and gathered the strength to end our relationship. While the Sierra landscape acted as a palliative for the wounds inflicted on me in Cuetzalan, the pain remained latent within my psyche. I now see that this experience affected my ability to develop bonds of trust with later life partners. At that time, I thought that

not talking about what happened (or remaining closed to it) would be the right way of overcoming the pain.



Figure 49. *Walking Secrets*. Still Image # 3.

The reality is that my healing began when I decided to face this ghost through my a/r/tographic practice, and when I removed myself from Mexican society. I found in the anonymity that comes with living in cultural displacement a safe location in which I could externalize this troubled experience. *A Piece of Poetry* (Figure 50) is conceived as a continuation of *Walking Secrets*. I transformed the fabric covered with flowers, used in the animation, into a three-dimensional object. *A Piece of Poetry* shares similarities with Ana Mendieta's *Siluetas* series (1973–1977), which involved carving out contours of her body on the ground within diverse natural settings. With this, Mendieta was seeking a state of belonging, and of identity construction as a Latin American woman, as a response to a series of alienating experiences—rape amongst them—held throughout a life in exile in the United States (Blocker, 1999). Like Mendieta, my memory work/mappings unfold as a response to the experience of living in displacement. *A Piece of Poetry*, however, operates in a reversed manner from that of Mendieta's *Siluetas*. *A Piece of Poetry* is a form of metonymic unearthing of my buried secret as part of my

process of reconstructing my cultural identity. This action metaphorically represents a process of clearing my subconscious.



Figure 50. *A Piece of Poetry* (2012). Soft Sculpture (13.7 x 19.6 in).

An artist whose work has also inspired this aspect of my a/r/tographic practice is Marina Abramović. I identify with how she “stages her fears in order to transcend them” (Thurman, 2010) through performance art pieces. I reflect on her last collaborative performance with Ulay, her former life partner, entitled *The Great Wall Walk* (1998). They walked from opposite sides of the Great Wall of China in order to meet in the middle. Through this ritual they would end their relationship (Grigor, 1988). In my case, walking in silence by the side of my former partner,

pretending that nothing had happened, showed me that a true bond had not existed between us. Regardless, by not addressing the wounds inflicted on me, this person has remained present in my subconscious. Re-enacting the experience by stitching my memory mapping and assembling my soft sculpture has been my way of processing what happened, accepting it, and finally letting him go. In so doing, I have also let go of unnecessary cargo in my ongoing journey abroad.

A Piece of Poetry is the relic left behind after having unearthed my secret. This fibre-sculpture mimics the ground I stepped on when walking in the Cuetzalan Sierra. This piece is a way to assert that the essence of my femininity is still fertile and alive. The exposed roots are a metaphor for my search of the right soil (location) in which to plant my garden. In a way, I can say that I have already found that new ground. To explain how this has happened, I want to refer to Bonilla Palmeros (2009) explanations of the meaning of flowers in Nahúa culture. According to this author, flowers are signs of fertility, life cycles, and good harvests. This means that in the Nahúa vision, flowers are used to represent those who “have made outstanding achievements socially and artistically (Bonilla Palmeros, 2009, p. 8).” Nahúa women adorning their garments with embroidered flowers, therefore suggests that the Nahúas consider textile making to be a valuable artistic practice. Extending this symbolic meaning to my research endeavours as a PhD student, the flowers of my new identity as a Mexican a/r/tographer are blossoming in Canadian soil. Ironically it is thanks to my ongoing dislocation that I have finally achieved a sense of belonging within Mexican culture. From this state of cultural displacement, I have looked at my past and found ways of integrating it into my present and future life. Now I know that wherever I go, flowers will connect me with the spiritual world of my Indigenous ancestors. Flowers are now integral to my aesthetic vocabulary as I construct a dignified path as a woman that has inhabited many worlds. I do not yet know the new directions this path will take. But I am certain that my

harvest has been rich. The new batch of flowers growing within my mestiza consciousness will help me to develop a socially conscious way of being an artist/teacher/researcher.

Tying Up My Studio-Based Allegory

I am now arriving to the finishing touches of my a/r/tographic weave. It is within this space of creation that my a/r/tographic allegory on Mexican cultural identity begins to take shape. I am now in position to answer the first question posed at the start of my living inquiry. As stated in Chapter 1 , the piece entitled *Superficie / Surface* (2005) represented the underlying (or intuitive) query guiding my research: What is hidden underneath or, perhaps, held within this textile surface (my artwork)? In other words, my objective was to unveil the ideas, values, and/or experiences that could have (in the past) subconsciously led me to conceptualize art works that incorporated Indigenous aesthetics. This for me was equal to (re)defining my artistic identity in a way that I could make space for my the research interest that have been unfolding along my living inquiry. In this section, I focus on the findings gained through my engagement with memory work through craft-contemporary art as the grounding for me to address the educational significance of my a/r/tographic research in the following chapter.

Memory work as part of my living inquiry method allowed me to explore how the local (or place) and the vernacular craft relate to each other within Mexican culture. To achieve this, I reviewed memories of walking in both Mexican urban sites and the countryside. Getting back in touch with my memories of walking, which now I see as metaphors for my life progression, gave me the possibility to further explore the interstices (or the space where hybridity begins) in-between a number of opposite-complementary relations such as Spanish(Indigenous), urban(rural), or male(female) within Mexican society. At the foreground of these relations, I

place elements that characterize Mexican patriarchy. In parentheses, I locate those aspects that relate to my own identity and which I have in many ways un-hidden through my thesis.

Particularly in this chapter and by mapping geographies of self (Sinner, 2008), I realized that these contradictory forces (or relations) also form part of who I am. More important, I realized that this does not necessarily pose a problem. To explain my point, I want to refer to the example of my *Memory Circuits*. In these works, the tensions that emerge from the intermingling of the visual cartographies of Mexican (post)colonial urban sites (Western/Masculine) and my newly found tactile sensibility (Indigenous/Feminine) prevent the viewer from reading my maps in a conventional manner. This for me metaphorically represents the nature of hybrid identities. We are a weave of many kinds of strands, and, thus, our identity cannot be easily defined or labelled.

The Role Played by Memories of Surfaces in This Inquiry

In this chapter, I develop my aesthetic inquiry by (re)thinking the surfaces that I have walked and stepped on throughout my life (the petate, the rock slabs, the red carpet, and the natural landscape). My inquiry was largely ignited by my attraction for the visual and tactile stimuli emanating from these surfaces. Yet as I explored their meaning, I found that the surfaces represented realities and histories more complex and personal than I had initially thought. In this process, metonymic memory representations, or digital photographs and videos, played a similar role to that of the parentheses in my a/r/tographic writing. As a critical analytical tool, they helped me to bring the unspoken reality (and influence) of patriarchal, white-oriented mestizaje to the foreground. For example, the petate is not just a commodity acquired in traditional markets. The petate also reflects a particular way of relating to space. Similarly, the embroidered flowers decorating the Nahúa blouse signal that textile makers are respected and valued within

the Nahúa community. As a child, paying attention to the visual(textural) differences between the rock slabs and the parish's carpet enabled me to make a distinction between the indoor and outdoor spaces of Mexican public space. My analysis of that particular memory shows me that within historical public sites access to particular buildings is restricted. Later on, the red carpet became a personal symbol, the "red trail," that stands for moments of independent learning. Lastly, and going back to the example of *A Piece of Poetry*, this apparently harmonious evocation of the Sierra of Puebla's natural landscape actually encapsulates a personal secret (my sexual trauma).

In short, in my work, surfaces have become metaphors for first impressions. Surfaces, however, hold deeper truths that challenge our perceptive and our interpretative capacities. From this perspective, engaging in an a/r/tographic allegorical praxis means to learn to see beyond the surface (Springgay, 2004) or to (un)hide the truths contained within it so that we may relate to Others in more honest and egalitarian ways. This realization becomes the essence of my a/r/tographic allegory via metaphor/metonymy. My practice of (un)hiding personal memories and revisiting visual-tactile surfaces also sparks new educational reflections nurturing an incipient relational pedagogy. This emerging pedagogy will seek complex curricular conversations (Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2009), which take into account hybrid (or mestiza) ways of being and merge notions of (in)formal education with contemporary approaches to (art)craft practice.



Figure 51. Superficie / Surface (detail # 3).

As I follow the flow of the fold, I become excess.

I no longer reside on the surface (Figure 51).

I now come in and out its rhizomatic interstices (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987).

I have seen both ends of the fold.

This personal (and geographical) text(ile) weave is now expanding into the (un)known, transforming itself as it (un)folds, as it becomes.



THE RENDERING OF EXCESS

Excess may deal with the monstrous, the wasteful, the leftover, as well as with the magnificent and the sublime. It is also the “as yet unnameable” the “other than” —those aspects of our lives and experiences that are potentials and filled with possibility. (Irwin & Springgay, 2008b, p. xxx)

Chapter 6

Movements of Becoming Within this Mestiza A/r/tographic Allegory

As I come to this point in my self-study learning journey, I arrive to a (state) space of excess in which I am finally able to integrate the (self) knowledge gained through my art practice into my emerging educational research agenda. Springgay et al. (2005) claim that excess is a space of intimate creation in which a/r/tographers are able to “re-image ourselves into being” (p. 907). Coming to a consciousness of excess means completing my allegory by disclosing how I have come to embrace my hybridity, personally and professionally. For me, excess is weaving in the finishing ends to the fabric of my new professional (and personal) identity. Excess is the space where all the threads (or renderings) of my living inquiry are connecting together. This is the place where I explain how my way of being a Mexican artist has influenced my approach to educational research. In other words, I have finally arrived to a position in which I can provide insights to the questions posed at the start of my inquiry: How do vernacular textiles, as the basis of contemporary studio practice, provide a lens to interrogate aspects of Mexican cultural identity and the overall notion of hybridity? Why does the practice of craft–contemporary art open third spaces of inquiry for artists, researchers, and teachers? And what are the implications of craft–contemporary art in relation to place and specifically to processes of learning for self and community?

Pursuing an autobiographical art practice grounded in Mexican vernacular textile traditions but experienced between Mexican and Canadian geographies has made me aware of the relational quality of identity. I acknowledge that this geographical in-betweenness is applicable to people like me, who may have adopted a nomadic, transnational lifestyle. Yet going back to my Mexican roots has enabled me to identify myself as a “mestiza a/r/tographer”

or a “mestiza scholar.” But, what does identifying myself as a mestiza a/r/tographer entail in terms of my educational research practices? Much like Chicana feminist writer/scholar/educator, Gloria Anzaldúa, my vision of the educational role that my new mestiza’s consciousness may play, aligns with that of “a liminal subject who lives in borderlands between cultures, races, languages, and genders. In this state of in-betweenness, the mestiza can mediate, translate, negotiate, and navigate these different locations” (1992/2013, p. 280). Grounded in José Vasconcelos’s (1925/2010) *La Raza Cósmica / Cosmic Race*, Anzaldúa (1987/2012) produces a feminist version of mestizaje: a conceptual third space that seeks the democratization of education. The difference between Anzaldúa’s vision and that of Vasconcelos is that Anzaldúa aims for equality through heterogeneity rather than homogeneity. Conversely, Anzaldúa proposes accepting and embracing difference, whereas Vasconcelos’s vision entails coming to a sole form of cultural expression. Like Anzaldúa, I am convinced that my role as a mestiza a/r/tographer would be to generate excess (transformations) within homogenous (or hegemonic) social or educational contexts (whether these be in Canada or in México or elsewhere in the world) so that members of the learning community may access learning experiences that are coherent with their cultural backgrounds. These communities may include artists and educators in formal educational contexts or Indigenous and immigrant communities in informal educational contexts. Within formal educational contexts, my goal will be to facilitate processes of self-discovery and, through these processes, to sensitize future educators to the importance of acknowledging cultural difference (Bhabha in Rutherford, 1990). Within informal educational contexts, my focus will be on recovering vernacular ways of being and of teaching as ways of strengthening individual identity-construction processes and, in so doing, of fostering a sense of belonging to a community.

Taking on the role of a mestiza a/r/tographer for me is about fostering processes of liberation (Freire, 1970). In this sense, my emerging educational agenda may be considered a craft-based version of Canadian literary educational métissage, which seeks to create empathic connections through individuals sharing their personal histories (Haesebe-Ludt, Chambers, & Leggo, 2009). I expect that this form of exchanges will sensitize us to cultural difference. These exchanges may also help us become aware of the ways in which ethnic discrimination and unbalanced gender interactions may have affected our lives. Excess (or liberation) will take place when, based on these exchanges, the members of my future learning communities consciously avoid being part of discriminatory practices. A/r/tographic relational ethics constitute a third space in which I will develop the previously described mestiza scholarship.

Integrating A/r/tographic Relational Ethics Into a Socially Conscious Mestiza Praxis

Since my future praxis will be about transitioning from a self-study into community-oriented activities, my discussion on a/r/tographic relational ethics as well as my craft-oriented pedagogy is about “the yet to be named” (Irwin & Springgay, 2008, p.119). Irwin and Springgay (2008) contend that “the yet to be named” stands for the active dialogue between theory and practice; it is the fusion of the two. Applied to my self-study, the “yet to be named” stands for making a transition into a new cycle of my a/r/tographic praxis. It is precisely my inquiry on my cultural identity, and on hybridity that shows me that relationality is an alternative for my own practice. However, because I do not really know exactly under what circumstances my new educational activities will emerge, the reflections that I share here are coming, to certain degree, from a theoretical perspective. This in itself poses a contradiction to the nature of relational ethics, which are about responding to specific educational contexts rather than coming in with a

fixed idea of how to behave (Springgay, 2008). La Jevic and Springgay (2008) contend that adopting a relational ethical praxis signifies abandoning pre-established ideas of what is ‘right’ and what is ‘wrong’, or who is the Other. In this sense, instead, claims Springgay, a/r/tographers have the possibility of learning to respond to specific situations in a way that is productive for all members of a learning community. As I see it, adopting this attitude also entails relying on collaborative, rather than pre-established plan of action. This, in turn, equals to letting go of authoritarian forms of interactions (La Jevic & Springgay, 2008). Letting go of authoritarian schemes is a more feasible option within informal contexts of education because, within these spaces, there are fewer regulations that define what a learning experience should be like. As a result, adopting non-authoritarian attitude in these contexts will be key for me to be able to create empathic connections. I predict that these upcoming exchanges will become new openings in my self-study and my self-decolonization. Swanson (2008) claims that it is important for a/r/tographers interested in developing a socially conscious praxis to constantly check on the beliefs and experiences that guide our actions. At times, even when there might be a sincere interest in social justice, our actions or attitudes may be led by misguided assumptions, particularly when working with communities that have suffered from some form of marginalization. A/r/tographers, claims Swanson, may be “speaking with the ghosts that [may] haunt our ethical commitments and good intentions defined by the personal activism in our research” (p. 185). What Swanson is implying is that, without being conscious about it, when adopting an educational role, that scholars trained within formal Western educational contexts (for me this includes the English, Spanish, French, and Portuguese both in the First or the Third World) might be prone to adopt attitudes of unintended colonization. From this perspective, it is our responsibility to develop self-reflective and self-critical mechanisms so that we may open

ourselves to the realities of Others (Swamson, 2008). In my case, opening up to the possibility of engaging with communities outside formal educational contexts will now imply awareness of how such influences may have shaped my behaviour. For example, my study on Mexican mestizaje was initially and largely based on the ideas of what it means to be a mestizo(a) transmitted through the formal Mexican system of education. In this system, the average Mexican assumes that pre-Hispanic traditions and contemporary vernacular practices form part of their cultural legacy but does not necessarily include bringing their interactions with Indigenous peoples to a more egalitarian level. I now understand that identifying myself as a mestiza comes with that responsibility.

Weaving Mestiza Geographies generally discusses the situation of Mexican Indigenous (particularly women) artisans. I consider this aspect of my study, however, to be just the beginning of a bigger project. Immersing myself in readings about Mexican history and that of my chosen Nahúa textiles offers me a comprehensive perspective on the politics involved in the production and sustainability of contemporary Mexican material culture. This experience indeed triggers insights for future potential a/r/tographic collaborations with communities of Mexican Indigenous artisans and other textile workers. In other words, for me, seeking contact with Mexican Indigenous artisans will signify the strengthening of my understanding of vernacular crafts and, as such, the strengthening of my mestiza identity. In this way, potential collaborations with Mexican Indigenous populations entail a willingness to learn from them. Similarly, in the case of future work with immigrant populations in community educational contexts, a humble attitude will help me to learn about the values that vernacular crafts from other cultures embody. I am also certain that seeking such forms of educational experiences largely responds to my need

to bring my practice outside of the academic realm and, in so doing, to infuse life into my scholarship.

Introducing My Craft-Oriented Pedagogy

My focus on craft–contemporary art brings together my experiences as a visual artist, a textile designer, and more recently, a craft maker. This focus coincides with Manzanti’s (2011) perspective on the craft as a connecting or fusing agent for contemporary creative visual/material practices. I define craft–contemporary art as a hybrid creative practice that combines traditions of the handmade (craft) with contemporary artistic processes and digital, often design-oriented, technologies that facilitate the emergence of personal visual narratives. These narratives, in turn, attest to the uniqueness of our identity. In this sense, I identify with Pöllänen’s (2011) view of the craft as “self-expression” or “cultural know-how” (p.122) that can help us achieve a better understanding of our social/ecological surroundings and therefore help us become sensible to cultural difference. In other words, craft–contemporary art seen from an educational *métissage* (Haesebe-Ludt, Chambers, & Leggo, 2009) perspective also aims to acknowledge the relationship between craft maker and place (both global and local) as part of the process of learning to see who we are. It is from this position of self-acceptance and self-confidence that we will be able to better understand the Other.

To achieve this, I propose to acknowledge and engage with both the material and practical dimensions of the craft. At a material level, I intend to approach craft objects from a (post)colonial and material culture perspective. This means that the object itself can be treated as a means for investigating cultural identity and exploring what it means to belong to communities peripheral to the dominant or mainstream culture (Helland, Lemire, & Buis, 2014). In contrast,

the “hands-on” aspect of the craft becomes the means through which we may develop a stronger connection with our culture of origin while also finding ways of integrating ourselves into the mainstream culture. In other words, as an artist, as a researcher and as a teacher, I see in craft practice the potential for becoming relational. To further explain this idea, I want to refer back to my own experience of engaging in a weaving praxis as a way to connect with Mexican vernacular textile traditions from a position of displacement. Throughout this weaving practice, I was constantly mediating between the geographies left behind and the learning experiences of my present location. This metaphorical back and forth between my native culture and my current home, led to a state of excess (or transformation) in my own art practice. My work no longer incorporates contrasting colours, as it did when I arrived to Canada. But, at the same time, my work now denotes a more in-depth understanding of the cultural significance of my weaving practice. I now interpret the absence of colour in some of my works (e.g., the memory mappings) as exposure to Canadian snow landscapes. I also interpret these transformations in my art practice as a shift in my way of relying on my sensory experience to create and produce art. I have come to an up-to-date reflection of my own visual and motor skills, or, put in a different way, of my aesthetic sensibilities (Irwin, 2003b). At the same time, spending so much time indoors during winter naturally leads me to heavily rely on electronic devices to communicate with the outside world. This also had an impact on my studio practice, as I found new ways of integrating digital imaging into my “hands-on” practice.

Craft–contemporary art as a pedagogical disposition that combines theory and practice or touch (Springgay, 2004) is also a practice of becoming (Springgay et al., 2005). It is about getting in touch with our core (through the craft object) and letting it guide us into freer ways of relating to place. It is about finding creative ways of locating ourselves within the interstices of

the local and the global. In this emerging pedagogy, engaging with life writing and/or oral histories will support our self-reflective process. This includes interpreting the sociocultural meanings conveyed by craft objects as well as the (self) knowledge gained through our engagement with craft practices. Formal educational contexts more than community-oriented activities may view writing as a more acceptable, even desirable practice. In community-oriented activities, I envision a role for implementing technological alternatives (such as video or audio recording) to document oral testimonies.

In the following sections, I introduce three pedagogical strategies that conform to this craft-oriented relational pedagogy: *life crafting*, *digital craft*, and *subversive cartography*. These strategies can be used independently or in combination, and can be adapted to meet the needs of specific communities of inquiry.

Life crafting as a tool for community building. The term life crafting is inspired by Jefferies's (2011) analogy of the craft as narrative. She contends that craft and narrative are similar in that they are inspired by everyday life and draw on memory as part of an ongoing process or construction of the self. Life crafting, as pedagogical strategy, brings together craft (a practice of touch) and life history as ways to underline the importance of letting others who might be different from us to metaphorically touch and transform our lives (Springgay, 2004). By doing this, I expect to foster habits of seeing through and beyond text and textile(ed) surfaces. When I speak of surfaces, I am referring to socially constructed stereotypes of gender, ethnicity, class, and nationality (Rogoff, 2000). For me, the invisible stands for the life experiences, family influences, and cultural legacies that make us unique and, in turn, influence our emotional responses to our surroundings. Learning to acknowledge and perhaps even see the invisible

within the members of our learning communities will in turn nurture the empathy required to develop positive ways of relating to each other. In my perspective, a community becomes a social structure when its members assume active roles in promoting communal growth. This implies the tacit understanding that shared goals or interests compensate for the potential differences between members. Life crafting aims to ignite such positive attitudes by fostering an interest in self-discovery and craft practice.

Life crafting as a pedagogical strategy has the potential of identifying latent passions, interests, and talents in the process of designing lifelong learning projects as well as creating social networks or communities that can actively support us in the process. To achieve this, I propose the use of vernacular crafts as the basis for autobiographical (art)craft practices. I expect this approach will allow us to get back in touch with our family and communal roots, with the purpose of consciously integrating family-inherited creative (behaviours) practices into our current learning communities. Counsellors Skott-Myhre, Weima, and Gibbs (2012)—who engaged in auto-ethnographic studies as tools to improve their own counselling praxis—contend that understanding how the cultural factor interferes within family relations may provide insights into the ways in which we conduct ourselves within larger social contexts. I want to examine this idea through the lens of the informal and intergenerational passing along of traditions and (aesthetic) creative behaviours. As seen in my self-study, and particularly my memory work with family photographs, I was able to see that my father's introduction of the petate in my household and my mother's buying of traditional Indigenous garments for me and herself fostered my affinity for textile mediums. Grandmother Estela's habit of sewing traditional garments for my mother, and later for my cousins and me was also an important influence. The combination of my mother's and grandmother's actions shows me the strong gender component that

characterizes Mexican vernacular textile traditions. And most important, I now see how the gender component of my research materialized in my own life experience. Furthermore, adopting fibres as my main medium of inquiry within my artistic and academic praxis has largely determined the communities that I have worked with as a professional, and will continue to do so.

I intend to create (third) learning spaces in which members of a learning community are able to identify similarly significant experiences with their (our) own family history. We will consciously draw on these elicitations in order to support learners' personal/creative/professional growth. Such transformations (or excess) will also be framed and supported by each member of the learning community seeing him or herself reflected in community members' responses to his or her works. It is through such reflections that we will be able to generate empathic connections (Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2009). In life crafting as a pedagogical site, individuals will be mutually empowered by the communal acknowledgement of life experiences, cultural difference, and creative talents.

My life crafting approach shares similarities with Szabad-Smyth's (2005) use of objects as means to reconnect with past life experiences and as the starting point of autobiographical art. The difference between her approach and mine is that I am proposing to use vernacular crafts and to seek craft-based approaches to autobiographical art. Throughout my (post)colonial life writing(crafting) practice, engaging with the handmade has allowed me to develop a sense of ownership or being in control of my creative project. This sense of agency takes me back to the standard definition of craft discussed in Chapter 3 that states that the craft is "an activity that involves making something in a skilful way by using your hands" (*Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*). I contend that other aspects of our lives may contain echoes of such skills. For

example, the act of weaving has revealed as a spiritual means of connecting with my Indigenous roots (Figure 52).



Figure 52. White is Not Neutral. Work in progress: wall piece made of white and transparent ribbons (70" x 98").

White is Not Neutral is a work in progress in which I create a metaphor of the white areas of Indigenous colonial blouses (amongst them the Nahúa blouse) to the “white” or Western culture that established itself in México since the colony. In order for Indigenous women to become part of this new system, it was necessary for them to change some of their dressing traditions including covering their torsos (Pomar, 2005; Zavala Alonso, 2014). Weaving became a personal ritual in which I became acquainted with the “whiteness” of this colonial garment (Sahagún, 2014) (Figures 53 and 54).



Figure 53. White is Not Neutral (detail # 1).



Figure 54. White is Not Neutral (detail # 2).

In this ongoing project, the white references the Spanish colonial history as a silencer whereas weaving references ancestral Indigenous traditions. As discussed elsewhere as a mestiza, both forces exist within me. However, as I weave, I realize that Indigenous women artisans did not succumb to the colonial power. They wove and embroidered their blouses in accordance with Indigenous traditions, expressing a profound experience of the land and of the landscape. The motifs depicted on the Nahúa blouse (flowers and birds) as well as other colonial blouses are signs of resistance. It is now time for me to embrace this heritage (Sahagún, 2014). Weaving allowed me to understand that traditions of the handmade are means for transmitting familial and cultural identity. From this perspective, further developing manual skills through my studio practice has provided me with a self-confidence that has supported my socialization activities, as I found pride in talking about Mexican vernacular traditions and my own

engagement with weaving.

In addition, engaging with labour-intensive projects such as weaving, stitching, or assembling provided me with time for introspection and to examine my life. It has also given me the possibility of redirecting my future professional praxis, that is, engaging with craft—contemporary art as a form of excess has also given me the possibility of “re-imag[ing] [myself] into being” (Springgay et al., 2005, p. 907). The visual outcome of my craft practice does not resemble the original traditional techniques of the vernacular textiles that I was working with; instead the visual outcome is reflective of my life history. Similarly, this life crafting pedagogy aims to foster aesthetic expressions reflective of students’ personal visions and experiences.

Digital-craft as a third space for memory work. Contemporary theorizations depict craft as a practice lingering in the interstices between innovation and tradition, manual skill and intellectual capacity, or mechanical repetition and uniqueness (Stevens, 2011). This going back and forth between centre and periphery confers upon the craft a huge potential for initiating critical, political, and controversial social dialogues. Amongst the many manifestations of such contemporary critical and creative practices, there is digital-craft. I define digital-craft as a learning experience that enhances cognitive skills through the exercise of memory. This third space may involve combining craft practice with digital technologies with a design (Zoran & Buechley, 2013) or a fine arts (Treadaway, 2009) orientation. In my case, digital-craft has provided a third space for the pursuit of a (post)colonial autobiographical inquiry. I have used digital-craft to visually communicate memories or stories while also incorporating a critical dimension to my work. For example, I used digital Google Maps to recreate memories of activities made with family members in the Coyoacán neighbourhood as well as other locations

within Central México. Revisiting places and tracing routes through satellite imaging helped me to remember specific details. Then, by making alterations through weaving out or stitching on my digitally rendered maps, I metaphorically ruptured the power-based relations represented by white-mestizaje. Engaging with digital-craft as a hybrid creative practice, also gave me the possibility to observe and to contrast the differences between working directly with materials to those when working with digital media. Digital technologies demand much more visualization work whereas the craft largely relies on touch. Brought together, they offered me a more complex learning experience.

I approached digital photography, video, and stop motion as means through which I could externalize my memories and visually tell my stories. Weaving, stitching, assembling, and collaging in turn, allowed me to navigate emotions associated with such narratives, and, through this, to come to key aesthetic decisions. For example, the animated collage entitled *Coyoacán* (Figure 55) is a visual narrative, or an alternative form of mapping (Springgay, 2007), put together through using printouts of photographs of my former childhood neighbourhood to create an ever-changing collage. As I cut, paste, and add elements to my miniature composite (2.5 x 3.5 in), I progressively address emotional responses that emerged when I revisited the Coyoacán plaza on December 2011 (Sahagún, 2013). Each alteration made to my Coyoacán collage is scanned and later on used to create a visual sequence. In my animated collage, I juxtapose interior and exterior sites of Coyoacán with expressions of Mexican popular cultures (García Canclini, 1993) text and sound. The combination of elements helps me to provide (in)sights into my current vision of this urban (post)colonial Mexican public site. My vision merges nostalgia for my childhood years with concern for the reports of the increasing violence taking within Mexican public spaces since the start of the Drug War in 2006 (Grayson, 2010).



Figure 55. Coyoacán. Still image of a stop motion animation (duration: 1min and 2 s) published in the first issue of *Voke*. Copyright 2013 by Verónica Sahagún. Full animation available at <http://www.vokeart.org/?p=343&spoke=1>

As I further analyze my creative process, I understand that this relatively easy fusion of apparently very different technical procedures unfolded naturally for me due to craft and digital mediums also sharing similar traits. McCullough (2010) claims that both craft and digital imaging entail the use of some form of technology and the need to develop haptic (and I would add synesthetic) skills in order to master such technology. Throughout the “hands on” aspect of my memory work, I invested long periods of time changing or improving technical aspects related to both my handmade and digital work. This leads me to ponder on the connection between making and remembering within an overall learning experience. Jones (2007) argues

that “due to our finite ability to mentally store memories, human societies have produced a series of devices for storing memory in an extrabodily form” (p. 1). Such devices, according to this author, range from clay and rock tablets to computers. In other words, the learning takes place through the process of engaging mind and body in the creation of remembrance mechanisms. From this perspective, handmade objects and digital technologies can be seen as gateways into other peoples’ learning experiences. Digital-craft is a hybrid expression of this human impulse of learning to make things (aesthetic objects this case) while also preserving and sharing the learning experience.

Coming to a digital-craft practice also requires us to acknowledge that each medium demands a different kind of corporeal engagement. In the case of craft objects, Johnson (1997) emphasizes that they are “made of a sense of touch, and invite a tactile response” (p. 293). Seen from a learning-oriented perspective, touch-based interactions with materials and tools, in turn, nurture and inform the subsequent decisions in a creative project (Treadaway, 2009). Our ability to step back and transform the object after a decision is made is limited by the physical qualities of the medium itself; we may want to try different techniques, but the materials will respond better to one in particular. For instance, because I decided that *Memory Circuits* would be made by weaving printed-out strips of paper, I could use only the most basic or “plain” weaving pattern to keep the pieces of paper in place. This pattern involves alternating one strand in the warp with one strand in the weft. If I had produced these maps using threads in a standard weaving loom, I could have alternated larger groups of strands in the warp with my weft passes. Using tapestry techniques or a Jacquard loom would have also given me the possibility of creating maps with more defined shapes. Yet I chose paper weaving because the paper’s sturdiness resembled the material qualities of the dry leaves used to weave the petate. I also went

with paper weaving because I could achieve a “blurred” effect that emphasized the fuzzy quality of memory itself. In this way, when I share the finished pieces, viewers can appreciate the end result and yet somehow infer the steps taken to get there. In contrast, Treadaway (2009) focuses on how digital imaging allows us, at once, to document thinking patterns or our creative process in great detail and to revisit previous stages and modify them without losing their original form or an original idea. Applied to my own experience when using digital imaging, stop motion animation sequencing, and video editing software, I found that reverting images or footage to their original state was relatively easy. Even if technical problems prevent us from reverting, we can always return to backup copies of the original materials. This flexibility makes room for the creation of multiple versions of a story.

I identify in the merging of craft practice and digital technologies a parallel with my metaphorical weaving of my cultural identity. Craft practice for me represents the influences coming from Mexican rural/Indigenous cultures (the Mexican local) whereas the digital stands for the life experiences held in two different urban/global locations: México City and Montréal. Similarly, the vast array of potential technical and technological combinations offered by craft and digital technologies metaphorically represent the infinite number of existing (post)colonial and global hybrid identities. A particularly illuminating example of this is the Mohawk artist Alan Michelson’s *Third Bank of the River* (2009) (see Morris, 2011), a piece in which the combination of ceramics and digital photograph surprised me and, in turn, informed and inspired both my artist and educator perspectives and my ongoing a/r/tographic inquiry. Michelson uses digitally altered photographs of the St. Lawrence River imprinted in individual ceramic panels. By placing individual photographic panels next to each other, he creates a large-scale wall piece that provides a panoramic (and contemporary) view of the river itself while at the same time

referencing the Two Row Wampum belt. This belt is known as a symbol of the welcoming of European peoples into Mohawk lands (Faden, 2003). By integrating the Two Row Wampum belt reference into a digital-craft project, Michelson is bringing Mohawk ancestral values forward in a way that is compatible with contemporary visual languages. He is asserting his identity as a member of the Mohawk community, while also making a political commentary. I interpret this piece as being a critique of Western ambition for land possession as reflected in the national frontiers (Canada–United States) that divide the Mohawk Nation at Akwesasne. Perhaps the difference between Michelson’s position and mine is our individual locations in relation to Indigenous communities. Because he directly identifies as a Mohawk, he is comfortable incorporating the visual reference to the Two Row Wampum belt. In contrast, as a Mexican mestiza raised outside the Nahúa communities, I do not feel that I have the right to incorporate Nahúa symbols into my digital craft practice. The closest that I will get to working with Nahúa symbols is in my memory mapping inspired by the Nahúa blouse. And even in this piece, I make sure to reference flowers in general and not the embroidered floral motifs of the blouse itself. What we do have in common, however, is our use of digital craft to merge tradition and innovation in mappings of the self and to establish a connection to place. This piece serves as an appropriate transition to the last component of this emerging craft-oriented pedagogy. In the next section, I discuss a shift in my view of what can be achieved through mapping as a resource for identity construction and defining our relationship to place.

Subversive cartography as a practice of resistance. Subversive cartography stems from my experiences with artistic map making. Building on feminist geographies, I developed memory mappings (or Mestiza fibre works) by drawing on my bodily (or emotional) responses to

place rather than patriarchal social/institutional versions of what a place represents (Nelson & Seagar, 2005). The (post)colonial dimension of my work emerges when I acknowledge that the *politics of (my) location* (Rogoff, 2000) as a middle-class white (in appearance) mestiza, according to Mexican standards, also affects spatial experiences (Blunt & Rose, 1996). As a result, coming to a subversive cartographic practice also meant becoming conscious of what those emotions told me about place. The step that followed was to create via my studio work a critique of pre-established ways of relating to such locations. Revisiting memories of the countryside made it clear that Mexican natural landscapes represent for me a space for (re)encounter with the self and with Indigenous knowledge. This perspective generally contradicts Western perspectives on the countryside as an empty uncivilized space (Shaw et al., 2006). Indigenous ways do not see the relationship to native lands as one of ownership. Indigenous relationships are established by learning to be with and to listen to the land (Shaw et al., 2006). For me, going back to nature is a way to (re)centre. Listening to the sounds of nature makes space for my inner voice to manifest itself. Exposure to the colours, textures, and smells of nature gives me ideas for future creative works. It is by paying attention to my own aesthetic experiences in nature that I have come to realize that the Nahúa textiles, which form the basis of my studio work, are also manifestations of such kinds of learning experiences.

In a Western colonial (or imperialist) mindset, mapping is about claiming ownership and setting clear territorial boundaries (Ackerman, 2009), which in turn contribute to the creation of hierarchical (class/ethnic-based) social systems. Seen from a global perspective, Mexican citizens are not considered desirable within North American geographies; Mexicans are the only North Americans who require a visa to visit the other two North American countries. Similarly, within the internal geographies of each of these countries, urban spaces—excluding the working-

class and immigrant ghetto areas—mostly belong to the elites, whereas Indigenous peoples tend to remain within clearly delimited locations both in the cities as well as in the countryside. Subversive cartography is meant to question and to rupture such kinds of social boundaries as well as preconceived ideas of what is a relevant learning experience. As I see it, the dichotomy of formal-informal education is another way of establishing the superiority of Western ways of producing knowledge in relation to indigenous or vernacular ways. Put in a different way, formal education stands for serious or rigorous ways of producing knowledge, whereas informal education represents more intuitive learning processes. By moving between both realms, my subversive cartography seeks to bring forward vernacular ways of producing knowledge to recuperate aspects of identity that might have been neglected or denied.

The merging of craft practices such as weaving and stitching with mapping for me represented bringing Indigenous female legacies into a dialogue with the Western patriarchal values that have influenced my gendered experiences in Mexican society. This fusion of apparently irreconcilable sensibilities allowed me to sort through the conflicted emotions raised by Mexican (historical) colonial plazas. These spaces take me back to positive familial memories, but are also representative of the racialization that still prevails within contemporary Mexican society. Crafting as mapping has helped me to accept such contradictions as being part of my identity while also externalizing my emotional responses to these public spaces. Subversive cartography as crafting allowed me to generate alternative readings of space with the purpose of questioning, or even nullifying the surveillance function of maps by making maps that are impossible to read. In this way, I envision subversive cartography as an opening for voicing out experiences of displacement and of further personal decolonization. Displacement may refer to Indigenous peoples being racialized within public Western (post)colonial public

spaces and/or institutions. It may also take shape in the form of immigrant populations being stereotyped or marginalized.

The digital-craft piece titled *Mindscape* (Figure 56) is another example of subversive cartography in which I create a symbolic representation of place through the use of formal elements associated to Minimalism (multiple geometrical modules and a scheme of greys) to a depiction of a Mexican landscape. In *Mindscape* I deliberately incorporate a minimal amount of landscape imagery as a way to respond to the stereotypical renderings of Mexican landscapes and peoples propagated by American visual culture (Speedy González being a salient example) in which Mexican Indigenous peoples are portrayed sleeping under the shadow of a Saguaro cactus, a species that grows in the northern desert of Sonora and Arizona. This subversive mestiza mapping combines my family history with practices learned in the Mexican countryside that constitute a form of living inquiry. Through this piece, I deliberately go back to the Texcoco Sierra landscapes of my early childhood memories (Figures 57, 58, and 59). The cactus that I am presenting here is the cactus known as *nopal* or *nopalli* (Barros & Buenrostro, 2010), a Nahúa word still used in Mexican society to refer to the prickly pear cactus. The nopal is most characteristic of the Central México Sierras (including Texcoco and Puebla), the natural landscapes that I was exposed to throughout my childhood and early adult years. Sights of *nopaleras* (cactus plantations) permeate my memories of walking in the Texcoco Sierra with my father. I never saw a mestizo or an Indigenous person sleeping under the shadows of a nopal. Indeed, I would not recommend doing so, as the nopales and the species of small cacti that usually grow nearby are covered with thorns. Instead, I have plenty of memories of countrymen and women carefully separating the nopal from its fruit, the prickly pear, also known as tuna (Spanish) or xoconochtli (Nahuatl) (Barros & Buenrostro, 2010), so that people may eat them.

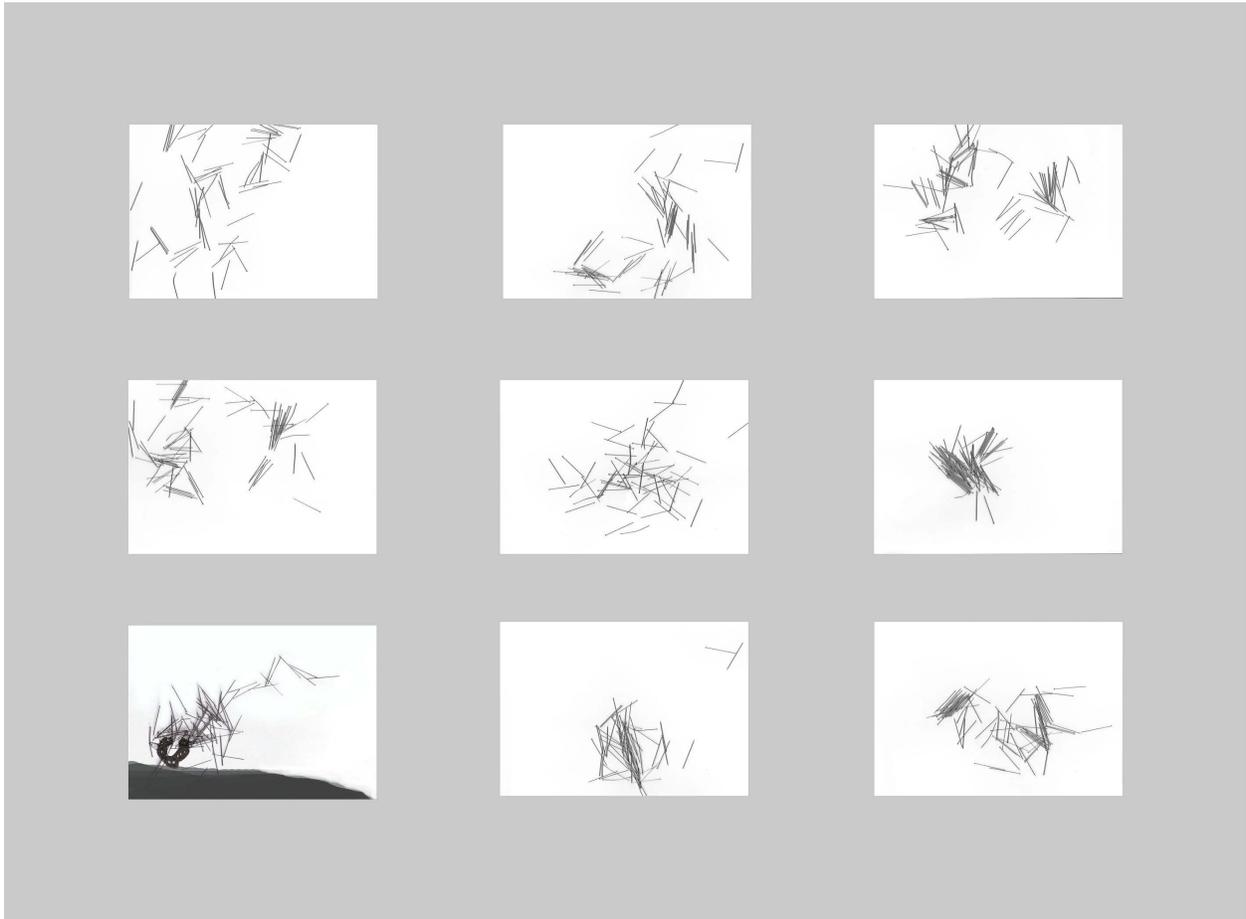


Figure 56. Mindscape (2013). Digital-collage Polyptych (9 cards of 5 x 7 in).



Figure 57. Texcoco Sierra I (2011). Photograph retrieved from Verónica Sahagún's archives.



Figure 58. Texcoco Sierra II (2011). Photograph retrieved from Verónica Sahagún's archives.



Figure 59. Texcoco Sierra III (2011). Photograph retrieved from Verónica Sahagún's archives.

I also associate this culinary tradition with family stories. My mother and my aunt have told me that my grandfather Rafael shared memories with them of how part of his survival during Revolutionary times was due to him cutting out nopales from the nopaleras. Grandfather Rafael would bring the nopales to the women making tortillas in the market places; he would ask them to grill the nopales for him and sell him some tortillas. He recalled the feeling of satisfaction after having eaten a nopal taco with a pinch of salt and a sip of fresh water.



Figure 60. *Nopales Stand in the Texcoco Market* (2011). Photograph published in the first issue of *Voke*. Copyright 2013 by Verónica Sahagún.

Mindscape is a way to honour this indigenous Mexican plant, and, by doing so, to remind myself of my family's roots. The nopal literally supported the survival of my maternal

Grandfather (and family) during times of extreme social hardship and violence. Thanks to intergenerational efforts, I do not need to rely on the nopal for my physical survival in this similarly conflicted time in the history of México (the Drug War), making the nopal a symbol of excess in my cartographic mapping of my journey. Instead, my family's efforts have provided me with a new toolkit for survival outside of México: the possibility of developing a transnational scholarship, the nopal of my life today. In this state of displacement, the nopal becomes a symbol of (family) strength that guides my way in this ongoing quest to design a peaceful and dignified living situation.

Springgay et al. (2005) refer to bodily secretions—excrement or blood—to suggest that excess is an expression of the grotesque, the sublime, or the difficult in our living inquiry. Excess implies a sort of transmutation of what is against us into a positive way of looking at things. In *Mindscape* (Figure 60), pins as metaphors for the nopal's thorns—or the nopal's excess—are projected into space as a way to assert my commitment to support vernacular textile traditions and craft practices through my mestiza scholarship. This metaphor is also my way to acknowledge that the hardships or battles held in northern lands are finally bearing fruit. The nopal's thorns (pins) are suspended in space, but the blowing wind will disseminate them into varied directions: the new and (un)expected directions of a/r/tographic paths of inquiry.

During the conceptualization of these three pedagogical strategies, I become aware of the potential contradictions that I might face when putting these a/r/tographically informed ways of working in action. On the one hand, I have decided to treat my pedagogical strategies as frameworks that can be further developed rather than fixed practices. On the other hand, I acknowledge the there is the possibility that the craft-oriented pedagogy proposed here does not meet the needs of all the educational landscapes that I have envisioned. To what extent then do

these three strategies fall within traditional styles of teaching in which the educator arrives with a socially informed curriculum? The only way to identify the successful and the not-so-successful traits of this emerging pedagogical approach is to put it into practice. It is now time to for me to open up spaces for Others to join me in this lifelong project of bringing (or weaving) cultural and geographical differences closer to each other.

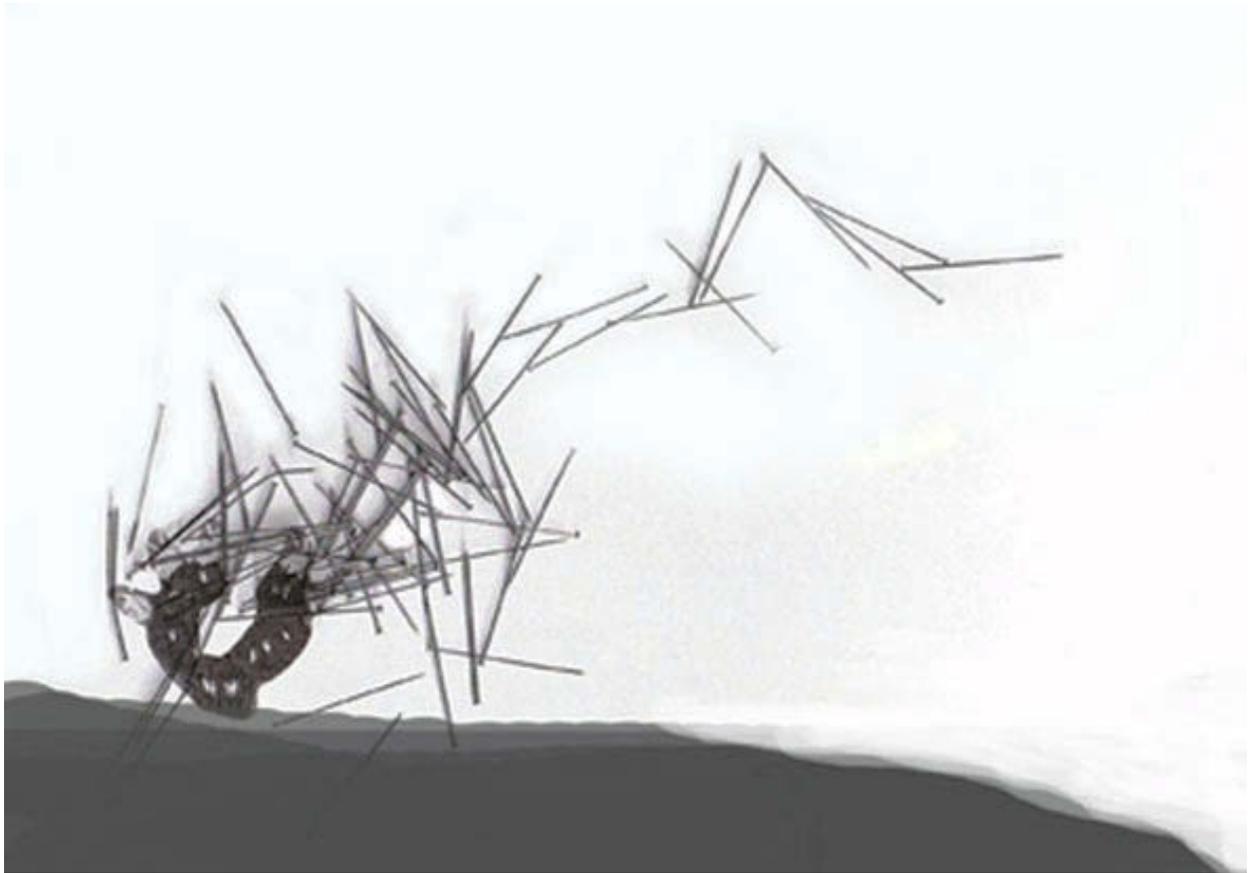


Figure 61. *Mindscape* (card 1).

To Close the Weave

Thinking about my overall educational experience in Canada, I believe that the most valuable lesson learned was to lose the fear of remaining in silence and solitude in order to see myself. This according to Irwin (1999) is a valuable practice for educators. For Irwin, this is an

act of bravery that will open up the possibility of empathizing with other members of our educational communities. To come to this point, I had to unblock difficult memories, review my family history as well as my relationship to specific family members and to Mexican sites. Learning to see myself meant finally bringing the connection between my studio practice and my teaching abilities to the surface. Adding a new depth to my studio practice, through using Mexican vernacular textile traditions, also opened the door for me to access new areas of knowledge. I now can see myself pursuing research in areas such as cultural and women's studies. Most important, I now see that going through this metaphorical fire was the last step to achieving maturity as an educator. Doing this extensive inquiry on my cultural identity and hybridity, gave me the emotional grounding for me to want to open up the scope of my research, and through this, attend to the realities of Others who might be experiencing similar or even worse experiences of cultural displacement. In other words, learning to see myself has expanded my vision and I now feel ready to see beyond myself.

I want to refer to Carlos Castaneda's *Fuego Interno / the Fire from Within* (1984/1991) to further explain what I mean by 'seeing beyond myself'. In this book, Castaneda shares some of the teachings of a Mexican Indigenous shaman known as Don Juan. During his extensive interaction with Don Juan, Castaneda is introduced to the path of the warriors who pursue true knowledge. The ultimate goal within this path is to become a *seer* in the broad sense. For Don Juan, a seer is someone who acts not only with his own interests in mind; he or she acts in order that other more intuitive, perceptual mechanisms (beyond sight) are activated. For the warrior who wants to achieve this, and thus become a seer, says Don Juan, it is necessary to let go of *self-importance*, or our ego, because this makes us lose sight of the things that really matter. In other words, for Don Juan, being concerned with what others may think of us delays our own

journey. In my case, letting go involved learning to tame the fear of being hurt as I opened myself, allowing others to review my life history. Taking this risk gives me a clearer vision of who I am. As a result, I now know that criticism cannot really hurt me. In a way, identifying myself as a mestiza a/r/tographer when I also have the possibility of identifying myself as white is a means to challenging my own self-importance as I am deliberately making myself vulnerable to criticisms in the future. But, identifying myself as a mestiza a/r/tographer is also a way to also redirect my path, in a direction that is true to my heart.

Don Juan teaches Castaneda that letting go of one's self-importance is probably the most difficult challenge to overcome because it entails daily practice and is present in all our personal interactions. This is why Don Juan also defines a seer as a warrior who has been impeccable. For Don Juan, impeccability is not about *not* having feelings. On the contrary, it is about acknowledging those feelings and using them constructively, rather than just being reactive. Castaneda describes how important these feelings are for growing as a warrior of true knowledge: “Don Juan once told me that without sorrow and longing one is not complete, because without them, there is no sobriety and no kindness. He used to say that wisdom without gentleness and knowledge without sobriety are useless”¹³ (Castaneda, 1984/1991, p. 3).

In this way, a parameter for me to know how successful my mestiza relational practice has been will be to see how much I have relied on kindness and sobriety in my a/r/tographic interactions. It is now clear that in order to achieve the egalitarian relations within my educational practice, I will have to keep my self-importance in check. A way to do this will be to remind myself that feelings of being hurt or sadness are part of what make me human, and that I can always learn something from them. Instead, I will see these feelings as openings that may show me something new about myself. In other words, I now prepare myself to enter the spiral

¹³ Translated from the original text in Spanish by Verónica Sahagún.

of a/r/tographic living inquiry again. The difference this time is that my aesthetic compass will be finely tuned, as the tool of impeccability will complement it.

Postlude: Contemplating Future Directions

As I think of methodological tools that might support my plan of creating educational spaces in which cultural difference is acknowledged—particularly within informal contexts of education—two tools seem to naturally fit my pedagogical design: participatory art and a/r/tographic action research. I will offer a brief discussion of the contemporary debates on participatory art and then move on to a discussion of the qualities of a/r/tographic action research and why I am starting to envision the latter as a suitable option for my educational research activities.

The notion of participatory art has become increasingly popular in the realm of community art education. Many of these practices have been informed by Bourriaud's (2002) seminal text *Relational Aesthetics*. This author theorizes the role of the artist as social activist by encouraging viewers to participate in the execution of the piece itself. Bourriaud's work triggered artists' and theorists' extensive exploration of participatory art practices throughout the last decade. As a result, critiques of participatory art have also emerged. Authors like Wilsher (2012) and Clements (2011) criticize contemporary participatory art projects that stage an activity or provide instructions for making an artwork. For Wilsher, this is a "tokenistic" approach in which an idea is represented but the original goal of participatory art is lost. In participatory art, the ideal pursuit is to involve the public in a creative process and to 'co-author' the art piece. Clements asserts that the politics (or ethics) of the implementation of such kinds of projects are questionable. From his perspective, a tokenistic approach translates into participants being asked to align their creativity (and perspective) with the artist's point of view. In order to reverse this situation, says Clements, the artist needs to learn to cede control to the participants so that it is them who define the direction of the artistic project. In my view, when this happens,

the individual identity of the artist becomes integrated into (not to say replaced by) a communal identity.

From a research point of view, Clements' suggestions align with arts-based participatory action research, or in my case, a/r/tographic action research. A/r/tographic action research is about embracing what Irwin et al. (2006), refer to as a "methodology of situations" (p. 70). This relational a/r/tographic methodology is built through collaboration with Others and through paying attention to the unique circumstances that characterize a learning (and creative) experience and the place framing this experience (Irwin et al. 2006). This conception, suggests that the adoption of a/r/tographic action research will support my process embracing with relational ethics (Springgay, 2008). Furthermore, taking the route of a/r/tographic action research would symbolically signify me being ready to make a new shift in my scholarship; it will provide me with up-to-date reflections of my social skills as an artist/teacher/researcher. In addition, potential a/r/tographic action research projects could benefit from a review of Deborah Barndt's research. This author has extensively explored and implemented arts-based action research methodologies to develop social research. More important, this author concentrates on a series of topics that I consider to be essential to my future educational research practices: multiculturalism (Barndt, 2011), art and activism (Barndt, 2006), the Mexican location (as minor) in relation to North American geographies (Barndt, 2008) as well as gender and migration (Barndt, 1982).

As I contemplate the possibility of implementing a/r/tographic action research into my future scholarship, two questions emerge: If I cede control to my future co-learners, how do I make room for my own aesthetic interests? Can I develop criteria for choosing when to engage with participatory art and when to work with a/r/tographic action research?

With the purpose of taking a step towards answering these questions, I have conceived three potential a/r/tographic projects. Each of these projects contemplates working with different populations: immigrant communities, Mexican Indigenous communities, and Mexican women (of Indigenous and mestiza origins) who work in the apparel industry. The first project will involve a combination of a studio work and participatory art. It will be directed to immigrant populations living within cosmopolitan cities such as Montréal. The second project will have a community art education component and will incorporate a/r/tographic action research; I will seek a collaboration with a community of Mexican Indigenous women textile artisans. The third will also integrate an a/r/tographic action research orientation. My objective will be to find the appropriate means to document and disseminate the experiences of Mexican textile workers as a form of academic activism. In the following sections, I provide brief descriptions of the projects.

Virtual Tiles as Narratives of Migration in Public Space

This studio-art project, integrates my three pedagogical strategies. It is conceived as an intervention project with the purpose of creating dialogues between immigrant communities and the public space. My project's general design borrows from my experiences in creating the piece titled *Shifting Territories* (2014) introduced in Chapter 2. As previously mentioned, *Shifting Territories* is a virtual tile (a stop-motion animation piece) inspired by Mexican colonial tile traditions as a way to make my presence visible within Montréal's public life. Having experimented with this approach, this visibility was achieved by projecting my tile onto the street-facing windows of my house. A first step in bringing forward this project will be for me to (re)visit, and to achieve more depth in this aesthetic inquiry. Once I have achieved this, I will be in a better position to work on the participatory application of this project.

For the creation of my subsequent virtual tiles, I will draw on the aesthetics of another Mexican popular art known as *ex voto*. Rizzi Salvatori (2010) generally describes *ex votos* in the following manner: “The Latin term *ex voto* (short for *ex voto suscepto*, “from the vow made”) designates a Catholic votive offering placed in a church or shrine in thanksgiving for a miracle received” (p. 28). She goes on to explain that Catholic *ex votos* may consist of miniature sculptural objects referencing body parts (hearts, arms, torsos, or legs) or paintings that describe the miracle granted. Mexican pictorial representations of a miracle granted are known as *retablos*. These pictorial representations incorporate a tragic scene and are complemented by a textual element, a narrative (usually located at the bottom) that describes the way in which the miracle took place (Fraser Gifford, 2000). This tradition was introduced in México early in the colonial period. Fraser Gifford (2000) claims that it was even used as a tool for Catholic indoctrination. However, the *retablos* tradition has continued to evolve. Indeed, in the colonial period, claims Rizzi Salvatori (2010) *retablo* paintings transitioned from being a European tradition to being practice widely disseminated amongst mestizo and Indigenous craftsmen. In other words, *retablo* paintings progressively became part of contemporary Mexican popular cultures through appropriations of both Mexican folk art and contemporary fine arts (Rizzi Salvatori, 2010) particularly throughout the twentieth century. In this way, *ex votos* have also acquired new forms, such as photographs, small souvenir reproductions, assemblages, and embroideries by rural women (Rizzi Salvatori, 2010; Bartra, 2011), and have appeared in the paintings of modern and contemporary Mexican artists including Frida Kahlo (1932) (see Castro-Sethness, 2004/2005), Julio Galán (1985) (see Galán and Pitol, 2008) and Betsabeé Romero (2001) (see Perrée, 2012). Following this tradition, my own appropriation of this traditional art would support a practice of subversive cartography as I (and Others) make my (Their) narratives

(or experiences) of migration visible within a cosmopolitan urban context.

I foresee my virtual tiles developing in a direction similar to that of one of the most salient contemporary versions of *ex votos*, produced by Mexican immigrants crossing the United States–Mexico border (Duran & Massey 2000; Caruso & Caruso, 2006). But my tiles will also contain an element of hybridity due to my use of digital craft. The video clip titled *Corazón Sangrante / Bleeding Heart* (posted online on YouTube), produced by the video artist Minerva Cuevas in collaboration with the cabaret and performance artist Astrid Hadad, provides insights into the aesthetic production that I intend to achieve. Gutierrez (2001) states that *Corazón Sangrante* is a feminist fusion of the *ex voto* and the *bolero* tradition (a genre of popular romantic music in Mexico) with digital media. In the video, Astrid Hadad appears singing a bolero she composed, which shares its name with the clip. A digitally generated backdrop that changes constantly frames Haddad’s performance. This backdrop fuses widely spread images of the Mexican countryside (incorporating cacti and hills) with urban locations. In particular, it references fine arts institutions such as the Casa del Lago in Chapultepec Garden in México City (Gutierrez, 2001). As the video evolves, so do Hadad’s characterizations, all of them grounded in the pictorial aesthetics of the traditional *retablo*. She appropriates both Mexican Spanish and pre-Hispanic archetypal figures as she asks questions about love and how to cure a broken heart. As I see it, this piece is an allegory of Mexican identity that questions contemporary Mexican patriarchy. As part of my a/r/tographic praxis, my virtual tiles also take on a feminist perspective as I ask questions about love within contemporary global contexts. I will offer insights into personal narratives of migration revolving around romantic (dis)encounters and heartbreaks produced by cultural difference.

The participatory art component of this project will mostly be grounded in the strategy of

subversive cartography. I intend to leave open the direction participants can take: will they see in the tiles their country's vernacular tiles or simply early expressions of public signage. I will invite participants to produce their own version of a street sign as a way to locate themselves within the new cultural landscape that they inhabit. The narratives inspiring the virtual tiles will be entirely grounded in participants' own experiences of migration. My role will be to support the process of creating personal narratives as well as providing technical support for the actual production of the virtual tiles. The last step will be to support participants in the process of making their intervention (projection) in public space. The interventions will be documented for the future dissemination of the project, whether for catalogues or to seek out new exhibition spaces.

Collaboration as a Fusion of Tradition and Innovation

This project entails using a/r/tographic action research techniques in order to collaborate with a community of Indigenous women artisans. I will seek contact with a community interested in making transformations to their textile works for commercialization purposes but who are also mindful of preserving their cultural identity. Some of the problems faced by Indigenous artisans within contemporary global market include the appropriation of Indigenous aesthetics by transnational companies, or even by other communities of Indigenous artisans (Dessai, 2005; Helland et al., 2014), and unfair remuneration of Indigenous artisans' work. Taking this into consideration, the question that emerges for me is: How to support Indigenous women artisans so that they are able to protect their work and feel satisfied for having received acknowledgement and fair pay for it?

Within the last decade, there has been a movement worldwide that seeks developing

sustainable design projects that incorporate vernacular traditions. In México, I have identified two of such projects. The textile collective El Gato con los Pies de Trapo, which is located in the highlands of the state of Chiapas and is composed of a group of fourteen Chamula and Zinacatecas female artisans and one mestiza designer and communicator (*El Gato con los Pies de Trapo Blogspot*). This collective produces embroidered fabric shoes that are sold locally and on-line. These shoes also incorporate such long hours of manual work that it is common that they work by commission. In their blogspot they emphasize the importance of taking decisions as a community. Their main objective is to prevent that hand made embroidery from being entirely replaced by machine embroidery, and in so doing, generate sources of income for Indigenous women (*El Gato con los Pies de Trapo Blogspot*).

Another example is the Oax-i-fornia project in Oaxaca City. This initiative was conceived by designer Raúl Cabra; it is a summer exchange project made in collaboration with the California College of the Arts. This project's main goal is described in Oax-i-fornia's website: "to broaden creative opportunities for local artisans through multidisciplinary and collaborative work with other professionals in visual and creative fields. The project aims to provide longevity to ancestral traditions in contemporary world markets" (*Oax-i-fornia, Who We Are Section*, para. 2). Both projects are examples of hybrid identity formation characterizing the contemporary global society. These kinds of collaborations are also in search of developing more egalitarian relationships between those who have been marginalized and those who have had a more advantaged life. Artists and designers who have been trained within the realm of Western culture provide tools for navigating the contemporary global market; whereas artisans who have been trained within vernacular, communal, and familial contexts share the ancestral values embodied by the actual "hands on" aspect of craft making.

In my experience as facilitator of such kinds of exchanges, I have come to realize the importance of a clear objective, as the two previously discussed examples have shown. This clarity will prevent designers and visual artists from unconsciously taking a more dominant role. During my experience as a facilitator of a collaborative project — taking place in the Museo Textil de Oaxaca (<http://www.museotextildeoaxaca.org.mx/>) in 2010 —in which Mexican artists, artisans, and designers worked together to create a textile collage. Throughout the process, I noticed that Indigenous artisans tended to be reserved, whereas designers and visual artists tended to be outspoken. As a way to build trust and to produce a space that feels safe for Indigenous artisans to express their opinions, I foresee the introduction of a preparatory stage in the collaborative project. In this stage, I will familiarize myself with the community and their textile practices as well as how they operate within the spaces of commercialization in which they work. Knowledge of the latter will provide me with a better understanding of the power-based dynamics that might affect the commercialization of Indigenous artisans' works. The second stage will involve asking Indigenous women artisans about their needs, aspirations, and dreams as the starting point for our collaborative design of a creative project. The final stage will involve seeking out new strategies for the dissemination and commercialization of the community's work.

Body Politics, Textile Labour, and the Global Economy

This case study will draw on feminist views of the *body* (Drew, 2009) and *identity politics* (Nicholson, 2013), on a postcolonial theory seen from a fibre arts perspective (Jefferies, 2007), and on sociological studies of working-class migration. The purpose will be to generate reflections on the participation of México, Canada, and the United States, as global trade

partners, in the creation of social inequalities that impoverish the lives of Mexican textile workers. This case study will take place on Mexico's northern border and will be implemented through a/r/tographic action research methodologies. The case study's purpose is to create openings so that Mexican textile workers can communicate their experiences of the apparel industry and their views on Mexican vernacular textile traditions. Spivak's (1999/2012) critique of hybrid global culture describes how industrialization processes in Bangladesh have progressively weakened local traditions of handmade textiles. I contend that something similar might be happening in North America. As documented by a series of authors throughout more than a decade, the post-NAFTA development of the apparel industry on the northern border of México has attracted numerous young Indigenous women and mestizas in search of work (Canales, 2002; Quintero Ramírez, 2009). My project aims to identify who amongst these working-class women might have previously dedicated themselves to traditional handmade Indigenous practices in their local communities. In this way, my research project's main questions include: What is the meaning of working in a textile industry for women who once formed part of vernacular textile traditions as textile makers? And, how can I as a mestiza a/r/tographer create third spaces for textile workers to communicate and to accomplish the dreams that motivated them to leave their communities?

It is common knowledge that, parallel to the industrialization of this area, a large number of women have been murdered. The feminist filmmaker Lourdes Portillo's *Señorita Extraviada* (1993) is a documentary film on the femicide that began in Ciudad Juárez, Sonora (which borders Arizona), and that is part of the industrialization of this area (see <http://www.lourdesportillo.com>). In this film, Portillo suggests that the Mexican authorities are aware of what is going on and actually might know those who are responsible for these murders,

but choose to do nothing for reasons that are unclear. She suggests that taking action would most likely inflict, one way or another, losses on the transnational companies established in Ciudad Juárez. In other words, to Mexican authorities, because the murdered women were Indigenous or mestizas with close genetic ties to Indigenous peoples, they were expendable (Barberán Reinales, 2010). By extension, my case study also aims to tap into the underlying politics framing the lives of Mexican textile workers as the industrialization of the Mexican border also stands for a feminicidal phenomenon triggered by the implantation of neoliberal economy in México (Olivera, 2006). Potential dissemination materials will bring attention to the contrast between the daily reality that these women have to face and the aspirations of progress promoted by a neoliberal economy.

Achieving this project for me would stand for fulfilling the political/activist potential of my scholarship to the foremost. In a way, this project represents the hybrid identity that I have become. I doubt that my professional practice would have followed this direction if I would not have developed this inquiry from a position of displacement. I am also certain, that being exposed to Canadian perceptions of Mexican culture is largely what prompted me to reflect on the role played by México within contemporary North American geographies. Canada became the third space for me engage in such reflections.

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Appendix 1: Ethics Summary Protocol



Summary Protocol Form (SPF)

Office of Research – Research Ethics Unit – GM 900 – 514-848-2424 ext. 7481 – <mailto:oor.ethics@concordia.ca> – www.concordia.ca/offices/oor.html

Important Information for All Researchers

Please take note of the following before completing this form:

- You must not conduct research involving human participants until you have received your Certification of Ethical Acceptability for Research Involving Human Subjects (Certificate).
- In order to obtain your Certificate, your study must receive approval from the appropriate committee:
 - Faculty research, and student research involving greater than minimal risk is reviewed by the University Human Research Ethics Committee (UHREC).
 - Minimal risk student research is reviewed by the College of Ethics Reviewers (CER; formerly the “Disciplinary College”), except as stated below.
 - Minimal risk student research conducted exclusively for pedagogical purposes is reviewed at the departmental level. **Do not use this form for such research.** Please use the Abbreviated Summary Protocol Form, available on the Office of Research website referenced above, and consult with your academic department for review procedures.
- Research funding will not be released until your Certificate has been issued, and any other required certification (e.g. biohazard, radiation safety) has been obtained. For information about your research funding, please consult:
 - Faculty and staff: Office of Research
 - Graduate students: School for Graduate Studies
 - Undergraduate students: Financial Aid and Awards Office or the Faculty or Department
- Faculty members are encouraged to submit studies for ethics review online on ConRAD, which can be found in the MyConcordia portal.
- If necessary, faculty members may complete this form and submit it by e-mail to oor.ethics@concordia.ca along with all supporting documentation. Student researchers must use this form, except for departmental review. Please note:

- Handwritten forms will not be accepted.
- Incomplete or omitted responses may result in delays.
- This form expands to accommodate your responses.
- Please allow the appropriate amount of time for your study to be reviewed:
 - UHREC meets on the second Thursday of each month. You must submit your study 10 days before the meeting where it is to be reviewed. You will normally receive a response within one week of the meeting. Please confirm the deadline and date of the meeting with the staff of the Research Ethics Unit.
 - CER reviews require approximately 14 days.
- Research must comply with all applicable laws, regulations, and guidelines, including:
 - The [*Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*](#)
 - The policies and guidelines of the funding/award agency
 - The [*Official Policies of Concordia University*](#), including the *Policy for the Ethical Review of Research Involving Human Participants, VPRGS-3*.
- The Certificate is valid for one year. In order to maintain your approval and renew your Certificate, please submit an Annual Report Form one month before the expiry date that appears on the Certificate. You must not conduct research under an expired Certificate.
- Please contact the Manager, Research Ethics at 514-848-2424 ext. 7481 if you need more information on the ethics review process or the ethical requirements that apply to your study.
- A new SPF is required only if the amendment represents a major change to the study.

Additional Information for Student Researchers

- If your research is part of your faculty supervisor's research, as approved, please have him or her inform the Research Ethics Unit via e-mail that you will be working on the study.
- If your research is an addition to your faculty supervisor's study, please have him or her submit an amendment request, and any revised documents via e-mail. You must not begin your research until the amendment has been approved.

1. Basic Information

Study Title: *Weaving Mestiza Geographies: an A/r/tographic Allegory on Cultural Identity through the Lens of Vernacular Textile Traditions*

Principal Investigator: Veronica Sahagun

Principal Investigator's Status: *PhD Student*

Concordia faculty or staff

Visiting scholar

Affiliate researcher

Postdoctoral fellow

- PhD Student
- Master's student
- Undergraduate student
- Other (please specify):

Type of submission: *New Study*

- New study
- Modification or an update of an approved study.
- Approved study number (e.g. 30001234):

Where will the research be conducted? Mexico and Canada

2. Study Team and Contact Information*

Role	Name	Institution† / Department / Address‡	Phone #	e-mail address
Principal Investigator	Veronica Sahagun	Concordia University Art Education EV. 2.635	514 975 2508	veronicasahagun@gmail.com
Faculty supervisor§	Linda Szabad-Smyth	EV.2.629	ext. 4645	linda.szabad-smyth@concordia.ca

Notes:

- * If additional space is required, please submit a list of team members as a separate document.
- †For team members who are external to Concordia only.
- ‡For individuals based at Concordia, please provide only the building and room number, e.g. GM-910.03.
- §For student research only.
- ¶For research conducted by PhD and Master's students only.
- °Please include all co-investigators and research assistants.

3. Project and Funding Sources

Please list all sources of funds that will be used for the research. Please note that fellowships or scholarships are not considered research funding for the purposes of this section.

Funding Source	Project Title*	Grant Number†	Award Period	
			Start	End
	<i>Weaving Mestiza Geographies: An Artographic Allegory on Cultural</i>	NA		

	<i>Identity Through the Lens of Vernacular Textile Traditions</i>			
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Notes:

* Please provide the project title as it appears on the Notice of Award or equivalent documentation.

† If you have applied for funding, and the decision is still pending, please enter “applied”.

4. Other Certification Requirements Not Applicable

5. Lay Summary

Please provide a brief description of the research in everyday language. The summary should make sense to a person with no discipline-specific training, and it should not use overly technical terms. Please do not submit your thesis proposal or grant application.

Weaving Mestiza Geographies is a self-study focusing on mestizaje, which is a key trait of Mexican cultural identity and is defined as the cultural and ethnic mixing of Indigenous and Spanish people. The motive for this self-study is to design an educational craft-oriented agenda that is consistent with my own experiences as a Mexican artist, teacher, and researcher. I have been engaged in the writing of this project throughout the past year.

Generally put, in this project, I have developed a series of autobiographical art works and written narratives inspired by two vernacular textiles produced by two Indigenous textiles from Mexico that include the petate, which is a dry leaf woven mat, and the Nahua blouse, which is a cross-stitched embroidered blouse. Because these two textiles formed part of my household and family life when growing up in Central Mexico, I used them as a means to explore the Indigenous roots of my identity as a Mexican mestiza. In other words, I used the petate and the Nahua blouse as entry points into memory work with individuals and places in Mexico.

Initially, my process consisted of retrieving (scanning) photographs from my parents’ family albums during a visit made to Mexico City on December 2011. These photographs included family group photographs as well as photographs in which family members were wearing Mexican traditional garments and/or photographs in which my chosen textiles are depicted. As I started writing my narratives, gaps related to the people and the places where these photographs were taken, prompted me to contact my parents, and later on an aunt and uncle, to ask informal questions about my family history. The stories told by them about my family history, and the images themselves enriched my own narratives resulting in my wish to incorporate what they had to say into a chapter of my thesis where I present my family album. I wanted to accurately portray my family’s history and identity. When reflecting on the steps taken throughout this intuitive process, I decided that it was best to seek an ethics review of my research activities realizing that I might need consent from family members to include their stories and photo images.

6. Scholarly Review

Has this research received favorable review for scholarly merit?

For faculty research, funding from a granting agency such as CIHR, FQRSC, or CINO is considered evidence of such review. Please provide the name of the agency. For students, a successful defense of a thesis or dissertation is considered evidence of such review. Please provide the date of your defense.

Yes Funding agency or
 date of defense:

No

If you answered no, please submit a Scholarly Review Form, available on the Office of Research website. For studies to be conducted at the PERFORM Centre, please submit the Scientific Review Evaluator Worksheet.

7. Research Participants

Will any of the participants be part of the following categories? *No*

Minors (individuals under 18 years old)
Individuals with diminished mental capacity
Individuals with diminished physical capacity
Members of Canada's First Nations, Inuit, or Métis peoples
Vulnerable individuals or groups (vulnerability may be caused by limited capacity, or limited access to social goods, such as rights, opportunities and power, and includes individuals or groups whose situation or circumstances make them vulnerable in the context of the research project, or those who live with relatively high levels of risk on a daily basis)

a) Please describe potential participants, including any inclusion or exclusion criteria.

My Research participants are my parents and paternal uncle and maternal aunt.

For my first contact with my parents, I sent an email to ask when and where my chosen photographs were taken. My selected images include a photograph of my parents taken just two years after they got married and three photographs in which I am depicted at a young age sitting on a petate or wearing an Indigenous traditional garment. Throughout these initial informal exchanges, I also asked they knew the story of how and when my grandparents met and what was the ethnic origin of my great-grandparents. At this point, my parents suggested that I contact their older siblings to get more information about both my grandparents and great-grandparents.

b) Please describe in detail how potential participants will be identified, and invited to participate. Please submit any recruitment materials to be used, for example, advertisements or letters to participants.

Research participants included my parents, a paternal uncle, a maternal aunt, and my brother.

- c) Please describe in detail what participants will be asked to do as part of the research, and any procedures they will be asked to undergo. Please submit any I instruments to be used to gather data, for example questionnaires or interview guides.

My initial contact with family members involved sending an email to my parents with my selected images attached. I asked them if they could tell me when and where the photographs were taken and, whether they could share any other memories that my selected images my have awakened. Both of them told me that it would be easier for them to tell me the stories on Skype.

Because my selection of photographs included my mother wearing a variety of traditional Indigenous garments (including the Nahua blouse), I asked her what it meant for her to wear these garments. In turn, during my conversation with my father, I asked him to tell me anything that he knew about the petate which was a vernacular craft introduced by him into our household.

I also asked both of my parents, whether they had any re-collection of how my grandparents met and, of the ethnic origin of my great-grandparents. My father was able to share some stories related to these questions. This included him passing on stories related to my great-grandmother, who was a woman of Indigenous descent. But he also suggested that I contact his eldest brother to get more details about our family's ethnic origin. My mother recalled a few details of how my grandparents met, but was unable to tell me more details about our family ethnic background. She then suggested I contact one of her older sisters for me to get more details.

In the case of my aunt and uncle, there were a few email exchanges in which I told them that I was doing a self-study on cultural identity, and that for me this involved inquiry about the ethnic origin of our families. I then asked them if they knew anything about the ethnic background of my great-grandparents and of the history of how my grandparents met. In the case of my aunt, there were a few follow up emails in which I asked her to clarify a few ideas held in her stories.

As a way to bring closure to this process, I will offer to have a Skype conference where I will act as translator of my own text for each of my family members. I will describe the content of sections in which the information provided by each of them is included and ask them if they would like to make any additions, deletions or modifications.

I will also ask my younger sibling for his permission to publish two images in which he is depicted as a child. The images will be identified by the figure number and title given to them in my thesis.

After completing this step, I will contact my parents, aunt and uncle as well as my brother to have them sign a consent form indicating that they agree to have the information that I

have solicited to be primarily used to fulfill the requirements of my doctoral thesis and additionally to be published and presented at conferences.

The images of family members (parents, grandparent and a great-grandmother) retrieved from the family albums belong to my parents, so I will also ask them for their permission to include these images in my dissertation. This is also due to my grand-parents and great-grandmother having passed away.

- d) Do any of the research procedures require special training, such as medical procedures or conducting interviews on sensitive topics or with vulnerable populations? If so, please indicate who will conduct the procedures and what their qualifications are.

Not Applicable

8. Informed Consent

- a) Please explain how you will solicit informed consent from potential participants. Please submit your written consent form. In certain circumstances, oral consent may be appropriate. If you intend to use an oral consent procedure, please submit a consent script and describe how consent will be documented.

Please note: written consent forms and oral consent scripts should follow the “I understand” format, as shown in the sample consent on the OR website. Please include all of the information shown in the sample, adapting it as necessary for your research.

I am attaching an English and Spanish draft of the consent forms that will be delivered to my research participants. They will be asked to sign both of them.

- b) Does your research involve individuals belonging to cultural traditions in which individualized consent may not be appropriate, or in which additional consent, such as group consent or consent from community leaders, may be required? If so, please describe the appropriate format of consent, and how you will solicit it.

No

9. Deception

Does your research involve any form of deception of participants? If so, please describe the deception, explain why the deception is necessary, and explain how participants will be debriefed at the end of their participation.

Please note that deception includes giving participants false information, withholding relevant information, and providing information designed to mislead.

No

10. Participant Withdrawal

a) Please explain how participants will be informed that they are free to discontinue at any time, and describe any limitations on this freedom that may result from the nature of the research.

The email that I send out to family members for member check via Skype regarding the information they have provided me, will indicate that they are free to withdraw their participation with no negative consequences and, that I will delete any information that they have provided me from my chapter should they wish to withdraw.

b) Please explain what will happen to the information obtained from a participant if he or she withdraws. For example, will their information be destroyed or excluded from analysis if the participant requests it? Please describe any limits on withdrawing a participant's data, such as a deadline related to publishing data.

Information will be deleted from my external drive and email accounts.

11. Risks and Benefits

a) Please identify any foreseeable benefits to participants.

My study will benefit my family in the sense that I have documented the stories of my ancestors, and my own views about our history. This version of my family history may be passed on to family members and saved for future generations

b) Please identify any foreseeable risks to participants, including any physical or psychological discomfort, and risks to their relationships with others, or to their financial well-being.

There are no risks involved. I see no foreseeable risks to their participation.

c) Please describe how the risks identified above will be minimized. For example, if individuals who are particularly susceptible to these risks will be excluded from participating, please describe how they will be identified. Furthermore, if there is a chance that researchers will discontinue participants' involvement for their own well-being, please state the criteria that will be used.

Not Applicable

d) Please describe how you will manage the situation if the risks described above are realized. For example, if referrals to appropriate resources are available, please provide a list. If there is a chance that participants will need first aid or medical attention, please describe what arrangements have been made.

Not Applicable

12. Reportable Situations and Incidental Findings

a) Is there a chance that the research might reveal a situation that would have to be reported to appropriate authorities, such as child abuse or an imminent threat of serious harm to specific individuals? If so, please describe the situation.

Please note that legal requirements apply in such situations. It is the researcher's responsibility to be familiar with the laws in force in the jurisdiction where the research is being conducted.

Not Applicable

b) Is there a chance that the research might reveal a material incidental finding? If so, please describe how it would be handled.

Please note that a material incidental finding is an unanticipated discovery made in the course of research but that is outside the scope of the research, such as a previously undiagnosed medical or psychiatric condition that has significant welfare implications for the participant or others.

Not Applicable

13. Confidentiality, Access and Storage

a) Please describe the path of your data from collection to storage to its eventual archiving or disposal, including details on short and long-term storage (format, duration, and location), measures taken to prevent unauthorized access, who will have access, and final destination (including archiving, or destruction).

My data collection included written responses via email as well as notes taken after my Skype conferences. I will preserve the emails and notes for three years (the latter will be stored in an external hard drive with password protection), and after that, they will be deleted. No one else will have access to both kinds of files.

b) Please identify the access that the research team will have to participants' identity:

	Anonymous	The information provided never had identifiers associated with it, and the risk of identification of individuals is low, or very low.
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	Anonymous results, but identify who participated	The information provided never had identifiers associated with it. The research team knows participants' identity, but it would be impossible to link the information provided to link the participant's identity.
	Pseudonym	Information provided will be linked to an individual, but that individual will only provide a fictitious name. The research team will not know the real identity of the participant.
	Coded	Direct identifiers will be removed and replaced with a code on the information provided. Only specific individuals have access to the code, meaning that they can re-identify the participant if necessary.
	Indirectly identified	The information provided is not associated with direct identifiers (such as the participant's name), but it is associated with information that can reasonably be expected to identify an individual through a combination of indirect identifiers (such as place of residence, or unique personal characteristics).
	Confidential	The research team will know the participants' real identity, but it will not be disclosed.
	Disclosed	The research team will know the participants' real identity, and it will be revealed in accordance with their consent.
	Participant Choice	Participants will be able to choose which level of disclosure they wish for their real identity.
X	Other (please describe)	Mixed. My parents' and my brother's identity will be disclosed but not that of my aunt and uncle.

c) Please describe what access research participants will have to study results, and any debriefing information that will be provided to participants post-participation.

The de-briefing will take place through our Skype conference in which I will act as translator of my own text, due to them having a limited knowledge of the English language. I will describe the content of individual sections in which I have incorporated information provided by each family member.

d) Would the revelation of participants' identity be particularly sensitive, for example, because they belong to a stigmatized group? If so, please describe any special measures that

you will take to respect the wishes of your participants regarding the disclosure of their identity.

No, but I also want to clarify that in my study, my parents and sibling's identity will be disclosed but not that of my aunt and uncle. There will be neither pictures nor names of the latter two. I came to this formula because of my study being a self-study. My own identity is much more related to that of my nuclear family than to that of my aunt and uncle.

e) In some research traditions, such as action research, and research of a socio-political nature, there can be concerns about giving participant groups a “voice”. This is especially the case with groups that have been oppressed or whose views have been suppressed in their cultural location. If these concerns are relevant for your participant group, please describe how you will address them in your project.

No

14. Multi-Jurisdictional Research

Does your research involve researchers affiliated with an institution other than Concordia? If so, please complete the following table, including the Concordia researcher's role and activities to be conducted at Concordia. If researchers have multiple institutional affiliations, please include a line for each institution.

Not Applicable

Researcher's Name	Institutional Affiliation	Role in the research (e.g. principal investigator, co-investigator, collaborator)	What research activities will be conducted at each institution?

15. Additional Issues

Bearing in mind the ethical guidelines of your academic or professional association, please comment on any other ethical concerns which may arise in the conduct of this research. For example, are there responsibilities to participants beyond the purposes of this study? No

16. Signature and Declaration

I hereby declare that this Summary Protocol Form accurately describes the research project or scholarly activity that I plan to conduct. Should I wish to make minor modifications to this research, I will submit a detailed modification request or in the case of major modifications, I will submit an updated copy of this document via e-mail to the Research Ethics Unit for review and approval.

I agree to conduct all activities conducted in relation to the research described in this form in compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and guidelines, including:

- The [*Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*](#)
- The policies and guidelines of the funding/award agency
- The [*Official Policies of Concordia University*](#), including the *Policy for the Ethical Review of Research Involving Human Participants, VPRGS-3*.

Please note that Concordia faculty members may submit this form in MS Word or PDF format from their official Concordia e-mail address. Such a submission will be deemed equivalent to an ink-on-paper signature.

Principal Investigator Signature: _____

Date:

Faculty Supervisor Statement (required for student Principal Investigators):

I have read and approved this project. I affirm that it has received the appropriate academic approval, and that the student investigator is aware of the applicable policies and procedures governing the ethical conduct of human participant research at Concordia University. I agree to provide all necessary supervision to the student. I allow release of my nominative information as required by these policies and procedures in relation to this project.

Faculty Supervisor Signature: _____

Date:

Appendix 2: List of Questions for Research Participants

Questions asked to parents:

1. Do you remember where or when these pictures were taken?
2. Can you tell me the story of how you met my mother (or father)?
3. Can you tell me the story of how my grandparents met?
4. Do you know anything about the ethnic origin of my great-grandparents?

Question made to Mother:

1. Can you tell me why you used to wear traditional Indigenous garments during your student years and as a young professional?

Question made to Father:

1. Do you know anything about the history or production processes of the petate?

Questions asked of my Aunt and Uncle:

1. Can you tell me the story of how my grandparents met?
2. Do you know anything about my great-grandparents ethnic origins?

Appendix 3: Parents' Consent Form

PARENTS' CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN *Weaving Mestiza Geographies: an A/r/tographic Allegory on Cultural Identity through the Lens of Vernacular Textile Traditions*

I understand that I have been asked to participate in a research project being conducted by *Veronica Sahagun Sanchez* of the *Art Education* of Concordia University (veronicasahagun@gmail.com, tel. 514 975 2508) under the supervision of Anita Sinner (anita.sinner@concordia.ca, tel.514 848 2424 ext. 5199) and Linda Szabad-Smyth of Art Education of Concordia University (linda.szabad-smyth@concordia.ca).

A. PURPOSE

I have been informed that the purpose of the research is to contribute to Veronica Sahagun 's Doctoral thesis. Her research is a self-study focusing on Mexican cultural identity and Mexican mestizaje with the purpose of developing a craft-oriented pedagogy. This information is primarily to fulfill Veronica's requirements for her doctoral thesis but additionally to be used in publications and conference presentations.

B. PROCEDURES

I understand that part of Veronica's research consists of creating her own version of our family album using the stories that I have shared with her via e-mail and/or Skype and references to family photographs. In these communications, Veronica asked me questions related to our family history. I have agreed to give Veronica my permission to use the following family photos from our family album:

- () *Mamá Julia*
- () *Grandmother María Luisa and Grandfather Francisco*
- () *Mamá Julia / Grandmother María Luisa*
- () *Grandmother Estela, Grandfather Rafael, and Mother (Conchita)*
- () *Conchita as Tehuana*
- () *Mom and Dad*
- () *Verónica, Salvador, and Daniel*
- () *Conchita as China Poblana*

I understand that I will be given the opportunity to review Veronica's interpretations of my stories through a Skype conference. In this de-briefing session, I will have the chance to request changes, additions, or complete elimination of my story from her thesis.

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

I understand that Veronica's research poses no risks for me but may be of interest to me and other family members who might want to learn and pass on our family history.

D. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences. I also understand that my participation in this project will be (please check one of the following boxes):

() NON-CONFIDENTIAL (i.e., my identity will be revealed in study results)

- I understand that the data from this study may be published.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT.
I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME (please print _____)

SIGNATURE _____

If at any time you have questions about the proposed research, please contact the study's Principal Investigator Veronica Sahagun (veronicasahagun@gmail.com) at the Art Education Department or Anita Sinner (anita.sinner@concordia.ca, tel. 514 848 2424 ext. 5199) and Linda Szabad-Smyth of Art Education of Concordia University (linda.szabad-smyth@concordia.ca).

If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481
oor.ethics@concordia.ca

Appendix 4: Aunt's and Uncle's Consent Form

AUNT'S AND UNCLE'S CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN *Weaving Mestiza Geographies: an A/r/tographic Allegory on Cultural Identity through the Lens of Vernacular Textile Traditions*

I understand that I have been asked to participate in a research project being conducted by *Veronica Sahagun Sanchez* of the *Art Education* of Concordia University (veronicasahagun@gmail.com, tel. 514 975 2508) under the supervision of Anita Sinner (anita.sinner@concordia.ca, tel.514 848 2424 ext. 5199) and Linda Szabad-Smyth of Art Education of Concordia University (linda.szabad-smyth@concordia.ca).

A. PURPOSE

I have been informed that the purpose of the research is to contribute to Veronica Sahagun 's Doctoral thesis. Her research is a self-study focusing on Mexican cultural identity and Mexican mestizaje with the purpose of developing a craft-oriented pedagogy. This information is primarily to fulfill Veronica's requirements for her doctoral thesis but additionally to be used in publications and conference presentations.

B. PROCEDURES

I understand that part of Veronica's research consists of creating her own version of our family album using the stories that I have shared with her via e-mail In these communications, Veronica asked me questions related to our family history.

I understand that I will be given the opportunity to review Veronica's interpretations of my stories through a Skype conference. In this de-briefing session, I will have the chance to request changes, additions, or withdraw my story from her thesis with no negative consequences.

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

I understand that Veronica's research poses no risks for me but may be of interest to me and other family members who might want to learn and pass on our family history.

D. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences. I also understand that my participation in this project will be (please check one of the following boxes):

() CONFIDENTIAL (i.e., the researcher will know, but will not disclose my identity)

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT.
I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME (please print _____)

SIGNATURE _____

If at any time you have questions about the proposed research, please contact the study's Principal Investigator Veronica Sahagun (veronicasahagun@gmail.com), at the Art Education Department or Anita Sinner (anita.sinner@concordia.ca, tel. 514 848 2424 ext. 5199) and Linda Szabad-Smyth of Art Education of Concordia University (linda.szabad-smyth@concordia.ca).

If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481
oor.ethics@concordia.ca

Appendix 4: Brother's Consent From

BROTHER'S CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN *Weaving Mestiza Geographies: an A/r/tographic Allegory on Cultural Identity through the Lens of Vernacular Textile Traditions*

I understand that I have been asked to participate in a research project being conducted by *Veronica Sahagun Sanchez* of the *Art Education* of Concordia University (veronicasahagun@gmail.com, tel. 514 975 2508) under the supervision of Anita Sinner (anita.sinner@concordia.ca, tel. 514 848 2424 ext. 5199) and Linda Szabad-Smyth from the department of Art Education of Concordia University (linda.szabad-smyth@concordia.ca).

A. PURPOSE

I have been informed that the purpose of the research is to contribute to Veronica Sahagun's Doctoral thesis. Her research is a self-study focusing on Mexican cultural identity and Mexican mestizaje with the purpose of developing a craft-oriented pedagogy. This information is primarily to fulfill Veronica's requirements for her doctoral thesis but additionally to be used in publications and conference presentations.

B. PROCEDURES

I understand that part of Veronica's research consists of creating her own version of our family album. I grant her my permission to use the following family photos from our family album:

() *Verónica, Salvador, and Daniel*

() *Daniel and Verónica*

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

I understand that Veronica's research poses no risks for me but may be of interest to me and other family members who might want to learn and pass on our family history.

D. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent at anytime without negative consequences. I also understand that my participation in this project will be (please check one of the following boxes):

() NON-CONFIDENTIAL (i.e., my identity will be revealed in study results)

- I understand that the data from this study may be published.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT.
I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME (please print _____)

SIGNATURE _____

If at any time you have questions about the proposed research, please contact the study's Principal Investigator Veronica Sahagun at the Art Education Department or Anita Sinner (anita.sinner@concordia.ca, tel. 514 848 2424 ext. 5199) and Linda Szabad-Smyth of Art Education of Concordia University (linda.szabad-smyth@concordia.ca).

If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 oor.ethics@concordia.ca