CULTURAL RESISTANCE AND NATIVE TESTIMONIO IN THE AMERICAS:
A Study of the Life Stories
by Juan Pérez Jolote, Nuligak Kriogak and An Antane Kapesh

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores native testimonies in Canada, Mexico, and Québec written between 1950 and 1980. The goal of this research is to study the strategic use of life writing and the testimonial genre by Native subjects in particular in their struggle for self-governance, cultural recognition and survival in order to talk back to the dominant neo/colonial culture.

Testimonio allows Native voices to emerge in scriptocentric culture while questioning the authority of neo/colonial cultures and addressing important issues regarding Native survival. The focus of this study is how the use of testimonial writing allows Native cultures to renegotiate history, fight cultural misrepresentation and resist cultural assimilation. By finding new ways to transmit oral knowledge and traditional heritage, while undergoing the process of mediation, such as translation and/or editing, Native writers are able to judiciously use testimonio as an empowering tool for cultural survival.

The truth claims found in these narratives are discussed individually in order to render a clearer picture about Natives’ oppression in the Americas. This enables the socio-historical specificities of each Native discourse to emerge from various geopolitical contexts and to stand tall against neo/colonial oppression.

In order to better understand how testimonio can put forward Native voices and demands, this study draws on testimonial theory from researchers such as John Beverley, George Yúdice and Georg Gugelberger as well as on postcolonial and life-writing theory.
According to these theorists, testimonio writing speaks urgently about oppression, marginalization and survival, often for political not just aesthetic purposes.

This thesis studies life stories by Juan Pérez Jolote, Nuligak Kriogak, and An Antane Kapesh as example of testimonio, by analysing the collaboration between the author/teller and the editor/translator; the cultural mis/representation within these narratives, and the resistance (if any) these works engage in. The use of native languages (especially: Tzotzil, Inuvialuktun, and Innu-aimun) at the early stages of the collaboration testifies to the ongoing cultural survival of the Chamula, the Inuvialuit, and of the Innu in the 20th century. The political urgency of these testimonios can be observed at the different stages of the process of their liberation in each respective narrative.

Keywords: Native Literature, Testimonio, Intercultural Studies, Cultural Resistance
RÉSUMÉ

Dans ce mémoire, je propose d’explorer l’écriture autochtone publiée entre 1950 et 1980 au Canada, au Mexique et au Québec. L’objectif de cette recherche est d’étudier l’utilisation stratégique de l’écrit par des sujets autochtones, plus particulièrement l’écriture de témoignage (testimonio) dans leur combat pour l’auto-gouvernance, pour la reconnaissance culturelle ainsi que pour survivre. En effet, cette littérature répond au message véhiculé par la culture néocoloniale dominante.

Ainsi, la littérature de témoignage, mieux connue en Amérique Latine sous le nom de testimonio, permet non seulement l’émergence du discours autochtone dans la culture dominante, mais permet également à l’Amérindien de questionner l’autorité des cultures néocoloniales dominantes tout en exprimant les problématiques de la survie autochtone. En examinant comment la littérature de témoignage (ou testimonio) facilite la renégociation historique, la combat envers la fausse-représentation culturelle (cultural misrepresentation) ainsi que la résistance à l’assimilation, cette étude vise à démontrer que ce genre littéraire est un outil favorable qui permet non seulement de redéfinir les méthodes de transmission orale, mais est aussi outil de valorisation culturelle qui permet de mettre en évidence l’urgence des revendications autochtones.

Afin de mieux comprendre comment les testimonios à l’étude permettent de mettre de l’avant les voix et demandes amérindiennes, cette recherche s’inspire non seulement des théories de l’écriture de vie (life-writing theories) et des théories sur la littérature postcoloniale, mais aussi des théories sur la littérature de témoignage telles que discutées, entre autres, par John Beverley, George Yúdice et Georg Gugelberger. Selon
ces théoriciens, ce genre adresse urgemment les problématiques d’oppression, de marginalisation et de survie pour des raisons plus souvent politiques qu’esthétiques.

Finalement, ce mémoire étudie les auto/biographies par Juan Pérez Jolote, Nuligak Kriogak et An Antane Kapesh comme étant des exemples de la littérature de témoignage (testimonio) en analysant la collaboration entre ces auteurs/orateurs et leurs éditeurs/traducteurs; les problèmes de fausse-représentation contenue dans ces œuvres et, finalement, en analysant la résistance (si il y a) que ces testimonios engagent.

L’utilisation des langues amérindiennes (en particulier : Tzotzil, Inuvialuktun et Innuaimun) dans le processus de collaboration témoigne de la survie culturelle des cultures Chamula, Inuvialuit et Innu au travers du 20e siècle. Ces testimonios dépeignent l’urgence politique de leur survie à différents moments de leur processus de libération.

Mots-clés : Testimonio, Littérature Autochtone, Études interculturelles, Résistance
J’aimerais remercier tous les gens qui ont cru en moi et tous ceux et celles qui ont fait de moi la personne que je suis aujourd’hui. Je tiens aussi à remercier plus particulièrement certaines personnes qui ont su être là quand j’avais besoin d’eux. Merci donc à :

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Our language contains the memory of four thousand years of human survival through conservation and good management of our Arctic wealth.

Eben Hopson, 1977, Founder of the Inuit Circumpolar Council
Introduction:

Cultural Resistance and Native Testimonio

Native writing often emerges from colonial oppression and speaks to the dominant non-native cultural groups and to native groups as well, in terms of anti-colonial and post-colonial discourse which valorizes native culture in neo/colonial society. Native testimonios present to the world an alter/native story about the established power relationships between dominant and marginal cultures. The way in which Natives represent themselves raises questions about identity and self-representation and the genre of testimonio appears especially suited to raise such questions. Testimonio, as a genre of life writing sometimes used by Native authors, generally aims for cultural recognition and contributes to a political empowerment of oppressed cultures. John Beverley has defined testimonio as a ‘novel or novella-length narrative’ that is concerned with a life of significance. ‘Told in the first person,’ the genre of testimonio has adopted many literary styles in order to get its discourse heard (“The Margin at the Center,” 24-5). Fiction writing is not generally associated with testimonial writing and the corpus under study in this thesis looks at non-fiction texts. The use of testimonio in native writing enables the authors to culturally, socially and politically resist dominant powers that seek to assimilate and silence their culture. It is at times difficult to see the resistance at work in testimonio. Be it due to a ‘lack of authenticity’ for some readers or to the compliant voice that articulates cultural assimilation, testimonio nevertheless articulates the post-colonial reality in which the authors live and write.

In testimonio such as that of Rigoberta Menchú, the resistance at work is perhaps more obvious due to her unique social position and to the way she articulates the

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1 The neologism “neo/colonial” used in this thesis is short hand for neo-colonial/colonial
necessity for political resistance and activism. When the author of the testimonio is firmly engaged in political activism, it is easier to see, as readers, how this particular genre of life writing enables a resistant author to speak of his/her situation of oppression. But when the author is not as engaged politically, can testimonio still be an efficient medium to speak of what it means to live on the margins of justice and equity? Hence, when the author is compliant with the dominant power, it is also revealing of the situation in which these authors live and the extent of the assimilation that these cultures undergo.
Testimonio, whether resistant or compliant, is nevertheless a “rejection of the master narratives [and] implies a different subject of discourse, one that does not conceive of itself as universal and as searching for universal truth but, rather, as seeking emancipation and survival within specific and local circumstances” (Yúdice, 44). Because of the specificity of each narrative, testimonio cannot be read and interpreted as universal. Thus, it is important to be able to properly read the specifics of cultural survival and political resistance as we will see in the testimonios under study in this research.

The three testimonios studied in this thesis are: Juan Pérez Jolote: Tzotzil collected by Ricardo Pozas and translated from Spanish into French by Jacques Rémy-Zéphir; I, Nuligak by Inuvialuk writer Nuligak Kriogak, edited and translated from Inuvialuktun into French by Maurice Metayer; and Je suis une Maudite Sauvagesse/EUKUAN NIN MATSHIMANITU INNU-ISKEU by An Antane Kapesh, translated from Innu-aimun (Montagnais) into French by José Mailhot, Anne-Marie André, and André Mailhot and published as a bilingual volume.

For this research, I have chosen a corpus of indigenous testimonio from Mexico, Québec and the Northwest Territories (Inuvialuit Settlement Region) in order to present
the readers with a variety of cultural discourses and perspectives regarding the socio-cultural conditions of different native groups. These life narratives have been selected for a number of other reasons as well, one being that this corpus covers a time period starting from the early 1950s to the mid 1970s. This period is significant because of the rapid development of the genre of testimonio in Latin America and because these narratives have come to be produced under various forms of collaboration such as joint editing, transcription, translation, etc. The three texts selected are presented in a chronological order and reflect the development of the genre of testimonio. Furthermore, the collaborative nature of the testimonial genre is a highly debated subject and a study of this collaboration between the editors/translators and the author (the author-teller) is significant because it provides the readers with an understanding of the process through which discourse emerges from below in terms of class, race and power, and on a north-south axis in the Americas. Notwithstanding the collaboration with often non-Native editor/translator in the process of production, these testimonies attest to both the ongoing oppression and the enduring resilience of Natives long after contact.

One of the best known testimonios is that of Rigoberta Menchú, a Quiché woman who faced dreadful oppression which pushed her onto the international scene through a life of political activism for the defence of the rights of Guatemalan natives. This testimonio has been greatly studied and debated due to the disputed truth claims it makes about the oppression of the Quiché people. The analysis of how the genre of testimonio enables native subjects to protest their socio-cultural conditions is a central element of the present study.
The first testimonio to be discussed in this thesis was published in 1952 by Ricardo Pozas who collaborated with a native subject in Mexico to write *Juan Pérez Jolote: Tzotzil*, an account of the life of an indigenous member of the Mexican community. The book depicts not only the poverty in which Juan Pérez Jolote grew up, but also the cultural, socio-political, and linguistic difficulties encountered by Jolote. One of the challenges faced by Jolote is the cultural rejection he experienced when speaking either Tzotzil or Spanish. Jolote’s testimonio, narrated in Spanish, was tape-recorded by Pozas. Conducted as anthropologic research about the Chamula culture, Jolote’s life story can be read as representative of this culture’s struggle for survival.

From the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR) of the Northwest Territories, Inuvialuk writer Nuligak Kriogak has captured public attention with his testimonio about life on the margins. His book *I, Nuligak*, published in 1966, is our second testimonio and is less about the internal dilemmas of the author than about the life Nuligak lived and the changes he witnessed in the Inuit communities. The translation of the original manuscript (written in Inuvialuktun) was only achieved after Metayer had visited Nuligak several times. The modifications Metayer made to the text were proofread by Nuligak during those visits. The fact that this narrative was originally written in Inuvialuktun is revealing of the role language plays in the process of calling attention to a cultural minority. Nuligak’s testimonio is a clear statement of the survival of the Inuit culture and language as well as of the effort and true desire of the author/teller and collaborators to keep them alive.

In 1976, An Antane Kapesh wrote her testimony with the objective of validating, in the eyes of the dominant cultural group and of her own people, the Innu-aimun
(Montagnais) culture. Entitled *Je suis une Maudite Sauvagesse*, this bilingual book talks back, in French and in Innu-aimun on alternate pages, to the neo/colonial discourse of Québec and brings to light a culture and a history that are marginalized and often ignored. Kapesh’s will to communicate the injustices she and others witnessed and experienced reveals the neo/colonial cultural policies of Québec regarding Native culture that undermine Natives’ right to self-determination. Originally written in Innu by Kapesh, this testimonio was translated by José Mailhot, Anne-Marie André, and André Mailhot. Having the French translation side by side with the Montagnais version of Kapesh’s testimonio reveals the author’s attempt to empower her Innu culture and language.

On a personal level, the importance of examining Native testimonios coming from both Latin America and Canada might not be immediately obvious to the readers. On the one hand, having myself family members living in Mexico and Québec has somehow triggered my reflections on what it means to have a multicultural identity and how others, who also share a multicultural identity, come to deal with it. On the other hand, I have always been interested by stories of the underdog, and these life stories are concrete examples in which voices from below can succeed in emerging from the abyss of repression’s darkness by being heard in the higher realms of culture. The process by which these long ignored voices suddenly start being heard is always fascinating. As they come to mainstream awareness, they shed light on whole groups of people, whole cultures and civilizations who have been silenced. The authors manage to be heard often by using the oppressor’s tools in new and original manners. This study attempts to demonstrate how life stories from cultural minorities emerge in mainstream culture and how they are able to get attention by representing life on the margins. An analysis of
these texts in the discourse of testimonio can help explain native populations’ rewriting of history and renegotiation of power.

The genre of testimonio will be discussed in the first chapter. Each subsequent chapter will discuss one of the three selected testimonios separately and will be subdivided into four different sections focusing on the author’s/teller’s use of the genre, the collaboration, the cultural misrepresentation, and the resistance. A short summary of each life story under study will precede this four prong approach. In order to present each Native testimonio respectfully, it is crucial that the specific context (of oppression) in which the subjects live, the resistance articulated in the text, and the collaboration at work in the production of these life stories be discussed separately before comparisons among testimonies are drawn in the conclusion.

This thesis will attempt to see how these narratives can be classified as testimonios. Does the testimonial discourse presented in these works allow recognition of marginal knowledge and give importance to history from below? Are the cultural, historical, economic, political, and sociological truth claims found in these testimonios revealing of the oppression and assimilation of Natives by their respective dominant neo/colonial cultures and also of their resistance and compliance?

The intention behind exploring the genre and the function of testimonio in the selected life narratives aims at demonstrating how these writings serve to put forward the voices of minorities as a form of resistance for cultures from below. The study of the genre, however, will not narrow the understanding of these testimonial writings to generic questions alone. To present these life narratives as mere prototypes of a specific, classified literary genre would not only be contrary to the forms of such narratives that
talk back to history through the use of postmodernist techniques (irony, anger, humour, and (counter) mimicry for examples), but would also be against everything these writings stand for: inclusiveness. This inclusiveness aims to go beyond the mere academic recognition of these authors. Their publications demand, or at least aim for, direct action by way of ensuring cultural and linguistic survival (through culture-based education), while allowing a renegotiation of the existing power relationship (through claims of self-governance) as well as renegotiating the iconographic representation put forward by dominant culture (by resisting the cultural mis/representation that presents Natives as third-class citizens). This study does not present testimonio as a prescribed, hermetic form; rather, some life stories under study in this thesis can now be studied as testimonio even though they have previously been categorized as other genre of life stories (namely: an anthropologic biography, and two autobiographies,) in so far as key formal principles of the genre of testimonio can be found. In other words, the context in which these testimonios arise and the process of collaboration by which they are produced are nonetheless principles of the genre that cannot be overlooked and that are of importance in the analysis of these life stories as testimonios.

Another objective of this study explores the collaboration between the collector/editor/translator and the narrating subject/author/teller. How do both parties influence each other and how do they use each other in order to put forward their agenda? How does this relationship influence the reception of the testimonio? What does collaboration reveal about the socio-cultural position of both the editor and author? Is this collaborative effort empowering or subjugating toward marginal discourse?
The intention in exploring the issue of collaboration is to see how each party is successful in using the strengths and weaknesses of the other culture in order to present another history, another culture, another lifestyle. On the one hand, through this relationship, there is a danger of cultural misrepresentation that can weaken the marginal discourse and that can prevent the process of cultural liberation. On the other hand, it is possible for Native authors to use this collaboration in the struggle for cultural survival and by doing so, resist colonial assimilation. The study of the collaboration between the Native authors and their collaborators/translators aims at revealing the neo/colonial forces at work in the process of producing testimonio.

A further aspect of the life narratives selected for study examines the cultural misrepresentation found in the discourse. Does the testimonio present an assimilated community or does it present a community resisting the neo/colonial oppression? Is the dominant discourse appropriating the native voice? Is the discourse of the narrated subject in the testimonio demanding redress?

The intention behind the analysis of cultural misrepresentation is to better understand how Native oppression is spurred by misrepresentation of the cultural Other. The three testimonios selected for study have not all been read to the same degree and the reception of these testimonios cannot be equally measured or compared since the social and political contexts differ from one culture to another. By addressing cultural, historical, political and social issues, generally ignored by the dominant non-native culture, these testimonios attempt, on the one hand, to fight cultural misrepresentation and, on the other hand, to empower their culture and language. So, those in the academy who are interested in Native literature must remain conscious of the collaborative nature
of these narratives even in the stage of reception. It is important not to appropriate native discourse only for academic purposes.

Another goal of studying indigenous life writings will uncover the strategies of resistance in each testimonio. How does resistance take place through testimonio? Is resistance possible through different cultural means of communication such as testimonios? What does it tell us about the lived conditions in each native community? Besides claims of truth-telling, which address cultural misrepresentation, how do strategies of resistance such as mimicry, irony, traditional knowledge and elements of orality depict their subjugated condition? Is the narrated subject a resistant self or a compliant self? To what extent do these testimonios articulate resistance and/or consent to oppression?

By studying the “I” and the “We” in the corpus, this thesis explores the issues of self-definition and community building in indigenous culture. In other words, it might then be possible to argue that on the one hand, testimonio, as a referential text, resists abuse and injustices and serves as a site of cultural memory for both the individual and the collectivity. On the other hand, what happens when the voice in the testimonio is compliant with the established neo/colonial power and discourse? The strategies used by a compliant self or community, such as mimicry, give the readers an understanding of the persistent effects of neo/colonial politics on the construction of indigenous identity.

The four-pronged approach of this research will hopefully enable a greater understanding and recognition of native experience. These texts under study present not only an alter/native perception of the social apparatuses behind native/non-native relations, but also Native cultures struggling at various stages of the liberation process as
well as the different types of oppression exercised by the dominant culture which vary depending on class, ethnicity, poverty, region, and so on.
Chapter I

Testimonio: Portraits of the Other Americas

The genre of testimonio is rather recent in the study of literature in North America. First emerging in Latin America approximately fifty years ago, it has been argued that the genre of testimonio “came into existence due to the Cuban Revolution, more specifically due to Miguel Barnet’s recording of the life story of Esteban Montejo under the title *Biografía de un cimarrón/The Autobiography of a Runaway Slave* (1966)” (Gugelberger, 8). It is through the publication of dissident voices that the genre of testimonio has gained in importance by the way it exposed cultural and political oppression in what was known as “Third World” or “underdeveloped” countries. Georg M. Gugelberger, in the Introduction to *The Real Thing: Testimonial Discourse in Latin America*, has identified three stages through which the genre has gone since its beginning.

At first the genre of the testimonio was a Latin American ‘thing,’ originating in Cuba in the immediate years of the revolution, then manifesting again in Bolivia before it became nearly a Central American genre. The second stage was the critical response to the testimonio by ‘progressive’ intellectuals in the United States, a majority of whom were women, just as the majority of the producers of the testimonio were women. The third stage in the development of the testimonio was the response of critics in the United States, many of whom were of Latin
American origin, who struggled with the issues of 'lo real' and started to refute the presumed 'left' 'poetics of solidarity,' going 'beyond' the unconditional affirmation of the genre. (5)

The genre was thus first officially recognized by Cuba: “Latin American testimonio coalesces as a clearly defined genre around the decision in 1970 of Cuba’s cultural centre, Casa de las Américas, to begin awarding a prize in this category in their annual literary contest” (Beverley & Zimmerman 1990, 173). Hence testimonio, as a literary production, emerged from the margins of the literary canon. Since its origin is not only from Latin America, but also often from Native oral tradition, holocaust survivor accounts, and feminist witnessing of violence against women, it could be argued that testimonio is an adequate tool that can expose the lived reality of the people who either sustain the way of life of the wealthiest nations or who experience traumatic events due to dominant culture. Testimonio, as a writing process, empowers people by providing them with an alternative means of communicating culture, knowledge, and history through life writing, a medium that is generally reserved for the educated centre.

It is precisely in this process of sharing a reality, a history or a culture that the genre of testimonio has been able to establish a connection with the literary intelligentsia. In its early stage testimonio could best be understood through the analysis of “the anthropological or sociological life history composed from tape-recorded oral accounts developed by social scientists” (Beverley & Zimmerman 1990, 173). Beverley and Zimmerman argue that the roots of testimonio are located in anthropologic research. Through anthropologic research, and life stories as the genre evolved, testimonio has
since been able to speak on behalf of at least some marginal subjects in order to counter
hegemonic cultural, political, and sociological claims made by the cultural majority.
Indubitably, testimonio cannot speak on behalf of all silenced cultures. If we consider
Arnold Krupat argument in *The Turn to the Native: Studies in Criticism and Culture* that
"Native American writing, whether in English or in any indigenous language, is in itself
testimony to the conjunction of cultural practices" (Krupat 17), we can then see how
testimonio, as a medium that is the written transcription of oral culture and history, can
help break that silence located at the junction of multicultural encounters, or as Mary
Louise Pratt calls it: the "Contact Zone." With this term, Pratt refers "to the space of
colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated
come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving
conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict" (Pratt 6). So if we go
back to Krupat’s argument, it means that notwithstanding the language in which
testimonio is produced, it is relevant to and of native and non-native experience and co-
presence in time. Furthermore, while speaking of resistance or compliance to oppression,
this genre not only empowers the native speaker, but also strengthens his/her culture by
renegotiating history.

In Latin America these so-called “underdeveloped countries,” or “developing”
countries, at once the locus of the cultural Other, were slowly exterminating their own
marginal cultural groups through the increase of political and racial oppression. The case
of Rigoberta Menchú is perhaps the most known dissident testimonio to have reached an
international readership. Her description of the harsh conditions and military oppression
the Quiché Indians lived through have drawn international interest on what was
happening and what had happened since the 1930's in Guatemala. To a certain extent, the authors/tellers under study in this research have also worked toward such recognition and have succeeded in getting their voices heard by the cultural majority as well as resisting cultural assimilation and racial oppression. These oppressive actions were the result of political and military involvement from the United States and the Soviet Union even though these interventions were highly covert and are still disputed today. The establishment of dictatorial regimes in various Latin American countries prevented the blooming of cultural institutions and forced these institutions to move from one country to another as Beverley and Zimmerman have argued. “The center of Central American cultural and intellectual life, which had traditionally been Guatemala City, shifted to Costa Rica in response to the relatively open and democratic situation that developed there in the 1950s” (1990, 46). The authors go on to argue that “the new cultural factor that began to intervene more and more in the post-World War II era was U.S. involvement in the creation of a modernized educational and intellectual infrastructure” (45). So, the United States, not only as a political and military force, but as a cultural one as well, shaped the various components of social life in different countries of Latin America (Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala are the countries on which Beverley and Zimmerman center their study).

It is easy to see the relevance of such testimonio in cases like that of Rigoberta Menchú and to a certain extent in the case of Jolote as well due to his cultural and socio-political situation in one of the most oppressed parts of Mexico. However, it might be more difficult to see how it can be applied to testimonio such as that of An Antane Kapesh and of Nuligak. In Canada, authors like Kapesh and Nuligak told and wrote their
stories to expose that social, political and cultural exclusion of the nation building process. For Native authors such as Kapesh and Nuligak, the publications of their life stories meant, among other things, testifying to the fact that the first inhabitants of this country are still alive, still surviving and are still being kept outside the political process in Canada. Of course there have been in the last five years examples of cultural recognition such as the attempt by the Conservative Canadian government to do justice to history by recognizing the importance of the First Nations in Canadian history, but that recognition did not go further than mere paper forms. Empowerment of marginalized cultures is not necessarily as corollary to recognition of past wrongs. Many of the demands of the First Nations in Canada and much of their political integration and participation are still being ignored. Consequently, the study of authors like Kapesh and Nuligak are, like Latin American authors, relevant to understanding political exclusion.

After the Cuban Revolution there was not only a need, but a necessity to position marginalized American cultures against mainstream culture and in this sense, it could even be argued that there was a very political flavour to this cultural legitimization of the genre of testimonio. Therefore, it is not so difficult to find the marked interest of Cuba in recognizing the literary value of testimonio. It is, in fact, not surprising that this particular genre of life writing found support in Cuba, the center of resistance to the U.S. economy, politics, and culture. Keeping in mind the U.S. cultural involvement in Latin America by the 1950s, Cuba’s recognition of the literariness of the genre of testimonio in respect to cultural prizes could be interpreted as culturally talking back to the increasing cultural hegemony of the United States.
Discussion about oppression that was arising in Latin America through the use of testimonio addressed important issues for the survival of cultural minorities in various Latin American countries. But what happened in Latin America also happened to different and yet similar degrees in Canada. Authors like Nuligak and Kapesh also wrote about their life as cultural minorities in Canada and Québec deal with their positioning as cultural Others. There is a close correlation that can be observed between what has been expressed by authors from Latin America and what Canadian authors like Nuligak and Kapesh have expressed; that is to say: a discourse of resistance to inner or outsider cultural powers that threaten their way of life, their means of survival and their rights.

i. Defining the Genre

One of the most influential theorists on testimonio is John Beverley, author of *Testimonio: On the Politics of Truth* (2004), *Against Literature* (1993), and co-author of *Literature and Politics in the Central American Revolution* (1990). Beverley has provided one of the earliest and most detailed definitions of the testimonio genre. Adopted by many theorists interested in testimonio, Beverley’s definition (first published in 1989) has become the cornerstone of the approach to reading the genre.

By testimonio I mean a novel or novella-length narrative in book or pamphlet (that is, printed as opposed to acoustic) form, told in the first person by a narrator who is also the real protagonist or witness of the events he or she recounts, and whose unit of narration is usually a ‘life’ or a significant life experience. Testimonio may include, but is
not subsumed under, any of the following textual
categories, some of which are conventionally considered
literature, others not: autobiography, autobiographical
novel, oral history, memoir, confession, diary, interview,
eyewitness report, life history, novella-testimonio,
nonfiction novel, or ‘factographic’ literature. (“The Margin
at the Center,” Beverley 24-5)

According to this definition, the narration in testimonio is done by an author/teller that
actually experiences, or at least witnesses, the related events. Furthermore, testimonio is
inclusive of many other genres but does not usually include fiction. Since by definition a
novel is a work of fiction, this why Beverley speaks of the “nonfiction novel” in his
definition. Still, testimonio is not solely a melting pot of literary genres and conventions.
It is much more a cultural and socio-political discourse as opposed to being only
preoccupied with literary aesthetics. Like Beverley, George Yúdice has argued that

testimonial writing may be defined as an authentic
narrative, told by a witness who is moved to narrate by the
urgency of a situation (e.g., war, oppression, revolution,
etc.). Emphasizing popular, oral discourse, the witness
portrays his or her own experience as an agent (rather than
a representative) of a collective memory and identity.

(Yúdice, 44)

To my understanding, the testimonio genre avoids the conventions of the dominant
culture literary aesthetic in a way that disables the reproduction of power (from centre to
periphery) in the literary discourse. By reading or writing testimonio, one can start to break free from the traditional conventions of political discourse that reinforces the idea of supremacy of one culture over another. By using the tools brought by the oppressors such as writing, authors from traditional oral culture have been able to refute their predetermined cultural, economical, political, and sociological roles imposed by the dominant culture. Often kept outside projects of nation building, people living in the margins have been able to get their voices heard by a greater audience by judiciously using the strengths of the colonizers against those who seek to silence them.

Testimonio as a genre of life writing has increasingly been read beside literature and become popular as reading material among the general public. It also adopted many forms, keeping in mind the plurality of genre to which Beverley refers, in order to get these life stories heard. If we, as readers, accept that the genre of testimonio is a cultural chameleon – meaning that different cultural minorities will be using their favoured means of communication combined with dominant forms of cultural expression – what can then define testimonio? If we consider Beverley’s and Yúdice’s argument, as previously mentioned, the resistance of the discourse emerges in a context of political urgency and gives coherence to this genre. Even though not all testimonios are examples of resistance writing, they assuredly provide insightful information about life on the margins whether they are resistant or compliant with power. On the one hand, when testimonio is resistant it:

- calls attention to itself, and to literature in general, as a political and politicized activity. The literature of resistance sees itself furthermore as immediately and directly
involved in a struggle against ascendant or dominant forms
of ideological and cultural production. (Harlow, 28-29)

On the other hand, when testimonio is compliant it pictures a socio-cultural situation
marked not only by neo/colonial prerogatives, but also by the difficulty for cultural
minorities to be heard and recognized by the dominant culture. Because a compliant
testimonio often reproduces the dominant culture’s method of articulating history and
power, it will often mimic the dominant culture’s way of narrating the individual life in
the form of autobiography among other established genres. It then becomes possible for
such a compliant testimonios to effectively seduce its readership because the shock the
readers experience is generally one of pity, one that engages in poetics of solidarity
instead of one that engages in political solidarity such as subaltern testimonios. When a
subaltern testimonio emerges, it becomes difficult to seduce the readers because of the
destabilizing truth it tells to the very culture that reads and oppresses (Colás, 170). But
then again, the collaboration that produces these testimonios for mass readership, whether
they may be compliant or subaltern, greatly influences the reception they have and how
we, the readers, come to deal with these truths.

Previously, I provided Beverley’s earlier definition of testimonio, but it is
important to highlight that his position on testimonio has changed over the years and that
Beverley has been less concerned with policing the genre (Rimstead 1996, 146). His
definition was partially exclusive of the discourse of minority cultures struggling with
issues such as literacy because the collaboration it necessarily implied could only
empower the dominant cultural discourse, and at the very best, represent the cultural
Other in a static iconography. For example, previously Beverley insisted that the genre
included only tellers and collaborators without including subaltern subjects who write their own stories. He is now agreeing with other theorists that testimonio must be more inclusive of texts coming from cultures struggling and speaking from the different stages of their cultural liberation, which Beverley did not recognize previously. In other words, Beverley saw testimonio as a product of the final stages of liberation whereas he now recognizes the necessity for testimonial writing to include texts that speak of the process of liberation. In his article “The Margins at the Center” reworked for his book entitled: *Against Literature*, Beverley addresses this aspect of the theory previously less explored.

Since, in many cases, the narrator is someone who is either functionally illiterate or, if literate, not a professional writer, the production of a testimonio often involves the tape recording and then the transcription and editing of an oral account by an interlocutor who is an intellectual, journalist, or writer. (Beverley, 70-71)

The collaboration between the author/teller and the editor/translator is, as Beverley puts it, “one of the more hotly debated theoretical points in the discussion of the genre” (71). The author also made it clear in the same book that testimonios, which resulted from oral discussion, were as important as those resulting from the writing process since they provide different cultural and political insights through the negotiation of the different cultural coding. According to Beverley, it is precisely this negotiation that then becomes the locus of resistance or resilience and that undoubtedly speaks of the process of liberation.

In *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub define testimonio as an act in progress. Testimonial is
not closing chapters on past events, but rather opening Pandora’s Box while asking the readers to take positions and action. The authors are more concerned with the survival story than they are about literary aesthetics. Felman and Laub’s study of testimony deals with stories of Holocaust survivors. Still, their discussion is highly relevant for our discussion on testimonio. Their theory on testimony clearly differs from Beverley’s earliest definition of testimonio in that, unlike Beverley, they are not so much concerned with who produces the text, because the text can liberate the self. Their focus is rather on the cognitive function of the text in this process of liberating the self from the trauma experienced by the narrator/survivor.

To seek reality is both to set out to explore the injury inflicted by it – to turn back on, and to try to penetrate, the state of being *stricken, wounded* by reality [*wirklichkeitswund*] – and to attempt, at the same time, to reemerge from the paralysis of this state, to engage reality [*Wirklichkeit suchend*] as an advent, a movement, and as a vital, critical necessity of *moving on*. (Felman, 28)

Many theorists have been concerned with the truth/reliability aspect of testimonio and have discredited the genre, perhaps too hastily, on the basis that there could be from time to time inaccuracies found in the narratives. In “The Myth of Authenticity” Gareth Griffiths has argued that “some strategies of authenticity […] within white systems of representation […] disavow the possibilities for the hybridised subjects of the colonising process to legitimate themselves or to speak in ways which menace the authority of the dominant culture” (Griffiths, 241). The necessity for authentic representation and the critics who argue for it is revealing of not only the political and cultural affiliation of such
critics, but is also revealing of the neo-colonialist policies of assimilation they espouse in the way they use the text to counter the efforts of cultural assertion from the minorities. Griffiths further argued that this myth about the authenticity of a text is an idealistic demand that hinders Native speakers from having their voices properly heard and understood. “The danger resides not in the inscription of the alternative metatext as such, but in the specific employment of this metatext under the sign of the authentic to exclude the many and complex voices of the Aboriginal peoples past and present” (Griffiths, 241). The demand for authenticity is one way that the dominant culture discredits and homogenizes native stories because these testimonios can pose a threat to dominant values. Thusly, the production of testimonio is not per se dangerous for the dominant culture, it is rather how these testimonios come to be used or misused (inside and outside the literary field) that may or may not endanger or menace the neo/colonial cultural and political space. Necessarily, when we do lessen our demands for authenticity and see testimonio for what it is we can but observe that there is a fragmentation of the narrative that occurs which cannot be avoided because “[a]s a performative speech act, testimony in effect addresses what in history is action that exceeds any substantialized significance, and what in happenings is impact that dynamically explodes any conceptual reifications and any constative delimitations” (Felman, 5). The text can be read to be less about the description of an exact chain of events than it is about telling a story of suffering and the need to heal. The readers must nuance the truth/reliability aspect of the testimonio because any account of an experienced oppression necessarily means that action surpasses recollection and for that reason, a testimonio can never be entirely true - there are but shades of truths.
ii. I, We, and Them: On the Collaborative Nature of Testimonio

The relationship between the author/teller and the collector/editor/translator is an issue highly debated today as well as an issue that strongly influences the testimonio. For example, the strategies used in the collaboration process for an indigenous testimony have a direct influence on how the testimonio is received by the native and non-native readership. Collaboration can undermine the resistance aspect of the discourse through the reinforcement of cultural misrepresentation; but it also can make the testimonio more available. Before discussing in depth collaborative relations at work in the testimonios under study, it is important to engage in a theoretical discussion on the nature of collaboration.

This theoretical discussion on the nature of collaboration necessarily involves the production of a text and its narrative aesthetic. John Beverley has argued, “that there was a creative or ‘storytelling’ element involved in the construction of testimonial narratives, and I had been criticized on that score for ‘aesthetifying’ testimonio at the expense of its political and ethical urgency” (Beverley 2004, xv). The “political and ethical urgency” of the narrative can, however, only reach the readership through the production of the life story, that is to say the text. There is thus a necessity for the production of a readable text if the cultural Other wishes to have his or her discourse heard.

Furthermore, the reader must not be blind to the strategic usage of the literary production since the production of a discourse that denunciates conditions marked by oppression and marginalization necessarily passes through the collaborative process in order to gain broader attention. More precisely, it is argued here that the aesthetic of the
text, the way it is produced – through collaboration – and published, may contribute to the resistance project put forward within the narrative as well as possibly reinforcing cultural misrepresentation.

In a related way, testimonio implies a challenge to the loss of the authority of orality in the context of processes of cultural modernization that privilege literacy and literature as norms of expression. It allows the entry into literature of persons who would normally, in those societies where literature is a form of class privilege, be excluded from direct literary expression, persons who have had to be ‘represented’ by professional writers. (Beverley 2004, 35)

The collaboration between the author/teller and the collector/editor/translator enables the emergence of a new literary aesthetic that creates a space for the voices and the identities of the Cultural Other. In her article “Testimonio and Survival,” Barbara Harlow has identified the counter-hegemonic space in which testimonial narratives operate. “[T]he collaborative nature of the project reworks the hierarchical structures of power implicit in literature as a cultural institution” (Harlow, 72). In addition to this challenge, by enabling the voices of the Cultural Other to enter the literary canon, testimonial writing also challenges the authority of the dominant discourse. In “What’s Wrong with Representation?,” in The Real Thing, Santiago Colás argues:

[t]he resistance value of testimonio as a cultural practice and artifact […] seems to derive from the tension generated by the disjuncture between these different subjects. It is not the testimonio’s uncontaminated positing
of some pure, truthful, native history that makes it so powerful, but rather its subversion of such a project. (Colás, 170)

Therefore, the production and reading of testimonial writings can promote a discourse of resistance by subverting the power of hierarchy implicit in the dominant discourse. By refusing to be presented and integrated in a static culture, Native authors are able to resist neo-colonialist assumptions by telling their own stories, albeit often in the language of the colonizer. Furthermore, testimonio is produced through the resistance strategy of forcing the dominant groups to recognize the legitimacy of marginal social claims, which leads to the empowerment of the Cultural Other. Consequently, we acknowledge that testimonial writing is marked by the exercise of historical negotiation and the subversion and appropriation of power.

Indeed, the collaborative nature and the aesthetic of the genre of testimonio enable the counter-hegemonic discourse of the marginalized to take place. By challenging the institution of literature and the implicit relations of cultural oppression contained in the dominant discourse, testimonial writing is able to articulate the resistance discourse of the marginalized. Kathleen M. Sands comments on the dichotomy at work in the process of collaboration in her article “Cooperation and Resistance: Native American Collaborative Personal Narrative:”

focus on the collector/editor, as is the case with most criticism of collaborative autobiography, presumes that the collector, as participant in a dominant culture’s ideology, controls the text. Thus critics often miss the power of Native American narrators to use the collaborative process to express difference, to use the narrative events to their own ends, and, in
some cases, to actively resist the collector’s cultural and ideological agenda. (Sands, 138)

These notions of ideal collaboration, where Native speakers are able to use the “collaborative process” to their advantage, necessarily demands cultural adaptation. One of the most obvious adaptations that operates in many testimonios is the linguistic translation. How could readers who not only do not share the same cultural background and references, but who also do not share the same language, be aware of what these life stories testify about? In order to make the discourse of cultural minorities understood by a broader audience, it is crucial to translate these life stories into other languages. But as these life stories are told in indigenous language there is, on one hand the linguistic challenge and on the other hand, there is also, through that linguistic change, a cultural break that operates between author and the audience due to that difference in cultural references. This different cultural background and reference are, for a majority of different cultural readers, difficult to understand.

In the translation process there are words or expressions – not to mention a peculiar reality – that cannot be translated word for word and that needs further explanations. Generally, these cultural precisions made by the translator/editor are about behaviour proper to the culture may it be Chamulas, Inuit or Innu for this research. In order to facilitate the culturally external readers’ understanding of the narrative there is, generally speaking, foot or end notes that aim to provide the readers with an insider comprehension of a reality with which they are not familiar. For example, in Juan Pérez Jolote, Ricardo Pozas uses the footnotes to provide the readers with peculiar knowledge of the Chamulas’ socio-cultural heritage and the implication it has in everyday life.
Je ne sais pas comment les anciens, nos tatas ont fait pour nous donner des noms d’animaux.

(4). Chez certains groupes Tzotzil, le patronyme au indigène correspond à celui d’un animal, d’une plante ou d’autre chose. Ce nom est un des vestiges de l’ancienne organisation sociale. De nos jours persiste l’interdiction du mariage entre personnes ayant le même nom indigène.

(13-14)

In I, Nuligak, Maurice Metayer, like Ricardo Pozas, also uses footnotes to allow a greater understanding of a culturally different narrative. At times these footnotes are concerned with the diet, with social conventions and with technological heritage and expertise. Still, even in the footnotes the cultural precisions and expertise are the translator’s exclusive domain insofar as his or her interlocutor are inclined to share their secrets. Chuck Zerby also argued in The Devil’s Detail: A History of Footnotes that “[n]othing makes clearer that the historian’s facts are melted by interpretation on the skillet of the writer’s temperament” (94).

The Kraresaluks had a boat, a true Eskimo umiak of sealskin.

(6). The Eskimos used two types of boat which they constructed themselves. The kayak, long, narrow and pointed, was the hunter’s canoe. The umiak was the family vessel or whaleboat. […] The frames of these craft were shaped from driftwood, bound with baleen fibres or, when the Inuit could not obtain whalebone, with long willow roots. Roots were
easier to work than baleen fibres, but eventually rotted away while baleen fibre lasted forever. Both kayak and umiak were finished in seal skins, carefully sewn together to make a waterproof finished covering (M M from Nuligak). (26)

In this example we can see that the author, Nuligak, resists Metayer’s expertise not as much as keeping secret part of the cultural knowledge of the Inuit, but rather as resisting an external authority about his culture. Nuligak frees himself from being the object of knowledge in order to be, for the readers, an agent of Inuit culture. The cultural authority in the narrative is henceforth located in Nuligak’s experience rather than in Metayer’s observations and translation. As it is the case in both Jolote’s and Nuligak’s testimonio, the stories at work in-between the lines of the narrative depict a reality that is difficult to render or understand without the help of footnotes. Anthony Grafton argued in The Footnote: A Curious History that, even though there is no guarantee, “the use of footnotes and the research techniques associated with them makes it possible to resist the efforts of modern governments, tyrannical and democratic alike, to conceal the compromises they have made, the deaths they have caused, the tortures they or their allies have inflicted” (233). In conclusion, then, the function of collaboration may be to reduce, transmit, or heighten resistance, depending on its application in each place in the text.
Chapter II

Juan Pérez Jolote: A Cultural Other in Both Cultures

In Juan Pérez Jolote: Biographie d’un Tzotzil, published in 1952, the readers are introduced to the life of the Chamula culture from the parajes\(^1\) of Cuchulumtic in Mexico. The autobiographical subject is named Juan Pérez Jolote and comes from a village called ‘Gran Pueblo,’ also known as Chamula. The distinction between Chamula, the culture, and Chamula, the region, might be confusing as well as the use of Tzotzil in the description of Jolote’s culture. Before analyzing Jolote’s life story, it is important to clarify these distinctions. First, a parajes is a territorial division of Indian villages in the state of Chiapas (Pozas, 6) where Jolote’s village is located. Second, Jolote’s village, Chamula, will be referred to in this discussion as Gran Pueblo in order to minimize confusion between the place and the culture. Third, the culture to which Jolote belongs is called Chamula and their members speak Tzotzil. Since not all Indian Mexican communities speak Tzotzil in this region, it is possible to argue that the use of Tzotzil in the title by the author/ethnographer, Ricardo Pozas, when speaking of Jolote, clarifies the subject’s relation to the indigenous Mexican groups in this area.

Les Indiens Chamulas forment un groupe de plus de 16 000 individus parlant la langue Tzotzil et vivant dans des parajes\(^1\) disséminés sur les pentes des hauts plateaux de San Cristóbal, proches de Ciudad las Casas. Le village de Chamula en constitue le centre. Il est destiné aux pratiques cérémonielles et abrite les autorités politiques et religieuses. (6)

\(^1\) "Division territorial des villages indiens du centre de l’État du Chiapas, constituée de groupes de maisons, grandes ou petites, situées près des terrains de culture" (Pozas, 6)
This point being made, it is relevant to note as evidence of the strength of Mexican Indians: the Tzotzil language has been able to survive notwithstanding the small number of people speaking it at the time Pozas interviewed Jolote. “Les Indiens Chamulas forment un groupe de plus de 16 000 individus parlant la langue tzotzil” (6). Today, speakers of Tzotzil number more than 300,000 according to the 2005 census of National Institute of Statistic and Geography of Mexico (INEGI).\footnote{Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía. (INEGI). www.inegi.org.mx. Web. 22. Sept. 2011} The village of Gran Pueblo is an important political and religious center of the region. These facts are revealing of the Mexican Indians’ cultural and linguistic resilience.

Jolote’s life could be summed up into two main moments: his life outside the community (through his run-away experience) and his life in the community once he returned after some twenty years as the historical clues left suggest. This life story begins with a summary of Jolote’s birth place, but is silent as to his age when he decides to run away from home the first time. According to Pozas, Jolote ran away out of fear of his father who beat him.

During this first experience of running away, Jolote lived with different families and moved around the villages that surrounded Gran Pueblo. Jolote worked for these families but ended up being sold to a plantation owner. After seven months, once his dept was paid, he returned to his village, but stayed only for a month and a half before leaving again. This time though, knowing a little more about how the world functions outside the community, he decided, instead of working for other families with the risk of being sold in exchange for food at any time, to work on a plantation. There, he stayed three years before leaving for further south of Gran Pueblo to work on another plantation. Word had
reached him that his father knew where he was and Jolote wanted to escape his father’s beatings. On that other plantation, Jolote was wrongfully accused of the murder of another worker and was sent to the local prison. Thus, Jolote’s life story becomes both prison narrative and indigenous testimony which follows a traditional lifeline narration (from birth to death) but that yet remains difficult to follow because of the absence of dates and ages.

In prison, Jolote learnt to speak Spanish. He already understood some Spanish before going to prison, but due to contact with other prisoners, he was able to speak Spanish fluently, but only at the cost of losing his mother tongue – Tzotzil – as we learn later in the testimonio. Jolote spent almost a year in detention before the army of Zapata recruited the prisoners and sent them to Mexico City. Not knowing how old Jolote is at the beginning of the life story, we can with fragments of information deduce that the moment when Jolote is sent to Mexico is around 1911. Jolote is, knowingly or not, referring to the assassination of President Madero by Victoriano Huerta and the subsequent uprising of Carranza. Having fought on Zapata’s side (Huerta being an ally of Zapata who fought for land ownership mainly south of Mexico City) and having been injured in battle, Jolote was in the hospital of Mexico City when Carranza entered the town. Free, Jolote attempted to find his way back home but unsuccessfully, meeting no one who could tell him where his homeland was.

He then rejoined the army of Carranza. “Fatigué d’errer dans la ville, j’allai à la caserne m’engager” (36). Revealing of the high political instability of the time, Jolote’s

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garrison was later overcome by Pancho Villa's garrison and Jolote fought once more on Zapata's side. After six months, the general Almazán surrendered to Carranza and Jolote was once more free to go back to Gran Pueblo. It is on the 14th of August, 1930 that Jolote finally gets back home. This first Julian date given on page 45 (from a total of 94 pages) by Jolote is revealing not only of the time he spent moving around – his run away condition and his involuntary participation (according to Pozas) in the Mexican Revolution – but also of the cultural hybridity he experienced as we witness Jolote's difficulties to reintegrate into his community later on.

These travels mark an important aspect of the Native situation in the modern society of Mexico, that is to say: a seasonal geographic exodus to earn money on plantations for their survival. To a certain extent, Jolote's travels embody the discourse of dislocation, economic oppression, and of cultural hybridity and loss. It is on Jolote's return that the effects of such dislocation are felt. The loss of language, "Moi, j'avais oublié la langue" (43); of customs, "J'étais triste; je ne savais plus vivre comme un Chamula" (45); and the loss of the community identity confirmed by some of the villagers conversation, "Écoute, Juan est revenu, on dit qu'il a tué des gens, il a l'air très aladino\(^7\)" (45) are a few examples of Jolote's dislocation and to this extent, of the Chamula culture. According to Pozas, Jolote is a typical embodiment of his cultural community; "[n]otre exemple est typique. Il caractérise le comportement de bien des hommes de son groupe (exception faite de la participation au mouvement armé de la Révolution mexicaine, qui constitue un fait accidentel)" (5). To that extent, Jolote's discourse may be perceived as engaging cultural solidarity. But because Jolote's

\(^6\) Zuñiga, Rubén Osorio. "Villa, Francisco (Pancho) 1878-1923 General." Encyclopedia of Mexico. Volume II.

\(^7\) Aladino/ladino: somebody who has adopted the occidental lifestyle.
discourse has been published and written down by Pozas, it might also be perceived as engaging cultural misrepresentation and hence justifying neo/colonial assumptions regarding political, economic and class divisions between Mexicans and Indian Mexicans.

Once back in his community, Jolote applied himself to learning the ways of the Chamula: the language, the clothing and the customs. After reintegrating with difficulty into the community, Jolote eventually married. With his wife, Dominga, they had one child named Lorenzo. As Jolote reintegrated into his community he assumed political and religious responsibilities like his father before him. Gran Pueblo is the religious centre of the Chamula region. The description of Jolote’s political involvement, at first, and his religious one later give to the reader a greater understanding of the social, political, and religious life of the Chamula culture. Jolote’s description of the various religious and social ceremonies he participated in provides the readers with a greater understanding of this culture. For example, the wedding customs of the Chamula (lengthily expressed from page 51 through 61) and later his religious responsibility and the inherent alcoholism that such responsibility imposes through cultural customs. “Pour gouverner le village pour régler les affaires des gens, pour rendre justice, chaque fois il faut prendre de l’eau-de-vie” (49). The religious responsibilities to which Jolote refers to are also of a political nature, but are not legally recognized by the Mexican government which imposes a governmental representative on the indigenous communities. It is always a ladino and such choice from the government is revealing of the disparities that exist between Indian and non-Indian Mexicans.

8 Ladino: a non-Indian Mexican.
The legal and political disparities that are at work between Gran Pueblo and the Mexican government suggest that these social inequities are directed toward breaking down the autonomy of the Chamulas’ culture and social organization. This enables landlords to recruit and exploit Indian Mexicans under the *enganche* system as well as dispossessing Indian Mexicans from arable land, forcing them to commit to such exploitation. “Ils sont engagés selon le système de l’*enganche* qui consiste à avancer au travailleur une certaine quantité d’argent, ce qui permet à celui-ci de vivre tout en le liant au domaine; d’où le vol et les abus de la part de l’employeur” (7). This type of economic exploitation must be, under all considerations, supported by the Mexican government politics which would explain why such abuses are able to go on. The following comment expresses this very idea that Gran Pueblo suffers from such political division. “Contrairement à ce que prescrit la première partie de l’article 115 de la Constitution politique mexicaine, Chamula [Gran Pueblo] a deux mairies, d’où un décalage entre l’organisation politique générale du pays et l’organisation politique interne de cette municipalité” (69). Such political division as explained by Pozas and lived by Jolote is suggestive of the power relationship that operates between the Mexican government and the Indian communities. To a certain extent, we, the readers, can also witness this power relationship through the production of Jolote’s life story by Pozas.

2.1. Jolote’s use of the Genre

Even though Pozas contributed to the emergence of the Chamula’s cultural discourse, his scholarly or even professional objectives might have entailed the egalitarian relationship that is at work in the production of this life story as it is generally
understood in the theory of testimonial writings. Bearing in mind that Pozas was, first and foremost, an ethnographer studying the Chamula culture in Gran Pueblo (the Chiapas region), however, one must acknowledge that the study of one member of the Chamula culture put Pozas in a relationship that subordinated Juan Pérez Jolote to Pozas’ authority at the reception end through the appropriation of his work on Jolote by the dominant culture. In other words, Pozas enjoys a position of cultural expert for the readers (on the reception end) and his “Introduction” suggests an oversimplification of the Chamula culture he defines. The “Introduction” forces the Chamula people into misrepresentation by conflating them culturally and behaviourally with one individual Indian self. The readers can acknowledge a certain expertise on the part of Pozas, but must remain wary of the power that such cultural oversimplification may have in the definition of power between center and margins.

It is in this relationship between Juan Pérez Jolote and Ricardo Pozas that the neo/colonial tenor of the book emerges. Jolote, being the object of study of Pozas, comes to support not only the cultural assumptions about his community, but also the legitimization of the neo/colonial discourse regarding his culture in the process of national identity through the internalization of the dominant culture’s discourse. Jolote’s discourse (as individual) might then mislead the readers about the underlying collective heteroglossia at work and which Pozas attempted to present through his cultural expertise of the Chamula. The thin line between truth/reliability, or the author’s/teller’s voice, and the narrative construction, the editor’s textual work, often allows cultural generalizations and leads to misrepresentation as Gareth Griffiths has argued. “Even when the subaltern appears to ‘speak’ there is a real concern as to whether what we are listening to is really a
subaltern voice, or the subaltern being spoken by the subject position they occupy within
the larger discursive economy” (Griffiths, “The Myth of Authenticity,” 240). For
example, Pozas’ description of the Chamulas’ ability for manual labour is a
reinforcement of the lived oppressive behaviour of plantation owners in their exploitation
of the Chamulas through unfair working and economic conditions, both which reveal the
inequality in the relationship between Indian and non-Indian Mexican groups. This
relationship between the minority voice, the postcolonial readers, and editors thus shapes
the subjectivity of the Cultural Other. One could then argue that Pozas’ work on and
about Juan Pérez Jolote engages a poetics of solidarity about cultural minorities and
produces a literary work (a textual voice) that struggles to elicit solidarity between
dominant and marginal cultural groups. Although Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak was
speaking specifically of India in her article “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” her argument
about representativity is relevant to this discussion.

For the ‘true’ subaltern group, whose identity is its difference, there is no
unrepresentable subaltern that can know and speak itself; the intellectual’s
solution is not to abstain from representation. The problem is that the
subject’s itinerary has not been traced so as to offer an object of seduction
to the representing intellectual. In the slightly dated language of the Indian
group, the question becomes, How can we touch the consciousness of the
people, even as we investigate their politics? With what voice-
consciousness can the subaltern speak? Their project, after all, is to rewrite
the development of the consciousness of the Indian nation. (27)
On the one hand, Jolote’s testimonio cannot avoid misrepresentation precisely because he chooses to speak, which jeopardizes his representativity status within his community while shaping the Native Mexican iconography in the collective memory of the non-Native Mexican culture (poetics of solidarity). George Yúdice argued that “testimonial writing provides a new means for popular sectors to wage their struggle for hegemony in the public sphere from which they were hitherto excluded or forced to represent stereotypes by the reigning elites” (Gugelberger, 53). On the other hand, Jolote’s testimonio struggles to appeal to the readership of the dominant culture because of what it testifies to. By exposing the exploitation and political oppression, which Native Mexican cultures experience, Jolote’s testimonio breaks with this poetics of solidarity (‘seduction’ in Spivak’s term) and jeopardizes the solidarity that had, initially, charmed the readers from the dominant non-Native Mexican culture (who may have difficulty in engaging solidarity). The distinction being made here is that: on the one hand the study of the broader reality of the exploitation of Mexican Indians, to which Jolote testifies, could impede the readers’ solidarity with marginal indigenous cultures; on the other hand, the study of the life story of one particular individual could trigger the solidarity of the readers through the iconographic misrepresentation of the Native Mexican cultures.

The objectives of producing literary works for Native auto/biographical subjects are often quite different than the objectives pursued by the dominant cultural group. In this case, one can observe that Pozas’ writing is effective in the presentation of the idealization of the Indigenous Other to the Mexican society. The image presented is thus one that does not offend Pozas’ readers since the iconography of the Indigenous Other comes to reaffirm the cultural and social hegemony of the dominant group. As a result of
an interview, the life story of Juan Pérez Jolote, as an object of study, presents an
essentialized image of the Chamulas in order to allow non-Native readers to better relate
to the subject. Still, this image is nonetheless the result of Jolote’s cultural hybridity.

Reasonably, one could argue that Pozas’ writing intends much more to please the reader
in this cultural representation, or rather misrepresentation, of the Mexican Native rather
than reclaiming justice and cultural recognition for this minority group. Yet, Pozas’
ethnographic methodology does present the social and economic organisations of the
Chamula culture. For example: Pozas’ description of the economic system “il est à cheval
entre deux types d’économie, comme tous les hommes de son village : l’une « indienne »
[...] l’autre nationale, [...] de type capitaliste;” (5-6) of the diet “leur alimentation [...]
dépendent presque exclusivement de la culture du maïs, du haricot et de quelques
légumes ; ils tirent ces cultures des terres arides et érodées qu’il fertilisent mais ne
peuvent irriguer,” (6) and of the work on the coffee plantations under the enganche
system, which will be discuss in greater details later in this chapter.

Far from being engaged in political stands for proper recognition of the Chamula
culture and the conditions of their existence in the Mexican society, Pozas’ writing is
rather more concerned with establishing the existence of this cultural group in a written
form that can then be inscribed in the Mexican literary and historical canon. Indeed,
Pozas’ ethnographic methodology results in leaving a written trace, or proof, of the
Chamula culture in the history of the Mexican society rather than presenting a non-
condescending image of this Indigenous Other by allowing cultural and social
generalizations to be read in this life story. Frederic Jameson commented on the
importance of having the voice of cultural minority integrate the dominant culture in his
article “Literary Import-Substitution.” “It is thus ironic that Ricardo Pozas [...] should obscure this dialectical movement by too great a sociological emphasis on typicality and sociological representativity” (187-188). Nevertheless, Pozas’ ethnographic work, no matter how romanticized, assuredly allowed the Mexican society to become aware of the social conditions in which the Chamulas lived.

The challenge in presenting the discourse of the Indigenous Other to the dominant group is effectively one that is not easily accomplished. Indeed, there are traps such as: misrepresentation and objectification of the Cultural Other, and the assumptions and legitimizations within colonial discourse that can favour the reinforcement of the subjectivity of the minority group by the dominant power of the cultural majority. To some extent, Pozas does misrepresent the Chamula culture and legitimizes some cultural assumptions entertained by the dominant culture, but it can also be observed that such mis/representations are only possible insofar that his subject, Jolote, testifies to such perceptions of the Mexican Indians (through his cultural hybridity). Even though not all literature written by Indigenous subjects is the same, nor is it all oppositional, it yet may be argued that the publication of the Native discourse and its implications work quite differently when the discourse is produced and/or published by a Native author. In some cases, the production of the minority voice may serve to revalorize the culture, the religion, and the lifestyle of the minority group as a legitimate way to understand the world. In others, the readers find a compliant Native subject where the discourse is oriented in reminiscence of the past, which favours cultural misrepresentations. Given the tradition of orality in American Native cultures, however, much of the literary production of the New World has resulted from the European colonial settlers’ experience of this
new reality which necessitated new ways of articulating experience. In *Rediscovering the New World*, Earl E. Fitz argues that “[n]ew languages, which would generate the new images and convey the new themes, were solely needed to express the realities of the rapidly evolving American experience, one that looked both backward and forward and that was suddenly possessed of both national and international perspectives” (126). In other words, the arrival of the European settlers in the New World, which occurred quite differently throughout the Americas, has shaped our conception of the American Land and its inhabitants. Edward Said argues in *Culture and Imperialism* that “it was the case nearly everywhere in the non-European world that the coming of the white man brought forth some sort of resistance” (xii). Pozas’ work allows the Chamulas to make cultural claims that positioned them as distinctive cultures evolving outside the dominant culture standards. Hence, it can be argued that contact allowed empowerment (of the neo/colonial dominant culture) and tolerance (of the Native American culture) in the process of cultural resistance between centre and margin (within America – between Native and neo/colonial cultures – as well as between European and neo/colonial American cultures).

According to Pozas’ identification of the literary genre in the title to biography, while being identified by the translator Jacques Rémy-Zéphyr as “Récit de la vie d’un indien mexicain” (Cover), it would be improbable to identify *Juan Pérez Jolote: Biographie d’un Tzotzil* with testimonio even though it is written in the first-person narrative as if Jolote is speaking. Improbable, yes. Impossible, no. In *The Real Thing*, several critics refer to this life story as testimonio and Frederic Jameson even referred to Pozas as “the very founder of the genre” (187). Then what makes it possible to identify
this text with testimonio? What makes it possible is the second-degree reading that we as readers can choose to engage in. As Mikhail Bakhtin argued in “Discourse in the Novel,” “[w]e puzzle out the author’s emphases that overlie the subject of the story, while we puzzle out the story itself and the figure of the narrator as he is revealed in the process of telling his tale. If one fails to sense this second level, the intention and accents of the author himself, then one fails to understand the work” (*The Dialogic Imagination*, 314).

Bakhtin’s concept of heteroglossia at the narrative stage of literary production allows the readers to question the cultural authority over narration in this discussion of Jolote’s testimonio. By displacing the authority of the narration from Pozas to Jolote, the reader can avoid the pejorative conceptions about the Chamulas culture described in Pozas’ list in the “Introduction.” For example: “une constitution physique athlétique chez l’homme [...]; [...] désir d’occuper des postes publics non rémunérés [...]; usage de l’eau-de-vie dans toutes les relations sociales, politiques et religieuses ; [...] un caractère irascible et chicaneur lorsqu’ils sont ivres ; la crainte de la vengeance des hommes et des esprits” (9).

Pozas’ “Introduction” allows him to become the author/anthropologist of the life story instead of giving space to the subject’s/teller’s voice (Jolote) through his appropriation of the speaking ‘I,’ which fixes meaning on the subject. Nevertheless, Pozas’ anthropologic research was not only innovative in the 1950s, but assuredly allowed the genre of testimonio to grow in importance, notwithstanding the later appropriation of Jolote’s discourse by the non-Indian government.

The text is narrated in the first-person, which is usually associated with autobiography (Lejeune) and autoethnography (Pratt), but with testimonio as well (Beverley). It would perhaps be easier to hear the voice of the testimonio’s teller if we
consider the biased nature of the narration in *Juan Pérez Jolote*: *Biographie d’un Tzotzil*. The narrating ‘I’ in the book is to some extent distorted by Pozas, as I argued previously about the “Introduction,” which is 6 pages long on a total of 94 pages and we find, in the entire book, a total of eighty-six footnotes by Pozas while there is one by Rémy-Zéphir. The multiplicity of cultural interventions throughout the book by Pozas tends to portray “the ‘I’ as an implied narrator ventriloquating the ‘he’ or ‘she’” (Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* 185). Smith and Watson thus echo Beverley’s definition on another aspect of testimonio. The authors of *Reading Autobiography* have also spoken of the representativity of the narrator. For the authors, “testimonio unfolds through the fashioning of an exemplary protagonist whose narrative bears witness to collective suffering, politicized struggle, and communal survival” (71). Their argumentation echoes the significance of life experience argued by Beverley. On this point, the representativity of Jolote is recognized by Pozas: “Le livre [...] est le récit de la vie sociale d’un homme en qui se reflète la culture d’un groupe indigène [...]. Notre example est typique” (5). According to these claims, *Juan Pérez Jolote*: *Biographie d’un Tzotzil* can be recognized as belonging to the genre of testimonio on the basis of representativity (Beverley, Smith and Watson) and on the basis that testimonio can be inclusive of other literary genres such as interviews (Beverley). Even though Beverley has not specifically mentioned biography in his enumeration of the different literatures that can be associated with testimonio, he identifies testimonio as having its roots in anthropological and ethnographic life histories that were tape-recorded such as Pozas’, which he names specifically, in the “Margin at the Centre” (25). This narrative can be read as a testimonio if we consider that it results from an interview, a
process that Beverley regards as possibly resulting in testimonio. Yet, Jolote’s representativity functions quite differently whether it is read through the dominant culture’s representational functions – Pozas’ recognition of Jolote’s cultural representativity – or through the subjects representational speech with an oppositional We (Jolote’s cultural representativity granted by his own culture).

The representativity of the narrator and of his narrative cannot be doubted since the locus of authority (the non-Indian Mexican culture) recognizes this very representativity through the sponsoring of Pozas’ research by the Fondo de Cultura Económica, which is a governmental institute in Mexico. No matter to whom the readers grant authority over narration (to Pozas or Jolote), the representativity of the subject of enunciation (Jolote’s life experience) is recognized by Pozas. Jolote and Pozas’ perception on representativity may, however, be distinct from one another. For Jolote, his cultural representativity only makes sense if it is understood as one story among others that share the same conditions of marginalization. Still, Jolote does not appear to be much interested in embodying the broader Chamula’s discourse. The readers understanding of the collective discourse that can be found in Jolote’s testimonio is only revealed through the rendering of the conditions of oppression. Hence, it becomes almost impossible for Pozas to properly present a collective heteroglossia in a discourse that does not emphasize it. For Pozas, Jolote’s cultural representativity is emblematic of the life conditions of the Indian-Mexicans and thus stands in for all other Native-Mexicans as representative. The problem with such a view is that it limits the proper recognition of the different needs and experiences of distinct indigenous cultures. The difference between what Jolote expresses as a specific cultural issue and what the text later translates is that
Jolote’s claims, on the reception end, are interpreted by the dominant culture into a homogenized and standardized indigenous response that does not take into consideration the specific cultural recognition originally demanded. By standardizing its response, the dominant culture risks preventing proper cultural recognition of the cultural specificity and of the oppositional nature of Jolote’s indigenous testimony. As it has been argued in my discussion of Jameson’s reading of Pozas, the author/anthropologist is giving the readers information about the cultural specificities of the Chamulas (in the footnotes) while, at the same time, essentializing (in the “Introduction”) the very culture he describes as unique. Pozas’ universalizing descriptions in the “Introduction” are both socio-cultural and biological and are probably meant to facilitate the reading process. The former is more ethnographic in nature while the latter is more essentialists. Both socio-cultural and biological descriptions are two and half pages long (on a total of six pages total for the “Introduction”) and differ only in the format rendered by Pozas; in other words, the biological descriptions is presented to the readers in the format of a list.

Since the dominant culture establishes the norm as to what is culture in a country, it can engage in a judgemental process of appropriating minor cultures into its own by identifying what is and what is not representative of both the dominant and marginal cultures. The question of representativity is closely linked to the questions of authenticity and of authority in the testimonial genre, especially if we consider the issue of collaboration in these texts. Anne-Elizabeth Gravel argues that “[m]any oral narratives are told to a person in a privileged position whose role as mediator and editor problematizes the question of authenticity and authorship” (Gravel, 116). If the readers do not recognize the authority of the Indigenous narrator, then the readers become
suspicious of the narrative. In other words, the readers do not recognize the marginal authority of the narrative when they feel that the truth is partly hidden. This break of confidence between the author/teller and the readers, when not coming from the self-censure of the author, comes from the 'mediator' in the process of editing the testimonio. An aspect that leaves us to wonder is how can testimonio engage the readers in recognizing the authenticity of the narrative given the highly mediated nature of testimonial writing which can hinder its credibility?

John Beverley has argued in *Testimonio: On the Politics of Truth* that “[t]he appeal to authenticity and victimization in the critical validation of testimonio stops the semiotic play of the text [...] fixing the subject in a unidirectional gaze that deprives it of its reality” (67). Hence, it could be argued that the claims to authenticity, to truth/reliability, and to victimization are essentials for the readers of the dominant culture in order for them to engage in solidarity with the Cultural Other. What this suggests is that the recognition of the authority of the Cultural Other is intrinsic to cultural misrepresentation since it is this misrepresentation that excites the condescending assumptions about the Cultural Other (Colás 165). In other words, the subjugation of the testimonial subject is a key factor that engages the reader from the dominant culture in reading the life story insofar as the discourse produced by the marginal voice consolidates the relationship of cultural domination.

Nevertheless, we are left to wonder who really testifies in *Juan Pérez Jolote: Biographie d’un Tzotzil* – is it Jolote or Pozas? Jolote speaks about his life, and by extension, of the life in the margins whereas Ricardo Pozas speaks of the survival of one Indian Mexican who lives unique experiences that necessarily distinguish Jolote from the
rest of his community’s life experiences. Through this charged process of editing and collaboration – as argued previously about Bakhtin’s concept of heteroglossia – it could be argued that Pozas’ mediation impedes Jolote’s testimony, and as a result, it pushes back Jolote’s narrative to the margins of cultural legitimization by creating a disempowered victimized discourse that confines Jolote to the margins of social evolution.

If readers are to counter-read the dominance of Pozas’ narrative, then they have to recognize the legitimacy of the reasons that motivated Jolote to tell his story. Since the readers are given no explanations as to what motivated Jolote to share his life story, what are the arguments used by Pozas to convince Jolote to tell him, and us, his story? Perhaps part of the answer can be found at the beginning the “Introduction.”

Le livre Juan Pérez Jolote est le récit de la vie sociale d’un homme en qui se reflète la culture d’un groupe indigène, culture en voie de changement dû à notre civilisation.

Le cadre des relations dans lesquelles évolue l’homme de notre biographie, décrit ici dans ses traits les plus caractéristiques, doit être considéré comme une petite monographie de la culture chamula [sic]. On ne peut parvenir à la connaissance globale d’un groupe à un moment de son évolution culturelle par la seule narration du milieu dans lequel se déplace l’homme (à plus forte raison quand font défaut tous les antécédents historiques du groupe) ; toutefois, la description des composantes les plus marquantes de cette culture rend la compréhension de la biographie plus claire. (5)
Pozas’ intentions in publishing, or collecting, this life story can be understood as an attempt to present an indigenous culture that is being kept on the margins of non-Indian Mexican society. Jolote’s testimonio must be read and understood through an evolutionary perspective that can enable indigenous Mexican cultures to take part in the construction of their identity over time, but does not guarantee it. Pozas’ work with Indigenous Mexican cultures has enabled Native cultures to enter the dominant culture’s history. While Pozas’ intentions can be understood in this light, Jolote’s desire to speak, or testify, can best be understood through his imminent death. “Cela fait déjà plusieurs jours que je ne mange plus…Mon père est mort ainsi. Mais moi, je ne veux pas mourir, je veux vivre” (94). These are powerful last words that echo the socio-economic and cultural conditions of the Chamulas life-style.

2.2. On the Collaboration between Jolote and Pozas

In the collaboration between Ricardo Pozas and Juan Pérez Jolote, as mentioned previously, Pozas’ interventions in Jolote’s narrative are omnipresent in the text through footnotes (in the French translated version by Jacques Rémy-Zéphir versus Endnotes in the original Spanish one) while the “Introduction” puts forward cultural and biological descriptions (ethnographic versus essentialist descriptions, as I discussed previously) of the Chamula culture. For example, by the end of the “Introduction” Pozas speaks of “une éducation familiale solide, fondée sur des critères traditionnels” (8) but on which he does not elaborate.

If the reader considers Pozas’ sponsor (Fondo de Cultura Económica de México), one is then able to begin to understand the power relations at work in the process of
cultural misrepresentation put forward in Pozas’ “Introduction.” “Les divers aspects de la culture chamula sont les suivant: [...] les Chamulas dont la conduite [...] a pour fondements les traits suivants de leur personnalité de base” (8-9). These generalizations not only present an iconographic misrepresentation of the Cultural Other, they also deny the possibility for the Cultural Other to be properly represented. By picturing an idealized image of the Cultural Other, Pozas allows the dominant culture to undermine the resistance of Jolote’s discourse by reinforcing the dominant culture perceptions of these marginal cultures through these generalizations which legitimize the dominant culture economic, cultural, and political exploitation. After reading Pozas’ “Introduction,” readers can surmise that this narrative is ideologically oriented through cultural generalizations since the ethnographer’s job is to find representative characteristics in an individual subject in order to generalize about the culture as a whole. In this sense, the subject is not a speaking subject for the purpose of testimony and protests as much as a case study, which enables the readers to better relate to a reality that they do not share.

The result is that while Jolote’s discourse may have been able to challenge such generalizations, the readers are already engaged with oversimplified cultural perceptions from the back matter on the book jacket and the first pages of the text, rather than with those of Jolote. Therefore, the readers must be careful in their engagement with the narrative contract in testimonial writings. If it is true that Pozas’ “Introduction” helps to provide readers with a cultural context for Jolote’s testimonio, they must also remain critical of the ideological agenda at work in the master’s narrative put forward. We can witness this phenomenon in Pozas’ depiction of the Chamulas’ personality traits when he says that the Chamulas have a “habileté dans le déroulement d’activité mécaniques
simples, ce qui les fait préférer aux autres travailleurs non indien pour l’émondage, le
sarclage et la cueillette du café” (9).

If we then return to Pozas’ description of the *enganche* system, as previously
stated, the readers perceive an economy based on the exploitation of Indian workers, in
which, as I quoted earlier, “[i]ls sont engagés selon le système de l’*enganche* qui consiste
à avancer au travailleur une certaine quantité d’argent, ce qui permet à celui-ci de vivre
tout en le liant au domaine ; d’où le vol et les abus de la part de l’employeur”(7). We are
then right to question what it is that makes plantation owners want to hire Indian workers
rather than non-Indian workers. Is it that Indians are better manual workers than non-
Indians? Or is it rather that those non-Indian workers are more likely to refuse the kind of
exploitation to which Indian workers are subjected? Pozas’ explanation of this system
thus reveals the conditions of oppression that the broader Indian Mexicans experience.

The acceptance of this system of economic exploitation (*enganche*) by the Indian
workers can be explained by two factors. On the one hand, the poverty in which many
Indian groups live due to the dispossession of their land forces them to accept almost any
kind of work in order to survive. On the other hand, the discrimination to which Indian
cultures are subjected does not allow upward mobility in the labour market, and thus
prevents many Indian workers from securing jobs with higher wages or with important
administrative roles, as I argued previously about the political organization in Gran
Pueblo (there are two level of government even though the Mexican Constitution forbids
it). Notwithstanding their purported gifted manual abilities, as argued by Pozas, it could
therefore be argued that Indians are condemned to this vicious circle of exploitation that
results from dispossession, poverty, and discrimination.
Jolote addresses the subjugation of his community by the Mexican government laws on various occasions. Jolote’s denunciation is successful insofar as Pozas clarifies the historical and political context in which Jolote lived. Some of Pozas’ interventions help the readers to better understand the power relationship put forward by the master’s narrative by exposing the politics of indigenous Mexican oppression at work.

[J]e partis pour la ferme. [...] Nous étions nombreux. [...] ; les uns allaient rembourser les dettes de leurs parents déjà morts, et d’autres les amendes que le recruteur avait payées pour eux au président de San Cristóbal qui les avait mis en prison pour vagabondage nocturne\textsuperscript{39}. (49)

39. Le président auquel fait allusion Juan Pérez Jolote faisait enfermer, en accord avec le recruteur, les Indiens qui se promenaient dans la rue après sept heures du soir. Le recruteur payait l’amende et récupérait les prisonniers qu’il emmenait travailler.

When later Jolote accepts his first administrative charge, the oath taken mentions the importance of obedience to the Mexican government (representative). “Obéis au ladino, car c’est lui qui commande! Car il est le fils de Dieu, fils du ciel, celui au visage pâle, celui qui porte chemise et pantalon\textsuperscript{58}.” (71).

58. Bien que le secrétaire du gouvernement municipal doive être désigné par le président, il est ici imposé par les autorités non indiennes. On le tient en grande estime et il exerce une grande influence. Ce n’est jamais un indigène.
The obedience to the ladino demanded from the Indigenous Mexicans and the fact that the fincas (plantations) are both a site for forced and hired labour (Indigenous people are forced to work off their prison debts versus Indigenous people freely agreeing to go work on the plantations) shows how Indian Mexicans are to remain a cheap labour work force which is condoned by the Mexican government. Although Pozas' writing reflects parts of the master's narrative agenda through the footnotes, it nevertheless allowed the 'Indian Question' in Mexico to be addressed.

2.3. Cultural Misrepresentation

An important question jumps to mind when we think of reading testimonio: why is "authentic" representation so important for the genre's legitimization? In autobiography, the question of representativity of a group by an individual is rapidly discarded because it is understood that the life story presented to the reader is one of exception, and/or of great accomplishments. So why is representativity so important for critics of testimonio? An answer can begin to be articulated through theory of Indigenous knowledge, which sees knowledge as distinct from one culture to another and that is valued because of the difference it presents in the various processes of producing knowledge. When the text presented is able to make the readers experience – at least psychologically – the story, it is easier to grant representativity and therefore, authenticity. But when the story fails to do that, as it is often the case with stories of suffering and oppression unlikely experienced by the wealthiest readership, the Cultural Other remains other (remains a romanticized representation) and authenticity is more likely to be criticized or ignored through this break in confidence with the readers.
because they cannot find any life experience referent. As previously argued, if the Cultural Other disassociates himself from this romanticized image, then the truth/reliability (and/or referentiality) of both the text and of Natives’ experience, which is often in conflict with the truth of the dominant culture’s experience, is questioned by the neo/colonial readership (Spivak, 27).

Still, the issue of representativity is unavoidable not only in theoretical discussion, but also for the narrator while telling the story as well as in the daily life. In “What’s Wrong with Representation?: Testimonio and Democratic Culture,” Santiago Colás has argued for a proper understanding of the role of representativity in testimonio. “Without its representative aspects, both its depiction of a collective life experience and its repeatability, without these, it would fail to establish solidarity beyond that existing between the narrator/protagonist and [...] interlocutor” (Colás, 167). The representativity of Juan Pérez Jolote and of the Chamula culture can only engage in solidarity beyond the pages of a book if the narrative succeeds in presenting a collective life experience and its historical dis/continuity in order to be able to subvert the neo/colonial discourse.

But beyond all concerns about truth/reliability, what happens to those authors who succeed in making, through acculturation, this cultural and social bond between marginal and dominant culture? The fact that Juan Pérez Jolote ran away from home at an early age (p.14); that he had learnt Spanish in prison (p.28); and that he was forced to participate in the Mexican Revolution (switching from Carranza’s side to Villa’s – p.38) are all elements that speak of the uniqueness of Jolote’s life experience. Jolote’s representativity of the Chamulas culture, through the appropriation of Pozas’ work by the dominant culture, misleads the readers about Jolote’s cultural hybridity. “Mes
companions se moquaient de moi parce que j’étais habillé en monsieur, parce que j’avais abandonné mon habit de Chamula. ‘D’où viens-tu me disaient-ils, tu es vêtu en monsieur, pourtant nous sommes compagnons’” (24). And again, after years of living outside the community, the loss of Jolote’s cultural and linguistic identity is manifest. “Maintenant que tout me paraît si bizarre, que je ne peux parler comme les autres et que j’ai oublié les coutumes…Que vais-je devenir?…J’ai honte de m’habiller comme un Chamula” (45).

The specificities mentioned above are in fact the very reasons why Pozas was able to write about Jolote. Since Jolote spoke Spanish fluently, the communication between interviewer and the protagonist could take place. To some extent, this communication, by its very existence as well as its nature in the dominant language, embodies the possible break with Jolote’s representativity as Colás argued.

For the agent, while undoubtedly inside the community (whatever that might mean since the community is constituted only in the process of that agent’s narration), has as the conditions of possibility of his or her speech in the testimonio his or her simultaneous exteriority with respect to that community. In short, this agent is not identical to the other members of the community, precisely because he or she has chosen to speak. (165-166)

For Juan Pérez Jolote it means that since he has chosen to speak, his representativity cannot fully be acknowledged. What can thus be acknowledged is the uniqueness of his life experience. In fact, Juan Pérez Jolote should be seen as a representative of the Chamulas culture rather than representing this culture. Being a representative of the culture means, on the one hand, that Jolote has the experience of what it means to live
according to the Chamula culture. On the other hand, it means he is situated outside this
culture in order to be able to speak of it in the dominant language.

To see Jolote as a representative of the margin puts forward the problem of his
cultural authority as mentioned earlier. For the dominant culture’s readership, the
representativity of the Indigenous Other is jeopardized if it recognizes Jolote’s authority
as an active agent of the culture rather than a romanticized image. The cultural authority
of the dominant discourse secures itself in a static misrepresentation of the cultural
minority. If the dominant discourse recognized Jolote as a spokesperson of the Chamula
culture, then this indigenous Cultural Other would cease to be passive and becomes
active. The result of such recognition is that it endangers the established power
relationship between the dominant and the marginal cultures. To weaken the established
cultural hegemony is of course one of the goals of much testimonio, but is not the case in
this testimonio as the readers can witness Jolote’s compliance to the neo/colonial society
through his cultural hybridity which is appropriated and oriented by the dominant cultural
discourse.

While considering Colás argument, previously stated, it could be argued under
Bhabha’s argumentation that the recognition of the Cultural Other’s authority over
discourse establishes the polarity of culture. In other words, there is a distinction to be
made between cultural diversity (Cultural Other as static) and cultural difference
(Cultural Other as agent). Homi K. Bhabha’s discussion on the subject in The Location of
Culture is one that needs attention.

If cultural diversity is a category of comparative ethics, aesthetics or
ethnology, cultural difference is a process of signification through which
statements of culture or on culture differentiate, discriminate and authorize the production of fields of force, reference, applicability and capacity. (50)

This means that there is a power relation in the presentation of the text and even a greater one in the capacity of the author/teller to act. In other words, cultural diversity represents culture whereas cultural difference produces changes in society. Depending on whose voice can be read in a testimonio, the marginal discourse is either compliant or resistant to cultural misrepresentation while hopefully encouraging cultural and social changes. In his article “Testimonio in Guatemala,” Marc Zimmerman has argued that “[t]his matter of voice in testimonio is perhaps the key to the question of representation – specifically, testimonio as the written transmission of voice” (112). In Juan Pérez Jolote: Biographie d’un Tzotzil, the voices that can be heard are that of Pozas, that of Jolote, and that of the other members of the community, but not necessarily in this order.

Because Jolote has not grown up as a Chamula (see p.51), much of what makes him a Chamula eludes him and his cultural representativity can only be measured through the knowledge of other members of his community who share, knowingly or not, with Jolote these cultural specificities. “Je savais que c’était avec ça que les gens du pays se soignaient, mais j’ignorais pour quelle raison ils le faisaient. Pendant la nuit, ma mere et ma femme parlèrent de nos maladies; moi je les écoutais. Alors je compris pourquoi l’on soignait ainsi dans mon village” (79). The fact that Jolote ran away from home at an early age (not specified in the narrative) and returned to his community as an adult (the 14th of August, 1930 – the only date given in the entire narrative – ) explains why, during this lengthy absence that might have lasted for some twenty years, his knowledge of the tribe was interrupted. This knowledge is only available to him through the other members of
the community. If we consider this, then we have to acknowledge that Jolote’s testimony is effective only insofar as it recognizes the locus of cultural authority and knowledge in others. This does not however prevent Jolote from becoming part of that cultural locus.

In fact, what happens is that culture is understood as the avatar of the community rather than solely that of Jolote. The readers witness the transmission of cultural knowledge that operates from the community to the individual. “Mon père m’enseigna à semer le maïs” (65); “écoutant ma mère parler la langue” (46); “Pour la Toussaint, j’allai à San Cristóbal [...]. Mon père me disait ce que je devais faire en chaque occasion” (46). These are but a few examples that show how Jolote’s absence impeded the full understanding of his cultural identity. For Jolote to be able to relate culturally and linguistically after all these years, he must rely on the other members of the community. One example of this solidarity is when relatives of Jolote came to work on his land: “Ceux-là, on ne les paie pas; on leur donne seulement la nourriture, parce que quand ils ont besoin d’aide [sic] nous aussi sommes tenus d’aller travailler sur leurs terres” (65). Still, this solidarity goes farther than the immediate family, for it is also within the community and it is applied to other communities as well.

This solidarity ought to be understood as going back and forth from one cultural group to another on the premise of socio-economic difficulties. When Juan Pérez Jolote runs away at the beginning of the narrative, he is hired by a Zinacanteque family who is extremely poor and who end-up exchanging him for corn. “Mais comment y retourner, si j’avais été vendu pour [sic] qu’eux mangent!” (18). Engaging in solidarity with the different Mexican cultures (with the Zinacanteque families, with the Mexican army, and
with the plantation workers) Jolote’s testimonio expresses the socio-economic difficulties of the Indigenous Mexicans and the political oppression that they suffer.

2.4. About Tzotzil Resistance

By deconstructing the dominant culture’s discourse about Jolote’s hybridity, the readers can observe the cultural resistance at work in the Chamula culture. It is this cultural hybridity of Jolote that enables his discourse to reach the readership and to testify to the political oppression that the indigenous nations of Mexico experience. In other words, the hybridity of the subject not only reinforces the testimonio about the loss of a cultural identity, but also enables the discourse of the subject to enter the readership of the dominant culture. It is at this point, at the crossing of cultural identities, that cultural resistance emerges.

In order to recognize this resistance, we have to consider both the dominant and the marginal discourses when we read testimonio in order to be able to better understand the cultural, economical, and political conditions that oppose subjects and masters. Even if Edward Said’s comment, from his book *Culture and Imperialism*, does not refer to the standpoint argumentation, it is relevant of the way in which cultural identity is achieved, and received. “we have to concede that as an immigrant settler society superimposed on the ruins of considerable native presence, American identity is too varied to be a unitary and homogenous thing” (xxv). The shifting and complex nature of identity at work in colonized countries reveals not only the hybridity of cultural identities in these countries, but also questions the possibility for these countries to produce one homogeneous cultural discourse. Therefore, we ought to consider a variety of standpoints in our readings of
testimonios especially if we wish to get a better understanding of the cultural reality experienced by marginal cultures.

Accordingly, our reading of *Juan Pérez Jolote: Biographie d’un Tzotzil* should grant authority to both Jolote’s voice and Pozas’ expertise. In fact, in order to really grasp the reality of the narrative, authority ought to be granted to both Jolote and Pozas since it is this negotiation between the two that can more accurately represent the life of the Indigenous Mexican in the master’s narrative. If such an enterprise is undertaken, then the readers are able to properly represent to themselves what is said about the negotiation of power.

When we consider the hybridity of the narrative, we can witness the phenomenon of talking back and of redress. Jolote talks back to the Master narrative through his testimony of cultural, economic, and linguistic survival. The difficulties faced by the Chamulas in negotiating their rights to self-determination on the political and economic levels testify to the oppressive life conditions in which they are kept. If these underlying demands for change are not acknowledged by the readers, it means not only that they are complicit with this oppression, but also that they do not recognize the authority of the cultural minority narrative. In *Juan Pérez Jolote: Biographie d’un Tzotzil*, this oppression engages the audience in a victimization reading through the description of the Chamulas’ inability to change their life-style. Pozas’ discourse about the economic dependency of the Chamulas to the capitalist system is revealing of this economic hybridity of the Chamulas. “Les Chamulas emploient enfin l’argent pour les opérations commerciales, activité complémentaire de leur économie” (7). Yet, money appears to be essential for far more important ‘transaction’ as Jolote testifies.
Ensuite, je préparai mon voyage et partis travailler à l'Escalón, pour rembourser ce qu'on m'avait avancé pour me marier. Le jour de mon départ, je dis à ma femme : Il faut que j'aille rembourser l'argent que je dois; celui que j'ai demandé pour la dépense que j'ai faite pour toi. (63)

This dependency on money goes further than the mere necessities of commercial activities; it affects deeply the social relationship of Indigenous Mexicans while possibly jeopardizing their cultural survival. The economic hybridity of the Chamulas is explained by the loss of agricultural lands, which forces them to work in plantations in order to subsist when they are not trapped between prison and the recruiting agent sent by the plantation owner as previously discussed. Unable to survive with traditional agriculture, the Chamulas become a cheap labour force that is widely exploited by the plantation owners (condone by the government as mentioned earlier) in the capitalist system.

On the one hand, it is impossible for the Chamulas to make a living out of their traditional economic system. Necessarily, they must find other sources of income, which comes from the capitalist system. The participation of the Indigenous Mexicans in the modern economy, and the inherent exploitation of the Indigenous People, is thus seen as a necessary evil by Pozas. “C’est pourtant un complément essentiel du système économique des Chamulas qui ne peuvent se marier sans fournir une certaine quantité de biens à la famille de leur femme. De même en est-il des relations avec les institutions et les hommes de leur propre culture” (7-8). On the other hand, the economic exploitation of the Indigenous Mexicans, through the enganche system (as mentioned earlier), is thus legitimized by the Mexican legal system. One reading that can be made out of Pozas’ description of the Chamulas’ hybrid economy is that it does not only present the extreme
poverty of this population, but it also presents a culture’s inability to be recognized as equals by the dominant culture.

The ending of *Juan Pérez Jolote: Biographie d’un Tzotzil* leaves the reader on Jolote’s deathbed. Dying in much the same way as his father before him, the author’s/teller’s death can be interpreted as embodying the death of the culture if we consider Pozas’ argumentation on Jolote’s representativeness. The cultural and political oppression, as well as the economic exploitation, are thus legitimized through the Master narrative standpoint reading if we consider to whom this narrative is mainly addressed. Because this Spanish text is unlikely to be read by the Chamulas audience, it could be argued that *Juan Pérez Jolote: Biographie d’un Tzotzil* as a Spanish narrative, is aimed at presenting the life story of an Indigenous to the non-Chamula readership since so few of them could read or speak Spanish by then. “Le Président du Mexique veut que tout le village de Chamula sache lire; mais auparavant, il faut leur apprendre à parler espagnol [sic]. […] La campagne prit fin au bout de trois ans” (93). This literacy campaign is evidence of the linguistic assimilation politics of the non-Native Mexican government which is also revealing of this ‘cultural death’ of Indigenous populations. Through this assimilation process, the Chamula culture is able to survive by using their traditions and beliefs in this process of acculturation.

Désormais, les gens qui veulent apprendre l’espagnol achètent le l’*aceite guapo* chez les apothicaires de San Cristóbal : on dit que c’est pour apprendre à lire. (93-94)
By integrating their own means of communicating knowledge, the Chamula culture is able to survive. Notwithstanding that it does survive as a hybrid culture, Jolote’s testimonio is successful in exposing the continuous subjugation and survival of the Indigenous Mexican. On the one hand, this testimonio is able to show how and why Indigenous cultures of Mexico are left in the trenches of economic exploitation and of cultural and political oppression while showing, on the other hand, how the different elements that compose the Chamula culture are used to ensure cultural survival in the dominant culture.

Yet, this dominant culture nevertheless shares beliefs with these Indigenous cultures as the note of the translator on page 94 of the testimonio shows. The fact that the cultural precision made by the translator (Jacques Rémy-Zéphir) about the *aceite guapo* is intended for a better understanding of the indigenous culture by another readership than the Mexican one (since this cultural specificity is not mentioned by Pozas in the original manuscript) demonstrates that the Mexican dominant culture is also hybrid and relies on Indigenous culture to position itself against Spanish colonial culture. In *Entre Inclusion et Exclusion: La Symbolisation de l’Autre dans les Amériques*, Amaryll Chanady argues that “Il ne s’agissait pas d’intégrer la ‘voix’ de l’indigène et ses pratiques culturelles dans une nouvelle culture véritablement hybride, mais de créer une mémoire culturelle officielle et hégémonique basée sur une appropriation très sélective de la culture autochtone” (Chanady 56). In *Juan Pérez Jolote* the romanticized iconography of the Native is used by the dominating center in the articulation of the national identity.
project while, at the same time, being kept apart from any participation in such a project as Chanady commented. “Cependant, l’Indien reste avant tout, surtout dans le cas des discours latino-américains, un symbole d’américanité et constitue la base d’une mémoire culturelle différente” (59). This enables the center to proclaim its cultural supremacy over indigenous culture while reproducing the cultural, economic, and political oppression of the marginal Natives.

As the result of an interview, as a narrative that speaks of the economic and political oppression, and as a polyphonic narrative, my discussion of 

**Juan Pérez Jolote: Biographie d’un Tzotzil** has shown that this life story can be read as testimonio. The death of Jolote rather than his survival at the end of the testimonio better serves the ideological objectives of the Master narrative. In other words, the extinction of the Chamulas’ life-style confers power on the dominant culture that maintains its periphery in subordination. The economic interests of the dominant are thus secured, at the expense of the dominated, by the Master narrative which does not recognize the right to self-determination by the margin as it has been suggested in my discussion on the appointed (non-Native) representative of the Mexican government in Chamula community. Yet, as I have later discussed, the Chamulas’ appropriation of their cultural hybridity through their traditional means of survival (*aceite guapo* as specified by the translator) shows the culture’s resilience to this very acculturation. By showing both Jolote’s assimilation and resistance, this testimonio has been able to shed light on the power relationship between the dominant Mexican non-Native cultural center and the Native Cultural Other (such as the Chamula culture among many other cultural minorities). The aspect of mis/representation has also been discussed to show that readers cannot entirely rely on
the representativity of Jolote in their understanding of the Chamulas culture. The specificity of Jolote’s life experience, even though it is not recognized as voluntary (for example: Jolote’s participation to the Mexican Revolution), is undeniable. Because the testimonial subject’s capacity to self-determination is not acknowledged nor is it granted by the dominant non-Indian culture, misrepresentation of the Chamula culture takes place and engages the audience in a victimization reading that confines Jolote to the margins of social justice. Through the analysis of the hybridity of Jolote’s text and his experience of the Chamulas culture itself, I have tried to demonstrate that the master narrative’s attempt to silence the resisting aspect expressed by Jolote’s narrative and rendered in Pozas’ work. The result that follows is that the Master narrative is more careful about maintaining domination over the Indigenous than it is about redress for and empowerment of the marginal culture.
Chapter III

Nuligak: An Alter/Native Heritage

*I, Nuligak* was published for the first time in 1966. It was edited and translated from Inuvialuktun into French by Maurice Metayer under the title *Moi, Nuligak*. Written in journal form, this book was later translated from French into English by Olive Koyama and published under the title *I, Nuligak: The Autobiography of a Canadian Eskimo* in 1971. Even though Nuligak’s story drew a lot of attention at the time of its publication (and the fact that children’s stories and DVDs have been produced portraying Nuligak’s adventures), it remains a book that is difficult to get and that has been published much more in English than it has been in French. Due to the unavailability of the French version of the narrative on the market, I decided to go with the English translation version as I felt the importance of discussing this author/teller. The personal tone of the narrative approaches the personal journal genre, as Maurice Metayer wrote in the introduction, “[t]he original manuscript is somewhat like a mate’s log” (10). Still, the testimonial tone remains through the representativeness of Nuligak’s story. It is not only his story, but also that of Inuit communities battling to survive in the hostile neo/colonial environment of the Northwest Territories in the early 1900s. The book offers a perspective on the life of Inuit communities from the beginning of the 20th century until the late 1950s.

Living conditions, for example the availability of game – and its decrease over time as witnessed through Nuligak’s narrative – as well as the economic abuses taking place in Northern Canada at the beginning of the 20th century, colour Nuligak’s testimonio. The social changes that occurred throughout Nuligak’s life were conditioned by a greater availability of modern means of transportation such as boats and planes, by
the emergence of better means of communication such as the telephone and radio, and by the availability of modern technology such as guns, compasses, and so on. Much of Nuligak’s experience with “White technology” can be seen as representative of Inuit communities and of the phenomenon of the “contact zone” (Pratt). The phenomenon of contact is obvious in Nuligak’s testimonio in that he recounts numerous encounters with English and Japanese sailors, priests and merchants as well as with other Inuit from Alaska and Siberia.

Nuligak’s assimilation into the dominant cultural group is also portrayed through the means of communication he uses in order to pass on knowledge and history. He writes in Inuvialuktun to tell his life story instead of transmitting it orally, as per his culture’s tradition. The Inuvialuk language or Inuvialuktun is one of the eleven official languages of the Northwest Territories. It is written in the Roman alphabet and has no tradition of using Inuktitut syllabics. The fact that Roman alphabet is used instead of Syllabic alphabet has been discussed by Louis-Jacques Dorais in *The Language of the Inuit: Syntax, Semantics, and Society in the Arctic*. “But this type of writing never spread beyond Netsilingmiut country because in the western Arctic the Inuinnaqtun and Inuvialuit had been exposed to the Roman alphabet by missionaries, trappers, and traders since the end of the nineteenth century” (178). Before going further, I wish to clarify the cultural and linguistic differences between Nuligak tribe and the Inuit since there are historical points that need to be discussed. The Inuvialuit (sing. Inuvialuk) are the inhabitants of the Northwest Territories and like all other Inuit are descendants of the Thule who migrated eastward from Alaska. Their homeland – the Inuvialuit Settlement Region – covers the

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Arctic Ocean coastline from Alaskan border, east through the Beaufort Sea and beyond the Amundsen Gulf which includes some of the western Canadian Arctic Islands, as well as the inland community of Aklavik and part of the Yukon. The land was demarked in 1984 by the “Inuvialuit Final Agreement.” The Inuvialuit of today are the descendant of Inuit migration (from Alaska and Siberia), but the ISR (Inuvialuit Settlement Region) was primarily inhabited by the Siglit Inuit who were decimated at the beginning of the 20th century by the introduction of new diseases as mentioned in Nuligak’s life story “a bad influenza killed a large number of Inuit. [...] Since that time, however, I do not feel too well [...] I am not as I was before” (163). In *Inuit Languages and Dialects*, Louis-Jacques Dorais argued that:

Siglitun has no subdialects. Formerly spoken by a numerous population, which was diminished by epidemics at the beginning of the 20th century, it was later thought that it had completely disappeared and been replaced by Alaskan Inupiaq. But this assumption, held by many supposed specialist, was far from being true. Contemporary Mackenzie Coast Inuit are descendants of the original local population, and their language is still essentially the same (70)

Also spelled *Kitigariuit, Kitigaaryuit* is known in the English language as the region of the Mackenzie River Delta where Nuligak is from. It would be fair to advance that Nuligak is from the Siglit community and that he speaks and writes Siglitun. For the purpose of this research I will refer to Nuligak’s language as Inuvialuktun (since Siglitun is one of the three dialects grouped under this label) and will refer to Nuligak’s culture as

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The Inuvialuit (since the term also designates Siglit Inuit while being more precise).

"Although related to their neighbours, the Inuvialuit have their own distinct cultural identity, heritage and dialects" ("Inuvialuit Places Names." Web). My use of the term Inuit will refer, for its part, to the broader Native communities as it is by the Inuit Circumpolar Council. Another point to be taken in consideration is Metayer’s use of the term “Eskimau.”

Although the name “Eskimo” is commonly used in Alaska to refer to all Inuit and Yupik people of the world, this name is considered derogatory in many other places because it was given by non-Inuit people and was said to mean “eater of raw meat.” Linguists now believe that “Eskimo” is derived from an Ojibwa word meaning “to net snowshoes.” However, the people of Canada and Greenland prefer other names. “Inuit,” meaning “people,” is used in most of Canada. (Kaplan, “Inuit or Eskimo.” Web).

Yet, at the time Metayer transcribed Nuligak’s life story, the term “Eskimo” was still used and is entirely justified once we consider that the Inuit Circumpolar Council originally adopted this resolution in 1977 and ended the debate around the use of the terms “Inuit” and “Eskimo” once and for all by the ICC Executive Council at the meeting in Nuuk on September 29th 2010. “Let it therefore be resolved that the research, science and other communities be called upon to use the term ‘Inuit,’ instead of ‘Eskimo’ […] in the publications of research findings and other documents” (Lynge, ICC, Web).

Through the reading of Nuligak’s life story we learn that it is after two-to-three-years’ stay at Stanton next to the Mission that Nuligak began his journal.
We remained in Stanton until the summer of 1940, when I decided to go and live in the lowlands of the Delta, seven miles from the Village-of-the-Reindeer (Reindeer Station). From that date on, September 26, I wrote my daily journal. I still do it today. (159)

His assimilation, through the means of communication, can be observed in the shift from oral to scriptocentric culture while we are allowed through this very shift to witness Nuligak’s cultural resistance and survival. Still there remains a truth, beyond the assimilation phenomenon, that the Inuit communities came to realize about written form, as argued in the introduction by Robin Gedalof to Paper Stays Put: A Collection of Inuit Writing. It is said by an unknown Inuk that “[b]y ear we forget, but paper stays put” (7). I, Nuligak is less about the internal dilemmas of the author than it is about the collective life Nuligak lived and the changes that he witnessed as a member of an Inuit community. The translation of the original manuscript (written in Inuvialuktun,) was only achieved after Maurice Metayer visited Nuligak in 1958 in order for him to proofread Metayer’s translations.

And so begins the book with a map that bears the inscription “ARTIST SKETCH OF TOPOGRAPHIC MAP OF THE NORTHERN COAST” with under it an ESKIMO TRANSLATION OF ENGLISH PLACE NAMES” (5-6). The introduction by Maurice Metayer starts on page 9 and ends on page 11, where he explains briefly the mechanics of the Inuit language as well as a short presentation of Nuligak and his family. Still, it is

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3 For a better understanding of Nuligak’s travels, I recommend to the readers to visit the virtual exhibit on “Inuvialuit Place Names” presented by the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre (www.pwnhc.ca/inuvialuit).
Nuligak that testifies and who is the author/teller of this life story as the beginning of the
narrative shows:

I, Nuligak, will tell you a story. It is the story of what has happened to me
in my life, all my adventures, many of them forever graven in my
memory.

Those of my people who lived before me came from Kitigariuit.

During my earliest youth the Kitigariukmeut were very numerous; I have
known them, I have seen them. (15)

For most of us who do not know about Inuvialuit names in Canadian geography it would
be clearer to say that Nuligak and his people are also known as the Inuit of the Mackenzie
Delta, and more specifically: the Inuvialuit (referred to as the Kitigariukmeut by
Nuligak). Yet, the very first memory Nuligak has “is of the white whale hunt” (15).

Nuligak’s life story is divided into five chapters, which are in turn divided into sub-
chapters. Each chapter describes important periods of Nuligak’s life: beginning with
Nuligak’s childhood (first chapter); his coming of age as a hunter (second chapter); his
life as an adult (third chapter); his family life (fourth chapter), and, finally, his days as an
Elder (the fifth chapter). Each sub-chapter shows the “mate log” format of Nuligak’s life
story to which Metayer refers (which he reorganized in more classic format for non-Inuit
readers) and describes important events (hunting, traditions, adventures, stories) that
happened during those times.

The first of five chapters is “Iliapak” (Poor Little Orphan Boy) on Nuligak’s
childhood and covers a period from approximately 1901 to 1908. Before going further, it
is important to note that Nuligak’s mother was still alive but that he “lived for a long time
with his paternal grandmother Okkonuluk” (10) while his mother travelled with her new husband (Kaanerk). In Inuit culture, you often become orphaned when your father dies since it is he who is responsible for providing and for teaching hunting techniques that would ensure survival. Nuligak recalls that, as a young boy, when the “men go hunting I do my utmost to accompany them. At times they forbid me to go: ‘You will freeze,’ they say. But I am made that way. The young men will even go so far as to hide their departure from me, leaving early morning as I awake” (51). Being fatherless, Nuligak has no one to bring him along during hunting expeditions. This is why Nuligak is identified as an orphan and that, even if he remains part of the community, his survival (and that of his grandmother) is uncertain. This chapter is divided into four sub-chapters which in turn are divided into smaller divisions of the text that shape the narrative and give a direction to the reading. In this chapter, Nuligak gives great detail about the life of the community concerning their habitation (the various types of igloos) or their traditional celebrations such as related in the sub-division “Kaivitjvik” (Polar Night Festivals). There, Nuligak details a variety of games of strength, agility and of role playing such as: the personification of the Itkilit – the southern Indians – attacking and the famous tunrait (tunrar in its singular form), an animal inspired puppet. “During the times of merrymaking that were the night festivals a host of interesting and amazing things was shown. There was such an abundance of meals, games and things to admire that these sunless weeks sped by as if they had been only a few days” (21).

The second chapter, Ilisaroblunga (Budding Hunter) covers a time period from 1908 to 1913. It is divided into six sub-chapters which, as in the first chapter, are also in turn divided into smaller divisions themselves. In this chapter, the readers are introduced
to the life style of the Inuvialuit in the early 20th century. The hunting trips and travel he accomplished when he was but 13 years old up until he was 18 are remarkable, and the traditional knowledge shared by Nuligak in this section truly show the rich cultural heritage of this great Nation. For example, Nuligak shares with the readers his uncle’s teaching of the Inuvialuit moon names in the second sub-chapter “Takunaklunelu Nalaklunelu” (All Eyes, All Ears) which will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter. But indigenous knowledge is obtained in these remote areas only if the subjects survive their ordeals.

It was during those days that we two, Uncle Nuyaviak and myself, got sores all over our hips, thighs and feet. The itch was unbearable, so much so that often after scratching the sore to the quick we found relief by sitting in the snow; and the snow would turn red with blood. We very nearly died. I believe that we had what the white men call smallpox. This frequent sitting in the snow cured us, healing our sores. (78-79)

This type of illness brought by the whale hunters stresses the dangers of northern life through cultural contact, but other dangers await them in the northern lands. In the third chapter “Inuktun” (A True Eskimo), covering the time period from 1913 to 1920, we witness these harsh conditions through the recounting of Nuligak’s expeditions, where ingenuity can mean the difference between survival and death.

During the full moon we made hunting expeditions into the mountain. [...] and with Morris Pokiak we went back and forth, hauling the carcasses from the hunting grounds to the ship. The road we followed was a river bed. The wind blew incessantly, brushing away any trace of snow and
forcing us to travel on smooth and slippery ice. At times when there was a gale even our dogs were not able to stay on their feet. [...] From old iron scraps I had fashioned for myself a kind of skate which I would fasten to my feet with twine, to protect the sole of my boots. As we went, we travelled faster and faster [...]. But in that giant stride we had made, many pairs of boots could be worn out sliding on the ice! (95-96)

By strapping homemade skates to his boots, Nuligak and his friend Morris Pokiak (a Japanese sailor) were able to bring back the hunt to the ships, limit the wearing off of their boots, as well as provide food to the sailors left on the coast. The fourth chapter “Nuliartunga” (I Took a Wife) covers a time period between 1921 and 1955. There are only two sub-chapters in this chapter. The first sub-chapter “A Time of Comfort” is itself divided into eight small divisions. In the second sub-chapter “Days of Anxiety” there are thirteen divisions. In the first part of the fourth chapter Nuligak marries – at the age of 26 – Margaret (her Inuit name being Panigak) “a widow with four children, a half-breed (metis) with French blood” (139). Nuligak and Panigak’s first child (Alice) was born on “April 17, 1922” (139), another little girl (Christine Rose) was born on “October 13, 1925” (142) and “on the twenty-second of July, 1927, a boy that I called William was born to Margaret and to me” (147). That ‘time of comfort’ was not only about the birth of Nuligak’s own children, but also about life’s good fortune. In other words, the game was plentiful and “[t]he boat I ordered came to Aklavik. That summer of 1926 I owned a schooner at last!” (143). The second sub-chapter “Days of Anxiety” contrasts drastically with the first part of the fourth chapter. The danger of shipwreck with the lives of Margaret, the children and granddaughter (Agnes) at stake, begins this first of the thirteen
divisions. "We had left Tuk and were past Warren Point when we were surprised by a northern wind" (149). Nuligak goes on to describe what happened then.

Even in daylight I had feared this place and never wanted to come into it. And now, in the middle of the night, fogbound, in a northerly storm and high waves, not seeing where we were going, we had managed to get through this narrow passage-way. [...] If we had not fallen right on it we were lost forever, drowned with all our children.

The next morning the sight of the path we had followed during the night gave us shivers. Even today I do not like to think about it. When these thoughts come back to me I get weak in the stomach. The storm lasted all day. The next day the wind died away. And not without pain, sounding and testing, did we finally come out of these shallow waters.

(150)

Other dangers through the hunt of Nanuk (the polar bear) and the low availability of game – such as fish – are but two example that show the difficulty of finding food for a family of now about ten members (Nuligak, Margaret, their seven children, the wife of one of them and their child). It is also in this chapter that Nuligak mentions the death of his mother. It is at the end of this fourth chapter that the chronology of the narrative is broken for the first time and will be discussed in greater detail later in this research. The fifth chapter "Angayokrartune" (Now an Old Man) is but two pages long and no date is given. "Now I hunt no longer. I make no more trips. Although I do give an occasional helping hand to my children, I do not work much – I have become old. I who have been ever on the go, now I keep house. Suvitor: there is nothing else that I can do; such is life"
Nuligak is nostalgic for the game he pursued knowing that “one is no longer able to go hunting” (172). This also shows nostalgia for a past self, a younger “I” who could hunt and be a provider.

There are four appendices following the end of Nuligak’s life story on page 172. The first appendix is a story about a kinsman of Nuligak’s ancestors. “The Avaottor Saga” (173) is based on an oral story of vengeance passed down from one generation to the next. The second appendix is a word-for-word sample translation of Nuligak’s poem which ends the narrative. It is interesting to note that half of the original poem has not been incorporated in the body of the testimonio ending the translated narrative. It is in fact Metayer’s footnote, sending the reader back to this appendix, which ends Nuligak’s story in its original version. Nevertheless, as unfortunate as it may be, one of the words that ends this poem – in its original version and quite possibly the last words by Nuligak are “‘Uvanga okrartung’ (I have spoken)” (185). This fact is rather interesting since instead of being Metayer’s footnote that ends the narrative, it is Nuligak who is clearly the author/teller of this hybrid text by ending it in the same way as he began. The third appendix is about the meeting in igloos as previously mention but its function is explained in greater detail by Nuligak. The last and fourth appendix is a glossary of word-for-word translation from - Roman - Inuvialuktun to French (in this edition, English).

3.1. Nuligak’s use of the Genre

This book is of great interest because it shows, on the one hand, how the difficulties of survival in the North were eased by the encounter with non-natives and, on
the other hand, how Inuit communities had come to depend on the technologies of the "White-Man." The description of the social reality of his time enables an analysis of Nuligak's sense of community belonging. Changes to the Inuit traditional life-style reveal another discourse that presents a counter-history. The book's counter-discourse has to be understood beyond the current claims by the Inuit regarding history. In other words, the testimonio of Nuligak presents an alter/native history of the contact between the White and Inuit communities that aims to reshape the power relationship through a renegotiation of truths; that is to say: a history of hybridity (through contact with White culture) and of survival.

To read Nuligak's life story as an autobiography can be considered realistic if we keep in mind Beverley's argument on the genre of testimonio, or more precisely, his considerations of the multiplicity of literary genres that can be associated with testimonio. Even if autobiography is often considered to be a narrative of great accomplishments, while this aspect of extraordinariness is revealed in the reading of I, Nuligak, it is through the results of this literary production that Nuligak's story, as testimonio, has been able to share a reality about survival and cultural marginality.

One day, perhaps in July, after break-up, my companion Osukrak and I were playing on the beach...I cast a glance out to sea, and just before me I saw the wake of a school of white whales. One of them surfaced to breathe. I shot and hit it in the head...It was true, I had really killed a white whale with a little .44 rifle. Everyone was surprised, and I was very proud: I was not big. I was thirteen years old. (49-50)
Being both Inuvialuk and an orphan (as I have discussed at the beginning of this chapter) and therefore experiencing, to some extent, social and cultural exclusion in both Inuit and Canadian culture, Nuligak’s double marginality could have compromised the authority of the narrative. But Nuligak’s accomplishments in terms of his extraordinary hunting skills, his adventures throughout the country and his constant desire to learn (other hunting techniques, foreign languages such as English, and how to read and write) provides both Inuit and Canadian readers with an understanding of the uniqueness of his life experience. Nuligak’s testimonio is also representative of Inuit cultures because his individual accomplishments are praiseworthy, they have the effect of seducing the readers as an Inuvialuk who gains respect within his community.

If we consider how this narrative starts, with Nuligak’s strong statement of self-identification we have to recognize Nuligak’s subjecthood despite collaboration and mediation through transcription and translation. It is clearly Nuligak who produces the story as the following truth claim indicates: “I, Nuligak, will tell you a story. It is the story of what has happened to me in my life, all my adventures, many of them forever graven in my memory” (15). Nuligak’s testimonio is also a collective one since it can be read as representative of the life of Inuit at that time. As previously discussed, Yúdice’s argument is that “the speaker does not speak for or represent a community but rather performs an act of identity-formation that is simultaneously personal and collective” (Gugelberger 42). Through its representativeness, Nuligak’s testimonio and his authority over the narrative is noticeable and limits the authority that can be granted to Metayer, the translator. The only authority claimed by Metayer is found in the footnotes and at times within the narrative. In Nuligak’s testimonio, we find seventy-nine footnotes by
Metayer (not counting the in-text interventions) whereas there are eighty-six footnotes in Pozas’ ethnographic study (not counting one footnote by the translator Rémy-Zéphir). The cultural precisions provided by Metayer, which will be discussed in-depth later in this chapter, grant him some cultural authority over the subject.

Authority can be granted to Nuligak because of what his testimonio tells us about growing up and living in the North (more precisely, the Inuvialuit Resettlement Region in the Northwest Territories) from the turn of the 20th century until the mid-1900s. The parallel that can be drawn between Nuligak’s life and Inuit legends, as well as the author’s self-representation as an Inuk, legitimize Nuligak’s narrative as representative of the culture for non-Native readers. Nuligak’s cultural authority is also one of an insider who is recognized by his own community.

Evidence of Metayer’s authority is found in the editor/translator’s learned expertise of the Inuit culture. Metayer’s cultural interventions in Nuligak’s narrative are thus made in order to facilitate the reader’s understanding of certain Inuit practices, and, thus, highlight the peculiarities of each the Inuvialuit people. For example, when the text reads “Our igloos were large enough to house ten or twelve families” (17) Metayer’s footnote reads:

1. These igloos are peculiar to the Mackenzie Delta, where the Eskimo found driftwood in quantity. They piled tree trunks into semblance of a house, heaping up earth clods about the walls and on the roof. However snow-block igloos like those common among the Inuit of the eastern and central Arctic regions were thrown up for a night or two’s use by travellers and hunters. M M. (17)
We can observe that Metayer's cultural expertise is applied to various Inuit groups to
distinguish between the igloos found in the region of the Mackenzie Delta and those
found in the 'eastern and central Arctic regions.' These cultural distinctions go further
than the mere regional availability of material. Indeed, these distinctions can also witness
the social relations between each Inuit group as Metayer argues through his explanation
of the word *Krangmalit*.

18. *Krangmalit*: the-people-east-of-us. By this name the eskimos of the
Mackenzie Delta designate roughly all the tribes between Baillie Island
and Gjoa Haven, including the people from the north of Victoria Island.
Often a slightly depreciatory sense is understood, for the western tribes
consider themselves more “civilized” than the eastern. The Krangmalit are
comparative dullards in their eyes. The Alaskan tribes, on the other hand,
call Krangmalit those who are east of their territory, the Mackenzie Delta
people included. Thus, for the western Arctic Eskimo, the term seems to
designate the Eskimo of the central Arctic. M M. (41)

Metayer is able to provide to the readers a greater understanding of the peculiarities of
Inuit culture, life-style and social relationships by intervening also in the narrative. But
his interventions must be read carefully since they might bear colonial assumptions to
which Nuligak’s testimonio is resisting. Martin Behr argued in “Postcolonial
Transformations in Canadian Inuit Testimonio” that

it is really Metayer’s position that the western tribes consider themselves
more civilized than the eastern ones. His claim gives ethnographic
authority to his own voice, thus undermining the motives implicit in Nuligak’s testimonio acts. (137)

As reader, one must remain conscious and careful of the fused discourse in this testimonio. It is difficult to know if Metayer’s interventions are the results of his own northern experience or if they are transcriptions of Nuligak’s explanation to Metayer’s questions. As Martin Behr expressed, this intervention – most likely transmitted to Metayer by Nuligak – “facilitates Metayer in instructing readers to consider the habits of the Inuit from his culture’s point of view” (137). Such cultural perspectives are not only tainted by postcolonial assumptions about Inuit culture, but are also dangerous for the reception of Nuligak’s testimonio. In other words, one must read Metayer’s intervention in this testimonio with great care in order to avoid the traps of cultural misrepresentation and of post/colonial assumptions about Inuit culture since Nuligak’s culture is distinct from other Inuit cultures.

Still, there are places in the narrative where Metayer’s involvement attempts to go further than the mere anthropological or ethnographic interest of the editor/transcriber by demonstrating the “genius” of Inuit cultural practices (language, writing, humour) as a resistance project that enables recognition of Inuit culture and knowledge and legitimates non-conventional ways of understanding the world. In the introduction, Metayer demonstrates the “genius” of Inuit language.

The Eskimo genius is entirely different from the Indo-European genius.

An Eskimo word is often the equivalent of a whole French or English sentence, and moreover everything is backward. [On page 14, for instance, the translation reads:] ‘The sight of all those kayaks putting out to sea was
a spectacle we (children) never tired of.’ In Eskimo, *takusungnangayak krainat*, of which the strict word-for-word translation is *taku*, to see; *sung*, to desire with all one’s might; *nan*, that which inclines us to; *gayak*, enormously; *krainat*, Eskimo canoes or kayaks. (9-10)

Notwithstanding the transcriber’s ability to overcome the difficulties of translation, which is to Metayer’s credit, his interventions throughout the narrative demonstrate that there is an expertise (more precisely about cultural and physical survival) that can and must be granted to the insider knowledge of Nuligak as Inuvialuit subject.

The people from Booth Islands said that they had discovered a dead whale stranded somewhere on the shore of Franklin Bay. It was buried in the snow. The Krangmalit Eskimos ate of it – until the day when, clearing all the snow, they discovered that the whale wore a belt. A whale wears no belt. It was a giant! His skin was as coarse as that of a whale. They had eaten of the *inukpak*, and they died! (43)

20. *Inukpak*: deeply rooted in Eskimo folklore is the belief in giants. What was meant by the ‘belt’ around the whale I do not know, but the people were probably poisoned by the spoiled meat. M M

Here Metayer concedes the limits of his knowledge. The interplay between Metayer’s cultural interventions and Nuligak’s narrative shows that cultural identity cannot be defined by only one part of the narrative. In *The Interplay of Autobiography and Ethnography*, Anne Elizabeth Gravel argues that “identity-value cannot be verified by the
presence or absence of specific features within the text; it can only be authenticated by extratextual information” (41). In other words, in the case at hand, both the author (Nuligak Kriogak) and the editor/translator (Maurice Metayer) depend on one another to represent what it means to be Inuvialuk. Gravel’s discussion of the autobiographical genre goes on to consider the effects that this type of literary production has on the discourse of the Cultural Other if it is considered as a narrative performance. “Viewing autobiography as a narrative performance ties the practice of the literary genre into the efforts by many marginalized groups to get the voices of their members heard in ‘mainstream’ American culture” (79). It could be argued that Nuligak’s testimonio is the materialization of the cultural shift that operates within the ‘contact zone;’ in other words, through the publication of Nuligak’s testimonio the readers witness this juncture between oral and scriptocentric methods of transmitting knowledge and history. This new paper-method can hence be perceived as the continuity and extension of oral traditions that, in the end, enables cultural survival.

Elizabeth Tonkin’s discussion on oral history and autobiography is relevant to the oral aspect of I, Nuligak even though her own focus is on African orality. In her book entitled Narrating our Past: The Social Construction of Oral History, Tonkin argues that “[s]ince speakers and writers must also, simultaneously, orient themselves temporally to topics and audiences, temporality is an aspect of narrations which may also indicate genre, or be directed by genre” (55). Tonkin’s argument tells us that the process of identifying the genre of a narrative is intrinsically linked to temporality. This link between literature and time thus shapes the identity of a narrative as well as the way the narrative is received and discussed. In the case at hand, it is more revealing of the latter
than of the former function of temporality as presented by Tonkin. In *I, Nuligak*, it is the
genre that shapes the narrative’s temporality. Nuligak’s use of temporality follows the
classical timeline that one can expect of an individual life story; that is, it starts with his
childhood and ends with Nuligak’s elderly days. Apart from one shift backward in time,
Nuligak’s narrative follows chronological and linear timeline from past to present. This
shift backward or flashbacks are judiciously used in the narrative to express teaching or
anecdotes. By the end of page 160, Nuligak gives “a report of what I took [sic] during the
fourteen years I spent in the land of the Delta” (160). His report starts in 1941 and ends in
1955. At the beginning of page 161, we find ourselves in 1953. It is perhaps the first time
where the break in temporality can be felt. By the beginning of page 162, we are sent
back to 1948 (“The Rabbit and the Children”), then in 1950 (“Laughing-Stock!”) and
then in 1952 (“And Sickness Came”) before rejoining the natural time sequence in 1954
by the end of page 163 (sub-chapter “Days of Anxiety”). Still, these three jumps in time
are – through the use of sub-divisions of the sub-chapters – either teaching or relating life
experience. These jumps follow a condensed summary of fourteen years living in the
Delta – starting back in 1941 to 1955 – and they do shed light on Nuligak’s life during
that period.

These fourteen years in the Delta appear almost unworthy of attention since they
are summarized in only half a page of a hunting schema and only three paragraphs relate
Nuligak’s life during all that time.

1941 we had 888 rats (420 snared, 468 shot).

1942 " " 936 " [...] 

1947 – [...]
It is perhaps here that Metayer's collaboration injures Nuligak's narrative the most since the reader cannot help but feel that there are parts of the narrative missing. The way in which Metayer excises Nuligak's repetitions in the narrative also contributes, unfortunately, to the erasure of native oral traditions found in storytelling technique. Metayer's sense of readership may have cut out what appears to be a huge part of Nuligak's life on the premise that there was nothing to report or, as he put it his introduction, "I have deleted also reports on fishing and hunting expeditions related the same way year after year and without special adventures to recommend them" (9). The fact that within these fourteen years Nuligak's sons had taken wives, that they had children are only implied through the sub-division (of the second sub-chapter of the fourth chapter) entitled "The Rabbit and the Children."

In 1948 I set about building a log igloo, about three miles above Reindeer Village. The rabbits were coming quite close to eat grass. Andy, my grandchild, set a snare and caught a rabbit. The rabbit started to shriek, and Andy did not want to kill it. Our granddaughter, Lily Rose, was still a baby and [...] took up a little axe. I thought she had gone to meet her brother. But no, she was actually preparing the way in the willows so that her brother would easily be able to bring back the dead rabbit.74 (162)

74. Lily Rose was imitating the adults, who cut their way through the willows in order to haul back the carcasses of large game. M M
These divisions into sub-chapters shape the narrative by enabling the reader to better understand the narrative during time breaks by episodic arrangement. As previously discussed, they also organize this very timeline. This time organization in *I, Nuligak* takes form through the division of the narrative into five main chapters. Each chapter marks an important life transition and as previously stated, they read as follow: I. *Iliapak* (Poor Little Orphan Boy); II. *Ilisaroblunga* (Budding Hunter); III. *Inuktun* (A True Eskimo); IV. *Nuliartunga* (I Took a Wife) and V. *Angayokrartune* (Now an Old Man).

The first date given (1901) is found in the second sub-chapter of “*Iliapak*” which relates one of Nuligak’s travels with his grandmother *Anana* (literally translated as grandmother). The last date given by Nuligak is found in the fourth chapter (on page 164) and relates a blizzard that took place in 1955 on Herschel Island that trapped Nuligak’s sons for few days. The sub-chapters’ division into shorter narrative are not only consistent throughout the first four chapters and are noteworthy of the way they teach history, culture and traditions as previously mentioned. These divisions of the sub-chapters reinforce the journal form of Nuligak’s narrative before being carved into an autobiography by Metayer.

Helen Carr’s comment on autobiography in ‘In Other Words’ published in *Life/Lines: Theorizing Women’s Autobiography* edited by Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck, is significant to the discussion of identifying *I, Nuligak* as an autobiography that can be inscribed in the testimonio genre. Carr’s understanding of autobiography in Native American discourse would seem to work best when considered in the testimonial perspective, as it could then undermine mimicry and the reproduction of power relationships.
Autobiography inevitably makes an ahistorical primitivism impossible. The subject can only live in history, and the multistranded production of these texts denies the myth of separate existence. Colonial power pervades these life histories, even though it is superficially absent. Its presence both works within and calls attention to the split between their own humanitarian, libertarian ideals, and the oppressive power relations within which they work. (152-153)

Therefore, while considering *I, Nuligak* – the autobiography – we can but acknowledge the urgency of this narrative in terms of what it says about the loss of traditional Inuvialuit lifestyle, the depletion of game resources and the economic exploitation (that is to say, the resale value does not match the hardship of the hunt). “Every day I went walking on the ice in search of food. I had but forty-four cartridges for my gun. The H.B.C. had a store in Baillie but I had no means to pay. It is the H.B.C. custom to ignore you when you become poor” (157-8). These economic relationships that shaped the social relationships between Whites and Inuit are charged with financial interests at the expense of humanitarian ones as the H.B.C. custom dictates. It could thus be argued that *I, Nuligak* can be read as a testimonio in respect to what it says about Inuit survival.

Of course, if we consider the political dimension of the testimonial genre, as evoked by Beverley, Colás, Yúdice and Zimmerman, it is not difficult to identify *I, Nuligak* as a testimonio. Although Nuligak himself did not demonstrate much of an interest in politics – both in his life and in the text – the political nevertheless influences his narrative. The political interest of the autobiographical subject is best understood in relation to what it means for him to be subjected to Canadian politics. Following the
Migratory Bird Conservancy Act of 1917 between Canada and the United States, the hunting of this type of birds—such as the Culvert Duck—was condemned. “If the great white man’s chiefs came here to see the innumerable nests, they would not be so jealous of the eggs they forbid us to take. It is because they do not know that they act thus, I feel sure” (147). Nuligak’s observation echoes José Martí’s comment in Nuestra América about good governance.

A lo que es, allí donde se gobierna, hay que atender para gobernar bien; y el buen gobernante en América no es el que sabe cómo se gobierna el alemán o el francés, sino el que sabe con qué elementos está hecho su país, y cómo puede ir guiándolos en junto, para llegar, por métodos e instituciones nacidas del país mismo, a aquel estado apetecible donde cada hombre se conoce y ejerce, y disfrutan todos de la abundancia que la Naturaleza puso para todos en el pueblo que fecundan con su trabajo y defienden con sus vidas. (17)

Through Martí’s statement about the link that exists between experience of the country and the need to address the management of the game, the issue of self-governance is addressed. The political dimension of this narrative is not limited to Nuligak’s encounters with Canadian politics as previously discussed; it extends to the political and geographical relationships among the different Inuit communities.

Speaking of the Delta, I would like to add a few remarks that were made by my parents. Long ago the Kitigaruit Inuit, the real inhabitants of this land, avoided building their homes in the Delta. The Indians did the same. For them the Delta was a hunting-land, the trapping ground. When the
hunting season was past, they would return home, keeping the mouth of
the Mackenzie as a park where no one had the right to build or spend a
whole year there. Game was abundant. The Nunatarmeut, coming in from
Alaska, began to build houses and live there the whole year round. They
hunted mink everywhere, even during the summer by canoe, so much so
that they laid bare the whole country. Now there is no more game in the
Delta and the trapping is very poor. (84)

Hence, as I have related, the political dimension of this narrative works on two levels.
The first deals with the impact of Canadian politics on the lifestyle of the Inuit. "Today it
is not like that. When the days lengthened we killed caribou, as many as we wished.
There was no such thing as a closed season for hunting" (133). The second deals with the
impact of the land's usage and division of the hunting grounds among the different Inuit
groups as Nuligak discusses when speaking of the Mackenzie Delta.

To conclude this discussion about Nuligak's use of the genre, I would like to
stress John Beverley's warning about the testimonial genre made in his book entitled
Testimonio: On the Politics of Truth. "Testimonio represents an affirmation of the
individual subject, but in connection with a group [...] marked by marginalization,
oppression, and struggle" while autobiography is "an account, and also a means of access
to, middle - or upper - class status" (Beverley 41). Nuligak's discourse engages in a
discussion about "marginalization, oppression, and struggle" in connection to a group
rather than being an attempt on the part of the author/teller to inscribe himself into a
higher-class status through a quest for posterity which may be the case with
autobiography. This discussion about marginalization, oppression, and struggle will become clear in my analysis on cultural misrepresentation.

3.2. On the Collaboration between Nuligak and Metayer

This testimonio, a translation from the original version written in Inuvialuktun, exposes a collaboration that does not engage as much in misrepresentation as in the case of Jolote-Pozas. In his introduction, Metayer is careful to engage in self-erasure from Nuligak’s narrative in order to put forward the voice of Inuvialuit cultures. “I have not added anything to the original without accounting for it, as was necessary in the case of certain explanations. Customs quite clear to Eskimos might prove incomprehensible to a ‘white man’ (9).

As argued in this chapter, Metayer’s interventions throughout Nuligak’s narrative are directed toward cultural explanations of the Cultural Other’s customs, territories and traditional knowledge, rather than promoting an Inuit iconography. Metayer’s use of the term Eskimo is, at the time of the publication of the narrative, adequately used, but is now outdated as I have mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. The term is considered pejorative by Inuit as it was introduced by non-Natives to refer to the many Inuit cultures. The readers witness the absence of an idealized Inuit iconography to the benefit of a discourse that recognizes the value of Inuit culture. This phenomenon allows not only the emergence of other cultural voices, but also empowers the Cultural Other as participative actors in the construction of a Canadian cultural identity and history.
The end of Metayer’s introduction may be interpreted as the fostering of an idealized iconographic representation of Nuligak as an embodiment of Inuit culture. When Metayer says that Nuligak and his grandmother “became in real life the legendary Eskimo pair, […] suggesting that such stories are only the projection in folk-take form…” (10) and that “Nuligak was just such an orphan, and the adventures of his life closely parallel the Eskimo legends” (11), the reader is left with a notion of an idealized Inuit iconography. As argued in this chapter, and as expressed on page 114 of Nuligak’s narrative, Metayer’s comment exposes the Inuit community’s recognition of Nuligak’s exemplariness.

Being orphaned very early, the first years of my life were spent in poverty and hardship. Whenever someone gave me advice I was happy to follow it. Later on when I spoke, my words were taken into consideration. I loved to do someone a good turn. When hunting caribou, bear, or huge bearded seal, the older Inuit used to abide by what I said, although I was but a young man. (114)

In other words, Metayer’s comment asks from the readers to set aside their cultural assumptions in order to actively recognize the value of Inuit culture. The fact that Nuligak’s life can symbolize this cultural recognition is hardly enough evidence to support an argument on iconographic misrepresentation that would engage the master’s narrative in the promotion of an Indian thematic at the expense of an Indian reality. It is then possible to argue that Nuligak’s testimonio promotes the life and identity of the Cultural Other in its own terms rather than communicating the master’s narrative.

Metayer’s knowledge of literary conventions, manifested by the omission of some events
and of linguistic repetitions, facilitated the reading of this narrative but possibly at the expense of Inuit traditional technique of transmitting knowledge and history (such as repetition).

In other words, Metayer’s representation of Inuit culture through the collaboration and literary changes eased the reading of this narrative by non-Inuit readers who do not have the requisite cultural or linguistic references to be able to fluently understand Nuligak’s discourse. It is then possible to argue that Metayer’s collaboration, originating perhaps in his personal interest for Inuit culture, empowers the cultural minority’s discourse through his conscious, necessary self-erasure as agent of the master’s narrative cultural discourse. We can therefore summarize the collaboration between Nuligak and Metayer as a relationship that allows cultural empowerment, historical negotiation and legitimization of the Cultural Other’s discourse by portraying the unique knowledge that Nuligak has of the Inuvialuit (the Siglit Inuit).

3.3. Cultural Misrepresentation

In testimonio, cultural misrepresentation works on two different levels. The first level confirms the established relationship of domination between centre and margin, and the inherent romanticized representation of the Cultural Other. The second is often an attempt on the part of the marginal subject to renegotiate a more respectful image of the cultures living on the margins of the nation. In *I, Nuligak: The Autobiography of a Canadian Eskimo*, both Nuligak and Metayer’s narratives undermine cultural misrepresentation. In this section I will demonstrate how Metayer contributes to the renegotiation of, though not the resistance against, cultural misrepresentation. In so
doing, I return to Anne Elizabeth Gravel’s previously quoted argument. The fact that “identity-value [...] can only be authenticated by extratextual information” (Gravel 41) is most relevant in our analysis of Metayer’s involvement in presenting an empowering image of the Inuit cultures.

Metayer’s interventions show the genius of the culture through different examples of cultural traditions, while other examples relate to the transmission of knowledge. The precisions made by Metayer in the footnotes, and sometimes within Nuligak’s narrative, explain the cultural specificities that define Nuligak’s experience and reality.

We were in the middle of the strait. It was windy and the new ice was so thin and soft that it bent under our weight.51 (101)

51. Newly formed fresh-water ice is fragile, clear, and breaks like glass, but the new ice of salt water is opaque, flexible and somewhat elastic; it follows the undulations of the sea swell without breaking. M M.

On the following page, Nuligak’s grandfather’s experience of the ice reveals the dangers that surround life in the North. “I recalled one of my grandfather’s stories, where the ice had collapsed under the feet of a band of Inuit. [...] It was hare-brained of Putagor and me to have acted that way. Twenty minutes after we got to shore, our bridge of thin ice was completely destroyed” (102). The knowledge of the ice, transmitted to Nuligak by his grandfather, in this case exposes the thin line that exists between life and death. In The People and the World: Reading Native Nonfiction, Robert Warrior has pointed to the relevance of reading experience. “Experience, mediated in representations of it through
language, is the material manifestation of the connection between Native texts and Native lives” (xvi). Warrior’s comment indicates that the communication of experience-based knowledge should not be understood solely as a literary production. In fact, the reader must understand that the narration of experience can have direct repercussions on the lives of others. To return to the discussion on the dangers of different types of ice, this narrative is not only a literary production relaying an adventure, but is also, and mostly, a collective teaching performance with the objective of educating other Inuit about the dangers of, and distinctions between, newly-formed ice.

Metayer’s 25th footnote in the subchapter “A Hunter’s School” reveals this teaching dimension of Nuligak’s narrative: one that is more directed to the non-Inuit readers. Even though this intervention by Metayer aims to facilitate the reader’s understanding of how game is distributed, it nevertheless expresses Inuit and Inuvialuit social conventions about hunting:

I wanted to be there when it was time to share the spoils.²⁵ (51)

²⁵. By Eskimo custom all those who had taken part in a hunting expedition could take their share. Back at camp they might share again with the absent [...]. This was no longer justice, but charity. M M

Other parts of Nuligak’s testimonio display a resistance to cultural misrepresentations and one that is most revealing is seen in Metayer’s 67th footnote, which divulges that the author/teller was baptised with a Western name. The author/teller testifies under his Inuvialuk name: Nuligak Kriogak. The use of his Inuvialuk name not only enables
Nuligak to resist assimilation to the neo/colonial culture, but also to share his thoughts about Christianity and the way it imposed itself in the Inuit communities. In 1912,

[a] minister, Mr. Whittaker, arrived. He poured water on a great number of people. I got in line and did as the others did. [...] Furthermore a number of them did not even know what this ceremony was all about – even the adults did not bother to ask for explanations, and they knew nothing of the meaning of the prayers. (82)

Baptised Robert Cockney, Nuligak Kriogak comments in “Baptism in Series” (81-82) on the way through which Christianity reached the fringes of Canadian territory, but also on the arbitrariness of the official records that aimed to assimilate Inuit cultures and identities. To testify under his Inuvialuk name means for Nuligak that his experience and his identity are important parts of his culture. Struggle over naming demonstrates the incapacity of the dominant culture to completely assimilate the Inuit as the survival of the Squirrel dialect proves. Notwithstanding this resistance to the dominant culture, Nuligak speaks of a linguistic hybridity that emerges through contact between the “White man” and the Inuit. “The population of Herschel was relatively large and I was surprised to hear the Inuit speak the white man’s language and speak it well. They had learned it from the whale hunters while living and working beside them” (84). Some Inuit had learned the White man’s language and it is plausible to argue that this new language was spreading relatively quickly throughout the different Inuit communities for economic reasons.

In fact, the readers can find neologisms in this narrative, translated by Metayer, that refer to the Inuvialuktun nomenclature for technology used by the White man. “We
had one of those needles-for-foggy-weather, but it was impossible to see anything around us” (129). Here, Nuligak clearly refers to a compass. “Even on the coldest days, when the machine-making-cold says fifty below…” (123). Here, Nuligak refers to a thermometer.

In another passage, Nuligak’s reference to a motor is apparent: “That summer of 1926 I owned a schooner at last! […] It was forty feet long, with a Francisco Standard ten horsepower machine-to-make-fire” (143). The introduction of a vocabulary on technology, and of the White man’s technology, into the everyday reality of the Inuit necessarily demanded a coinage of the sign referentiality in order to be able to describe this new reality.

It is perhaps through the introduction of a new reality (through linguistic coinage) vocabulary that cultural exchanges are the most revealing. In other words, language reflects the contact between dominant and marginal cultures. As previously mentioned, Mary Louise Pratt has theorised in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* the phenomenon of the contact zone as “an attempt to invoke the spatial and temporal copresence [sic] of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures, and whose trajectories now intersect” (7). But this “copresence of subjects” does not manifest itself only in the European/Inuit relationship. Metayer notes that this hybridity also exists in the coexistence of the different Inuit groups and the languages they use to describe their reality, as explained in the 49th footnote: “Tan ’nit is the word used by the Tchukchis and Koryaks of Siberia to refer to each other. It is believed that they brought the word across the Behring Str. [sic] to the Alaskan Eskimos who use it when speaking of the men of the whaling ships M M” (99). However, the social transformations manifested through language are also manifested through the usage of
various material goods. “At that time the Inuit did not know of the white man’s food. Even flour and sugar were unknown to us. Tea, tobacco, gunpowder and lead for cartridges were the only things we borrowed from the white man” (15). This comment testifies to the necessity of obtaining these most useful material goods, if we think of “gunpowder and lead for cartridges” for example, which established a relationship of interdependency between the Inuit and the White man.

Both groups need one another to survive as Nuligak expresses, “Inuit in the vicinity met at Ballie […]. There was no more lead or gun powder, no canvas for tents, or many other useful things” (49). But if it is true that the Inuit need the material goods – not to mention technology – to facilitate their lives, it is also true that the White man needs Inuit knowledge and skill to survive the Arctic environment, as expressed later by Nuligak: “There were many Eskimos […]. They were building sledges and sewing harness [sic] right beside our tent, preparing Swanson’s departure for the south with Captain Pederson” (94). This interdependence between the Inuit and the “White man” is not only of great importance for the survival of both cultural groups, but also shapes intercultural understanding. The contact between the Inuit and the White man’s cultures, as well as the exchange of material goods, led to the construction of perceptions and representations of the Cultural Other on both sides. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said discusses aspects of the interdependence that unites dominant and marginal cultures:

> Life in one subordinate realm of experience is imprinted by the fictions and follies of the dominant realm. But the reverse is true, too, as experience in the dominant society comes to depend uncritically on
natives and their territories perceived as in need of *mission civilisatrice*.

(xix)

Therefore, the perceived reality of the different cultural groups shapes how each group represents both the Cultural Other and itself. Perceptions of the Other are thus often influenced by misrepresentations. For example, the long tradition of seeing Canada as a vast empty territory, especially when speaking of the Great North, proves to be incorrect. This perception is contested by Nuligak’s narrative: “The big Christmas reunion took place in Ukerpik, where there were the most people. [...] Some of them built snow igloos for the nights [sic]. There was [sic] quite a number of houses around the bay, but no more room” (145). The Canadian claims about the empty space of the territory are, through Nuligak’s testimonio, challenged and proven to be false.

Of course, for readers to understand misrepresentation they must consider the differences in the ways that nomadic and sedentary cultures occupy territories. In *Entre Inclusion et Exclusion: La Symbolisation de l’Autre dans les Amériques*, Amaryll Chanady argues “[c]e qui est important pour le sentiment d’identité n’est pas la filiation réelle, mais la filiation construite dans l’imaginaire social” (52). The perception of the North as an “empty” territory, considering the nomadic lifestyle of Inuit cultures, is part of the Canadian imagination of the North formed through the travel writing of (mainly) European explorers. Such a perception aims to subjugate the Cultural Other rather than to recognize Inuit rights over the land to which this testimonio testifies constantly. As noted earlier, the Inuit’s right to self-governance is thereby denied by the dominant culture.

Nuligak resists misleading cultural representations by presenting to the readers a society that held knowledge and that governed itself long before the arrival of Europeans
in America as argued on page 84 of Nuligak’s testimonio when discussing land occupation and games in the Mackenzie River Delta. Metayer’s involvement in the representation of the Inuit and Inuvialuit culture and traditions through the specifics found in the footnotes aims to rectify Canadian assumptions about the Inuit. Metayer’s notes about the differences that exist between the different groups of Inuit and the knowledge of the environment held by those who inhabit the land empowers Inuit culture. These are but two examples that portray the Inuit as marginal cultures outside of neo/colonial culture. The author’s/teller’s usage of his Inuvialuk name instead of his Western name, as well as the fact that this testimonio was originally written in Inuvialuktun, legitimizes the cultural authority of the politically marginalized. The dependence between the White man and the Inuit for survival in this part of Canada (the Northwest Territories, specifically: the Inuvialuit Settlement Region) presents to the readers the reality of the contact zone that necessarily emerges from the encounter of “two” cultures. The contact between these “two” cultures has modified the Inuit’s traditional lifestyle. The hybridity that arises from such contact, through the introduction of the White man’s technology and material goods, can also be witnessed in the analysis of language. I will now analyze further how resistance to cultural misrepresentations takes place in this testimonio.

3.4. About Inuvialuit Resistance

The cultural resistance found in Nuligak’s testimonio manifests itself through various subjects discussed by the author. Nuligak’s claim to authenticity at the beginning of the narrative shows the desire of the author to be taken seriously by his Inuit audience.
The author’s preoccupation with legitimizing his testimonio is evident in his attempts to include Inuvialuit-specific knowledge of the Northern environment, so as to cater to an Inuit as well as a non-Inuit readership. For example, Nuligak observed in 1902 a wolf pack so great that his concerns with truth/reliability are not only obvious, but also prevent him from giving an exact number to his readers. “There were so many of them that the last ones were still in front of us when the leaders had disappeared on the eastern horizon. […] I do not know how many wolves there were, and rather than pass for a liar I refuse to give a number” (27-28). Conscious of the possibility of being labelled as a liar, Nuligak does not want to say how many wolves he has seen pass, hence leaving the readers to interpret for themselves. This passage highlights an ecological reality before the decline of wild game in the area. The identification of wildlife by Nuligak is less about the construction of self in this territory than it is about testifying to life and the reality of the ecosystem at the beginning of the 20th century.

Nuligak was a skilled – perhaps extraordinary – hunter, but his descriptions of the game in the ISR (Inuvialuit Settlement Region) can be misleading for the readers who may be inclined to think that the game was not only plentiful, but also easily caught. “That winter was fantastic! White foxes and coloured ones were plentiful. In the mountains caribou herds abounded. We Inuit spent the entire winter in comfort, lacking nothing. Just before freeze-up we netted forty thousand herring” (121). Aware of the improbability of being believed by his audience (both Native and non-Native), Nuligak consciously sets the record straight. In the lengthy quotation that follows, we witness Nuligak’s preoccupation to provide a believable account of his reality means to cater to both Inuit and Non-Inuit readers:
I must tell you what I think about hunting. The wild animals are not caught just like that! It takes effort, and lots of it. Perhaps you young men and young ladies who are reading my stories think, “In those days game filled the country; hunting for them was just play!” I must tell you, my friends, that you are quite mistaken. From time immemorial the Inuit have looked for something to eat and have gone hunting for it. How many hunters have remained in the bush for days and days and come back without a single caribou! Forty or fifty below zero at times, and sometimes colder than that, and having left home without eating they had to stay two or three days without food. There were caribou, but not a cloud in the sky – no way of getting near them. I have seen men freeze their cheeks, their noses, their feet. Cold masters us quickly when the stomach is empty.

(133)

This quotation serves as a rectification of the easiness of catching the game and contrasts with the previous accounts of hunting presented in other parts of Nuligak’s testimonio. On one hand, this rectification emphasizes the hunting skill of Nuligak. On the other hand, by setting the record straight, the author resists the assumptions that emerge from his testimonio concerning game.

Conscious of the shift experienced by Inuit through the contact with neo/colonial cultures, Nuligak is concerned with the loss of traditions. His discussion regarding the loss of traditional hunting methods in this testimonio can thus be understood by the readers as a strategy of resistance. By informing readers of the loss of cultural traditions, the author is able to talk back to the dominant culture. At the same time, by recalling how
the Inuit used to hunt the polar bear, the testimonio serves to empower the Inuit through the preservation of traditions and cultural memory.

In those days our dogs were skilled in hunting bears. [...] For tracking, the dogs were unhitched from the sledge and wore only their harness. Often they had not gone far, when they began to bark; nanuk was at bay. The dogs had it cornered and would not let it go. Today the Inuit are unfamiliar with this manner of hunting polar bears with dogs. They can no longer recognize the distinctive tones of the barking when a nanuk is at bay.

While going on to tell of another traditional method of hunting nanuk (the white polar bear), Nuligak tries to leave a legacy of privileged Inuvialuit knowledge of life in the ‘Great North.’ By allowing himself to speak of cultural loss, the author resists cultural oblivion. In order to fight back against the loss of cultural traditions and knowledge, Nuligak’s testimonio engages in a discourse that aims to safeguard aspects of the culture that are, through time, disappearing from the Inuvialuit’s collective memory. This attempt on the part of the author to preserve Inuit traditions and knowledge can best be observed through the didactic function of the testimonio. Nuligak incorporates maxims that teach young Inuit and non-Inuit readers about the truth of life. For example, “[t]he old Inuit used to say ‘He who is lazy has to live on an empty stomach.’ As far as we are concerned, I can say that we worked!” (159).

To teach does not only mean to preserve and pass on knowledge; it also means to resist neo/colonial assumptions about the inferiority of marginal knowledge as well as valorizing this very same marginal knowledge. In the subchapter “What the Moons Are
Called,” we witness the teaching aspect present throughout the narrative. Nuligak’s knowledge of the moons comes from his grandmother’s brother, Naoyavak. Naoyavak’s teaching provides Nuligak with the Inuvialuktun names – and origins – for the moons that are at risk of being forgotten.

“I will teach you how to recognize the different moons; I am getting old and many do not know the Eskimo names of the moons. They have forgotten. You, remember them.” […] This is what I retained of what he taught me in that month of January, 1909. The January moon is called Avunniviayuk in Eskimo. […] The February moon is Avunnivik. […]

March is Amaolikkervik. […] The April moon receives the name of Kriblalikvik […]. Tigmiyikvik is our month of May […]. June is called Nuertorvik; […] To the July moon we give the name of Padlersersivik […]. August becomes Krugyuat Tingiviat in Eskimo […]. In September […] the moon is called Aklikarniarvik. In the month of October […] the moon Tugluvik. In November […] this moon is called Itartoryuk. We call the December moon Kaitvitjvik […]. Today the Inuit do not know these names in their language; I am almost the only one who knows these words. I used to love to listen to those who told the stories and customs of long ago. I craved to know more and more. (57-58)

This teaching aspect of Nuligak’s testimonio functions not only to transmit traditional knowledge, but also functions importantly as an act of resistance to the dominant culture’s hegemonic assumptions regarding this knowledge. In Nuligak’s testimonio, his teaching of the moons in Inuvialuit tradition serves to revive the cultural knowledge of
the marginal Cultural Other. The space given to these lessons in Nuligak’s testimonio expresses the respect that he has for his cultural and intellectual heritage. While legitimizing marginal knowledge, the testimonio also valorizes the oral techniques used to pass on knowledge and traditions.

An interesting aspect of this testimonio is that Nuligak refuses to remain silent about the past. The author’s desire to share his experience and knowledge with other members of his community, and with non-Native readers, is an eloquent plea about the importance of remembering. The author thus selects the information that he wishes to share strategically. In Entre Inclusion et Exclusion, Chanady explains the power relations that such a process implies. “L’oubli et le souvenir ne sont pas des processus collectifs spontanés, mais des processus dirigés qui impliquent des relations de pouvoir” (55). Henceforth we are forced to recognize, contrary to Doris Sommer’s discussion in “No Secrets,” that keeping and sharing secrets does have a strategic value (Gugelberger, 130). In other words, Nuligak’s choice to reveal or keep silent part of his testimonio comes to empower not only his culture, but also valorizes the methods used to pass on knowledge and traditions. Without falling in a romanticized vision of the past, this resistance strategy rather propels traditional knowledge and Inuvialuit culture in modernity.

On the one hand, Nuligak keeps secret parts of his life. “I do not tell you everything in these stories that I relate” (125). The strategy behind this selective silence exposes the author’s ability to deliver a literary product that is as worthy as any other coming from the dominant culture. “There would be material for more than one book were I to say everything. So I have skipped many events…” (125). Nuligak selects what he wishes to say in order to present a culturally aesthetic pleasing product. On the other
hand, Nuligak emphasizes the importance of sharing secrets (which Sommer intelligibly argues) in order to prevent the loss of the Inuvialuit cultural heritage and resist oblivion, assimilation, and dissemination.

Now the people wished to see the tunrait, a kind of puppet. The aged people who had made them would work only at night, being careful to avoid being seen by newcomers and children. [...] Before we youngsters could learn from the old, a severe illness carried them away. They were so wary of giving away their secret that it died with them. (20-21)

The strategy behind sharing secrets is obviously to prevent the loss of cultural knowledge. By sharing these secrets, Inuit culture ensures the continuity of tradition and exposes the uniqueness of their cultural knowledge and the specificities of the methods they use to share this knowledge. Still, Nuligak remains careful not to tell everything in order to prevent cultural misinterpretation and misuse of information that weakens even more the Inuvialuit culture in their struggle for proper recognition and for self-governance.

To conclude this discussion on the cultural resistance found in I, Nuligak, our analysis has demonstrated that Nuligak Kriogak’s resistance operated in different aspects of the narrative. The author’s/teller’s inscription of insider knowledge and concern with authenticity challenges the cultural assumptions that young Native and non-Native readers can harbour about Inuit cultures. Nuligak’s teaching of the Inuvialuit names of the moon exposes, for example, the author’s resistance to linguistic assimilation and oblivion while valorizing Inuvialuit’s cultural knowledge. This empowerment is achieved through the strategic usage of secrets. Some secrets will be kept while others will be
shared. Nulgak’s decision to share the secrets he has learnt from the elders and through personal experience thus reveals the author’s control over the shape and content of his testimonio.
Chapter IV:

An Antane Kapesh: Identity in De/Construction

_Je suis une Maudite Sauvagesse_ by An Antane Kapesh was published in 1976. In this book, the reader finds the Roman Innu-aimun text (instead of the syllabic written form of the Innu-aimun language, which is much used by the Naskapi-Montagnais) on the even-numbered pages and the French translation on the odd-numbered pages. Changing from _Eukuan Nin Matshimanitu INNU-ISKUEU_ by An Antane Kapesh to _Je suis une Maudite Sauvagesse_ by Anne André (the Christian name of Kapesh), this autobiography was translated into French by José Mailhot with the collaboration of Anne-Marie André and André Mailhot. Kapesh’s life story is divided into nine chapters that could be interchangeable since there is no chronology – as understood by westernized standards – that ties them together. In other words, each chapter could be read individually without getting lost since they are composed as whole stories within a larger one. But before discussing in greater details Kapesh’s testimonio it is important to clarify the cultural and linguistic distinctions that exist between Kapesh and Nuligak. In the previous chapter, I have been referring to the terms Inuvialuit and Inuvialuktun (Siglitun) when speaking of Nuligak’s culture and language. Inuit are the descendants of what anthropologists call the Thule culture, who emerged from western Alaska [...] The Inuit are not to be confused with the Innu, a distinct First Nations people who live in northeastern Québec and Labrador. They speak an Algonquian language known as Innu-aimun or Montagnais. (_Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami_ and _Innu-aimun_. Web.) Kapesh uses the term Montagnais to refer to her culture and language. The Innu Nations are themselves divided into different cultural groups (for example: the Montagnais who lived closer to the St-Lawrence shore
and the Naskapi-Montagnais who lived inland) and linguistic groups that nonetheless share a common heritage. Since the 1990s, the Montagnais people have generally chosen to be officially referred to as the Innu (Innu-aimun. Web). In order to minimize confusion in the use of the term Montagnais (at times meaning culture, on others language) I will refer to the culture as Innu and to the language as Innu-aimun.

The first chapter, “L’arrivée du Blanc sur notre territoire,” emphasizes the connection that exists between Natives culture and land. The strategic dispossession of Native land by White-settler culture engages loss as echoed in the third and fourth chapters on the White-settler educational system and game control. The second chapter, “La découverte du minerai dans le Nord,” questions the official written history of the dominant culture by integrating stories passed down from one generation to the next. Such renegotiation of history – or rather Kapesh’s counter-history – enables the autobiographical subject to put forward her cultural heritage while resisting the dominant culture’s attacks and manipulations of history and iconography. The third chapter entitled “L’éducation blanche” exposes the treacherous trickery of separating the children and the adults through the residential school system. By cutting off the children from their parents, a break (cultural, linguistic, and historical) which occurs between generations. The fourth chapter, “Le garde-chasse,” exposes the difficulties in the management of the territory and the game that result from the dispossession of Natives land. Because of the sedentary life imposed on Native communities – through the residential system and the promises of paid work by the Iron Ore Company – Natives travelled less across land (their hunting grounds) which led to another type of land exploitation besides mining. Kapesh speaks of how her husband’s hunting ground has been flooded to make way for
the Churchill River hydroelectric project as well as how her father’s hunting ground has been dispossessed due to occupation by hunting clubs. “Autrefois [...] il y avait du caribou. [...] Aujourd’hui, il y a de très nombreux clubs de chasse et pêche précisément sur son terrain de chasse. Voilà pourquoi il n’y a que du poisson, du porc-épic, du lièvre et de la perdrix” (109;111). The fifth chapter “Le marchand d’alcool” is but scratching the tip of the iceberg in regards to the problem that alcohol brought to Native communities; one of them being the discrimination against Natives by the inn-keeper. “Les Indiens allaient le voir depuis quelques années seulement quand le marchand d’alcool a agrandi son hôtel et y a aménagé un bar-salon où seuls les Blancs sont admis” (119). When too drunk, Natives are taken in charged by the police which shows a cycle of alcohol, crime, and punishment. The sixth chapter, “La police et les tribunaux,” is used by Kapesh to assert cases of police brutality. The whole chain of events that led to cultural assimilation and oppression emerges: the settling process of nomadic culture; the cultural break through the residential school system; the dispossession of hunting grounds for mining and hunting clubs; the 1963’s amendment of the 1867’s Indian Act to allow selling of alcohol to Natives (117), and the cultural discrimination that followed; and the cases of police brutality, all draw a rather bleak portrait of cultural contact between White-settler culture and Innu.

The seventh chapter, “Les journalistes et les cinéastes” speaks of the role that the media played in reinforcing Natives cultural misrepresentation. “Quand le Blanc nous dénigre dans les journaux, moi je considère qu’il se dénigre lui-même parce que c’est lui qui nous a enseigné sa culture” (177). For Kapesh, the native iconography mirrored in the White-settler’s media can only show the result of this cultural shift and its repercussions
on Native lifestyle. In the eighth chapter, “Les maisons de Blanc,” Kapesh discusses the various governmental attempts to move the community from Sept-Îles to Shefferville, from Shefferville to ‘Lac John’ (three miles further), and back again to either Shefferville or Sept-Îles. In the last chapter, “Comment le Blanc nous considérera-t-il à l’avenir,” Kapesh speaks of the break in traditional lifestyle – from nomadic to sedentary – and territorial dispossession while stressing the necessity for self-governance over Native land.

4.1. Kapesh’s Use of the Genre

An Antane Kapesh’s testimonio, Je suis une Maudite Sauvagesse, is a good example of the desire of Native groups to have their cultures recognized as a fundamental part of the history of New World colonization by reaching beyond orality and inscribing Native discourse into the literary corpus of the colonial society. The objectives in the act of writing can easily be identified, though they are not easily accomplished. In order to defend her culture and ensure its survival, Kapesh uses literature to tell her side of the story. By allowing herself to write down what she witnesses in her life as a member of the Innu Nation, Kapesh is still able to locate her story within her cultural frame; that is to say that Kapesh uses the tools favored by orality such as repetition in order to narrate her life story, hence reinforcing her cultural heritage. Kapesh’s preface begins by acknowledging the fact that she is going to produce knowledge and history proper to Native experience – and traditionally transmitted orally – through the Cultural Other’s tools. “Dans mon livre, il n’y a pas de parole de Blanc. Quand j’ai songé à écrire pour me défendre et pour défendre la culture de mes enfants, j’ai d’abord bien réfléchi car je
savais qu’il ne fait pas partie de ma culture d’écrire” (Preface). It is clear that the production of scriptocentric literary work is acknowledged by Kapesh as a necessity for the marginalized to defend their rights to territorial claims, and especially, their rights to cultural recognition, notwithstanding the cultural break from orality that such an enterprise demands.

Because *Je suis une Maudite Sauvagesse* is written in Innu-aimun, Kapesh’s mother tongue, her testimonio is effective in relaying the authenticity of her discourse. Because Kapesh’s testimonio is published in Innu-aimun with a French translation, the bilingual text lends her discourse an authority and becomes a repository of cultural and historical knowledge that is not often readily granted to Native writers by the dominant cultural group’s discourse. In the case at hand, the collective voice heard in *Je suis une Maudite Sauvagesse* is revealed through the deconstruction of the singularity of the author’s experience through her integration of stories by other members of the community. Shortly, I will discuss in more detail how Kapesh’s second chapter on the discovery of iron ore in Shefferville is an example of that polyphony at work. For now, I wish only to stress what Kapesh thought of the colonizer’s story of the discovery of the iron ore by Father Babel O.M.I. (Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate); “Après avoir entendu cela, j’étais étonnée : jamais je n’avais entendu mon père, ni les autres Indiens, ni les Vieux raconter cette histoire. […] Il n’y a pas que mon père qui détienne des histoires, il y a aussi son père, son grand-père et son arrière-grand-père” (42; 45). As Natasha Dagenais argues in *Testimonial Life Writing as Cultural Survival*, “[b]y underlining this tradition of storytelling and its storytellers (father, grandparents, great-grandparents, and other elders) […] Kapesh discloses the interconnection between the healing power of
stories, Indigenous history and cultural survival” (176). Notwithstanding the first-person narration in this testimonio, there is a shift from a singular narration to a plural narration. In other words, Kapesh’s connection to her cultural group is emphasized by the usage of a narrating ‘We’. “Voici ce que je pense. […] Nous, par exemple, sommes vraiment harcelés par les Blancs parce qu’ils veulent à tout prix être les maîtres sur notre territoire” (29). This is but one example of the narrative technique that positions the locus of authority in the author’s discourse, which is intrinsically linked to that of the community. By leaving space in her testimonio for the voices of others, Kapesh ensures the readers’ access to the representation of this collective experience and as such, the text becomes a teaching tool as well as a story of cultural resistance.

The individual life story thus expresses the story of the community as well. In his article “Testimonio in Guatemala,” Marc Zimmerman says, “each individual testimony evokes an absent polyphony of other voices, lives, and experiences. The testimonial form affirms the speaking subject by addressing the reader in the form of an ‘I’ that demands attention” (Gugelberger, 112). Our analysis of Kapesh’s autobiography reveals “an ‘I’ that demands attention” but in connection with a group experience. It is in fact an I that stands for a We. This We that demands attention thus engages the readers in an experience that emphasizes the polyphony and thus may be read as testimonio. The second chapter of the testimonio, “La découverte du minerai dans le Nord,” makes apparent the polyphonic nature of the narration through the intervention of Kapesh’s father

En 1970, […] nous avons entendu raconter pour la première fois que c’est le Père Babel qui a découvert le minerai de fer ici. […] À son arrivée chez
nous, je lui ai aussitôt raconté ce que j’avais entendu dire. Je n’avais pas encore terminé […] que mon père s’est mis à rire puis me dit: « Voyons, n’écoute pas ce mensonge. L’histoire que tu as entendue aujourd’hui, le Blanc vient de l’inventer. » Mon père me dit encore : « À présent moi je vais te raconter quelque chose, écoute-moi bien: […] » Cela doit faire aujourd’hui presque deux cents ans que nous, les Indiens, entendons raconter l’histoire de Tshishenish Pien qui a découvert la mine. (39; 45; 51)

The intervention of Kapesh’s father emphasizes the plurality of voices in this testimonio, which reveals the community basis for testimonial narration. This intervention results in a negotiation of an alter/native history that aims to resist cultural misrepresentation. This aspect will be discussed in greater detail in the following analysis of cultural misrepresentation. That said, it is important to note that the inclusion of various discourses in the author’s testimonio gives meaning to the polyphony of this narrative and to the Innu experiences. Therefore, it is almost impossible for the readers to take only Kapesh’s experience out of this testimonio since a multiplicity of voices and experiences are connected and must be read as a whole through her narration.

The testimonial discourse gives insight to the experience of not only the speaker, but of the entire community to which she belongs. Diane Boudreau argues in *Histoire de la littérature amérindienne au Québec* that, generally, in native writing the “intérêts de l’être individuel comptent bien peu face aux exigences de l’être social” (121). The author comes to eclipse herself in the narrative while unfolding her life story as representative.
In other words, the speaker’s experience in the testimonial genre serves to resist oppression, exclusion and misrepresentation of the subject’s culture.

Even though Boudreau was talking specifically about the collective orientation of indigenous people in Québec, one cannot avoid noticing the relationship that exists between indigeneity and testimonio across the Americas. Indigenous testimony uses the forms favoured by the Native community such as storytelling or testimonio for example. As argued previously, the *I* in the testimonio is in fact a *We* that speaks to the social conditions of a minority about exclusion from national identity, about economic exploitation and about judicial and political oppression. Yet, one must remain cautious, as Beverley argued, of the implications and risks that the shift from testimonio to autobiography represents.

Testimonio represents an affirmation of the individual subject [...] in connection with a group or class [...] If it loses this connection, it ceases to be testimonio and becomes autobiography, that is, an account of, and also a means of access to, middle – or upper – class status, a sort of documentary bildungsroman. (Beverley 2004, 41)

Kapesh’s writing is not a “means of access to middle – or upper – class status,” but rather an individual expression of a class or group situation that demands proper attention. For Kapesh, the act of writing testifies not only to the Innu cultural, judicial and political oppression, but stems from the desire to defend her cultural identity. Respect for cultural and political traditions is at the core of this testimonio and reveals a “situation marked by marginalization, oppression, and struggle” (Beverley 2004, 41). The testimonio bears witness to discrimination in Chapter Five; to the cases of police brutality in Chapter Six,
and to forced dislocation in Chapter Eight. The following excerpt speaks of the
impossibility for the Innu Nation to remain subjected to White-settler culture and laws:

Nous remercions le Blanc de ses lois et règlements [sic] mais ils ne nous
sont d'aucune utilité parce que nous, qui sommes Indiens, ne comprenons
rien à la loi des Blancs de toute façon. Que le Blanc garde ses lois et
règlements et qu'ils lui servent à lui, parce que c'est de sa culture qu'il
s'agit. (27; 29)

This impossibility for Kapesh of being subjected to the Whites' laws stresses the urgency
of Innu self-governance as it was articulated more than a hundred years ago by José Martí
in *Nuestra América*.

Viene el hombre natural, indignado y fuerte, y derriba la justicia
acumulada de los libros, porque no se la administra en acuerdo con las
necesidades patentes del país. Conocer es resolver. Conocer el país, y
gobernarlo conforme al conocimiento, es el único modo de librarlo de
tiranías. (18)

For Kapesh, only the inhabitants of the land are qualified to legislate. “Aussi, en territoire
indien, seul l'Indien était en droit de faire des lois et de les faire respecter des Blancs”
(Kapesh, 29).

To summarize our discussion of why Kapesh’s narrative can be considered a
testimonio, we have seen that the author’s connection with her cultural group allows
Kapesh to put forward a discourse that “implies a challenge to the loss of the authority of
orality in a the context of cultural modernization that privilege literacy and literature as
means of expression” (Beverley 2004, 35). The urgency of the narration for cultural survival is literally expressed by Kapesh in her preface. Her writing aims to defend her cultural identity that is endangered by the growing influence of the White man’s history and politics. Furthermore, the polyphony of voices that can be found in this narrative reveals not only the oppression experienced by the author as an individual subject, but also the oppression experienced by her entire community.

4.2. On the Collaboration Between Kapesh and J. Mailhot, A.-M. André, and A. Mailhot

The relationship of collaboration behind this testimonio is between An Antane Kapesh and José Mailhot (with the collaboration of Anne-Marie André and André Mailhot). This collaborative relationship is perhaps the most difficult of all in this thesis to study since the translators’ presence is mostly hidden in the narrative. Unlike the collaborations previously discussed, the collaboration between Kapesh and her translators has far fewer interventions or notes in the margins.

Following Jarold Ramsey’s comment in the article “Telling Stories for Readers,” my understanding of the collaboration at work in this narrative takes form. The “process of translation [is] not only from one language system to the other, but also from one culture to the other” (122). As it has been argued in this chapter, most non-Innu readers only have access to this narrative through the process of translation. Being published in its (Roman) Innu-aimun version on even-numbered pages and in its French translation on odd-numbered pages, the availability of this testimonial writing to non-Innu readers is made possible by this collaboration in translation while simultaneously having the purpose of serving as a teaching tool to ensure cultural and linguistic survival. Further, it
can be argued that the collaborative nature of this testimonio is manifest through language. Robert W. Schrauf and David C. Rubin have insightfully argued on the importance of language in their article, “On the Bilingual’s Two Sets of Memories:”

After all, if languages are merely codes, learning another language is just learning another way of coding the world. This assumes that there is an objective, essentially noncultural [sic] world coded slightly differently by different languages. By implication, either the codes are interchangeable, or, more perniciously, ‘our code’ is normative and ‘our world’ is the ‘real’ world. (Schrauf & Rubin, 132)

Following this reasoning, the publication of Kapesh’s text in both its original and its translated versions expresses and troubles those two linguistic realities. The French translation expresses that “the codes are interchangeable,” which enables a broader public reading. However, the (Roman) Innu-aimun version contests the “normative” nature of linguistic code by presenting a different approach as to what constitutes the “‘real’ world”. As it is the case with Kapesh’s testimonio, it is the Roman alphabet that is used to write in Innu-aimun rather than the syllabic one. Aside from small communities in Labrador, known as the Naskapi-Montagnais, I have not found supporting evidences that the syllabic alphabet is generally used for writing Innu-aimun language. It would seem that the syllabic alphabet is used to greater extent by populations such as the Cree and some Inuit groups.

Schrauf and Rubin’s argument reveals a certain truth about the dynamics of language, but they seem to be missing another important truth about language: that is to say that language is intrinsically and necessarily marked by the cultural reality of the
narrator in the enunciation of the narrative as well as in the reception of the narrative by the readers. However, Schrauf and Rubin acknowledge this in their discussion of the aspect of referentiality in communication. “Language not only depends on context for its meaning, but invokes context as well […]. Any experience, then, if complex in any way, will be marked by the linguacultural context that makes it possible as a meaningful human event” (Schrauf and Rubin, 139).

More precisely, the above analysis indicates that both the Innu-aimun and the French versions compel readers to recognize an alter/native method of coding the world. This means that effective communication is enabled through access to the Cultural Other’s referentiality. The French translation in this testimonio enables this access while the Innu-aimun version empowers the voice of the cultural minority. Through this collaboration, which enabled the reading of this testimonio by both Native and non-Native readers, the readers engage in a cultural negotiation of history as well as in a negotiation of encoding the world. For the readers to be able to participate in the empowerment of the Cultural Other’s discourse, which takes place through these negotiations, we must be able to establish a connection between our experiences and the references of Native cultures.

The accessibility of a relatable cultural referent is thus crucial to the empowerment of alter/native discourses. The cultural interventions of the translators further the readers’ understanding of the Cultural Other’s referent. There are only a handful of these cultural interventions in this particular testimonial narrative as the notes of the translators (N.D.T.) reveal:
On a demandé [...] de faire cuire de la bannique\(^1\) dans le sable. [...] nous faisions un makushan\(^2\), c’était de la graisse de caribou que nous mangions.

La tente qu’on avait dressé était une shaputuan\(^3\)... (41)

1. Pain dont le levain est remplacé par de la poudre à pâte. (N.D.T.)

2. Banquet ritual. (N.D.T.)

3. Grande tente rectangulaire pourvue d’une porte à chaque extrémité, où se déroule le makushan. (N.D.T.)

These cultural interventions, made by the translators in the form of a glossary of terms, serve to enhance the readers’ understanding of a reality with which they are not familiar. Later in the testimonio, the translators do clarify untranslatable words that can only refer to the Innu reality:

L’indien ne se voit jamais utiliser un canot d’écorce qu’il a lui-même fabriqué, se construire une habitation avec de l’écorce ou de la peau de caribou et, après avoir tué un beau caribou, faire préparer par la femme indienne un timtshipashikan\(^1\). C’était la meilleure nourriture indienne. Je ne vois jamais de timtshipashikan dans les films. (179)

1. Viande de caribou entier qui est finement découpée, séchée puis soigneusement emballée dans le tissu sous-cutané puis dans la peau de l’animal. Préparer ce ballot de viande séchée est un art. (N.D.T.)

The collaboration at work in this testimonio and the resulting cultural interventions allowed non-Native readers to access the Cultural Other’s reality. Of course, the
interventions by the translators are not found in the Innu-aimun side of the text. Most interventions, like those previously mentioned above, are directed at the non-Native readers who do not know about the specifics of Innu rituals and cuisine. Still, the translators’ interventions on Kapesh’s discussion of alcohol might also have been inserted in the Innu-aimun text as we may question how many Innu know about the politics of alcohol to which Kapesh refers and how it all began in her community:

Le premier hôtel n’était pas tellement grand et il n’y avait pas de bar-salon. Quand il fut terminé et qu’on eût permis à l’Indien de boire de l’alcool, les Blancs et les Indiens buvaient ensemble à l’hôtel. (117)

1. La Loi des Indiens, votée en 1867, comportait une clause qui interdisait aux Indiens de la consommation de boissons alcoolisées. Cette clause fut amendée en 1963. (N.D.T.)

It is probable that many of the community Elders know about that law but perhaps some of the younger Innu readers do not have this information either. The fact that the translators’ interventions are directed one way (to non-Native readers) reinforces the value and the uniqueness of Innu culture and their singular knowledge while Kapesh’s writing aims at ensuring Innu history and to pass-on knowledge to the next generations. The collaboration at work in this testimonio manifests itself through the process of a possible or impossible translation. Through their cultural precisions, the translators have been able to not only empower Kapesh’s testimonio through their self-erasures, but also allow the readers to develop an understanding of an alter/native coding of reality that empowers Native discourse and history.
4.3. Cultural Misrepresentation

Kapesh’s testimonio engages the readers in a process of deconstructing their knowledge of the history of colonization. The arrival of White-settler culture in the northern part of Québec has affected the autonomy, economy, language and culture of the Innu nations. Kapesh argues that White-settlers (Le Blanc) always lied to the Natives in order to take away their land, their culture and their language. By being dishonest with the Innu, White-settlers have been able to live off of Native land at the expense of the Native lifestyle and heritage.

Quand on songe aujourd’hui aux raisons pour lesquelles on nous a construit cette école [...] j’incline à penser que c’était uniquement pour nous faire du tort, pour nous faire disparaître, pour nous sédentariser, nous les Indiens, afin que nous ne dérangions pas le Blanc pendant que lui seul gagne sa vie à même notre territoire. [...] Quand le Blanc a songé à venir nous trouver pour exploiter notre territoire, quand il a songé à y construire un chemin de fer, il s’est mis à parler de nous et à insinuer que la culture que nous avions n’était pas bonne et que nous n’étions pas civilisés. (75)

Of course, it is difficult to think that Innu cultures could have been integrated into the political and economic projects of the province of Québec since they would assuredly have protested against the government’s intentions to jeopardize their lifestyle. Kapesh condemns how the government’s association with a corporation influences Natives’ lives. “C’est ce fonctionnaire du gouvernement fédéral, venu pour le compte de la Compagnie Iron Ore, qui annonce aux Indiens comme l’Iron Ore a réglé notre sort” (191). Kapesh
denounces the Iron Ore Company’s behaviour toward the Innu when it forced them to move out of Shefferville and testifies to the argument given by the agent of the Indian Affairs department in order to get the community moving. “Si vous acceptez de déménager, l’Iron Ore vous dit qu’en retour elle vous donnera du travail. Si vous restez ici près de la ville, l’Iron Ore dit que vous allez polluer l’eau” (191). By presenting her side of the story, Kapesh resists the misrepresentation of Native discourse reported to the dominant culture’s public and shows how things are done to insure economic development of White-settler interests. The act of recording in writing the Innu experience of “L’arrivée du Blanc” let Kapesh give a different version of history, one that allows re-appropriation of land, language, and culture by resisting historical misrepresentations.

Vous ne trouverez cette histoire nulle part dans un livre car avant que le Blanc nous enseigne sa culture, nous les Indiens, n’avions jamais vécu de telle manière que nous écrivions pour raconter les choses du passé. À présent que le Blanc nous a enseigné sa façon de vivre et qu’il a détruit la nôtre, nous regrettons notre culture. C’est pour cela que nous songeons, nous aussi Indiens, à écrire comme le Blanc. (37)

The appropriation of the written form by Native authors shows that there is a desire, even a necessity, for Native communities to reclaim their rights not only territorially, but also historically. The intervention of Kapesh’s father, (the discovery story of iron ore by Tshishenish Pien in “La découverte du minerai”), aims to negotiate an alter/native history by resisting the misrepresentation of Natives’ role in history.
But to know history means to have access to it through (cultural) education. Kapesh speaks of the result that this non-Indian education (namely the residential school system) had on Native culture and language through the shift from nomadic to sedentary lifestyle and through a new type of education which projects, as a hybrid and assimilated culture, an iconographic misrepresentation of the Innu.

À cause de l’éducation blanche qu’ils ont reçue, aujourd’hui mes enfants ne connaissent rien de leur culture indienne, ils perdent leur langue indienne, ils mangent à peine de leur nourriture indienne, ils ont perdu leurs coutumes vestimentaires […] Parce qu’ils sont allés à l’école du Blanc, nos enfants se trouvent à présent dans l’entre-deux: ils sont incapables de gagner leur vie dans leur culture indienne et ils ne sont pas habitués à la gagner à la manière des Blancs. (83)

This quotation not only reveals the cultural hybridity of the Innu, but also, to some extent, the Innu inability to be properly represented. Kapesh not only criticizes the White-settler’s school system imposed on her culture, but also speaks of the necessity of investing in Native teaching by Natives and to start building a written culture from a traditionally oral one:

Maintenant que les Indiens lui demandent d’enseigner l’indien […] c’est alors qu’il [the government] devrait vraiment investir […]. Il devrait y avoir plusieurs Indiens qui soient rémunérés pour contribuer à l’enseignement en indien aux enfants, autant qu’il y eut de Blancs rémunérés pour les enseigner le français. Il devrait y avoir plusieurs livres écrits en indien que les enfants puissent lire. Et on ne devrait pas faire de
livres en indien seulement dans une réserve, on devrait en faire dans chacune des réserves indiennes. (93)

Notwithstanding the good intentions of the government in offering the same opportunities to Native children, the attempts to educate and assimilate these children break the generational relationship between them and older Natives through the loss of language, tradition, lifestyle, diet and culture. Still, Kapesh resists the misconception of her culture’s erasure by publishing her life story in her own language and is “practicing what she preaches” (keeping her culture alive) by publishing other stories such as “Ces terres dont nous avions nommé chaque ruisseau,” “J’ai gaspillé toutes tes montagnes,” and *Qu’as-tu fait de mon pays?* Kapesh also addresses Native misrepresentation through education by valorizing Native traditional knowledge through the colonizer’s language. “Nous sommes au courant du fait que le Blanc va à l’université et qu’il possède un diplôme. L’Indien […] n’a jamais montré qu’il en possédait un et […] quand il vivait sa vie à l’intérieur des terres, il se montrait à lui-même qu’il possédait un diplôme et il le faisait valoir” (31). The White-settler education is counter-balanced by Kapesh’s valorization of her own – cultural – education by locating Native knowledge outside the academic system used by non-Native cultures.

This cultural valorization of Natives’ knowledge expressed by Kapesh – through the distinction she makes before and after White-settlers’ arrival and intervention – is essential to cultural empowerment, but can only be achieved through the continuous practice – spoken or written – of Native language. This cultural and linguistic pride is re-appropriated by Kapesh in her testimonio. “À mon avis, de tous les peuples de la terre, il n’y en a vraisemblablement aucun qui ait la fierté de la culture et de la langue du peuple
voisin. Nous Indiens, avions une culture indienne et une langue indienne dont nous
pouvions être fiers” (93-95). The importance given to language and its valorization on the
level of cultural recognition can appear to be analogous to the experience of the
Québécois. However, there is a significant distinction to be made between the Native
discourse and that of the French Québécois, as Diane Boudreau has argued in *Histoire de
la littérature amérindienne au Québec*: “L’ « indianité » et la « québécitude » n’ont rien
en commun si ce n’est la force de l’affirmation identitaire” (15). In other words, the
Québécois have been on the one hand demanding a distinct cultural status within Canada
and have been doing so on the historical basis of their culture and language. On the other
hand, Natives have been demanding the same type of consideration – that of sovereignty
to sum-up – on the very same historical basis of culture and language. These two
elements (language and culture) are often stressed in the process of “affirmation
identitaire” (cultural recognition). Hence it could be argued that Natives and Québécois’
cultural identity struggles have something in common. Where they grow apart, though, is
in terms of what each culture stands for and represents as to culture, language, history,
lifestyle and political organisation and objectives.

Still, Kapesh is not the only Native author who has written in her traditional
Native language, as was discussed in the previous chapter. The emergence of Native
writing on the margin of the Québécois literary canon has enabled a protest, among other
things, against colonialism and neo-colonialist societies’ misrepresentation of Native
culture. The iconography propagandized by the media about Natives is challenged by
Kapesh who demands that these misrepresentations, reinforced by the social and cultural
exclusion of Natives from White-settler society, be stopped. “Aujourd’hui quand on
montre l’indien à la télévision, ce n’est pas sa véritable façon de vivre qu’on voit, c’est celle qu’il a depuis que le Blanc est venu le trouver et a changé sa culture” (179). As a result of acculturation the ‘real’ Native lifestyle no longer exists and it becomes therefore increasingly difficult for the media to keep presenting this image of the Wild Indian as they did early on in colonial history. The results of Natives’ misrepresentation, following the encounter with White-settler cultures as argued by Kapesh, have not necessarily proven beneficial to Native cultures and have in fact jeopardized Native cultural traditions that now survive in stories or on paper. “Je sais bien qu’aujourd’hui il est très difficile de me montrer ma vie d’Indienne parce que ma culture n’existe plus aujourd’hui. Quand j’y réfléchis, il n’y a que dans ma tête que je conserve ma vie d’autrefois” (183).

The search for a ‘pure’ traditional indigenous lifestyle and the belief that a ‘real’ Native identity could have existed is a myth, as Gareth Griffith argued in “The Myth of Authenticity,” since all cultures and nations have been, at one point or another, hybrid, migrant and heterogeneous long before contact with Europeans settlers as we have seen in the previous chapter about Nuligak.

The objectives in writing, for Natives, are hence clearly displayed in Kapesh’s testimonio: the revalorization of Native culture, the political inclusion of Natives in the National project, the historical recognition of their cultural groups and experiences, and protest against the linguistic appropriation of their histories and re-appropriation of their own history. The Native writer who desires to write might do so insofar as he or she agrees, like Kapesh, to lose elements of his/her cultural habits in order to address his/her oppressor using the White-settler terminology. As Boudreau states: “Ils ont emprunté les arguments de l’écriture et les règles du discours politique occidental pour mieux dénoncer
les abus du pouvoir colonial” (106). For Kapesh and many Native authors, it is important to talk back to the dominant discourse in order to change the western perceptions (mis/representation) of Native conditions.

La seule raison pour laquelle je suis contente aujourd’hui de rencontrer des journalistes et des cinéastes, c’est pour montrer au Blanc qu’il nous a mal élevés. En tant qu’Indienne, c’est la seule raison pour laquelle j’accepte de paraître à la télévision et au cinéma mais il n’y a rien de vrai là-dedans. (173)

Talking back, Kapesh is able to counter misrepresentation and expose the results of White-settlers’ education that have affected traditional Native cultures. Because the transmission of knowledge is curtailed by the loss of language, creating a gap in inter-generational relationships, the need to create new methods for passing on knowledge becomes even more important for Native communities. The act of writing engages cultural, historical, linguistic and iconographic resistance to the neo-colonial society’s misrepresentation of Natives. The emergence of the testimonio as a literary medium often allows Native authors to highlight the oppression lived by Native communities on the one hand, and on the other hand, to be read and understood by their oppressors. In such a case, the counter-discourse challenges the established cultural preconceptions of a dominant culture by redirecting the discourse of blame toward the dominant group. The resulting effect is that the testimonio questions the dominant group’s hegemony over power, education and both cultural and historical recognition. By using the language of the dominant culture – through translation – to question its assumptions, Kapesh is able to reverse her cultural subjection to the oppressors.
To sum up this discussion on cultural misrepresentation, we have seen that the loss of identity experienced by the Innu, through their cultural assimilation in school, has disabled what Kapesh considers as a proper Native representation to ever be presented in the media. Kapesh’s testimonio attempts to expose the inherent consequences that such acculturation implies by reversing the discourse of blame and directing it toward the colonizers’ education policy and using the White-settler terminology to legitimize traditional Native knowledge. The author’s usage of her mother tongue, Innu-aimun, serves to revalorize her cultural heritage. Kapesh also asserts this cultural richness through the publication of other short stories and a novel which challenge the misrepresentation of a disappearing and illiterate culture. In order to ensure linguistic and cultural survival, Kapesh stresses the importance of providing cultural and linguistic oriented courses to young Natives.

4.4. About Innu Resistance

In this testimonio, the author, through various devices meant to counter the master narrative of Québec, while articulating cultural resistance. The Innu-aimun writing, found on the even-numbered pages of the volume, is one of the aspects that valorize the Innu culture by resisting the loss of the Innu-aimun language. By publishing her manuscript in Innu-aimun, Kapesh not only resists linguistic assimilation, but also engages in resistance that aims to empower and valorize the Innu-aimun language and Innu culture. As I have discussed earlier, Kapesh’s publication of other stories is the materialization of this linguistic resistance to Québécois culture, but this linguistic resistance can only
effectively take place insofar as there is an Innu-aimun linguistic survival. In other words, the language must be actively taught in order to ensure its survival.

À mon avis, si on commence par enseigner aux enfants leur langue indienne d'abord, ce n'est pas seulement pendant une année ou deux qu’il faut le faire : il serait bon que pendant environ cinq ans l'enfant reçoive un enseignement exclusivement dans sa langue et que pendant ce temps, il n'entende pas du tout de professeur blanc lui parler français jusqu'à ce qu’il connaisse bien sa propre langue. (91)

Kapesh is saying that Innu-aimun must be taught early on in school in order to ensure that young Innu do not forget their mother tongue. Today, Kapesh message has born fruit and we witness an Innu self-governance in regards to education with the Institut Culturel et Éducatif Montagnais (ICEM). Still at the time that Kapesh wrote, Innu-aimun language (Montagnais) was not yet part of the educational curriculum of Native children (in residential school and in school) and a generational gap happened within Innu families and to which the author testifies.

Aujourd’hui j’ai des problèmes avec mes enfants qui vont à l’école: moi qui suis Indienne, quand je parle montagnais à mes enfants, ils ne comprennent pas et quand eux me parlent, je ne les comprends pas bien parce que déjà, mes enfants sont a peine capables de parler indien aujourd’hui. (93)

This break (through loss of language) divides the community and this division is the result of the politics of Québec on Innu education to which Kapesh resists by writing and publishing in Innu-aimun. Yet, through the loss of language, other dangers lurk: the loss
of cultural knowledge and cultural memory for example, as well as the dispossession of Innu history and land. “The main battle in imperialism is over land, of course” (Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 12-13). Kapesh testifies to the expropriation of Native land. These expropriations are experienced by Kapesh, her family, and the entire community:

Tous les Indiens sont importunés par le Blanc sur leur terrain de chasse. Il y en a même dont le terrain de chasse a été complètement détérioré. Mon mari, par exemple, a été poussé par le Blanc à prendre un travail salarié et il a accepté cela. Un jour il s’est rendu compte que le terrain où il chassait se trouvait sous l’eau, avec tous ses animaux indiens. Je parle de la rivière Hamilton où on a construit un barrage. (101)

The Natives’ loss of territory is the result of the competing cultural interest regarding land, which affects deeply the survival of Innu’s traditional lifestyle. Kapesh argued that the interests of Québec’s government in the exploitation of Innu land are mainly economic in nature. An example is the hydroelectric project on the Churchill River (named the Hamilton River until 1965):

Quand le Blanc barre des rivières pour en tirer de l’électricité, je ne peux pas voir à quoi va me servir cette électricité à moi, une Indienne. […] Cette électricité ne servira qu’au Blanc pendant des siècles et c’est à lui seulement qu’elle rapportera des profits jusqu’à la fin des temps. (103; 105)

The author exposes the imperialist behaviour of White-settler culture through the economic imperatives that the territory represents for the governments of Québec and Newfoundland and Labrador, regardless of Innu land claims. These land claims have
been silenced and facilitated by the dislocation of the Innu communities from the inland areas to the coastal sedentary life as a result of “L’éducation blanche,” a process that also operates back and forth. The later development of the Shefferville mine by the Iron Ore Company is yet another example of Innu’s dislocation and of this economic conflict over land claims. “En 1956, [...] nous sommes retournés sur nos terres. [...] Nous avions pensé que l’Iron Ore serait amicale envers nous [...], elle qui allait détruire nos terrains de chasse et qui allait en tirer de gros profits” (185). Kapesh goes on to discuss the expropriation of ancestral lands, a narrative that exposes the government’s aims and intentions regarding Innu territory. “Quand la compagnie est venue ici, [...], elle s’est immédiatement emparé de notre territoire dans toute son étendue. [...] Quand le Blanc est venu, [...], il s’est emparé du Nord dans toute son étendue” (197). Kapesh stories of expropriation and dislocation exposes the relations of power that the control of the land implies as argued by Edward Said’s comment in *Culture and Imperialism*:

Territory and possessions are at stake, geography and power. Everything about human history is rooted in the earth [...]. At some very basic level, imperialism means thinking about, settling on, controlling land that you do not possess, that is distant, that is lived on and owned by others. (7)

Through this line of reasoning in the testimonio, we can see that the insidious expropriation of Innu land through the shift from nomadic to sedentary lifestyle; the establishment of the Iron Ore Company in Shefferville for mining interests, and the loss of hunting grounds through the Churchill River hydroelectric project were not incidental, but rather essential to the domination of White-settler culture over the rights of Natives. Kapesh’s resistance to Québec’s policies is revealed through her political involvement:
Pendant mon mandat à la chefferie, les fonctionnaires ont travaillé très fort pour que les gens redéménagent en ville. De mon côté, j’ai travaillé très fort pour qu’ils ne redéménagent pas. Les fonctionnaires et moi […] travaillions dans des buts contraires. (199; 201)

In this testimonio, we can see that the politics of dislocation directed at the Innu does not empower the community in which Kapesh lives. Rather, the Québec government is preoccupied with subduing the Innu to its politics and interests. According to Kapesh, the Master narrative is much more concerned with safeguarding appearances than it is with recognizing Natives’ rights, while the media are unable to impartially cover the settlement dispute between the government of Québec and the Innu. An interesting aspect of Kapesh’s testimonio is that the phenomenon of redress is present in the text:

Quelque mois après que les Indiens eurent déménagé en ville, nous avons entendu Chrétien parler à la radio. Voici ce qu’il a dit: «Ce sont les Indiens à qui on a construit des maisons qui ont eux-mêmes demandé qu’on leur construise ces maisons en ville parce que leur façon de vivre leur faisait honte. […]» J’étais étonnée d’entendre Chrétien dire cela. […] Jamais je n’ai entendu un seul Indien dire: « Moi la raison pour laquelle je veux déménager en ville, c’est que j’ai honte de ma manière indienne de vivre. » […] Par contre, j’ai souvent vu les fonctionnaires des Affaires indiennes pousser les Indiens en ville. […] si Chrétien a dit ce qu’il a dit, c’est pour bien s’en tirer en rejetant la responsabilité sur les Indiens. Si Chrétien avait dit vrai, pourquoi aujourd’hui songerions-nous à nous mettre à la poursuite de notre mode de vie indien? (211; 213)
Kapesh is insulted by the redress offered by the government because, on the one hand, it refuses any responsibility for the resettlement of the community, and, on the other hand, it denigrates the Innu’s traditional lifestyle, culture, and language. The direct address of Kapesh’s testimonio redirects the racial discourse of the White-settler toward its source.

“C’est nous, les Indiens, qui devrions nous lamenter de toutes les injustices du Blanc et il faut qu’il nous écoute plutôt que de toujours nous opposer un refus quand nous lui disons comment nous souhaitons nous organiser” (231). In other words, the author is sickened by the master narrative and argues for proper recognition of her culture by resisting the dominant culture’s discourse. The author’s concern with the dominance of one culture over another is expressed through her discourse on the Innu’s rights over the territory on which they live:

Même si nous, les Indiens, voulions quitter le Nord [...], nous ignorons où nous pourrions aller: nous sommes ici sur notre territoire. [...] Ce n’est pas au Blanc à gouverner sur notre territoire. Et si le Blanc ne veut pas comprendre que c’est à lui de se tenir tranquille, c’est lui qui devrait retourner d’où il est venu. (237)

Kapesh could not be any clearer about how White-settler culture has come to be considered in the North. The White-settlers need to exploit and dominate the Innu land much more than the Natives need the colonizer’s economy, politics and culture of ecological genocide. The difference between White-settler and Native relations to the land has shaped the social, geographical, and political reality of each. The reality of each cultural group clashed and often led to violent confrontation on the basis of race, culture, and land manifested through misrepresentation and misunderstanding.
In Race, Space, and the Law: Unmapping a White Settler Society, Sherene H. Razack has commented on the relationship that exists between race and place. “Our concern is to tell the national story as a racial and spatial story, that is, as a series of efforts to segregate, contain, and thereby limit, the rights and opportunities of Aboriginal people and people of colour” (17). This latter aspect of how one culture manages to ‘segregate, contain, and thereby limit, the rights’ of another culture is addressed by Kapesh. “Après nous avoir enseigné sa culture et avoir en retour détruit la nôtre, […] le Blanc […] est incapable de nous considérer comme il se considère lui-même et il est incapable de nous accorder les mêmes droits que ceux qu’il s’accorde à lui-même” (165; 167). This denunciation exposes the limits of equality that are conditionally granted at the whim of the dominant culture and highlights Kapesh’s resistance as seen through her refusal to be governed by another culture than her own. Hence, we are forced to acknowledge that the economic prerogatives of Québec’s politics, as argued by Kapesh, render impossible the recognition of equal rights between Québec and Innu cultures.

In Multiculturalism and ‘The Politics of Recognition,’ Charles Taylor has argued that “dominant groups tend to entrench their hegemony by inculcating an image of inferiority in the subjugated. The struggle for freedom and equality must therefore pass through a revision of these images” (66). Thus, we can understand that Kapesh’s objectives, by resisting the entrenchment of cultural misrepresentation, is to expose the political and economic subjugation experienced by the Innu. We can witness Kapesh’s resistance in her postscript and her title, in which she employs the condescending appellation of Sauvagesse to proclaim the richness of her cultural identity. In so doing, Kapesh counters the assumed hierarchy of cultural rights:
Je suis une maudite Sauvagesse. Je suis très fière quand, aujourd'hui, je m'entends traiter de Sauvagesse. Quand j'entends le Blanc prononcer ce mot, je comprends qu'il me redit sans cesse que je suis une vraie Indienne et que c'est moi la première à avoir vécu dans le bois. Or toute chose qui vit dans le bois correspond à la vie la meilleure. Puisse le Blanc me toujours traiter de Sauvagesse. (241)

It is noteworthy that Kapesh deconstructs the icon of the savage to challenge her subjected condition. The minority is able to speak to the majority in the very terms it uses to establish its neo/colonialist politics. By playfully inverting the signification of pejorative French words, Kapesh re-appropriates the power of language and uses it to demand proper recognition of her culture. It is in the pejorative views of the colonizer that Kapesh finds the nobility of her cultural identity. By reworking the negative image and the pejorative appellation of the Native, Kapesh is able to valorize her cultural identity through the very term that seeks to diminish it. The author breaks away from Rousseau's concept of the "Noble Sauvage" to affirm that the Savage is Noble; the distinction between the two being that the former has adopted the colonizer's culture and life-style whiles the latter remains true to his Native ways and it is in that, that the nobility of Innu culture emerges.

In the cultural resistance enacted through this testimonio, I have observed that the language issue was addressed by Kapesh when she exposed the dangers of cultural loss through the linguistic assimilation of Native youth. The author's plea for greater publication of literature in her Native language emphasizes the importance of safeguarding the Innu cultural identity. Kapesh's discussion of the expropriation of land
and dislocation of her people has shown the oppositional forces at work and her resistance to White-settler economic development demonstrates the lack of equal rights between the dominant and marginal culture. Kapesh further argues that the racial discourse of the province of Québec is but another attempt to confine her culture to the margins of cultural recognition and to prevent Innu self-governance. All in all, Kapesh's resistance has been established through her discussion of cultural loss and she exposed the politics of Québec not only as hegemonic, but also as oppressive.
Conclusion:

Collaboration, Representation and Resistance

The purpose of this research has been to read Native testimonios as a site of both cultural and political resistance. By focusing on the discourse found in these texts, on how Native writers use the genre of testimonio in order to put forward their stories about marginality, oppression and survival, I have attempted to demonstrate that this genre can be empowering for cultural minorities and allow silenced voices to emerge in mainstream culture. The time period in which these testimonios were published, from 1950 to 1980, is revealing of the emergence of the genre, but more importantly, the emergence of Native discourse itself at risk due to marginalization, oppression, and cultural misrepresentation.

This time period is also revealing of the rapid development of the politics of the Cultural Other. In other words, we have seen rapid and important changes both locally and internationally on the level of national cultural identity, empowerment of emerging countries in the context of modernity, and awareness of international conditions of poverty through the rapid development of means of communication. The three testimonios studied here are not only revealing of the ongoing oppression of Native cultures in the Americas as well as of their resilience and/or compliance to this oppression, but they are also revealing of specific behaviour from the different governments in their approach to territoriality, class, and power.

Any assumption about a homogeneous Native resistance and discourse is dangerous because it necessarily banishes the specificities of distinct Indigenous collectivities into the corners of cultural misrepresentation and subjugation to Canadian,
Mexican, and Québécois politics. As such, one must be careful to allow enough space to Native issues and Native subjects if one is to undertake a comprehensive analysis of the discourse found in these testimonios. By drawing on testimonio theories, as articulated by Beverley for example, this study has been able to reflect on the importance of cultural inclusion and political empowerment as strategies of resistance against cultural assimilation and ethnic cleansing. Testimonio, more than biography or autobiography, is able to highlight these changes through perspectives from marginalized subjects.

As a collaborative medium, testimonio enables Native discourse to rise from the otherwise silenced confines of exploitation, seclusion and cultural misrepresentation in order to attempt to ‘set the record straight’ about the Indian politic in America insofar as the readers are able to associate with and believe the native author/teller. The witnessing of the testimonio on the part of the reader is complex because of the challenge of referentiality that operates between the actual lived reality of Native subjects and the myth of authenticity in the construction of the imaginary disempowered ‘Indian victim’. It is not as if the degree of exploitation, oppression and marginalization could be measured simply in terms of the author’s self-portrait of victimization, authenticity, and referentiality. As a site where truth claims are constructed and protest take place, the testimonio could be described as a medium that allows the deconstruction of the Indian myth while addressing urgent issues that aim to empower Native cultures in the dominant neo/colonial cultures. This genre represents or stages the teller’s truth mediated through collaboration.

By studying these life narratives as part of the genre of testimonio, I have attempted to demonstrate how this particular genre enabled the discourse of Juan Pérez
Jolote, of Nuligak Kriogak, and of An Antane Kapesh to deconstruct their subjection and present their own truths. Indeed, these texts not only present stories of community experience through personal ones; they also reveal the difficulties of reaching mainstream audiences by breaking free from the iconographic misrepresentation imposed by the master narrative of the dominant culture. In order for the native authors to reach this readership, there was a necessary process of collaboration involved in the production of these testimonios through transcription, translation, and/or dissemination. Pozas’ and Metayer’s collaboration addresses the challenge of presenting a reality and culture under oppression while José Mailhot, Anne-Marie André and André Mailhot have erased their presence from Kapesh’s text and the few interventions made, as discussed in the fourth chapter, came to highlight the dominant culture’s ignorance of the Innu reality and culture as well as dominant subjects’ ignorance of their own political in/action.

Even through this process of collaboration, Jolote, Nuligak and Kapesh remain the author/tellers of the text by selecting and influencing what can or cannot be told about themselves and their communities as seen in the analysis of Nuligak’s and Kapesh’s testimonies. As I have discussed, the strategic use of secrets enables the renegotiation of power and history in the interplay between the Native author/teller and the collaborators. On one hand, the influence of the collaborators can either reinforce the marginalization of the cultural Other or, on the other hand, collaboration can favour the understanding of the lived reality of the narrating subjects in a way that celebrates indigenous knowledge and cultural uniqueness. In my analysis of these three testimonios, the Indian issue has been addressed to various degrees by the author/tellers and their collaborators. The resistant or
compliant nature of these native subjects has thus been shaped on the reception end by the influence of the collaborators as argued in the second part of Chapters II, III and IV.

In Chapter I, my intentions were to provide the readers with an understanding and overview of the genre of testimonio and by doing so, I hoped to emphasize the importance of reading Jolote's, Nuligak's and Kapesh's texts as testimonios. Reading these texts as such enables not only the teller's counter-discourse to emerge in mainstream culture, but also enables a more accurate understanding of the neo/colonial forces at work in these texts through the process of collaboration. By exploring the origins of the genre of testimonio I tried to show that an analysis of Jolote's, Nuligak's, and Kapesh's life stories as testimonios would allow the power relationship between dominant non-Native collaborators and marginal Native subjects/tellers to emerge.

I have discussed these three testimonios under four thematic subsections: the use of the genre of testimonio by the author/teller; the collaboration between the author/teller and the editor or translator; cultural misrepresentation, and the resistance of Native cultures to neo/colonial power and politics. Each author chose to speak (by using writing) and these life stories showed the difficulties of Natives to challenge the established relationship of power. Jolote's use of the genre, as I argued, was not undertaken in the same way as Nuligak's and Kapesh's; instead of writing down his life story, Jolote as teller was recorded by Pozas who translated the oral testimony and put it down on paper. It is likely through this involvement by Pozas, at the beginning of the process of production that Jolote's use of testimonial genre differs from the others. Nuligak and Kapesh are both alone at the beginning of the writing production of their life stories while Jolote, as an object of study, is asked by Pozas to speak. Metayer and Mailhot were for
their part, involved much later in this process: after the decision to speak was made by Nuligak and Kapesh.

Nonetheless, all three authors have used the genre of testimonio to teach the next generations about traditional knowledge and culture as I have discussed through the didactic functions and polyphony (Bakhtin) that can be read in these texts. For example: Jolote’s inclusion of other voices that highlight the religious specificities of the Chamula culture as discussed through the religious celebration at the end of Jolote’s testimonio. Similarly, Nuligak’s use of writing has been employed to teach culture and language as I have explained through my reading of Nuligak’s discussion of the names and origins of the Inuvialuit moons. Kapesh has also used writing to teach Innu history through the voices of Elders, which renegotiates the neo/colonial version. On the other hand, Kapesh’s use of the genre allows her personal experience to be connected with the broader Innu experience as it was the case in both Jolote’s and Nuligak’s life stories. The three subjects have been able to speak of Native resilience by using new methods of communicating knowledge (scriptocentric versus oral tradition); and, as mentioned earlier, through linguistic survival of the Chamula (from 16,000 to more than 300,000 speakers today); of the Inuvialuit (the Inuvialuktun language, believed to be extinct, has been rediscovered in the mid 1980s), and of Innu (Innu-aimun is now taught in school). By choosing to write/tell and collaborate, the three authors studied have used the tools of scriptocentric culture to show Native resilience to cultural assimilation.

This co-presence of Native cultures and history is made available to both Native and non-Native readers through the process of collaboration with the editor/translator by allowing these stories to be collected, edited, and/or translated. These three testimonios
have been received with various degrees of acceptance and popularity by both Native and non-Native readers. The role of the collaborators (Pozas, Metayer, and Mailhot) has also influenced the reception of these life stories by being able (or not) to present their subjects as worthy of interest (through the use of writing/telling to show the uniqueness of the subject's life experience); to show the author-tellers in relation to their community (cultural representation), and to present their resistance or compliance to neo/colonial cultures and politics.

In the collaboration between Jolote and Pozas, the essentialist description of the Chamula (culture, politics, and economic) has homogenized the different Mexican Indians issues under a single discourse where there are in fact many. Still, I have argued that notwithstanding the possible multiplicity of Native discourses that could be read in Jolote's testimonio, they all share a common economic exploitation as I have referred to in my discussion of the enganche system. Pozas' intervention in the narrative enabled the readers to relate to Jolote's experience by showing the specifics of Chamula culture as it is the case in the collaboration between Nuligak and Metayer.

While admitting to editing (which influences the reception of Nuligak's life story by Native and non-Native readers while possibly de-valorizing unique Inuit – Inuvialuit – methods of communicating knowledge such as the repetition technique,) Metayer is nevertheless able to emphasize Nuligak's cultural representativity. Furthermore, Metayer is able to show Nuligak's uniqueness to the readers by drawing attention to the specifics of Nuligak's condition and experience such as: that of being an orphan, of a unique culture and language – the Siglit culture and Siglitun dialect known today as Inuvialuktun – and the specifics of Inuvialuit cultural knowledge and heritage as I have discussed, for
example in the description of the different types of igloos that can be found in the Mackenzie River Delta.

Likewise, in Kapesh’s testimonio, the readers are also presented with a unique culture (the Innu) and language (Innu-aimun), which are rendered through the author’s ability to use her writing for didactic purpose, as discussed previously, to share Innu rituals and cuisine. The fact that the interventions of the translators (J. Mailhot, A.-M. André, and A. Mailhot) are oriented toward the non-Innu readers empowers Innu history through Kapesh’s renegotiation as witness, for example, in her chapter “La découverte du minerai,” which reinforces the native subject’s connection with her community. But this connection is not always easily granted by the neo/colonial culture as well as by the community of the author/teller when he or she steps outside of tradition (through the method of communicating knowledge and through cultural assimilation or appropriation.

Jolote’s life story shows the author’s/teller’s cultural belonging to and knowledge of Chamula culture. If the readers are to read Jolote in connection with his community – that is to say as representative of Chamula culture – they should acknowledge that this representativity only reaches the readership through Jolote’s situation of exception, as argued by Pozas (for example, his run-away condition and his involuntary participation in the Mexican Revolution as mentioned earlier). Often in testimonio, as is the case in Jolote’s and Nuligak’s testimonios, this connection to community manifests itself in the text through “extra-textual information” (as argued by Anne Elizabeth Gravel). This ‘extra-textual information’ is manifested through the process of collaboration which results in a participative, community-based, experience of encoding life in the margins, hence reinforcing traditional oral techniques of communicating knowledge. As argued
previously, this ‘extra-textual information’ coming from other members of the community thus shapes representation as well as serves as a teaching tool to signify the importance the traditional Native knowledge has for survival purposes (for example, as I referred to in my discussion of Nuligak’s grandfather’s expertise of the various types of ice).

Nuligak challenges the misrepresentation of the Inuit by speaking of a territory occupied by a multiplicity of cultures that brought with them (if we think of English sailors for example) an all-different perception of the world and encoded it by introducing a vocabulary that refers to an unknown Inuit reality as shown when Nuligak spoke of ‘needles-for-foggy-weather’ for a compass; of a ‘machine-making-cold’ for a thermometer, and of a ‘machine-to-make-fire’ for the motor of his schooner. The introduction of a new referent terminology (emerging from the contact between Inuit cultures and neo/colonial ones) is appropriated by Nuligak and shows the genius of the Inuvialuktun language by coining the neo/colonial referent to the Inuit way of understanding the world. Nuligak exposes the neo/colonial cultural misrepresentation of Inuit cultures by demonstrating the specifics of Inuvialuit culture and Inuvialuktun language while positioning Inuvialuit culture against Siberian or Alaskan Inuit cultures and putting them into relation. My discussion in the Introduction of the term Tan’nit by Siberian and Alaskan Inuit in the vocabulary of Inuvialuit culture thus proves that pure Indigenous origins, as argued by Griffiths, is but a myth and challenges neo/colonial assumptions about a homogenous Inuit culture, where there are in fact many.

Kapesh, for her part, addresses directly the issue of cultural misrepresentation shown in journal and television by neo/colonial cultures and reverses these cultural
assumptions to reflect on Innu's condition. Through her strategic use of Innu-aimun Kapesh allows non-Native and Native readers to witness a culture and history that predates that of Québec and that survived despite the politics of assimilation. It is on the aspect of the language used to write their life stories that Nuligak and Kapesh distinguish themselves from Jolote in that they wrote in their languages while Jolote's language, Tzotzil, is not available to the readers since Pozas wrote in Spanish. Then again, Nuligak and Kapesh differ in the rendering of the text. While Nuligak integrated notions of Inuvialuktun language in his testimonio, as discussed earlier, Kapesh published her testimonio in both Innu-aimun and French simultaneously. Kapesh has been able to counter the growing inter-generational gap that exists within the Innu community while promoting specific cultural education about tradition and language which stands publicly against the colonizing culture's scorn. By demanding an Innu education for Innu children, Kapesh is also strengthening the demands for self-governance in Indian country.

The demands for self-governance have not been as distinctively articulated by Jolote. Rather, his testimonio shows Jolote's subjection to the Mexican government. Jolote's cultural and economic hybridity showed his assimilation and exploitation through the enganche system that maintains the Native Mexican population in usufruct, thus making it impossible for the Chamulas to be recognized by the dominant culture as agents of their own destiny. This economic exploitation is revealing of the Mexican government's politics in regards to Native conditions, which have been marked by economic, political, and cultural struggles (for example, as I argued in respect to the political system in place in Gran Pueblo and the fact that the political organization of the region is divided, which is contrary to the Mexican constitution). Jolote's run-away
condition, his participation in the Mexican Revolution and his imprisonment – where he learned Spanish – are all elements that led to his assimilation. On the one hand, these life experiences limit the possibility for the readers to see the author/teller as representative of the cultural minority. On the other hand, it is those trans-cultural experiences that set Jolote’s life on the margins of both cultural identities. In other words, Jolote’s cultural hybridity, which constitute a break with his Chamula identity, has enabled, ironically, Pozas to collect the story which testifies to the oppression of the Indigenous Mexicans. Notwithstanding Jolote’s compliance to neo/colonial power, his testimonio enables the conditions of oppression and exploitation to be publicly spoken of (at best critiqued).

In a similar way, Nuligak’s resistance is indirectly manifested in his testimonio as he testifies to his subjection to government power (for example, as previously noted in his testimony to government control over game such as duck eggs and hunting season). Yet, Nuligak’s resistance is also witnessed more overtly through the phenomenon of translation from Inuvialuktun to French by Metayer. In other words, the fact that Nuligak wrote his life story in his mother tongue shows the author’s linguistic resistance in that he demonstrates the survival of Inuvialuit through adaptation to other realities and cultures. We have seen in Nuligak’s testimonio the introduction of a new vocabulary resulting from the contact between different Inuit communities (the term *Tan’ nit* introduced by Inuit from Siberia and in turn appropriated by Alaskan Inuit as I previously discussed) and between Inuit communities and neo-European settlers (as shown in my discussion of the introduction of White-settler’s technology such as: compass, thermometer, and motor). These technologies introduced by White-settlers need to take grip in Inuit referentiality too. The coinage of concepts to express the new reality of another culture
shows resistance to cultural loss. The introduction of a new reality engages changes in Inuit cultures that resulted in new methods of communicating knowledge, of perceiving and experiencing the world. Nuligak uses the literary medium to teach Native and non-Native readers about his experiences and thus shares his knowledge of Inuvialuit cultural traditions. By sharing traditional knowledge, Nuligak is not only able to keep his cultural heritage alive, but is also able to valorize the traditional oral techniques used to communicate life-based experiences. This resilience was discussed earlier in regards to the names of the moons taught to Nuligak by his grandmother’s brother, Naoyavak.

The didactic function of Nuligak’s testimonio enables the safeguarding of traditions and knowledge (such as the lesson on the different types of ice) as well as enabling the resistance to cultural assimilation. As argued earlier in my discussion about the tunrait – a traditional Inuvialuit puppet – Nuligak chooses to not be as wary as his elders and, instead, to share secrets about traditional knowledge. Nuligak’s control over the narrative enables him not only to resist cultural oblivion, but also to resist the master narrative.

This overt resistance distinguishes Nuligak’s testimonio from Jolote’s, while being in line with Kapesh’s approach, the latter of which is the angriest in tone of all three. Talking-back to the master narrative, Kapesh exposes the exploitation of Natives and Native territory. As discussed in the fourth chapter and as testified to by Kapesh in different sections of her testimonio, the government had tried on many occasions to resettle the Innu in order for the Iron Ore Company to be able to dig a mine on their territory. On the one hand, Kapesh worked very hard to stop the government from exploiting the natural resources, and on the other hand, she worked for the Innu to stay on
the territory they have long inhabited by resisting dislocation (from Shefferville to Sept-Îles). Kapesh cannot stop herself from reflecting on the manipulation of the governmental discourse that lures not only the Natives, but the Québécois as well, into the challenges of modernity that Québec must face. Still, for Kapesh it is important to resist regardless of the lies being told as she argued when speaking about poor housing and lack of work despite promises by the government and the Iron Ore Company, which were never fulfilled. This is why she playfully and bitterly reworks pejorative name-calling in French “Sauvagesse,” to celebrate her Indigenous identity as claimed in her Postface.

In conclusion, I have argued that our traditional understanding of the literary genre of life writing, under which these stories were published, may sometimes confine the minority discourses to the margins through cultural misrepresentation. In order to be able to grant power to the identity claims made by these Native authors, readers should let go of their understanding of these narratives as mere autobiographic or biographic writings and instead perceive them as testimonios if we are to engage in solidarity with Natives. Since the genre of testimonio, as defined by John Beverley, centers the locus of authority on the margins, the author/tellers are able to strengthen the marginal discourse by hopefully enabling readers to change their reading standpoint from one that is comfortable with neo/colonial perspectives to one that confronts and critiques neo/colonial values in solidarity with native subjects.

Throughout the analysis of these Native testimonios I expected to read stories of exploitation and oppression and, while these expectations were sadly confirmed, it is through such stories that the lived experience of the cultural Other finally emerge. Through reading more about Native conditions and life, one can hope to establish
respectful relationships between dominant and marginal cultures while seeing alternative realities that challenge the misrepresentation of Native subjects which operates at the expense of Native rights.

The resistance found in these testimonios is manifested through the strategic and hybrid use of Native language (for Nuligak and Kapesh) that empowers an alter/native history and codes; through the strategic use of the colonizers’ language by enabling the authors’ discourse to reach a broader audience as it has been argued for Jolote, Nuligak and Kapesh; and finally, through the strategic use of secrets which shapes and empowers the authors/tellers in the process of literary production in that it exposes the readers to the author/tellers’ standpoint. As a result, the forces at work are renegotiated between neo/colonial discourse – the master narrative – and Native discourse. This renegotiation enables greater recognition of the lived realities of marginal cultures.

Collaboration behind the testimonio enables the cultural specificities of different Indigenous groups to be understood and reflected upon as empowering knowledge. Collaboration also enables a greater attention to be directed at the preoccupying issues of Native cultural and economic survival as well as self-governance. The drug war and dispossession of native land going on in Mexico and the increasing violence it involves; the development of Northern Canada, as witnessed in the past years, with increasing military presence; and the destruction of rivers like La Romaine in Québec as well as the in/famous Plan Nord of the government of Québec may foreshadow a continuing story of exploitation and oppression. But awareness is growing and rebellion is brewing against tyranny. This thesis has argued that testimonios may be a site for expressing this resistance, yet paradoxically through an act of collaboration.
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