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Masking Revolution: Subcomandante Marcos and the Contemporary Zapatista Movement

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Abstract Orr-Álvarez examines the historical shift from a Cold War to a post-Cold War Latin America in order to explain how and why the Zapatista movement in Mexico began as a utopian revolutionary campaign that strictly followed Ernesto “Che” Guevara’s foco theory and ended up as a symbolic war against injustice—an (inter)national campaign for “absolute democracy” that promoted an imagined community or utopia of the twenty-first century. Within this framework, the author dissects how Subcomandante Marcos’s revolutionary performances use words, fictional characters, and masks as tactics with practical utopian effects, always rooted in the land.

In his 2006 interview with Subcomandante Marcos, Jesús Quintero, Spanish journalist and host of the highly esteemed interview show *El loco de la colina* [The fool on the hill], described the rebel as “today’s guerrilla rebel, a new Che Guevara [...], the leader of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation.”²¹ Yet the post-Cold War context in which Marcos and

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the Zapatistas emerge differs greatly from the years following the Cuban Revolution. The 1960s were a time when the radical Latin American Left believed that an armed struggle headed by charismatic rebel leaders and the subsequent adoption of a Marxist-Leninist agenda were the people's best defense against the US-backed Latin American dictatorships and political tyranny that plagued the continent.

Decades later when Marcos and the Zapatistas come onto the scene, the group uses words as weapons, weapons as symbols of political action, and masks to cover their faces in an attempt to simultaneously erase differences in name, rank, gender, ethnicity, and age as well as expose the corrupt face of the Mexican government. Also, if class antagonism defined the revolutionary package of the past, the vocabulary that shapes the Zapatista movement reflects concerns common to postcolonial discourse and tradition: indigenous rights, autonomy, recognition, and both national and global "democratic" awareness.

Just as the armed revolutionary campaigns that sought a clean break from the current state of affairs seemed right for the 1960s, Marcos's nonviolent campaign for an inclusive (inter)national democracy is deliberate and fitting for the global technological era in which he and the Zapatistas emerge. Despite the group's emphasis on the indigenous cause, Marcos—a self-described *mestizo* of middle-class upbringing—has been the protagonist of the movement since day one. To this end, Guillermo Gómez-Peña (2001) has called the rebel a "consummate *performancero*" who, I will argue, strategically appeared and (re)invented himself at a precise moment in his country's and the world's economic and digital history to propose a revolutionary campaign for the people of the new millennium (90). But, as we will see, Marcos vanished from the scene at a key moment as well. On May 24, 2014, twenty years after waging a war on the state of Mexico, Marcos reappeared after a five-year absence from the spotlight to declare his persona's un-existence and to reinvent himself instead as "Subcomandante Galeano."⁷

Along these lines, my chapter examines Marcos's tactical use of the mask to construct his persona and movement in relation to three distinct steps: a conscious move away from previous views of revolution derived from international revolutionary "Che" Guevara; adoption of core characteristics of national heroes and movements such as the 1910 revolution, Emiliano Zapata, and the Student Movement of 1968; and movement beyond such leaders and practices in speeches and in writings to create a non-authoritative political persona and discourse. To conclude, I will

discuss Marcos's most recent (dis)appearance as his attempt to reappropriate the Zapatista cause and redirect the media's attention to the indigenous roots of the movement.

FOLLOWING CHE: THE FLN ARRIVES TO THE MOUNTAIN IN CHIAPAS

Prior to his involvement with the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional [Zapatista Army of National Liberation or EZLN], Marcos was a key figure in the Fuerzas de Liberación Nacional [National Forces of Liberation or FLN], a political-military group based in Chiapas in the 1980s that sought to forcefully respond to the corrupt practices of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional [Institutional Revolutionary Party or PRI]. At first, Marcos and the FLN adopted Che Guevara's proactive *foeo* theory as the practical and theoretical models for their class-driven guerrilla campaign: "We envisioned a guerrilla group that followed Che Guevara's centralized one very closely. At the start, it was a group that in its operation and armed propaganda, hoped to create consciousness and sway other groups into thinking that the armed way was the only way, until ending up with a popular guerrilla war" (Le Bot 1997, 135).² But Marcos eventually abandoned Che's project for a socialist revolution in favor of a predominantly indigenous-centered and community-oriented democratic movement.

Marcos describes his transition from rebel leader to citizen-pupil living among the organized indigenous communities in Chiapas in the following way: "We went through a process of reeducation, or remodeling. It was as if they had broken down all of the elements that we had—Marxism, Leninism, Socialism, urban culture, poetry, literature—all that formed part of who we were [...]. They unarmed and ideologically armed us again, but in a different way" (Le Bot 1997, 151).³ Marcos's amphibology—to disarm and to arm again in a different way—marks the seemingly forced reconstruction of his political identity from the FLN's authoritative strategies to the EZLN's necessary push for a collective process of indianization.

Certain national and international occurrences also contributed to this seemingly radical shift in Marcos's movement and persona. On a national level, the electoral fraud that brought Carlos Salinas de Gortari of the PRI to power in 1988 and his later revision of Article 27 of the 1917 Constitution, which resulted in the privatization of *ejidos* or communal lands, emphasized the Mexican government's authoritarian view on

democracy and disregard for the indigenous communities.⁴ Also, the end of the ideological struggles of the Cold War and the effects of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994—an event that Paco Ignacio Taibo II (2002) has deemed the “final kick in the stomach to the indigenous communities”—led the PRI to emphasize international capital and affairs rather than to focus on the local communities’ rights and needs (22). Such practices and events thrust the Zapatistas into an international context that required a revolutionary movement and leader who would capitalize on the benefits of living in an electronic era while at the same time recognize the diverse body of citizens as its base (Kampwirth 2003, 228).

1910/1968: MARCOS (RE)DEFINES HIS POLITICAL IDENTITY

In response to this new situation, Marcos aimed to carry out revolution in a different way through the “Zapatista idea.” Such an approach, according to journalist Naomi Klein (2002), combined the use of the Internet and other mass media resources with “public spectacle” as a means to quickly disseminate the Zapatistas’ political message and to gain national and international attention and support (116).⁵ In this context, Marcos’s “public face” as masked spokesman promotes the illusion, but not necessarily the reality, of a unified force—strength and political action in a democratic reformist movement run purportedly for and by the people (Arendt 1959, 178–79).

Marcos’s discourse also replaces key utopian aims associated with past political struggles—the assumption of power to bring about socialism—with a nation-centered democratic rhetoric drawing on the achievements of former national heroes and questions of land, national identity, and the inclusion of “others” in a horizontal society built from the bottom up. Such a shift in focus prompted Marcos to follow a nation-centered model in the creation of his political persona and democratic leadership style as well.

Marcos’s emergence as a spokesman for the Zapatistas in the early 1990s inevitably evoked images of Zapata and his former struggle. Enrique Rajchenberg and Catherine Héau-Lambert (1996) explain that for Mexico, in that moment, “[a]ll that was left from Marcos’s individual identity hidden behind the ski mask, was the symbolic identity of an agrarian guerrilla hero [and] [...] defender of the peasant village who died for his ideals” (44).⁶ Marcos strives to transform the symbolic link between Zapata’s

fight and that of the Contemporary Zapatistas into a real historical and political one in his “Primera declaración de la Selva Lacandona” [“First Declaration from the Lacandon Jungle”] by emphasizing the importance of respecting the changes outlined in the 1917 Constitution, the EZLN’s “El manifiesto de la Carta Magna” [“Magna Carta Manifiesto”] (Marcos 2001, 13).⁷ The association between such causes reveals that though one of Emiliano Zapata’s biggest triumphs during the 1910 Revolution was agrarian reform and the subsequent public and legal recognition of certain minority groups, the same fight persists over seventy years later, which Marcos interprets as a symbolic and real call for action.

If Marcos uses Zapata’s name to initiate a discussion on reform and recognition in a corrupt neoliberal state, he borrows nonviolent strategies from the leaders of the Student Movement of 1968 to unveil the undemocratic practices of then PRI President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, whose actions, according to Carlos Monsiváis (1994), suggested that “to repress is to govern” (xi).⁸ Though the participants in the 1968 protests sought to establish a dialogue with government officials on democratic reform from within, the state responded with the massacre of more than 350 citizens and then silenced the truth for decades (Monsiváis 1994, xi). On the thirtieth anniversary of this massacre, Marcos uses his word as a weapon of resistance against the government’s implicit breaching of a social (democratic) contract with citizens in a global age by calling out for the construction of a different form of democracy rooted in those who resist, those who continue, those who died, and those who survived 1968 and now 1998: “The movement of 1968 has definitively marked this country’s history. Then, two countries confronted one another: one constructed on the basis of authoritarianism, intolerance, repression, and the most brutal exploitation; and the other that wants to build itself on democracy, inclusion, liberty, and justice” (Marcos 2001, 143). Marcos’s mask is symbolic of the ongoing fight between the two faces of Mexico that emerge as a result of the massacre: those who hide the truth and those who seek to expose it.

MARCOS’S MASKED “I”: BUILDING A MORE INCLUSIVE AND “ABSOLUTE” DEMOCRACY

Marcos’s presentation of his masked self to the public in relation to these two national events is a political gesture he uses to link his persona and political campaign to a diverse but explicit audience: the wide ranging sectors of citizens—peasants, indigenous people, and students—that took part

in such movements, suggesting that he hopes that the base of the contemporary Zapatista movement will be equally as diverse. Such an approach is observed in his use of the metaphor of the bridge in his writings—"a multiple bridge, a walking octopus" (Marcos 2001, 183)—to unite all sectors of Mexican society and other groups around the world fighting against injustices from their respective countries and in their difference and distinct battles in a Zapatista ideology: "A Zapatista is anyone anywhere fighting injustice" (Klein 2002, 116). However, some would argue that Marcos's universalist aims leave out just as many groups as they include.⁹

Marcos is not the first rebel to dramatize revolution by incorporating such theatrical concepts as the persona and the mask into the formation of his political identity and movement. Participants in the French Revolution, for instance, often used the mask as a metaphor to describe the revolutionary process as a power struggle between the "unspoiled, honest face" of the people and the "mask of hypocrisy" of the ruling class (Arendt 1965, 102). Mexican authors Octavio Paz (2002) and Carlos Fuentes (1963) have previously linked the mask to a silencing of an intellectual and political consciousness or the shame associated with an unstable national identity in a state of a perpetual failed revolution, respectively.¹⁰ For Marcos, though, similar to the French revolutionaries, the mask represents the paradox of the movement: in covering their faces, the Zapatistas simultaneously reveal themselves in their unity, diversity, and dignity to the government and expose the true (corrupt) face of democracy in Mexico.

But Marcos's mask also implies the erasure of the dominant "I" that was so common to past revolutionary movements and brings to the fore instead the collective personality of Marcos, best noted in the Zapatista slogan "Todos somos Marcos" [We are all Marcos].¹¹ This is perhaps best exemplified in the video morphing of one of Marcos's televised speeches in 2006 from the remote location of La Realidad, Chiapas into a musical video of sorts, starring the faces of Zapatismo.¹² In this public media spectacle, Marcos projects his mirror image onto the people (which is that of the people) and then grasps the attention of all—especially the media—when he promises to remove his mask, thus revealing his true identity to the world. The suspense rises as Marcos begins to remove his revolutionary paraphernalia—headphones, pipe, bullet cartridges, and cap—in the form of a pseudo-striptease accompanied by one of the well-known Zapatista anthems, Manu Chao's "EZLN." Yet, just as he is about to remove his ski mask, in a scene reminiscent of Michael Jackson's 1991 "Black and White" video, Marcos morphs into someone else, and that

person into someone else, and so on, suggesting that this symbolic leader is what Ernesto Laclau (2002) calls an "empty signifier," a figurative space that anyone and everyone fighting against injustice around the world can occupy at any given time (5).

Apart from alluding to his "pop-star" status—something that Marcos himself has been highly critical of in the media but has taken full advantage of for the sake of "the cause" through his mask and slogan—the rebel attempts to erase the differences among citizens by using "difference" to create a bond with "those who are the same, making them different" (Marcos 2001, 336). Such a process is akin to what Diana Taylor (1997) describes as "the performativity of nation-ness" (92). In projecting himself as the people, this self-described *mestizo* spokesman allows for "very different people [to] imagine they share commonalities and [...] to identify as part of a group" (92). The mask not only prompts distinct groups to "perform" under the same collective identity but also it provides them with the opportunity to rewrite what Judith Butler (1999) calls the "naturalizing [patriarchal] narrative" of the past, which defines them as a passive subaltern mass, by acting in the present as conscious agents working toward a common political and democratic goal (146–47).

Marcos's aim to achieve a "leveling of all social differences" by uniting all sectors of society in spite of and in their difference under the banner of universalism (but not socialism) does not come without consequences (Žižek 1999, 165). His push to cover up what we should interpret as the anxieties of a post-Marxist (and postutopian) era results in what Slavoj Žižek (1999) calls a "politics of the particular (ethnic, sexual, etc.) [...] in which every particular group is 'accounted for'" (208). Marcos not only accounts for previously silenced voices in his public appearances and texts, as we will see below, but he also places them at the center of his democratic project as the driving force for change from within the system and around the world. This suggests that Marcos is not merely "politically correct" but anything and everything to anyone fighting injustice anywhere around the world: "Any man or woman, of whatever color, in whatever tongue, speaks and says to himself or to herself: Enough is enough!—¡*Ya Basta!*!" (Marcos 2001, 111). This "imaginary world" that Marcos appropriately proposes from the isolated Zapatista territory (La Realidad, Chiapas) is necessary to "ensure the success of the [Zapatista] operation," for it is only in imagining themselves as part of a national fight against neoliberalism on a global stage that the Zapatista identity and idea come to life (Baudrillard 1995, 12).

Marcos's "omnipresent" mask and unifying political slogan ("Todos somos Marcos") also serve an aesthetic purpose, according to Ilan Stevens (1996, 54). In his speeches and writings, he actively strives to sanitize his political persona of any traces of an aspiration to power by speaking from the position of a "correct," dialectic, non-authoritative "I." Such an aim would explain his self-identification as *Subcomandante Marcos* and not *Comandante Marcos*—a relegation he claims he earned due to his impatience with the international press (Marcos 1994, 92; emphasis mine). It also elucidates his decision to mask his "I" with the first person plural "nosotros" or "we" that dominates his discourse. In relation to this collective "we," in his writings, Marcos uses heteronyms or characters specific to indigenous and Hispanic oral, literary, and cultural traditions. Through such figures, Marcos aims to break with past visions of the authoritative rebel leader by dispersing his dominant "I" and disseminating his views on race, age, social class, gender, and sexual orientation without ever having to assume a position of real or textual authority.¹³ Marcos sums up these goals in his 2001 interview with Carlos Monsiváis: "Our fight's essential demand is that of indigenous rights and culture, because that is what we are. Related to this, we want recognition of difference. That explains our alliance with the gay and lesbian movements, and also with other marginalized ones" (Monsiváis 2001, 38).¹⁴ Two characters Marcos uses to disseminate his message at home and abroad are "El viejo Antonio" [Old Don Antonio], a respected elder of the Mayan indigenous community in Chiapas who served as Marcos's mentor during his time with the FLN on the mountain, and the beetle knight errant, "Don Durito de la Lacandona" [Don Durito of the Lacandon]. Marcos's combination of indigenous Mayan and Hispanic traditions through such voices suggests that though he writes primarily to promote the political cause of the less privileged sectors of Mexican society, he does not surrender his *mestizo* identity, nor does he forget that Mexico, in the end, is a *mestizo* nation.

The relationship between Old Don Antonio and Marcos is rooted in the oral didactic indigenous tradition first established by Rosario Castellanos in *Balún Canán* (1957) and most recently expressed in Francisco Garza Quevedo's film *El violín* [The violin] (2005) that "the indigenous people decide, while the mestizos [...] learn from them" (Vanden Bergh and Maddens 2004, 128). In "La historia de las preguntas" ["The Story of the Questions"], the exchanges between the esteemed indigenous elder and his young and naive pupil (Marcos, pre-1994) serve to situate Emiliano Zapata's historical, political, and personal achievements within a mythical Mayan indigenous framework rather than a heroic Western one.

In the opening of the story, when Old Don Antonio asks Marcos who he is and what he is fighting for, the young rebel responds with a list of what he interprets as definitive precursors to and characteristics of revolution in Mexico: "Zapata and Villa, and the revolution, and the land, and the injustice, and hunger, and ignorance, and sickness, and repression and everything. [...] I start with [...] the Plan de Ayala, the military campaign, the organization of the villages, the betrayal at Chinameca" (Marcos 2001, 413–14). Yet Old Don Antonio sets out to correct Marcos's view of revolution and of Zapata by explaining the "Rebel of the South's" unknown link to mythical figures Ik'al and Votán Zapata, two Mayan gods that learned to walk as one by asking each other questions, continuously moving forward, and working together toward a common goal: "So that is how the true men and women learned that questions help to walk, and not to stand still [...]. They are never still." But after Old Don Antonio concludes Zapata's real story through that of Ik'al, Votán, and their journey between "the light and the darkness" (102), Marcos misses the point and asks "[...] and Zapata?" Old Don Antonio responds: "You've learned now that in order to know and walk, you have to ask questions" (415).

In closing, Old Don Antonio passes on to Marcos an old black and white photograph of Zapata taken in 1910. The image contains symbols that Marcos and his group—the revolutionaries of the new millennium—associate with successful armed revolutions: a clenched fist, rifle, bullets, and Zapata's signature *sombbrero* [hat]. But what he fails to notice until Old Don Antonio reveals Zapata's mythical-indigenous bloodline is that the leader is not alone; he is situated in between two staircases—one dark, with many other Zapatistas with "faces the color of night" (364) in the background—and another illuminated by a light leading to an unknown but promising future that only his steps are capable of leading to (438).

Through his relationship with Old Don Antonio, an esteemed elder and source of the often forgotten sociocultural and political knowledge related to the Mayan communities, Marcos presents himself modestly as an inexperienced revolutionary who takes at face value conventional representations of revolution and of Zapata as a leader and national hero. Yet at the same time, Marcos's interactions with his mentor allow him to tailor Zapata and Zapatista discourse, both common to a pre-EZLN time, to an age of globalization and new technologies. In this vein, we should interpret Old Don Antonio's oral history, presence on the mountain, and two-dimensional photograph of Zapata, which he keeps to himself until meeting Marcos, as products of the revolution in a previous era.

On the other hand, Marcos, with his revolutionary paraphernalia, avid use of the Internet and mass media, and diverse national and international following and support, points toward the future of the revolution in a Latin American context.

Another character Marcos speaks through in many of his writings is the *quijotesque* storyteller Don Durito who always appears before the people with his loyal squire and scribe "SupMarcos" in his rewritings of age-old fairytales. In an attempt to simultaneously educate and entertain his public through the traditional teaching by contraries—a tradition that dates back to the Renaissance dialogue¹⁵—Marcos attributes certain qualities to Durito, the self-described ultimate (beetle) warrior that women dream of and men aspire to become. These are qualities associated with former rebel leaders—qualities that the media assign to him (and, as we saw above, rightly so) in an attempt to insert him into the same revolutionary tradition. "This little beetle has traveled the roads of the world, righting wrongs, rescuing damsels in distress, healing the sick, aiding the weak, instructing the ignorant, humbling the mighty, and exalting the humble [...]. Millions of women sigh for him, thousands of men speak his name with respect, and hundreds of thousands of children worship him" (Marcos 2001, 289). Marcos's parody of the image of the heroic guerrilla rebel through such statements and in his presentation of himself to the public as SupMarcos, the "not quite Commander," brings to light characteristics that he believes a rebel leader in a global era should possess: modesty, diplomacy, and respect for differences.¹⁶ But, more importantly, his subordinate position also offers him the opportunity to indirectly criticize the neoliberal Mexican state and to educate and entertain the people through a literary perspective.

In "La historia del ratoncito y el gatito" ["The Story of the Tiny Mouse and the Tiny Cat"], Don Durito retells the tale of the rivalry between the cat and the mouse. Durito's version is a political allegory of the fight between the cat (the neoliberal state in Mexico post-NAFTA) and the mouse (the Zapatistas), although it differs from traditional interpretations of such a tale. In the end, the mouse wins when he consciously takes control of his destiny and screams, "¡Ya basta!" ("Enough is enough!") and eats the cat.

Durito opens his story by clearly outlining the roles he and his loyal squire will occupy in the narrative (Marcos 2001, 330). While Durito acts as both SupMarcos's superior and as the erudite educator of the masses, SupMarcos is a diplomat, a mediator who simply relays Durito's messages in the form of communiqués to the citizens of Mexico. In this instance,

while Durito tells the story, he orders SupMarcos to write to the people of Mexico to outline what his superior believes to be the basic requirements needed to ensure that diplomatic relations exist among countries. Durito's instructions for such an assignment include explicit orders to eliminate topics such as the forces of rapid intervention, economic programs, and the flight of capital—definitive practices of the Mexican government during Ernesto Zedillo's presidency (1994–2000).

Implicit in the introductory and concluding words to Durito's story is Marcos's criticism of Zedillo's neoliberal policies.¹⁷ When the state places more emphasis on a desire to attract foreign capital and to strengthen the relations abroad through the privatization of lands and the deregulation of the economy and accordingly concerns itself less with the conditions at home, the people and not the Mexican government pay the high political price. Such "democratic" practices point to why Laclau defines democracy—a form of politics that is theoretically formed of and by the people—as a hegemonic political system in which the continuous power play between the universal (the democratic "head of state") and the particular (the different social groups represented by democracy) inevitably results in the oppression or exclusion of certain groups: "Democracy requires the constant recreation of the gap between the universal and the particular, between the empty place of power and the transient forces occupying it—in other words, [...] democracy can only flourish in a hegemonically constructed space" (Laclau 2002, 13). But, as I have tried to suggest above, Marcos's attempt to represent all sectors of society in his fight against a neoliberal government is just as futile.

Marcos's emphasis on different sectors' struggles for recognition appears in a unified fashion in "La verdadera historia de Mary Read y Anne Bonny" ["The True Story of Mary Read and Anne Bonny"], a tale of two female pirates who fall in love. Though Durito takes on the central role as narrator of the story, SupMarcos has the first and last words, which clue us in on how to interpret the text. Upon Durito's request and before his mentor begins to relate his story, SupMarcos points out several significant unknown details that the reader is not to overlook: the author, public (even though the public is stated quite clearly as the lesbians, homosexuals, transgender, and transvestites of the world), gender of the protagonists, and date of publication. SupMarcos's voice pops up again at the end to clarify the complex concept of "double otherness" that Durito refers to in his concluding words: "When we are struggling to change things, we often forget that the struggle also includes changing ourselves"

(Marcos 2001, 337). Thus he highlights the importance of the relationship between the universal and the particular in a Zapatista context.

This same message appears in another one of Marcos's chapters in reference to a different group of "doubly othered" and doubly dominated citizens: the Zapatista women. Not only do their husbands rule these women at home but they also suffer from higher percentages of illiteracy, are paid lower wages, and are marginalized by a system that fails to recognize equal rights between men and women. Precisely because of their double domination, the female participants in Zapatismo fight harder than the average citizen for rights, and accordingly, their political awakening is doubly noted, or as Marcos explains, the double nightmare that is their life doubles their political awakening (Marcos 2001, 70). The result of the pressure such women feel to change society through themselves is the birth of a keen awareness of humanity and human rights, which Marcos ties to a feminine consciousness: "The conscience of humanity passes through female conscience; the knowledge of being human implies they know they're women and struggle. They no longer need anyone to speak for them; their word follows the double route of a self-propelled rebellion—the double motor of rebel women" (2001, 60).

DEMOCRACY UNMASKED: A ZAPATISTA APPROACH TO UTOPIA IN A POST-"MARCOS" ERA

In the abovementioned texts, Marcos evades a position of power by placing himself in the periphery of the text as SupMarcos, while Durito takes center stage and openly proclaims his message to the people. Yet SupMarcos's emphasis on mediation, guidance, interpretation, and inclusion—key concepts in the Zapatistas' understanding of democracy—clearly highlight his push to create a new type of movement that situates often forgotten perspectives and identities at the core of his fight for recognition and inclusion.

At the base of Marcos's proposal for an inclusive democracy sits the collective body of citizens who with his guidance seem to rapidly move from a passive subaltern mass that the state has historically silenced and ignored to a group of active participatory agents in a collective campaign against neoliberalism. Such a shift would transform the Zapatistas—at least on a superficial level—into what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2004) describe as a faceless autonomous postnational "multitude" that is guided, educated, and moved to action, but not commanded by Marcos (349).

In spite of his purportedly humble intentions, Marcos's democratic performance and aim to unite all sectors of society under the umbrella of one symbolic fight against neoliberalism—a political strategy evidenced most recently in the Zapatistas' "La otra campaña" [The Other Campaign] (2006)—seems as utopic as the revolutions of the 1960s. Marcos's approach to revolution in the twenty-first century suggests that "absolute democracy"—a political system that Negri, following the political thought of seventeenth-century Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza, defines as "the management of the *freedom of all* by these *all* themselves"—is the new imagined community or utopia of the twenty-first century, at least in a Zapatista context (Negri 2013, 31).

We could interpret the recent dissolution of Marcos as person and persona in this same vein. On January 1, 1994, "Marcos" as name, mask, and community becomes the body through which Zapatistas act on and carry out their political desires. Yet, twenty years later, on May 24, 2014, this same figure comes forth to claim his inexistence and subsequently rename himself as one Comandante Galeano in remembrance of a fellow fallen indigenous comrade. In a lengthy speech titled "Entre la luz y la sombra" ["Between Light and Shadow"] that is reminiscent of Che Guevara's nostalgic "Carta de despedida a Fidel Castro" ["Farewell Letter to Fidel Castro"] (Guevara 1965), Marcos highlights key moments of the Zapatista fight. He also refutes rumors of strategic and political failures, and even admits—amid descriptions of indigenous dreams, improbable worlds, and an unclear future and direction for the movement—that the EZLN, not unlike previous rebel groups, has a hierarchical "top-down" leadership structure (Marcos 2014).¹⁸ But the central point of Marcos's public discourse is another one: the history behind the strategic creation and "death" of "Marcos."

The Zapatistas created "Marcos" to facilitate dialogue between the EZLN, the Mexican government, and the media and to draw attention to the movement. The strategy worked. From the onset, the masked spokesman grabbed the attention of the people and of the national and international lines of mass media and communication. However, this "imaginary world" created for and by the Zapatistas to ensure the ongoing success of an unarmed democratic reformist movement in a global era—similar to the fame of Alberto Korda's photograph of a somber, bearded Che Guevara post-1967—has been reappropriated by the media (Loviny et al. 2006). Rather than gain political support and attention for the Zapatistas, Marcos has become a "deterrence machine" that both the media and the

Zapatistas use to revive the Zapatista dilemma at key moments in the movement's history (Baudrillard 1995, 12). In this vein, by "retiring" "Marcos" and his mask and subsequently renaming himself, the Zapatista spokesman, like many rebels before him, succeeds in disappearing from the spotlight while at the same time maintaining the suspense and interest surrounding the Zapatista movement and cause.

NOTES

1. My translation of "un guerrillero de hoy, un nuevo Che Guevara [...], el líder del Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional." In Jesús Quintero, *El loco de la colina*, "Entrevista a Subcomandante Marcos en 2006" [Interview with Subcommander Marcos in 2006]. YouTube video, part 1 of 2, 9:30. June 14, 2006, accessed June 25, 2015, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVO3pRRQmDc>.
2. My translation of "Se planteaba una guerrilla en términos muy cercanos al foco guerrillero. En sus inicios es una guerrilla que con su accionar, con su propaganda armada, pretendía crear conciencia y jalar a otros grupos que optaran por la lucha armada, hasta culminar con una guerra popular."
3. My translation of "Sufrimos realmente un proceso de reeducación, de remodelación. Como si nos hubiesen desmontado todos los elementos que tenemos—marxismo, leninismo, socialismo, cultura urbana, poesía, literatura—, todo lo que formaba parte de nosotros [...]. Nos desarmaron y nos volvieron a armar, pero de otra forma." See also Petrich and Henríquez (1994) as well as González Esponda and Pólito Barrios (1994).
4. While Karen Kampwirth would argue (and I agree) that the continual dominance of the PRI in the political sphere in Mexico and this party's incessant control over and disregard for the land and rights of the indigenous populations was one of the most determining factors in the EZLN's decision to declare war on the state of Mexico on January 1, 1994, Salinas de Gortari's and the subsequent president's neoliberal practices, revisions to the Constitution of 1917, and ensuing disrespect for the democratic spirit of such a document thrust the Zapatistas into action (Kampwirth 2003, 235).
5. Official Zapatista websites include: EZLN (<http://www.ezln.org.mx>), Radio Insurgente (<http://www.radioinsurgente.org>), and El enlace (<http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx>). Indeed, one of the first steps that Subcomandante Marcos took to gain international attention for the Zapatista movement was his 1994 interview with reporter Ed Bradley of *60 Minutes*. Marcos used this international stage to outline the reasons for the Zapatista uprising and goals of the movement and to gain the support

of the North American people. The Zapatistas' official website (<http://www.ezln.org.mx>) went live in 1994 and contains up-to-date information, photographs, studies, and opinions related to the movement. In addition, they formed Yahoo discussion groups and launched Radio Insurgente [Insurgent Radio], a Zapatista radio network that is broadcast live from Chiapas (<http://www.radioinsurgente.org>). Finally, as recently as 2006, the Zapatistas created a blog (<http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx>) that provides information regarding the cross-country march nicknamed *Zapatour* and campaign titled "La otra campaña" ["The Other Campaign"] launched by the Zapatistas that same year in an effort to unite distinct resistance groups across Mexico in their differences and in their fight to survive in a (non)democratic Mexico.

6. My translation of "[d]e la identidad individual de Marcos, oculta tras el pasamontañas, sólo quedaba la identidad simbólica de un héroe guerrillero agrarista [y] [...] defensor del pueblo campesino que murió por sus ideales."
7. Marcos states: "Porfirio Díaz's dictatorship, which denied us the just application of the reform laws, and leaders like Villa and Zapata emerged, poor men just like us who have been denied the most elemental preparation so they can use us as cannon fodder and pillage the wealth of our country. They don't care that we have nothing, absolutely nothing, not even a roof over our heads, no land, no work, no health care, no food or education, not the right to freely and democratically elect our political representatives, nor independence from foreigners. There is no peace or justice for ourselves and our children. But today we say: ENOUGH IS ENOUGH! We are the inheritors of the true builders of our nation. We are millions, the dispossessed who call upon our brothers and sisters to join this struggle as the only path, so that we will not die of hunger due to the insatiable ambition of a seventy-year dictatorship led by a clique of traitors who represent the most conservative and sellout groups" (2001, 13). With this, Marcos uses the Government's perception of the indigenous peoples as "cannon fodder" and an "easy target," as well as the complete disregard for and inhumane treatment of such groups in Mexico as a means to gain the support of the women, children, elderly, and indigenous in an uprising against the oppressive Mexican government.
8. My translation of "reprimir es gobernar."
9. See Vanden Bergh and Maddens (2004); see also Marcos (1996) and Lisbona-Guillén (2006).
10. Fuentes describes the mask in much the same way in its relation to power. However, for Fuentes, the mask would not only represent the face of power and the institutionalization of what he calls a (perpetual) failed revolution in Mexico but it would also come to symbolize the silencing of a

- political, moral, and intellectual consciousness on the part of Mexican citizens (1963, iii-iv).
11. The Zapatista slogan "Todos somos Marcos" suggests that all citizens form the body, but the leader, who was historically the king, is not the head of the political body but a mere part and spokesperson of the collective body of Zapatistas. This political proposal actually reverses the concept of *corpus mysticum politicum* that has dominated political thought at least since Plato, if not before, according to José A. Maravall. This completely breaks with the colonial mandate and the idea of a hierarchical power (1999, 191-214).
 12. Videographer unknown, "Subcomandante Marcos Removes his Mask," accessed June 25, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bGP8TNaG-f0>.
 13. Marcos is not the first writer to incorporate heteronyms in his creative works in an attempt to disperse his own identity and to propose an alternative "I." Two literary figures of the twentieth century, Portuguese poet and literary critic Fernando Pessoa (1915) and American poet Ezra Pound (1909) also used this strategy to either fragment or unveil their own identities in their writing, a strategy that Marcos was well aware of.
 14. My translation of "Lo fundamental de nuestra lucha es la demanda de los derechos y la cultura indígena, porque eso somos. En torno a esto se da el reconocimiento a la diferencia. De allí nuestra liga con el movimiento homosexual y de lesbianas, y también con otros movimientos marginados."
 15. In Marcos's relationship with his heteronyms, one sees traces of the literary tradition of the Renaissance dialogue. Such a tradition allowed authors to offer multiple perspectives in a forceless and pedagogic way on universal topics relevant to the period, such as human dignity and the rational competence of man. See Friedlein (2005, 19).
 16. For further analyses of the public persona of Subcomandante Marcos, see Paz (2002, 30-33), Guillermprieto (2002, 33-45), and Bradley (1994).
 17. Marcos highlights the demoralizing effects of Zedillo's embrace of neoliberalism on the indigenous communities in Chiapas in two letters he writes to him in 1994 and in 2000 (*Nuestra arma* 72, 164). For Marcos's further discussion of this concept and its consequences, see in this same text "Palabras en el acto de inicio del primer encuentro intercontinental por la humanidad y contra el neoliberalismo" ["Opening Remarks for the First International Encounter for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism"] (112), "Mañana comienza hoy" ["Tomorrow Begins Today"] (120), "Segunda declaración de la realidad por la humanidad y contra el neoliberalismo" ["The Second Declaration of Reality for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism"] (127), "La sociedad civil, el concepto incómodo y la realidad molesta" ["Civil Society, the Uncomfortable Concept, and Modest Reality"] (131), "El caracol del fin y el principio" ["The Snail and the

Beginning of the End"] (136), "Los misterios de la cueva del deseo" ["The Mysteries of the Cave of Desire"] (319), and "Otra nube, otra botella y otra carta de Durito" ["Another Cloud, Another Bottle, and Another Letter from Durito"] (341).

18. My translation of "No escondemos que somos un ejército, con su estructura piramidal, su centro de mando, sus decisiones de arriba hacia abajo."

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