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Introductory Note to Issue 2, 2020

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Los Mayas Migrantes

Un Viaje Sin Retorno

by Gaspar Pedro González

2020

Introductory Note to Issue 2, 2020

Maya America is pleased to publish this new Spanish-language novel by Gaspar Pedro González. Accepting an original and timely work from a leading Guatemalan intellectual and novelist would be easy enough, and Gaspar's new novel is at once insightful and provocative. Rather than presenting his characters as villains or victims, the author leaves much up to the imaginations and sentiments of the reader to interpret and make sense of the thoughts and decisions of the main characters. "The Migrant Maya", ultimately uncovers some of the consequences of leaving home that go beyond the risks of jail and deportation, such as the high costs of family disintegration, loss of values, isolation, children scattered to unknown places, psychological damage, pain and death. Some may wonder at the use of the term "migrant", given the Maya pre-European links to the Americas, but the novel through the lens of "migrant" brings focus to the background of institutionalized colonialism.

Previous essays published by our journal Maya America have discussed both the positive outcomes of the Maya diaspora, and the ever-possible adverse consequences. Examples that discuss some of the negative consequences would be Victor Montejo's "The Rabbit and the Goat: A Trickster's Tale of Transnational Migration of Mayas to the United State of America (El Norte)" (in V1, I1) and Pablo Marcos' "Emigrar: Vale la Pena" (in V2, I1). On the other hand, hundreds of thousands of Mayas have established successful lives in the United States, and a large but uncounted generation of Maya born in the United States have joined the makeup of the multi-ethnic United States.

Examples from the journal that highlight Maya success would include Carmelina Cadena who described her flight from Guatemala as a child in the 1980s, in "From There to Here: My Mayan Journey and Life in America" (in V1, I1); and the sister and brother in South Carolina writing about their Maya youth organization in "Kojichk'ulal - Kojiq'b'ej – Kojinatil" (V2, I1).

Gaspar Pedro González employs a narration style that maintains deep roots in the world of the Maya. In the words of the author "The novel employs techniques of a literature-based orality, through the ancestral discourse in which they intervene such as parallelism, puns, repetition, and complementarity. Typical for ancient Maya discourse, found in the cognitive anthropology of the semantic, symbolic and juxtalineal meanings of Maya literature, the novel thereby collects in its original space the experiences of the people and communities affected by migration."

This Spanish version of the novel will be followed by a combined Spanish-English version accompanied by a discussion guide that is designed for college classrooms.

Juanatano Cano

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