en cada región. El caso de Chiapas, pero también el de Guatemala y Perú, es ilustrativo al respecto, como lo demuestran Lewis, Adams y Martín-Sánchez, y al mismo tiempo nos lleva a otros contextos. Uno se puede preguntar por qué Estados Unidos nunca tuvo un instituto indigenista. El Bureau of Indian Affairs surgió en medio de las guerras indias como parte del Ministerio de Guerra y luego del Departamento del Interior, lo que pone un límite espinoso a la “soberanía tribal” de que habla Dawson. El gobierno norteamericano simplemente dejó de cumplir la Convención del Instituto Indigenista Interamericano, y más bien ejerció una clara influencia política sobre la dirección del “indigenismo latinoamericano”, como se ve en Perú y en Chiapas. Hoy sencillamente ya no le importa la cuestión, y se limita a mostrar a los indígenas las bondades de convertirse en empresarios del capitalismo de casino.

Esto me lleva al singular trabajo comparativo de Dawson, a propósito del culto e ingestión del peyote entre los huicholes y tarahumaras de México y las dos iglesias nativas americanas. A mi juicio, Dawson omitió toda referencia a los “Mexican Kickapoo Indians” de Coahuila y Sonora, venidos de los Grandes Lagos. En México, el gobierno de Cárdenas les cedió tierra ejidal, pero ya en esos días (1936) todo el mundo sabía de su utilización del peyote, sin mayores consecuencias (Alfonso Fabila, La tribu kickapoo de Coahuila, INI, 2002 [1940], p. 142). Como decimos por aquí, lo que no está reglamentado está permitido. Resulta entonces que, junto con su trabajo de jornaleros agrícolas en USA, simultáneo a la expansión de la Native American Church, los kikapú llevaron el peyote allende la frontera. La delgada línea roja entre culto y tráfico a veces se diluye, y hoy el principal problema epidemiológico de la Traditional Kickapoo Tribe of Texas es la drogadicción, aunque sean empresarios de casino. Por cierto, fueron los kikapú de Sonora los que se acercaron al INI para conseguir “permisos de exportación” del peyote. La documentación se guarda en el CDI de Guadalajara. Como dice Dawson con toda razón, es posible que los indigenistas mexicanos y los indian officers no se hablaron con el mismo lenguaje. Pero queda la pregunta de si los académicos de aquí y allá no hacemos aún lo mismo.

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In 2000 Years of Mayan Literature Dennis Tedlock takes a painstaking approach to detail and asks us to reconsider our notions of pre-Colombian Mayan literacy and literature. This book gives a rich multi-level translation and decod-
ing of the surviving corpus of Mayan material culture (pictographic writing, monuments, pottery, ornaments, códices) and its later post-Conquest destruction, adaptation and survival in the language-based categories of western epistemology (Roman alphabet). Following in line and going beyond the groundbreaking scholarship that rethinks Mesoamerican literacies, such as Hill Boone’s and Mignolo’s edited collection of essays Writing Without Words (1994), Tedlock revisits the polemical notion that “literature existed in the Americas before Europeans got [there]—not only oral literature but visible literature” (p. 1).

In the first part of the book (chapters 1-19), Tedlock explains the intricacies of the Mayan writing system and provides a rich introduction to Classic Mayan texts through the analysis of inscriptions painted, engraved or graffitied on cocomeric drinking vessels, carved stone, plastered walls or caves, and books (or códices). Tedlock notes that one of the most interesting features that Classical Mayan script shared with later alphabetic texts is the presence of parallel verse found not only in couplets, but also in “triplets, quatrains, and unparalleled introductory and transitional phrases” (p. 403). Tedlock’s pièce de résistance in this first part is “Reading the Vase of the Seven Gods,” where he demonstrates the poetical nature of Mayan script and the multidisciplinary skill required to translate the inscriptions on a cocoa-drinking vase which was a baby gift for a Maya prince. Tedlock translates the Mayan script on the rim of the vase and re-organizes it in lines to “display its poetic structure” (p. 36). Then he translates three hidden bundles located in the script, which in turn map out three of the principal stars of Orion as they appeared while rising in Mayan latitudes during the Classic period. The multidisciplinary nature of decoding the narrative of this vase was made possible by matching the stars of the painting to the stones of a stela and then comparing that constellation with a narrative from the Popol Vuh, a 16th-century alphabetic Mayan text which in turn was read and interpreted by a contemporary Mayan priest-shaman. Tedlock’s thought-provoking interpretation of this vase is a clear example of how the present can inform the past.

In the second part of the book (chapters 20-32), Tedlock maps the post-Conquest loss, survival, and adaptation of Mayan script up to the present time. Tedlock traces the arrival of Europeans into the Mayan world in order to highlight the problems of cultural translation. At times Tedlock provides amusing but chilling stories that demonstrate the mistranslation of the Mayan script into the Roman alphabet based on a Eurocentric perception of writing. A case in point is Franciscan Diego de Landa’s failed attempt to translate the Mayan alphabet. He acquired antihero status for publicly burning many Mayan books (or códices) and for conducting the unauthorized trial and torture of 4,549 indigenous witnesses in the name of the Holy Office of the Inquisition. Projects of Mayan memory erasure were rampant in colonial times. Tedlock notes that
the colonial administration banned Mayan weavers from brocading and forbade public performances, recognizing that brocades and performances were forms of preserving or “writing” Mayan memory.

Nevertheless, Tedlock makes clear that despite the physical and epistemological violence imposed on the Mayan people and their literature, “the Mayan script continued in use for a long time” (p. 246), was adapted and has gone through a renaissance. Tedlock analyzes various colonial productions, including the nine surviving books of the Chilam Balam (Jaguar Spokesman), which although written in Roman alphabet on European paper, used “Mayan rather than Christian ways of measuring time [and] treated the Christian calendar as an addition to their own rather than as a substitute for it” (p. 250). The subversive nature of colonial Mayan literary production is also evident in the curative ritual incantations (or scripts) referred to as the “Ritual of the Bacabs,” whereby Mayan healers in the colonial period invoked the Mayan Gods through herbs and words—a practice that was banned during colonial times. The Mayan Gods are also unapologetically invoked in Tedlock’s translation masterpiece of the Popol Vuh (Council Book), whose subject matter is described on a number of Classic cocoa-drinking vases and is also invoked in a covert manner in the “Rabinal Achi” dance-drama that continues to be performed by the Maya today.

Tedlock’s call to revisit pre-Colombian Mayan cultural production as literature is, of course, not new. It is reminiscent of Miguel León-Portilla’s life-long project to recover and revalorize Nahua philosophical thought and culture. In this respect, Tedlock’s work on Mayan literature should be praised for bringing to light the rich, varied and at times poetical corpus of Mayan texts. By the same token, one suspects that Tedlock’s work will be criticized for labeling some of these “texts” as literature. Where do we draw the line?2

Ultimately, Tedlock not only suggests the possibility of imagining alternative literacies but also reminds us how the present (interviews with contemporary Mayan informants and the use of alphabetic Mayan literary texts) can inform the past and help us decode and interpret the rich meaning of pre-Colombian texts found in Classical Mayan script. By re-contextualizing these Mayan “texts” as literature, Tedlock, it seems, wants us to no longer relegate these rich historical and cultural productions to a time of undecipherable nineteenth-century ruins or exotic artifacts at the museum, but wants to breathe life into them just as reading a beautiful poem would. The question of translation and interpretation of course cannot be ignored and is at the heart of this book. As Tedlock notes, “Much decipherment has taken place but very little in the way of translation [...] guided by linguistic rather than literary goals” (p. 1). Thus, Tedlock’s own comparative and multidisciplinary methodology, coupled with his masterful translations with at times “literary goals” (exemplified in the excerpts from the
Popul Vuh), puts to work his cultural knowledge and sensitivity by interpreting and rendering the original Mayan texts with a new English-reading public in mind. Despite what may be lost and gained in translation, Tedlock has put this civilization’s corpus on the map. Furthermore, he recognizes the rich production of the Mayan’s literary descendants, as exemplified in the verses of Mayan poet Humberto Ak’abal, “Lightning/ lights up the clouds, it wants to see if we are still here, below/ Then comes the revelation/— Here we are (p. 402).

Notes
1 These sentiments are also echoed by Camilla Townsend, “Reading Symbolic and Historical Representations in Early Mesoamerica,” Latin American Research Review, 2012, vol. 47.

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In the 1980s, when countries throughout Latin America began to transition from authoritarian rule, there was a great deal of optimism. It appeared to be a moment when democracy could be redefined in a way that was potentially more inclusive and substantive. Women, through human rights and feminist organizations, were prominent political actors in this transition, and it seemed likely that they would continue in this role. Yet, as time passed, this optimism has faded. Increasingly, scholars and activists have raised concerns about the quality of democracy that is enduring in the region and it seems that women’s organizations are no longer the central political actors.

In Feminist Agendas, Jane S. Jaquette addresses these issues and asks what happened to women’s activism and feminism in the region. She argues that women and women’s issues continue to be pursued in Latin America despite the fragmentation of the movement, the re-emergence of political parties, and neo-liberal globalization. In this book she offers a sampling of some of the feminist successes in Latin America during the last few decades.

The chapters are organized around three themes: feminism and the state, legal strategies and democratic institutions, and international and cross-border