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A Documentary Reader*

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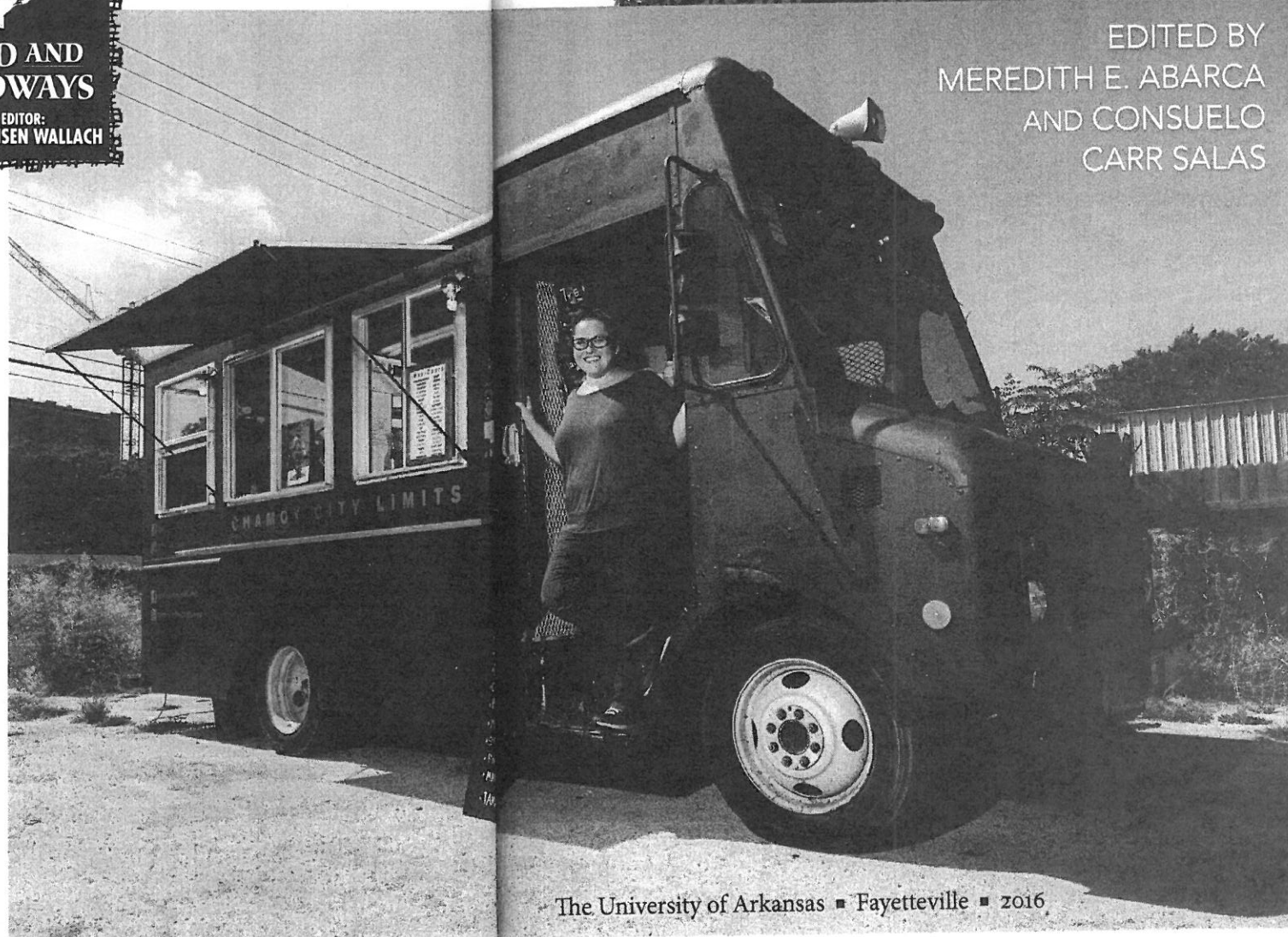
*Dethroning the Deceitful
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Edited by
Jennifer Jensen Wallach

Latin@s' Presence in the Food Industry

CHANGING HOW WE THINK
ABOUT FOOD

EDITED BY
MEREDITH E. ABARCA
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CARR SALAS



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Certainly, not everyone in the Global North can afford a meal in trendy Mexican food restaurants. Food historian Jeffrey Pilcher was right when he warned us about the future of Mexican food: the gentrification will result in the appropriation “of peasant cooking for a sophisticated, international elite [and] factory-made tortillas or Taco Bell for the masses, both in Mexico and abroad.”⁵¹ Of course, one should be aware that in Mexico the masses cannot afford to dine in many American-based eateries, just like many people cannot afford a meal in hip Mexican food trucks in the USA or Europe.

A final irony in Puebla’s case is the fact that in 2010 “[t]raditional Mexican cuisine-ancestral, ongoing community culture, the Michoacán paradigm,” was inscribed on the Representative List of the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Accordingly, this list enhances “the visibility of intangible cultural heritage and promote[s] respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.” The UNESCO committee identified that “traditional Mexican cuisine is central to the cultural identity of the communities that practice and transmit it from generation to generation.” The 2010 nomination file clearly stated that “to salvage this culinary system as a unit, concentrated efforts must be made in communities in Michoacán and other hubs of culinary knowledge,” such as Puebla, “in need of protective measures.”⁵² Yet, authorities in Puebla continue to support exactly the opposite: the removal of popular food and its vendors from important spaces, including the city center, declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

CHAPTER 5

From Working the Farm to Fast Food and Back Again

Rural Mexicans in the Neoliberal Food System

ELIZABETH FITTING

You know there’s a sick joke amongst older farmers here because the average age of a farmer in the United States is approaching sixty right now . . . in ten years the average age of the American farmer is going to be dead. Nonetheless, this country is full of farmers! They are standing on street corners looking for work. They come from Mexico, Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Colombia, Panama. They’ve been displaced! They mow our lawns, they pump our gas, they cook our food in fancy restaurants, those are farmers. We’re surrounded by farmers. They’re out of work.

—ERIC HOLT-GIMÉNEZ, food scholar, activist, and executive director of Food First, speaking in Seattle, 1999¹

Juan is a returned migrant of twenty-six. He left school when he was fourteen to find work in a neighboring town and help support his seven siblings. In the late 1990s, at the age of eighteen, Juan decided to head north to Oregon, where he had an aunt and a cousin who could help him get settled. He borrowed money from a local lender to pay

the \$1,600 fee to a guide (coyote) to cross the US-Mexico border. The first job he got was washing dishes at a fast food restaurant. Although he had originally planned to work for three years and return home, he decided to stay longer, in part to learn how to speak English. Juan explains that he spent the first four years in the United States working to help support his parents and siblings back in his hometown of San José. He sent \$200 a month back to his family to help with their upkeep, his sister's education, a small *milpa* (cornfield), and the cost of building an addition to the house. At his next job, as a waiter, he was able to save for a car and the construction costs of his own house in San José. He also opened a small store that operates out of his house. After traveling back and forth over the years Juan decided to move back to San José in 2004. He now lives with his wife and two children in the house he saved to build. Since he does not grow corn or work in the fields, he purchases his grain from the market in a neighboring town, where it is slightly cheaper. Like other migrants his age, he lacks experience and interest in *maize* agriculture. He is unsure about whether he can support his family without returning to the United States for work in the future.²

Rural Mexicans play an integral role in the North American³ food system. While some grow food for their own communities and even for export, others are im/migrant workers on farms, in fast food restaurants, in meat-packing and poultry plants, and staff in restaurants in the United States and, to a lesser extent, Canada. Capitalism, particularly in its neoliberal phase, pushes rural food producers into migrant streams; at home, they face increased usurpation of their resources and mounting environmental and economic hardships, and in response, seek out earnings in urban centers and across national borders. The above quote by Holt-Giménez importantly highlights this process of rural displacement and farmers' search for work abroad. What it does not touch on is what migrant workers desire. Would they rather be farming?

The answer to this question depends on who you talk to and when you talk to them. Based on research in the southern Tehuacán Valley agricultural town of San José Miahuatlán (Puebla) from 2000 to 2008 (for different durations, with some more recent follow-up interviews),⁴ I found that migrants from their teens into their early thirties

prefer work in the US food sector rather than in Mexican agriculture despite the considerable risks of undocumented status and employment in the United States. "There is no money in the *milpa*," I was told many times over the years. However, generations differ in their attitudes about, and their knowledge of, agriculture. Young migrants discuss corn agriculture as burdensome work, unprofitable, and even as a backward tradition, while older residents describe agriculture as a dignified livelihood, which is linked to their identities as *campesinos*.⁵ Since older residents view the cultivation of maize as a social safety net, the question remains whether or not young migrants will take up agriculture as they age; however, the economic, social, and environmental conditions for them to do so are increasingly difficult.

In this chapter I look at how valley migrants and indigenous *campesinos* fare under the contemporary food system⁶—or the shift to neoliberal policies and processes related to food and agriculture—and it also attends to the agency of residents in navigating these processes. It illustrates how interconnected the food system is across national borders and across a range of jobs and social locations. In addition to ensuring a steady supply of inexpensive food in the United States,⁷ rural Mexicans are integral to the Mexican food supply as peasants because they produce food, especially maize, for local and—depending on the farmer—national consumption, and they maintain native varieties (*criollos*)⁸ of maize in their fields. Peasants and migrant workers typically come from the same rural households; in some cases, they are one and the same, working in different areas of the food system at different moments in their lives. In other cases, migrants are children of *campesinos* and their earnings help maintain their parents' households or establish their own homes in the valley.

This raises questions about the role of generational groups in social reproduction, or how residents of different age groups maintain and advance their households ("simple" or "expanded" reproduction), and at another level, how their livelihood strategies are a creative response to, and in turn contribute to, the current capitalist food system. Capitalism draws rural agriculturalists into the world of waged labor, but it simultaneously differentiates and segments: within the same communities some benefit more than others, and experiences are shaped by gender, class, ethnic, and generational locations. In the

valley, indigenous campesinos, depending on their age, resources, and gender, reproduce their households and families through maize agriculture, unpaid labor in the home, work in the valley poultry industry and clothing *maquiladoras* (assembly plants), and migration to the United States (and sometimes Canada) for employment in the restaurant and food processing sectors.⁹

This case study helps to challenge the romantization of rural life, particularly of indigenous and campesino communities, found in some food activism and scholarship.¹⁰ When rural life is romanticized some important dynamics are missed. For example, not enough attention is paid to the pull of capitalism—access to consumer goods and the promise of waged employment or making a profit on agricultural goods, which is, most of the time, not fully realized. Similarly, instead of treating rural communities as homogenous and conflict-free, we should consider how social differences and inequality *within* communities, and even households, are engaged and negotiated as rural populations increasingly diversify their livelihoods, relying on the cash markets for goods and labor. Finally, romanticizing rural life can also attribute migrants' hard work to a cultural disposition, which naturalizes their exploitation and subordination.

Corn and Capitalism: Social Reproduction and Rural Life

In times of crisis, when social services collapse or cannot effectively carry out their functions, corn's importance becomes self-evident. Recourse to corn is the last line of defense for security, for hope, for the retreat of lesser units of society in order to defend their very existence.

—ARTURO WARMAN¹¹

In his book *Corn & Capitalism*, Mexican anthropologist Arturo Warman traces the history of maize from Mesoamerica to its emergence as a global staple crop.¹² Corn, he argues, is a particularly important crop for looking at how peasants fared under modern capitalism, as well as its relationship of capital to labor and other resources. Not

only was corn the quintessential peasant crop of the Americas, it also was the key crop in the development of the commercial seed industry¹³ and remains pivotal to the reproduction of rural life in Mexico today.

Political economy in anthropology, like the work of Warman, approaches capitalism as an economic system that has social, cultural, environmental, and political characteristics that play out in particular ways, in particular places, or as a "history of diversity."¹⁴ While anthropologists have studied food since the emergence of the discipline, the study of food as a commodity—as a good produced for exchange—began later. In the 1950s anthropologists working in Latin America became interested in what commodities tell us about power, particularly unequal social relations and state practices.¹⁵ Commodities embody the labor that went into making them and the system under which they are made. Scholars turn to the work of Karl Marx, who wrote in the nineteenth century, for thinking about commodities. He argued that commodities are fetishized under capitalism: that we worship the goods we buy, placing value in them as discrete objects rather than valuing the labor that made them.¹⁶ The market mediates our understanding of where goods come from and, in the process, obscures the unequal and exploitative social relations involved in their making. Commodity fetishism normalizes inequality and exploitative labor conditions, and an important part of this normalization is how commodities, and the system in which they are made, are represented and framed. In recent years, food activism has taken up aspects of this approach—with different degrees of success—asking us to consider where our food comes from and what we know about the lives of those who farm, process, and serve our foods. As part of this line of inquiry, though, we need to understand the broader system of inequality and exploitation in which food producers and workers are located, as well as consider how food workers and producers feed themselves and their families.

Today's food system has its origins in capitalism and colonialism,¹⁷ and it has undergone changes at different historical moments. With the implementation of neoliberal policies in the 1980s, there was an increase in nontraditional food exports from the Global South (fruits, vegetables, and meat), the continued export of subsidized grain from the Global North, the expansion of supermarket chains,

the consolidation of agribusiness, the financialization of markets, the liberalization of trade, and the increasing precariousness of rural livelihoods.¹⁸ Today's food system is also characterized by the rise of genetic engineering as the main technology for capitalist agriculture and by changes in regulation at national and international levels, which accommodate this technology.¹⁹

Agricultural life is always vulnerable to conditions beyond the farmer's control to a degree, like the weather or crop pests. Under capitalism, rural life is precarious in additional ways. As Marx explained, the emergence and expansion of capitalism involved "primitive accumulation," or the expropriation of many farmers' means of production, notably their land.²⁰ David Harvey refers to this process as "accumulation by dispossession" because it is ongoing in the contemporary world: profit is made from the usurpation and privatization of resources that were previously in the public domain or held communally, such as land, water, and, today, seeds and genetic resources.²¹ This process also involves the commodification of forms of labor that were previously uncommodified or outside the cash nexus. It creates a surplus labor population that is dependent on paid employment but often does not make a living wage. In the valley, such processes have a long history dating back to colonialism, which includes not just the usurpation of land but also the use and control of spring water.²² This chapter focuses on the contemporary period in the valley, but agriculture and residents' livelihoods were by no means static in earlier moments.

Scholars of agrarian change argue that accumulation and rural precariousness have intensified with neoliberal capitalism.²³ In Mexico, neoliberal policies involved cuts to rural subsidies, the implementation of counter-agrarian reform policies (such as those which enable communal landholders to sell land), increased corn imports (rather than prioritizing national food self-sufficiency), and exports of fresh fruits and vegetables to Canada and the United States, including organic produce. The country's dependency on corn imports has increased. Mexico now imports its most consumed and most important crop, maize, while its most significant export is labor. Mexico has promoted rural development through modern, commercial agriculture, improved seeds, trade liberalization, and the displacement of what various offices of the state deem "inefficient" campesinos. In this

sense, neoliberal policies have sought to transform peasants into new rural subjects: into either agricultural entrepreneurs who produce for export or an inexpensive (and surplus) labor force.²⁴

In this neoliberal food system, how do food producers and workers feed themselves? In Mexico, maize remains an important part of the diet, especially in rural locales like the Tehuacán Valley. Women are responsible for cooking, and this includes the preparation of tortillas and other corn-based foods. Women remove the kernels and soak them in limestone,²⁵ which is then ground to make the *masa* (dough) for tortillas. This process was enormously time consuming until the first corn mill was set up in town in 1953, which shortened the time required to make *masa*.²⁶ Meals are considered incomplete without homemade tortillas or tortillas bought fresh from a neighbor. As feminist scholars have rightly pointed out, what is called "reproductive labor"—such as raising children, preparing food, and care work—is central to the functioning of capitalism, yet is largely devalued and un- or under-paid. This type of reproductive labor is naturalized as an expression of biological sex, based on ideas about what it means to be a woman, and an innate predisposition for such tasks.

However, daily life complicates conceptualizations of "reproductive" and "productive" labor. The lines between such categories shift and change. In recent years, male migrants from the valley have taken up cooking for themselves and their roommates while living abroad and have remarked to me about the amount of work that goes into food preparation. To a certain extent, these migrants reevaluate assumptions about gendered domestic tasks. Although returned migrants reconsider some expectations about gender, other gender expectations are reinforced. Young women who worked in valley factories continue to contribute to household earnings after having children by staying at home and opening a store, a food stand, or more frequently, taking on piecework for maquilas. Typically, these earnings are seen as supplemental to their husband's or father's wages.

Men and women, teens, and elders work to "reproduce" their households or to secure "the conditions of life and of future production from what is produced and earned now."²⁷ In the process, their labor—paid and unpaid—contributes to the social reproduction of capitalism, a system in which "daily life depends upon the production

of commodities produced through a system of circulation of capital that has profit-seeking as its direct and socially accepted goal."²⁸ Campesinos in the valley grow maize for reasons other than, or in addition to, profit, but they do so within a wider context of a changing capitalist food system.

As mentioned above, the cultivation of maize is central to the reproduction of rural households because it provides a form of security to older residents who have few sources of income. Maize can either be consumed as tortillas (and other foods) for the household or sold when cash is needed. Warman referred to peasant reliance on the crop as the "recourse to corn."²⁹ He argues that maize becomes especially important in times of crisis or hardship, when households or communities cope with loss of income or state support, or decide to engage wider markets only selectively. Although historically maize has been an excellent source of economic security, in what ways have valley practices and meanings of maize changed, if at all?

Crisis in the Valley of Corn and Changing Livelihood Strategies

The Tehuacán Valley³⁰ is known as the "cradle of maize" largely due to Richard MacNeish's important archaeological study of the 1960s, which uncovered maize cobs dating back to 5000 BCE,³¹ although other regions of Mexico are more likely sites of maize domestication. In addition to Spanish, different dialects of Nahuatl are spoken in the valley's towns.³² Campesinos and indigenous peoples from the valley and surrounding sierras look to the regional capital of Tehuacán for employment. The most commonly grown crops in this semi-arid valley are maize and beans. Garlic, tomatoes, sugarcane, fruits, and flowers, among other crops, are also grown commercially.

When a national economic crisis hit in 1982, and the government began to implement austerity measures followed by neoliberal policies, San José was already suffering from a water drought. Following the escalation of a local conflict over irrigation water, an initial wave of residents left to work in the United States for the first time since the 1950s.³³ In the mid-1990s labor migration from the valley quickly expanded. This was in part due to the implementation of the North

American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), with its rise in inexpensive US corn imports (which are subsidized in the United States and often sold abroad below cost, or "dumped") and changes to rural subsidies. Local concerns about insufficient irrigation water were also a factor. Valley residents found it increasingly difficult to support their families through farming or selling their maize for income.³⁴ As one resident in his early forties explained, the earnings and food from agriculture alone were often insufficient. He said, "I work the fields, but five months after harvest, where will my food come from? You can't live off the countryside alone. After the corn runs out, then what?"³⁵

In response, valley residents further diversified their livelihood strategies or the ways they maintain their households, generate income, and produce food for consumption. I use "strategy" intentionally here in order to highlight the agency of residents under discussion. Food producers and workers are not simply pushed and pulled about by larger forces (nor are we as readers, scholars, or activists); rather, they make decisions on how to manage, get ahead, or even challenge, and sometimes change the social and economic conditions in which they find themselves. This response to neoliberal capitalism, and the stresses this type of development places on the environment, especially with declining groundwater levels and soil erosion, is part of a long history of adaptation in the region.

The increased diversification of agricultural livelihoods and the expansion (or initiation) of labor migration, which characterized much of rural Mexico in the 1980s, 1990s, and into the new millennium,³⁶ is experienced in particular ways in particular places. There are also exceptions. For example, in northern Mexico, farmers have taken advantage of changes to policy and the market and have made a profit from converting to maize production.³⁷ In other regions, some communities have selectively engaged the market by selling peasant crafts and foods like tortillas, strengthening their communities,³⁸ or organizing oppositional political movements and social alternatives to neoliberal policies (the Zapatista or EZLN movement being a famous example).³⁹

In the valley, maize production and off-farm employment constitute part of a local strategy between age groups or generations to maintain or advance the economic position of their families. It is a

strategy that embodies tensions, not only between wives and their migrant husbands but also between generations, as children are raised with an absent parent and teen workers, at some stage, reduce their financial contributions to their parents' households.

In a sociological sense, "generation" refers both to one's age group (or stage in the life cycle) and to the sense of identity and meaning shared by an age group at a particular historical moment.⁴⁰ Philip Abrams's concept draws our attention to the wider social, political, and economic changes in society and asks whether the sense of being part of a particular age group is static—that is, continuous with the previous age group or groups—or whether it is undergoing change in connection to those wider changes. In the valley, as young people work in maquilas and migrate north to work in the neoliberal food system, are their ideas about rural life and sense of identity distinct from a previous generation?

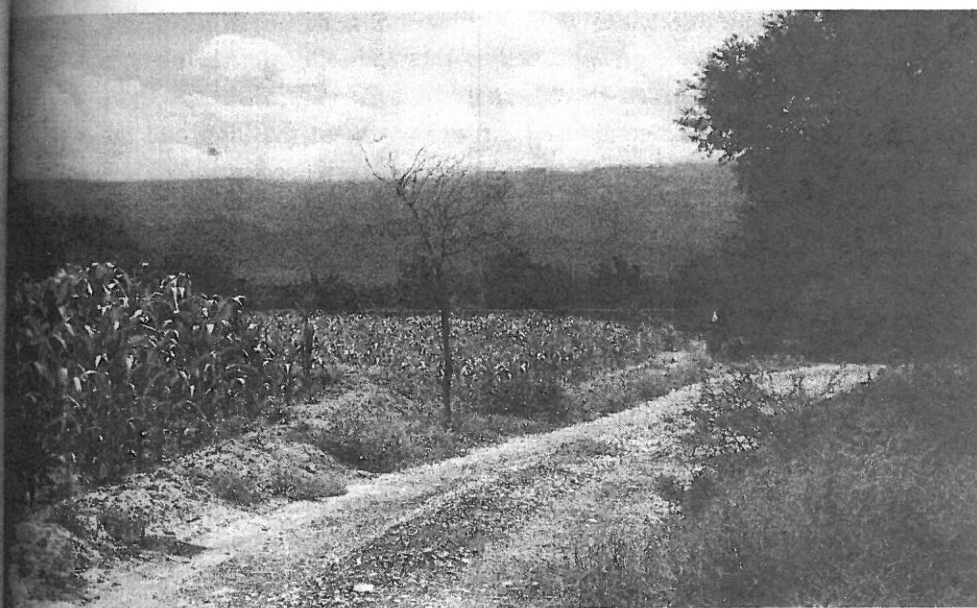
"We are Campesinos"

Some of us grow corn because there is no other work. Not everyone can get a job or make it across the border.

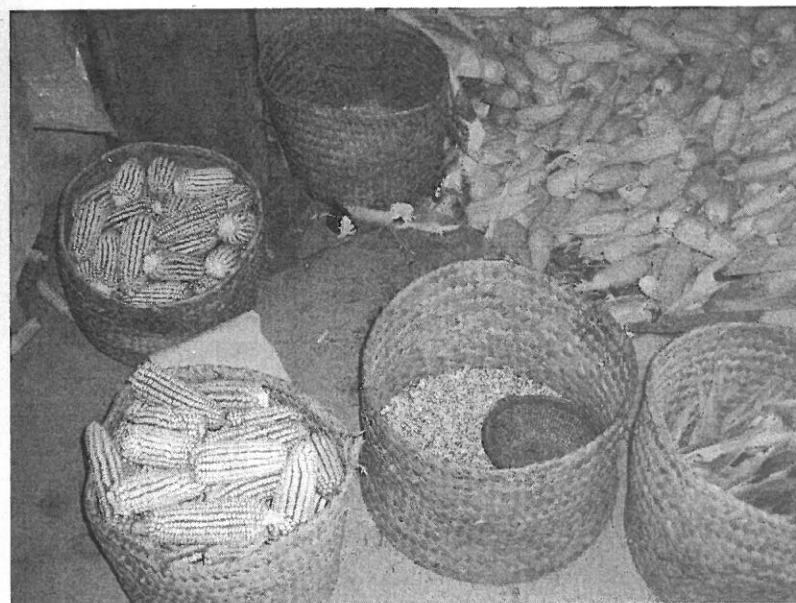
—Maize farmer, male, June 21, 2006

Maize farmers in San José are generally men who are either (a) in their thirties or forties, have worked in the United States (for periods between months to several years), and often have a small business or income like bus driving in the valley, a corn mill, construction work, and so forth, or who are (b) full-time agriculturalists in their fifties and older who are less likely to find paid employment other than work as local agricultural day laborers.⁴¹ As the interviewee quoted above said to me, "Some of us grow corn because there is no other work." Both men and women of these older generations work in the fields. Women are also food producers and preparers. They farm crops like tomatoes and are responsible for selecting maize seed to save for future replanting; however, agriculture, and maize cultivation in particular, are considered "men's work."

Farmers in the valley refer to themselves as *campesinos*, a term which has a complex history in a country that experienced a peasant



Milpa (maize field) in the southern Tehuacán Valley. Courtesy of author, Elizabeth Fitting, 2008.



Husking and sorting dry maize. Courtesy of author, Elizabeth Fitting, 2008.

revolution in the early twentieth century and numerous development interventions aimed at improving rural production. In the early to mid-twentieth century, revolutionary leadership and the new state portrayed campesinos as the rightful owners of the land and the heart and soul of Mexico.⁴² Such representations were undergirded by redistributive land reform and agrarian policies. While this imagery and discourse was used to generate support for the state, it also resonated with many rural peoples, including indigenous farmers in the Tehuacán Valley.

The term *campesino* remains in use in the valley today, but the context in which it is used has significantly changed. In addition to some branches of the state portraying campesinos as inefficient and culturally backward producers, agrarian policies and supports have been dismantled or radically transformed. For older residents, the term *campesino* recalls a past when the state had a responsibility—at least officially—to small-scale farmers. They use the term to signal hard work and a dignified life, which is in contrast to some official state narratives about inefficient peasants. In this sense, *campesino* as a self-label is one of the ways that residents criticize and sometimes challenge official policy and discourse. They also have refused to sell their communal land to agribusiness and have a history of petitions and conflict with the state (and valley neighbors) over access to spring water.⁴³

In addition to signaling a previous era of state obligation to rural folk and a sense of respectable hard work, the term *campesino* connotes a preference for local or regional *criollo* corn over yellow industrial corn (grown in the north or the United States). Residents of all ages prefer *criollo* maize for making tortillas, even though I found that imported or industrial grain was 30 percent cheaper at the local market. When yellow corn is received through government programs or purchased at the local store, it is either fed to farm animals or mixed with local corn to hide its taste and texture. The industrial corn flour, Maseca, and yellow imported corn are seen as “pig food” that is considered not very tasty and not consistent with a dignified rural life. A female storeowner, who also has a small *milpa* for her household’s consumption, told me that people grow corn despite the cost because they prefer the taste of white corn and because it makes tortillas of better quality than those found in cities. As she explains, “We grow

corn because we want to have good, soft, white tortillas. They don’t turn out the same in the city. In Mexico City, a truck carrying masa comes round as if it were mud. It’s even uncovered! They say we live like animals here in the countryside, but in the city, they eat like animals!”⁴⁴ Through her comparison between rural and urban tortillas, the storeowner counters urban stereotypes about rural Mexico as backward or uncivilized (“they say we live like animals”). Access to local corn of high quality is connected to the idea that campesinos are hard working and deserving of respect. Ironically, for young migrants from the valley working and living abroad, Maseca, the industrial corn flour, has become a taste of home.⁴⁵

Although maize remains the most cultivated and important crop in San José,⁴⁶ agricultural production is on the decline overall. There are now a number of households that no longer grow maize at all. Agricultural fields are transformed into housing for returned migrants, irrigation and rain water levels are reportedly low, and the price of inputs has increased. Indeed, under NAFTA, the cultivation of *criollo* maize for food in the valley came to cost at least as much as purchasing imported corn.

While male and female residents in their forties and older often view the cultivation of maize as minimizing risk, migrants and *maquiladora* workers in their teens and twenties do not believe that maize agriculture provides advantages, particularly not for their generation. At this stage of migration and their lives, young migrants have few agricultural skills, prefer nonagricultural work, and view corn agriculture as an unprofitable tradition with few future prospects.

“No hay dinero en la milpa”: US Bound Migration and Back Again

“You can’t make any money in the countryside! There is no money in the milpa!”

—Teenage migrant workers discussing
maize farming, November 30, 2001

The younger generation has joined wage labor circuits that take them farther afield than previous generations. Most young men now

migrate to the United States for work, and this migration is often undocumented and transnational in the sense that residents generally come home to the valley for months and sometimes years at a time, build houses, marry partners from town, and then return to the United States for another stint.

In comparison, young women of the same age tend to travel much shorter distances to work in maquilas and poultry plants within the valley, but they now do so unaccompanied by male relatives. Unaccompanied female travel, at this scale, is fairly new, and it generates discussion and anxiety among some residents. Even though men also work in valley maquilas and, to a lesser extent, women become migrants bound for the United States, these are gendered labor circuits because they are underpinned by assumptions about what is appropriate work for each gender, and because the distances that men and women travel to work differ. These are also transnational circuits: migrants remit money home and live transborder lives, while workers in valley assembly plants generate profit for domestic and foreign consortiums. Participation in these circuits of labor and capital provides much-needed income for rural households, but it also puts stress and strain on families and on the workers involved. Maquila work, for example, is demanding; it involves keeping up with an output quota and working long hours (sometimes in hot factories) for low wages. If and when women marry and have kids, one of the few options for employment is to continue working in the maquila industry as pieceworkers from home.⁴⁷

Residents of all ages agree that income from off-farm employment, particularly in the United States where the wages are higher, is key for household maintenance and socioeconomic advancement. The southern valley has become a migrant-sending region. Previously, there had been up to three dozen contracted agricultural workers from San José under the Bracero Program in the 1950s and 1960s, but most of these contract workers returned home, and migration did not expand significantly. Migration from San José to the United States started up again in the 1980s and increased rapidly in the 1990s. This reflects larger trends in Mexico and the needs of the low-end service economy in the United States. An estimated 1.8 million undocumented migrants arrived in the United States from Mexico in

the 1980s. The following decade, this number jumped to 4.9 million, despite the increased militarization of the US-Mexico border and the passing of the most severe anti-immigrant legislation to date. In the five years that followed, from 2000 to 2005 alone, there were another 4.4 million undocumented migrants.⁴⁸

In the wake of 9/11, there was a temporary drop in migrant trips across the border, due to heightened security. In 2008, there was also a decline in unauthorized entries. While the cause of this decline remains debatable, it could be due to the rapid drop in US employment (particularly in sectors like construction) or the delayed effects of heightened border enforcement and a decline in back-and-forth migration.⁴⁹ In the valley, migrants are indeed extending their stays on either side of the border, but many young residents either continue to journey across the border or are in the process of planning and preparing for such journeys.

Unlike their predecessors, who worked in Californian agriculture, young migrants from San José find work largely in the US food industry as dishwashers and bus boys in restaurants and fast food chains, in food processing and packing plants, and on fishing boats that leave from the northwest coast. Most of the young interviewees reported sending money home to help their parents. Generally, they earmark money for building their own cement block house or opening a small business, like a store. While some migrants were successful in saving for the completion of their houses, starting up a business, or purchasing agricultural inputs (a tractor, irrigation water, etc.) others were not. In other words, the economic benefits of migration are not uniform, which helps to widen class differences among residents.

Young migrants report little knowledge about agriculture: they cannot identify or describe the traits of local varieties, soil qualities, or other aspects of agriculture. This can be seen as a generational interruption in the transmission of agricultural knowledge. When I asked interviewees why they thought their older relatives or townspeople grew corn, I was told that maize was grown as a custom or tradition and to produce food, but that it was not a means to make money: "People grow corn here to eat, so they don't lose the custom, or to get out of the house. They don't grow corn to make money. It's not a business."⁵⁰ The value of growing maize is not only economic but also

has to do with the flexibility of the crop's uses, the older generation's contribution to the household, the widespread preference for the taste of local varieties, and the sense of autonomy that such agriculture brings to farmers, at least in theory if not in practice.

In addition to wages, migrants and maquila workers bring home ideas about agriculture, how to earn a living, and even about indigeneity and gender. As in other regions, migrants and maquila workers enjoy new social status in their hometowns. The money that migrants earn abroad enables them to build and improve homes in Mexico, buy consumer goods, and participate in local celebrations.⁵¹ Richard C. Jones suggests that migrant income and purchasing power translate into a new "migrant elite" whose prestige comes from "wage labor earnings rather than from land, commerce, social status, and political pull."⁵² To an extent, this is also evident in San José, where younger returned migrants gain social prestige from their purchasing power and experience abroad rather than from their control of irrigation water, participation in ritual kinship and celebrations, or affiliation with political factions, as was true of older Sanjosepeños and even older migrants who are also farmers.

Young women see maquila work as an economic necessity, and residents often say they are glad to have it. It is repetitive and low-paid work, and some women endure harassment in the factories as well as face local disdain about their unaccompanied travel and interaction with nonrelated men at work. Yet, at the same time, the experience and income provides young women with a sense of independence and freedom from some of the social constraints that their mothers or grandmothers faced. Several young women mentioned to me that they felt their income gave them more respect in the home. Their journey to work challenges ideas about gender on the one hand, while the industry depends on normative ideas about gender on the other: the ideas that women are more subservient, have nimble fingers, and are supplemental earners who therefore can be paid less than men.⁵³

In the United States, Mexican workers are inserted into the racial hierarchy as inexpensive, disposable, and deportable labor.⁵⁴ Despite harsh anti-immigration policies, there is tacit if not explicit acceptance of the employment of undocumented Mexicans, especially

in the food system. Ruth Gomberg-Muñoz provides an excellent summary of the myths and realities of undocumented workers in the United States, pointing out that while hard work contributes to a sense of self-worth among migrants, it is also used as a cultural trope about Mexican workers. Undocumented Mexicans are particularly vulnerable because they are unable to complain or report unfair wages, dangerous working conditions, and abuse, or they might face enormous risks if they do so. Moreover, Mexicans, and other Latin Americans, are often assumed to be undocumented workers, regardless of their citizenship or immigration status. As Gomberg-Muñoz explains in her study of Mexican restaurant staff in Chicago, "[T]he desirability of low-end service workers is often evaluated on subjective criteria such as their 'work ethic' and 'good attitude,' conditions that are promoted by workers' powerlessness."⁵⁵

Yet, migrants from San José also experience working abroad as an improvement in their social status and self-perception—in the United States they are seen as Mexicans and not *indígenas* (indigenous)—despite the exploitation and racism. Additionally, this experience, along with wages, work experience, consumer goods, and the ability to speak English, are steps toward assimilation—though not necessarily complete or successful—when back in Mexico. According to accounts by returned migrants, in the United States employers, customers, and residents tend to view Sanjosepeños as homogeneously Mexican. A group of teenage migrants told me that in the restaurant kitchen where they worked in Las Vegas, even though they often spoke Nahuatl to each other, their employers referred to them as *Mexicans*. Contrastingly, when they are in Tehuacán—historically known as the City of Indians—they avoid speaking Nahuatl because they do not want people to think that they are "indios" (Indians). It is just "too embarrassing," I was told.⁵⁶ Ironically, these young migrants felt more a part of a larger Mexican society based on their work experience in the United States.

Studies of migrants from other indigenous regions of Puebla have also found that their experience in the United States provides a path toward assimilation when back home,⁵⁷ but that assimilation often is not successful or complete. Ideas about, and experiences of, being campesino and indígena—not to mention male or female, young,

middle-aged, or old—change over time and place, as well as in different social spaces and encounters.

Labor migration to the United States builds the confidence of some Sanjosepeños. But for those who do not learn English, their experiences abroad may confirm their insecurities about traveling and interacting with people outside the valley. Several migrants reported that if you do not speak English in the United States, your capacity to earn and save will be more difficult, as will be your overall experience. Not all male migrants preferred working in the United States over staying in San José, and many were not successful in saving part of their income. However, without other remunerative employment options, many are compelled to return to the United States regardless of whether or not they had a positive experience there.

Their income, travel experience, English-language ability, and greater access to consumer goods enable some migrants to cast off the negative associations of being indigenous or to redeploy them.⁵⁸ For others, their experience abroad as Mexicans and exposure to other, more positive ideas about Mesoamerican Indians contribute to their rethinking the meaning of being an indigenous. In contrast to their parents and grandparents, migrants and maquila workers have access to social prestige through their income and travel experience rather than via more traditional avenues such as patron-client relationships or ritual kinship. In this way the experience of working in the United States and in the valley maquilas is transforming some notions about rural life and identity, while simultaneously reproducing others.

I also found that in interviews with migrants who had worked in the US food sector, although they discussed low pay, the hardship of being away from family, and exploitative work conditions, they also reported feeling a certain amount of freedom from what they saw as the outdated agricultural livelihoods of their elders, as well as from parental and, in the case of women, gender expectations. A few migrants also mentioned that, back in the valley, they were “free” from the fear of *la migra* (US border and immigration enforcement agents) and from the exploitation of food service work in the United States.

Although a sense of freedom most often came up as a point of discussion among returned migrants, I interviewed one young mother in her early twenties who described living in San José as freedom. She

sold lunch foods outside of a school in the valley when I first interviewed her. She lived with her campesino parents who grew maize for household consumption and sale. She told me that residents were “free [here in the valley], but there is almost no food or work.”⁵⁹ She was referring to the freedom (“*somos libres*”) of being able to go to one’s own land to pick fruit or grow maize and, perhaps, as in her case, start a small business instead of working for someone else. Several years later, this young mother moved to the city of Tehuacán for work, telling me she hoped the move was temporary. Unlike the other residents and migrants I had interviewed in their teens and twenties, she had discussed rural life as a kind of freedom.

Accumulation by dispossession in the valley is a process that works over generations transforming increasing numbers of rural residents into disposable surplus labor. This also has paradoxical effects. Marx described “primitive accumulation” as the process that affected the European countryside starting in the sixteenth century, but that also characterizes capitalism in other places and times as “freedom.”⁶⁰ Rural peoples were “freed” of their access, control, or ownership of resources (their means of production), and this “freed” them to search for work. The process generates an abundance of potential workers and consumers for market goods. However, this process cannot simply be reduced to a mechanism to generate inexpensive or reserve labor forces for capitalists. There are many instances when a living wage is beyond reach. Sometimes this process can also be experienced as a freedom from inherited social relations and cultural norms, as is certainly the case with a younger generation from the valley.

At this point, it appears that young migrants and maquila workers face conditions distinct from previous generations and also express new identities and ideas about agriculture. However, the question remains whether younger migrants will take up maize agriculture as they age. Older residents rely on maize agriculture as a social safety net. Yet, we have also seen that in a neoliberal food system, the processes that push young migrants off farms also undermine the next generation’s ability to remain on the land, if they so choose, as agricultural producers. The ability to maintain an agricultural livelihood is undermined by increasing production costs, declining levels of spring water, changes to rural subsidies, counter-agrarian policies

(which enable communal landholders to sell land), and other factors like home construction on arable land.⁶¹

Conclusion

I began this chapter with a quote about Latin American immigrants to the United States being out-of-work farmers, followed by my question about whether these rural migrants would prefer returning home in order to farm. My case study from the Tehuacán Valley complicates this further, compelling us to consider whether all of the im/migrants looking for work on street corners were in fact farmers back home or children and grandchildren of farmers. Juan's story about being a returned migrant with little knowledge or interest in agriculture, for instance, is typical among my interviewees in their teens, twenties, and early thirties. Older migrants in their thirties and forties were more likely to farm when in the valley or to send home remittances to be spent on agricultural inputs.

What does it mean for food activism when rural youth no longer want to farm food crops for their own communities or others? Food activism and scholarship importantly criticizes how neoliberal capitalism and the modern food system contribute to rural displacement and "accumulation by dispossession." Food sovereignty, advanced by Via Campesina, the international peasant rights group, promotes the ability of each community and nation to "maintain and develop its own capacity to produce its basic foods respecting cultural and productive diversity."⁶² This concept and platform has gained considerable traction as a critique of, and alternative to, the current food system. My point is that in our support of alternatives to conventional farming and the idea that small-scale food producers should be self-sufficient, we—as food activists and scholars—need to be careful not to romanticize rural life in a way that overlooks the desire among younger residents to escape the farming life of their elders.

What larger lessons or questions for future research does this chapter raise? Learning from rural Mexicans about their livelihood strategies provides a window into the food system in North America, particularly the motivations, concerns, and cross-border familial and economic ties of workers and food producers. Such case studies are

important because they can help challenge discourses about peasant inefficiency, romanticizations of rural life, and debunk culturalist arguments that justify the exploitation of food workers. They help us better understand how contemporary capitalism and the food system work "on the ground" in specific locales, while also portraying residents as agents who engage, negotiate, criticize, and may even help transform the system. The intergenerational livelihood strategy found in the valley—which combines migrant and *maquila* labor with small-scale maize production—has had paradoxical effects, particularly when we compare the experiences of residents of different resources, generations, and genders. This case study helps unsettle the idea of a homogenous rural community and illustrates the importance of taking the "intersectionality" of experience seriously, or how gender, age, class, and ethnicity shape an individual's experience.

Finally, does information about who produces and prepares our food help transform the food system? If consumers (and producers) translate such knowledge into political action, it certainly can make a difference. I think this is particularly the case if we examine the larger political economic context in which food producers live and work, the reasons rural peoples migrate, and how food producers and workers experience the food system, perhaps differently, over the course of their lives. At the same time, because nativism and racism against undocumented (or perceived to be undocumented) migrants is a powerful discourse in North America, and particularly against Mexicans and Central Americans in the United States, knowing *who* produces and prepares food, might not always generate change in and of itself. In our efforts to change the food system, we also need to strive to create policies that support those *campesinos* who want to stay home and work the land, improve food workers' rights, reform immigration policies, and challenge sexism and racism. Like all complex problems, real transformation of the food system requires multi-dimensional solutions at home and abroad.

Chili's, and Burger King. Victor Cardoso, "Vende Walmart de México su división de restaurantes a Alsea," *La Jornada en línea* 11 (September 2013), accessed February 7, 2014, <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2013/09/11/economia/026nieco>.

43. Locales that used to house restaurants or mom-and-pop shops are now featuring nonprepared food shops such as OXXO convenient stores (the Mexican equivalent of Seven Eleven and largest store in Latin America). Only a couple of old-time restaurants survived: one that is attached to a hotel (Royalty) and another one that features pizzas and Italian food (Vittorio's).

44. This would have been culturally outrageous to residents of the city of Oaxaca who, since 2003, have been turning down the McDonald's application to open at the heart of the city center, another UNESCO World Heritage site. Reed Johnson, "McDonald's loses a round to Oaxacan cultural Pride," *Los Angeles Times*, January 3, 2005, accessed December 31, 2013, <http://articles.latimes.com/2003/jan/05/entertainment/ca-johnson5>.

45. Santa Clara, Historia, accessed February 15, 2014, <https://www.santaclara.com.mx/historia1.asp>.

46. The Italian Coffee Company, accessed February 6, 2014, <http://www.italiancoffee.com/concepto.php>.

47. In this article, Francisco Toledo is referring to changes occurring in Oaxaca, but here I am using his phrase because it also applies to Puebla. See Reed Johnson, "McDonald's loses a round to Oaxacan cultural Pride," *Los Angeles Times*, January 5, 2003, accessed December 31, 2013, <http://articles.latimes.com/2003/jan/05/entertainment/ca-johnson5/2>.

48. Nancy Churchill Conner, "El (re) desarrollo urbano neoliberal: El Paseo del Río San Francisco," in *Sujetos Neoliberales en México*, ed. Ricardo F. Macip (Puebla: BUAP, 2009), 149–50.

49. For a discussion of this kind of invisibility, see Irene Tinker, *Street Foods: Urban Food and Employment in Developing Countries* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 15, 159.

50. Of course, some street vendors have managed to sell downtown, employing a number of strategies such as bribing police, hawking and hiding products, etc. And to this day, there are still a couple of tiny mom-and-pop food vendors in the Portales.

51. Pilcher, *Planet Taco*, 13.

52. Nomination File no. 00400 for Inscription on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2010, UNESCO, Fifth Session, Nairobi, Kenya, November 2010.

Chapter 5: From Working the Farm to Fast Food and Back Again: Rural Mexicans in the Neoliberal Food System

Many thanks to Sanjosepeños and valley residents for their hospitality and discussion over the years. A special thanks goes to Regino Melchor Jiménez Escamilla. I also thank Lindsay DuBois, Pauline Gardiner Barber, and the editors of this volume for their comments.

1. Teresa M. Mares, "Engaging Latino Immigrants in Seattle Food Activism

through Urban Agriculture," in *Food Activism: Agency, Democracy and Economy*, ed. Carole M. Counihan and Valeria Siniscalchi (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), 31.

2. Juan, in discussion with the author, June 8, 2005.

3. North America is used here to refer to Mexico, the United States, and Canada. This paper focuses primarily on valley workers in Mexico and the United States. Only a few residents discussed work in Canada, where Mexicans from other regions are employed in the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (see endnote number 5). In the US food sectors, Mexicans work alongside other Latin American immigrants, particularly Central Americans.

4. This paper is based on over seventy interviews with southern valley residents about their livelihoods, as well as participant observation in 2001–2002. I also conducted research during extended summer visits until 2008. My ethnography *The Struggle for Maize: Campesinos, Workers and Transgenic Corn in the Mexican Countryside* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011) is based on this fieldwork and interviews with participants in the GM corn debates. I remain in contact with several valley residents, receiving occasional updates, and plan to return to conduct a follow-up study.

5. Small and medium-sized farmers often identify as peasants or "campesinos." This has a complex political history in Mexico and other Latin American countries. Although the term carries a lot of conceptual baggage, including overgeneralized, reified, and romanticized notions of peasant and indigenous communities, I use it here because my interviewees use "campesino" to refer to themselves. I also use "campesino" to mean "petty commodity producer," which I discuss later in this chapter. For a more extensive treatment of the politicized concept and identity of "campesinos" in Mexico, see Christopher Boyer, *Becoming Campesinos: Politics, Identity, and Struggle in Postrevolutionary Michoán, 1920–1935* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), or my own research on the valley (*The Struggle for Maize*).

6. The concept of "food system" focuses our attention on policies and practices related to food—its production, provisioning, and consumption. Food systems are embedded in larger social, economic, and ecological contexts and can include alternative or counter practices. Here, for the sake of convenience, I use the term as shorthand to talk about food policies and practices under neoliberal capitalism.

7. Mexicans also work, to a lesser extent, in Canada, where there are important differences from the United States in policies and discourses around immigration. Under the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP), up to 26,000 contracted agricultural workers come to Canada annually, the majority of whom are Mexican. The program is open only to Mexicans and people from the Caribbean (CBC 2012). In the US food system, Mexicans work alongside other Latin American immigrants, particularly Central Americans. See recent research on the Canadian SAWP, such as Leigh Binford, *Tomorrow We Are All Going to Harvest* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013). For further reading on the anthropology of Mexican im/migrants working in different aspects of the US food system, see Steve Striffler, *Chicken: The Transformation of American's Favorite* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005) on the poultry industry; Ruth Gomberg-Muñoz, *Labor and Legality: An Ethnography of Mexican Immigrant Network* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) on restaurant staff; and Patricia Zavella, *I'm Neither Here*

Nor There: Mexican Quotidian Struggles with Migration and Poverty (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), on Californian agriculture, especially strawberry production.

8. Native varieties of maize are “maíces nativos” in Spanish. They are grown, selected, and improved by farmers in their fields, in contrast to scientifically improved or “modern” varieties. However, the term *criollo* is used by interviewees (and is popularly used in the countryside). *Criollo* refers to both native and creolized varieties. Creolized varieties are the result of intentional or unintentional mixing between native and scientifically improved varieties.

9. Less commonly, valley residents also move to urban centers in Mexico, sometimes as step-migration on the way to the United States. Unlike valley residents who went to the United States as Bracero farm laborers, recent migrants work in food processing and service sectors more frequently than in agriculture.

10. The romanticization of rural communities via calls for food self-sufficiency can be found among some of the En Defensa del Maíz network in Mexico. See Elizabeth Fitting, “The Political Uses of Culture: Maize Production and the GM Corn Debates in Mexico,” *Focaal, Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology* 48 (2006): 17–34; Fitting, *The Struggle for Maize*; or Henry Bernstein, “Food Sovereignty: A Sceptical View” (Paper presented at the Agrarian Studies Conference, Food Sovereignty: A Critical Dialogue, September 14–15, 2013). http://www.yale.edu/agrarianstudies/foodsovereignty/pprs/1_Bernstein_2013.pdf.

11. Arturo Warman, *Corn & Capitalism: How a Botanical Bastard Grew to Global Domination*, trans. Nancy Westrate (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003 [1988]): 20.

12. Ibid.

13. Jack Ralph Kloppenburg Jr., *The First Seed: The Political Economy of Plant Biotechnology 1492–2000* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

14. William Roseberry, introduction to *Coffee, Society and Power in Latin America*, ed. William Roseberry, Lowell Gudmundson, and Mario Samper-Kutschback (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 1–37; Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

15. Casey Walsh and Emma Ferry, “Introduction: Production, Power, and Place,” in *The Social Relations of Mexican Commodities*, ed. Casey Walsh, Emma Ferry, Gabriela Soto Laveaga, Paula Sesia, and Sarah Hill (San Diego: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies at the University of California-San Diego, 2003), 1–18.

16. Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume 1*, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Vintage Books, 1977 [1866–1867]), 163–77.

17. See Harriet Friedmann, “International Regimes of Food and Agricultural Since 1870,” in *Peasants and Peasant Societies*, ed. Theodor Shamin (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), and Philip McMichael, *Food Regimes and Agrarian Questions* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2013), on the emergence of the first international food regime with capitalism and British colonialism, as well as for a discussion of the concept of food “regime.”

18. Henry Bernstein, *Class Dynamics and Agrarian Change* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2010); Philip McMichael, “Peasant Prospects in the Neoliberal Age,” *New Political Economy* 11, no. 3 (2006): 204–418; Philip McMichael, “A Food Regime Genealogy,” *Journal of Peasant Studies* 36, no. 1 (2009): 139–69.

19. Gabriela Pechlaner and Gerardo Otero, “The Third Food Regime: Neoliberal Globalism and Agricultural Biotechnology in North America,” *Sociologia Ruralis* 48, no. 4 (2008): 1–21.

20. Marx, *Capital*, part 8.

21. David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

22. Discussed in Fitting, *The Struggle for Maize*, ch. 3; and Luis E. Henao, *Tehuacán: Campesinado e irrigación* (Mexico City: Edicol, 1980).

23. Farshad Araghi, “The Invisible Hand and Visible Foot: Peasants, Dispossession and Globalization,” in *Peasants and Globalization*, ed. A. Haroon Akram-Lodhi and Cristóbal Kay (New York: Routledge, 2009), 111–47; Bernstein, *Class Dynamics*; McMichael, *Peasant Prospects*.

24. I expand on this argument elsewhere: Fitting, *The Struggle for Maize*.

25. This is known as nixtamalization, which releases the vitamin niacin and the amino acid tryptophan in the corn. Corn flour that is not nixtamalized lacks this nutritional benefit.

26. Interview, July 2, 2002.

27. Bernstein, *Class Dynamics*, 128.

28. David Harvey, “The Geopolitics of Capitalism,” in *Social Relations and Spatial Structures*, ed. Derek Gregory and John Urry (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1985), 128.

29. Warman, *Corn & Capitalism*.

30. This area is also one of the sites where the Mexican government found evidence of transgenes growing among native varieties of maize, contributing to the controversy over transgenic corn that made international headlines beginning in 2001–2002. Because the source of such transgenes is considered to be transgenic corn imported from the United States, this controversy illustrates the interconnectedness of our ostensibly national food systems. Elsewhere, I situate the GM corn controversy in relation to the food system (Fitting, “The Political Uses of Culture: Maize Production and the GM Corn Debates in Mexico,” *Focaal, Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology* 48 (2006): 17–34; Fitting, *The Struggle for Maize*).

31. Richard S. MacNeish, “Summary of the Cultural Sequence and Its Implications for the Tehuacan Valley,” in *The Prehistory of the Tehuacan Valley: Excavations and Reconnaissance*, ed. Richard MacNeish (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1972), 496–504.

32. Prior to Spanish conquest, the valley was settled by Nahua, Popoloca, Mixteca, Chocho, and Mazateca indigenous groups.

33. In the 1950s up to three dozen residents from San José left to work in the United States as temporary agricultural workers under the Bracero program, the binational treaty between the United States and Mexico, which ran from 1942 to 1964. There were local political struggles over water access during this period also (see Fitting, *The Struggle for Maize*, ch. 3). Close to five million Mexicans sought work in the United States under the program. As Gomberg-Muñoz explains, “As millions of Mexican workers became accustomed to employment practices, lifestyles, and consumption patterns in the United States, they established networks between jobs in the U.S. and friends and family members back home that allowed migratory flows to become self-sustaining in the decades that followed” (Gomberg-Muñoz, *Labor and Legality*, 31).

34. Fitting, *The Struggle for Maize*.
35. Interview, June 23, 2006.
36. Alejandro Nadal, "Corn and NAFTA: An Unhappy Alliance," *Seeding: The Quarterly Newsletter of Genetic Resources Action International* 17, no. 2 (2000): 10–17; Antonio Turrent-Fernández, Timothy A. Wise, and Elise Garvey, "Achieving Mexico's Maize Potential: Global Development and Environment Institute" (Working Paper, no. 12-03, Medford, MA: Tufts University, October 2012). <http://www.ase.tufts.edu/gdae/Pubs/wp/12-03TurrentMexMaiz.pdf>.
37. Hallie Eakin, Julia C. Bausch, and Stuart Sweeney, "Agrarian Winners of Neoliberal Reform: The 'Maize Boom' of Sinaloa, Mexico," *Journal of Agrarian Change* 14, no. 1 (2014): 26–51.
38. J. Samuel Barkin, *International Organization: Theories and Institutions* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).
39. The Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN), Zapatista National Liberation Army, made up largely of Mayans, declared war against the Mexican state on the first day of 1994, the day the NAFTA went into effect, from the Lacandon region of Chiapas. Although the movement began as an armed struggle, it became largely civil disobedience against the state's military excursions in the region and neoliberal globalization. This movement has generated enormous international and media attention on the struggles of indigenous peoples in Mexico and beyond, as well as discussions about participatory democracy and alter-globalization.
40. Philip Abram, *Historical Sociology* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), ch. 8.
41. Farmers from San José can be considered "petty commodity producers" in that they own or have usufruct rights to the land, irrigation water, and/or seed; they produce maize for consumption and sale, but the scale of production is relatively small; and they rely on unpaid labor or sharecropping. Those who can afford it hire local day laborers to help with the more arduous parts of planting and harvesting.
42. Boyer, *Becoming Campesinos*.
43. Explored further in Fitting, *The Struggle for Maize*, ch. 3 and 5.
44. Interview, June 20, 2006.
45. Jeffery Pilcher, "Taco Bell, Masaca, and Slow Food: A Postmodern Apocalypse for Mexico's Peasant Cuisine?" in *Fast Food/Slow Food: The Cultural Economy of the Global Food System*, ed. Richard Wilk (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2006).
46. Residents grow several varieties of maize. The most common are a rain-fed white corn—distinct from industrial, hybrid yellow corn—grown for human consumption and an irrigated white maize for sale on the cob, called elote. Residents have grown this commercial elote since the 1960s. Elote can be sold for a better price than grain because there is a market for it (both in the valley and beyond, in Mexico City), and it can be dried and eaten at home. However, elote requires irrigation water and therefore is more costly to produce than rain-fed corn, which means the poorer strata of households either grow rain-fed corn only or they sharecrop elote fields with a relative or neighbor who contributes the irrigation water or some other inputs.
47. Lourdes Flores Morales, "No me gustaba, pero es trabajo": *Mujer, trabajo*

- y desechabilidad en al maquila (Mexico City: Instituto de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades "Alfonso Vélaz Pilego," BUAP/Plaza y Valdés S.A. de C.V., 2008).
48. Gomberg-Muñoz, *Labor and Legality*, 33–35.
49. Josiah Heyman, "Constructing a 'Perfect' Wall: Race, Class, and Citizenship in US-Mexico Border Policing," in *Migration in the 21st Century: Political Economy and Ethnography*, ed. Pauline Gardiner Barber and Winnie Lem (New York: Routledge, 2012), 153–74.
50. Interview with twenty-nine-year-old male migrant, June 8, 2005.
51. Luin Goldring, "Power and Status in Transnational Social Spaces," in *Migration and Transnational Spaces*, ed. Ludger Prier (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 1999), 162–86; María Leticia Rivermar Pérez, "La reconstrucción de las identidades sociales en el contexto de las migraciones," in *Conflictos migratorios transnacionales y respuestas comunitarias*, ed. Leigh Binford and María Eugenia D'Aubeterre (Puebla: Instituto de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades, BUAP, 2000), 81–96.
52. Richard C. Jones, "U.S. Migration: An Alternative Economic Mobility Ladder for Rural Central Mexico," *Social Science Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (1992): 496–510, 507.
53. Flores Morales, "No me gustaba."
54. Nicholas De Genova, *Working the Boundaries: Race, Space, and "Illegality" in Mexican Chicago* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).
55. Gomberg-Muñoz, *Labor and Legality*, 37.
56. Interview, November 12, 2001.
57. Rivermar Pérez, *La reconstrucción*.
58. Similarly, anthropologist Judith Friedlander found, in her study on indigenous ethnicity in Morelos forty years ago, that residents felt to a certain degree that "the more material symbols of Hispanic [mestizo] culture they obtain[ed], the less Indian they will become." Judith Friedlander, *Being Indian in Hueyapan: A Study of Forced Identity in Contemporary Mexico* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975), 131.
59. Interview, May 31, 2001.
60. Marx, *Capital*, part 26.
61. Fitting, *The Struggle for Maize*.
62. Delphine Thivet, "Peasants' Transnational Mobilization for Food Sovereignty in La Via Campesina," in *Food Activism: Agency, Democracy and Economy*, ed. Carole M. Counihan and Valeria Siniscalchi (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), 193–210, 193.

Chapter 6: Las Gallinitas de Doña Luz: Dominican Women Public Kitchens and Trans-Ethnic Networks in San Juan

I wish to thank Doña Luz, to whom this chapter is dedicated, for her collaboration and her delicious foods, and my sister Argen, through whom I first tasted the gallinitas. Thanks to the editors and two anonymous reviewers, whose comments helped greatly to improve the coherence of this chapter. I am also grateful for my food survival networks, locally and abroad.

1. Meredith E. Abarca and Nieves Pascual Soler, "Introduction," *Rethinking Chicana/o Literature through Food: Postnational Appetites*, ed. Nieves Pascual Soler and Meredith E. Abarca (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).