IN/SECURING IDENTITIES - AN EXPLORATION. ETHNIC AND GENDER IDENTITIES, AMONG MAYA WOMEN IN GUATEMALA[1]

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I. Introduction

Sabemos por ahora que lo que nos une es ser mujeres, pero también tenemos que tener el respeto entre nosotras mismas, y si nosotras vamos a decirnos somos mujeres guatemaltecas entonces en dónde queda nuestra identidad?

Comisión Guatemalteca Preencuentro, Memorias, Coincidencia de Mujeres, 1992

What do we mean by security? Can we pin it down? Define it? Alter it? When we apply it to different bodies, 'levels', spaces, moments, and contexts does it mean the same thing? How does the security of the Guatemalan state relate to the security of the Guatemalan military, Guatemalan ruling coalition, Mayan pueblo, Ladino society, Mayan men, Mayan women, Ladino women, wives, mothers, campesina/o's? Was the relationship among these different securities similar 30 years ago, 500 years ago, and will it remain recognizable ten years from now?

The meanings of security depend on the context. Context in this sense includes the particular situation of—and relations between—the person/institution defining danger and threat, the person/body experiencing insecurity and the person/body/institution posing the threat/danger. It also takes into account the socio-economic, and political moment, as well as the location. Hence, security cannot be a 'thing' which we attain through a certain method—its content determined and its characteristics defined. Security is as fluid and varied as the people who seek or experience it and as contingent as the forces which render it necessary for those who are 'insecure'. Security therefore can not be divorced from insecurity, for the very need for security implies a lack of security: insecurity. And, the very recognition of insecurity implies a search for security.

In/security, as it is commonly understood in the academic and policy-oriented discourses of global politics evokes notions of threat, danger, vulnerability, as well as (perhaps) a

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striving for well-being, safety, autonomy etc. Although most often understood as relating to nation-states in military terms, the mainstream security discourse, however, has recently been widened to encompass threats to the environment, the economy and society at large. An alternative discourse has arisen as a critique to the state-centered and 'negative' military emphasis on security found in mainstream analysis. However, this alternative discourse has not adequately addressed how in/security may differ depending upon one's gender or ethnic identity. Nor has it addressed what it means to be in/secure, or to seek security in different locations in varying matrices of power systems. Security therefore generally remains an uncontested terrain, even if its application and form have come under critique. Security continues to be treated as a fixed, gender neutral, and universal concept— a concept reliant upon a sovereign (masculine) subject.

Aim

Security, as it is often read in dominant and many alternative texts of International Relations re-produces a view of politics which ignores (and perhaps even constitutes) the insecurity of many people who live in violently insecure situations. Dominant understandings of security posit political subjectivity at the level of the state or the individual (man-citizen). This construct is based on the timeless abstraction of the 'rational man' (read: propertied) who has freely entered into a social contract with a community/state. The 'state' (also a fixed category) does not pose a threat to 'its' people, but, instead is their protector. The state therefore enjoys a monopoly over the use of 'legitimate' violence in both the 'domestic' and the international environment. National security is paramount because, as the principle of state sovereignty dictates, states compete in a hostile international system characterized by belligerent 'others'. The nation-state is therefore the target and the agent of security. Security rests upon the primacy of the state-as-protector, and the centrality of war. The state is the actor, and, rarely the problem— at least in the 'domestic' sphere. Consequently, the wielders of power 'within' the state occupy themselves with war and the safe-guarding of the state (read: their positions of power) from 'external' or 'internal' threats, thus reinforcing the defining dichotomies of inclusion-exclusion.

But how is in/security constituted for people whose political subjectivity resides in other spheres than those dictated by state sovereignty? Similarly, how is political subjectivity (both dominant and marginal) constructed? And how does the formation—and politicization—of a subject relate to her in/security? What can in/security possibly mean in terms of Mayan-women in Guatemala?

 Many Mayan women in Guatemala claim that they are insecure in multiple ways: as women, as members of an ethnic group, and as members of a socio-economic class which struggles to attain the basic requirements for survival. Many also feel threatened in different and related manners in the variant spatio-temporal contexts which inform their lives, such as the family, society at large, their organizations, or the Guatemalan nation-

state project. Similarly, those who threaten these persons may, in a different context, be their closest ally. Many Mayan women's in/security is therefore contingent and multiple—even hybrid.

However, despite (and in the function of) their subaltern positions, many Mayan-women have begun to make their voices heard in protest of their self-defined[2] triple discrimination, both on a national level, and within their own communities and organizations. For the first time in Guatemala's history, Mayan-women are making claims for security and identity *as Mayan-women*, negotiating their struggles in the simultaneous sites of subjugation and resistance. They are forging a vision of a more secure existence, and re-defining who they are in relation to those who threaten them, thereby altering the very relations of power which rendered them 'insecure'. They are thus re-constructing both what this identity and what security and insecurity mean in the many different contexts of their lives. They are also making it increasingly clear that they too are subjects in the fashioning of the society in which they are living.

Mayan women's claims must be seen in light of the current conjuncture in Guatemala. The Guatemalan state, although multi-ethnic and muli-cultural (Bastos & Camus:148) has for many reasons (economic, political, ideological etc.) been engaged in a particularly violent form of nation-state building.[3] This national project has included a counter-insurgency campaign against the umbrella Guerilla forces, UNRG—and effectively against the indigenous peasantry—which has spanned over 30 years. In 1995 an accord on the Rights and Identity of the Indigenous Population was signed by both the URNG and the government as part of the peace process.[4] After 7 years of negotiations, on December 4, 1996, the URNG and the government signed a peace agreement to put an end to the insurgency/counter-insurgency war. Yet, although the 'dirty' war no longer terrorizes the

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[2] Mayan-women's "triple oppression": "as women, Mayan, and poor" is a common description made by members of popular /cultural movements.

[3] According to most accounts of the demographics of Guatemala, there are three main folk groups: Indigenous peoples (of Mayan descent); *Ladinos* referring "to people of mixed blood and western culture...and also...to Indians(*sic*) who have adopted western costume and culture." (Handy, 1984:14) and *Criollos,* the descendants of (white) Spanish settlers who make up the elite aristocracy of the ruling coalition. These categories, of course, are highly problematic. Perhaps most importantly, these accounts tend to reify and delimit identity categories—categories established through a history of colonialism, racism, and sexism.

[4] This document forges significant new paths in the history of Guatemala, and in Indigenous-*Ladino* relations; it reflects the growing salience of the political identity of the Mayan *pueblo*. Furthermore, the accord provides the Mayan *pueblo* with an internationally recognized document which validates critical and highly charged *collective* demands on the Guatemalan state. Among those rights stipulated are access to land, educational reform, political regionalization and decentralization based on cultural and economic criteria, and *specific rights of indigenous women*. Even if the accord may be unrealistic and vague in its provisions (and difficult to enforce), it achieves an undeniably monumental goal: It has named the indigenous peoples—and in particular, indigenous women—as citizens of Guatemala.

majority of people who live within (and were forced to flee) Guatemala's borders to the extent that it did in the late 70´s and early 80´s, many still suffer the heritage of over 30 years of armed conflict, counter-insurgency tactics, and unjust distributions of resources. Together with the legacy of colonialism and US imperialism, the brutal policies of these years crafted and institutionalized a modern society largely characterized by violence, fear, poverty and crime. Nevertheless, hope can be found in the quelling of the direct violence. Furthermore, popular protest—more and more often articulated in terms of ethnic identity—has burgeoned[5], although with trepidation. Recently, the 'Mayan *pueblo'* has become an increasingly unifying political identity—an identity celebrated both as a source of pride and a basis for political rights for a growing movement which includes many sectors of civil society.[6]

One cannot begin to understand the security of Mayan-women, therefore, without exploring the significance of and interrelationship between 'Mayan'; 'woman'; the meaning of the identities of those who (also) define her danger/safety and those/that who threaten her—such as 'man', 'Guatemala', 'military' etc. To ask what in/security means for these people must also involve—at the very least— asking what in/security means in terms of the identities they locate and name, as well as in terms of the interwoven systems of power relations which inform their lives.

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[5] Previously, any sign of 'deviance' or subversion' was quickly attacked through the workings of, for example, death squads.

[6] The recent Mayan movement is understood by many as anchored in the celebration of 500 Years of Resistance, and Rigoberta Menchú's winning of the Nobel Peace Prize (Interviews and Bastos and Camus, 1993, 1995.) Although far from wide-spread or wholly unified, this 'movement' is becoming increasingly vocal and influential as democratic openings appear in society.

II. Constructing Political Identity

Gendered Ethnic/national Identities

Does the dividing line of gender also delineate the contours of political bodies (ethnic, national or sexual)? Does ethnic/national belonging also constitute gendered identities? Where are the boundary-lines between *us* and *them* drawn in the politicization of these identities: who is included *inside,* and who kept *outside?* How are the very boundary lines which demarcate the 'we' of Mayan identity, as well as the 'we' of women formed inter-subjectively? How do these categories and relationships shift in different contexts? (i.e. what does being a Mayan women mean *vis a vis* Mayan men, and vis a vis *Ladino* women.) How do Mayan-women resolve seeming tensions in varying loyalties?[7] How is the Mayan culture an integral part of—and in fact constitutive of—*'Guatemalidad'* (Guatemala-ness)? How are the parameters for the political identities of Mayan women constituted by that very nation-state project? In short, what meanings are given to being a Mayan-woman in Guatemala in terms of political identity? And how is her subjectivity constituted?

Up until this point I've been posing questions concerning political identity, sovereignty and in/security. An exploration into constructions of identity—and in particular, politicized identity—is vital to the understanding of these connections and to address questions like those noted above. In order to understand the contingency of security, I intend to ask what is the meaning and importance of identity, in particular, politicized identity.

It is impossible to speak, however, of identity formation in general. Furthermore (as will be explained below) identity, even within one person, is multiple and fractured; it moves, shifts, and eludes even the most fervent and sincere attempts to pin it down. For the purposes of this article, I will focus on better understanding the constitution of gender and ethnic identities. Neither ethnic, nor gender identity are independent categories of social division. One cannot, for example, look at ethnic identity alone and then see how that identity appears and is experienced differently depending upon gender— as if one could hold one variable: ethnicity, constant and simply apply it to another variable: gender. Social identities elude dissection into a composite of discrete parts. All ethnicities are gendered and all genders are ethnically/nationally determined. In the words of Westwood and Radcliffe:

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[7] For further discussion on the possibilities that attention to varying loyalties offer as a means of opening categories of identity, consult Eriksen, 1993:58

How does a particular gendered consciousness and its discourse arise and become constituted? How does the experience of 'woman', 'mother', 'ladina' 'indígena' 'woman-Christian-activist-' come to gain and shift in political meaning for certain women, and predominate in particular political and social settings? {...} In short, do the motherist/widowist groups in Latin America represent a porous identity of womanist/feminist consciousness that arises from a particularly repressive, sexualised class and ethnic experience? And, finally, are feminist theoretical categories sufficient in helping us understand such transformation of and by women? (Schirmer in Westwood and Radcliffe:30).

Gender

Although often hidden, articulations of gender operate in everyday life and inscribe other identity claims and social divisions. 'Women /the feminine' serves as the measuring stick for all that is not 'masculine.' Neither 'feminine' nor 'masculine' are independent characteristics, but instead, defined in opposition to each other. Dichotomies of 'male' and 'female' symbols, identities, behavior, roles, etc. are understood as natural and given because of the apparent immutable differences between male and female genitalia. The 'masculine' (i.e., that which is associated with or belongs to the 'male' sex.) is of higher value than the 'feminine' (i.e., that which is associated with or belongs to the 'female' sex.) This supposedly basic understanding and manifestation of gender is implicated in relationships in all aspects of political life. Gender acts as an often silent force which obfuscates and sustains hidden power structures. Gender hierarchies remain stubbornly in place—and overwhelmingly effective—because they are considered so 'natural'. Gender hierarchies also inscribe other, supposedly 'natural', relations of domination, such as those that perpetuate hierarchies of class, ethnicity, race, and sexuality, as well as categorical divisions between self-other and us-them.[8]

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[8] Much of this discussion is paraphrased from Peterson and Runyan, 1993:23-24.

Ethnicity & Nationalism

It has become clear, especially since 1989, that ethnicity and nationalism are forces that can wield immense power in struggles for influence over the ordering of political life. In general, one might distinguish between these two collective identities according to the following criterion: a community's access to power and the institutions of power, its ambition of attaining such power, and its size. According to Eriksen, for example, ethnicity refers to "an awareness of and communication of cultural differences" and "a nation is an ethnic group whose leaders have achieved or aspire to achieve, a state where its cultural group is hegemonic" (Eriksen, in Lindholm, 1994:42.)

Yet clarity regarding the meaning of ethnicity and nationalism remains elusive—and perhaps even undesirable. For example, the categorization of ethnicity, like that of gender and race, can easily become a tool of oppression and discrimination maintained by those in power. As Audre Lorde (1992) and many others (i.e. politically active Mayan in women in Guatemala) point out, ethnicity, like gender, is a term used primarily for those who are mired in positions of subordination, not those in power. One does not speak of Swedish, or 'American' or even *Ladino* ethnicity, yet the term: 'nationalism' could be applied. Similarly, one does not usually speak of gender when referring to privileged identities—to men. Nevertheless, nationalism, like ethnicity and gender, is a process in which collective and individual identities are continuously reproduced through symbols, activities, roles, etc., and the reinforcement of divisions between Us and Them. *It is important, then, to emphasize that not only marginal identities, such as "ethnic" and "feminine", but also dominant identities, such as "national" and "masculine", are social and political constructions* (as are dominant readings of "femininity", or marginalized readings of national identity.) These constructions arise within many interlocking power relations.

Identity as Multiple and Mobile

> The multiple sites of politics emphasized in our account is matched by the theorization of political identities as shifting. In the words of Laclau and Mouffe, 'unfixity has become the condition of every social identity. {...} (Stewert Hall) the coherent unified subject of earlier discourses is replaced by a shifting and contradictory collections of 'multiple selves' called forth by a multiplicity of discourses which has profound implications for political strategies and practice (Westwood and Radcliffe :24).

We are never just one thing—a daughter, Jewish, a researcher, a mother, white, a wife, middle class, etc.—but many things at once depending on context. I therefore take as my point of departure the notion that identity, both individual and collective, is a multiple and fluid *process*. Identity is constructed, and mediated through many different fields of power. Similarly, all of our identities are constantly being created; they shift and change, even instantaneously. The meaning given to being a daughter, for example, changes from one moment to the next, depending upon the overall context, the relationship to others,

and the specific situation[9]. Of course, some identities move more sluggishly than others. William Connolly, for example, distinguishes between entrenched elements of identity, and those less obdurate, warning that it is a mistake to assume that because they are constructed, all identities can easily be changed (Connolly:176).

Identity then is a social construct, an activity, an expression of multiple and constantly changing relationships, orders, discourses: it is a repository, a reflection, a product, as well as (re)creator of our surroundings. Judith Butler explains that "there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is preformatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results." (Butler:25). Kathy Ferguson also maintains that identity is something that one does, instead of something one is (Ferguson:159). Ferguson arrives at an understanding/vision of subjectivities as both plural and mobile, i.e. mobile subjectivities. She strives for an understanding of subjectivity (and therewith identity) that allows for difference and dynamism within and between identity categories. From this perspective, difference does not replace similarity or any other fixed content to identity categories, but is, instead, continually re-constructed in many intersecting power dynamics. Identity, according to Ferguson, is in constant flux, and is formed both in response to material circumstances and discursively. She explains:

> Mobile subjectivities locate themselves in relation to the moving trajectories of power and resistance via circumstances of proximity and distance, restlessness and rootedness, separation and connection (Ferguson: 161).
> The identity practices of mobile subjectivities are produced by institutional realignments and material circumstances as well as by discursive deployments and shifts (Ferguson:175).

Ferguson advocates a re-alignment of our perception (and politics) of subjectivity. She proposes taking responsibility for the political implications of recognizing difference, instead of viewing identity as a point of departure, where the content, although maybe multiple, is pre-determined and stable. Christine Sylvester also speaks about the value of homelessness, difference, contingency and irony in the risky process of "homesteading" identity: a receptive stance to tricksters' destabilization of "known" or inherited identity categories, can "open up rather than fence in terrains of meaning, identity, and place" (Sylvester, 1994:2). The identity category of 'Mayan' therefore would leave room for Anzaldúa's "meztiza consciousness"[10] — namely that it is not just a complement to that of

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[9] Shulz explains that identity is constructed contextually, relationally, and situationally. (Shulz, 1993.)

[10] Anzaldúa explains: "At the confluence of two or more genetic stream, with chromosomes constantly 'crossing over', this mixture of races, rather than resulting in an inferior being, provides hybrid progeny, a mutable, more malleable species with a rich gene pool. From this racial, ideological, cultural, and biological cross-pollinization, an 'alien' consciousness is presently in the making—a new *mestiza* consciousness, una conciencia de mujer. It is a consciousness of the Borderlands...Because I, a *mestiza*,/continually walk out of one culture/and into another,/because I am in all cultures at the same time,/*alma entre dos mundos, tres, cuatro,/me zumba la cab"* (Anzaldúa:77)

"woman", "peasant" etc.; it would be understood as incessantly re-formed in interaction with these other categories, and in relation to the shifting boundaries and borderlands that differentiate self from other (Ferguson, p.160, 169). In this sense, I propose, self means both a collective body and an individual body. An individual is formed and forms herself in relation with others. The individual internalizes the meanings given to a collective identity, such as that of "woman"; the individual identity also informs the meaning of the collective category. A clean separation between individual and group, or internal-external, therefore, becomes highly problematic. Ferguson explains:

> To attend to differences between women in the name of feminism seems to tighten the boundaries around specific identities by taking them for granted. {...} attention to differences *within* identity claims destabilizes the take-off points of the prior argument: woman of color and white woman become unstable categories, shaky representations, regulatory impositions concealing enormous turbulence. The trick for mobile subjectivities is to bring these two together in ironic juxtaposition.{...}Trihn gestures for this paring when she speaks of identity as points of re-departure of the critical processes by which I have come to understand how the personal—the ethnic me, the female me (the classed me)—is political Difference does not annul identity. It is beyond and alongside identity (Ferguson:160).

In following this reasoning, we are encouraged to try to understand the formation of political identities in connection to a myriad of power relations. Specifically: the discourses that mould relations of similarity and difference in ways that secure *certain* identities, render *others* insecure. In more concrete terms, these discourses place some people in the position to harm others.

The Politicization of Identity

The above discussion suggests that gendered and ethnic divisions compose fluid and porous social identities. These identities are suffused with an endless combination of mobile hyphen points, such as in 'Mayan-woman-campesina-heterosexual-'. The politicization of social identity provides a momentary resting place for the formation of a political subject. The identity of this subject is continuously recreated, yet nevertheless more fixed and definable than the many different social identities she moves into and out of in the rythms of everyday life. For example, when politicized, a particular representation of identity, such as that of Mayan-woman, becomes a less fluid, more stable subject (although never static). According to Rothschild, a *politicized* subject refers to a person who, according to her self-definitions, actively engages in trying to affect her "place and fate in the political and socio-economic structures of (her) state and society"(Rothschild, 1981, quoted in Lindholm, 1993). In the capacity of her politicized identity, this person thinks and acts from a relatively stable place—*together with other like subjects*—in order to achieve certain aims.

The mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina, and of the CoMadres in El Salvador, for example, became politically active *as mothers* and thus gave specific—and radically new—meaning to "motherhood" as a political identity from which to stake certain claims

(a recognition of the deaths of their disappeared loved ones, as well as much more).[11] This political identity of motherhood could hardly contain all of the social identities of these women in all contexts. "Motherhood" became a unifying and specific construct which served as the vehicle for the attainment of certain political goals.

In studies of ethnic-national identity formation, scholars have discussed to what extent identity can be considered primordial versus constructed. (This conversation resembles the dialogue about essentialism in feminist theory).[12] Most ethnicity-nationalism scholars embrace a combination of the two explanations, locating themselves somewhere on the continuum between the two (Lindholm, 1994:10). I propose that identity formation (both gender and ethnic-national) is contingent upon the meaning given to "markers" which can be *perceived* and deeply *experienced* as primordial, but are constructed. As noted above, this does not mean that all identities can change easily or quickly, or that they are not deeply imbedded in the histories of peoples lives. Particular contexts, however, determine the assignment of the social and political meaning of the markers. For instance, one can dispute the extent to which race or ethnicity is genetically determined or even the importance of posing this distinction. The significance given to the difference in "racial" physical attributes however depends upon the matrix of power relations which determine social relations. 'Black' means different things in New York than in Nairobi. 'Ladino' means different things in Miami than in Guatemala.

Furthermore, in the process of politicization, elites and others making claims based on a collective identity often assume some sense of "unity", and coherence within the collectivity. This assumption discourage changes or variance within this identity category. Deviance may come to be interpreted as disloyal or even dangerous to the political goals of the collectivity (Butler:14-15). Hence, even though the social significance of the 'marker' of difference, and even the difference itself, may be socially constructed, the power of the indicator of difference usually lies in its being experienced and perceived as given, fixed, natural—especially when much is at stake in identity claims (Lindholm, 1994a:28). The persistence of hierarchical gender identities offer a telling example of the extent to which socially determined hierarchical identities are invested in the legitimization of "nature" (Peterson and Runyan, 1992).

Ferguson explains, then, that one possible way of addressing the potency of these categories is to remain open to their dynamism and to embrace irony as a political stance:

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[11] One can interpret the claims made by the "Madres", effectively, as calls for a complete reordering of society.

[12] See, for example, Ferguson, 1991, pp. 80-81 on essentialism.

One of the problems with this discussion is that the categories marking subject positions seem anything but mobile. The challenge for mobile subjectivity is to name these positionalizations in ways that mark their fluidity, their interactiveness, their ambivalence...gender class and race are things that happen to us, positions through which we move, and which move through us and through each other (Ferguson:169).

In/securing Political Identity

As noted above, the principle of state sovereignty[13] has become the basic language which expresses other defining principles of political life, such as security and democracy.[14] State sovereignty is a response to fundamental questions about political life having to do with identity, agency and authourity. In the current world order(s) the globalization of capital, danger and even identity pose grave challenges to the hegemony of the principle of state-sovereignty[15]; despite these provocations, the principle endures. What David Campbell calls the "sovereignty paradigm"[16] continues to order politics and notions of both political identity and security. Sovereignty therefore offers a helpful starting point for addressing questions around security and identity. How does faith in a sovereign subject and identity politics become a means for *both securing and in-securing* people in respect to who they are as political subjects?

G.M. Dillon draws our attention to how danger, fear and threat are employed in power discourses to secure sovereign identities and to imperil identities which challenge the sovereign subject's hegemony. He describes the power/knowledge mechanisms which ensure sovereignty by "legislat(ing) fear; shaped, disciplined, and civilised by authorised

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[13] The discussion on the hegemony of the principle of state sovereignty can easily lead one to believe that I am referring to a type of conspiracy theory, whereby state sovereignty (the actor) is a megolomaniacal and wily sort, conniving and manipulating all of us dupes who think we have some measure of control over our lives. This, of course, is not what is intended. David Campbell explains that the 'sovereignty paradigm' (see below note on Sovereignty paradigm) does indeed have broader implications than those de-limited by the traditional understandings of what is relevant for world politics. The International relations discourse does not consist of one monolithic theory to which all of the people in power adhere. Nor is it one great big conspiracy crafted by those in positions of power. This discussion is intended to reflect the dominant ideas and ways of looking at the world which determine mainstream world politics.

[14] See Falk, 1995 , and Stern-Pettersson, 1993 (which is a discussion of Falk, 1995) for a more in depth description of the interrelationship between sovereignty, democracy, and security.

[15] For a further discussion on these points, please see Stern, 1991.

[16] "The paradigm of Sovereignty is not a paradigm in the Kuhnian sense of a conceptual resource that man applies to make sense of the world: it is a problematization in the Foucauldian sense that serves to discipline the ambiguity and contingency of history by differentiating, hierarchizing, and normalizing the site in which it operates. {...} The paradigm of sovereignty operates on the basis of a simple dichotomy: sovereignty versus anarchy. {...}

articulations of danger" as an *"in/security discourse" (*Dillon:108). He explains that this discourse is a self-securing process which constitutes legitimate political subjectivities. Through maintaining the exclusive rights to define the 'enemy'—who is within the realm of politics and who is outside—the principle of state sovereignty controls the definitions of, as well as the use of danger. Therefore, the primacy of the state, and the definition of what 'stateness' means *vis a vis* other states (and *vis a vis* the people and institutions which make up the state) is also assured through what Dillon names the "in/security discourse". As is the meaning of the Other.

Within the in/security discourse, norms of identity are created through the decision of who/what is excluded, according to Dillon. "{I}t is the distinctive competence of the sovereign power (man/Leviathan) to be able, always, to draw the necessary distinction; or else it would not be sovereign.{...} sovereignty is the power to invest all circumstances with threat" (Dillon:108). Dillon argues that Hobbes' emphasis on casting out the stones which do not fit in the "building of an edifice" (Hobbes quoted in Dillon:106) is a primary theme in the re-production of certain political orders: *a particular community maintains its salience from the perpetual need to protect itself from different, challenging orders; notions of threat and survival can become the legtimizing reason for sustaining the order, and can even be seen as constructing the order.*

The prevailing order/discourse of in/security rests on a hierarchy of identities where the nation-state and the individual (read: propertied man) in contract with the nation state are seen as rational and legitimate political subjects. The hegemony of the state—and the invested definition of man/citizen—is thus perpetuated. David Campbell explains that by "telling us what to fear", the operations of "discourses of danger" have been able to "fix where we are" and even who we are (Campbell: 195). He explains the workings of discourses of danger and "in/security" by exploring alternative narratives about US foreign policy. He describes foreign policy as:

> all practices of differentiation or modes of exclusion (possibly figured as relationships of otherness) which constitute their objects as 'foreign' in the process of dealing with them. ... {It} applies to confrontations between self and other located in different sites of ethnicity, race, class, gender, or geography (Campbell:76).

Hence, regulatory practices of locating and naming danger externally in the Other tame and discipline the 'self'. Dominant claims to identity act as what Butler terms a "normative ideal instead of a descriptive feature of experience" (Butler:16). Members of a collective expect and are expected to adhere to these norms for they become internalized in the workings of society and in the world view of individuals. Power—both capillary power (Foucault, 1980:78-133), and overt force—ensure the coherence of the dominant identity by making precautionary examples out of the danger of deviance. Danger, therefore, resides in any threat to the coherence of identity. If, for example, the coherent identity of 'masculinity'/subjectivity depends upon certain norms which regulate its expressions (and therefore the meaning of the 'masculine' subject) then any deviance from this norm endangers that very identity's right to hegemony, and therewith

its existence.[17] Homosexuality is just one of such possible threats. Woman/the feminine (meaning that which is associated with the feminine, such as homosexual, 'native', de-valued 'races', ethnicities etc.) also make up the foreign —the foreign that threatens as well as complements the norm if the established hierarchy of identities is disturbed. Machievelli's view of *fortuna*, enjoys many descendants in contemporary politics. In explaining these decisive views, Tickner explains that:

> 'Just as the concept of hegemonic masculinity...requires for its construction an oppositional relationship to a devalued femininity, Machievelli's construction of the citizen-warrior required a similarly de-valued 'other' against which true manhood and autonomy could be set. In Machievelli's writings this feminine other is 'fortuna', originally a Roman goddess associated with capriciousness and unpredictability...Machievelli also makes it clear that he considers women to be a threat to the masculinity of the citizen-warrior (Tickner:38-39)..

 The irony in Campbell's "foreign policy", is that the regulative practices of the discourses of in/security and danger compose both a necessary complement *and* a menace to the dominant identity in the forming of an Other. Connolly remarks that if difference and the drive to identity are inevitable, and if the claim to a natural or true identity is always an exaggeration, then :

> a powerful identity will strive to constitute a range of differences as *intrinsically* evil...—as other. It does so in order to secure itself as intrinsically good, coherent, complete, or rational and in order to protect itself from that other that would unravel its self-certainty and capacity for collective mobilization if it established its legitimacy. This constellation of constructed others now becomes both essential to the truth of the powerful identity and a threat to it. The threat is posed not merely by *actions* the other might take to injure or defeat the true identity but by the very visibility of its mode of *being* as other (Connolly:65-66).

Parker et al. explore this doubleness, emphasizing how the formation of national identity relies on binary oppositional categorizations—the creation of the self of the nation in relation to the others who are not us (Parker et al.:5).

Many theorists within the studies of ethnic and national identity have also focused on the importance of boundaries and markers of difference between ethnic groups: *we* know who (and where) *we* are depending upon who and where *they* are. Frederik Barth explained (Barth, 1969) that ethnic identity emerges in relation to an Other against whom one can define who one is (as opposed to what one is not); that "ethnic groups only persist as significant units if they imply marked difference in behaviour i.e.. persisting cultural differences" (Barth, p. 205). This is not to say that that which one may consider as symbols or manifestations of 'culture' and 'tradition' within a group do not exist prior to a meeting with an Other. Indigenous women in the territory known as Guatemala may have worn, for example, a type of *traje* long before the Spanish invasion. However, the particular meanings of *being* a group (as well as the meanings given to the symbols of that identity) are formed in relation to an Other.

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[17] Connolly makes a similar point, using the example of femininity. (Connolly:205)

Subjectivity therefore "owes a vast debt to difference" (Campbell: 249). Subjectivity, in this light, is seen as "the production of, rather than the discoverer or originator of, discourse" (Ferguson:121). Through many of the mechanisms described above[18], an in/security discourse gives substance to political subjectivity—both marginal and dominant.   When the boundary lines between the 'inside' and the outside' (the dangerous and the secure) blur, and the difference between the self and the other diminish, the discourse of danger re-instates the crucial dividing lines which secures identity—that is, ensures security. The assignment of 'foreign' threat safe-guards the identity of the community in question. Dominant identities are therefore fashioned—in part—as a response to the danger/threat implied by difference; similarly, marginal identities are—also, in part—constructed for the Others by groups in power in order to secure their own dominance and legitimacy (i.e. to give form to their own identity.)

Subjectivity, however, can also be seen as rooted in similarity. In fact, if one were to regard the space between similarity and difference as a binding hyphen (as a bridge which binds one to the other and gives presence to the place in between) then we might begin to see that not only do identity/difference (or inclusion/exclusion) inscribe each other, but similarity/difference are also two parts of a piece[19].

The word "cleave" in the English/American language has two, apparently opposing meanings: to divide by blow, split, sever; and to adhere, cling, to be faithful (Webster's New World Dictionary). What can this tell us about the relations between difference and similarity? Could it be that in the process of continual re-construction of identity, that we fashion ourselves/are fashioned through a duel and complementary process of co-construction with others that involves creating, sorting, ordering the similar from the different?

I would like to return for a moment to Dillon's quotation about norms being established by what is excluded (Page 20), and re-examine that statement from a slightly different angle. Previously, I placed emphasis on the processes of exclusion and the discipline involved in maintaining these norms. I would also like to cast light on the very attachment to norms of similarity in order to underscore the doubleness implied, yet not emphasized, in the concentration on difference and deviance[20]. Norms are established not only by what is excluded, but also by imitation of that which is included. Power resides in the authority and legitimacy to establish and maintain these norms. The power

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[18] For a more in depth discussion, consult Campbell 1990 and Dillon 1991.

[19] This idea is borrowed from Sylvester, 1987, note. 19:28

[20] Connolly also touches on the complexity of similarity /difference in discussing the complex relationship of identity to difference. He explains: "Identity is thus a slippery, insecure experience...it stands in a complex political relationship to the differences it seeks to fix. This complexity is intimated by variations in the degree to which differences from self-identity are treated as *complementary identities*, contending identities, negative identities, or non-identities." Connolly:64-65 (my emphasis).

to define and secure these norms receives, in part, its legitimacy from the drive to adhere to these very norms: to be *like* others, to feel *attached*, to *belong*. Anderson talks of this when he discusses why people are willing to die for their nations, ascribing this phenomena to a love for an interest-less and pure brotherhood and horizontal comradeship[21] (Anderson:144). The similarity/difference discourse, then would be composed of the drive to belong, the regulation of the norms of belonging, and the designation of an other which establishes the norm through the example of deviance. Highlighting the drive to be similar to others may shed light on the overwhelming potency and attraction of identity politics.

Although this may seem obvious, it is not trivial. In reviewing much of the literature on the establishment of political identity (both ethnic and gender) I find that the norms of normality are described overwhelmingly as being those of negation: the deviant establishes the norms and the norms are a result of comparison against the deviant. Instead we might see them as all this, *plus* a mutual struggle for effective imitation within a group of people. These norms are a co-construction of inter-subjective autobiographical narratives—a laboratory for the continual re-establishment of collective identity. Perhaps, in this sense, the binary opposition of similarity-difference can be opened and explored to contain many hidden spaces for constructive politics? Hence, similarity can be seen as part of identity/difference (Connolly). *Identity is a manifestation of cleavage.*

This point becomes particularly important when trying to explore how a specific in/security discourse works. The above discussion puts much emphasis on the interrelationship between security and insecurity. Through the naming and control over insecurity and danger, the norms of identity become secured. This is perhaps especially pertinent to dominant political identities, but could certainly be applied in maintaining certain dominant claims to marginal identities in a larger power structure, which may be the case with Mayan identity in Guatemala (In this sense, "dominant marginal identities" means the power of definition over the marginal identity: Mayan in the hegemonic nation-state. Hence the discourses of danger explained by Campbell and Dillon can also be construed as discourses of safety. One can then also see the discourse of danger/safety as inscribing subjectivity (or political identity).

This reasoning reveals a constant need to be aware of a drive (in me and in the groups of people I am studying) to be sovereign, secure, coherent, as well as a recognition that this aim is impossible. The security of identity precludes its closure (Butler:126). For example, the fixing of identity through politicization of marginal identities (i.e.. ethnic identity) may serve as a viable counter-force to the politics which arise out of securing

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[21] Anderson explains: 'Something of this political love can be deciphered from the ways in which languages describe its object: either in the vocabulary of kinship (motherland, Vaterland, Volk,) or that of *home* ... Both idioms denote something to which one is naturally tied. As we have seen earlier, in everything natural, there is always something unchosen. In this way nation-ness is assimilated to skin-colour, *gender*, parentage and birth-era-all those things one cannot help-. (Anderson:144).

hegemonic identity categories (i.e.. national identity). Identity politics may also render insecure the very people it aims to protect by enacting rigid and closed identity categories for them. Christine Sylvester repeats Germain Greer's statements: "security is a chimera". Perhaps embracing irony as advocated by Christine Sylvester (ibid.) and Kathy Ferguson (Ferguson:175) is the only appropriate response to this seeming conundrum?

III. In/securing Mayan-Women in Guatemala

As noted above, other political identities beside those deemed legitimate by state-sovereignty are formed within, and occupy, a marginal position in (inter)national relations. People whose different identities do not fit into (or compete within) the recognized spheres of political identity threaten the required unity, and thus the very subjectivity of the state. One could surmise that similar dynamics occur in instances of sub-national political identity formation, such as in a politicized ethnic group. The state or the ethnic group becomes a continuously contested terrain, where the (necessary) Other forms or is formed around other social divisions, i.e. gender, ethnicity, class with their own interrelated power discourses. These alternative sites of politics both endanger the cohesive identity of the original community, *and* legitimize its very existence.

Gender and ethnicity thus become mutually constitutive categories not only as identities imposed by the "foreign policy" of the nation-state (or the ethnic group), but also in the formation of points of resistance to the disciplining economies of these states/communities. Hence, when mapping interlocking in/security discourses—as well as recognizing alternative narratives of security and danger—one must pay attention to the inter-subjective formation of identity.

Furthermore, in the words of Arturo Arias (in speaking about Mayan identity formation in Guatemala): "popular culture, however, dispersed or ambiguous it may be, possesses features that are unique rather than simple deformations or imitations of the dominant culture" (Arias:230 in Smith, 1990). Despite the hegemony of a certain discourse, resistance struggles contest and challenge dominant readings of political life. Where there is power, there is also resistance; where there is a hegemonic reading of the political, alternative narratives can also be constructed which destabilize—and transform—politics as usual.

Yet sites of contestation do not always escape old logics. Danger, therefore, can be seen as both a conservative force, as well as a transformative one. It can act as the blueprint for the maintenance of hegemonic political identities and politics. Danger and sense of threat can also impel the construction of political identities and therewith identity politics that challenge the powers that be.[22] Hence, danger/threat and political identity (both dominant and marginal) mutually constitute each other.

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[22] There is absolutely no guarantee that such alternative constructions would be less injurious to either those 'included' or those 'excluded' from a new collective identity.

The above reading of in/security and its use in the making of marginal and dominant identities perhaps can provide alternative interpretations of the prevailing climate of in/security in Guatemala. These interpretations may help me better understand how certain politically active people struggle for security through perhaps radical subversions of inherited identities.[23] What kinds of questions can these struggles open up about the possible contingency of security? What could these struggles tell us about the possibility of embracing the necessity of identity (of cleavage), while avoiding the harmful practices that arise from discourses of danger and in/security? How can we live identity in a way that rejects the in/securing practices that lead to the common yet ever so urgent struggles: *'I don't want to be dissapeared, killed, raped, starved, or discriminated against'* One way to approach these questions is to return to the self-identification of some politically active Mayan women: "we are triply oppressed ...". In the remaining pages, I intend to briefly map some of the power relations that *may* constitute these identities.

In/securing Political Identity in Guatemala

The Guatemalan government/military—the ruling coalition—(Jonas) has claimed a monopoly over the definition of threat to the state, and over the meaning of *Guatemalidad.* According to nationalist in/security discourse, national security threats encompass any subversive activity which is inherently communist. This has included seeking economic alternatives to feed oneself, organizing around demands for land to grow ones crops and seeking the whereabouts of a loved-one's body who has been "disappeared". Through naming, and attempting to eliminate these dangers, the Guatemalan state ensures its own agency and subjectivity. The state exists as a political subject, in part, through its monopoly over legitimate definitions of danger—and, of course, through the ability to protect this power through force.

As explained above, the social norm of 'humanity' often depends upon an 'other' from which it is able to declare itself 'normal'. Hence, marginalized ethnic and gender (woman and devalued masculinities) identities are formed as necessary complements to the dominant and legitimate political subjects in the hegemonic discourses which define political life. In the context of Guatemala, that legtimate political subject is perhaps a *Criollo*[24]—or at the very least a *Ladino* male who adheres to a national identity defined by the ruling coalition (or at least doesn't challenge it). Mayan women who make political claims on their identity as Mayan-Women have become one of the primary 'enemies' of

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[23] An 'inhereted identity', as I am using the term here, refers to specific, and often dominant, understandings of identity categories and their content, such as 'woman', 'Swedish', or 'Jewish'. These categories can be received from the dominant group or from within the politicized ethnic community.

[24] It is interesting to note that the 'national' identity in the upper echelons of Guatemalan power, includes a strong identification with the United States and the 'Globe', while poorer, less privilidged people identify themselves much more locally. Further exploration of this point is warranted.

the Guatemalan state. One spokesperson for Conavigua, a widow organization (primarily Mayan) explains the "Otherization" of Mayan women in the following way:

> 'We as women have been seen as objects, as only something to be used. Many women have been raped by the military authorities. They come here to our house to rape us. They say that that's why the house is here—we are women without husbands. So they not only kill our husbands, but they come to rape us in our homes. All of this has been forgotten (Jennifer Schirmer in Radcliffe & Westwood:57).

Sovereignty, in the sense described above, also inscribes the ordering of identity in other sites, such as ethnic communities 'within' states. Partly by defining the threats to the Mayan pueblo[25] (such as the loss of the cultural barriers of tradition symbolized in women's dress, and behaviour) the very meaning of 'Mayan-ness' is constituted Disciplining norms of what it means to be 'Mayan' may become more rigid as this identity is more politicized However, control over the power of definition and authority may not necessarily be injurious in itself, but it can easily become so when used to repress alternative expressions of political identity.

Mayan-women as Boundary Markers: Inherited and Subverted identities

 As noted above, the maintenance of boundaries between the normal, the safe, the civilized, etc. and the pathological, the dangerous, the barbaric etc. allows subjects to safeguard their identity by knowing clearly where they are in relation to where other different peoples are—thus they ensure their security. Boundaries against the dangerous external other also serve to mould ethical boundaries, which ensure that the standards of what is normal remain recognizable to the members of the group.

Several scholars have pointed out convincingly that in the construction and reproduction of the collective identities (and imaginings) of ethnicity, the symbols and boundary markers of collective difference are inscribed on the idea of 'women', as well as on women's bodies (Brah:16). In the nation /ethnic group's striving to distinguish itself from 'the other', gendered symbols also maintain the "boundaries of social cohesion on the inside and social difference on the outside" (Wilson:9). Gender identification is one of the primary ways in which one can define the symbols of social difference. This can be seen, for example, in women's ascribed roles in social and cultural reproduction, (Wilson:7) as well as in the notions of 'femininity'—notions which warrant protection from the outside danger. As both custodians and transmitters (Jayawardena:257) of a particular identity, women—and gendered controls of behaviour become highly politicized and decisive in ethnic boundary-making.

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[25] It is important to keep in mind that there is not one way of being Mayan- this power is employed locally. In addition, a more localized identity (Mam, Quiche, etc. or even of a certain village) may be a more immediate and meaningful identity than 'Mayan' for many indigenous people. Please refer also to above note describing differences in politicized Mayan identity.

Within threatened communities (be these defined 'nationally', or 'sub-nationally'), women are often ascribed the role of reproducers and guardians of the culture at all levels of society: in their giving birth to children (sons/warriors/legacies); providing for the needs of daily subsistence; care-taking of the young, elderly, and sick; and (perhaps less for more 'modernized societies') maintaining tradition through clothing, religion, ritual, customs etc. They, may of course, already perform many of these roles in the daily lives of their communities; when the community is threatened, however, these roles may come to mean different things. In marginalized groups, women are usually less assimilated into the 'modern' (dominant) culture. These roles, therefore, become crucial in terms of cultural survival, and take on augmented significance in the politicization of identity. Women's roles as social re-producers provide a defense line against other—often dominant—cultures. In the words of Valentine Moghadam:

> When group identity becomes intensified, women are elevated to the status of the symbol of the community and are compelled to assume the burden of the reproduction of the group. Their roles as wives and as mothers are exalted, indeed fetishized. Women's 'place' in the home and the family is lauded. It is Woman as Wife and Mother- not women as worker, students, citizens— who is ideologically constructed in the discourse and program of the movement. This is why women's dress and behaviour become so important within the movement. This is why it is so important to establish an appropriate role for women (ordained by nature or by divine will) and to put women in their 'place'. Women who resist this role are accused of disloyalty (Moghadam:18).

In Guatemala it is clear that the markers of (marginal) ethnic difference can be used as both a vehicle of racism and oppression, as a symbol for the power held over these groups *and* as a site of struggle and resistance. These markers both ensure the difference of the marginal group and the identity of those in power: they thus serve as a multi-faceted and porous boundary between the two. Mayan women's *traje* (traditional dress) serves as one of the most important symbols of ethnic difference 'within' the Mayan communities. The *Ladino* society also perceives the *traje* as an indicator of indigenous racial inferiority; women wearing *traje* in 'mixed' spheres consequently suffer great discrimination. Yet the beautiful, colourful, fabrics of the different *traje* serve as alluring bait for the national tourist industry: Indigenous beauty contests tempt tourists to visit to 'authentic' Indian villages, and post-cards of smiling Mayan women line the streets in downtown Guatemala City[26]. Furthermore, one can also surmise how these very acts (beauty contests and post-cards) discipline the dangerous 'other' (both women and Mayan): by allowing them entry into *Guatemalidad*, yet by clearly defining the parameters and the content of their sojourn. Racism and sexism interact to create 'others' by which the norm is substantiated, and power sustained (Brah:13).

Yet, many Mayan women recognize and hold in high esteem their particular roles as defenders of the Mayan culture: they ensure the re-production of the culture—the language, the traditions, the *Cosmovision* against the barrage of both *Ladinoization* and ethnocide on the part of the Guatemalan military-state.(Assemblea de la Sociedad Civil,

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[26] Own observation, as well as subject of numerous discussions I held with women in Guatemala.

1994b; Consejo de Mujeres Mayas) Women at a workshop to discuss Mayan women's situation, for example, stressed their demand (from the Ladina feminists, as well as from the '*macho*' Guatemalan society at large) for "respect for the *traje* as identity, as culture, and as part of the Mayan *Cosmovision*"; they also emphasized "conservation of the languages as very important for fortifying (the Mayan) identity" (Memorias). Similar claims can be found in the demands of the *Sector de Mujeres Mayas* of the Civil Assembly (Assemblea de la Sociedad Civil, 1994b). A group of Andean women from Peru expressed analogous sentiments: "Women are producers of the family's clothing {...} in the woven textiles, as in a silent text, they generate a language full of complex meanings that enables them to express the specific identity of the community" (Indigenous Women and Community Resistance, in Jelin:167). Hence, these roles are not just imposed upon women by the dominant culture, or by the men in their communities, but are deeply imbedded in the construction of group, as well as gender identity.

According to many Mayan advocates, the dominating conflict (that which is between the Mayan peoples and the ruling coalition in Guatemala) overshadows all other possible conflicts within the community. Conflicts between, for example, different classes, language groups, or between men and women become subordinate to that which threatens the community from the 'outside'. This can perhaps be understood as a need to create a unified identity capable of withstanding the violent assaults of military/state, as well as insidious structural and psychological violence punctuated by rasism and classism (Bastos & Camus:147-157). In many facets of politicized Mayan identity in Guatemala, *specific meanings* of the ethnic identity of 'Mayan' therefore reign supreme. Unity can come to be seen as the "life blood" of an ethnic group and its culture, both in terms of sense of self and in terms of survival tactics. Frederick Barth, for instance, explains that "If a person is dependent for his (*sic)* security on the voluntary and spontaneous support of his own community, self-identification as a member of this community needs to be explicitly expressed and confirmed: and any behaviour which is deviant from the standard may be interpreted as a weakening of the identity and thereby of the bases of security" (Barth:226).

The securing of gender/ethnic identity may, however, also involve insecuring people who challenge rigid identity categories. Demands for loyalty to the norms of an over-riding and defining identity with the community may, for example make it difficult for Mayan women engaged in multiple and related struggles to pursue avenues of feminism which directly threaten the cohesiveness of the ethnic group.[27] Audre Lorde explains this tendency in reference to the experiences of many black feminists in the US.

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[27] This became increasingly evident to me through the many interviews I held in August 1994. For example, many men (and women) whom I talked to felt that the 'Women's Sector' within the 'Mayan Sector' of the Civil Assemblea threatened the impact and cohesiveness of the Mayan sector. Many men were vehemently opposed .

> The threat of difference has been no less blinding to people of Colour. Those of us who are black must see that the reality of our lives and our struggle does not make us immune to the errors of ignoring or misnaming difference. Within black communities where race is a living reality, differences among us often seem dangerous and suspect. The need for unity is often misnamed as a need for homogeneity, and a Black feminist vision mistaken for betrayal of our common interests as a people (Lorde, 92).

A focus on the influences of the Spanish invasion on the gender roles in the Mayan communities appears to be crucial in many Mayan women's own understanding of their subordinate positions within the family, the Mayan communities, and Guatemalan society in general. Women at the workshop noted above concluded the following:

> many of the Mayan women questioned whether or not the discrimination within the community was initiated with the Spanish invasion, with oppression, and education and values that were different. Or if its inherent within the culture. Some felt that social discrimination had its roots with the Spanish invasion. Others believed that the Spanish invasion made women's subordination more violent and apparent, more profound by incorporating other variations and elements? Now as part of the system of machismo, inequality exists within the Mayan culture (Memorias-author's translation).[28]

This testimony seems to promise an explicit awareness of and assessment among some Mayan-women about the interrelationship of systems of *machismo*. However, universal answers which map these systems' evolution remain, of course, impossible. A myriad different forces—endemic and global, and 'imposed' and 'chosen'—have defined their parameters. For example, one can question from the outside what role the need for a cohesive ethnic community in the struggles of the Mayan women plays in this assignment of a fixed beginning to oppression: the Spanish invasion in 1524. (It is arguably much less problematic to blame oppression on the Enemy—an Other— than to be forced to deal with the conflicts and consequences of recognizing the Other within your midst).

When read with a lens sensitive to in/security discourses, we can be attuned to how danger resides in the foreign: instances of disharmony within the group can be seen as attributed to predominantly 'outside' influences. Threat, danger and in/security thus engrave the dividing lines between an identifiable 'us' from an identifiable 'them', often leading to a hierarchization of any other identity categories. People who see themselves as part of a national/ethnic collective identity which is marginalized or threatened, often find it difficult to challenge the rigid borders of their over-riding identity with the group. This is seen particularly, in the face of other (subordinate) struggles for security, such as ones that challenge gender hierarchy within their communities. If the inside does not remain a unified political subject in the face of the outside, the "edifice" may crumble.

The above inquiry is not meant to be an exhaustive account of the power structures which define the lives of Mayan women; it is not even intended as a partial description.

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[28] This testimony was confirmed in my conversations with many politically active Mayan women. 1524 was the birth of patriarchy in their societies: it came with the Spanish and was therefore not 'theirs', but yet another aspect of colonialism and imperialism.

Instead, it can be read as an opening for the forming of further questions and the re-forming of already stated ones. I have discussed already some possible limitations on the subjectivity of Mayan women. At this point, I want to try to find away to examine the struggles for security in which Mayan women engage. *A primary effort will be to remain open to inconsistencies in my way of ordering the world which will allow me to be surprised by the ways these people have negotiated the discourses that both fix (secure) their identities and render them insecure.* Aware of the risk (and inevitability) that my readings of the identities of these people surely do not escape the many discourses of racism, nationalism, sexism, and classism that situate me as well as the subjects of my study in different locations in matrices of power structures, I hope to continue to take seriously the danger of reproducing the limiting practices of reification and otherization that I have criticized thus far in this article.[29]

With due reference to the wisdom of Anzaldúa, Ferguson, and Sylvester (and surely many others) I suppose that attention to borders, boundaries, and borderlands between and within inherited identities—as well as between and within the different discourses which re-produce them—may explode regulatory self-other dichotomies, and even partially disarm the in/security discourse described above. Attention to the "hyphen points"[30] of identities (i.e. on the "-" between Mayan-woman-peasant-... and Anglo-woman-researcher-...) suggests the contingency of the ways in which we order and conduct political life. Things might have been otherwise: woman/native/other[31] might have been constructed differently. Or these constructions might not be necessary at all. It is to these hyphen points that I will then turn.

V. Sites of Subjugation—Sites of Resistance:
Concluding Comments and Questions

Several of the theorists noted above[32] have rendered explicit the connections between the 'text' of international relations and politics as they are played out throughout the

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[29] As Chow warns in her discussion on the construction of a 'native identity' by scholars (anthropologists) attempting to 'return the touristic postcard which represents imperialism' to its 'rightful owner', must be seen as part of that very imperial project which "does not leave the 'subjects' any choice but to be an image (inferior reflection) or silent object which is lacking." (Chow, Ch. 2). Trinh expresses similar views: "The search and the claim for a female/ethnic identity -difference today can never be anything more than a move within the male is norm-divide and conquer trap. The malady lingers on. As long as words of difference serve to legitimate a discourse instead of delaying its authourity to infinity, they are, to borrow an image from Audre Lorde, 'noteworthy only as *decorations*'. (Trihn, 1987)

[30] I am borrowing this formulation from Christine Sylvester (Sylvester, 1993, 1994).

[31] I am borrowing this formulation from Trihn, 1990.

[32] For example: Ashley & Walker, 1990; Campbell, 1990; Connolly, 1991; Der Derian & Shapiro, 1989; Dillon 1990-91; Peterson, 1992; Peterson, 1992a; Sylvester, 1994; Walker & Mendlovitz, 1990; Walker

globe. In this sense, 'text' refers to the vast array of modes of representation which order the world in which we live. Hence, what is excluded and what included in traditional understandings of security reflect (and re-produce) a certain political order. The security of people whose different identities do not fit into (or compete within) the recognized spheres of political identity, and consequently, legitimated 'levels' of security are often ignored in the dominant language of security. Those who live at the bottoms or the margins of power structures within (or between) the hallowed 'level' of the state, such as female-bodied members of 'subaltern' or ethnic groups (Mayan women) are either excluded or reduced to 'individual (male) citizen of nation-state'.

Yet, as these subjects form themselves/are formed as marginal, they both challenge and perpetuate that which threatens them and that which renders them in/secure. They challenge the source of danger by becoming political subjects— subjects which contest the monopoly of what it means to be a part of Guatemalidad, and perhaps the growing monopoly over what it means to be Mayan. And they perpetuate it by their very marginality— the marginality which concedes the existence of a center. Because of these claims, the center is asked to negotiate a relationship with the margins, yet it remains, nevertheless, a center.) Specific understandings of sovereignty (man/ethnic community/state) thus define what it means to aspire to some other identity and to resist the identities fashioned by hegemonic powers (Walker:179). As Westwood and Radcliffe explain in their volume on "women and popular protest in Latin America":

> State narratives generate representations (in relations to the ideological constructions) of masculinities and femininities as well as 'race', labour, and communities. In this process there is an attempt to hegemonize political activism, as well as symbols and practices. However, popular social movements generate in turn, their own counter-hegemonic accounts of nation, gender, and ethnicities which provide contestations to the state's projects and seek alternative forms of legitimation (Westwood and Radcliffe:13).

I suppose that the in/security of Mayan women is constructed in direct relationship to the war-peace dance between central and marginal political identities—as a manifestation of cleavage. Struggles for security (be it the security of dominant national or 'male' identity, or of marginalized ethnic or 'female' identity) cannot be removed or taken outside of this dance. Yet, counter hegemonic struggles for security, such as those that politically active Mayan-women conduct, can result from and lead to the inclusion of a new step which radically alters the dance, as well as the dancers. What meanings, then, in terms of political identity are given to being a 'Mayan-women' in Guatemala? How are these subjects who make political claims based on their identities as women and as members of the Mayan 'pueblo' and as member of the lower/peasant class[33] fashioned by dominant—as well as marginal—notions of security? In Guatemala, the perceived threats to the state inscribe boundaries of difference (i.e.. Ladino vs. Mayan), which re-produce hierarchical divisions that distinguish the self (Guatemalidad) from the enemy (the

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1993.

[33] as in the common claim, "we are triply oppressed....." (Memorias)

majority of the people). Similarly, threats to any one of these alternative sites of identity (such as 'Maya-ness', or 'femininity') may also inscribe boundaries of inside-outside which regulate the identities of its members.

How do these women negotiate the seeming tensions in different loci of danger/threat and political strategy? How, for instance, do they relate threats from 'within' their communities, with their needs to remain cohesive as a collective group. The lines between 'us' and 'them' blur, for example, when many members of the military forces are forced teenage 'Mayan' recruits, when these women are subject to physical abuse from their husbands, and when Ladina women offer solidarity and support in their struggles for autonomy and dignified living conditions. When made rigid and when regulated by the dominant in/security discourse, the categories of nationalism/ethnic and gender identity severely constrict the realm of possible resolutions to the very real problems of danger and threat. Yet,

> these categories (nationalism and sexuality)[34] remain volatile sites for condensing and displacing the ecstasies and terrors of political life. For it is the lived crises endured by national and sexual bodies that form our most urgent priorities. These crises are not simply opportunities for the state to activate its strategies of containment and to reimpose its normativities. They also offer dissenting subjects the possibility of producing contestatory practices, narratives of resistance that may re-configure the horizons of what counts globally today as 'the political' (Parker et al.:14).

In the simple and tremendously courageous[35] act of becoming politically active—in constructing themselves as political subjects—these women challenge many of the disciplining forces of in/security both 'inside' the community, and 'outside', as well as those which insist on an 'inside' and an 'outside'. Their struggle for security and agency cannot be removed from the dominant in/security discourses which inform their lives; yet, despite the endurance of such constructions, their political subjectivity also attests to a profound challenge to these very forces. By refusing to accept the content of the (perhaps) inherited identity categories ascribed to them by interlocking systems of oppression, these people give their own meanings to the identities of 'Mayan-woman', validating the hyphen mark, rendering it political, and thus drastically transforming the very in/security discourse which endangers them.

The conclusion to this paper is also its beginning.[36] I am propelled by the following questions: How do the different disciplining moves inter-subjectively form the political identities of Mayan women? How does the formation of contentious political identities become the impetus for increased boundary-marking and danger-inscribing activities, both within the marginalized identities and the dominant ones? What in/securing

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[34] Through the use of this quotation, I am not intending to equate gender with sexuality!

[35] Many politically active women (and men) who engage in activity considered subversive by the state have been subjected to assassinations, death threats, disappearances, harassment, rape, and torture.

[36] Please see footnote # 1, page #1.

measures are taken in order to protect the sovereignty of dominant political identities? How does the construction of a political subject both secure and threaten these subjects as well as the sites of power which they contest?...

Perhaps Mayan women themselves can answer, or redirect these questions so that I can learn from them how we—as mobile and multiple subjects—may be able to better live with the chimera of security in ways that make us safe in our insecure existences.

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