

# APPARITION AND RESURRECTION: INDIAN FEMALE BODY AS MAJESTIC SURFACE

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*This article explores the ways in which indigenous women, in Chiapas and inside the Zapatista rebellion, have been constructed as signifiers of national symbols.*

It also describes the *episodes of epistemic violence*<sup>1</sup> and forms of mediation exerted on indigenous women's bodies not only by the state, but by their own communities. The analysis of the symbolic violence acted upon indigenous female bodies points towards the envisioning of the strategies of supplementation that replace indigenous women demands and locate them in the space of loss of both indigenous and modern values. The uncovering of indigenous women demands exhibits then the anxiety produced by the loss of tradition in the frame of modern nations.<sup>2</sup>

I will look at the symbolic role of Ramona, a well known Zapatistas' commander, as finder and bearer of one of the nation's symbols: the Mexican Flag. I analyze two events: the first round of negotiations between rebels and government in the Cathedral of San Cristóbal in February 1994 and Ramona's displacement to México's main plaza, "el Zócalo," as a Zapatistas' representative for the National Indigenous Congress held in October 1996. The analysis of such a *travesía* pretends to contribute to the construction of a methodology, a theory of ideology, which approaches the complex task of *measuring silences*, measuring the desires, located below the narratives of the indigenous women as *fetish*,<sup>3</sup> that which is placed in the space of loss.

Ramona's displacement follows the itinerary of two ways of inscribing women's voices and women bodies at the limit of the national law. The body and voice of indigenous women at the southern border are negotiated, articulated and dislocated between the two events: the erasure of female emergent juridical languages<sup>4</sup> and the visibility of injured female bodies. We find the Indigenous women inside this interval, in



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the interstices of speech and body, of juridical language and the body as a *wound*, an opening, a limit. I will analyze the inscription of indigenous women's demands as silence understood more as the "negation of phrases,"<sup>5</sup> the negation of women's desires, and women's questions around their own ways of *being* Indian, women and Mexican and the reconstruction of what the nation and community's forms of identity demands.

The process of modernization and its relation to liberation movements and nationalist discourses relies partially on the strategic appropriation, dissolution, translation of women questions and demands.<sup>6</sup> The pivotal point is the punctuation that displaces them from being agents of a fracture (a question, which reconfigures the role of women in the politics of exchange in between tradition and modernity) to be o(a)bjects of replacement and displacement of the losses of tradition to modernity. Indian women move from unveiling the processes of exchange to "filling the vacancies" of lost values in the contact zones<sup>7</sup> of modernity and tradition.

### ***The glorious body and the whispering voice: Ramona's apparition inside the Cathedral of Peace***

*An M-1 carbine held in front. . . She carries the rank of Infantry Major of an insurgent army which has called itself, this cold dawn of January 1, 1994, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation. Under her command is a rebel column which takes the former capital of the southeastern Mexican state Chiapas, San Cristóbal de Las Casas. . . Only the indigenous men and women under her command are witness to the moment in which the Major, a rebel indigenous tzotzil woman, takes the national flag and gives it to the commanders of the rebellion, those called "The Indigenous Clandestine Revolutionary Committee". Over the radio the Major says: "We have recovered the Flag. 10-23 over." She came to the mountains of the Lacandon Jungle in December of 1984, not yet 20 years of age and yet carrying the marks of a whole history of indigenous humiliation on her body. In December of 1984, this brown woman says "Enough is Enough!", but she says it so softly that only she hears herself. . . (EZLN 1995, 181-189)*

This first section analyzes Ramona's role during the first round of talks between the rebels and the government. The rebels will go from this first contact with the government to negotiate with the indigenous communities. The first scenario for the reunion of rebels and government representatives, is the Cathedral of San Cristóbal, specifically the altar, a space of mixture, where rebels, saints, crucifix, and crucified, indigenous representatives and government mediators gathered together as the main actors of political change in Mexico. The altar concentrates the political actors with mayor differences: the government, the rebels and the church.

Marcos makes it clear his voice represents the CCRI (Clandestine Indigenous Revolutionary Committee). He writes in one of the communiqués a full report of the outcome of the gatherings in the Cathedral. Marcos represents the rebels as bearers, in their bodies, of the weight of a nation that has forgotten them. He describes the "return" of Indians to the city as committed to the search of the lost "Fatherland." He writes:

*Por mi voz, habla la voz del Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional. Cuando bajamos de las montañas cargando a nuestras mochilas, a nuestros muertos y a nuestra historia, venimos a la ciudad a buscar la patria. La patria que nos había olvidado en el último rincón del país; el rincón más solitario, el más pobre, el más sucio, el peor (EZLN 1994, 168).*

Inside the Cathedral, during his opening speech, he addresses Ramona and the Zapatistas' women only heard about after death. Marcos speaks:

*¿Por qué es necesario matar y morir para que pueda venir Ramona y puedan ustedes poner atención a lo que ella dice? ¿Por qué es necesario que Laura, Ana María, Irma, Elisa, Silvia y tantas mujeres indígenas hayan tenido que agarrar un arma, hacerse soldados, en lugar de hacerse doctoras, licenciadas, ingenieras, maestras? (EZLN 1994, 164).*

A day after, an image of the mixture on the altar appears in many Mexican newspapers. Inside the Cathedral of Peace we see the altar and on the altar the actors of the dispute. A most unexpected image emerges:

on the altar below San Cristóbal and El Sagrado Corazón, we see the Mexican Flag, underneath the flag a table, at the table the government representative, Manuel Camacho Solís, the bishop and designated mediator, Samuel Ruiz, Marcos, the Zapatistas negotiation committee, and Ramona. Ramona is sitting to the right of the government representative Camacho Solís, her legs hanging from the chair without touching the ground.<sup>8</sup> What are we able to see within this ideological frame and its form of knowledge? What kind of equivocal magic does this image produce?<sup>9</sup>

The climax of the reunion happens when Marcos addresses the relation of the Zapatistas and of indigenous people to the Mexican Flag. Marcos describes the Flag as the only thing that they encountered in their arrival to the city.

*Venimos a la ciudad y encontramos esta bandera, nuestra bandera. Eso encontramos; no encontramos riquezas, no encontramos dinero, no encontramos a nadie que nos escuchara otra vez. Encontramos la ciudad vacía y sólo encontramos esta bandera. Venimos a la ciudad y encontramos esta bandera y vimos que bajo esta bandera vive la patria; no la patria que ha quedado olvidada en los museos, sino la que vive, la única, la dolorosa, la de la esperanza (EZLN 1994, 164).*

In the cathedral, during the inauguration of the official dialogue, Ramona takes the Mexican flag from her tiny purse and slowly unfolds it.<sup>10</sup> Ramona hands Marcos the flag. He extends it above his chest grasping it from both ends. Manuel Camacho Solís in a sudden gesture stretches and grasps the flag with his fist. He barely manages to hold one of its ends. The image is powerful: Marcos with open arms under the altar extends the flag, simulating an/other crucifixion. From the right angle of the flag, we see a hand grasping one of its ends, the government hands touching, in the last moment, the national symbol.

Marcos continues his “opening” speech,<sup>11</sup> he states that below the Mexican Flag there is a living Fatherland, a painful, hopeful, unique Fatherland. But what is found “below” the flag is the body of an Indian women: the hurting body of the fatherland.<sup>12</sup>

Ramona is identified by the viewers as the one that carries the flag and delivers it.

*Era Ramona la que llevaba la bandera mexicana y encabezaba la fila cuando los demás guerrilleros entraban al sitio donde se ofrecían las conferencias de prensa. Es Ramona la que llega a representar al EZLN a la Ciudad de México. Entendamos ese mensaje y decidámonos, como mexicanos todos, a reconocer que durante mucho tiempo, durante mucha historia, los indígenas eran todavía ciudadanos. Respetemos su demanda. Harán más rica a nuestra patria (La Jornada [México] october 15<sup>th</sup>, 1996).*

Ramona is described as the tiny woman who does majestic acts: commands soldiers and re-covers the lost flag, the lost fatherland. Marcos writes:

*Among the indigenous commanders there is a tiny woman, even tinier than those around her. A face wreathed in black still leaves the eyes free and a few hairs dangling from the head. In that gaze is the glitter of one who searches. A 12 caliber sawed-off shotgun hangs from her back. With the traditional dress of the women from San Andrés, Ramona walks down from the mountains, together with a hundred more women, towards the city of San Cristóbal on that last night of 1993. Together with Susana and other indigenous men she is part of that Indian command of the war which birthed 1994, the Clandestine Indigenous Revolutionary Committee-General Command of the EZLN. Comandante Ramona will, with her size and her brilliance, surprise, the international press when she appears during the first Dialogues for Peace held in the Cathedral and pulls from her backpack the national flag re-taken by the Major on January 1<sup>st</sup> (italics mine)(EZLN 1995, 182 –183)*

But the grandeur as translator and organizer of the “Revolutionary Women’s Laws,” acknowledged in the former quote, was not consistently read as a majestic enterprise. In the many articles written there were rarely connections relating the fundamental erasure of the women’s voices in the signed agreements and the act of investiture of their bodies as bearers of the lost fatherland. The “majestic” presence of Ramona was juxtaposed to the size of her body. This juxtaposition magnified the act of delivery of the nation’s symbol by the “little in between the little.” Luis Hernández

Navarro, a Mexican Journalist, states:

*En el lapso que va del 20 de febrero de 1994, cuando la comandante Ramona entregó al subcomandante Marcos la bandera mexicana para que éste la desplegara en la catedral de San Cristóbal de las Casas, al 11 de octubre de 1996, cuando la misma comandante entregó al veterano jaramillista Felix Serdán otra bandera nacional, se condensan dos símbolos centrales de la lucha zapatista. El primero es el del labaro patrio, donde se resumen simultaneamente, la vida y la muerte de esa parte del país cuya existencia es negada por los poderosos, la de los pueblos indios, y la esperanza de hacer nacer nuevamente a la patria. El segundo, es el de la revolucionaria tzotzil de 38 años, "pequeña entre las pequeñas," ejemplo de la lucha por la vida y por el cambio (italics mine)(La Jornada [Mexico], October 15 1996).*

Through Ramona's act Indian women's bodies were re-covered as the couriers, carriers, banners of a foundational national symbol. The word for the portable body, the tiny body of Ramona performing a glorious, supreme act. Her silence framed such exalted moment. This scene inside the Cathedral of Peace was invested with an aura and remembered not only because of the actors assembled, but because it involved the "apparition" of an Indian women as bearer of the flag inside the church, a space of reverence and hope. Mexican imagery is abundant with images of "La Virgen de Guadalupe" carried along side the Mexican Flag.<sup>13</sup> Ramona's body re-appears at the altar as a space of devotion, a sublime surface where the fatherland/flag was found, a space where suffering Mexicans find refuge.

Marcos continues his opening speech with the flag in his hands and says referring to Ramona:

*Escuchen a Ramona-que está aquí- decir cosas tan terribles como que las mujeres indígenas quieren vivir, quieren estudiar, quieren hospitales, quieren medicinas, quieren escuelas, quieren alimento, quieren respeto, quieren justicia, quieren dignidad (EZLN 1994, 164).*

Marcos specifies that it is only after death, that Ramona may be heard. But even after the death of In-

dians after 1994, and after the actual event of her "speech" (through the "Revolutionary Women's Laws) her voice is still a whisper in comparison with the magnified resonance of her body as the site for loss. The presence of the body and absence of the voice performs one of the ways indigenous women play as strategies of intervention and disruption inside national disputes.<sup>14</sup> The flag is recovered by the female "comandante," but it is the flag which captures the Indian female voice. Her body is a surface for the recovering of one of the nation's symbols but apparently under one condition, that her own word and her own demands are not represented. The absence of women's voices (the one that fractures Indian tradition and constitutional laws) guarantees the repertoire: Indians betrayed by governmental politics based on economies of globalization and a government blind and deaf to Indian voices.

The visual register prevails since Ramona is hardly heard through her broken Spanish and the scarcity of translators. The perception of Ramona's body is highly determined above her tongue, her speech, her words. Shortly after the first round of negotiations, the overdetermination of her body reappears when it is reported by the media that she is very ill or may be dead.

### ***The return to the center of the Nation: the Indian female as resurrection.***

*Ramona does not know then, nor do we, but she already carries in her body an illness which eats her life away in huge bites and dims her voice and her gaze. Ramona and the Major, the only women in the Zapatista delegation who show themselves to the world for the first time declare: "For all intents and purposes we were already dead, we meant absolutely nothing" and with this they almost count the humiliation and abandonment. The Major translates to Ramon the questions of the reporters. Ramona nods and understands, as though the answers she is asked for had always been there, in that tiny figure which laughs at the Spanish language and at the ways of the city women. Ramona laughs when she does not know she is dying. And when she knows, she still laughs. Before she did not exist for anyone, now she exists, as a woman, as an indigenous woman,*

as a rebel woman. Now Ramona lives, a woman belonging to that race which must die in order to live...(EZLN 1995, 182-183).

This section explores the second displacement of Ramona, this time as bearer of the national flag to the National Indigenous Conference held in Mexico City in October 1996. The Conference was meant to concretize both the support of the implementation of the San Andrés Accords signed by the rebels and the government and to unify criteria on how to protect indigenous rights in a "nation for everyone." The conference was seeking a new social contract between Indians, mestizos and whites.<sup>15</sup>

Shortly after the first round of negotiations between the rebels and the government in February 1994, rumors were strong that Ramona, one of the EZLN comandantes who took San Cristóbal de la Casas in January 1994 and one of the women that gathered together the "Revolutionary Women's Laws," had disappeared in the jungle. Ramona was supposed to be very ill, even dead. Her previous "appearance" in the Cathedral for Peace and the condition of "disappearance" or possible death shortly after influences the inscription of Ramona as a re-appearance and resurrected to Mexico's public life in 1996. Rumors ended when Marcos announces during the National Democratic Convention in August 1994 that Ramona was very ill. Shortly after, Ramona is seen in a video.<sup>16</sup> Guiomar Rovira writes about her reappearance:

*Ramona aparecía en la pequeña pantalla sentada ante una mesa, portando un ejemplar del periódico La Jornada del 18 de enero. Detrás de ella había una sábana blanca con siglas EZLN. Era la prueba fehaciente de que no había muerto como habían publicado algunos periódicos alarmistas (italics mine)(Guiomar Rovira 1997, 202).*

Ramona appeared in a video calling for women to wake up and to the Mexican people not to forget them. She switches from Tzotzil to Spanish:

*...Otra vez le pedimos al pueblo de México que no nos olvide, que no nos dejen solos, que nos ayuden a construir la paz... Quiero que todas la mujeres se*

*despierten y sientan en su corazón la necesidad de organizarse; con los brazos cruzados no se puede construir el México libre y justo con el que todos soñamos: democracia, justicia, dignidad y paz. Viva el Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional!*<sup>17</sup>

The voice and image of Ramona was received with jubilation. She was seen and heard as a virtual image. Ramona was seen as some sort of phantasmagoric return from the other world. The "the little in between the little" was not "yet" dead. Death for her is imminent, not only because of the pervasive military presence inside the rebel's zones, but because of an unknown illness that attacks her body. In a broken Spanish she addresses her imminent death and the liminal situation within life and death of her Indian people:

*Posiblemente muera pronto. Muchos niños, mujeres y hombres también están igual, tenemos muchas enfermedades, pero los médicos, la medicina y los hospitales no están en nuestras manos... Le hablo al pueblo de México a todos los habitantes de nuestro país (Correa and Alvarez 1996, 22).*

Ramona would reappear in another video months later, a day before the beginning of the fifth round of negotiations for peace held in San Andrés Larrainzar. In the video we hear Ramona saying: "Les agradezco mucho su apoyo y que me den la esperanza de poder seguir viviendo y luchando. Pero ahora también les pido su solidaridad y su trabajo para mis otras hermanas, para las mujeres indígenas de todo México..."(Rovira 1997, 204).

The Zapatistas' idea of sending Ramona, half dead and "resurrected" to the National Indigenous Conference was read as a very efficient political strategy to regain the admiration, veneration and support that the Zapatistas had lost during the intense accords' negotiations in San Andrés. The Zapatistas decision to send Ramona as the rebel representative to the Conference was, as Jaime Avilés a well known Mexican journalist describes, an "ace" in the sleeve. Avilés states:

*A lo largo de todo el juego... Marcos actuó con una admirable sangre fría y con un as guardado en la*

*manga...Sitiado por el mayor cerco militar en la historia de México, pero aislado igualmente dentro del cerco político creado por el desgaste propio y de sus adeptos...el "sup" señala con malicia que le estaban tratando de vender realmente carísimo el "permiso" de viajar al Distrito Federal, una mercancía que, por otra parte, ya tenía en la canasta. Así que, señores, dicen que pidió con toda serenidad, bájjenle (La Jornada [México], 13 october, 1996).*

The Zapatistas rebels were surrounded by military forces and their circulation outside the military rim was fiercely prohibited by the government. After delicate negotiations, the government agrees to allow a Zapatistas' delegation of ten people to attend the National Indigenous Conference. Marcos surprises the government and the Mexican public by saying that they do not need to send ten, they are going to send "the little in between the little," Ramona. Avilés states:

*Y entonces, cuando sólo faltaba que el EZLN diera a conocer los nombres de los "hasta diez" delegados rebeldes que viajarían en compañía de la Cocopa y la sociedad civil...Marcos sacó el 'as' que había conservado todo el tiempo debajo de la manga y los depositó en el tapete para dar el golpe maestro: La delegación que enviaremos al Congreso Nacional Indígena, anunció, estará formada única y exclusivamente por la comandante Ramona (La Jornada [México], 13 october 1996).*

Ramona is designated once again to be the bearer of the flag to the Convention. In a scene captured in video, we see Marcos handing Ramona the national flag. We see a small table in one of the "Aguascalientes,"<sup>18</sup> above it lays the Mexican flag. Marcos and Ramona stand behind it. We hear Marcos say: "Solo con ustedes somos. La Patria tiene que nacer otra vez de nuestros despojos, de nuestros cuerpos rotos, de nuestros muertos."<sup>19</sup>

Ramona will travel with the flag carefully folded in her purse from "Aguascalientes" to the center of the nation. Jaime Avilés describes her departure: "La salida de la comandate Ramona de la región chiapaneca, en medio del cerco militar es la más aparatosa de la historia local y nacional (La Jornada [México] 13 october 1996)."

Parallel to the well known cyber-rebellion that began to circulate internationally very early in 1994, and to the reappearance of Ramona as a virtual image in video, the Zapatistas were also creating strategies that involved the circulation of the antithesis of virtuality. They were displacing, circulating the actual body of a beloved, respected, auratic woman: Ramona.<sup>20</sup> What happens to the Mexican society when Ramona, a symbol of "resurrection," a return, gets displaced from her hidden refuge in the Lacandona jungle to the center of the nation? Which are the scenes that advance and preclude her voice? What kind of images, metaphors, discourses is "the little in between the little" and her magnanimous surface producing?

Indigenous people have been persistently displaced against their will since the Conquest and later intensively during the Mexican Revolution.<sup>21</sup> The event of Ramona being displaced this time by the indigenous rebels themselves and not by forced migration, reconfigures, although momentarily, power relations in between indigenous people and the government's hegemonic practices of displacement and replacement of Indians inside the nation. Guiomar Rovira considers that Ramona's reappearance could stop the violent military invasion of communities that began in February 1995. She states:

*Ramona logró con este mensaje apelar a la movilización nacional e internacional para detener el avance del ejército en las comunidades rebeldes. Era febrero y el subcomandante Marcos se encontraba cercado y huyendo a salto de mata (Guiomar Rovira 1997, 203).*

Jaime Avilés writes also about one of the effects of Ramona's displacement: the reinforcement of the negotiations around the San Andrés Accords:

*Después de la airosa resolución de las elecciones en Guerrero y el viaje de Ramona a la capital, dentro de la administración de Zedillo se está abriendo una corriente de pensamiento que mira cada vez con mayor simpatía la idea de culminar en una auténtica negociación, de la cual emerjan soluciones reales a*

*los problemas reales...es inútil y absurdo que se siga creyendo que la línea dura de los empleados gubernamentales es la correcta (La Jornada [México] 19 October 1996).*

Ramona's travesía to Mexico City and its effects were reported in the newspapers parallel to political events such as the tense elections in one highly combative state, Guerrero, which gained much more representatives from the leftist party in Mexico than expected. Another effect of Ramona's apparition, even more unexpected than the success of the left wing's party, happen when she arrives to México City. The same day that Ramona arrives to the Mexican capital, the 12<sup>th</sup> of October, Columbus day (renamed by Indian rights activists as the Day of the Meeting of Two Worlds), a most exceptional event is reported in the news. Competing with the Zapatistas' strategies of displacement of "apparitions," the district attorney Pablo Bezanilla announces that the body of Manuel Muñoz-Rocha, one of the suspected conspirators in the assassination of Ruiz Massieu,<sup>22</sup> was found on the Ranch "La Escondida," property of Raúl Salinas de Gortary, brother of the former president Carlos Salinas de Gortary. Betraying the solemnity of his juridical language, the district attorney announces eloquently that "La Paca" the personal "psychic" of the president's brother had a vision in which she "visualized" the body of the suspected conspirator in "La Escondida." Surprisingly the body "appeared" where it was envisioned by "La Paca." Avilés writes about this event.

*Es una lástima que en medio de este cuadro, en el colmo de la desesperación, para lavar la cara de todos los que hicieron el ridículo oponiéndose a la visita de los zapatistas, y para despojar de las ocho columnas de los diarios a una pequeña indígena enferma que llega a la capital con la bandera de México tiernamente doblada entre sus manos, los propagandistas del poder hayan tenido que desenterrar un cadáver que, si algo representa, es el estado de salud del "sistema" (La Jornada [México] 13 October 1996).*

The newspapers reported extensively about the "apparition" of the conspirator's body and little about Ramona, with the exception of *La Jornada*. The scene of the "apparition" of Ramona in Mexico City is widely reported through the Internet. Did the government engage with a phantasmagoric rhetoric to re-cover the space that Ramona would, for sure, deserve in the media?

Notwithstanding the little cover in the national media, the event of Ramona approaching Mexico City is celebrated not only by sectors of the Mexican society but by a "rainbow" of rebels gathered together around cyberspace.

On October 12<sup>th</sup> she was welcomed at the Conference center. She reads in Spanish not before apologizing "por los tropiezos de mi lectura." Ramona addresses the "gift" that the Zapatistas send through her, the national flag:

*El regalo de nuestra Comandancia General del EZLN es esta bandera, que es la bandera de México. Esto es para que nunca olvidemos que nuestra patria es México y para que todos escuchen lo que hoy gritamos de que nunca más un México sin nosotros (Correa and Morales 1996, 23).*

After her speech the expected scene is reported: Ramona apologizes again for her speech stumbles and handles "with her thin hands and small body the national flag." (Correa and Morales 1996) Ramona speaks slowly and never reads Spanish for a long time. The task of translation of her speech is never consistent, sometimes she speaks in Tzotzil and it is not translated, other times she reads in Spanish, always with great effort and low voice. It is interesting to note that neither journalists nor academics in México, interested in Ramona's journey, place special emphasis on reporting and marking the moments of translation and "crossing-over" from Tzotzil to Spanish or viceversa. Seldom readers know which parts were spoken in Tzotzil or which were spoken in Spanish, and if the Spanish is uttered by Ramona or translated. In the newspapers' articles and reports Ramona's voice appears fluent and articulate. In actuality she speaks a very fragmented and "poor" Spanish. Only when Ramona is seen in person or through a video are the marks of translation visible. Apparently the task of handling the flag, the nation's memory, the lost Fatherland, and her size and illness overtake the efforts of marking the displacements and "crossings" of her tongue. Her voice is covered by loss: the lost flag and the lost fatherland. Her body plays as a *fetish*, it re-covers an absence.

The absent marks of translation are evident in Ramona's tongue whenever she moves. From her village to the space of the maid, the erasure is marked through the absence of the translation of her experience. From the city to the guerrilla the erasure is evident when the emergent juridical subject and incipient normative language delineated through "Revolutionary Women's Law" has no discursive space to be fully addressed. From the jungle to the capital of the nation, she is spoken through the space of the *gift*: the Zapatistas' offering of the forgotten fatherland to the nation.<sup>23</sup> Her voice is fragile vis-à-vis the investiture of the *gift* she represents. The effects of her unmarked speech are today evident in the fragmented inscription of the indigenous voices in the documents that emanates from the negotiations with the government. The presence of her portable body, re-covered by the flag, produces the reinscription of emotions attached to the Indian body. Ramona's ill and tiny body, her low voice produces the eruption of national guilt, compassion and devotion. The saints venerated in the churches by millions in Mexico neither talk back.

I will close my dissertation with Ramona's last journey and her arrival to the heart of the nation "El Zócalo." There, Ramona spoke in Tzotzil for more than one hour. In Tzotzil she addressed the suffering under the military invasion of their communities. She punctuated the situation of the indigenous women in occupied territory and the women's resistance to denigrating traditional practices. When they translated her, in exchange for her words, a brief communiqué of subcomandante Marcos was read.

It is the inscription of Ramona's body as the space that re-covers the lost fatherland which is at stake, not her voice, neither her place as translator of female Indian demands. Her body is played as an "ofrenda" a *gift*. But it is paradoxically this "offering" which also saves Ramona. While she was in México City several NGO's arranged the procedures for her recuperation. Ramona needed urgently a new kidney. Dozens of organs were offered for her. Ramona offers her body and through this "ofrenda" she receives the possibility of life. Notwithstanding the importance of this event of donation of life, her recovery is still relegated only to the body. Her voice, the voice of the translator, has not been recovered, yet.

Ramona represents a signifier of the EZLN's desire to offer, from the outside, from the abject of modernity, what the nation has lost. Ramona herself offers her body as the surface for the production of the offering of the re-covered nation. The nation is represented by her injured body, her martyrdom. She circulates with medical paraphernalia, her kidneys functioning poorly. The people gathered in "el Zócalo" struggle to touch her. The abjected of the nation is precisely what represents the wound of modernity, and paradoxically what cannot be inscribed in its text, in its language. Her word cannot appear with her body. It remains outside the symbolic order that which guarantees interchange of signification and the construction of subjectivity. How can the demand expressed by Indian women as *the right to rest* be accomplished if the space for Indian women's desire is concentrated in her bodies as surfaces for inscription of loss and as portable *gifts*?

The Zapatistas' offer Ramona's body and with that possibility to inscribe fictions of loss and recovery overwritten on her tongue. Ramona is Ramoncita, the tiny women whose sacrifice is magnificent, the tiny resurrected women, who is outstanding, auratic, majestic and speechless.

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## NOTES

1 Spivak describes moments of epistemic violence as the way in which writing -as a form of supplementation of the other- interferes and disciplines the subaltern's demands. What is interesting here is the alternative theory of ideology that she proposes under the impossible task of "measuring silences." The silence of the subaltern (the deafness of the colonial discourses) could mark precisely when and how much the speech in the subaltern intervention is deviating from the Western, intellectual ideal of what a subaltern subjectivity implies and what a subaltern subjects knows. See Gayatri Spivak, "Can the subaltern speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 286-287.

2 I will understand a modern nation, when related to the Zapatistas' frame of intelligibility, within the requirements that the "first world's" rhetorical discourse demands in order to undergo market interchanges with an acceptable partner. These conditions are democracy, equality, economical capacity of response to achieve market exchanges. During November 1993 the NAFTA agreement was signed. The Mexican nation, extremely uneven in its economical development arranged a spectacle of modernity in order to fulfill the requirements of the nations partners of the agreement: Canada and the US. The viability of this performance needed the exclusion of diverse groups of citizens that could not sustain the terms of this agreement: peasant organizations, and workers unions that were functioning mainly in a national market dynamic and to which the reinforcement of globalization, in a short time period, would damage severely. A special and extremely complicated exclusion (the one that is made out of something that was never inside the nation) was made long ago: the exclusion of indigenous communities and specifically indigenous women's demands. It is this exclusion that I will address.

3 Any object that is placed in substitution of an original (imagined or real) presence constitutes the fetish. It is not only an object that guarantees the experience of excitement, but it is mainly an object that is covering a lack. Drawn from its psychoanalytical meaning the fetish is covering the mother's absence of a phallus. The mechanism that creates a fetish is double. On the one hand we face a process of recognition of the representation of a lack and on the other a very active investment to disavow this same representation. It is not simply an erasure of the representation, but an active repression of it. Lacan emphasized that the fetish is a substitute for the phallus not the penis. Disavowal is its mechanism. More than the location of the mother as the space of lack, which resonates with binaries of masculinity and femininity long ago criticized by feminists. What is reveling here is the active investment of denial and disavowal vis-à-vis difference be it sexual or racial. See Jacques Lacan, "The Signification of the Phallus," in *Écrits* (London: Norton 1977), 287-289 and Freud, "Fetichismo," 2993, 2994.

4 What I mean by the erasure of emergent juridical language is the radical edition of the "Revolutionary Women's Laws" (gathered together by Ramona and another female comandante) in the negotiations between rebels and government inside the final document signed by both parts and known as San Andrés Accords. The dialogue of San Andrés began on February 21st 1994 with the discussion of "Rights and Indigenous Culture." It suffered several interruptions the most sounded began in February 9th 1995 after a military occupation of communities that supported the Zapatistas or where under the Zapatistas control. However talks resumed and ended with the signing of the "San Andrés Accords" in February 16th 1996. The "San Andrés Accords" made specific references to the question of Indigenous women rights and culture. However this ref-

erences are inscribed mainly in the propositions of an autonomous and indigenous juridical frame. This autonomous frame certainly challenges the national juridical realm and its forms of governance, inscribing the possibility of a multicultural nation regulated by at least two juridical languages. The fate of indigenous women demands inside the "Acuerdos de San Andrés" is similar to what happens with the 34 demands: the divisions of "inside" (private) and outside (public). However it is worthy mentioning that in the "Acuerdos de San Andrés" some women's demands do appear: under point 5.1.b as the necessity to guarantee constitutional rights and human rights in particular to women, under 5.1.e to guarantee women the right of participation in equal conditions in the government and development of the indigenous communities. The problem is that the definition of what is, according to women, a constitutional or human right or what is meant by equality is subordinated to what is understood as the right to be governed by the juridical frames of traditional communities. See Comisión Nacional de Intermediación (CONAI), *Primeros Acuerdos de San Andrés*. Mesa 1: "Derechos y Cultura Indígena" (México: CONAI, 1996), 4-10, and Luis Hernández Navarro and Ramón Vera Herrera, eds., *Acuerdos de San Andrés* (México: Era, 1998), 53-66. For the content of the "Revolutionary Women's Laws" see Rosalba Hernández Castillo, "Esperanzas y Desafíos de las Chiapanecas ante el siglo XXI, La Doble Jornada" (México), Lunes 3 de marzo 1997, 18-20; Rosa Rojas, *Chiapas ¿ y las mujeres qué?* (México: La Correa Feminista, 1994), 26-40.

5 I am obliquely referring to the notion of differend used by Lyotard. The differend appears at the limit of the system of phrases and enunciations uttered in a dispute. The differend as "victim," the subaltern, appears dispossessed of the armor of language and powers of signification (instances of communication) to report the wrong done by not addressing the event with a "proper" (self owned and also adequate) language. In this case "silence" would not be read as an absence but as the negation of specific phrases. See Lyotard, 8.

6 For more on the negotiations of female voices inside nationalist movements see Partha Chatterjee, "The Nationalist Resolution of the Woman's Question," in *Recasting Women*, eds. Kum Kum Sangary and Sudesh Vaid, 233-253 (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1989) and Lydia Liu, "The Female Body and Nationalist Discourse: The Field of Life and Death Revisited," in *Scattered Hegemonies*, Inderpol Grewal and Caren Kaplan, eds. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 37-74.

7 Mary Louise Pratt defines contact zones as "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination-like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today." See Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes. Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge 1992), 4.

8 See Camera Lucida (New York: Hill and Wall 1981). Barthes creates the term "punctum" to talk about the unspeakable in an image. He defines the "punctum" as a wound (Ibid., 21) an enigma (Ibid., 18) an adventure (Ibid., 19) a set of interferences, "a kind of subtle beyond-as if the image launched desire beyond what it permits us to see" (Ibid., 59). The "punctum" of this image, for me, enters in the middle of the photograph through one the masked rebels and transits horizontally to impact the flag, ending at the altar on San Cristóbal frozen statue.

9 For the relation of photography with the real and the equivocal see Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Anchor Books Doubleday, 1977).

10 See Carlos Monsivais, "El nuevo país: un sueño de fin de siglo y la sociedad del espectáculo," in *Proceso* Num. 904, February 1994, 16-21.

11 For the complete inaugural speech see EZLN 1994, 162-168

12 In Spanish "fatherland" is feminine, the feminine gender attached to the notion of Fatherland, doubles the effect of Ramona as a woman and a hurting body, representing the "painful," fatherland.

13 During the 17th and 18th century a hegemonic discourse of La Virgen de Guadalupe arose out of the Criollo desire to wrest power and create an independent Mexican nation. This new discourse transformed Guadalupe from merely a religious symbol, to a national one. During this period La Virgen de Guadalupe gained her immense popularity as La Virgen Morena, while Malintzin absorbed the historical guilt through her designation as La Chingada, the Mexican "opening" the Mexican deepest wound according to Octavio Paz. This separation or binary discourses collapses with Ramona who is both: the wound and the "apparition." For more on

the relations with the nation's wound (La Chingada) and the nation's symbol (La Virgen de Guadalupe) see Norma Alarcón, "Traddutora, Traditora: A Paradigmatic figure of Chicana Feminism," *Cultural Critique* 13, (Fall 1989), 57-87; Alma García, "The Development of Chicana Feminist Discourse, 1970-1980" in *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S Women's History*, ed. Vicky Ruiz and Ellen Carol Dubois (New York: Routledge 1994), 531-534; Octavio Paz and Ana Castillo, eds., *Godess of the Americas/La Diosa de las Americas* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1996).

14 For more on the use of women's bodies in nationalist struggles see Lydia Liu, "The Female Body and Nationalist Discourse: The Field of Life and Death Revisited," in *Scattered Hegemonies*, Inderpol Grewal and Caren Kaplan, eds. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 37-74.

15 The National Indigenous Conference (CND) was created in 1995. Their main goal was the creation of an indigenous common front against the political system in Mexico, in power over more than seventy years. The CND seeks for democracy in a wider sense involving social, economic and cultural realms. See Juan Alzada Meneses, ed. *Nunca más un México sin nosotros! El Camino del Congreso Nacional Indígena* (México: Ce-Acatl, 1998).

16 See Video Canal Seis de Julio, *La Otra Palabra*, Produced by Canal Seis de Julio, 1996, videocassette.

17 See Ibid. and EZLN, *Documentos y Comunicados*, vol. 2, (México: ERA, 1995), 233.

18 The "Aguascalientes" are enclaves created by the Zapatistas in the rebel zones. Whenever one of their villages is taken by the military a new "Aguascalientes" appears. During the Mexican revolution in 1914 the different factions of the struggle gathered together in Aguascalientes to define a new social contract.

19 Ibid

20 For more on the use of the Internet by the Zapatistas see Sergio Aguayo Quezada and John Bailey eds, *Las Seguridades de México y Estados Unidos en un Momento de transición*, (México: Siglo XXI 1996), 320-344; Bertrand de la Grange and Maité Rico, *Marcos, la Genial Impostura*, (México: Aguilar 1997), 379-406; Roger Burbach, "Roots of the Postmodern Rebellion in Chiapas," in *New Left Review* 205, 1995, 36-46; Jaime Avilés and Gianni Mina, *Marcos y la Insurrección Zapatista: La Revolución virtual de un pueblo oprimido* (México: Grijalbo 1998).

21 For a history of Indian forced migration to the south see George Collier, *Basta! Land and the Zapatistas Rebellion in Chiapas* (Oakland: Food First, 1994), 15-45.

22 José Francisco Ruiz Massieu was assassinated on March 1994. At that time he was the Secretary General of the PRI.

23 According to Derrida, a gift has a very specific mechanism of operation. Its dynamic is centered in a verb: to give. Similar to the promise, the gift has its stipulations. Something can be conceptualized as a gift only if the receiver does not recognize it as something that has been given by another. The gift defies reciprocity. The act of giving (giving as a gift) requires that the receiver does not have to "pay back." Derrida deconstructs the meaning of space and time in order to be able to inscribe the logic of the gift, outside the symbolic. He plays the meaning of a present as a thing that is given, and the present as time. The giver and the receiver in the realm given by chronology and space recognize the present. He constructs the gift out of the logic of time, of circular time. Derrida constructs the gift precisely like the lacanian "real," the impossible. «The real is distinguished, as I said last time, by its desexualization, by the fact that its economy, later, admits something new, which is precisely the impossible.» (Derrida 1992, 167) The question here would be about the type of economy of signification that allows the gift to appear. It is not inside the economy of the symbolic sphere, that «implies the idea of exchange, of circulation, of return.» (Derrida 1992, 6) which would contain the gift. Derrida constructs the gift as expelled from the very notion of circularity, exchange, return, and circulation. See Jaques Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992), 1-33.