The Myth of La Malinche: From the Chronicles to Modern Mexican Theater

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(ABSTRACT)

In the changing discourse on Mexican history, La Malinche has evolved from a historical figure of the Conquest to a national myth and a symbol of all those who have allied themselves with foreigners against their own country and its native values and traditions. On the other hand, La Malinche is regarded as the symbolic mother of the *mestizos*. This thesis proposes to analyze the figure of La Malinche as both a historical actor in the Conquest of Mexico and as a myth in the creation of contemporary Mexican national identity. Consequently, this study takes into account the chronicles of the conquerors, later Romantic versions, and contemporary cultural and historiographical studies. This study analyzes the changing image of La Malinche in national discourse, especially following Mexico's independence from Spain and the Mexican Revolution, whereupon Mexicans searched for a national identity. It also analyzes different interpretations of twentieth-century scholars as they attempt to vindicate La Malinche from her myth as traitor. Instead, in these interpretations, La Malinche is seen playing important roles as interpreter, strategist, mediator between two different cultures, and feminist symbol. Finally, I rely on twentieth-century Mexican theater to show how the myth of La Malinche is being used, questioned, and revised on stage in accordance with current historiography and socio-economic conditions in Mexico.

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A mis padres, Natalio and Josefina, por su amor y dedicación.

I would like to recognize to my husband, Francisco and my son, Paco for their love and support. To you Francisco because you will always be “El velero, el viento y la estrella de mi travesía.” To you, my beloved son because your smile is always with me.

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Introduction

In this thesis, I propose to analyze the figure of La Malinche as both a historical actor in the Conquest of Mexico and as a myth in the creation of contemporary Mexican national identity. Consequently, the study takes into account the chronicles of the conquerors, later Romantic versions and contemporary cultural and historiographical studies. Finally, I rely on twentieth-century Mexican theater to show how the myth of La Malinche is being used, questioned, and revised in accordance with current historiography and socio-economic conditions in Mexico.

Concerning the life of this historical figure, we find diverse versions about her place of origin and social status. We can only speculate about her life before and after the period of the Conquest, but we do know for certain that she plays an important role in the conquest as interpreter for Cortés, the Spanish captain of the expedition that defeated the Aztecs. La Malinche is represented as an instrument of value by the Spanish chroniclers, and treated with respect in the indigenous accounts. Nevertheless, in the changing discourse of the history of Mexico her image was to be transformed into a symbol of treason and betrayal. After three centuries of colonialism, Mexico obtained its independence from Spain and forged a new nationalism, which culminated following the Mexican Revolution. This new nationalism denied Mexico's Spanish heritage and glorified its indigenous past. As Mexicans struggled to form a national identity, they discovered a perfect scapegoat in the figure of La Malinche due to her alliance with the Spanish conquerors. She became symbolic of all those who have allied themselves with foreigners against their own country and its native values and traditions.

After the Mexican Revolution, Mexican intellectuals attempted to identify and define the concept of what it means to be a Mexican. The leader among these intellectuals was Octavio Paz, who saw in the Conquest the roots of a national inferiority complex based on the rejection of both the European and the indigenous. Furthermore, in opposition to the Mexican nationalists, there were those who continued searching for ideologies outside of Mexico. They were labeled with the name *Malinchistas*, a negative term derived from the name of Malinche and her purported betrayal. In sum, over the centuries, La Malinche has been perceived as a heroine, the tongue, the Conquest's verb, and also as a traitor, symbolic mother of the *mestizo* and whore.

Since the late 1960's, there has been an attempt to vindicate her from her negative symbol as traitor to *la patria.* This study provides an overview of different reinterpretations of her role as interpreter, as well as her negative feminine image as the bad woman, the whore. Among the reinterpretations, I will focus on the evolution of her image as she has been represented in Mexican theater. Various dramas on the Conquest of Mexico present perspectives that differ from those of official history.

The first chapter, *La Malinche and the Chronicles*, offers an overview of La Malinche's role in the Conquest of Mexico as seen by the chroniclers. Primary sources include chronicles of eyewitnesses such as Hernán Cortés, leader of the Spanish expedition, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, a Spanish foot soldier, and Andrés de Tapia and Francisco Aguilar, also soldiers of the expedition. Other accounts include Francisco López de Gómara, secretary and biographer of Hernán Cortés, and the indigenous informants of Bernardino de Sahagún, a Franciscan friar. This chapter also discusses other accounts that were written during the centuries after the conquest, such as those of

the Spanish poet and playwright Antonio de Solís, the English historian William Prescott, and the twentieth-century biographer of Cortés, Salvador de Madariaga.

The second chapter, *La Malinche in Mexican National Identity*, discusses the changing image of La Malinche after the Conquest. It analyzes the transformation of La Malinche from a historical figure of the Conquest to a national myth. I examine the evolution of La Malinche as she has been seen in the national discourse, especially following Mexico's independence from Spain and the Mexican Revolution. The latter event prompted in Mexican intelligentsia the search for a national identity. A new ideology called *Indigenismo* promoted the denial of Mexico's Spanish origins and fostered the creation of a new nationalism that exalted Mexico's indigenous past. In this nationalistic context, La Malinche has been treated as a scapegoat, the ultimate betrayal to the indigenous. In post-Revolutionary Mexico, some Mexican scholars have seen in the events of both the Spanish conquest and the Mexican Revolution the origins of the trauma that resulted in a national inferiority complex. Octavio Paz's essay, "The Sons of La Malinche," has been particularly decisive in the construction of La Malinche as a negative symbol of treachery to her race and also as a passive object of the Conquest. This chapter also deals with the term "malinchismo" and its significance within Mexican culture and socio-economic practices.

The third chapter, *La Malinche as Interpreter and Traitor*, shows the different interpretations that twentieth-century scholars, such as Todorov, Karttunen, and several Chicano scholars, have offered of La Malinche. Most of them attempt to vindicate La Malinche and her myth. In these interpretations, La Malinche plays important roles as

interpreter, *soldadera* (female soldier), strategist, symbol of the fusion of two different cultures and feminist symbol.

The fourth chapter, *La Malinche in Mexican Theater*, provides an analysis of the figure of La Malinche as she has been presented in different dramas dealing with the Conquest of Mexico. It also includes the evolution of the historiography concerning La Malinche during the last decades of the twentieth century. The first dramas analyzed in this chapter present a more patriarchal ideology, which is then contrasted with the more modern versions of the conquest, versions by Sabina Berman, Willebaldo López, and Víctor Hugo Rascón Banda, all of whom question both patriarchal ideology and official history. All three dramatists bring La Malinche up to the present epoch in postmodern presentations that make fun of official history while at the same time making the audience or reader reconsider her persisting myth.

Chapter 1: La Malinche and the Chronicles

Most of the early accounts concur that La Malinche was an Indian woman, who along with nineteen other women was granted to Hernán Cortés and his soldiers in one of the first encounters between Spaniards and Indians. Malinche became Cortés's interpreter and accompanied him during the Spaniards' expedition to Tenochtitlán (today Mexico City) to defeat the Aztec empire ruled by Moctezuma. Eventually, La Malinche became Cortés' concubine. Even in modern interpretations of the Conquest of Mexico, La Malinche is described as Cortés' interpreter and concubine.

To understand La Malinche's role in the Conquest of Mexico, it is necessary to review what the chroniclers wrote about her and her participation in the Conquest. Since they constitute the primary source for an analysis of La Malinche. In this chapter, I present an overview of what has been said about La Malinche in Spanish chronicles and other writings since the Conquest. First, I consider different chronicles written by eyewitnesses such as Hernán Cortés himself, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, Andrés de Tapia, and Francisco de Aguilar, as well as Cortés' first biographer, Francisco López de Gómara. I also explore how the natives presented her in their account of the Conquest, the *Florentine Codex*, a finally, I consider historiographic works written a long time after the events, such as those of Antonio de Solís, William Prescott, and Salvador de Madariaga.

Even though La Malinche was his interpreter and the mother of his son, Hernán Cortés barely mentions her in his letters to the King of Spain, Charles V. In his *Cartas de relación*, Cortés makes only two references to La Malinche as his Indian interpreter. [1] In

[1] The originals of Cortés' letters to Charles V are lost. But a copy, probably made in 1528, of all but the first, as well as a copy of the 1519 letter to the municipality of Veracruz, which substitutes for that lost

the second letter, he does not even mention her name. Instead, Cortés refers to her as the Indian interpreter from Potonchán. He tells us about her loyalty to the Spaniards by describing how she alerted them to the Cholulans' plot to attack. According to Cortés, this *india* was told about the plans by a Cholulan woman, who offered to help her escape from the Spaniards. La Malinche immediately informed Jerónimo Aguilar,[2] who then warned Cortés. Consequently, Cortés ordered a massacre of the Cholulan people. Therefore, by discovering the conspiracy of the Cholulans, this *india*, as Cortés calls her, saved the Spaniards from disaster:

> Y estando algo perplejo en esto, a la lengua que yo tengo, que es una india que esta tierra, que hube en Potonchán…y que los de la ciudad cómo muy cerquita de allí estaba mucha gente de Mutezuma junta, y que los de la ciudad tenían fuera sus mujeres e hijos y toda su ropa, y que había de dar sobre nosotros para matarnos a todos, y si ella se quería salvar que se fuese con ella, que ella le guarecería; la cual lo dijo a aquel Jerónimo de Aguilar, lengua que yo hube en Yucatán.[3]

In Letter V, Cortés refers to her as the interpreter who always accompanied him. He explains that she was one of twenty women who were given to him. There is no doubt that Cortés needed her as his interpreter due to his inability to communicate with the Indians:

> . . . Y para que creyese de verdad, que se informase de aquella lengua que con él hablaba, que es Marina, la que yo siempre conmigo he traído, porque allí me la habían dado con otras veinte mujeres; y ella le habló y le certificó de ello, y cómo

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letter, are in the National Library of Vienna. Hugh Thomas, *Conquest: Moctezuma, Cortés and the fall of Old Mexico,* 2nd ed. (New York: Touchstone Simon & Schuster Inc., 1993), 791.

[2] Cortés's fleet first touched land at the Island of Cozumel, where they rescued a Spanish castaway, Jerónimo de Aguilar, who had lived among the Maya for eight years. Aguilar became Cortés's interpreter.

[3] Hernán Cortés, *Cartas de relación*, 7th ed. (México: Editorial Porrúa, 1973), 44.

> yo había ganado a México, y le dijo todas las tierras que yo tengo sujetas y puestas debajo del imperio de vuestra majestad. . . .[4]

In the chronicle of Francisco López de Gómara, considered to be the first biographer of Cortés,[5] he mentions Marina and the other women who were given to Cortés among other offerings, such as hens, fruits, and gold. These women were given to the Spaniards for grinding and cooking the maize. He tells us that these women were slaves who were put at the Spaniards' services. López de Gómara adds that Cortés assigned these women to his captains:

> Así que pasado el término que llevaron, vino a Cortés el señor de aquel pueblo y otros cuatro o cinco, sus comarcanos, con buena compañía de indios, y le trajeron pan, gallipavos, frutas y cosas así de bastimento para el real, y hasta cuatrocientros pesos de oro en joyuelas, y ciertas piedras turquesas de poco valor, y hasta veinte mujeres de sus esclavas para que les cociesen pan y guisasen de comer al ejército; con las cuales pensaban hacerle gran servicio; como los veían sin mujeres, y porque cada día es menester moler y cocer el pan de maíz, en que se ocupan mucho tiempo las mujeres.[6]

López de Gómara does not tell us to whom Cortés assigned Marina, only that these women were divided among the Spanish soldiers to be their *camaradas*: ". . . y repartió aquellas veinte mujeres esclavas entre los españoles por camaradas."[7] Therefore, these women were not only destined to cook for these men, but also to satisfy their sexual appetite.

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[4] Ibid., 242.
[5] López de Gómara was Cortés' chaplain in the last years of his life. Most of the events he narrates are based on Cortés' *Cartas de relación.* López de Gómara's *Historia de la conquista de México* was first published in Spain in 1552. This account tends to exalt the figure of Cortés.
[6] Francisco López de Gómara, *Historia de la conquista de México*, 3rd ed. (Mexico: Editorial Porrúa: 1997), 36.
[7] Ibid.

Concerning La Malinche's role as interpreter during the conquest, López de Gómara explains that she was able to communicate with the envoys that Moctezuma, the Aztec emperor, sent to the coast of Veracruz to learn the identity of the foreigners who had arrived. Since Jerónimo de Aguilar could not understand the natives of those regions,[8] La Malinche represented for Cortés the opportunity to communicate with them. López de Gómara tell us that Cortés spoke to her through Aguilar and offered her more freedom if she would help him communicate with the natives. Moreover, he wanted her as his secretary:

> . . . porque una de aquellas veinte mujeres que le dieron en Potonchan hablaba con los de aquel gobernador y los entendía muy bien, como a hombres de su propia lengua; así que Cortés la tomó aparte con Aguilar, y le prometió más que libertad si le trataba verdad entre él y aquellos de su tierra, pues los entendía, y él la quería tener por su faraute y secretaria . . . [9]

López de Gómara states Marina's place of origin to be Xalixco and that she was kidnapped from her parents, who were rich landowners. Later she was sold to the people of Xicalango and, finally, given to the Spaniards as a slave. López de Gómara also points out that Marina was among the first Indians to be baptized:

> . . . le preguntó quién era y de dónde. Marina, que así se llamaba después de cristiana, dijo que era de Xalixco, de un lugar dicho Viluta, hija de ricos padres, y parientes del señor de aquella tierra; y que siendo muchacha la habían hurtado ciertos mercaderes en tiempo de guerra, y traído a vender a la feria de Xicalnco, que es un gran pueblo sobre Coazacualco, no muy aparte de Tabasco; y de allí venida a poder del señor de Potonchan. Esta Marina y sus compañeros fueron los

[8] The language of the Mexicans was Nahuatl, and Jerónimo de Aguilar only spoke Maya.
[9] López de Gómara, *Historia de la conquista*, 41.

> primeros cristianos baptizados de toda la Nueva España, y ella sola, con Aguilar, el verdadero intérprete entre los nuestros y los de aquella tierra.[10]

López de Gómara also informs us of Marina's warning about the Cholulan plot:

> . . . avino que una mujer de un principal…dijo a Marina que se quedase allí con ella que no quería que la matasen con sus amos. Ella disimuló la mala nueva y sacóle quién y cómo la tramaban. Corrió luego a buscar a Jerónimo de Aguilar, y juntos dijerónselo a Cortés.[11]

In sum, in the scant information that López de Gómara offers about La Malinche, she is merely presented as an ally who obtained the details about the Cholulans' plot.

The lengthy chronicle written by Bernal Díaz del Castillo,[12] a Spanish conqueror, provides some biographical information about La Malinche. In *The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico*, Díaz describes her as an intelligent, beautiful, and heroic woman. According to Díaz, Doña Marina[13] and other women were given to the Spaniards as a gift in one of their first encounters. Díaz narrates that some *caciques* and chiefs of Tabasco brought them gold presents and other objects, as well as twenty women. Díaz deems

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[10] Ibid., 42.
[11] Ibid., 90.
[12] *The True History of the Conquest of New Spain* was written in the 1560s and published in 1632, long after the soldier-chronicler had died. Díaz wrote this chronicle in the form of a spectacular epic. Like the peripatetic hero of a historical novel, Díaz is invariably present where the most dramatic events were happening. Introduction of Irving A. Leonard in Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico*, trans. and ed. Irving A. Leonard (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1956), xi-xix.
[13] She has been called Malintzin, Malinche, Doña Marina and more recently Malinche. I prefer to call her La Malinche since it is this name with which she is most recognized today. Bernal Díaz del Castillo refers to her as Doña Marina, using the honorific title of *Doña* given to Spaniard ladies at that time. Marina was the name Spaniards gave to her after she was baptized. Other chroniclers, Cortés himself, call her Marina. In indigenous accounts she is called Malintzin. In his study of book twelve of the *Florentine Codex*, James Lockhart explains that the name of the indigenous interpreter for the Spaniards is rendered frequently in Nahuatl texts as Malintzin. Other sources confirm the authenticity of this form, which apparently goes back to the time of the conquest itself. The name arises from the Spanish Marina by substituting *l* for *r* (which Nahuatl lacked), omitting the final *a* for reasons that are not clear, and adding the honorific ending *–tzin*. James Lockhart, *We People Here: Nahuatl Accounts of The Conquest of Mexico* (Los Angeles: UCLA Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1993), 33.

Doña Marina to be the most valuable of those gifts, since he considers her to play such an important role in the communication between Spaniards and Indians.[14]

> This present however, was worth nothing in comparison with the twenty women that were given us, among them one very excellent woman called Doña Marina, for so she was named when she became a Christian. [15]

In his chronicle, Díaz states that before talking about the great Moctezuma and his famous city of Mexico and the Mexicans, he would describe Doña Marina, who was of noble origin, a daughter of *caciques*.[16] Díaz refers to her more respectfully than Cortés and López de Gómara, always using the title "Doña" to address her. He claims that she was: "a person of the greatest importance and was obeyed without question by the Indians throughout New Spain."[17]

Díaz narrates that La Malinche's parents were *caciques* in a town called Paynala, near Coatzacoalcos. When her father died, her mother married another *cacique* and bore him a son. In order to prevent La Malinche from being an impediment to his inheritance, they agreed to give her to some Indians from Xicalango, and told their people that she had died. Later, she was given to the people of Tabasco, who then gave her as a gift to Cortés. [18]

The valuable contribution of La Malinche to the Conquest is recognized by Díaz. She knew Maya and also Nahuatl, the language of the Mexicans, because it was spoken in her place of origin. As a result, Jerónimo de Aguilar could communicate with her and then translate into Castilian for Cortés. Díaz claims that it is necessary to recognize Doña

[14] Díaz, *The Discovery and Conquest*, 67.
[15] Ibid., 62.
[16] Ibid., 66.
[17] Ibid., 67.
[18] Ibid., 66-67.

Marina because: "Without the help of Doña Marina we could not have understood the language of New Spain and Mexico."[19] Yet, even though Díaz claims here that her participation was important, he only devotes to her a few pages of his lengthy chronicle and barely mentions her interventions as interpreter and ally during the march from Veracruz to Mexico.

Díaz does refer at length to a dialogue that La Malinche had with her mother and half brother during their expedition to Honduras, explaining that when Cortés passed through the province of Coatzacoalcos, he ordered all the *caciques* of that province (among them were La Malinche's mother and half-brother), to congregate for a speech about religion. Díaz states that when Doña Marina saw her mother and half-brother, instead of reproaching them for what they had done to her, she told them not to be afraid because she had already forgiven them. She said she was happy to be a Christian and married to a Spanish soldier. Moreover, she was happy also to serve Cortés and her husband:

> . . . and said that God had been very gracious to her in freeing her from the worship of idols and making her a Christian, and letting her bear a son to her lord and master Cortés and in marrying her to such a gentleman as Juan Jaramillo, who was now her husband. That she would rather serve her husband and Cortés than anything else in the world, and would not exchange her place to be Cacica of all the provinces in New Spain.[20]

We can only speculate about the veracity of these words supposedly enunciated by La Malinche. It could be argued that Díaz put these words in her mouth, perhaps to justify the purpose of the spiritual Conquest, in which the Indians were renouncing their

[19] Ibid., 68.
[20] Ibid.

old faith and embracing the new one by means of baptism. According to both Díaz and López de Gómara, La Malinche and the other women were among the first baptized in Mexico. Additionally, Díaz describes her obedience and gratitude toward Cortés, who married her to one of his best men, Juan Jaramillo,[21] even though she already had had a son with Cortés.

Díaz describes in detail the episode in which La Malinche found out the plot that the Cholulans were preparing against the Spaniards. While Cortés and López de Gómara state that La Malinche was informed by a Cholulan woman, Díaz offers a more romantic version. He tells us that this woman offered her son to La Malinche to liberate her from the Spaniards. He also explains that first she obtained this woman's trust to learn more about the Cholulans' plans, and later, La Malinche replies with lies to this woman to make her believe she is interested in her offer. La Malinche speaks affectionately to this woman by calling her mother: "I do not want them to notice us, so Mother you wait here while I begin to bring my property…and then we shall be able to go."[22] Instead of leaving with them, La Malinche informs Cortés. In sum, La Malinche is presented by Díaz as an intelligent woman who offered unconditionally her services as interpreter, and who served the Spaniards as a trustful ally.

Díaz also tells us about the name that the Indians called Cortés, "Malinche," which means "Marina's Captain." Cortés received this name because La Malinche was always with him, especially when he had to speak to ambassadors of the different towns they went through. Thus, throughout his chronicle, Díaz always refers to La Malinche as

[21] Originally, Cortés assigned La Malinche to one of his captains, Alonzo Hernández Puertocarrero, but when he went to Spain, La Malinche became Cortés' mistress. In his expedition to Honduras, Cortés married her to one of his captains, Juan Jaramillo. By this time, Cortés was a widow, and La Malinche had had a son with him

Doña Marina and uses the name of Malinche for Cortés: "I will call him Malinche from now henceforth in all the accounts of conversations which were held with any of the Indians."[23]

On many occasions, Díaz suggests that La Malinche was not only Cortés' interpreter but also that she at times spoke for herself. For instance, when Moctezuma was seized by the Spaniards, La Malinche advised him to go with them and said that they would treat him with the respect he deserved. In fact, she convinced him that it was for his own good: "Señor Moctezuma, what I counsel you, is to go at once to their quarters without any disturbance at all, for I know that they will pay you much honour as a great Prince such as you are, otherwise you will remain here a dead man, but in their quarter you will learn the truth."[24]

There are other accounts of the Conquest that were also written by eyewitnesses, such as Andrés de Tapia and Francisco de Aguilar. The first was one of Cortés' most trusted captains who took a prominent part in the campaigns. Francisco de Aguilar, who also took part in all the campaigns and guarded Moctezuma when he was imprisoned by Cortés, wrote about the Conquest of Mexico much later when he was a monk of the Dominican order.

Francisco de Aguilar refers not to twenty women, but only eight who were given to them as slaves. He also mentions La Malinche's understanding of the Maya and Nahuatl languages. However, he does not mention her important role as interpreter. Instead, he briefly refers to her with these words:

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[22] Díaz, 176.
[23] Ibid., 150.
[24] Ibid., 230.

> They also brought a present of some mantles and eight slave women, one of whom was named Marina. She knew the Mexican tongue and understood the language Aguilar had learned during his six or seven years of captivity.[25]

In his account, the conqueror Andrés de Tapia refers to La Malinche, but not by any name. He only tells us that among the twenty women who were given to Hernán Cortés, there was one who spoke two languages and who could communicate with their Spanish interpreter, who also remains nameless:

> Of the twenty Indian women that had been given him, the marqués had divided some among certain gentlemen . . . one of the women spoke to them, so we found she spoke two languages and our Spanish interpreter could understand her. We learned from her that as a child she had been stolen by some traders and taken to be sold in the land of Tabasco where she was brought up.[26]

Another study that has been widely used to understand the events of the Conquest of Mexico is the collection of Nahuatl narrative accounts of the Conquest of Mexico that Sahagún collected in his Book XII of the *Florentine Codex*.[27] In this account, La Malinche (called Malintzin by the natives) plays an important role as interpreter. She speaks to the Indians and then translates to the Spaniards. She is depicted in many illustrations, in which she appears in a central position between the Spaniards and the Indians. The first time La Malinche appears is when the Aztec emissaries return to Mexico to tell Moctezuma what they have seen. They communicate to their emperor that

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[25] Patricia de Fuentes, ed. and trans., *The Conquistadors: First-person Accounts of the Conquest of Mexico* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 138.
[26] Ibid., 24.
[27] In sixteenth-century central Mexico, some relevant texts were written, set down in Roman letters in the indigenous Nahuatl, and during the twentieth century scholars have published those extant texts, translating them into various languages. This encyclopedic history of Nahua culture was organized by the Franciscan

they have seen among the Spaniards a woman, "one of us people here," who is the foreigners' interpreter:

> It was told, presented, made known, announced, and reported to Moctezuma, and brought to his attention, that a woman, one of us people here, came accompanying them as interpreter. Her name was Marina and her homeland was Tepeticpac, on the coast, where they first took her.[28]

In his *Historia de la Conquista de México*, Antonio de Solís, who also uses the title *Doña* to speak about her, refers to Díaz del Castillo's explanation of La Malinche's origins.[29] However, he does not tell us the same history of how La Malinche came to Xicalango. Solís claims that there are different versions: "Y por ciertos accidentes de su fortuna, que refieren con variedad los autores, fue transportada en sus primeros años en Xicalango."[30] Solís describes how La Malinche was born a noble but raised in poverty, sold to the Tabasco *cacique* as a slave, and later given to Cortés: "donde se crió pobremente, desmentida en paños vulgares su nobleza, hasta que declinando más su fortuna vino a ser, por venta o por despojo de guerra, esclava del cacique de Tabasco, cuya liberalidad la puso en el dominio de Cortés."[31]

Solís describes La Malinche as a beautiful woman: "Venía con estas mujeres una india principal de buen talle y más que ordinaria hermosura, que recibió después con el bautismo el nombre de Marina."[32] Solís asserts that doña Marina learned Castilian in a

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friar Bernardino de Sahagún. Book Twelve is thought to have been first drafted in around 1555. Lockhart, *We People Here*, 1, 27.

[28] Ibid., 86.

[29] Antonio de Solís was a talented Spanish poet and playwright who was named royal chronicler of the Indies by Philip IV in 1661. His history was published in 1684. Since he was a playwright, Solís gave his history the form of a heroic drama. Benjamin Keen, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1985), 176.

[30] Antonio de Solís, *Historia de la Conquista de México*, 2d ed. (Mexico: Editorial Porrúa, 1973), 67.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid., 65.

few days because of her special abilities and her noble origins: " . . . doña Marina aprendió la castellana, en que tardó pocos días, porque tenía rara viveza de espíritu y algunos dotes naturales que acordaban la calidad de su nacimiento."[33] Solís points out Marina's fidelity to Cortés, and refers to the son she had with him. "Fue siempre doña Marina fidelísima intérprete de Hernán Cortés, y él la estrechó en esta confidencia por términos menos decentes que debiera, pues tuvo en ella un hijo que se llamó don Martín Cortés." [34]

The English historian, William Prescott, like Díaz del Castillo, felt it was important to provide the reader with more information about La Malinche's character and history due to her important role in the Conquest of Mexico. Prescott explains that Cortés was unable to communicate with the Tabascan chiefs through Aguilar since he did not know the Náhuatl language. Then Cortés was informed that one of the female slaves given to him was a native Mexican who understood that language: "Her name that given to her by the Spaniards –was Marina; and as she was to exercise a most important influence on their fortunes, it is necessary to acquaint the reader with something of her character and history."[35]

Prescott describes La Malinche as a young, charming, generous, and intelligent woman. In addition, he states that she remained faithful to the Spaniards, to whom she was very useful. He praises her "lively genius" to learn Castilian, the language of the conquerors: "She learned it the more readily, as it was to her the language of love."[36] When he narrates her early life and the way she was given to the Spaniards, he bases his

[33] Ibid., 68.
[34] Ibid. Díaz states that since she was good looking, intelligent and without embarrassment, Cortés gave her to Alonso Hernández Puertocarrero. When the latter went to Spain, Doña Marina lived with Cortés and bore him a son named Martín Cortés. Díaz, 64.

account on Díaz's. In fact, Prescott claims that the "honest" soldier, Bernal Díaz himself, had witnessed the encounter between Marina and her mother as well as La Malinche's generous treatment towards her mother:[37]

> She is said to have uncommon personal attractions, and her open, expressive features indicated her generous temper. She always remained faithful to the countrymen of her adoption; and her knowledge of the language and customs of the Mexicans, and often of their designs, enabled her to extricate the Spaniards, more than once, from the most embarrassing and perilous situations.[38]

Prescott tells us about Cortés' appreciation of her services as his interpreter and his mistress. He also informs us about La Malinche and Cortés' son, Martín Cortés: "Cortés who appreciated the value of her services from the first made her his interpreter, then his secretary, and, won by her charms, his mistress. She had a son with him, Don Martín Cortés. . . "[39] After Prescott narrates Marina's marriage to Juan Xaramillo,[40] he claims that from that point on the name of this woman disappeared from the pages of history: "But it has been always held in grateful remembrance by the Spaniards, for the important aid which she gave them in effecting the Conquest, and by the natives, for the kindness and sympathy which she showed them in their misfortunes."[41]

Among Cortés' numerous biographers, who have tended to exalt him, Salvador de Madariaga points out with respect to La Malinche that "Doña" was not a common title, and that in Spain this title was given to a lady, as a symbol of her nobility. Thus,

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[35] William Prescott, *History of the Conquest of Mexico*, Vol. I (New York: A. L.Burt Co., 1843), 208.
[36] Ibid., 209.
[37] Unlike Díaz, Prescott preferred to call her Marina instead of Doña Marina.
[38] Prescott, *History*, 209-210.
[39] Ibid., 209.
[40] Díaz narrates that during the expedition to Honduras Doña Marina got married to a "gentleman" named Juan Jaramillo, 67.
[41] Prescott, *History*, Vol. II, 333.

Madariaga argues that the women given to the Spaniards were not slaves, but ladies.[42] Moreover, Madariaga argues that this fact "proves to what an extent the subconscious attitude of the Spaniards was one of racial equality and assimilation."[43]

There was in Spain an institution that endeavored to combine the sanctity of monogamous marriage and polygamous proclivities: the *barragana*, who was a kind of admitted concubine. Spaniards often took one or more Indian girls as *barraganas*, "wives in all but the sacrament." Thus, according to Madariaga, Spaniards granted their Indian mistresses honor and privilege as well as genuine social and racial equality.[44] Moreover, he argues that even though Cortés already had a high opinion of La Malinche's linguistic ability, he chose her to be his bedfellow during the period when her loyalty was most vital to him. Later on, he was quite content to see her united to other men when he realized that she was not so indispensable as a political tool.[45]

After having analyzed what has been said about the historical figure of La Malinche in all these accounts, one can see that each version presented by the chroniclers is slightly different. Cortés, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, as well as Andrés de Tapia and Francisco de Aguilar were all eyewitnesses to the events of the Conquest of Mexico, but it seems that their motives in relating these events were different. Cortés, for example, was offering the King of Spain a narration of his own military achievements and the territories he had conquered. Thus, one can question the veracity of the events presented in these *Cartas de relación*, since his purpose was to gain the King's trust in his

[42] Salvador de Madariaga, *Hernán Cortés, Conqueror of Mexico* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1941), 152.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid., 153
[45] Ibid.

campaign and thus obtain his financial and political patronage.[46] Therefore, the person who could tell us most about La Malinche is the person who barely mentions her. In fact, he only refers to her on two occasions. The first time that Cortés mentions her is only as a *india,* and the second time as *la lengua,* "the tongue," to explain her function as his interpreter.

Although the chronicle of Bernal Díaz del Castillo has served as the source for much biographical information about La Malinche, we cannot be sure of the reliability of these "facts."As Frances Karttunen points out, most of what we think we know about doña Marina is through Bernal Díaz del Castillo's chronicle.[47] Bernal Díaz del Castillo shows La Malinche as a heroine.[48] He informs us of her noble lineage, her incredible beauty and her courage, and how she was respected by Spaniards as well as by Indians. Yet, in both the Indian account in the *Florentine Codex* and the chronicle of Bernal Díaz del Castillo, what seem to be La Malinche's words are perhaps not hers. Following the patriarchal tradition of putting words into women's mouths, her purported statements may have been invented.

There are no significant variations in the consideration of La Malinche's role in the interpretations of Solís, Prescott, and Madariaga. In fact, they take the Spanish chronicles of Cortés, Díaz del Castillo, and López de Gómara as the primary sources for their accounts. Nonetheless, while Prescott presents a romantic heroine in the figure of La Malinche, Madariaga, as Cortés' biographer, tends to minimize the figure of La Malinche and exalt the figure of Cortés.

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[46] De Fuentes, *The Conquistadors*, ix.
[47] Frances Karttunen, "Rethinking Malinche," *Indian Women of Early Mexico* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 299.

As Sandra Cypess points out, the Spanish texts of the conquest show this Amerindian woman transformed into Doña Marina, a Hispanic lady who is seen as a positive figure.[49] Therefore, La Malinche's actions are seen in favor of the *conquistadores*, such as her uncovering of the Cholulan plot, which López de Gómara, Díaz, and Cortés narrate in great detail in their accounts. Cypess argues, however, that this Cholulan episode would later be used in future texts, to condemn La Malinche for betraying her people.[50]

[48] Julie Greer Johnson, *Women in Colonial Spanish American Literature* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983), 14.
[49] Sandra Messinger Cypess, *La Malinche in Mexican Literature: From History to Myth* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991), 9.
[50] Ibid., 35.

Chapter 2: La Malinche in Mexican National Identity

During the colonial period, Doña Marina of the Spanish chronicles, protector of the foreigner and mother of the first *mestizo*, was largely ignored in both historical and literary texts. It was not until after the Independence of Mexico from Spain in 1821 that the myth of La Malinche was revised from the Spanish version to a version determined the dominant politics. As in other Spanish-American countries, Mexico attempted to reject its Spanish heritage. Hence, La Malinche's image was re-elaborated as a negative one. As Sandra Cypess points out, La Malinche is transformed from the "biblical heroine" to a whore and terrible mother. La Malinche became both snake and Mexican Eve, the traitor and the temptress. [51] Cypess claims that: "La lupa nacionalista exagera todo lo negativo e ignora cuanto positivo pudiera haber existido."[52] This negative image of La Malinche was promoted by a Mexican nationalism that was inspired by indigenous roots rather than by its Spanish heritage. In her cultural study of Mexico, Irene Nicholson observes that the Indian heritage still exercises a strong influence because both Indian tradition and anti-Spanish sentiments, engendered during the struggle for Independence, have been kept alive by extreme nationalists. She states that in the eyes of a few pro-Indian, anti-European propagandists, Cortés was a syphilitic, while the name of his mistress and interpreter, Malinche was used as synonym for quisling (traitor).[53]

The first historical novel that narrates the conquest is *Xicoténcatl*, anonymously published in Philadelphia in 1826. At that time Mexico had just achieved independence from Spanish rule. This novel narrates the arrival of Cortés and his armies in Tlaxcala,

[51] Cypess, *La Malinche in Mexican Literature*, 9.
[52] Sandra Messinger Cypess, "Re-visión de la figura de la Malinche en la dramaturgia mexicana contemporánea," *La Malinche, sus padres y sus hijos*, ed. Margo Glantz (Mexico: UNAM, 1994), 179.

the resistance offered at first by the *tlaxcaltecas*, and finally, their collaboration with Cortés in his advance toward Tenochtitlán, leading to the defeat of the Aztecs. [54]

In this novel, Marina seems to be multidimensional, for at first she is deceitful, passionate, and sensual, driven by self-interest and her attraction to Cortés and the power derived from her association with him. However, her son's birth awakens sentiments that ennoble her. This event helps her recognize her role in history as the symbolic mother of the nation.[55]

The first time that La Malinche appears in the second chapter, the anonymous author uses the same story told by the chroniclers about her origins and the way she was granted to the Spaniards. However, this story is followed by the author's position with respect to her as a negative character who reflects the anti-Spanish sentiments:

> . . . The fine talents and charms that she possessed attracted her master, who, after having baptized her with the name of Marina, gave her his love and trust in such a way that in a few days she went from being his slave to being his concubine and confidante. This last office she carried out with great advantages for Hernán Cortés, for the natives did not suspect in her the guile and deceit of the Europeans. She was able to employ corruption and intrigue more effectively, activities in which she made great progress. [56]

In the creation of a new nation after independence, the figure of La Malinche became ambiguous. On the one hand, she was blamed for the destruction of the indigenous world, a "crime" used by the nationalists to affirm Mexico's pre-Columbian past as the forging of the new nation. On the other hand, La Malinche represents the birth

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[53] Irene Nicholson, *The X in Mexico: Growth Within Tradition* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1966), 18.
[54] Guillermo I. Castillo-Feliú, ed. and trans., *Xicoténcatl* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), 2.
[55] Ibid., 3-4.
[56] Ibid., 37.

of the *mestizaje*, the progenitrix of the *mestizo* race,[57] and thus, the symbolic mother of all Mexicans. As Margo Glantz points out, La Malinche is the paradigm of *mestizaje*.[58] To understand the process of transformation that La Malinche experienced through different periods of Mexican history, it is necessary to examine the different perspectives of both Conservatives and Liberals concerning the Conquest of Mexico and the origin of the Mexicans.

Traditional hispanophile Conservatives were influenced by the original imperial school of history. Thus, Spanish texts on the Conquest, such as Hernán Cortés' letters to Emperor Charles V and the chronicles of Francisco López de Gómara and Bernal Díaz del Castillo, were used by the first national historians of the nineteenth century to justify and glorify the military conquest of the Aztec empire. Thus, Conservatives interpreted the Conquest as the birth of the Mexican nation, Cortés as its founding father, and the Virgin of Guadalupe as its christening. On the other hand, the Liberals presented a hispano-phobic position, condemning and rejecting the Conquest, influenced mainly by Bartolomé de las Casas' writings.[59] While Conservatives praised Cortés, Liberals exalted Cuauhtémoc, the last Aztec emperor, along with Independence leaders such as Miguel Hidalgo and José María Morelos. In their anti-Spanish interpretation, Liberals mainly condemned the Church.[60] After the triumph of the liberal Reform (1855-1867) as well as

[57] Ann McBride-Limaye, "Metamorphoses of La Malinche and Mexican Cultural Identity," *Comparative Civilizations Review,* 19 (1988): 1.
[58] Margo Glantz, *La Malinche, sus padres y sus hijos*, 1.
[59] His *Historia de las Indias*, written in 1527-66, was not edited until 1875. De las Casas' writings stigmatized Spaniards with unique greed and cruelty since their barbarous acts in conquering and exploiting the Indians.
[60] Thomas Benjamin, *La Revolución: Mexico's Great Revolution as Memory, Myth, & History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 15-16.

the triumph of the Liberals over the Conservatives and the French in 1867, the Liberals attempted to create a new national order to replace the Spanish colonial one."[61]

The position of the Liberals toward the Conquest and La Malinche can be illustrated in the words of the Liberal Ignacio Ramírez[62] in a speech delivered in Alameda Park in Mexico City on Independence Day, September 16, 1861. Ramírez compares the figure of La Malinche with the figure of Doña Josefa Ortiz, an advocate of independence:

> One of the mysteries of fate is that every Mexican owes his downfall and disgrace to a woman, and to another woman his salvation and glory; the myth of Eve and Mary is reproduced everywhere; we indignantly remember Cortés's mistress and will never forget, in our gratitude to Doña María Josefa Ortiz, the immaculate Malintzin of other times who dared to pronounce the *Fiat* of independence, so that the incarnation of patriotism would make it happen.[63]

By comparing La Malinche with a heroine of independence, Ramírez underscores her treason to *la patria* (fatherland). For Ramírez, La Malinche is only Cortés' concubine. In his view, she is the Mexican Eve, singlehandedly responsible for the downfall of the old Mexican civilization. In his words, Doña María Josefa Ortiz is the immaculate Malintzin and represents the essence of the Liberal ideology, the *desespañolización*, which casts the blame not only on the Spaniards, but also on their Indian allies. Moreover, according to the prejudices of that period, La Malinche is not only a traitor

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[61] Leopoldo Zea, *Positivism in Mexico*, trans. Josephine H. Schulte (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1974), xiii.

[62] Ignacio Ramírez was an educator, journalist and orator. He was often called "El Voltaire mexicano." He came from pure Indian stock. He emphasized that the first steps to be taken toward the goal of the Indian's redemption must be based upon recognition of his language, modes of thought. Martin S. Stabb, "Indigenism and Racism in Mexican Thought: 1857-1911," *Journal of Interamerican Studies*, I (1959): 412-413.

[63] Ignacio Ramírez, "Discurso cívico pronunciado el 16 de septiembre de 1861, en la Alameda de México, en memoria de la proclamación de la Independencia, *Obras*, vol I, 134, as cited in Rogelio Bartra, *The Cage of Melancholy: Identity and Metamorphosis in the Mexican Character*, trans. Christopher J. Hall (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 156.

because of her betrayal to her people, but also for her condition as woman, in becoming Cortés' mistress.[64]

The search for national identity became a central focus of attention, especially after the Mexican Revolution.[65] Mexico also experienced a philosophical revolution due to the dissatisfaction of Mexican intellectuals with the Positivism that had established a semiofficial ideology during the dictatorial regime of Porfirio Díaz (1876-1911). Positivism in Mexico involved a depreciation of traditional Mexican culture and institutions in favor of an attempt to copy, at least symbolically, the organizations and ideologies of the more advanced Western nations.[66] As Alan Knight points out, Porfirian thinkers were profoundly influenced by social Darwinism and Spencer's Evolutionism, both imported from Europe. At that moment, Mexico was experiencing great economic development, in which the indigenous peasants were stigmatized by the myth of the lazy native by both foreign and Mexican employers.[67]

Díaz's concern about Mexican nationality seemed very contradictory when just two months before the official beginning of the Maderista revolution in November 1910, Mexicans celebrated the centennial of their independence with a dose of nationalistic sentiment through speeches, writings and parades. However, this celebration also awakened nationalist resentment since lower-class Mexicans were excluded from participating in those celebrations because they might be offensive to the foreign visitors.

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[64] Carlos Monsiváis, "La Malinche y el Primer Mundo," *La Malinche, sus padres y sus hijos*, 143-144.
[65] Solomon Lipp, *Leopoldo Zea: From Mexicanidad to a Philosophy of History* (Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1980), 3.
[66] Michael A. Weinstein, *The Polarity of Mexican Thought: Instrumentalism and Finalism* (State College: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976), 1.
[67] Alan Knight, "Racism, Revolution, and Indigenismo: Mexico, 1910-1940," *The Idea of Race*, ed. Richard Graham (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 78.

Therefore, these celebrations, which claimed to be a celebration of one hundred years of a new nation, only represented the Mexican elite.[68]

Among the *Científicos,* who emphasized scientific progress and gradual evolution in order to prevent revolution, Justo Sierra was a towering figure in the intellectual life of Porfirian Mexico. Harold Davis claims that Sierra's positivism is apparent in his *The Political Evolution of the Mexican People*.[69] In this writing, Sierra praises Hernán Cortés' audacity and faith, while he comments about La Malinche:

> In Tabasco, after a furious fight on the banks of the Grijalva, he acquired Doña Marina, the Indian woman who has been called a traitor by the retrospective adulators of the Aztecs but who was adored by the Aztecs themselves almost as a goddess, the Malintzin, "the Tongue," the Conquest's Voice.[70]

Sierra's brief description of La Malinche is similar to that of Spanish chronicles, which use the term *la lengua* (the tongue) to define her participation as interpreter during the conquest. Sierra notes that although Malintzin (La Malinche's Indian name) was adored by the Aztecs, she has been called a traitor by those who have rejected the Spanish heritage and glorified the Indian past.

Since independence from Spain, Mexico had adopted from other nations philosophies that were foreign to the reality of the new nation. Therefore, since the time of the Mexican Revolution there has been a continous effort on the part of scholars to develop a Mexican philosophy with a truly Mexican perspective. [71]

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[68] Frederick C. Turner, *The Dynamic of Mexican Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: University: of North Carolina Press, 1968), 102-103.
[69] Harold Eugene Davis, *Latin American Thought: A Historical Introduction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1972), 108.
[70] Justo Sierra, *The Political Evolution of The Mexican People,* trans. Charles Ramsdell (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969), 55.
[71] John H. Haddox, *Vasconcelos of Mexico: Philosopher and Prophet* (Austin: University of Texas, 1967), 50-51.

To counter the influence that the church had traditionally had, post-revolutionary Mexico attempted to inculcate "a new religion," a post-revolutionary nationalism that exalted music, dance and the rituals of national folklore, as well as revolutionary martyrs like Zapata.[72] This new ideology is known as *indigenismo* due to its exaltation of the Mexican indigenous past and the rejection of the Spanish heritage. As Knight argues, however, this post-revolutionary *indigenismo* represented yet another non-Indian formulation of the "Indian problem"; it was another white/*mestizo* construct in which the Indians were the objects of this ideology. In fact, these ideologies were dealing with the fact that Mexico's population was composed primarily of *mestizos*.[73] Thus, the *mestizo* became the ideological symbol of the new regime. In fact, the *Indigenistas*' main objective was to integrate the Indians, to "mestizo-ize" them. The most celebrated proponent of *mestizaje* in Mexico was José Vasconcelos, who formulated the idea of the "cosmic race." He claimed that the *mestizo* was the bridge to the future, and exalted the *mestizo*'s character to be quick, vivacious, and lacking in prejudice.[74] Vasconcelos urged Mexicans not to deny their Spanish heritage because it was Spanish colonization that created the *mestizaje.* He states that while some Mexicans are of Spanish blood, all Mexicans are Spanish in culture. At the time of independence from Spain, Mexicans wanted to deny their traditions by breaking with their past: "nosotros los españoles, por la sangre, o por la cultura, a la hora de nuestra emancipación comenzamos por renegar de nuestras tradiciones; rompimos con el pasado…"[75] As John H. Haddox points out,

[72] Alan Knight, "Racism, Revolution, and Indigenismo," 82.
[73] Ibid., 77. Knight presents the ideas of several Mexican philosophers such as Aguirre Beltrán, who claimed that Indigenismo represented neither the Indian nor the Spaniard, but rather that of the *mestizo*. Knight also refers to Manuel Gamio, who claimed that the Indian lacked consciousness, meaning that he suffered but did not understand the causes of such suffering.
[74] Ibid., 86.
[75] José Vasconcelos, *La raza cósmica*, 5th ed. (Mexico: Espasa-Calpe, 1977), 22.

Vasconcelos was accused of being an *hispanista* because of his over-emphasis of the Spanish part of Mexican culture.[76]

In these different perspectives on Mexico's Spanish heritage, La Malinche occupies an ambiguous position; on the one hand, she is the traitor, the one who caused the defeat of the Aztecs. On the other, she is the symbolic mother of the *mestizo*, the new race, the "cosmic race."

As a consequence of revolutionary *Indigenismo*, the old racist prejudices were in some cases reverted to the point that it was difficult to distinguish whether *indigenista* antipathies towards blacks, Spaniards, North Americans, or Chinese were strictly racist or merely nationalist.[77] Turner argues that in the creation of a Mexican nationalism, the most important factor was xenophobia. He shows manifestations of xenophobia produced during the Revolution towards Chinese, Spaniards, and North Americans who were either immigrants or entrepreneurs during the Díaz administration. It was often mentioned that during the Porfiriato, Mexico had become "mother of foreigners and the stepmother of Mexicans."[78] As Ilene Malley states, after Independence, nationalistic resentment focused mostly on the Spaniards. In the mid-1800s, with the advent of the Mexican war, the resentment shifted toward the United States.[79]

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[76] Haddox, *Vasconcelos of Mexico*, 55.

[77] Ibid., 95. He shows the persecution of the Chinese population, which led to mass expulsions in 1931. During Díaz's regime, Chinese immigrants were brought into the country because they represented cheap labor. But they soon became successful shopkeepers, traders and businessmen, especially in the Northwest. Since most of the immigrants were male, it was said that they prostituted the Mexican race by having children with Mexican women.

[78] Frederick C. Turner, *The Dynamic of Mexican Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 202-208. Turner shows that Mexican xenophobia towards North Americans was due to the loss of Mexican territory during the War of 1847 and the constant menace of an intervention. In the case of the Spaniards, it was due to old resentments based on centuries of colonial rule.

[79] Ilene V.O. Malley, *The Myth of the Revolution: Hero Cults and the Institutionalization of the Mexican State, 1920-1940* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1986), 118.

Indigenismo influenced Mexican history, for a national history based on indigenous origins was considered essential in the cultural assimilation of the native peoples.[80] Since Independence, and especially since the Revolution, it has been the fashion among liberal elements to deny Mexico's Spanish heritage. Lesley Simpson observes that in school texts and in enthusiastic eulogies of the Mexican Revolution, it is written that Mexico is fundamentally indigenous. Thus, the conqueror Cortés personifies the destruction while Cuauhtémoc personifies the noble Aztec.[81] Simpson argues that Mexico would not be Mexico if the conflict were not dramatized.[82]

As Benjamin Keen observes, in Mexico, the cult of its ancient past, particularly that of the Aztecs, reflects an intense nationalism, which was accentuated by *Indigenismo.*[83] In the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution, the dominant party encouraged the rejection of the Hispanic tradition and consequently, the glorification of the Aztecs in such a way that the pre-Hispanic past constituted a fundamental part of their process in forging the post-revolutionary nation.[84]

In his analysis of the Mexican character, Roger Bartra states that Mexicans are "the imaginary and mythical inhabitants of a violated limbo" that resulted from the immense tragedy that began with the Conquest and ended with the Revolution. He argues that in order to analyze the present-day reality of Mexicans, it is necessary to explore the trauma experienced by the Mexican during these two events: on the one hand, the

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[80] Davis, *Latin American Thought*, 163.
[81] Cuauhtémoc was the last of the native rulers, and was sentenced by Cortés to die at the gallows. He is considered a symbol of democratic resistance to the oppressor. Lesley Bird Simpson, *Many Mexicos* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1966), 22-24.
[82] Ibid., 22.
[83] Benjamin Keen, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*, 2nd ed. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1985), 467.
[84] Brian Hamnett, *A Concise History of Mexico* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 56.

Spanish conquest and its consequent clash or fusion of two different cultures; on the other hand, the Mexican Revolution and the consequent industrialization of the country.[85]

Solomon Lipp notes that in many studies the Mexicans' attempt to find a national identity takes the traumatic experience of the Spanish Conquest as their point of departure. In addition, he observes that these studies show that this traumatic experience, suffered mainly by the indigenous population, affected the relationship between man and woman. Indian women, who satisfied the biological needs of the Conquerors, found themselves in a position that might be considered a betrayal of their culture. Therefore, the woman has been seen negatively as an "object" of the conquest.[86]

In the prologue to his book, *Perfil del hombre y la cultura en México,* Samuel Ramos states that the sentiment of inferiority of the Mexican race has its historical origin in the Spanish Conquest and colonization. However, it is not until Independence that this inferiority complex begins to manifest itself as Mexico tries to define its own national physiognomy.[87]

In his psychoanalytical study of the Mexican psyche, Octavio Paz explores the tragic consequences of the Conquest in the formation of a national identity. Paz states that the Mexican wants to be neither an Indian nor a Spaniard. Thus, the Mexican rejects the Spaniard because he does not want to descend from him: "He does not affirm himself as a mixture but rather as an abstraction. He becomes the son of Nothingness."[88]

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[85] Bartra, *The Cage of Melancholy*, 20.
[86] Solomon Lipp, *Leopoldo Zea: From Mexicanidad to a Philosophy of History* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1980), 15.
[87] Samuel Ramos, *Profile of Man and Culture in Mexico*, trans. Peter G.Earle (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1962), 9-10.
[88] Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude,* trans. Lysander Kemp (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1961), 87.

Paz considers the conquest itself as a rape, wherein La Malinche as Cortés' concubine represents "the open." He argues that Mexican people have not forgiven her, as their mother, for her betrayal:

> If the *Chingada* is a representation of the violated Mother, it is appropriate to associate her with the Conquest, which was also a violation, not only in the historical sense but also in the very flesh of Indian women. The symbol of this violation is doña Malinche, the mistress of Cortés. It is true that she gave herself voluntarily to the Conquistador, but he forgot her as soon as her usefulness was over. Doña Marina becomes a figure representing the Indian women who were fascinated, violated or seduced by the Spaniards. And as a small boy will not forgive his mother if she abandons him to search for his father, the Mexican people have not forgiven La Malinche for her betrayal.[89]

In Paz's interpretation, La Malinche had no agency in the Conquest, but was a passive figure, an "object" of this violation: "She embodies the open, the *chingado*, to our closed, stoic, impassive Indians."[90] Paz's interpretation of the passive role of woman in Mexican's society is unsurprising because he considers woman to be submissive and open by nature.[91]

In another similar study of the character of the Mexican, Santiago Ramírez makes constant references to Paz's essay, where the dichotomy between "masculine" and "feminine," between "open" and "closed," is presented from a psychoanalytical perspective. Ramírez emphasizes the superiority of the man over the woman, the "object" of the conquest. Thus, social devaluation, defeat, and the indigenous are viewed as feminine characteristics, while strength, the conquest, and social values are masculine

[89] Ibid., 86.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid., 38.

characteristics. Ramírez emphasizes the figure of the *mestizo*'s absent father, the Spanish conqueror who had relations with an indigenous woman in a devalued condition and later abandoned her. Therefore, the *mestizo* is always in a permanent conflict, for he feels an adversion toward his violent and foreign father. He can consider himself neither *criollo* (a Spaniard born in America) nor *indígena*. When the mestizo gets married, even with a *mestiza*, he repeats the same role as his father, thereby expressing his superiority.[92]

Bartra argues that in the *machista* Mexican culture there are two parts to the "Mexican spirit": on the one hand, the virgin-mother, protector of the helpless, the Virgin of Guadalupe; on the other hand, the raped mother, *la Chingada*. Therefore, these two figures represent "two symbolic cornerstones that come together in the definition of the Mexican woman."[93] Bartra shows that in Mexican national culture, the Virgin of Guadalupe and La Malinche are two sides of the same coin: "Mexican man knows that woman (his mother, lover, wife) has been raped by the *macho* conquistador, and he suspects that she has enjoyed and even desired the rape."[94] Since the archetype of the Mexican woman is the Malitnzin-Guadalupe, the Mexican man expects his companion to fornicate with enjoyment, but at the same time to be virginal and comforting."[95]

The figure of La Malinche as traitor to her race, Mexican Eve, and symbolic mother of the *mestizo* becomes even more complex when she is also considered as the raped mother. Moreover, La Malinche was seduced by the conqueror; thus, she herself desired this rape. In Mexican culture, this makes her the whore mother, in contrast to the

[92] Santiago Ramírez, *El mexicano: psicología de sus motivaciones* (Mexico: Grijalbo, 1977), 50-61.
[93] Bartra, 150.
[94] Ibid., 158.
[95] Ibid., 158-160.

Virgin of Guadalupe. In a *machista* culture that prizes virginity, La Malinche is seen as a whore.

Paz argues that many Mexicans have followed La Malinche's example and become traitors to their country. Paz defines these so-called *malinchistas* to be "those who want Mexico to open itself to the outside world."[96] Following Paz's dichotomy of the open and the closed, the *malinchistas* are those Mexicans who in the same way that La Malinche helped the Spaniards to conquer Mexico and mainly opened herself to Cortés, have helped foreigners gain influence over the nation. For him, the *malinchistas* are "the true sons of La Malinche."[97]

Carlos Monsiváis states that the term *malinchismo* has been promoted since the 1930s. It is a derogatory adjective applied to those Mexicans who without reason prefer foreigners, considering them superior. According to him, the term has more political and economic meaning.[98] Bartra states that *malinchismo* is a Mexican myth. He defines it as "an adaptation of canons narrowly linked to capitalist development and the consolidation of nation-states –that is to say, what we call the modern West."[99] Lipps points out that one of the most obvious symptoms of the Mexican inferiority complex, which the Revolution of 1910 sought to eliminate, is what has been labeled *Malinchismo*, a term derived from La Malinche due to her alliance with the Spaniards. He claims that Mexican people made her the national scapegoat, an "object" of collective hatred.[100]

Brian Hamnett also notes that this term, *malinchismo*, which means the betrayal of Mexican integrity and values to the foreigners, derives from La Malinche, who

[96] Paz, 86.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Carlos Monsiváis, "La Malinche y el primer mundo," *La Malinche, sus padres y sus hijos*, ed. Margo Glantz (Mexico: UNAM, 1994), 145.

represents one of the fundamental symbols of Mexican popular culture.[101] Sandra Cypess likewise observes that La Malinche embodies the betrayal of national goals: "the one who conforms to her paradigm is labeled *malinchista,* the individual who sells out to the foreigner, who devalues national identity in favor of imported benefits."[102] Mexican psychologist Juana Alegría argues that *malinchismo* has turned La Malinche into a scapegoat of Mexican history. The conquest and defeat of the Mexicans have been attributed to this woman, who has been labeled *vendepatria*, one who sells the country to foreigners. It seems if the dispraise for her were interminable.[103]

In sum, in Mexican culture, La Malinche has been considered in contradictory ways. Like the Conquest, La Malinche represents an enigma that has not been resolved by the Mexicans. In forging a national identity, Mexicans, most of them *mestizos*, have seen in their origins a conflictive situation. They try to deny their Spanish origins, yet they also do not consider themselves indigenous. La Malinche has been a complex figure for Mexicans. She represents the traitor to her race, the defeat of the Aztec civilization, the Mexican Eve. However, she has also been seen as the mother of a new race. Furthermore, for the *mestizo*, her symbolic son, she has represented the indigenous mother who was either seduced or raped and later abandoned by his Spanish father.

Mexican nationalism, which began with independence from Spain, transformed the figure of La Malinche as presented in the chronicles into a negative image. The Amerindian woman who was viewed positively during the Conquest, was then transformed into a symbol of treachery to her race. The new Mexican nation made La

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[99] Bartra, 167.
[100] Lipp, *Leopoldo Zea*, 15.
[101] Hamnett, *A Concise History of Mexico*, 62.
[102] Cypess, *La Malinche in Mexican Literature*, 7.

Malinche the scapegoat for the resentment of three centuries of Spanish colonization. Moreover, her negative image increased after the Mexican Revolution, as Mexicans searched for a national ideology that represented Mexican, rather than foreign values.

[103] Juana A. Alegría, *Sicología de las mexicanas* (Mexico: Editorial Diana, 1981), 76.

Chapter 3: La Malinche as Interpreter and Traitor:

Modern Interpretations

In modern interpretations of the Spanish chronicles, the name, origin and importance of La Malinche in the Conquest of Mexico are frequently either explained in a brief paragraph or as a note. She is described as both interpreter and concubine of Hernán Cortés. Patricia De Fuentes, for example, explains in a note she makes to Andrés de Tapia's chronicle, that La Malinche was Cortés' mistress and the mother of his bastard son, had linguistic abilities and possessed a "shrewdness" that helped the Spaniards in many difficult situations.[104]

In *The Mexican Dream*, Le Cléizo studies the Conquest of Mexico, using as his main source Bernal Díaz's chronicle. He argues that the conquest was achieved by Cortés mainly due to two factors. On the one hand, during his first victory over the armies of Tabasco, the Spaniards were seen as invincible warriors, as "gods." On the other hand, La Malinche, his companion and interpreter, became "the essential instrument of the Indians' destruction."[105] Le Cleizo argues that her intervention in the Conquest was essential since it was through her that Cortés used his most fearsome instrument of domination, speech. He states that his words, enunciated by Malinche, were more important than his sword in achieving the Conquest.[106]

In his account of the conquest of Mexico, Hugh Thomas briefly refers to La Malinche, summarizing what has been said about her. Concerning her origins, Thomas states that she was from Painala, a village near Coatzacoalcos, in which her father was a

[104] De Fuentes, *The Conquistadores*, 214.
[105] J.M.G. Le Clézio, *The Mexican Dream*, trans. Teresa Lavender Fagan (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 12.
[106] Ibid., 17.

lord, or a *tlatoani*. Thomas points out that at the beginning, Malinche communicated in Nahuatl with the Mexica and then translated to Maya for Aguilar, who would then speak in Castilian to Cortés. After a while, Marina learned enough Spanish that Aguilar was no longer required by Cortés. Therefore, Thomas states that all the important communications between the Spaniards and the Mexica were passed through Marina.[107]

Since women in old Mexico were usually confined to the household, mainly occupied in weaving and grinding, Thomas argues that La Malinche's impact must have been great on the Mexica and others to whom she spoke. Women, for instance, were conventionally depicted in codices as kneeling, while men sat: "Marina must thus have seemed to her compatriots to have the liberty of a prostitute."[108]

In her interpretation of gender roles in Aztec society, Inga Clendinnen notes that sources on women are lacking since: "We hear no Mexican women's voices at all: the little we can discover must come indirectly."[109] Clendinnen states that before and after the Conquest, public matters were men's business, and consequently, recorded by men. Thus, those who recorded Mexico's past were males, and often celibate foreign males like Sahagún. Clendinnen concludes that, "The conquest, apart from the disquieting Doña Marina, interpreter to Cortés, was a male affair, at least in the male telling of it."[110]

Clendinnen argues that in Aztec society, there was no clear difference in gender treatment through the early years. Then their paths diverged, as the boy followed his father to learn his skills, and the girl her mother, grinding maize to smoothness, cooking, spinning, and weaving. Thus, marriage was the Mexica woman's ambition, and indeed

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[107] Hugh Thomas, *Conquest: Moctezuma, Cortés, and the Fall of Old Mexico*, 2d. ed. (New York: Touchstone Simon & Schuster Inc., 1995), 171-172.
[108] Ibid., 173.
[109] Inga Clendinnen, *Aztecs: An Interpretation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 154.

her fate, except for those few who devoted their lives to temple service. For men as for women, social maturity came only with marriage, in which the woman performed her womanly tasks and her loyalty to her husband.[111] Clendinnen notes that the physical prominence and verbal dominance of La Malinche is surprising since Mexica women had no right to speak on public occasions.[112]

In his concise account of the history of Mexico, Brian Hamnet refers briefly to La Malinche as Cortés' interpreter. He states that Malitzin,[113] a captive Indian woman who spoke Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs, played a crucial part in Cortés' dealings with Moctezuma. Hamnet emphasizes that she became a symbol of Mexican popular culture, in which she is held responsible for "handing over the Indian world to the European conquerors."[114] In addition, Hamnet explains the parallel between the Virgin of Guadalupe and Malintzin, who represent two female symbols at opposite poles. He points out that the Virgin of Guadalupe, the indigenous Virgin Mary, became "the mother who redeems the *patria* handed over to Cortés by Malintzin."[115]

Jonathan Kandell points out that La Malinche, whom he calls Marina, became one of Cortés' most trusted counselors, and later, his mistress. He emphasizes her value to Cortés as interpreter. He states that she made him aware of the existence of the Aztec empire and its system of subject provinces.[116]

Through the last decades of twentieth-century, scholars have attempted to vindicate La Malinche from her negative myth as traitor and *La Chingada*. In their

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[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid., 156.
[112] Ibid., 159.
[113] Several scholars have used the name of Malintzin , or Malintzin Tenepal, perhaps to emphasize her Indian origin.
[114] Hamnett, *A Concise History of Mexico*, 62.
[115] Ibid., 104-105.

reinterpretation of La Malinche's role during the Conquest, they have used the Spanish chronicles, mainly Bernal Díaz's. Consequently, these scholars see La Malinche in a more favorable light. They see in her an intelligent woman who acted as intermediary between the two cultures.

In his approach to the Conquest of Mexico, Todorov states that La Malinche is an essential figure in what he calls the "conquest of information." He summarizes what Spanish chronicles say about her noble origins and being sold to the Mayans and later given to the Spaniards during one of the first encounters.[117] Todorov notes that La Malinche was respected by the Indians, since she is depicted in every image of the *Florentine Codex*. In addition, he points out the importance of the fact that Cortés was addressed by the Indians as Malinche, since the woman normally takes the man's name.[118]

Todorov argues that it is understandable that given her past, she would have a certain rancor toward her people, which caused her to side with the conquistadors. In doing this, La Malinche not only adopted the Spaniards' values but also contributed to the achievement of their goals. Todorov notes the fact that since independence, La Malinche became the symbol of betrayal of indigenous value and servile submission to European culture and power. Instead, Todorov perceives her as the symbol of the cross-breeding of two cultures, since she acted as intermediary and also because she glorified the mixture of the two races.[119]

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[116] Jonathan Kandell, *La Capital* (New York: Henry Holt, 1988), 97.
[117] Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*, trans. Richard Howard, 2d. ed. (University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 100.
[118] Ibid., 101.
[119] Ibid.

In his essay, "Rethinking Malinche," Frances Karttunen analyzes how the myth of La Malinche has been constructed through the centuries: "She is now enclosed within an edifice of myth, a construction all the more fantastic and obscuring."[120] Karttunen states that in the forging of national identity, a scapegoat for three centuries of colonial rule was easily found in La Malinche. Thus, in a "wink," she was demoted from crucial interpreter and counselor (as she had been represented in Spanish chronicles) to lover and mistress of Cortés, traitor to her race, and mother of the *mestizo*. [121]

Karttunen notes that sixteenth-century indigenous representations of Malintzin portray her not as evil or immoral, but rather powerful. He observes that the Nahuatl writers of the *Florentine Codex* always use the honorific *–tzin* every time they mention her name, while they only occasionally use this suffix for Moctezuma.[122]

Kartunnen points out that the characterization of La Malinche as traitor was based on circumstances such as the Cholulan episode narrated by López de Gómara, Bernal Díaz, and Cortés himself. Karttunnen argues that the question of her ethnic loyalty has no legitimacy since at that time Mesoamerican people had no sense of themselves as "Indians" united in a common cause against Europeans. Instead, they identified themselves as Mexihcah, Tlaxcaltecah, Chololtecah, etc. Since La Malinche was none of these, it is not possible to talk about treachery, but only loyalty to Cortés.[123]

Kartunen states that La Malinche and Cortés needed each other to survive, but all the power lay with Cortés. Thus, she made herself helpful by exploiting her only asset,

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[120] Frances Karttunen, "Rethinking Malinche," *Indian Women of Early Mexico*, ed. Susan Schroeder, S. Wood and R. Haskett (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1997), 292.
[121] Ibid., 297.
[122] Ibid., 295.
[123] Ibid., 304.

her linguistic abilities, which distinguished her from the other women who were given to Cortés to make *tortillas* and to serve as concubines.[124]

Roger Bartra, attempting to redeem the myth of La Malinche as a traitor, states that it was possible that Malintzin supported the Spaniards as an act of rebellion against the despotism of the Aztecs. He argues that at the time of the conquest, there was no idea of nation, and that the concept of fatherland cannot be applied to Mexico's original population. [125] Bartra considers La Malinche an extraordinary woman whose intelligence and advice made possible the Conquest of Mexico. He explains that the emerging of Mexican nationalism, supported by the Liberalism of the nineteenth century, transformed La Malinche from a woman respected by both Indians and Spanish conquerors, into a symbol of treachery and dishonor for the Mexicans.

Jean Franco argues that the problem of national identity is presented by male authors, who psychoanalyze the nation as if it were only a problem of male identity.[126] Franco states that La Malinche, mistress and interpreter of Cortés, became a mythic scapegoat in Mexico after its independence from Spain. This story of female treachery was necessary for the nationalistic epic. Therefore, La Malinche, who in the narrative of the Conquest was presented as the "hero's helper" and associated by the natives with the magical power of the Spaniards, became the symbol of betrayal to the nation.[127]

Margo Glantz analyzes La Malinche's function as *la lengua* during the conquest, by interpreting Malinche's presentation in Spanish chronicles, such as Bernal Díaz's, as well as in the *Florentine Codex*. Glantz argues that La Malinche has no voice; in fact,

[124] Ibid., 310-312.
[125] Ibid., 154-155.
[126] Jean Franco, *Plotting Women* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 131.
[127] Ibid., xviii-xix.

everything she says or interprets is controlled through indirect discourse. Therefore, La Malinche is always enunciated by others. Glantz notes that throughout the text, we hear not La Malinche's voice, but Cortés's. Furthermore, Glantz states that since La Malinche is only considered by her voice, her body disappears. In fact, her body is a slave, and so Malinche acts like a ventriloquist, as if her voice were not hers. [128]

Luis Leal notes that the characterization of women throughout Mexican literature has been influenced by two archetypes present in the Mexican psyche: that of the woman who has kept her virginity and that of the one who has lost it. The latter emerged since the conquest, represented by La Malinche. She became the symbol of the person who betrays the homeland by aiding the enemy. Her opposite, the pure woman, is the Virgin of Guadalupe, who protects Indians, as well as *mestizos* and Creoles. Leal argues that in Mexican literature this opposition between the good and the bad woman reflects the characteristics attributed to women in Mexican society throughout the years.[129]

In her study of the *soldaderas* in the military history of Mexican women, Elizabeth Salas views La Malinche as the first *soldadera* in the history of Mexico. Salas exalts Malinche's role as Cortés' invaluable ally, interpreter, and strategist. Malinche provided Cortés with valuable information about the customs, habits, and ways of thinking of the Mexicas, and also warned Cortés about surprise attacks.[130] Salas argues that Malinche's role as *soldadera* has been obscured due to her condemnation as *La Chingada* (the fucked one). Among Mexicans, her name has become synonymous with the word "traitor." Salas states that the treatment of La Malinche shows that historical

[128] Margo Glantz, "La Malinche: la lengua en la mano," *Mitos Mexicanos,* ed. Enrique Florescano (Mexico: Aguilar, 1995, 130-132.
[129] Luis Leal, "Female Archetypes in Mexican Literature," *Women in Hispanic Literature: Icons and Fallen Idols*, ed. Beth Miller (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 227, 229, 241.

facts and myth are joined and share a common ground in the reconstruction of Mexican culture after independence from Spain.[131]

Iris Blanco argues that Mexican history has been manipulated to obscure the historical role of women. Furthermore, she states that in detriment to La Malinche's myth, Cuauhtémoc emerges as symbol of the protector of *la raza*, dying for his fatherland instead of selling out. She argues that all the Mexican soldiers who were Cortés' allies and committed all kind of atrocities were forgotten by history, which insisted on making the woman the symbol of betrayal. In addition, Blanco explains that *malinchismo* operates on both sides of the Río Grande. Thus, among Chicanos, it is manifested in the resentment toward those who associate with those of a different race.[132]

In her analysis of the Chicana writers who have attempted to revise the myth of La Malinche, Mary Louise Pratt states that these writers often invoke La Malinche as a vital resonant site through which they respond to androcentric ethno-nationalism and claim a gendered oppositional identity and history. Pratt points out that Chicana women who married Anglo men or took Anglo lovers have often been labeled *malinches.*[133]

In opposition to the representation of La Malinche as a negative image, Adelaida del Castillo argues that instead, La Malinche should be reconsidered as a woman who was able to act beyond her prescribed societal function as concubine and servant.[134] Del Castillo recognizes La Malinche's role in the conquest as a valuable woman who did not follow the norms of society and who emerged in the history of the conquest as the

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[130] Elizabeth Salas, *Soldaderas in the Mexican Military* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 14-15.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Different race is somebody with no Mexican ancestors. Chicanos claim *la raza* as their own identity. Iris Blanco, "Participación de las mujeres en la sociedad prehispánica," *Essays on La Mujer*, ed. Rosaura Sánchez, Rosa Martínez Cruz (Los Angeles: University of California), 75, 76.
[133] Mary Louise Pratt, "Yo Soy La Malinche," *Callaloo*, 16.4 (1993): 859-873.

mediator of two conflicting worlds, to create a new one, that of the *mestizos.* Del Castillo argues that La Malinche not only translated, but also acted on her own initiative and, using her own persuasion, acted as a peacemaker between Spaniards and Indians:

> Doña Marina is significant in that she embodies effective decision in the feminine form, and most important, because her own actions syncretized two conflicting worlds causing the emergence of a new one –our own. Here woman acts not as a godess in some mythology, but as an actual force in the making of history.[135]

Adelaida del Castillo attempts to rescue La Malinche from her condemnation as *una traidora a la patria* (a traitoress to the fatherland). She argues that at the time of the conquest there were many Indian nations attempting through rebellion to regain their former independence from the Aztec empire.[136] Furthermore, Del Castillo points out that since history has depicted woman as being the main cause for man's failure, according to this mysogynistic perspective, La Malinche has been seen as the Mexican Eve. Instead, Del Castillo sees La Malinche as the beginning of the *mestizo* nation, the mother of its birth. And consequently, "any denigration made against her indirectly defames the character of the Mexican/Chicana female."[137] In her view, women in both Mexican and Chicano culture suffer from the implications of being La Malinche's symbolic daughters, whose value in their patriarchal societies has been diminished.

Norma Alarcón notes the mythic dimensions of Malintzin as evil goddess, creator of the mestizo race, and the mother-whore. The last term connotes her bearing of illegitimate children and her responsibility for the Spanish invasion. Alarcón argues that

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[134] Adelaida del Castillo, "A Preliminary Look into a New Perspective," *Essays on La Mujer,* ed. Rosaura Martinez Cruz (Los Angeles: Chicano Studies Center, 1977), 126.
[135] Ibid., 125.
[136] Ibid., 131.
[137] Ibid., 141.

this myth reflects woman as sexually passive and used by men, whether by seduction or rape.[138]

Cherríe Moraga attempts to examine the effects of this myth on racial and sexual identity. She notes that Mexican as well as Chicana women suffer from a sexual legacy of betrayal, which has its origin in the historical and mythical figure of Malintzin Tenepal. Moraga argues that Malintzin has been slandered as *La Chingada* (the fucked one) or *La Vendida* (the sold one) since she is blamed for selling out to the white race. Moraga states that brown men have been accusing La Malinche of betraying her race, and over the centuries continue to blame her entire sex for this transgression.[139] Furthermore, Moraga observes that in a patriarchal society, there is a male urgency to control the reproductive function of women, which is reinforced by the Catholic Church and by the social institutionalization of women's role as sexual and domestic servants to men:

> The woman who defies her role as subservient to her husband, father, brother, or son by taking control of her own sexual destiny is purported to be a traitor to her race by contributing to the genocide of her people . . . she is *una Malinchista*. Like the Malinche of Mexican history, she is corrupted by foreign influences, which threaten to destroy her people.[140]

Moraga argues that the control of women begins through the institution of heterosexuality and that the Chicana lesbian takes control of her own sexual identity and severely challenges this anti-feminist, Chicano(a) identity. Thus, unlike Chicano gay

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[138] Norma Alarcón, "Chicana's Feminist Literature: A Re-Vision Through Malintzin: Putting Flesh back on the Object," *This Bridge Called My Back,* ed. Cherríe Morraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (New York: Kitchen Table Press, 1983), 182, 184.
[139] Cherríe Moraga, "From a Long Line of Vendidas," *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies,* ed. Teresa de Laurentis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 174-175.
[140] Ibid., 184.

men, the Chicana lesbian suffers from being stigmatized as a traitor, especially if she has a relationship with white women.[141]

In sum, in their attempt to vindicate La Malinche from her negative myth as traitor to her race and *La Chingada,* several scholars argue that at the time of the Conquest there was no sense of *patria* among the indigenous. In fact, the indigenous populations were looking for an opportunity to rid themselves of Aztec domination. In these reinterpretations, La Malinche represents a multilingual interpreter, a strategist, a *soldadera*, the symbol of the union of two cultures and an icon of feminist ideology. Her myth has transcended Mexico's border as Chicana scholars find in her a symbol of feminism and race.

[141] Ibid.

Chapter 4: La Malinche in Twentieth-Century Mexican Theater

The events of the Conquest of Mexico have served as context in modern Mexico. The search for a national identity has also been reflected in the theater. Cultural identity was now based on a new nation that arose after the Mexican Revolution. In this context, the *mestizo* was elevated as the core of national identity. The theater questioned official history and reverted to the vision of the conquered and the vanquished. With regard to the Conquest, for example, dramatists portrayed the Spaniards as cruel and greedy for gold, while the Indians represented the noble values of a great civilization.

Sandra Cypess has classified the plays in two groups that have contributed to the paradigm of La Malinche: patriarchal and plurivocal. In the first group, we find *Malinche o La leña está verde* (1958) by Celestino Gorostiza, *Corona de fuego* (1960) by Rodolfo Usigli, *Cuauhtémoc* (1962) by Salvador Novo, and *Todos los gatos son pardos* (1970) by Carlos Fuentes. The first three plays are among the first in which the figures of the conquest are brought to the stage.[142] The figure of La Malinche presented by Gorostiza and Novo reflects more the patriarchal perspective (which portrays woman as silent and submissive) found in Octavio Paz's essay, in which La Malinche is the symbol of passivity and the open.[143]

For plurivocal playwrights, there is not just one "truth," but many. In opposition to the patriarchal texts written before, playwrights like Rosario Castellanos, Sabina Berman, Willebardo López, and more recently, Víctor Hugo Rascón Banda have attempted to deconstruct old paradigms, replacing them with new images and also giving

[142] Sandra Messinger, Cypess, "Re-visión de la figura de la Malinche en la dramaturgia mexicana contemporánea," *La Malinche, sus padres y sus hijos*, 179-194.
[143] Cypess, *La Malinche in Mexican Literature*, 98.

women a role in Mexican historical discourse. These dramatists use satire, farce and parody to criticize the authoritharian patriarchal ideology.[144]

Through the analysis of different plays, it is possible to see the evolution of the figure of La Malinche as she has been treated in twentieth-century Mexican theater. Although this study focuses on the more modern versions of the conquest such as Willebaldo López's *¡Malinche Show!,* Sabina Berman's *Aguila o sol*, and Víctor Hugo Rascón Banda's *La Malinche*, it also explores the treatment of La Malinche in earlier, more traditional plays on the conquest.

Corona de fuego

In this three-act play, Rodolfo Usigli narrates the events of February 27 to 28, 1525, during Cortés' expedition to Hibueras when Cuauhtémoc, who was taken prisoner in Tenochtitlán and brought on this expedition, is accused of planning to annihilate the Spaniards and is condemned by Cortés to die at the gallows. La Malinche, who accompanied Cortés as his interpreter, informs Cortés of the supposed plans of Cuauhtémoc. However, Usigli not only presents La Malinche's treason, but also that of the Mayan caciques. Thus, Usigli shows the rivalries that existed among the natives.

Cortés always calls her Marina, while Cuauhtémoc addresses her by her Indian name, Malintzin. Instead, Malinche is the name used by the natives to refer to Cortés. Usigli presents a Malinche already converted to the religion and culture of the Spaniards. She is always with Cortés, to whom she acts as a submissive servant. Yet, when Cortés asks his men to punish some disobedient Indians by cutting off their hands, Malinche begs him to desist since she feels guilty for other hands that he has cut. She says that

[144] Ibid., 123.

those hands have been haunting her day and night. Moreover, those hands extend to her young son, who is also his son:

> No ya no más, señor. Hazme este agrado por lo que fui. Las manos que has cortado me persiguen de día y de noche, también ennegrecen mi sueño y me estrangulan y alcanzan a mi hijo, que es el tuyo, tuercen su tierno cuello, y aunque huyo mi soplo apagan y mi vida anulan, y en el aire flotan y se agitan como voces coléricas que gritan. No, ya no cortes manos a cercén.[145]

La Malinche feels guilty because of her cooperation with the Spaniards. Nonetheless, Usigli underscores La Malinche's mythic role as traitor of her race, By having her recognize her own guilt, he obliges the audience to see her in a different perspective. A Mexican chorus insists on her betrayal of her race. They claim that through her interpretation for the Spaniards, she has caused the defeat of the Mexicans:

> . . . la princesa de espaldas a su raza cuya voz fue la voz de la denuncia, la voz de la matanza de Cholula? Voz marina engañosa y sibilante que cambiaste el sonido del idioma de los tuyos para alterar su pensamiento. . . [146]

Malinche is called the denunciatory voice. She is blamed for having changed the sound of her people's language in order to alter their thought. Moreover, she is blamed for the Cholula massacre, which has been the main argument of Mexican nationalists to condemn her as traitor to her own race. Once again she is said to be the denunciatory voice, this time by Cuauhtémoc's companion. He claims that her voice is impure and treacherous, that she must have changed all the words that she interpreted, especially when Moctezuma received Cortés in his city and treated him as a god. He blames her for bringing suffering to *nuestra patria* (our fatherland):

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[145] Rodolfo Usigli, *Corona de fuego* (México: Editorial Porrúa, 1973), 93-94.

> Malinche, voz impura, voz traidora, si así interpretas nuestros pensamientos y los tuerces y cambias el sentido de los motivos por los que sufrimos y suspiramos tanto en nuestra patria. ¿Cómo habrás traducido las palabras que pronunciamos, otras veces, todo lo que quisimos explicar a Malinche cuando lo recibió como a un dios Moctezuma? Eres mancha de aceite de tu raza que más y más se ensancha cada día.[147]

Malinche replies to this accusation by complaining to Cortés about the way she is treated. According to her, she has acted as intermediary by saving natives who were from her same race. Malinche sees herself differently, as the mother of a new *raza*:

> Así es, Capitán, como me tratan siempre. Su odio me ha seguido sin piedad y sin tregua porque soy de otro modo, porque soy diferente y porque soy la madre de un mundo que aún no llega. Diles tú cuántas veces no los salvó mi lengua del español que, como su espada, es impaciente, y cuántas les serví de escudo y de defensa porque la misma sangre nos liga y nos enciende.[148]

Malinche adds that it does not matter what they think about her since she has brought together two races and that this fact will excuse her from guilt and, moreover, save her. Malinche declares that she translated faifhfully and that what she said was the truth: "Yo sé lo que es fundir dos mundos en mi sexo y saberlo me basta y me exculpa y me salva. Mi traducción es fiel y declaré verdad."[149]

In the last act, when Cuauhtemoc is condemned to die at the gallows, he addresses Malinche with the following words: "Y ahora, adiós, Malintzin, ojalá que en el fruto de tu prole el mexicano venza al español y el sentido de México perdure."[150] Therefore, Cuauhtémoc sees the continuation of his nation through the new race that is beginning

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[146] Ibid., 112.
[147] Ibid., 124-125.
[148] Ibid., 125.
[149] Ibid.

with Malinche's son. However, it is not until this new race defeats the Spaniards that Mexico's consolidation will be possible. Malinche proudly says to Cuauhtémoc that the Conquest has fertilized her womb and brought life instead of death: "una mujer en quien conquista y guerra fecundaron un vientre endémico y longevo, dieron vida y no muerte."[151]

All the images that Usigli presents of Malinche's voice are negative. She is called by the Mexican chorus the "impure voice," "treason's voice," and a "stain on her race." Nonetheless, Usigli presents Malinche's attempt to vindicate herself by saying that she has faithfully translated and also acted as a mediator between the two cultures. Malinche is still trapped in her myth as traitor to her race, but through her role as mother of a new race she is elevated in the eyes of Cuauhtémoc, whose only hope is that the *mestizo* will forge a new Mexican nation.

Usigli for the most part maintains the myth of La Malinche as the voice of treason, and the cause of the Cholula massacre. Nevertheless, by having her recognize her own guilt Usigli urges the audience to see her in another perspective. Finally, through Cuauhtémoc, Usigli suggests that Malinche should be reconsidered as mediator between the two cultures and mother of the *mestizo*.

Cuauhtémoc

Salvador Novo's *Cuauhtémoc* is one act-play composed of twelve scenes. The main character, Cuauhtémoc, is represented by a young Mexican Indian. In the first scene, this actor addresses the audience, saying that his friends wanted to represent the Conquest, not as historians have said that the events occurred, but rather as the actors

[150] Ibid., 131.

would prefer they had occurred: "Puede que las cosas no hayan pasado exactamente como vamos a representarlas. Pero es también posible que no hayan sucedido como las cuentan los historiadores. A lo mejor fueron como nos gustarían que hubieran sido."[152] Therefore, Novo questions the official version of history, that which has been disseminated in history books. Novo's drama also reflects the ideology of *indigenismo* by presenting Cuauhtémoc as the symbol of nationhood by convincing Moctezuma and the other leaders that they have to ally themselves to defeat the Spaniards. Moreover, he claims that they have to establish a brotherhood since they are from the same race. Despite his heroic resistance, he fails to achieve his purpose, and finally is taken prisoner and killed by Cortés during his expedition to Hibueras.

Cortés asks La Malinche to tell Cuauhtémoc that he will still be the king of the Mexicans. Malinche replies that this nation does not exist anymore, that they are all dead. She says that it is impossible to hear anything except their silence: "Su pueblo ya no existe, señor. Todos han muerto. ¿No escuchas su silencio?"[153]

Malinche is left alone with Cuauhtémoc to try to convince him to pledge his loyalty to the king and to be baptized. She tells him that the Spaniards' god is kind, that she herself goes to mass and takes communion every day. Cuauhtemoc replies that he cannot understand her language and that it is a language that he would never be able to speak:

> Malinche: Su dios es bueno, ¿Sabes? Yo ya me he bautizado –y voy a misa, y comulgo, todos los días . . . ¿Por qué me vuelves la espalda, señor?

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[151] Ibid.
[152] Salvador Novo, "Cuauhtémoc," *Teatro Mexicano del siglo XX* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1970), 258.
[153] Ibid., 277.

Cuauhtémoc: No entiendo tu lengua, Malinche.

Malinche: ¿Hablo mal la lengua de Anáhuac?

Cuauhtémoc: Hablas un lenguaje –que yo no sabré nunca.[154]

Cuauhtémoc condemns her by saying she is speaking the language of the conquerors, even though she is speaking Nahuatl. By language, he refers to her betrayal. Cuauhtémoc is the voice of nationalism, while La Malinche is the symbol of the treason and defeat of the Mexicans. Throughout the play, Novo praises Cuauhtémoc's attempt to unite the towns against the Spaniards and his heroic resistance to them. In contrast, he presents La Malinche as a Spanish convert and traitor. Thus, in his *indigenista* drama on the Conquest, Novo makes Cuauhtémoc, instead of the mestizo, the emblem of what Mexico was to become.[155]

La Malinche o la leña está verde

La Malinche occupies center stage in Gorostiza's play from the beginning. Her first appearance on stage is similar to Bernal Díaz's presentation of her as an intelligent noble woman. However, in contrast to the chronicles, Gorostiza's Malinche already knows Spanish. Gorostiza presents the first encounter between Malinche and Cortés as "love at first sight." [156]She is described as very beautiful and as having a good figure. When Cortés asks her whether she is Marina, she replies that her name is Malinalli. After that, Cortés says she will be useful to him. Malinche states that she will be his servant and will do whatever he orders. Cortés, like a gentleman, says that she will not be a

[154] Ibid., 278.
[155] Kirsten F. Nigro, "Rhetoric and History in Three Mexican Plays," *Latin American Theater Review* 21.2 (1978): 68.
[156] Ibid., 66.

servant, but a sister. Immediately, La Malinche begins to translate directly from Spanish to Nahuatl. Additionally, La Malinche informs Cortés about all the towns that are subject to the Mexican emperor, Moctezuma, and suggests that it is possible that an alliance would put an end to Moctezuma's empire.

One of the most relevant scenes occurs when Malinche is talking with a young man whose identity we do not know until the end of this conversation. When Malinche finally asks him what his name is, he responds, Cuauhtémoc. He asks her for help because of her noble Mexican origin. She answers that she is nothing but a slave. Gorostiza's Cuauhtémoc, like Novo's character, has the noble intention to unify all the kingdoms in Mexico. Cuauhtémoc explains to Malinche that the young people are pursuing this unification in order to be a strong and happy nation. Malinche tells Cuauhtémoc that the nations are all divided and looking for an alliance with the Spaniards to defy Moctezuma.

Throughout the drama, the version that Gorostiza gives of the actions of La Malinche is that of the Spanish chronicles, especially Bernal Díaz's. She guides the Spaniards from the coasts of Veracruz to Tenochtitlán, along with the men of Cempoala and Tlaxcala, their most famous allies. The Cholulan episode is developed in a scene where La Malinche learns about the Cholulan plans to attack. This episode is presented as it was narrated by Bernal Díaz. Like Usigli, Gorostiza makes La Malinche recognize her guilt and regret her participation. After the Cholulan massacre, La Malinche regrets Cortés' violence because it is painful for her to see her people die, especially when she is

responsible: “me duele ver morir a la gente de mi raza y pensar que todo sucede por mi culpa.”[157]

Cuauhtémoc appears again at Malinche’s side to remind her of her obligation to her race. He reproaches her for the massacre. She replies that her intention was not for the Cholulans to die, but to save the Spaniards from a slaughter. Cuahtémoc tells her that it is her blood that is running: “Son tus hermanos que mueren. Es la sangre de los tuyos que corre como un río por el suelo. Es tu propia sangre. Tampoco tu sangre te dice nada?”[158] Then, La Malinche informs him that she is having a son, who is going to have neither Cortés’s blood nor her blood, but a new one: “En mis entrañas empieza a moverse un ser que no tiene ya tu sangre ni la mía. Tampoco la de Cortés. Es un ser nuevo que quiere vivir y que da con la suya un nuevo sentido a mi vida.”[159] Malinche adds that even though she can be seen as a deceitful woman, this new life gives a new sense to her own life: “Tal vez te parezca yo la más vil de las mujeres, . . . Pero a él no puedo traicionarlo. ¡Por él viviré y lucharé contra todo y contra todos . . . hasta la muerte!”[160]

Even though Gorostiza presents La Malinche as controlled by the two different patriarchies that Cortés and Cuauhtémoc represent, he attempts to vindicate La Malinche from her negative symbol of betrayal to her fatherland. Moreover, he suggests that if La Malinche did something wrong, she should be forgiven since she gives birth to the first symbolic *mestizo.* It must be noted that La Malinche is forgiven because of her motherhood, the quality most praised in Mexican culture.

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[157] Celestino Gorostiza, “La Malinche o la leña esta verde,” *Teatro mexicano del siglo XX* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1970), 486.
[158] Ibid., 488.
[159] Ibid.
[160] Ibid.

Kirsten Nigro argues that Gorostiza's main purpose is to convince his audience that the conquest was not only inevitable but also the glorious blending of two worlds. Cortés and La Malinche are presented as human beings who should be forgiven for their weakness.[161] In Gorostiza's play, La Malinche is depicted as a devout Catholic and devoted mother. These are two feminine qualities held sacred in Mexican society, but it is her role as mother that is most sanctified.[162]

In sum, in their dramas, Usigli, Novo and Gorostiza reflect Mexicans' concern with the search for a national identity. Both Usigli and Gorostiza suggest that the Conquest was inevitable and that it brought as a consequence the glorious birth of a new race, the *mestizo.* They attempt to vindicate La Malinche by seeing in her the mother of this new race. It is her role as mother of the *mestizo* that exculpates her. Unlike Gorostiza and Usigli, Novo condems La Malinche to remain in her negative role.

Todos los gatos son pardos

Like Gorostiza, Carlos Fuentes gives the spotlight to La Malinche when she appears on stage from the beginning. Like Gorostiza and Usigli, Fuentes offers La Malinche as a symbol of fusion between two worlds. Fuentes presents the complex figure of La Malinche in Mexican culture. In the first scene, she appears on stage addressing the audience by telling them about herself, mainly the three names assigned to her: Malintzin, the one that her parents gave to her; Marina, given by her lover; and Malinche, the one her people gave to her. She claims that as goddess, lover, or mother she can tell this story –the Conquest of Mexico, since she was one of the protagonists, the symbolic mother of a new race. She has been elevated for some to goddess, while for others she

[161] Nigro, "Rhetoric and History in Three Mexican Plays," 68.

has been a whore. Moreover, her people call her traitor, the tongue and guide of white man. Through her words, we see the three names she has been identified with, and more importantly, three different versions of one same myth:

> Malintzin, Marina, Malinche . . . Tres fueron tus nombres, mujer: el que te dieron tus padres, el que te dio tu amante y el que te dio tu pueblo . . . Malintzin dijeron tus padres: hechicera, diosa de la mala suerte y de la reyerta de sangre . . . Marina, dijo tu hombre, recordando el océano por donde vino hasta estas tierras . . . Malinche, dijo tu pueblo: traidora, lengua y guía del hombre blanco. Diosa, amante o madre, yo viví esta historia y puedo contarla . . . yo fui la partera de esta historia, porque primero fui la diosa que la imaginó, luego la amante que recibió su semilla y finalmente la madre que la parió. Diosa, Malintzin; puta, Marina; madre, Malinche.[163]

Fuentes's Malinche is skeptical as she questions the cult of bloody sacrifices practiced by the Aztecs as well as the Christian deities.[164] At the beginning, willing to help Cortés conquer Tenochtitlán, Malinche advises him that the Spaniards have to seem like gods before her people. Moreover, she tells Cortés that she will share with him the secrets of her fatherland, while she will not reveal his secrets, and through her words, he will become a god: "Guardaré tus secretos, señor; te contaré los de mi patria. Tú por mi boca, todo lo sabrás de ella . . . Eres plebeyo y mortal; serás, por mi boca, dios e inmortal."[165] La Malinche informs Cortés of Moctezuma's numerous tributary towns, and urges him to defy Moctezuma and occupy his place. Moreover, she urges him to turn against the distant authority of his god and his king: "Señor, vence a Moctezuma y toma su poder para ti; no destruyas esta tierra, no la violentes . . . Sé tú el nuevo emperador de

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[162] Ibid., 66-67.
[163] Carlos Fuentes, *Todos los gatos son pardos* (Mexico: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1970), 13-14.

México, dale la espalda a tu rey a tu dios; tú puedes ser tu propio rey y tu propio dios."[166] Thus, La Malinche seeks to exploit Cortés and use him to establish a new kingdom, not for Spain but for themselves, with Cortés in the role of Quetzalcoatl.[167]

La Malinche is the great strategist, always looking for allies against Moctezuma. She tells Cortés that all the subject towns could help him to vanquish Moctezuma since they are looking for a way to rid themselves of his yoke: "todos los pueblos sometidos se unirán a ti, pues sólo una oportunidad como ésta esperaban para rebelarse contra el yugo de México."[168]

Fuentes's Malinche knows that Cortés is not a god but a man. Nevertheless, she sees in him the union of two different worlds: "Oh señor; yo te sé mortal, aunque fuerte. Pero en ti se han reunido los destinos de dos universos . . . "[169] She adds that even when her sons deny him they will remember him: "Mis hijos te recordarán, señor, aunque de ti renieguen . . . "[170] Through Malinche's words, Fuentes suggests that the *mestizo* has not resolved his problem of identity. Instead, he has ambivalent feelings towards the two races who created him, especially his Spanish heritage.

Later, Fuentes's Malinche realizes that Cortés is not different from Moctezuma. She recriminates him, that even when she warned him not to destroy her land, he has brought blood, terror and slavery: "Nos has bañado de sangre . . . Has traído el terror y la esclavitud . . . Has traído tu tiranía en vez de la de Moctezuma." [171] Thus, La Malinche is

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[164] Lanin A. Gyurko, "The Vindication of La Malinche in Fuentes' 'Todos los gatos son pardos,'" *Ibero-Americanishes Archiv* 3.iii (1977): 235.
[165] Ibid., 72.
[166] Ibid.,100.
[167] Cypess, *La Malinche in Mexican Literature*, 118.
[168] Fuentes, *Todos los gatos son pardos*, 113.
[169] Ibid., 118.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Ibid., 152.

the only one to recognize before the conquest is completed that neither side offers salvation.[172]

Lanin Gyurko argues that Fuentes places La Malinche on an equal if not superior level to that of Cortés and Moctezuma, the two central antagonists in this epic drama of the Conquest. He also argues that in his drama, Fuentes consecrates Malinche as the creator of a new people. Rather than as a traitor, La Malinche is presented as a defender of her own people.[173]

In a final scene, Moctezuma defines himself as well as Cortés as the instruments of two empires, two agents of destiny: "Moctezuma y Cortés: los dos, simples agentes de la fatalidad."[174] Even though Moctezuma recognizes his defeat, he claims that he will always be alive in Mexico: "Oh, nada morirá . . . Moctezuma será siempre el amo de México . . . pues mientras un solo hombre pueda dominar a los demás hombres, Moctezuma seguirá viviendo." [175] Through these words, Fuentes suggests the circular nature of history in Mexico. This drama was written after the massacre of students in the Plaza de Tlatelolco in 1968. Actually, in the last scene, Fuentes brings the characters of the conquest to the present. The same person who plays the role of a sacrificial victim at the time of the Aztecs, later appears as a young student who was shot down by the *granaderos*. He dies at the feet of Moctezuma, who represents Mexico's president, Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, while Cortés plays a general in the US army. La Malinche comforts

[172] Cypess, *La Malinche in Mexican Literature*, 119.
[173] Gyurko, "The Vindication of La Malinche," 234.
[174] Fuentes, 168.
[175] Ibid., 170.

him as he dies. Fuentes suggests that the roles of exploitation and oppression enacted in the Conquest have not changed.[176]

Symbolically, the last words of La Malinche are directed to her son while she is giving birth to him. La Malinche summarizes in these words the condition of the *mestizo*, the bastard son of two enemy races. She urges him to take possession of his land. Ironically, her words are similar to those of Octavio Paz when she calls her son *hijo de la chingada*, and tells him that he will hate his father and insult his mother:

> Oh, sal ya, hijo mío, sal . . . hijo de la traición . . . sal, hijo de puta . . . sal, hijo de la chingada . . . cae sobre la tierra que ya no es mía ni de tu padre, sino tuya . . . sal, hijo de las dos sangres enemigas…sal, mi hijo, sal a odiar a tu padre y a insultar a tu madre . . . [177]

Additionally, La Malinche hopes for the reincarnation of Quetzatlcoatl in her son:

> Tú mismo, mi hijito de la chingada; deberás ser la serpiente emplumada, la tierra con alas, el ave de barro, el cabrón y encabronado hijo de México y España: tú eres mi única herencia, la herencia de Malintzin, la diosa, de Marina, la puta, de Malinche, la madre.[178]

La Malinche is portrayed neither as traitor nor as the symbol of motherhood. Instead, she is the voice of social, political and religious criticism, and represents the consciousness of the Mexican nation.[179] Thus, Fuentes attempts the desconstruction of the patriarchal feminine figure of La Malinche.[180]

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[176] Cypess, *La Malinche in Mexican Literature*, 121.
[177] Fuentes, 173-174.
[178] Ibid., 175.
[179] Gyurko, 257.
[180] Cypess *La Malinche*, 121.

El eterno femenino

In this drama, Rosario Castellanos attempts to deconstruct the myths associated with marriage and the role of women in Mexican society. The very name of the protagonist, Lupita, a nickname for Guadalupe, evokes the Virgin of Guadalupe, who has been used as a symbol of the good mother in opposition to the bad woman represented by La Malinche. In the first act, Lupita goes to the beauty salon to have her hair done for her wedding, traditionally an important occasion in the life of every woman. A salesman comes to the salon to sell an electronic device that comes from the U.S. This device, which fits into the dryer, was designed to prevent women from thinking. Instead, those who use it have dreams that concur with the stereotypical role of women in a patriarchal society. Yet, when the device is tried on Lupita, to prepare her for her new life as a married woman, it malfunctions and produces dreams that show gender relations in Mexico from a perspective that differs from the patriarchal one. The dreams offer satirized sequences of married life, and, in the third and last act, satirized images of the life of a single woman.

In the second act, after Lupita has a dream that satirizes the expulsion of Adam and Eve from paradise, six historical women make their appearance on stage. These legendary women are: the biblical Eve; La Malinche; Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, the baroque poet; Doña Josefa Ortiz de Domínguez, an advocate for Independence; the empress Carlota; Rosario de la Peña, the muse of the poet Manuel Acuña; and Adelita, a revolutionary *soldadera*. Sor Juana proposes to Lupita that they play a game in which each woman will represent herself, but not as the stereotypical figure of official history,

but as she really was, or at least as she believes she was: "Y ahora vamos a presentarnos como lo que fuimos. O, por lo menos, como lo que creemos que fuimos."[181]

Instead of the mythical Malinche, Castellanos inverts the stereotypical image of *la chingada* and the passive figure submitted to Cortés. Castellanos' Malinche does not act like the submissive woman portrayed in the plays of Usigli, Novo, and Gorostiza. Even in Fuentes's drama, Malinche depends on Cortés to realize her plans. Instead, Castellanos' Malinche, who recognizes herself not as Cortés' slave, but as his tool, is an intelligent woman who always uses the best strategy. She is wiser and more alert than Cortés, who complains about the hot weather and the adversities of the expedition. He also complains about one of his men, who was smoking and caused the burning of his ships. La Malinche advises him to say that he himself burned the ships in order to prevent his men from going back to Cuba. Thus, as Sandra Cypess notes, Castellanos transforms the episode of the burning of the ships into a humorous event, and consequently, deconstructs the tradition, which has presented Cortés as a skilled tactician.[182]

Similarly, when Cortés asks La Malinche for help in taking off his armor, she refuses because she believes that if Indians see him without his armor, they will discover that he is not a god, but a common man. Cortés feels flattered as he looks at himself in a mirror :

> Malinche: Si te despojas de ella los indios verán lo que he visto yo y me callo: que eres un hombre como cualquier otro . . . Armado te semejas a un dios.

[181] Rosario Castellanos, *El Eterno Femenino* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1975), 87.
[182] Cypess, *La Malinche*, 126.

> Cortés: (*Halagado.):* Dame un espejo. *(Se contempla y se aprueba.)* Es verdad. Y este papel de dios me viene pintiparado.[183]

Cortés seems easily manipulated, and ironically, it is La Malinche who controls all the situations. Castellanos' Malinche advises Cortés to form an alliance with the Tlaxcaltecas, who could lead them to Tenochtitlán. If La Malinche helps Cortés conquer the Aztecs, it is not because she is traitor, but because she considers Moctezuma a cruel emperor, who has subjected many people and deserves to be punished.[184]

Castellanos does the same with the other women who narrate their experiences in their own voices. Through their accounts, Castellanos attempts not only to show that the paradigms that have conditioned women have not changed through the centuries, but also to demonstrate that the established myths are merely versions that are subject to change.[185]

¡Malinche show!

In this play the central topic is *malinchismo*. Willebaldo López suggests that the myths of La Malinche, Cortés and Cuauhtémoc are still alive in present-day Mexico. Through parody, however, he offers La Malinche an escape from her myth as the first *malinchista* in Mexico.

Like Fuentes, López suggests that the history of Mexico is of a circulatory nature. Since the Conquest of Mexico, not only Spain, but also many other countries have had political and economic interests in Mexico. In the play, imperialism in Mexico is represented by a trio, which is a parody of the holy Trinity, composed of a gringo, a Catholic nun, and a European who alternately speaks French, German and Italian. This

[183] Castellanos, *El eterno femenino,* 89.

trio controls the *prestanombres*, who are defined by La Malinche as those who lend their names to foreigners to make possible their clandestine inversions in Mexico: "Prestanombres. Es que prestan su nombre y meten inversionistas clandestinos a nuestro país."[186] The *prestanombres* are in charge of La Malinche, who is the star of a TV program directed to the Mexican masses to convince them that they have to follow her example of selling the country to the foreigners. More complex than Castellanos's drying device, López creates a complex machine that brings La Malinche back to life, awakened by the *prestanombres* whenever they need her.

Tired of her myth as the first *malinchista*, La Malinche rebels against the *prestanombres*. She resists serving as both a symbol and an excuse for the *prestanombres* to practice *malinchismo.* Malinche begs them to let her die, both physically and mythically: "Déjenme morir . . . Se los suplico . . . Dénme la paz."[187] Instead, they reply, singing and dancing, that they have to keep her alive for their purposes. Later, they are going to take care of her as they have done for four centuries: "Te queremos, te queremos explotar . . . Te daremos mil cariños, masajes y bienestar . . . para que puedas durar . . . Cuatro siglos tienes viva . . . y te debemos conservar."[188] Moreover, the *prestanombres* claim that they themselves are Malinche's creation: "Somos todos tuyos, Somos tu creación."[189] La Malinche realizes that the *prestanombres*' opportunism has only benefitted a minority, who has enriched itself; however, it brings poverty to the majority of Mexicans. Malinche tells the *prestanombres* that what they are doing is worse than

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[184] Cypess, "Re-visión de la figura de la Malinche," 191.
[185] Cypess, *La Malinche*, 128.
[186] Willebaldo López G., *Malinche Show!* Colección teatro social mexicano No. 5. (México: Ediciones del Sindicato de Trabajadores del INFONAVIT, 1980), 30.
[187] Ibid., 7.
[188] Ibid.
[189] Ibid., 8.

what she did. Furthermore, she justifies her past actions by saying she was deceived by Cortés, who told her that he was only trying to better her world: " . . . pero ustedes son más sinverguenzas que yo…Yo fui engañada por Cortés, porque me dijo que sus conquistadores eran lo mejor para mi mundo . . . "[190] La Malinche continues reproaching them for deceiving Mexican people by offering them products of bad quality brought from other countries: "Ustedes sí saben muy bien la clase de porquerías que representan y que nos hacen llegar de otros países. Saben perfectamente que en vez de hacernos bien nos perjudican."[191]

The two male *prestanombres* are surprised by Malinche's attitude. They wonder how she knows so much about the reality of the country if she only sees television. The female *prestanombre* remembers having shown La Malinche some pictures published in newspapers and magazines. When the two male *prestanombres* realize that these magazines were from the Left, they begin to insult the female *prestanombre*. In fact, throughout the play, this woman is constantly insulted by the male *prestanombres.* La Malinche asks the woman whether she has realized that she is being used by men who treat her not as subject but as object. The woman laughs, and replies to Malinche that she was the first Mexican prostitute, that in addition to "opening" the doors of her country to the conquerors she also "opened"herself: "Tú no sólo le abriste las puertas a su conquistadores . . . le abriste otra cosa."[192] Interestingly, these words are those of Octavio Paz, when he asserts that La Malinche gave herself to the conqueror. López plays with the words "open" and "closed" used by Paz to argue that the Conquest was a violation.

[190] Ibid.,11.
[191] Ibid.
[192] Ibid.,15.

When the *prestanombres* decide that La Malinche is out of control, they awaken Cortés, whom they consider the symbol of *mestizaje* and more Mexican than the Aztecs: "Cortés es el símbolo del mestizaje, es nuestra raíz, es la tradición . . . Cortés es más mexicano que los Aztecas."[193] However, López presents a parody of Cortés, who does not remember anything that happened in the past. Like Castellanos' Cortés, he is childish, selfish, and easily flattered. When the *prestanombres* remind him that he was a conqueror, he begins to act with authority over Malinche, who, in response, makes him return to reality.

Through Malinche's reproaches to Cortés, López recreates the Mexican inferiority complex. La Malinche reproaches Cortés for taking their son, Martín Cortés, from her to live with Cortés' relatives in Spain, who surely made him feel inferior as a *mestizo*: "Que no dejaban de hacerle sentir que era un mestizo…eso lo acomplejó y te odió para siempre . . . ¡te odiaba! Otro poco y nos hubiera independizado de España."[194] Therefore, La Malinche also emphasizes "the desespañolización," that occurred when Mexico achieved independence from Spain as Mexico rejected its Hispanic heritage.

López's Malinche questions the history narrated in Spanish chronicles on the Conquest. Like Castellanos, and even Fuentes, López gives La Malinche her own voice to tell her story. La Malinche considers herself very important to Cortés'achievements not only because of her interpretation but also her advice: "Yo sabía muchas lenguas y sobre todo el Náhuatl . . . Y sabía interpretar y convencer." [195] La Malinche does, however, recognize her blame, since she informed Cortés about all those who hated Moctezuma: "Yo le dije a Cortés que muchos pueblos odiábamos a los Aztecas y a su

[193] Ibid., 18.
[194] Ibid., 22.

Moctezuma y él se aprovechó del odio que nos tenía tan desunidos . . . ¡Soy culpable! ¡Y ya no les voy a ayudar!"[196] La Malinche also denies idealized versions of her love for Cortés and her heroism, when Cortés tells her that she was another soldier and his love: "Si todos te respetaban fuiste un soldado más en la conquista . . . Hasta fuiste mi amor."[197] Malinche laughs at him, and asks him why then he gave her to Juan Jaramillo if she was his love. She asserts that his real love was his wife Catalina Suárez, la Marcaida, whom he eventually killed. She continues reproaching him because at the time that she married Jaramillo, Cortés was not married. She criticizes him for seeking instead a noble Spanish woman: "le tenías puestos los ojos a alguna señorona española."[198]

La Malinche asks Cortés to help her flee from the TV show (as she attempts to escape also from her own myth), but at the moment they attempt to escape, the trio appears on stage to remind Cortés that he has been one of them. In other words as the conqueror of Mexico, he was the first to exploit Mexico for his own benefit. When the trio disappears, the *prestanombres* urge Cortés to convince La Malinche to cooperate with their cause. Instead, La Malinche explains to Cortés that the *prestanombres* want them to serve the conquest that Mexico still experiences day after day: " . . . nos utilizan. Hacen que diariamente sirvamos a la conquista que viene de fuera."[199] When La Malinche explains to Cortés that his conquest is history and that Mexico now experiences another type of conquest from the French, Jews, Germans and especially, *gringos*, since they are Mexico's neighbors. La Malinche says that many Spaniards still come to

[195] Ibid., 9.
[196] Ibid.
[197] Ibid., 23.
[198] Ibid.
[199] Ibid., 27.

Mexico. Cortés approves of that because they are from the "mother country." Malinche replies that they are no different because they all come to steal from Mexico:

> Malinche: (Al público) "¿Hay de todo el mundo, verdad? . . . Hay franceses, judíos, alemanes . . . Y sobre todo viven de nosotros muchísimos gringos.
>
> Cortés: ¿Gringos dices?
>
> Malinche: (Como en secreto con el público de cómplice) Es que estamos de vecinos. ¡Ah! También sigue llegando un hervidero de españoles.
>
> Cortés: ¡Ah bueno . . . ! A esos les doy la razón (al público). Son de la madre patria…y tienen mi santa religión.
>
> Malinche: Cuando quieren robar son iguales que los otros, que los judíos, que los árabes . . . [200]

It is important to note that while Cortés and La Malinche talk they address the audience in an intimate tone. La Malinche looks for public approval of her remarks. La Malinche says that she is against the foreigners who live outside Mexico and make a fortune through the exploitation of the Mexicans. They pretend to generate employment in Mexico, but they pay ten times less to a Mexican worker than to a worker in their own countries: "Fortunas que hacen a costa de explotar y matar de hambre a muchos mexicanos. ¡Tú crees . . . ! Dicen que traen empleos y trabajo, pero con lo que pagan a un trabajador de su país, le pagan a diez de los de aquí. ¡No hay que ser!"[201] López inverts La Malinche's myth of *malinchista* and presents her with a national consciousness. He grants her the opportunity to talk to her people, her symbolic sons, the Mexicans, about

[200] Ibid., 30.
[201] Ibid., 31.

her old treason and her present vision of the Mexican situation, provoked by foreign interests and the *prestanombres*, the real *malinchistas*. As Sandra Cypess argues, by addressing the public, La Malinche involves the spectator as a judge in the action and as accomplice in the rejection of the pattern under scrutiny, *malinchismo.* At the same time, López encourages the audience to recognize the change in La Malinche's perspective through her distance from the traditional *malinchista* outlook. [202]

At the end of the play, Malinche is dying and asks for her son. The trio orders the *prestanombres* to bring somebody from the audience because to them they are the same, every Mexican is Martín Cortés: "¡Trae el primero que encuentres! ¡Todos son Martín Cortés!"[203]

In the character of Martin Cortés, López parodies the image of the Mexican *macho,* especially in his double valorization of woman, as the mother and the whore. Martín also represents the *mestizo,* who in Octavio Paz's words is neither Spaniard nor Indian. Actually, Martín hates his father, but also feels ashamed of his mother. Martín Cortés is also a *malinchista* who dresses himself according to European fashions: "El que me gusta a veces andar vestido a la europea…no significa que dejen de gustarme tus folklóricos modelitos . . . "[204] La Malinche notes that Martín is ashamed to be Mexican. However, Martín insists on being proud to be a Mexican. López satirizes the Mexican *macho* when Martín says he is truly Mexican since he gets drunk and has a lot of women: "Siempre que nos vamos de parranda con los cuates, nos emborrachamos con puro tequila y nos echamos a cuanta vieja se nos ponga en frente para que nadie dude de

[202] Cypess, *La Malinche in Mexican Literature*, 131.
[203] López, 45.
[204] Ibid.

nuestra mexicanidad."[205] Now La Malinche feels disappointed with her son: "¿Esta cosa es mi hijo? . . . ¿Dónde está mi hijo? . . . Yo no puedo tener la culpa de todo."[206]After pronouncing these words, she dies. Ironically, with her death, the show does not end, since Martín Cortés uses her, dresses up Malinche's corpse, to continue with the television program. The play finishes with the presentation of ¡*Malinche show*!

López uses La Malinche to criticize socio-economic conditions of his present-day Mexico and to illustrate the new economic conquest as consequence of Imperialism. By reverting Malinche's myth as first *malinchista*, López does not present her as a *vende-patria*. Instead, López's Malinche represents the national consciousness. Through La Malinche, López revises the question of national identity and the *mestizo*'s inferiority complex. However, as Cypess notes, the utter cynicism of Martín's exploitation of his own mother is a warning against the coercive nature of the cultural paradigm. [207] Therefore, *malinchismo* persists despite the changing view of La Malinche.

Aguila o sol

As Sabina Berman states in the prologue, this play is based on the indigenous chronicles of events as anthologized by Miguel León Portilla in *La visión de los vencidos* (*Broken Spears)*. Thus, it is the point of view of the conquered peoples that is expressed.[208] In her attempt to subvert the official version of the conquest, Berman challenges the established cultural roles. Moreover, Berman mocks all those who exercise power, not only Cortés, but also Moctezuma.The drama takes place between the time that

[205] Ibid., 49.
[206] Ibid.
[207] Cypess, *La Malinche*, 132.
[208] Sabina Berman, "Aguila o sol," *Teatro de Sabina Berman* (Mexico: Editores Mexicanos Unidos, 1985), 225.

the Spaniards are first sighted in Veracruz by Moctezuma's envoys and the death of Moctezuma.

As Sandra Cypess notes, Cortés speaks a bastardized *castellano* that includes foreign words in Latin, French, German and English –the languages associated with Imperialism.[209] La Malinche not only makes it possible for Cortés to communicate with the Indians, but also for the audience to understand Cortés. It is ironic that La Malinche is also required to translate for the Spanish-speaking audience.[210] The first time that Cortés speaks to the envoys of Moctezuma, for instance, the audience cannot understand:

> Cortés: ¿Gato por liebre, sucios negros trajinantes? Mas cus-cus ¿io?: nieve de orozuz.
>
> Malinche: Dice el Cortés: ¿no es una emboscada?[211]

In these conversations, La Malinche, by using an article before his name, refers to him as if he were an object: "Dice el Cortés" (the Cortés said). In addition, we see that the first time La Malinche translates Cortés' words, she later makes her own statement: "Cortés is never afraid." Later, when the envoys cut the heart out of a victim, La Malinche intervenes in order to prevent Cortés from killing them, explaining to him that they only want to please him since they consider him to be the god Quetzalcoatl. Thus, she acts as mediator between the two cultures. It seems that she is the only one who understands the situation, since Cortés's behavior is childish and the Indians seem so confused by the Spaniards' behavior. This situation is parodied in the scene *El tesoro* when the Spaniards discover Moctezuma's treasure. They show an avarice for gold that Moctezuma cannot understand, since he considers the Spaniards to be gods. In fact, by

[209] Cypess, "Dramaturgia femenina y transposición histórica," *Alba de América* 12-13 (1989): 299.
[210] Ibid.

presenting on the one hand Cortés's incoherence and on the other hand, Moctezuma's incomprehension of the political reality, Berman shows that both patriarchal leaders are empty signs since they do not signify the authority and command that history has attributed to them. [212]

As in the Spanish and Indian accounts, La Malinche's role as interpreter is of transcendental importance in the first encounter between Cortés and Moctezuma:

> Cortés: Calmantes montes alicantes pintos pájaros volantes.
>
> Malinche: Dice: tenga confianza señor Moctezuma. No tema nada
>
> Cortés: ¡Cuore mío! ¡Oh, cuore mío!
>
> Malinche: En verdad le amamos; intensamente le amamos.
>
> Cortés: ¿Pokarito? Paso. ¿Blof yo? Ve: cinco ases, digo cuatro: chécame las mangas.
>
> Malinche: Dice: Ya estando en su casa podrán hablar en calma. Tenga fe.[213]

Ironically, La Malinche is not translating Cortés's words to Cuauhtémoc, but rather trying to make sense of his gibberish. Berman subverts the patriarchal tradition that has presented Cortés as an excellent orator and also Malinche's portrayal as an instrument, *la lengua*.

Berman also shows irreverence toward religion, which is understandable since the religion of the invaders was imposed on the Indians as a way of exercising power. However, it seems surprising that La Malinche takes the Spanish side. In the scene

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[211] Berman, *Aguila o sol*, 234.
[212] Cypes, *La Malinche in Mexican Literature*, 135-136.

Bautismos, Berman presents La Malinche as the one who explains the Christian religion to the Indians. Nonetheless, Malinche parodies the belief that Jesus was born from the Virgin Mary: "De madre virgen que fue penetrada por el Espíritu Santo." She also sings: "Blanca y radiante va la novia. La sigue atrás su novio amante." And Malinche adds: "Los misterios no se explican. Además ustedes son indios y . . . ps . . . ps . . . El bautismo es señal de estar en la fe verdadera, la cristiana."[214] Berman's Malinche suggests that she is different from the Indians, because she is with the Spaniards. It is impossible for the Indians to understand the new religion's faith. Instead, Indians have to accept as truth this imposition and forget about their faith in their own gods. This imposition is satirized when Ixtlixuchitl, an Indian chief, sets on fire his mother's house because she refused to be baptized, then takes her corpse to be baptized. Cortés, La Malinche and the Spanish priest rejoice by singing: "¡A la bio, a la bao, a la bim bom bam!"[215] as if they were in a Mexican soccer game.

As Sandra Cypess argues, Berman presents La Malinche in a nontraditional way. She is neither a traitor to her people nor a submissive woman in love with Cortés. [216] At the same time that Berman gives La Malinche a more active role as interpreter, she also gives her more power. Therefore, La Malinche sees herself differently from the Indians because she is on the side of the conquerors.

Berman presents la Malinche not as a passive figure, but rather as a woman who rebels against earlier patriarchal portrayals. Berman's Malinche is more than just an instrument of the conquest and a self-denied woman in love with Cortés. Berman's

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[213] Berman, 255.
[214] Ibid., 251.
[215] Ibid., 253.
[216] Cypess, *La Malinche in Mexican Literature*, 136.

Malinche is skeptical about those who traditionally have held power. Thus, she makes fun of not only Cortés and Moctezuma, but also of the Catholic authority.

La Malinche

Víctor Hugo Rascón Banda attempts in this drama to vindicate La Malinche from the myth that has condemned her as a traitor and a whore. Like Castellanos and López, Rascón Banda brings La Malinche to the present. However, he uses a different technique, for he does not use technology to bring La Malinche to the stage. Instead, he presents three Malinches from three different ages. In the first scenes we meet an adult Malinche, who is a Mexican deputy and who at times goes to the psychoanalyst, who helps her remember what happened in the past by having her represent herself as the young Malinche. An old Malinche appears in several scenes along with the other two Malinches.

Rascón Banda's *La Malinche*, like Fuentes's and López's dramas, suggests that history in Mexico has been cyclical. In fact, this idea helps Rascón Banda criticize the present situation in Mexico. While López is more concerned with economic factors, Rascón Banda is more concerned with politics. Whereas in *Malinche Show*, the conquest comes from outside, from different countries, the U.S. among them, Rascón Banda focuses on U.S. imperialism and its effects on the indigenous population, as well as the cultural conquest of Mexico.

From the beginning, Rascon's adult Malinche, a PRD (Partido Republicano Democrático) deputy, attempts to vindicate herself by proposing that the name Malintzin Tepenal be put in golden letters among other names of Mexican heroes. La Malinche appeals to Mexican nationalism by arguing that she was a great woman and the mother of

the Mexicans: "…el nombre de una gran mujer, origen de nuestra nacionalidad, madre de todos los mexicanos."[217] In response, the other deputies make all kinds of *machista* insults. She ignores them, saying that it is time to recognize La Malinche's value because without her the Mexican nation would never have been possible: "Una mujer sin cuya obra y labor no hubiera sido posible fundar esta nación. Ha llegado el momento de reconocer sus meritos."[218] In the same scene, the young Malinche appears singing Gabino Palomares's song about *malinchismo*, "La maldición de la Malinche:"

Se nos quedó el maleficio	We remain with the evil curse
de brindar al extranjero	to offer the foreigner
nuestra fe, nuestra cultura,	our faith, our culture,
nuestro pan, nuestro dinero…	our bread, our money.
Hoy, en pleno siglo veinte!	Today in the twentieth century!
nos siguen llegando rubios	blondies continue to arrive,
y les abrimos la casa;	and we open our houses to them
y los llamamos amigos…	and we call them friends.
Oh! Maldición, de Malinche!	O curse, from La Malinche!
enfermedad del presente,	sickness of the present
cuando dejarás mi tierra	when will you leave my land?
cuándo harás libre a mi gente![219]	when will you free my people![220]

[217] Victor Hugo Rascón Banda, *La Malinche*, (Mexico: Plaza Janes, 2000), 16.
[218] Ibid.
[219] Ibid., 20.
[220] Translated by Sandra Cypess, La Malinche in Mexican Literature, 130.

The discussion continues in the Chamber of Deputies when a conservative PAN (Partido Acción Nacional) deputy claims that the father of the country is Hernán Cortés. This deputy praises Cortés's achievements in the conquest of Mexico. In response, we hear deputies who confirm this, while others protest: "¡muera el conquistador! ¡lárgate a España! ¡desnaturalizado!"[221] The figure of Hernán Cortés has been polemical in the creation of a national identity. Traditionally, he has been portrayed as a great and brave man who led a small army to defeat the empire of Mexico. He has been praised for his eloquence, as well as for his introduction of the Catholic faith.

In the fourth scene, the adult Malinche goes to a female psychoanalyst. She is feeling hurt after the episode in the Chamber of Deputies. Malinche is confused because she does not know what she did wrong. La Malinche tells the psychoanalyst that her name was Marina and she was married only once, the last time (to Jaramillo). When the psychoanalyst asks her about her offspring, she answers that she has a lot of children who hate her because they cannot understand her.[222] The children to whom she refers are the Mexicans, her symbolic sons and daughters, for whom her figure has been so polemical in their construction of a national identity. Rascón Banda gives voice to La Malinche to talk about her childhood and her encounter with the Spaniards. Malinche explains to the psychoanalyst that after her father died, her mother sold her to the *cacique* of Tabasco. She says she was fourteen years old when the Spaniards arrived. As has been mentioned, the cacique gave the Spaniards twenty women as a gift, since they had no women to cook for them: "El cacique que los quiso agasajar y darles la bienvenida. Ellos no traían mujeres ni quien les hiciera de comer. Éramos veinte muchachas. Nos regalaron al

[221] Rascón, *La Maliche*, 24.
[222] Ibid., 28

capitán."[223] In this scene, Rascón Banda presents Spaniards chasing women in a collective rape as Malinche explains how they were used by the Spaniards: "Nos usaron"[224]

Through this scene, *La Malinche va al sicoanalista*, Rascón Banda gives La Malinche the opportunity to tell her own story, which has traditionally been told by others. In the same scene, the psychoanalyst asks La Malinche whether the function of the twenty women was to serve as *soldaderas*. She answers that it was something similar: "algo así"[225] La Malinche explains that when Cuahtémoc's envoys came to Veracruz, the Spaniards and Mexicans could not understand one another. Malinche laughs as she remembers the Spaniards' attempts to communicate with the Mexicans through signs, as if they had no voice: "Se hacían señas unos a otros, como si estuvieran mudos."[226]

In the next scene, *Traducción simultánea,* Rascón Banda recreates the scene in which Cortés and Aguilar cannot understand what Moctezuma's envoys are saying. The conquerors are parodied as American tourists. Since Aguilar is not able to communicate with them, a simultaneous translation occurs: La Malinche translates from Náhuatl to Mayan, which Aguilar translates to the Castilian for Cortés. Rascón Banda's Malinche interprets wisely, and speaks more diplomatically than Cortés and Aguilar. Although most of the time she only translates, she also acts as intermediary between the two cultures. She seems to understand both sides and sometimes acts as peacemaker. For

[223] Ibid., 29.
[224] Ibid., 30.
[225] Ibid.
[226] Ibid., 31.

instance, La Malinche advises the Indians not to anger the Spaniards since they come in peace as friends: "No los hagan enojar. Vienen como amigos."[227]

In the same scene, Cortés asks Jerónimo Aguilar the name of the woman who just helped him to communicate with the Indians. When Aguilar says that her name is Malintzin, Cortés misspells it as Malinche. Cortés tells Aguilar to offer her liberty if she will help him to communicate with the natives. Cortés then tells Aguilar that he no longer needs his services, since he only knows Maya. Instead, Cortés wants to have Malinche as his *faraute*, as his secretary. Rascón Banda uses here the words of López de Gómara's chronicle:

> Cortés: ¿Malinche? Dile que le daré la libertad y otras cosas si me habla con la verdad y me ayuda a comunicarme con los naturales de estas tierras, ya que lo entiende tan bien.
>
> Jerónimo: ¿Y yo qué?
>
> Cortés: Tú ya no me sirves de mucho. Nomás hablas el maya. Y ésta debe saber todas las lenguas por acá. Es tan lista, que si no las sabe, las inventa. Dile que la quiero tener como, algo así como mi faraute o sea como mi secretaria, pues…
>
> Jerónimo: (a Malinche): Que si quieres ser su secretaria ejecutiva bilingue.[228]

When Jerónimo Aguilar reminds Cortés that Malinche has already been given to Portocarrero, Cortés, comparing himself to God, replies: "¿Y eso qué? Dios da y Dios quita."[229] Rascón Banda presents Cortés not as foolish and selfish, like Castellanos,

[227] Ibid., 38.
[228] Ibid., 41-42.
[229] Ibid., 42.

López and Berman, but as an ambitious and arrogant man who cares about no one but himself.

Malinche remembers the Spaniards' approach to Tenochtitlán: "van en son de conquista . . . algunos van llevando puesto el metal, van ataviados de hierro, van relumbrando. Se les ve con gran temor . . . "[230] Malinche claims to be afraid because she foresees that a tragedy is going to occur: "Tengo miedo. Algo me dice que va a ocurrir una tragedia." La Malinche is not portrayed by Rascón Banda as a traitor, but as an intelligent woman who understands the power of the two authorities, Cortés and Moctezuma, and foresees the clash between the two cultures. Moreover, Rascón Banda exculpates her from the Cholula massacre. Now an older Malinche is explaining to the psychoanalyst that she did not know Cortés's intentions when he ordered her to congregate the Cholulans to tell them that the Spaniards were leaving for Mexico and wanted to say goodbye. Instead, Cortés slaughtered the Cholulans who were plotting an attack. When Malinche says to Cortés that she did not translate that, he explains that he learned of the plot through another *lengua* (tongue):

> Malinche: ¡Yo no lo escuché! ¡Yo no traduje eso!
>
> Cortés: Lo supe por otra lengua.[231]

La Malinche is horrified by the slaughter and reproaches Cortés for his cruelty. He reminds her that she is not his conscience, but his tongue. Rascón Banda uses La Malinche to question the purposes of the Conquest, which he suggests was a violation and a clash between two worlds. In fact, the events that La Malinche narrated are from

[230] Ibid., 43.
[231] Ibid., 46.

the viewpoint of the conquered. In the scene *El tesoro de Moctezuma*, Rascón Banda illustrates the Spaniards' greed for gold when they discover Moctezuma's treasure. Malinche reproaches Cortés one more time for destroying everything beautiful he found."[232]

Concerning her role in the Conquest, Rascón Banda's Malinche recognizes that through her words she lied to both Spaniards and Indians because she understood that the conquerors and conquered would never understand each other. Malinche says that because she changed the words and converted the truth to a lie Spaniards and Indians were able to cohabitate in relative peace. Malinche questions what the truth might be. She claims that she was only pursuing an ideal:

> Eran dos lenguas. Eran dos mundos. No. Dos universos. Tan lejanos, tan opuestos, imposibles de unir y hacer uno solo. Y entonces lo decidí. Yo era la lengua, yo era la intérprete. Ser traductora era mi oficio. Me di cuenta de que los que llegaban no se podían entender con los que acá vivían. Los vencedores jamás se entenderían con los vencidos. Tan diferentes eran. Y me di valor. Me atreví. Mentí a unos y a otros. Cambié las palabras. Me propuse convertir en verdad la gran mentira del entendimiento. Una mentira tiene dos caras. Por eso pudieron convivir sin hacerse la guerra durante todo un año en Tenochtitlán. Yo inventaba una verdad hecha de mentiras cada que traducía de ida y de vuelta entre los dos mundos . . . Despreciada de unos y de otros.¿Qué es la verdad? ¿Qué es la mentira? Yo sólo quería un ideal.[233]

The three Malinches in the play question the diverse nouns that have been attached to this figure, such as the tongue, a heroine, *barragana*, *la chingada*, Cortés'

[232] Ibid., 68.
[233] Ibid., 95-96.

concubine and advisor; in general, the traitor, but overall, a myth. [234] By presenting more than one Malinche, Rascón Banda suggests the complexity of her figure.

The *mestizo* son is represented by Rascón Banda as a selfish and arrogant man (like Cortés), who lives in Spain. The term *raza* does not mean anything for Martín Cortés. He tells La Malinche that his mother is dead. La Malinche says that she is still alive because of the hatred of those who do not allow her to die peacefully: "Vive por el rencor de muchos, por el odio de algunos, por el desprecio de tantos. No puede morir, aunque quisiera . . . Se lamenta por sus hijos."[235] Thus, Rascón suggests that Malinche's negative image continues to exist in present-day Mexico.

In the following scene, La Malinche goes again to the psychoanalyst, who reads to her Octavio Paz's essay. La Malinche gets angry when she realizes her counterposition with the Virgin of Guadalupe (whom La Malinche considers to be Tonatzin, the Aztec goddess): "Ella es la Madre Virgen y yo la Madre Violada. Ella, la Madre Pura y yo, la Chingada Madre."[236] As the psychoanalyst continues reading, La Malinche interrupts her, refusing to accept her myth as the passive, open and seduced woman, the whore mother. For example, she says that she was not seduced, but raped. Her last words, when she realizes that she is considered a traitor, are: "O sea que soy traidora. O sea que no me perdonan. ¡Chinguen a su madre todos!"[237]

In one of the last scenes, the three Malinches are at the Chamber of Deputies, speaking against capitalism. Like López's Malinche, these Malinches represent the national interests and are therefore against all foreign interests. Throughout the play,

[234] See scene XXI,"Los adjetivos," Rascón, *La Malinche*, 89-90.
[235]Rascón, 107.
[236] Ibid., 111.
[237] Ibid., 113.

Rascón Banda criticizes the political and economic conditions of modern-day Mexico. He focuses on the consequences that NAFTA has brought to the country, especially to the indigenous population in Chiapas, which rose and rebelled in the form of the Zapatista army under the leadership of Subcomandante Marcos. In fact, Marcos is compared to Cuauhtémoc. In one scene, Cuauhtémoc and Marcos appear and narrate the tragic fall of Tenochtitlán, while in another La Malinche, Cuauhtémoc and Marcos narrate in a tragic tone about the events that occurred in Chiapas. They lament the consequences of the Neoliberalism. Malinche compares Chiapas to one of the indigenous groups that had to pay tribute to the emperor of Mexico: "Por miles de caminos se desangra Chiapas. Esta tierra sigue pagando su tributo a los imperios."[238] In another scene, La Malinche serves as interpreter between the government and the indigenous. In Rascón Banda's representation of La Malinche, she is not on the side of the conquerors but rather on that of the conquered. She realizes that all efforts are in vain, since those who have power do not listen to the petitions of the oppressed. Like Fuentes, in his drama *Todos los gatos son pardos*, Rascón is skeptical regarding any possible change in Mexico since all events are cyclical.

Rascón Banda gives voice to La Malinche, not only at the time of the conquest, but also in the present. Instead of betraying her people, La Malinche attempts to help them, in the past as well as in the present. She manifests opposition to the new conquest and also to the *malinchismo* of those who sell out to capitalist interests. Rascón Banda uses La Malinche to criticize the socio-political and economic situation in present-day Mexico. He suggests the circulatory nature of the history. Thus, the new conquest comes from U. S. neoliberalism and the consequent uprising of the Zapatista army in Chiapas.

[238] Ibid., 125.

Even though La Malinche attempts to act as intermediary, the Mexican government does not listen to indigenous petitions. Thus, Rascón suggests that as in the times of the Conquest, those who have power still demand a tribute. Rascón Banda, like López, criticizes the *malinchismo* of those politicians who sell out the country without caring the welfare of a majority of Mexicans. Furthermore, Rascón Banda's Malinche like Fuentes' and López's represents national consciouness.

Rascón Banda presents a defense of La Malinche, who is given the opportunity to confront her detractors, beginning with Octavio Paz.[239] Rascón Banda, by presenting these three Malinches, shows the complexity of her historical figure and myth as well as the permanence of this figure in Mexican culture.

After analyzing the changing image of La Malinche in different plays that deal with the Conquest, we see that the first dramas, Usigli's *Corona de fuego* and Gorostiza's *La Malinche*, as well as Novo's *Cuauhtémoc*, reflect not only the patriarchal ideology, but also the ideology of *indigenismo* by presenting Cuauhtémoc as the symbol of nationhood. In order to vindicate La Malinche as a negative symbol of treachery, both Usigli and Gorostiza make her recognize her guilt and regret her participation in the Conquest. In doing so, their intention is to justify the Conquest and glorify the birth of the new race, the *mestizo*. Thus, La Malinche is elevated as the symbolic mother of this race. In contrast, Novo shows no intention of vindicating her from her negative symbol as traitor of her race.

In his play, *Todos los gatos son pardos*, Fuentes presents the complex figure of La Malinche in Mexican culture. Like Gorostiza and Usigli, he portrays La Malinche as a

[239] Stuart A. Day, "La Malinche in the Neoliberal 90s," unpublished essay, 3.

symbol of the fusion between two worlds. However, Fuentes's Malinche is portrayed neither as traitor nor as the symbol of motherhood. Instead, she is the voice of social, political and religious consciousness and by extension, the consciousness of the Mexican nation. Fuentes attempts to deconstruct the patriarchal feminine figure of La Malinche and at the same time, suggests the circular nature of Mexican history.

In *El eterno femenino*, Castellanos inverts the stereotypical image of La Malinche as the passive figure submitted to Cortés. Instead, she is portrayed as an intelligent woman who always uses the best strategy. Thus, Castellanos deconstructs the tradition in which Cortés has been presented as a skilled tactician. Despite the positive portrayal of La Malinche, Castellanos suggests that the paradigms that have conditioned women have not changed through the centuries.

Like Fuentes, Willebaldo López in his play *¡Malinche show!* suggests that the history of Mexico is of a circulatory nature. Through the phenomenon of *malinchismo*, which is still alive in present-day Mexico, López presents the new Conquest coming not only from Spaniards, but also from many other countries that have economic interests in Mexico. Thus, López uses La Malinche to criticize socio-economic conditions of his present-day Mexico and to illustrate the new economic conquest as a consequence of Imperialism. López inverts La Malinche's myth as *malinchista* and presents her as the voice of national consciousness encouraging the audience to recognize the change in La Malinche's perspective through her distance from the traditional *malinchista* outlook. Nonetheless, at the end of the play, López shows that despite the changing view of La Malinche, *malinchismo* persists in Mexican culture.

Sabina Berman, in her play *Aguila o sol*, challenges established cultural roles and even when she presents the conquest from the perspective of the conquered, she mocks all those who exercise power, not only Cortés, but also Moctezuma. Berman presents La Malinche not as a self-denied woman in love with Cortés, as she has been depicted in earlier patriarchal dramas, but as an intelligent woman whose words went far beyond those spoken by Cortés and his men.

Rascón Banda attempts in his drama *La Malinche* to vindicate her from the myth that has condemned her as a traitor and a whore. Like Fuentes, López and Berman, Rascón Banda suggests that history in Mexico has been cyclical. Rascón Banda focuses on U.S. imperialism and its effects on the indigenous population, as well as the cultural conquest of Mexico. Rascón Banda presents La Malinche not as a traitor or whore, but like López, as the voice of national consciousness. He gives La Malinche several opportunities to confront her detractors and at the same time, shows the complexity of her figure and the permanence of her myth in Mexican culture.

Conclusions

By examining the little information that the chronicles present about La Malinche, we see different versions, which raise the question of to what extent they are reliable. She has been called in these chronicles by different names: Marina, the Christian name that the Spaniards gave to her; Doña Marina, as Bernal Díaz del Castillo refers to her, using the title "Doña" to indicate her purported noble origin and her importance in the conquest; Malintzin, as the indigenous accounts refer to her, using respectfully the ending "tzin"; and, Malinche, as she is commonly known today. There are other variations among the chronicles concerning her place of origin, and her early life before the conquest, while the date of her birth and of her death are unknown. Modern studies of La Malinche have used the chronicle of Bernal Díaz as a primary source of information about her life and participation in the Conquest. Unlike Hernán Cortés, who barely mentions her as his Indian interpreter, Bernal Díaz narrates La Malinche's noble origins and exalts her participation in the Conquest. However, if she was so important to the Spaniards and also so respected by the Indians, It is unclear why her contribution has been obscured relative to that of the conquerors. As Clendinnen notes, the conquest was a male affair and consequently its history was later recalled only by men. Consequently, we cannot know for sure how La Malinche was perceived by either Spaniards or Indians. Both Díaz's account and the *Florentine Codex* suggest that in addition to translating, La Malinche at times may have spoken her own ideas. How can we be sure? Her supposed words could have been invented by the chroniclers in accordance with their own objectives. Therefore, any attempt to analyze the figure of La Malinche and her role in

the Conquest can be at best a reconstruction based on the little information that it is known or thought to be known about her.

Later historians prefer to see her, as in the case of Prescott, as a noble, beautiful, Indian princess. These romantic interpretations praise her fidelity to Cortés and to the Conquest. Despite these variances, however, there are two activities that are consistently associated with Malinche: that of interpreter and that of concubine. Even in modern interpretations of the Conquest, in which the name, origin, and importance of La Malinche are frequently either explained in a brief paragraph or as a note, she is described as both interpreter and concubine of Hernán Cortés.

Considered by some as the most enigmatic figure of the Conquest, the figure of La Malinche has been repeatedly constructed and re-constructed through the centuries. During the past four centuries, she has been transformed from a historical figure to a national myth. In national discourse, La Malinche symbolizes on the one hand the creation of a new race, that of the *mestizo*. On the other hand, she represents the defeat and destruction of the indigenous order. Since Independence in 1821, La Malinche has been transformed from the heroic figure, interpreter and counselor (as she was perceived in the Spanish chronicles) to traitor of her race and symbolic mother of the *mestizo*. Although the *mestizo* became the ideological symbol of post-revolutionary Mexico, his mother was repudiated as the traitor and as the source of a chronic inferiority complex. Thus, La Malinche's role in the forging of a national identity is as ambiguous as her role in the Conquest.

In their attempt to vindicate La Malinche from her negative myth as traitor and *La Chingada*, several scholars have argued that the concept of betrayal cannot be applied to

the indigenous population at the time of the Conquest. There was no sense of "patria," but rather many tribes, who, anxious to rid themselves of Aztec domination, eagerly assisted Cortés in their defeat. La Malinche is seen by these scholars as an intelligent woman who rebelled against the traditional patriarchal values and standards that would restrict her to the role of servant and concubine. In these reinterpretations, La Malinche represents a multilingual interpreter, a strategist, a *soldadera,* the symbol of the union of two cultures, and an icon of feminist ideology.

The reinterpretation of La Malinche as both a historical and mythical figure was brought to the theater as twentieth-century dramatists began to question official history. Like the chronicles that reflect the ideology of the period in which they were written, these dramas also reflect the historical revisionism that Mexico has undergone. Thus, we see in the dramas of Usigli, Gorostiza, and Novo the presence of *indigenism*o as the predominant ideology following the Mexican Revolution. Both Usigli and Gorostiza attempt to exalt the figure of La Malinche as the symbolic mother of the *mestizo* and justify the Conquest as a predestined event that had to occur in order for a new nation and a new race to arise. Their dramas maintain traditional patriarchal ideology, while Fuentes, Castellanos, Berman, López and Rascón Banda suggest the idea that there is not one truth, but rather many possible truths. They also suggest the circular nature of Mexican history by presenting La Malinche and the events of the Conquest within the context of present-day Mexico. In all of these dramas, La Malinche struggles to break away from her own myth as it has persisted in Mexican culture since the days of the Conquest. By presenting more than one Malinche, Rascón Banda suggests that it is necessary to

combine them to reach an understanding of La Malinche's complexity in Mexico's history as well as in contemporary culture.

At the end of *La Malinche*, the adult Malinche makes a statement regarding her identity that could have easily been said by the chroniclers, modern-day historians, contemporary playwrights, or the Mexican public: "Yo inventaba una verdad hecha de mentiras cada que traducía de ida y de vuelta entre los dos mundos . . . Despreciada de unos y de otros. ¿Qué es la verdad? ¿Qué es la mentira? Yo sólo quería un ideal."[240]

[240] Rascón, *La Malinche*, 95-96.

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