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Hija de la Chingada: Visibility and Erasure of La Malinche in Contemporary Mexican Discourse

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Introduction

The story of *La Malinche* has pervaded Mexican nationalist discourse for the dichotomous relationship that has simultaneously mystified and demonized her. The woman behind the story is Malintzín, an Indigenous Aztec woman who had contact with the first Spanish settlers in what is known today as the Yucatán Peninsula. Discussions regarding her absence in the struggle against the Spanish settlers have, in turn, villainized her story. Contrastingly, Chicana feminist scholars have attempted to reclaim *La Malinche's* narrative by providing a historical alternative to the story, one which views her as a victim of the Spanish stronghold and patriarchy replicated by colonialism.

The present paper aims to construct the historical figure of *La Malinche* within a postcolonialist framework. Utilizing Malintzín's story as a case study illustrates the deeper colonial structures that have created the figure of *La Malinche* as a dishonorable and treacherous woman. Although the various nuances of her story will be discussed, my overarching question intends to answer in what ways the metaphor of *La Malinche* has been utilized as a form of abstraction to both uplift and oppress the Mexican woman who is either “traditional” or “sexually treacherous.” Scholars such as Gloria Anzaldúa have addressed *La Malinche's* positionality within contemporary Mexican and Mexican-American society, questioning the replication of the traditional/treacherous binary. However, I expand on this scholarship by observing this case study from a postcolonial lens, particularly by conceptualizing language as an object of weaponization, bridging, and Catholic conversion.

Furthermore, *La Malinche's* narrative will be constructed under Dr. Sankaran Krishna's theories of “willful amnesia” in international relations (IR). Under this theory, Krishna posits that strategies of abstraction and deferred redemption are weaponized to minimize the effects of colonialism in the past, present, and future of IR. Instead of placing more emphasis on the structural effects of colonialism, *La Malinche* is blamed for the downfall of pre-Hispanic civilization and subsequent settler-colonized relationships.

The framing of my research paper will firstly be supported by a historical background of *La Malinche* and the complexities of her relationship with the Spanish Crown. Next, I aim to begin answering my research question through analyzing how abstraction and similar methods of “willful amnesia” fit into the context of Spanish colonization. This will then be followed by a discussion of how *La Malinche*’s story has been weaponized to provide a blanket-statement explanation of Indigenous communities’ downfall. Finally, *La Malinche*’s story will be translated into a contemporary context: the pervasive nature of gendered violence in Mexico. Recognizing the connection between a harmful narrative of women deemed as *La Malinche* and the rising rate of *feminicides* illustrates the importance of deconstructing the aforementioned binary.

Background and Clarification of Terms

La Malinche

It must firstly be noted that this paper’s use of *La Malinche* and Malintzín is not interchangeable. *La Malinche* refers to the abstract narrative that mystifies and demonizes the actual person named Malintzín. Not separating the semantics perpetuates the oneness of the terms, thus furthering the erasure of the person. In addition, Chicana scholar Cordelia Candelaria highlights the importance of detaching the Spanish conquest from *La Malinche*’s narrative, despite the events contributing to what is now the permanent reality in Mexico.¹⁹⁰ Nonetheless, the *conquista* consisted of a “destruction of a way of life, (...) the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of Native peoples; and the subjugation and enslavement of the survivors.”¹⁹¹ Despite this paper’s acknowledgement of colonialism’s detrimental effects, centering the *conquista* to Malintzín’s story detracts from the contemporary structural effects caused thereafter.¹⁹²

Although there are not many first-hand sources of Malintzín, most of them being written by the Spanish, historians have weaved together various sources to construct an idea of who she was. Candelaria writes that Malintzín lived in a time of political contention regarding the Aztec ruler, Moctezuma, who exercised tyrannical order over the region that is now known as Mexico City and neighboring regions.¹⁹³ Moctezuma’s rule (1502–1520) caused political rupture amongst the Natives, which later proved to be a point of weakness against the Spanish colonizers. By the time Hernán Cortés arrived, the Aztec Empire was already beginning to decline. Candelaria emphasizes this attribute, since Malintzín has been used as a scapegoat for the successful Spanish conquering of the Natives.

¹⁹⁰ Cordelia Candelaria, “La Malinche, Feminist Prototype,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 5, no. 2 (1980): 1.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*: 3.

¹⁹² The conquest is widely known in Spanish as *la conquista*.

¹⁹³ Candelaria, “La Malinche, Feminist Prototype,” 3.

Malintzín formed part of a noble family situated in present-day Yucatán, Mexico. Her status as a chief's daughter presented her with opportunities for education. However, her father's death and mother remarrying caused a shift in her family dynamic. Her mother sold Malintzín into slavery to keep her inheritance and even held a false funeral to explain her daughter's disappearance.¹⁹⁴ Malintzín was sent to the ruling tribes in Tabasco, where she practiced various Indigenous languages and later Castilian Spanish when Cortés arrived in 1519.¹⁹⁵

When Hernán Cortés arrived in the Yucatán Peninsula, he was given twenty young women to serve as domestic laborers, one of those being Malintzín. Due to her educated background and polyglot abilities, Malintzín quickly distinguished herself from the other subjugated women. Cortés began to use her abilities to survey the land and populations he aimed to conquer, thus bridging the gap between the Spanish Crown and the settler-state formed by Cortés. Malintzín thus served as a sort of cultural diplomat for Hernán Cortés, by translating for the Spanish and the Indigenous peoples of the region for over ten years. Historical accounts also specify that Malintzín warned Cortés of Indigenous plots against him and ultimately gave birth to Cortés' son.¹⁹⁶

Her objectification and bestowal has caused her to be a symbol of subjugation before the Spanish and Native men. The subsequent Spanish conquest and mixing of the races furthered damage toward women's image. The mixture of races, also known as *mestizaje*, was elemental in continuing the subordination of Indigenous women as it made the offspring envy their Spanish father and despise their Indian mother.¹⁹⁷ The image of *La Malinche* has been molded to fit a number of *mestizo* narratives, due to her relationship with the colonial Spanish power. On one hand, she is seen as a traitor to her people, while on the other, she may represent resilience by adapting to the Spanish colonization processes.

Willful Amnesia and Abstraction

As mentioned previously, the theories constructed by postcolonialist scholar Dr. Sankaran Krishna will be utilized to understand *La Malinche's* narrative in a presence and absence framework. Krishna firstly argues that the IR discipline is based on a willful amnesia on questions of race; furthermore, it weaponizes the strategies of abstraction and deferred redemption to maintain its ideological coherence.¹⁹⁸ Focusing more so on the strategy of abstraction, it is defined as the choice to “theory build” rather than rationalizing the effects of land, violence, and

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ “The Figure of La Malinche in Chicana Literature: Between Betrayal and Redemption,” *Scottish Centre for Global History*, 2021.

¹⁹⁷ Harvard International Review, “Machismo, Femicides, and Child's Play: Gender Violence in Mexico,” 2020.

¹⁹⁸ Sankaran Krishna, “Race, Amnesia, and the Education of International Relations,” *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 26, no. 4 (October 2001): 401–424.

slavery. Oftentimes, the desire to include these in the study of IR results in a referral to other humanities disciplines such as anthropology or history.¹⁹⁹ Abstraction has been weaponized by renowned scholars, such as Martin Heidegger or Michel Foucault, to conceal the nuances of knowledge production. In other words, the double-edged sword of knowledge production consists of exposing hidden truths as well as concealing and “unknowing” the deep-rooted layers of larger concepts.²⁰⁰

Krishna applies the strategy of abstraction to the Spanish colonization of the Americas, specifically how the Spanish utilized the cleansing of Indigenous languages to promote Christianity and justify the sacking of resources and people.²⁰¹ Not only was Castilian employed to consolidate the Spanish Crown, but it was further used to fragment the already-established political systems of Indigenous civilizations.²⁰² This aspect of abstraction can extend to lingual formation that has spread the history of *La Malinche* as a traitor, rather than a survivor of Spanish colonialism. Furthermore, Krishna attempts to ameliorate the problem of willful amnesia by referring to Edward Said's method of contrapuntality. Said posits that, “by looking at different experiences contrapuntally, as making up a set of (...) intertwined and overlapping histories [one can] try to formulate an alternative both to a politics of blame and to the even more destructive politics of confrontation and hostility.”²⁰³ The mere consideration of *La Malinche*'s duality could be considered as a contrapuntal analysis, given the vast scholarship that has villainized her actions.²⁰⁴ However, this paper goes further in considering the colonial implications behind the framing of *La Malinche*'s narrative.

Femicides

Finally, the clarification of femicides must be noted. Although widely known as femicides, this paper opts to use the term feminicides. The latter refers to the killing (or homicide) of women, whereas a femicide includes the element of hatred toward women and the subsequent impunity of men on a cultural, judicial, and law enforcement level. The Mexican National Citizen Observatory for Femicides (OCNF) clarifies that feminicides are motivated by the perpetrators' sexist beliefs. Furthermore, the pervasive nature of feminicides results from the state's permissiveness of the culture of violence against women.²⁰⁵ Human rights organizations and other experts attribute violence against women as a truncation of systemic violence from organized crime and the drug trade, unemployment,

¹⁹⁹ Krishna, “Race, Amnesia, and Education,” 2.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid*: 3.

²⁰¹ *Ibid*: 12.

²⁰² *Ibid*: 14.

²⁰³ *Ibid*: 4.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid*: 1.

²⁰⁵ Alma Delia Buendía Rodríguez, “Encerrada Pero Libre: El Modelo de Atención de La Violencia Contra Las Mujeres En El Estado de México,” *Revista de Estudios de Género, La Ventana* 6, no. 48, 2018.

women in the labor market, and a lack of judicial impunity.²⁰⁶ Overall, from 1990 to 2020, reports demonstrate that there have been 60,509 women dead at the hands of femicide.²⁰⁷ In 2022, 1,015 per 100,000 women died as a result of femicide.²⁰⁸ In other words, over sixty women were victims of femicide for every month of 2022.²⁰⁹ The pervasiveness of this issue has called for a number of protests and social media campaigns, namely the *Ni Una Menos* (not one more death) movement.²¹⁰ Despite legislative concessions, the normalization of femicides continues to blame women for their deaths.²¹¹ Although *La Malinche’s* narrative cannot be construed as the sole contributor to the culture of femicides that is present in Mexico today, it can entertain the idea that a traditional/ treacherous binary furthers violence against women who do not fit in it.

Discussion

La Malinche’s story and the threat of femicides in Mexico are not directly nor explicitly related; however, the lens of Krishna's abstraction theory allows us to understand the culture of female subjugation in pre-Hispanic and present-day times. Weaving the historical and contemporary offers a different perspective on scholarship that has villainized Malintzín. Language–Indigenous or colonial—is the central object of abstraction. I argue that language has been used as an object of bridging, weaponization, and Catholic conversion *for* Malintzín as a traditional woman and *against* her for betraying her compatriots. Furthermore, Krishna's theory of abstraction allows us to see how Malintzín is both revealed and concealed, thus trapping her in an absence and presence framework. Abstraction has allowed for a funneled version of Malintzín to exist within the settler-colonized narrative, disregarding the dual implications of being sold into slavery and being confronted with the leader of the colonial mission.

Bridging, Weaponizing, and Converting

Indigenous languages faced the same dilemma as Malintzín: assimilation or annihilation. Language, either Indigenous or Castilian, was at the centerpiece of the colonization process. Furthermore, it allowed Malintzín to both thrive and perish under the colonial stronghold. Krishna draws on scholar Walter Mignolo to explain how an alphabetized language facilitates the acquisition of lands, calculation of

²⁰⁶ Observatorio Ciudadano Nacional de Femicidio, “Informe Implementación Del Tipo Penal de Femicidio En México: Desafíos Para Acreditar Las Razones de Género 2014-2017,” *OCNF*, 2018.

²⁰⁷ ONU Mujeres, “Violencia Femicida En México: Aproximaciones y Tendencias,” *Entidad de las Naciones Unidas para la Igualdad de Género y el Empoderamiento de las Mujeres*, 2020.

²⁰⁸ Observatorio de Igualdad de Género de América y el Caribe, “Femicidio,” 2021.

²⁰⁹ *El Financiero*, “Femicidios en México: Junio es el mes más violento de 2022 para las mujeres,” 2022.

²¹⁰ Gema Kloppe-Santamaría, “Ni Una Menos, Not One Less: Femicides and Gender-Based Violence in Mexico and Northern Central America,” *Wilson Center*, 2021.

²¹¹ Lorena Becerra, *Prevalece Visión Misógina*, Survey Report, *Periódico Reforma*, 2022.

debt, and further subjugation of Natives.²¹² Based on my observations, I argue that language can be materialized, namely by conceptualizing it as an object: a bridge, weapon, and a Catholic cross. Malintzín was able to use language to her advantage, however, the Spanish were the ultimate benefactors of the erasure of Indigenous languages and the establishment of Castilian.

There are several nuances that can be associated with the weaponization of language. Due to the violent nature of Malintzín's subjugation, first by her slave owners and later by Cortés, she was forced to use her advanced intelligence to survive. As such, her polyglot abilities were used as a military strategy against Moctezuma's empire, further partitioning loyalties for Moctezuma. Language, with Malintzín as the medium, was aimed back at Natives. This was a step towards alphabetization and gradual eradication of Indigenous languages. Furthermore, Mignolo asserts that language was able to simultaneously consolidate an imaginary Spanish Crown in the Americas and fragment the existing political structures.²¹³

The stretch of this strategic dis-memberment process extends further than the immediate contact with the Spanish.²¹⁴ One of the most known narratives of Mexican culture and its histories, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, is written by famed Mexican poet Octavio Paz. Essentially, Paz writes about Mexican culture from a postcolonial perspective. In it, Paz describes the meaning of the word *chingar*. A versatile word in Mexican lingo, *chingar* is used in many contexts and intonations.²¹⁵ Overall, *chingar* implies the use of force enacted on another, whether it be ripping something open, breaking, or wounding.²¹⁶ *Chingar* also has sexual connotations, giving it a "masculine, active, [and] cruel" meaning.²¹⁷ Its raunchy nature adds an element of taboo, even though it is sometimes used loosely among men or in casual settings.²¹⁸ One of its uses, *hijo de la Chingada*, may translate to son of a whore; thereby *Chingada* refers to the "Mother forcibly opened, violated or deceived."²¹⁹ Paz then connects *Chingada* with Malintzín, who he argues became a figure representing Native women who were violated by the Spanish. He adds, "[a]nd as a small boy will not forgive his mother if she abandons him, the Mexican people have not forgiven *La Malinche* for her betrayal."²²⁰ *Chingar* in any

²¹² Krishna, "Race, Amnesia, and Education," 13.

²¹³ *Ibid.*: 14.

²¹⁴ Dis-memberment refers to scholar Sabelo Gatsheni's theory in which colonized peoples humanity, history, and lands are taken apart, or dis-membered, by colonial forces

²¹⁵ *Chingón* (macho); *chingoncito* (deceptive); *chingadera* (rash behavior); *vete a la chingada* (to swear someone off).

²¹⁶ Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude; The Other Mexico; Return to the Labyrinth of Solitude; Mexico and the United States; The Philanthropic Ogre* (New York: Grove Press 1985): 77.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*: 79.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*: 86.

contemporary context is ultimately weaponized against Malintzín, who takes the fall for the colonization of her people. More dangerously, the narrative of *La Malinche* is generalized, almost as a cautionary tale for women to not fall into. Furthermore, the usage of the word against women serves as an example of the treacherous/traditional binary posed earlier.

Secondly, language is used as a bridge that allows Malintzín to cross between the Indigenous and colonial realms. Although Malintzín is not biologically *mestiza*, she still does the labor of linguistically and culturally translating between both realms. Chicana scholar Gloria Anzaldúa would conceptualize this endeavor as a metaphorical borderland that is “not restricted to physical spaces [and] includes the psychological, sexual, and spiritual borderlands.”²²¹ As the only one being able to access either realm, Malintzín is also the only inhabitant within this borderland. The other perspective of language as a bridge perceives Malintzín as the link between the “old” and “new” worlds, thus opening her world to foreign influence. Paz sees this opening, both in the 16th and 20th centuries, as contrary to the way things should be: “¡Viva México, hijos de la chingada! [expresses] our desire to live closed off from the outside world and, above all, from the past.”²²² This perspective not only echoes the desire to revert to pre-Hispanic contact but also to abandon Malintzín in the process.

The final use of language in the colonization process is through Catholic conversion. As mentioned previously, Spaniards systematically cleansed Indigenous languages to further establish themselves in the territory. However, they also learned the Native language to facilitate conversion into Catholicism.²²³ The clearest use of the Catholic cross to “purify” and “sanctify” was to dilute the Natives’ paganism to figures that were accessible to them. This figure comes in the form of the Virgin of Guadalupe, although she was known by the Natives as the maternal Aztec goddess *Tonantsi*. *Tonantsi* represented a benevolent feminine figure in Aztec culture, however, catholicization transformed her into a more palatable symbol.²²⁴ The purified image of the Virgin of Guadalupe thus replaced *Tonantsi* and offered natives protection and maternal affection. The Roman Catholic Church later named her as Mexico’s patron saint, and her emblematic visual attributes continue to be used in popular culture.²²⁵

The purification of *Tonantsi* implies a villainization of *La Malinche*. *La Malinche*’s narrative as treacherous is juxtaposed with the projection of the Virgin as a traditional woman. The Virgin is everything *La Malinche* is not: *La Malinche*

²²¹ E. Aigner-Varoz, “Metaphors of a Mestiza Consciousness: Anzaldúa’s Borderlands/La Frontera,” *MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States* 25 (2000).

²²² Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, 86.

²²³ Krishna, “Race, Amnesia, and Education,” 12.

²²⁴ Gloria E. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987): 27.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

betrayed her people and opened her world to colonization, while the Virgin protects and consoles her children.²²⁶ Catholic conversion also deemed all Indigenous deities as works of the devil, further exterminating Natives' morale.²²⁷ The *Malinche*/Virgin binary serves as an example of the colonial discourse permeating in the patriarchal conception of women as either traditional or treacherous. Returning to Krishna's theories, the conceptualization of language as a colonial object serves as a contrapuntal analysis to mainstream discourses.

Presence and Absence Framework

La Malinche is present and very much alive in Chicana discourse that aims to revise and remember Malintzin differently than traditional historians have. Anzaldúa has formed *La Malinche* within the constructs of *mestizaje* to explain that "metaphor has the power to restructure the collective unconscious through both linguistic and visual means."²²⁸ This is reminiscent of Krishna's strategies of abstraction as nationalistic narratives have shaped *La Malinche's* narrative by placing her in a treacherous or traditional binary. Although Anzaldúa is referring to Chicana culture, she posits that males have established the metaphors upon which cultures are built.²²⁹ Anzaldúa conceptualizes the Chicana woman within the patriarchal framework that splits her into the figures of the Virgin of Guadalupe, the myth of the Weeping Woman, and *La Malinche*.²³⁰ Contrastingly, Chicana literature has posited that Malintzin, "deliberately chose to be a survivor (...) [who] cast her lot with the Spaniards to ensure survival of a race."²³¹ This is despite historical accounts estimating that Malintzin was only fourteen when she was acquired by Cortés as a mistress and translator.²³² The drawback of Chicana literature thus gives *too* much autonomy to Malintzin, instead of accepting her victimhood as a result of the patriarchal colonial structure. Nonetheless, it offers a subaltern perspective that departs from the treacherous or traditional binary.

Arguably, the absence framework is more damaging than the autonomous Malintzin constructed by Chicana literature. The actual person (Malintzin) is absent from *La Malinche's* discourse, despite the prescriptions assigned to her. Paz's voice in *The Labyrinth of Solitude* echoes a 20th-century patriarchal lens that reduces Malintzin to nothing: "she loses her name; she is no one; she disappears into nothingness; she *is* Nothingness. And yet she is the cruel incarnation of the

²²⁶ Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, 85.

²²⁷ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 28.

²²⁸ Aigner, "Metaphors of a Mestiza Consciousness," 7.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*: 3.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*: 3; "The 'Weeping Woman,' who wanders through the streets late at night, weeping and crying out for her lost children."

²³¹ Elizabeth Rodriguez Kessler, "'She's the Dreamwork Inside Someone Else's Skull': La Malinche and the Battles Waged for Her Autonomy," *Chicana/Latina Studies*, 2005.

²³² *Ibid.*: 10.

feminine condition.”²³³ In fact, Paz equates *La Malinche*, not Malintzín, to one who has been *Chingada*. In other words, Paz erases her personhood to someone that has accepted passive sexual violation. Paz describes Malintzín as a mistress who “gave herself voluntarily to the conquistador” and was disposed of when she was not of use anymore.²³⁴

Paz’s derogatory interpretation of *La Malinche* reflects Mexican discourse of the Native woman. Paz was an influential figure in Mexican and international spheres and was awarded numerous accolades, including the 1990 Nobel Prize in Literature. His perception of Malintzín as passive, submissive, and a traitor against her own people fosters and perpetuates the negative connotations associated with *La Malinche*. Paz erased her identity even when the only significant historical remnants of her were recorded by the Spanish. Arguably, Paz’s award-winning work contains elements of what Krishna is advocating through Said’s contrapuntal analysis. Krishna writes, “one has to restage contrapuntally, the encounters between the West and the rest, (...) that produced the originary alienation that inaugurated the modern (post-Columbian) world and necessitated the discipline of IR to suture it.”²³⁵ Although Paz’s work could be considered contrapuntal, he manages to erase and belittle one of the main figures of Mexican nationalist discourse. Paz’s work lacks the further consideration of *La Malinche* as a multifaceted figure, even though her identity has been distorted by colonial forces. Chicana scholar Elizabeth Kessler asserts that Paz’s hegemonic and misogynistic interpretation is consistent with Mexican culture that reprimands women from deviating from traditional gender roles.²³⁶ The presence and absence framework within Mexican/Chicana discourse thus presents *La Malinche* as a malleable figure. In whichever circumstance, Malintzín can be erased and made visible. This juxtaposition presents a dilemma that can only be ameliorated by recognizing Malintzín as a person possessing multiple identities while *La Malinche* can live within the sphere of open interpretation.

Relevance to Femicides

As stated previously, my aim is not to attribute *La Malinche*’s narrative to the reason behind present-day femicides in Mexico. However, *La Malinche*’s story fits within the culture of blame towards women who fall outside of the traditional and subservient narrative. The binary of *La Malinche* and the Virgin of Guadalupe can be paralleled to the current rhetoric that places the blame on women for their deaths. For example, *La Malinche* is believed to be at fault for the fall of pre-Hispanic civilization. In a similar manner, women who fall outside of the non-

²³³ Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, 86.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

²³⁵ Krishna, “Race, Amnesia, and Education,” 4.

²³⁶ Kessler, “She’s the Dreamwork,” 8.

traditional perception by “[finding] themselves in risky situations” or who get drunk are “looking for trouble.”²³⁷ Instead of holding the governmental structure accountable for its impunity, Mexican women are left with a false sense of autonomy.

Concretion, rather than abstraction, counteracts the mainstream approach taken by the IR discipline in erasing “themes such as theft of land, racism, slavery, and colonialism.”²³⁸ The extrapolation of *La Malinche*’s story to feminicides provides a strategy of concretion because of its sociological consideration of violence. Without accounting for the historical context of victim-blaming in Mexico, assertions by scholars such as Octavio Paz would continue to reduce *La Malinche* and “similar” women to nothingness.²³⁹ As such, weaponizing sexist language towards non-traditional women only continues the cycle of feminicides. However, language has dual implications. Language can also serve as the catalyst for sparking conversation and igniting change, as long as the language shifts from blame to understanding.

Conclusion

This paper has dealt with the central claim that *La Malinche* has been utilized as a form of abstraction to both uplift and oppress her and other non-traditional women. Extending claims from scholar Sankaran Krishna allowed me to observe the duality of Malintzín and *La Malinche* through a postcolonialist lens. This came in the form of analyzing the nuances of language when applied to different contexts, namely the weaponization, bridging, and Catholic conversion of Natives. In addition, I was able to uncover how strategies of abstraction have erased Malintzín from the narrative of *La Malinche*. Such strategies have only allowed for *La Malinche* to exist in the confines of the patriarchal and colonial lens, instead of viewing her as a victim of slavery and colonialism.

Putting the writing of Octavio Paz and Gloria Anzaldúa in conversation with one another revealed an asymmetrical discourse about *La Malinche*, despite the former being highly regarded in Mexican culture. Paz simultaneously introduced *La Malinche* within a presence and absence framework. Ironically, however, Malintzín is presented as a symbol of betrayal as a result of her passivity. On the other hand, Anzaldúa connects Malintzín as a person who inhabits the colonial and Indigenous in-between. Analyzing the nuances of both authors helps explain the implications of presence and erasure.

The narrative of *La Malinche* left unchecked presents serious problems to the culture of victim-blaming present in the feminicide discourse. More specifically, the normalized nature of offensive words such as *chingar* and its connection to *La Malinche* represents a larger problem within the language that discusses traditional

²³⁷ Becerra, *Prevalece Visión Misógina*.

²³⁸ Krishna, “Race, Amnesia, and Education,” 7.

²³⁹ Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, 86.

and non-traditional women. *La Malinche* also forms part of the IR discourse since her narrative has been formed by Spanish, Mexican, and Indigenous spheres. In addition, the aforementioned strategies of concretion allow for the conceptualization of other female figures impacted by colonialism.

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