

Primary Source Packet

1. Letter, Hernán Cortés

This excerpt from Cortés' *Second Letter*, written to Charles V in 1519 and first published in 1522, is one of only two instances in Cortés' letters to the King that explicitly mentions his indigenous translator. The letters represent eye-witness accounts of the conquistadors' deeds and experiences. In spite of the close relationship between Cortés and doña Marina, his comments are terse and emphasize her usefulness. In the most frequently cited passage about doña Marina from these letters, Cortés describes her not by name, but simply as "*la lengua...que es una India desta tierra*" (the tongue, the translator...who is an Indian woman of this land).

Source: Cortés, Hernán. Hernán Cortés to Emperor Carlos V., 1522. In *Hernán Cortés: Letters from Mexico*. Translated and edited by Anthony Pagden, 72-74. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986.

The following morning, they came out of the city to greet me with many trumpets and drums, including many persons whom they regard as priests in their temples, dressed in traditional vestments and singing after their fashion, as they do in the temples. With such ceremony they led us into the city and gave us very good quarters, where all those in my company were most comfortable. There they brought us food, though not sufficient. On the road we had come across many of the signs which the natives of that province had warned us about, for we found the highroad closed and another made and some holes, though not many; and some of the streets of the city were barricaded, and there were piles of stones on all the roofs. All this made us more alert and more cautious.

There I found several of Mutezuma's messengers who came and spoke with those who were with me, but to me they said merely that they had come to discover from those others what they had agreed with me, so as to go and inform their master. So after they had spoken with them, they left; and with them went one of the most important of those who had been with me before. During the three days I remained in that city they fed us worse each day, and the lords and principal persons of the city came only rarely to see and speak with me. And being somewhat disturbed by this, my interpreter, who is an Indian woman from Putunchan, which is the great river of which I spoke to Your Majesty in the first letter, was told by another Indian woman and a native of this city that very close by many of Mutezuma's men were gathered, and that the people of the city had sent away their women and children and all their belongings, and were about to fall on us and kill us all; and that if she wished to escape she should go with her and she would shelter here. All this she told to Gerónimo de Aguilar, an interpreter whom I acquired in Yucatán, of whom I have also written to Your Highness; and he informed me. I then seized one of the natives of this city who was passing by and took him aside secretly and questioned him; and he confirmed what the woman and the natives of Tascalteca had told me. Because of this and because of the signs I had observed, I decided to forestall an attack, and I sent for some of the chiefs of the city, saying that I wished to speak with them. I put them in a room and meanwhile warned our men to be prepared, when a arquebus

was fired, to fall on the many Indians who were outside our quarters and on those who were inside. And so it was done, that after I had put the chiefs in the room, I left them bound up and rode away and had the harquebus fired, and we fought so hard that in two hours more than three thousand men were killed. So that Your Majesty should realize how well prepared they were, even before I left my quarters they had occupied all the streets and had placed all their people at the ready, although, as we took them by surprise, they were easy to disperse, especially because I had imprisoned their leaders. I ordered some towers and fortified houses from which they were attacking us to be set on fire. And so I proceeded through the city fighting for five hours or more, leaving our quarters, which were in a strong position, secure. Finally all the people were driven out of the city in many directions, for some five thousand Indians from Tascalteca and another four hundred from Cempoal were assisting me.

Spanish Text:

Fuente: Cortés, Hernán. Hernán Cortés al Emperador Carlos V., 1522. En *Cartas y Relaciones de Hernán Cortés al Emperador Carlos V.* Colegidas e ilustradas by Don Pascual de Gayangos, 72-74. Paris: A Chaix y C, 1866.

Otro día de mañana salieron de la ciudad á me recibir al camino con muchas trompetas y atabales, y muchas personas de las que ellos tienen por religiosas en sus mezquitas, vestidas de las vestiduras que usan y cantando á su manera, como lo hacen en las dichas mezquita. E con esta solemnidad nos llevaron hasta entrar en la ciudad, y nos metieron en un aposento muy bueno adonde toda la gente de mi compañía se aposentó á su placer. E allí nos trajeron de comer, aunque no cumplidamente. Y en el camino topamos muchas señales de las que los naturales desta provincia nos habían dicho ; porque hallamos el camino real cerrado y hecho otro, y algunos hoyos, aunque no muchos, y algunas calles de la ciudad tapiadas, y muchas piedras en todas las azoteas. Y con esto nos hicieron estar mas sobre aviso y á mayor recaudo,

Allí fallé ciertos mensajeros de Mutezuma que venían á hablar con los que conmigo estaban; y á mí no me dijeron cosa alguna mas que venían á saber de aquellos lo que conmigo habían hecho y concertado, para lo ir á decir á su señor; é así, se fueron después de los haber hablado á ellos, y aun uno de los que antes conmigo estaban, que era el mas principal. En tres días que allí estuve proveyeron muy mal, y cada día peor, y muy pocas veces me venían á ver ni hablar los señores y personas principales de la ciudad. Y estando algo perplejo en esto, á la lengua que yo tengo, que es una india desta tierra, que hobe en Putunchan, que es el rio grande (de que ya en la primera relation á V. M. hice memoria, le dijo otra, natural desta ciudad, como muy cerquita de allí estaba mucha gente de Mutezuma junta, y que los de la ciudad tenían fuera sus mujeres é hijos y toda su ropa, y que habían de dar sobre nosotros para nos matar á todos; é si ella se quería salvar, que se fuese con ella, que ella la guareceria; la cual lo dijo á aquel Jerónimo de Aguilar, lengua quo yo hobe en Yucatan, de que asimismo á V. A. hobe escrito, y me lo hizo saber; é yo tuve uno de los naturales de la dicha ciudad, que por allí andaba, y le aparté secretamente, que nadie lo vió, y le interrogué, y confirmó con lo que la india y los naturales de

Tascaltecal me habian dicho; é así por esto como por las señales que para ello habia, acordé de prevenir antes de ser prevenido, é hice llamar á algunos de los señores de la ciudad, diciendo que los queria hablar, y metílos en una sala; é en tanto fice que la gente de los nuestros estuviese apercebida, y que en soltando una escopeta, diesen en mucha cantidad de indios que habia junto á el aposento y muchos dentro en él. E así se hizo, que después que tuve los señores dentro en aquella sala, dejélos y cabalgué, é hice soltar el escopeta, y dimosles tal mano, que en dos horas murieron mas de tres mil hombres. Y porque V. M. vea cuán apercebidos estaban, antes que yo saliese de nuestro aposentamiento tenian todas las calles tomadas y toda la gente á punto, aunque como los tomamos de sobresalto, fueron buenos de desbaratar, mayormente que les faltaban los caudillos, porque los tenia ya presos; é hice poner fuego á algunas torres y casa fuertes, donde se defendian y nos ofendian. E así anduve por la ciudad peleando, dejando á buen recaudo el aposento, que era muy fuerte, bien cinco horas, hasta que eché toda la gente fuera de la ciudad por muchas partes della, porque me ayudaban bien cinco mil indios de Tascaltecal, y otros cuatrocientos de Cempoal.

2. Personal Account, Bernal Díaz del Castillo

Perhaps the most famous 16th-century portrayal of doña Marina, this description is also the most extensive from the period. Díaz del Castillo claims she was beautiful and intelligent, she could speak Nahuatl and Maya. Without doña Marina, he says, the Spaniards could not have understood the language of Mexico. These words, while evocative, were written decades after Díaz del Castillo marched with Cortés on Tenochtitlan, and thus represent both his memory of doña Marina and his reply to accounts of the conquest written and published by others.

Source: Díaz del Castillo, Bernal. Chap. 22-23 in *The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico, 1517-1521*. 1585. Translated by A. P. Maudsley. Noonday Press, 1965.

Early the next morning many Caciques and chiefs of Tabasco and the neighbouring towns arrived and paid great respect to us all, and they brought a present of gold, consisting of four diadems and some gold lizards, and two [ornaments] like little dogs, and earrings and five ducks, and two masks with Indian faces and two gold soles for sandals, and some other things of little value. I do not remember how much the things were worth; and they brought cloth, such as they make and wear, which was quilted stuff.

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. Cortés received this present with pleasure and went aside with all the Caciques, and with Aguilar, the interpreter, to hold converse, and he told them that he gave them thanks for what they had brought with them, but there was one thing that he must ask of them, namely, that they should re-occupy the town with all their people, women and children, and he wished to see it re-peopled within two days, for he would recognize that as a sign of

true peace. The Caciques sent at once to summon all the inhabitants with their women and children and within two days they were again settled in the town.

One other thing Cortés asked of the chiefs and that was to give up their idols and sacrifices, and this they said they would do, and, through Aguilar, Cortés told them as well as he was able about matters concerning our holy faith, how we were Christians and worshipped one true and only God, and he showed them an image of Our Lady with her precious Son in her arms and explained to them that we paid the greatest reverence to it as it was the image of the Mother of our Lord God who was in heaven. The Caciques replied that they liked the look of the great *Teleciguata* (for in their language great ladies are called *Teleciguatas*) and [begged] that she might be given them to keep in their town, and Cortés said that the image should be given to them, and ordered them to make a well-constructed altar, and this they did at once.

The next morning, Cortés ordered two of our carpenters, named Alonzo Yañez and Alvaro López, to make a very tall cross.

When all this had been settled Cortés asked the Caciques what was their reason for attacking us three times when we had asked them to keep the peace; the chief replied that he had already asked pardon for their acts and had been forgiven, that the Cacique of Champoton, his brother, had advised it, and that he feared to be accused of cowardice, for he had already been reproached and dishonoured for not having attacked the other captain who had come with four ships (he must have meant Juan de Grijalva) and he also said that the Indian whom we had brought as an Interpreter, who escaped in the night, had advised them to attack us both by day and night

Cortés then ordered this man to be brought before him without fail, but they replied that when he saw that the battle was going against them, he had taken to flight, and they knew not where he was although search had been made for him; but we came to know that they had offered him as a sacrifice because his counsel had cost them so dear.

Cortés also asked them where they procured their gold and jewels, and they replied, from the direction of the setting sun, and said "*Culua*" and "*Mexico*," and as we did not know what *Mexico* and *Culua* meant we paid little attention to it.

Then we brought another interpreter named Francisco, whom we had captured during Grijalva's expedition, who has already been mentioned by me but he understood nothing of the *Tabasco* language only that of *Culua* which is the Mexican tongue. By means of signs he told Cortés that *Culua* was far ahead, and he repeated "*Mexico*" which we did not understand.

So the talk ceased until the next day when the sacred image of Our Lady and the Cross were set up on the altar and we all paid reverence to them, and Padre Fray Bartolomé de Olmedo said mass and all the Caciques and chiefs were present and we gave the name of *Santa Maria de la Victoria* to the town, and by this name the town of *Tabasco* is now called. The same friar, with Aguilar as interpreter, preached many good things about our holy faith to the twenty Indian women who had been given us, and immediately afterwards they were baptized. One Indian lady, who was given to us here was christened *Doña Marina*, and she was truly a great chieftainess and the daughter of great Caciques and the mistress of vassals, and this her appearance clearly showed. Later on I will relate why it was and in what manner she was brought here.

Cortés allotted one of the women to each of his captains and Doña Marina, as she was good looking and intelligent and without embarrassment, he gave to Alonzo Hernández Puertocarrero. When Puertocarrero went to Spain, Doña Marina lived with Cortés, and bore him a son named Don Martin Cortés.

We remained five days in this town, to look after the wounded and those who were suffering from pain in the loins, from which they all recovered. Furthermore, Cortés drew the Caciques to him by kindly converse, and told them how our master the Emperor, whose vassals we were, had under his orders many to render him obedience, and that then, whatever they might be in need of, whether it was our protection or any other necessity, if they would make it known to him, no matter where he might be, he would come to their assistance.

The Caciques all thanked him for this, and thereupon all declared themselves the vassals of our great Emperor. These were the first vassals to render submission to His Majesty in New Spain.

Cortés then ordered the Caciques to come with their women and children early the next day, which was Palm Sunday, to the altar, to pay homage to the holy image of Our Lady and to the Cross, and at the same time Cortés ordered them to send six Indian carpenters to accompany our carpenters to the town of Cintla, there to cut a cross on a great tree called a Ceiba, which grew there, and they did it so that it might last a long time, for as the bark is renewed the cross will show there for ever. When this was done he ordered the Indians to get ready all the canoes that they owned to help us to embark, for we wished to set sail on that holy day because the pilots had come to tell Cortes that the ships ran a great risk from a Norther which is a dangerous gale.

The next day, early in the morning, all the Caciques and chiefs came in their canoes with all their women and children and stood in the court where we had placed the church and cross, and many branches of trees had already been cut ready to be carried in the procession. Then the Caciques beheld us all, Cortés, as well as the captains, and every one of us marching together with the greatest reverence in a devout procession, and the Padre de la Merced and the priest Juan Díaz, clad in their vestments, said mass, and we paid reverence to and kissed the Holy Cross, while the Caciques and Indians stood looking on at us.

When our solemn festival was over the chiefs approached and offered Cortés ten fowls and baked fish and vegetables, and we took leave of them, and Cortés again commended to their care the Holy image and the sacred crosses and told them always to keep the place clean and well swept, and to deck the cross with garlands and to reverence it and then they would enjoy good health and bountiful harvests.

It was growing late when we got on board ship and the next day, Monday, we set sail in the morning and with a fair wind laid our course for San Juan de Ulua, keeping close in shore all the time.

As we sailed along in fine weather, we soldiers who knew the coast would say to Cortés, "Señor, over there is La Rambla, which the Indians call Ayagualulco," and soon afterwards we arrived off Tonalá which we called San Antonio, and we pointed it out to him. Further on we showed him the great river of Coatzacoalcos, and he saw the lofty snow capped mountains, and then the Sierra of San Martin, and further on we pointed out the split rock, which is a great rock standing out in the sea with a mark

on the top of it which gives it the appearance of a seat. Again further on we showed him the Rio de Alvarado, which Pedro de Alvarado entered when we were with Grijalva, and then we came in sight of the Rio de Banderas, where we had gained in barter the sixteen thousand dollars, then we showed him the Isla Blanca, and told him where lay the Isla Verde, and close in shore we saw the Isla de Sacrificios, where we found the altars and the Indian victims in Grijalva's time; and at last our good fortune brought us to San Juan de Ulúa soon after midday on Holy Thursday.

†XXIII

Before telling about the great Montezuma and his famous City of Mexico and the Mexicans, I wish to give some account of Doña Marina, who from her childhood had been the mistress and Cacica of towns and vassals. It happened in this way:

Her father and mother were chiefs and Caciques of a town called Paynala, which had other towns subject to it, and stood about eight leagues from the town of Coatzacoalcos. Her father died while she was still a little child, and her mother married another Cacique, a young man, and bore him a son. It seems that the father and mother had a great affection for this son and it was agreed between them that he should succeed to their honours when their days were done. So that there should be no impediment to this, they gave the little girl, Doña Marina, to some Indians from Xicalango, and this they did by night so as to escape observation, and they then spread the report that she had died, and as it happened at this time that a child of one of their Indian slaves died they gave out that it was their daughter and the heiress who was dead.

The Indians of Xicalango gave the child to the people of Tabasco and the Tabasco people gave her to Cortés. I myself knew her mother, and the old woman's son and her half-brother, when he was already grown up and ruled the town jointly with his mother, for the second husband of the old lady was dead. When they became Christians, the old lady was called Marta and the son Lázaro. I knew all this very well because in the year 1523 after the conquest of Mexico and the other provinces, when Cristóbal de Olid revolted in Honduras, and Cortés was on his way there, he passed through Coatzacoalcos and I and the greater number of the settlers of that town accompanied him on that expedition as I shall relate in the proper time and place. As Doña Marina proved herself such an excellent woman and good interpreter throughout the wars in New Spain, Tlaxcala and Mexico (as I shall show later on) Cortés always took her with him, and during that expedition she was married to a gentleman named Juan Jaramillo at the town of Orizaba.

Doña Marina was a person of the greatest importance and was obeyed without question by the Indians throughout New Spain.

When Cortés was in the town of Coatzacoalcos he sent to summon to his presence all the Caciques of that province in order to make them a speech about our holy religion, and about their good treatment, and among the Caciques who assembled was the mother of Doña Marina and her half-brother, Lázaro.

Some time before this Doña Marina had told me that she belonged to that province and that she was the mistress of vassals, and Cortés also knew it well, as did Aguilar, the interpreter. In such a manner it was that mother, daughter and son came

together, and it was easy enough to see that she was the daughter from the strong likeness she bore to her mother.

These relations were in great fear of Doña Marina, for they thought that she had sent for them to put them to death, and they were weeping.

When Doña Marina saw them in tears, she consoled them and told them to have no fear, that when they had given her over to the men from Xicalango, they knew not what they were doing, and she forgave them for doing it, and she gave them many jewels of gold and raiment, and told them to return to their town, 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.

Doña Marina knew the language of Coatzacoalcos, which is that common to Mexico, and she knew the language of Tabasco, as did also Jerónimo de Aguilar, who spoke the language of Yucatan and Tabasco, which is one and the same. So that these two could understand one another clearly, and Aguilar translated into Castilian for Cortés.

This was the great beginning of our conquests and thus, thanks be to God, things prospered with us. I have made a point of explaining this matter, because without the help of Doña Marina we could not have understood the language of New Spain and Mexico.

Spanish Text:

Fuente: Díaz del Castillo, Bernal. Cap. 36-37 en *Historia Verdadera de la Conquista de la Nueva España*. 1585. Introducción y notas de Joaquín Ramírez Cabañas. Mexico City: Editorial Porrúa, 1976.

CAPÍTULO XXXVI

CÓMO VINIERON TODOS LOS CACIQUES Y CALACHONIS DEL RÍO GRIJALVA, Y TRAJERON UN PRESENTE Y LO QUE SOBRE ELLO PASÓ

Otro día de mañana, que fueron a quince días del mes de marzo de mil quinientos diez y nueve años, vinieron muchos caciques y principales de aquel pueblo de Tabasco, y de otros comarcanos, haciendo mucho acato a todos nosotros, y trajeron un presente de oro, que fueron cuatro diademas y una largatijas, y dos como perrillos y orejeras, y cinco ánades, y dos figuras de caras de indios, y dos suelas de oro como de sus cotaras, y otras cosillas de poco valor, que ya no me acuerdo qué tanto valían. Y trajeron mantas de las que ellos hacían, que son muy bastas, porque ya habrán oído decir los que tienen noticia de aquella provincial que no las hay en aquella tierra sino de poca valía. Y no fue nada todo este presente en comparación de veinte mujeres, y entre ellas una muy excelente mujer que se dijo doña Marina, que así se llamó después de vuelta cristiana. Y dejaré esta plática y de hablar de ella y de las demás mujeres que trajeron, y diré que Cortés recibió aquel presente con alegría y se apartó

con todos los caciques y con Aguilar, el intérprete, a hablar; y les dijo que por aquello que traían se lo tenía a gracia, mas que una cosa les rogaba: luego mandasen poblar aquel pueblo con toda su gente y mujeres e hijos, y que dentro en dos días le quiere ver poblado, y que en esto conocerá tener verdadera paz. Y luego los caciques mandaron llamar todos los vecinos, y con sus hijos y mujeres en dos días se pobló; y lo otro que les mandó, que dejasen sus ídolos y sacrificios, y respondieron que así lo harían; y les declaramos con Aguilar, lo major que Cortés pudo, las cosas tocantes a nuestra santa fe, y cómo éramos cristianos y adorábamos en un solo Dios verdadero, y se les mostró una imagen muy devota se Nuestra Señora con su hijo precioso en los brazos, y se les declare que en aquella santa imagen reverenciamos, porque así está en el cielo y es madre de Nuestro Señor Dios.

Y los caciques dijeron que les parecía muy bien aquella gran *tececiguata*, y que se la diesen para tener en su pueblo, porque a las grandes señoras en aquellas tierras, en su lengua, llaman *tececiguatas*. Y dijo Cortés que si daría, y les mandó hacer un buen altar, bien labrado, el cual luego hicieron. Y otro día de mañana mandó Cortés a dos de nuestros carpinteros de lo blanco, que se decían Alonso Yáñez y Álvaro López, que luego labrasen una cruz muy alta, y después de haber mandado todo esto, les dijo qué fue la causa que nos dieron guerra, tres veces requiriéndoles con la paz. Y respondieron que ya habían demandado perdón de ello y estaban perdonados, y que el cacique de Champotón, su hermano, se lo aconsejó, y porque no le tuviesen por cobarde, y porque no se lo reñían y deshonraban, y porque no nos dio guerra cuando la otra vez vino otro capitán con cuatro navíos, y, según parece, decíalo por Juan de Grijalva, también que el indio que traíamos por lengua, que se huyó una noche, se lo aconsejó, y que de día y de noche nos diesen guerra. Y luego Cortés les mandó que en todo caso se lo trajesen, y dijeron que como les vio que en la batalla no les fue bien, que se les fue huyendo, y que no sabían de él y aunque le han buscado; y supimos que le sacrificaron, pues tan caro les costó sus consejos. Y más les preguntó de qué parte traían oro y aquellas joyezuelas; respondieron que hacia donde se pone el sol, y decían “Culúa” y “México”, y como no sabíamos qué cosa era *México* ni *Culúa*, dejábamoslo pasar por alto. Y allí traíamos otra lengua que se decía Francisco, que hubimos cuando lo de Grijalva, ya otra vez por mí memorado, más no entendía poco ni mucho la de Tabasco, sino la de Culúa, que es la mexicana, y medio por señas dijo a Cortés que *Culúa* era muy adelante, y nombraba *México* y no lo entendimos.

Y en esto cesó la plática hasta otro día, que se puso en el altar la santa imagen de Nuestra Señora y la cruz, la cual todos adoramos, y dijo misa el padre fray Bartolomé de Olmedo; y estaban todos los caciques y principales delante, púsose nombre a aquel pueblo Santa María de la Victoria, y así se llama a la villa de Tabasco. Y el mismo fraile, con nuestra lengua, Aguilar, predicó a las veinte indias que nos presentaron muchas buenas cosas de nuestra santa fe, y que no creyesen en los ídolos que de antes creían, que eran malos y no eran dioses, ni más les sacrificasen, que las traían engañadas, y adorasen en Nuestro Señor Jesucristo. Y luego se bautizaron, y se puso por nombre doña Marina [a] aquella india y señora que allí nos dieron, y verdaderamente era gran cacica e hija de grandes caciques y señora de vasallos, y bien se le parecía en su persona; lo cual dire adelante cómo y de qué manera fue allí traída. Y las otras mujeres no me acuerdo bien de todos sus nombres,

y no hace al caso nombrar algunas; mas éstas fueron las primeras cristianas que hubo en la Nueva España, y Cortés les repartió a cada capitán la suya, y a esta doña Marina, como era de buen parecer y entremetida y desenvuelta, dio a Alonso Hernández Puerto Carrero, que ya he dicho otra vez que era muy buen caballero, primo del conde de Medellín, y después que fue a Castilla Puerto Carrero estuvo la doña Marina con Cortés, y hubo en ella un hijo que se dijo don Martín Cortés.

En aquel pueblo estuvimos cinco días, así porque se curaran las heridas como por los que estaban con dolor de lomos, que allí se les quitó, y demás de esto, porque Cortés siempre atraía con buenas palabras a todos los caciques, y les dijo cómo el emperador nuestro señor, cuyos vasallos somos, tiene a su mandar muchos grandes señores, y que es bien que ellos le den la obediencia, y que en lo que hubieren menester, así favor de nosotros o cualquiera cosa, que se lo hagan saber donde quiera que estuviésemos, que él les vendrá a ayudar. Y todos los caciques les dieron muchas gracias por ello, y allí se otorgaron por vasallos de nuestro gran emperador; y éstos fueron los primeros vasallos que en la Nueva España dieron la obediencia a Su Majestad.

Y luego Cortés les mandó que para otro día, que era Domingo de Ramos, muy de mañana viniesen al altar con sus hijos y mujeres para que adorasen la santa imagen de Nuestra Señora y la cruz, y asimismo les mandó que viniesen luego seis indios carpinteros y que fuesen con nuestros carpinteros y que en el pueblo de Zintla, adonde nuestro Señor Dios fue servido darnos aquella Victoria de la batalla pasada, por mí memoranda, que hiciesen una cruz en un árbol grande que allí estaba, que entre ellos llamaban ceiba, e hicieronla en aquel árbol a efecto que durase mucho, que con la corteza que suele reverdecer está siempre la cruz señalada. Hecho esto mandó que aparejasen todas las canoas que tenían para ayudarnos a embarcar, porque luego aquel santo día nos queríamos hacer a la vela, porque en aquella sazón vinieron dos pilotos a decir a Cortés que estaban a gran riesgo los navíos por la mar del norte, que es travesía. Y otro día, muy de mañana, vinieron todos los caciques y principales con todas la canoas y sus mujeres e hijos, y estaban ya en el patio donde teníamos la iglesia y cruz y muchos ramos cortados para andar en procession. Y desde que los caciques vimos juntos, así Cortés y capitanes y todos a una con gran devoción anduvimos una muy devota procession, y el padre de la Merced y Juan Díaz, el clérigo, revestidos, y se dijo misa, y adoramos y besamos la santa cruz, y los caciques e indios mirándonos. Y hecha nuestra solemne fiesta según el tiempo, vinieron los principales y trajeron a Cortés hasta diez gallinas y pescado y otras legumbres, y nos despedimos de ellos y siempre Cortés encomendádoles la santa imagen y santas cruces, y que las tuviesen muy limpias y barridas, y enramado y que las reverenciasen y hallarían salud y buenas sementeras. Y después de que era ya tarde nos embarcamos, y otro día por la mañana nos hicimos a la vela, y con buen viaje navegamos y fuimos la vía de San Juan de Ulúa, y siempre muy juntos a tierra.

Y yendo navegando con buen tiempo, decíamos a Cortés los que sabíamos aquella derrota: “Señor, allí queda la Rambla”, que en lengua de indios se dice Ayagualulco. Y luego que llegamos en el paraje de Tonala, que se dice San Antón, se lo señalábamos; más adelante le mostrábamos el gran río de Guazaqualco; y vio las muy altas sierras nevadas; y luego las sierras de San Martín, y más adelante le mostramos la roca partida, que es unos grandes peñascos que entran en la mar y

tienen una señal arriba como manera de silla; y más adelante le mostramos el río de Alvarado, que cuando lo de Grijalva; y luego vimos el río de Banderas, que fue donde rescatamos los diez y seis mil pesos, y luego le mostramos la isla Blanca, y también le dijimos adonde quedaba la isla Verde; y junto a la tierra vio la isla de Sacrificios, donde hallamos los altars, cuando lo de Grijalva, y los indios sacrificados; y luego en buena hora llegamos a San Juan de Ulúa, jueves de la Cena, después de mediodía. Y acuérdome que se llegó un caballero, que se decía Alonso Hernández Puerto Carrero, y dijo a Cortés: “Paréceme, señor, que os han venido diciendo estos caballeros que han venido otras dos veces a estas tierras:

Cata Francia, Montesinos;
Cata París, la ciudad:
Cata las aguas del Duero
Do van a dar en el mar.

Yo digo que mire las tierras ricas, y sabeos bien gobernar.” Luego Cortés bien entendió a qué fin fueron aquellas palabras dichas, y respondió: “Denos Dios ventura en armas, como al paladín Toldán, que en lo demás, teniendo a vuestra merced, y a otros caballeros por señores, bien me sabré entender.” Y dejémoslo, y no pasemos de aquí. Y esto es lo que pasó, y Cortés no entró en el río de Alvarado, como lo dice Gómara.

CAPÍTULO XXXVII

CÓMO DOÑA MARINA ERA CACICA, E HIJA DE GRANDES SEÑORES, Y SEÑORA DE PUEBLOS Y VASALLOS, Y DE LA MANERA QUE FUE TRAÍDA A TABASCO

Antes que más meta la mano en lo del gran Montezuma y su gran México y mexicanos, quiero decir lo de doña Marina, cómo desde su niñez fue gran señora y cacica de pueblos y vasallos; y es de esta manera: Que su padre y madre eran señores y caciques de un pueblo que se dice Painala, y tenía otros pueblos sujetos a él, obra de ocho leguas de la villa de Guazacualco; y murió el padre quedando muy niña, y la madre se casó con otro cacique mancebo, y hubieron un hijo, y según pareció, queríanlo bien al hijo que habían habido; acordaron entre el padre y la madre de darle el cacicazgo después de sus días, y porque en ello no hubiese estorbo, dieron de noche a la niña doña Marina a unos indios de Xicalango, porque no fuese vista, y echaron fama de que se había muerto. Y en aquella sazón murió una hija de una india esclava suya y publicaron que era la heredera; por manera de los de Xicalango la dieron a los de Tabasco, y los de Tabasco a Cortés. Y conocí a su madre y a su hermano de madre, hijo de la vieja, que era ya hombre y mandaba juntamente con la madre a su pueblo, porque el marido postrero de la vieja ya era fallecido. Y después de vueltos cristianos se llamó la vieja Marta y el hijo Lázaro, y esto sólo muy bien, porque en el año de mil quinientos veinte y tres años, después de conquistado México y otras provincias, y se había alzado Cristóbal de Olid en las Hibueras, fue Cortés allí y pasó por Guazacualco. Fuimos con él aquel viaje toda la mayor parte de los vecinos

de aquella villa, como diré en su tiempo y lugar; y como doña Marina en todas las guerras de la Nueva España y Tlaxcala y México fue tan excelente mujer y Buena lengua, como adelante diré, a esta causa le traía siempre Cortés consigo. Y en aquella sazón y viaje se casó con ella un hidalgo que se decía Juan Jaramillo, en un pueblo que se decía Orizaba, delante ciertos testigos, que uno de ellos se decía Aranda, vecino que fue de Tabasco; y aquél contaba el casamiento, y no como lo dice el coronista Gómara. Y la doña Marina tenía mucho ser y mandaba absolutamente entre los indios en toda la Nueva España.

Y estando Cortés en la villa de Guazacualco, envió a llamar a todos los caciques de aquella provincial para hacerles un parlamiento acerca de la santa doctrina, y sobre su buen tratamiento, y entonces vino la madre de doña Marina su hermano de madre, Lázaro, con otros caciques. Días había que me había dicho la doña Marina que era de aquella provincial y señora de vasallos, y bien lo sabía el capitán Cortés y Aguilar, la lengua. Por manera que vino la madre y su hijo, el hermano, y se conocieron, que claramente era su hija, porque se le parecía mucho. Tuvieron miedo de ella, que creyeron que los enviaba [a] hallar para matarlos, y lloraban. Y como así los vio llorar la doña Marina, les consoló y dijo que no hubiesen miedo, que cuando la traspuesieron con los de Xicalango que no supieron lo que hacían, y se los perdonaba, y les dio muchas joyas de oro y ropa, y que se volviesen a su pueblo; y que Dios la había hecho much amerced en quitarla de adorer ídolos ahora y ser cristiana, y tener un hijo de su amo y señor Cortés, y ser casada con un caballero como era su marido Juan Jaramillo; que aunque la hicieran cacica de todas cuantas provincias había en la Nueva España, no lo sería, que en más tenía servir a su marido y a Cortés que cuanto en el munso hay. Y todo esto que digo sélo yo muy certificadamente, y esto me parece que quiere remedar lo que le acaeció con sus hermanos en Egipto a Josef, que vinieron en su poder cuando lo del trigo. Esto es lo que pasó y no la relación que dieron a Gómara, y también dice otras cosas que dejo por alto. Y volviendo a nuestra material, doña Marina sabía la lengua de Cuazacualco, que es la propia de México, y sabía la de Tabasco, como Jerónimo Aguilar sabía la de Yucatán y Tabasco, que es toda una; entendíanse bien, y Aguilar lo declaraba en castellano a Cortés; fue gran principio para nuestra conquista, y así se nos hacían todas las cosas, loado sea Dios, muy prósperamente. He querido declarar esto porque sin ir doña Marina no podíamos entender la lengua de la Nueva España y México. Donde lo dejaré y volveré a decir cómo nos desembarcamos en el Puerto de San Juan de Ulúa.

3. Painting, Mexican Manuscript

A detail from a larger manuscript page in the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, this scene was created by an indigenous painter in central Mexico. Scenes from the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, now just fragments from a larger set of images, draw upon pre-conquest painting techniques and conventions. Like Malintzin herself, the *Lienzo* straddles a world of indigenous, pre-conquest practice and European intervention. In this fragment, Xicotencatl, the head of the indigenous state of Tlaxcala, greets Hernán Cortés, the leader of the Spanish conquistadors. The two men would become allies, banding together to defeat

Motecuzoma and his capital city, Tenochtitlan. Below and at the center of the image stands doña Marina; her placement underscores the role she played as linguistic and cultural mediator.

Source: "Cortés Greets Xicotencatl." Mid-16th century. Detail from *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*. Archer M. Huntington Art Gallery, University of Texas, Austin.



4. Painting, Florentine Codex

This image was created by an indigenous painter in central Mexico and accompanies a written description of the conquest of Tenochtitlan, penned in both Spanish and Nahuatl in the *Florentine Codex*. The *Florentine Codex* is one of the fullest Nahuatl descriptions of the conquest. The scene shows Malintzin in the act of translating. She sits upon a palace roof with Cortés. Her pointed finger and the small scrolls represent the act of speaking, and hint at her bravery.

Source: "Malinche Translating from Palace Roof Top." Pigment/ink on paper ca. 1570-1585. In Book 12, Chap. 18 of *Florentine Codex*, Bernardino de Sahagún et al., Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Italy.



5. Nonfiction, Florentine Codex (Spanish)

This chapter from the *Florentine Codex*, a bi-lingual encyclopedia of central Mexican life and history was created by the Franciscan friar, Bernardino de Sahagún and indigenous advisors, painters and scribes. Nahuatl and Spanish texts appear side by side, and are accompanied by the image of Malintzin translating (described above). The Spanish text represents Sahagún's translation of the Nahuatl, although the two accounts are not identical. This, Spanish account is shorter than the Nahuatl, even though it pauses to describe doña Marina—as a bilingual woman seized in the Yucatan—and clarify that she was Cortés' interpreter. A sense of her role and its power emerges at the end of the text, when we read that the orders she issues on Cortés' behalf strike fear in the Aztecs who heard her.

Source: Bernardino de Sahagún. "Of how the Spaniards entered Moteucçoma's private home, and what happened there." Book 12, Chap. 18, p.125 in *Florentine Codex*. ca. 1570-1585. In *We People Here*. Translated and edited by James Lockhart. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Chapter Eighteen, of how the Spaniards entered Moteucçoma's private home, and what happened there.

When the above had been done, [the Spaniards] attempted to find out about the special storehouse of Moteucçoma, and he took them to his storehouse, named Totocalco, which means "bird house." The Spaniards went along very joyfully, thinking that they would find much gold there; on arrival they took everything out of Moteucçoma's own storehouse, where there were many precious items of gold, silver, and precious stones, and they took it all. They removed all the gold and stones from the rich feather-pieces and put the feathers in the middle of the courtyard for their friends to take.

Then Captain don Hernando Cortés gave orders through Marina, who was his interpreter—she was an Indian woman who knew the languages of Castile and Mexico; they took her in Yucatan. She began to call loudly to the Mexica *tecutles* [lords] and *piles* [nobles] to come to give the Spaniards the necessary food.

But no one dared to come into their presence or approach them; they were all terrified and frightened. They sent them the necessary food, but those who carried it went trembling; when they put the food down, they tarried no longer, but immediately left, almost fleeing.

Spanish Text:

Fuente: Bernadino de Sahagún. "De como los Españoles entraron en las propias casas de Motecuçoma; y de lo que alli pasó." Libro 12, Cap. 18, p.125 en *Florentine Codex*. ca. 1570-1585. En *We People Here*. Traducido e editado por James Lockhart. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Capitulo 18. de como los Españoles entraron en las propias casas de Motecuçoma; y de lo que alli paso.

Hecho lo arriba dicho procurar_ de saber de la recamara de Motecuçoma y el los lleuo a su recamara que se llamaua totocalco que quiere dezir la casa de las aues: yuan los españoles muy regocijados por pensar que alli hallarian mucho oro: y llegando luego sacaron toda la recamara del mismo Motecuçoma donde auian muchas joyas de oro y de plata y de piedras preciosas y todo lo tomaron, y los plumajes ricos quitaronlos todo el oro y las piedras, y pusieron las plumas en medio del patio pan que las tomassen sus amigos:

y luego m_do el capitan Don hern_do cortés por medio de Marina que era su interprete la qual era vna india q sabia la lengua de castilla y la de mexico que la tomar_ en yocatan esta començo a llamar a voces a los Tecutles, y piles mexicanos pan que viniessen a dar a los españoles lo necesario para comer,

y nadie osaua venir delante dellos ni llegarse a ellos, todos estau_ atemorizados y espantados, embiau_los lo necesario para comer, y los que lo lleuau_, yu_ temblando en poniendo la comida no parau_ mss alli luego se yuan casi huyendo.

6. Nonfiction, Florentine Codex (Nahuatl)

This chapter from the *Florentine Codex*, a bi-lingual encyclopedia of central Mexican life and history was created by the Franciscan friar, Bernardino de Sahagún and indigenous advisors, painters and scribes. Nahuatl and Spanish texts appear side by side, and are accompanied by an image of Malintzin translating. The Nahuatl version of this text describes indigenous objects, words and emotions in more detail than its Spanish counterpart, from the treasured items seized by conquistadors to the palace roof where Malintzin uttered her commands. In this text, she emerges as the crucial figure—the name of Cortés is never mentioned and the orders she gives seem to be hers alone, not a translation of his demands. So, too, is the fear she induces more palpable and poignant.

Source: Bernardino de Sahagún. "Of how the Spaniards entered Motecuçoma's private home, and what happened there." Book 12, Chap. 18, p.124, 126 in *Florentine Codex*. ca. 1570-1585. In *We People Here*. Translated and edited by James Lockhart. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Eighteenth chapter, where it is said how the Spaniards went into Motecuçoma's personal home, and what happened there.

Thereupon they went to the place where Motecuçoma stored his own things, where all his special property was kept, called Totocalco. It seemed that they (all bunched together), were struck [with hope], patted one another on the back of the neck, their hearts brightening. And when they got there and went into the storage place, they seemed to disperse in all directions, quickly going in everywhere, as though covetous and greedy. Thereupon [Motecuçoma's] own personal property was brought out, belonging to him alone, his own portion, all precious things: necklaces with pendants, arm bands with quetzal leathers, golden arm bands, bracelets, golden bands with shells for the ankles, and the turquoise diadem, insignia of the ruler, and the turquoise nose rods, and other things without number belonging to him. They took all of it; they appropriated it, assigned and apportioned it to themselves. And

when they had taken off each and every piece of the gold, when it had been detached, then they assembled all the precious feathers in the courtyard, in the middle of the courtyard.

And when the collection of all the gold was completed, thereupon Marina summoned to her, had summoned, all the noblemen. She stood on a flat roof, on a roof parapet, and said, "Mexica, come here, for the Spaniards are suffering greatly. Bring food, fresh water, and all that is needed, for they are suffering travail, are tired, fatigued, weary, and exhausted. Why is it you do not want to come? It is a sign that you are angry."

But the Mexica no longer at all dared to go there. They were greatly afraid; they were limp with fear; they were taken aback. Fear greatly prevailed; it spread about. No one dared come out. It was as though a wild beast were loose, as though it were the deep of night. Yet there was not for that reason a halt or hesitation in delivering everything [the Spaniards] needed, but they delivered it fearfully, they went in fear, they ran in fear as they went to deliver it. And when they had spilled it on the ground, everyone came running back in a flash, panting and trembling.

Nahuatl Text:

Nahuatl Source: Bernardino de Sahagún. "Inic caxtoll capitulo: uncan mitoa, in quenin Españoles calaquito in ipilchan Motecuçoma: au in tlein umpa muchihuh." Book 12, Chap. 18, p.124, 126 in *Florentine Codex*. ca. 1570-1585. In *We People Here*. Translated and edited by James Lockhart. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Inic caxtollí omei capitulo: vncan mitoa, in quenin Españoles calaquito in ipilchan Motecuçoma: auh in tlein vmpa muchihuh.

Niman ie ic vi in vel itlatlatiaia Motecuçoma in vmpa mopia in vel itech iaxca in motecuçoma: itocaiocan Totocalco iuhquin yioiolipan, iuhquin mocecenquetza iuhquin moquequetzotzona, iuhquin iiztaia iniollo. Auh in onacito, in oncalacque tlatlatiloian, iuhquin mihicultia, mihicolia: nim_ ie ic oallaquixtilo in vel ixcoian yiaxca, in vel ineixcavil, in vel itonal, mochi tlaçotlanqui, in chiaiaoac cozcatl, in machoncotl, in teucuitlamatemecatl, yoan in matzopetzli, teucuitlaicxitecucuextli, yoan in xinwitzolli tlatocatlatquitl, yo_ in iacaxivtl, yoan in ixquich in oc cequi in itlatqui in amo çan tlapoalli muchi quicuique, moch intech compachoc moch c_motechtique, moch c_motonaltique. Auh in oc_cocoleuhque in ixquich in teucuitlatl; in ontlacocoleoaloc, niman ie ic quicentlalia itoalco, itoalnepantla in ixquich in tlaçohivtl.

Auh in ie iuhqui in o mochi munechico in teucuitlatl. Nim_ ie ic qu_oalnotza, qu_oalnentzallani in ixquichtin in pipiltin in Malintzin: tlapanco oalmoquetz, atenanticpac: Quitoa. Mexica xioalhuian ca cenca ie tlaihiovia in Españoles: xiqualcuic_ in tlaqualli, in chipaoac atl, yoan in ixquich monequi, ca ie tlaihiovia, ie quiciavi, ie quihiovia, ie mociavi, ie mihiovia: tleica in amo anoallaznequi? Ic neci ca anqualani.

Auh in Mexica ç_ nim_ aocmo motlapaloaia in ma onvian, canca momauhtiaia, mauhçaonequia mihiçaviaia, cenca mavitzli onoc, mavitzli moteteca, aocac tlaxtlapaloa, ça iuhqn tequiani vnca, ça iuhquin tlalli mictoc: tel amo ic

mocaoa, amo ic netzotzonalo in concaoa in ixquich intech monequi, ça in mauhcaç in concaoia, ça onmomauhcatlaloa in ontlacooa. Auh in ocontepeoatvalnetlalolo, vallachichitoca, tlacica, tlaviviioca.

7. Painting, *The Dream of Malinche*

This painting, by a Mexican artist engaged with the international movement of Surrealism, represents a slumbering Malinche; her body serves as the ground supporting an unnamed Mexican community and church. This image evokes certain female earth deities known to the Aztecs, and it sustains the metaphor of the Mexican nation having been built upon the “ground” laid by Malinche’s actions. The lightening above Malinche’s head suggests her dream (as in the painting’s title) may not be pacific. Should she toss or turn—or even awaken—the consequences for the Mexican community resting upon her blanket would be disastrous.

Source: Ruíz, Antonio. “El sueño de la Malinche” [“The Dream of Malinche”]. Oil on canvas, 11 7/8 x 15 3/4". Galería de Arte Mexicano, Mexico City, 1939.



8. Nonfiction, Octavio Paz

This essay, which seeks to explain modern Mexican sensibilities by examining the phrases “*hijos de la chingada*” and “*malinchista*,” presents La Malinche as violated woman—part victim, part traitor to her nation. In Paz’s words, the Mexican people (the sons of Malinche), “have not forgiven La Malinche for her betrayal.” The essay is now a touchstone and point of departure for revisionist work on Malinche, particularly by feminist, Chicana writers, artists and activists.

Source: Paz, Octavio. “The Sons of Malinche.” Chap. 4 in *The Labyrinth of Solitude and The Other Mexico*. Translated by Lysander Kemp, et al. New York: Grove Press, 1985.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Sons of La Malinche

Our hermeticism is baffling or even offensive to strangers, and it has created the legend of the Mexican as an inscrutable being. Our suspicions keep us at a distance. Our courtesy may be attractive but our reserve is chilling, and the stranger is always disconcerted by the unforeseen violence that lacerates us, by the solemn or convulsive splendor of our fiestas, by our cult of death. The impression we create is much like that created by Orientals. They too — the Chinese, the Hindus, the Arabs — are hermetic and indecipherable. They too carry about with them, in rags, a still-living past. There is a Mexican mystery just as there is a yellow mystery or a black. The details of the image formed of us often vary with the spectator, but it is always an ambiguous if not contradictory image: we are insecure, and our responses, like our silences, are unexpected and unpredictable. Treachery, loyalty, crime and love hide out in the depths of our glance. We attract and repel.

It is not difficult to understand the origins of this attitude toward us. The European considers Mexico to be a country on the margin of universal history, and everything that is distant from the center of his society strikes him as strange and impenetrable. The peasant—remote, conservative, somewhat archaic in his ways of dressing and speaking, fond of expressing himself in traditional modes and formulas — has always had a certain fascination for the urban man. In every country he represents the most ancient and secret element of society. For everyone but himself he embodies the occult, the hidden, that which surrenders itself only with great difficulty: a buried treasure, a seed that sprouts in the bowels of the earth, an ancient wisdom hiding among the folds of the land.

Woman is another being who lives apart and is therefore an enigmatic figure. It would be better to say that she is the Enigma. She attracts and repels like men of an alien race or nationality. She is an image of both fecundity and death. In almost every culture the goddesses of creation are also goddesses of destruction. Woman is a living symbol of the strangeness of the universe and its radical heterogeneity. As such, does she bide life within herself, or death? What does she think? Or does she think? Does she truly have feelings? Is she the same as we are? Sadism begins as a revenge against feminine hermeticism or as a desperate attempt to obtain a response from a body we fear is insensible. As Luis Cernuda has said, "Desire is a question that has no

answer." Despite woman's full, rounded nakedness, there is always something on guard in her:

Eve and Aphrodite concentrate the mystery of the world's heart.

Rubén Darío, like all the other great poets, considered woman to be not only an instrument of knowledge but also knowledge itself. It is a knowledge we will never possess, the sum of our definitive ignorance: the supreme mystery.

It is noteworthy that our images of the working class are not colored with similar feelings, even though the worker also lives apart from the center of society, physically as well as otherwise, in districts and special communities. When a contemporary novelist introduces a character who symbolizes health or destruction, fertility or death, he rarely chooses a worker, despite the fact that the worker represents the death of an old society and the birth of a new. D. H. Lawrence, one of the profoundest and most violent critics of the modern world, repeatedly describes the virtues that would transform the fragmentary man of our time into a true man with a total vision of the world. In order to embody these virtues he creates characters who belong to ancient or non-European races, or he invents the figure of Mellors the gamekeeper, a son of the earth. It is possible that Lawrence's childhood among the coal mines of England explains this deliberate omission: we know that he detested workers as much as he did the bourgeoisie. But how can we explain the fact that in the great revolutionary novels the proletariat again does not provide the heroes, merely the background? In all of them the hero is an adventurer, an intellectual, or a professional revolutionary: an isolated individual who has renounced his class, his origins or his homeland. It is no doubt a legacy from Romanticism that makes the hero an antisocial being. Also, the worker is too recent, and he resembles his boss because they are both sons of the machine.

The modern worker lacks individuality. The class is stronger than the individual and his personality dissolves in the generic. That is the first and gravest mutilation a man suffers when he transforms himself into an industrial wage earner. Capitalism deprives him of his human nature (this does not happen to the servant) by reducing him to an element in the work process, i.e., to an object. And like any object in the business world, he can be bought and sold. Because of his social condition he quickly loses any concrete and human relationship to the world. The machines he operates are not his and neither are the things he produces. Actually he is not a worker at all, because he does not create individual works or is so occupied with one aspect of production that he is not conscious of those he does create. He is a laborer, which is an abstract noun designating a mere function rather than a specific job. Therefore his efforts, unlike those of a doctor, an engineer or a carpenter, cannot be distinguished from those of other men. The abstraction that characterizes him — work measured by time—does not separate him from other abstractions. On the contrary, it binds him to them. This is the reason he is lacking in mystery, in strangeness. It is the cause of his transparency, which is no different from that of any other instrument.

The complexity of contemporary society and the specialization required by its work extend the abstract condition of the worker to other social groups. It is said that

we live in a world of techniques. Despite the differences in salary and way of life, the situation of the technician is essentially like that of the worker; he too is salaried and lacks a true awareness of what he creates. A government of technicians — the ideal of contemporary society — would thus be a government of instruments. Functions would be substituted for ends, and means for creators. Society would progress with great efficiency but without aim, and the repetition of the same gesture, a distinction of the machine, would bring about an unknown form of immobility, that of a mechanism advancing from nowhere toward nowhere.

The totalitarian regimes have done nothing but extend this condition and make it general, by means of force or propaganda. Everyone under their rule suffers from it. In a certain sense it is a transposition of the capitalist system to the social and political sphere. Mass production is characterized by the fabricating of separate units which are then put together in special workshops. Propaganda and totalitarian politics, such as terrorism and repression, employ the same system. Propaganda spreads incomplete truths, in series and as separate units. Later these fragments are organized and converted into political theories, which become absolute truths for the masses. Terrorism obeys the same rules. It begins with the persecution of isolated groups — races, classes, dissenters, suspects — until gradually it touches everyone. At the outset, a part of society regards the extermination of other groups with indifference, or even contributes to their persecution, because it is corrupted by internal hatreds. Everyone becomes an accomplice and the guilt feelings spread through the whole society. Terrorism becomes generalized, until there are no longer either persecutors or persecuted. The persecutor is soon transformed into the persecuted. One turn of the political mechanism is enough. And no one can escape from this fierce dialectic, not even the leaders themselves.

The world of terrorism, like that of mass production, is a world of things, of utensils. (Hence the vanity of the dispute over the historical validity of modern terrorism.) Utensils are never mysterious or enigmatic, since mystery comes from the indetermination of the being or object that contains it. A mysterious ring separates itself immediately from the generic ring; it acquires a life of its own and ceases to be an object. Surprise lurks in its form, hidden, ready to leap out. Mystery is an occult force or efficacy that does not obey us, and we never know how or when it will manifest itself. But utensils do not hide anything; they never question us and they never answer our questions. They are unequivocal and transparent, mere prolongations of our hands, with only as much life as our will lends them. When they are old and worn out, we throw them away without a thought, into the wastebasket, the automobile graveyard, the concentration camp. Or we exchange them with our allies or enemies for other objects.

All our faculties, and all our defects as well, are opposed to this conception of work as an impersonal action repeated in equal and empty portions of time. The Mexican works slowly and carefully; he loves the completed work and each of the details that make it up; and his innate good taste is an ancient heritage. If we do not mass produce products, we vie with one another in the difficult, exquisite and useless art of dressing fleas. This does not mean that the Mexican is incapable of being converted into what is called a "good worker." It is only a question of time. Nothing except a historical change, daily more remote and unlikely, can prevent the Mexican

— who is still a problem, an enigmatic figure — from becoming one more abstraction.

When this moment arrives, it will resolve all our contradictions by annihilating them, but meanwhile I want to point out that the most extraordinary fact of our situation is that we are enigmatic not only to strangers but also to ourselves. The Mexican is always a problem, both for other Mexicans and for himself. There is nothing simpler, therefore, than to reduce the whole complex group of attitudes that characterize us — especially the problem that we constitute for our own selves — to what may be called the "servant mentality," in opposition to the "psychology of the master" and also to that of modern man, whether proletarian or bourgeois.

Suspicion, dissimulation, irony, the courtesy that shuts us away from the stranger, all of the psychic oscillations with which, in eluding a strange glance, we elude ourselves, are traits of a subjected people who tremble and disguise themselves in the presence of the master. It is revealing that our intimacy never flowers in a natural way, only when incited by fiestas, alcohol or death. Slaves, servants and submerged races always wear a mask, whether smiling or sullen. Only when they are alone, during the great moments of life, do they dare to show themselves as they really are. All their relationships are poisoned by fear and suspicion: fear of the master and suspicion of their equals. Each keeps watch over the other because every companion could also be a traitor. To escape from himself the servant must leap walls, get drunk, forget his condition. He must live alone, without witnesses. He dares to be himself only in solitude.

The unquestionable analogy that can be observed between certain of our attitudes and those of groups subservient to the power of a lord, a caste or a foreign state could be resolved in this statement; the character of the Mexican is a product of the social circumstances that prevail in our country, and the history of Mexico, which is the history of these circumstances, contains the answer to every question. The situation that prevailed during the colonial period would thus be the source of our closed, unstable attitude. Our history as an independent nation would contribute to perpetuating and strengthening this servant psychology, for we have not succeeded in overcoming the misery of the common people and our exasperating social differences, despite a century and a half of struggle and constitutional experience. The use of violence as a dialectical resource, the abuse of authority by the powerful (a vice that has not disappeared) and, finally, the scepticism and resignation of the people — all of these more visible today than ever before, due to our successive post-revolution disillusionments — would complete the historical explication.

The fault of interpretations like the one I have just sketched out is their simplicity. Our attitude toward life is not conditioned by historical events, at least not in the rigorous manner in which the velocity or trajectory of a missile is determined by a set of known factors. Our living attitude — a factor we can never know completely, since change and indetermination are the only constants of our existence — is history also. This is to say that historical events are something more than events because they are colored by humanity, which is always problematical. And they are not merely the result of other events, but rather of a single will that is capable, within certain limits, of ruling their outcome. History is not a mechanism, and the influences among diverse components of an historical event are reciprocal, as has been said so

often. What distinguishes one historical event from another is its historical character: in itself and by itself it is an irreducible unity. Irreducible and inseparable. A historical event is not the sum of its component factors but an indissoluble reality. Historical circumstances explain our character to the extent that our character explains those circumstances. Both are the same. Thus any purely historical explanation is insufficient... which is not the same as saying it is false.

One observation will be enough to reduce the analogy between the psychology of the servant and our own to its true proportions: the habitual reactions of the Mexican are not limited to a single class, race or isolated group in an inferior position. The wealthy classes also shut themselves away from the exterior world, and lacerate themselves whenever they open out. It is an attitude that goes beyond historical circumstances, although it makes use of them to manifest itself and is modified by contact with them. The Mexican, like all men, converts these circumstances into plastic material. As he molds them he also molds himself.

If it is not possible to identify our character with that of submerged groups, it is also impossible to deny a close relationship. In both situations the individual and the group struggle simultaneously and contradictorily to hide and to reveal themselves. But a difference separates us. Servants, slaves or races victimized by an outside power (the North American Negro, for example) struggle against a concrete reality. We, however, struggle with imaginary entities, with vestiges of the past or self-engendered phantasms. These vestiges and phantasms are real, at least to us. Their reality is of a subtle and cruel order, because it is a phantasmagoric reality. They are impalpable and invincible because they are not outside us but within us. In the struggle which our will-to-be carries on against them, they are supported by a secret and powerful ally, our fear of being. Everything that makes up the present-day Mexican, as we have seen, can be reduced to this: the Mexican does not want or does not dare to be himself.

In many instances these phantasms are vestiges of past realities. Their origins are in the Conquest, the Colonial period, the Independence period or the wars fought against the United States and France. Others reflect our current problems, but in an indirect manner, concealing or distorting their true nature. Is it not extraordinary that the effects persist after the causes have disappeared? And that the effects hide the causes? In this sphere it is impossible to distinguish between causes and effects. Actually there are no causes and effects, merely a complex of interpenetrating reactions and tendencies. The persistence of certain attitudes, and the freedom and independence they assume in relation to the causes that created them, induce us to study them in the living flesh of the present rather than in history books.

History, then, can clarify the origins of many of our phantasms, but it cannot dissipate them. We must confront them ourselves. Or to put it another way: history helps us to understand certain traits of our character, provided we are capable of isolating and defining them beforehand. We are the only persons who can answer the questions asked us by reality and our own being.

In our daily language there is a group of words that are prohibited, secret, without clear meanings. We confide the expression of our most brutal or subtle emotions and reactions to their magical ambiguities. They are evil words, and we utter them in a loud voice only when we are not in control of ourselves. In a confused way

they reflect our intimacy: the explosions of our vitality light them up and the depressions of our spirit darken them. They constitute a sacred language like those of children, poetry and sects. Each letter and syllable has a double life, at once luminous and obscure, that reveals and hides us. They are words that say nothing and say everything. Adolescents, when they want to appear like men, speak them in a hoarse voice. Women also repeat them, sometimes to demonstrate their freedom of spirit, sometimes to prove the truth of their feelings. But these words are definitive and categorical, despite their ambiguities and the ease with which their meanings change. They are the bad words, the only living language in a world of anemic vocables. They are poetry within the reach of everyone.

Each country has its own. In ours, with their brief, aggressive, electric syllables, resembling the flash given off by a knife when it strikes a hard opaque body, we condense all our appetites, all our hatreds and enthusiasms, all the longings that rage unexpressed in the depths of our being. The word is our sign and seal. By means of it we recognize each other among strangers, and we use it every time the real conditions of our being rise to our lips. To know it, to use it, to throw it in the air like a toy or to make it quiver like a sharp weapon, is a way of affirming that we are Mexican.

All of our anxious tensions express themselves in a phrase we use when anger, joy or enthusiasm cause us to exalt our condition as Mexicans: "*¡Viva México, hijos de la chingada!*" This phrase is a true battle cry, charged with a peculiar electricity; it is a challenge and an affirmation, a shot fired against an imaginary enemy, and an explosion in the air. Once again, certain pathetic and plastic fatality, we are presented with the image of a skyrocket that climbs into the sky, bursts

in a shower of sparks and then falls in darkness. Or with the image of that howl that ends all our songs and possesses the same ambiguous resonance: an angry joy, a destructive affirmation ripping open the breast and consuming itself.

When we shout this cry on the fifteenth of September, the anniversary of our independence, we affirm ourselves in front of, against and in spite of the "others" Who are the "others"? They are the *hijos de la chingada*: strangers, bad Mexicans, our enemies, our rivals. In any case, the "others," that is, all those who are not as we are. And these "others" are not defined except as the sons of a mother as vague and indeterminate as themselves.

Who is the *Chingada*? Above all, she is the Mother. Not a Mother of flesh and blood but a mythical figure. The *Chingada* is one of the Mexican representations of Maternity, like *La Llorona* or the "long-suffering Mexican mother" we celebrate on the tenth of May. The *Chingada* is the mother who has suffered — metaphorically or actually — the corrosive and defaming action implicit in the verb that gives her her name. It would be worth while to examine that verb.

Darío Rubio, in his *Anarquía del lenguaje en la América Española*, examines the origins of *chingar* and enumerates the meanings given it by almost all Spanish-American people. It probably comes from the Aztecs: *chingaste* (lees, residue, sediment) is *xinachtli* (garden seed) or *xinaxtli* (fermented maguey juice). The word and its derivatives are used in most of America and parts of Spain in association with drinks, alcoholic or otherwise. In Guatemala and El Salvador *chingaste* means the residue or dregs that remain in a glass. In Oaxaca coffee lees are called *chingaditos*. Throughout Mexico alcohol is called *chinguere* — or, significantly, *piquete*. In Chile,

Peru and Ecuador a *chingana* is a tavern. In Spain *chingar* means to drink a great deal, to get drunk. In Cuba a *chinguirito* is a shot of alcohol.

Chingar also implies the idea of failure. In Chile and Argentina a petard *se chinga* when it fails to explode, and businesses that fail, fiestas that are rained out, actions that are not completed, also *se chingan*. In Colombia *chingarse* means to be disappointed. In Argentina a torn dress is a *vestido chingado*. Almost everywhere *chingarse* means to be made a fool of, to be involved in a fiasco. In some parts of South America *chingar* means to molest, to censure, to ridicule. It is always an aggressive verb, as can be seen in these further meanings: to dock an animal, to incite or prod a fighting-cock, to make merry, to crack a whip, to endanger, to neglect, to frustrate.

In Mexico the word has innumerable meanings. It is a magical word: a change of tone, a change of inflection, is enough to change its meaning. It has as many shadings as it has intonations, as many meanings as it has emotions. One may be a *chingón*, a *gran chingón* (in business, in politics, in crime or with women), or a *chingaquedito* (silent, deceptive, fashioning plots in the shadows, advancing cautiously and then striking with a club), or a *chingoncito*. But in this plurality of meanings the ultimate meaning always contains the idea of aggression, whether it is the simple act of molesting, pricking or censuring, or the violent act of wounding or killing. The verb denotes violence, an emergence from oneself to penetrate another by force. It also means to injure, to lacerate, to violate —bodies, souls, objects — and to destroy. When something breaks, we say: “*Se chingó.*” When someone behaves rashly, in defiance of the rules, we say: “*Hizo una chingadera.*”

The idea of breaking, of ripping open, appears in a great many of these expressions. The word has sexual connotations but it is not a synonym for the sexual act: one may *chingar* a woman without actually possessing her. And when it does allude to the sexual act, violation or deception gives it a particular shading. The man who commits it never does so with the consent of the *chingada*. *Chingar*, then, is to do violence to another. The verb is masculine, active, cruel; it stings, wounds, gashes, stains. And it provokes a bitter, resentful satisfaction.

The person who suffers this action is passive, inert and open, in contrast to the active, aggressive and closed person who inflicts it. The *chingón* is the *macho*, the male; he rips open the *chingada*, the female, who is pure passivity, defenseless against the exterior world. The relationship between them is violent, and it is determined by the cynical power of the first and the impotence of the second. The idea of violence rules darkly over all the meanings of the word, and the dialectic of the "closed" and the "open" thus fulfills itself with an almost ferocious precision.

The magic power of the word is intensified by the fact that it is prohibited. No one uses it casually in public. Only an excess of anger or a delirious enthusiasm justifies its use. It is a word that can only be heard among men or during the big fiestas. When we shout it out, we break a veil of silence, modesty or hypocrisy. We reveal ourselves as we really are. The forbidden words boil up in us, just as our emotions boil up. When they finally burst out, they do so harshly, brutally, in the form of a shout, a challenge, an offense. They are projectiles or knives. They cause wounds.

The Spaniards also abuse their strongest expressions; indeed, the Mexican is singularly nice in comparison. But while the Spaniards enjoy using blasphemy and scatology, we specialize in cruelty and sadism. The Spaniard is simple: he insults God because he believes in Him. Blasphemy, as Machado wrote, is a prayer in reverse. The pleasure that many Spaniards, including some of their greatest poets, derive from allusions to body wastes, and from mixing excrement with sacred matters, is reminiscent of children playing with mud. In addition to resentment, there is that delight in contrasts which produced the Baroque style and the drama of great Spanish painting. Only a Spaniard can speak with authority about Onan and Don Juan. In Mexican expressions, on the contrary, we cannot find the Spanish duality that is symbolized by the opposition of the real and the ideal, the mystics and the picaresque heroes, the funereal Quevedo and the scatological Quevedo. What we find is the dichotomy between the closed and the open. The verb *chingar* signifies the triumph of the closed, the male, the powerful, over the open.

If we take into account all of its various meanings, the word defines a great part of our life and qualifies our relationships with our friends and compatriots. To the Mexican there are only two possibilities in life: either he inflicts the actions implied by *chingar* on others, or else he suffers them himself at the hands of others. This conception of social life as combat fatally divides society into the strong and the weak. The strong — the hard, unscrupulous *chingones* — surround themselves with eager followers. This servility toward the strong, especially among the *políticos* (that is, the professionals of public business), is one of the more deplorable consequences of the situation. Another, no less degrading, is the devotion to personalities rather than to principles. Our politicians frequently mix public business with private. It does not matter. Their wealth or their influence in government allows them to maintain a flock of supporters whom the people call, most appositely, *lambiscones* (from the word *lamer*: "to lick").

The verb *chingar* — malign and agile and playful, like a caged animal — creates many expressions that turn our world into a jungle: there are tigers in business, eagles in the schools and the army, lions among our friends. A bribe is called a "bite." The bureaucrats gnaw their "bones" (public employment). And in a world of *chingones*, of difficult relationships, ruled by violence and suspicion — a world in which no one opens out or surrenders himself — ideas and accomplishments count for little. The only thing of value is manliness, personal strength, a capacity for imposing oneself on others.

The word also has another, more restricted meaning. When we say, "*Vete a la chingada*," we send a person to a distant place. Distant, vague and indeterminate. To the country of broken and worn-out things. A gray country, immense and empty, that is not located anywhere. It is not only because of simple phonetic association that we compare it with China, for China is also immense and remote. The *chingada*, because of constant usage, contradictory meanings and the friction of angry or enthusiastic lips, wastes away, loses its contents and disappears. It is a hollow word. It says nothing. It is Nothingness itself.

After this digression, it is possible to answer the question, "What is the *Chingada*?" The *Chingada* is the Mother forcibly opened, violated or deceived. The *hijo de la Chingada* is the offspring of violation, abduction or deceit. If we compare this expression with the Spanish *hijo de puta* (son of a whore), the difference is immediately obvious. To the Spaniard, dishonor consists in being the son of a woman who

voluntarily surrenders herself: a prostitute. To the Mexican it consists in being the fruit of a violation.

Manuel Cabrera points out that the Spanish attitude reflects a moral and historical conception of original sin, while that of the Mexican, deeper and more genuine, transcends both ethics and anecdotes. In effect, every woman — even when she gives herself willingly — is torn open by the man, is the *Chingada*. In a certain sense all of us, by the simple fact of being born of woman, are *hijos de la Chingada*, sons of Eve. But the singularity of the Mexican resides, I believe, in his violent, sarcastic humiliation of the Mother and his no less violent affirmation of the Father. A woman friend of mine (women are more aware of the strangeness of this situation) has made me see that this admiration for the Father — who is a symbol of the closed, the aggressive — expresses itself very dearly in a saying we use when we want to demonstrate our superiority: "I am your father." The question of origins, then, is the central secret of our anxiety and anguish. It is worth studying the significance of this fact.

We are alone. Solitude, the source of anxiety, begins on the day we are deprived of maternal protection and fall into a strange and hostile world. We have fallen, and this fall — this knowledge that we have fallen — makes us guilty. Of what? Of a nameless wrong: that of having been born. These feelings are common to all men and there is nothing specifically Mexican in them. Therefore it is not necessary to repeat a description that has been given many times before. What is necessary is to isolate certain traits and emotions that cast a particular light on the universal condition of man.

In all civilizations, God the Father becomes an ambivalent figure once he has dethroned the feminine deities. On the one hand, the Father embodies the generative power, the origin of life, whether he be Jehovah, God the Creator, or Zeus, king of creation, ruler of the cosmos. On the other hand, he is the first principle, the One, from whom all is born and to whom all must return. But he is also the lord of the lightning bolt and the whip; he is the tyrant, the ogre who devours life. This aspect — angry Jehovah, God of wrath, or Saturn, or Zeus the violator of women — is the one that appears almost exclusively in Mexican representations of manly power. The *macho* represents the masculine pole of life. The phrase "I am your father" has no paternal flavor and is not said in order to protect or to guide another, but rather to impose one's superiority, that is, to humiliate. Its real meaning is no different from that of the verb *chingar* and its derivatives. The *macho* is the *gran chingón*. One word sums up the aggressiveness, insensitivity, invulnerability and other attributes of the *macho*: power. It is force without the discipline of any notion of order: arbitrary power, the will without reins and without a set course.

Unpredictability adds another element to the character of the *macho*. He is a humorist. His jokes are huge and individual, and they always end in absurdity. The anecdote about the man who "cured" the headache of a drinking companion by emptying his pistol into his head is well known. True or not, the incident reveals the inexorable rigor with which the logic of the absurd is introduced into life. The *macho* commits *chingaderas*, that is, unforeseen acts that produce confusion, horror and destruction. He opens the world; in doing so, he rips and tears it, and this violence provokes a great, sinister laugh. And in its own way, it is just: it re-establishes the equilibrium and puts things in their places, by reducing them to dust, to misery, to nothingness. The humor of the *macho* is an act of revenge.

A psychologist would say that resentment is the basis of his character. It would not be difficult to perceive certain homosexual inclinations also, such as the use and abuse of the pistol, a phallic symbol which discharges death rather than life, and the fondness for exclusively masculine guilds. But whatever may be the origin of these attitudes, the fact is that the essential attribute of the *macho* — power — almost always reveals itself as a capacity for wounding, humiliating, annihilating. Nothing is more natural, therefore, than his indifference toward the offspring he engenders. He is not the founder of a people; he is not a patriarch who exercises *patria potestas*; he is not a king or a judge or the chieftain of a clan. He is power isolated in its own potency, without relationship or compromise with the outside world. He is pure incommunication, a solitude that devours itself and everything it touches. He does not pertain to our world; he is not from our city; he does not live in our neighborhood. He comes from far away; he is always far away. He is the Stranger. It is impossible not to notice the resemblance between the figure of the macho and that of the Spanish conquistador. This is the model — more mythical than real — that determines the images the Mexican people form of men in power: caciques, feudal lords, hacienda owners, politicians, generals, captains of industry. They are all *machos*, *chingones*.

The *macho* has no heroic or divine counterpart Hidalgo, the "father of the fatherland" as it is customary to call him in the ritual gibberish of the Republic, is a defenseless old man, more an incarnation of the people's helplessness against force than an image of the wrath and power of an awe-inspiring father. Among the numerous patron saints of the Mexicans there is none who resembles the great masculine divinities. Finally, there is no especial veneration for God the Father in the Trinity. He is a dim figure at best. On the other hand, there is profound devotion to Christ as the Son of God, as the youthful God, above all as the victimized Redeemer. The village churches have a great many images of Jesus — on the cross, or covered with thorns and wounds — in which the insolent realism of the Spaniards is mingled with the tragic symbolism of the Indians. On the one hand, the wounds are flowers, pledges of resurrection; on the other, they are a reiteration that life is the sorrowful mask of death.

The fervor of the cult of God the Son would seem to be explained, at first glance, as an inheritance from the pre-Hispanic religions. When the Spaniards arrived, almost all of the great masculine divinities — with the exception of the rain-god Tláloc, a child and an old man at the same time, and a deity of greater antiquity — were sons of gods, like Xipe, god of the young corn, and Huitzilopochtli, the "Warrior of the South." Perhaps it is not idle to recall that the birth of Huitzilopochtli offers more than one analogy with that of Christ: he too was conceived without carnal contact; the divine messenger was likewise a bird (that dropped a feather into the lap of the earth-goddess Coatlicue); and finally, the infant Huitzilopochtli also had to escape the persecution of a mythical Herod. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to use these analogies to explain that devotion to Christ, just as it would be to attribute that devotion to a mere survival of the cult of the sons of gods. The Mexican venerates a bleeding and humiliated Christ, a Christ who has been beaten by the soldiers and condemned by the judges, because he sees in him a transfigured image of his own identity. And this brings to mind Cuauhtémoc, the young Aztec emperor who was dethroned, tortured and murdered by Cortés.

Cuauhtémoc means "Falling Eagle." The Mexican chieftain rose to power at the beginning of the siege of México-Tenochtitlán, when the Aztecs had been abandoned by

their gods, their vassals and their allies. Even his relationship with a woman fits the archetype of the young hero, at one and the same time the lover and the son of the goddess. Thus López Velarde wrote that Cuauhtémoc went out to meet Cortés — that is, to the final sacrifice — “separated from the curved breast of the Empress.” He is a warrior but he is also a child. The exception is that the heroic cycle does not end with his death: the fallen hero awaits resurrection. It is not surprising that for the majority of Mexicans Cuauhtémoc should be the “young grandfather,” the origin of Mexico: the hero's tomb is the cradle of the people. This is the dialectic of myth, and Cuauhtémoc is more a myth than a historical figure. Another element enters here, an analogy that makes this history a true poem in search of fulfillment: the location of Cuauhtémoc's tomb is not known. The mystery of his burial place is one of our obsessions. To discover it would mean nothing less than to return to our origins, to reunite ourselves with our ancestry, to break out of our solitude. It would be a resurrection.

If we ask about the third figure of the triad, the Mother, we hear a double answer. It is no secret to anyone that Mexican Catholicism is centered about the cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe. In the first place, she is an Indian Virgin; in the second place, the scene of her appearance to the Indian Juan Diego was a hill that formerly contained a sanctuary dedicated to Tonantzin, “Our Mother,” the Aztec goddess of fertility. We know that the Conquest coincided with the apogee of the cult of two masculine divinities: Quetzalcóatl, the self-sacrificing god, and Huitzilopochtli, the young warrior-god. The defeat of these gods — which is what the Conquest meant to the Indian world, because it was the end of a cosmic cycle and the inauguration of a new divine kingdom — caused the faithful to return to the ancient feminine deities. This phenomenon of a return to the maternal womb, so well known to the psychologist, is without doubt one of the determining causes of the swift popularity of the cult of the Virgin. The Indian goddesses were goddesses of fecundity, linked to the cosmic rhythms, the vegetative processes and agrarian rites. The Catholic Virgin is also the Mother (some Indian pilgrims still call her Guadalupe-Tonantzin), but her principal attribute is not to watch over the fertility of the earth but to provide refuge for the unfortunate. The situation has changed: the worshipers do not try to make sure of their harvests but to find a mother's lap. The Virgin is the consolation of the poor, the shield of the weak, the help of the oppressed. In sum, she is the Mother of orphans. All men are born disinherited and their true condition is orphanhood, but this is particularly true among the Indians and the poor in Mexico. The cult of the Virgin reflects not only the general condition of man but also a concrete historical situation, in both the spiritual and material realms. In addition, the Virgin — the universal Mother — is also the intermediary, the messenger, between disinherited man and the unknown, inscrutable power: the Strange.

In contrast to Guadalupe, who is the Virgin Mother, the *Chingada* is the violated Mother. Neither in her nor in the Virgin do we find traces of the darker attributes of the great goddesses: the lasciviousness of Amaterasu and Aphrodite, the cruelty of Artemis and Astarte, the sinister magic of Circe or the blood-lust of Kali. Both of them are passive figures. Guadalupe is pure receptivity, and the benefits she bestows are of the same order: she consoles, quiets, dries tears, calms passions. The *Chingada* is even more passive. Her passivity is abject: she does not resist violence, but is an inert heap of bones, blood and dust. Her taint is constitutional and resides, as we said earlier, in her sex. This passivity, open to the outside world, causes her to lose her identity: she is the

Chingada. She loses her name; she is no one; she disappears into nothingness; she is Nothingness. And yet she is the cruel incarnation of the feminine condition.

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. She embodies the open, the *chingado*, to our closed, stoic, impassive Indians. Cuauhtémoc and Doña Marina are thus two antagonistic and complementary figures. There is nothing surprising about our cult of the young emperor — "the only hero at the summit of art," an image of the sacrificed son — and there is also nothing surprising about the curse that weighs against La Malinche. This explains the success of the contemptuous adjective *malinchista* recently put into circulation by the newspapers to denounce all those who have been corrupted by foreign influences. The *malinchistas* are those who want Mexico to open itself to the outside world: the true sons of La Malinche, who is the *Chingada* in person. Once again we see the opposition of the closed and the open.

When we shout "*¡Viva México, hijos de la chingada!*" we express our desire to live closed off from the outside world and, above all, from the past. In this shout we condemn our origins and deny our hybridism. The strange permanence of Cortés and La Malinche in the Mexican's imagination and sensibilities reveals that they are something more than historical figures; they are symbols of a secret conflict that we have still not resolved. When he repudiates La Malinche — the Mexican Eve, as she was represented by José Clemente Orozco in his mural in the National Preparatory School — the Mexican breaks his ties with the past, renounces his origins, and lives in isolation and solitude.

The Mexican condemns all his traditions at once, the whole set of gestures, attitudes and tendencies in which it is now difficult to distinguish the Spanish from the Indian. For that reason the Hispanic thesis, which would have us descend from Cortés to the exclusion of La Malinche, is the patrimony of a few extremists who are not even pure whites. The same can be said of indigenist propaganda, which is also supported by fanatical *criollos* and *mestizos*, while the Indians have never paid it the slightest attention. The Mexican does not want to be either an Indian or a Spaniard. Nor does he want to be descended from them. He denies them. And he does not affirm himself as a mixture, but rather as an abstraction: he is a man. He becomes the son of Nothingness. His beginnings are in his own self.

This attitude is revealed not only in our daily life but also in the course of our history, which at certain moments has been the embodiment of a will to eradicate all that has gone before. It is astonishing that a country with such a vivid past — a country so profoundly traditional, so close to its roots, so rich in ancient legends even if poor in modern history — should conceive of itself only as a negation of its origins.

Our shout strips us naked and discloses the wound that we alternately flaunt and conceal, but it does not show us the causes of this separation from, and negation of, the Mother, not even when we recognize that such a rupture has occurred. In lieu of a closer

examination of the problem, we will suggest that the liberal Reform movement of the middle of the last century seems to be the moment when the Mexican decided to break with his traditions, which is a form of breaking with oneself. If our Independence movement cut the ties that bound us to Spain, the Reform movement denied that the Mexican nation as a historical project should perpetuate the colonial tradition. Juárez and his generation founded a state whose ideals are distinct from those that animated New Spain or the pre-Cortesian cultures. The Mexican state proclaimed an abstract and universal conception of man: the Republic is not composed of *criollos*, Indians and *mestizos* (as the Laws of the Indies, with a great love for distinctions and a great respect for the heterogeneous nature of the colonial world, had specified) but simply of men alone. All alone.

The Reform movement is the great rupture with the Mother. This separation was a necessary and inevitable act, because every life that is truly autonomous begins as a break with its family and its past. But the separation still hurts. We still suffer from that wound. That is why the feeling of orphanhood is the constant background of our political endeavors and our personal conflicts. Mexico is all alone, like each one of her sons.

The Mexican and his Mexicanism must be defined as separation and negation. And, at the same time, as a search, a desire to transcend this state of exile. In sum, as a vivid awareness of solitude, both historical and personal. History, which could not tell us anything about the nature of our feelings and conflicts, can now show us how that break came about and how we have attempted to transcend our solitude.

Spanish Text:

Fuente: Paz, Octavio. "Los hijos de la Malinche." Cap. 4 en *El laberinto de la Soledad*. Mexico City: Cuadernos Americanos, 1947.

IV HIJOS DE LA MALINCHE

La extrañeza que provoca nuestro hermetismo ha creado la leyenda del mexicano, ser insondable. Nuestro recelo provoca el ajeno. Si nuestra cortesía atrae, nuestra reserva hiela. Y las inesperadas violencias que nos desgarran, el esplendor convulso o solemne de nuestras fiestas, el culto a la muerte, el desenfreno de nuestras alegrías y de nuestros duelos, acaban por desconcertar al extranjero. La sensación que causamos no es diversa a la que producen los orientales. También ellos, chinos, indostanos o árabes, son herméticos e indescifrables. También ellos arrastran en andrajos un pasado todavía vivo. Hay un misterio mexicano como hay un misterio amarillo y uno negro. El contenido concreto de esas representaciones depende de cada espectador. Pero todos coinciden en hacerse de nosotros una imagen ambigua, cuando no contradictoria: no somos gente segura y nuestras respuestas como nuestros silencios son imprevisibles, inesperados. Traición y lealtad, crimen y amor, se agazapan en el fondo de nuestra mirada. Atraemos y repelemos.

No es difícil comprender los orígenes de esta actitud. Para un europeo, México es un país al margen de la Historia Universal. Y todo lo que se encuentra

alejado del centro de la sociedad aparece como extraño e impenetrable. Los campesinos, remotos, ligeramente arcaicos en el vestir y el hablar, parcos, amantes de expresarse en formas y fórmulas tradicionales, ejercen siempre una fascinación sobre el hombre urbano. En todas partes representan el elemento más antiguo y secreto de la sociedad. Para todos, excepto para ellos mismos, encarnan lo oculto, lo escondido y que no se entrega sino difícilmente: tesoro enterrado, espiga que madura en las entrañas terrestres, vieja sabiduría escondida entre los pliegues de la tierra.

La mujer, otro de los seres que viven aparte, también es figura enigmática. Mejor dicho, es el Enigma. A semejanza del hombre de raza o nacionalidad extraña, incita y repele. Es la imagen de la fecundidad, pero asimismo de la muerte. En casi todas las culturas las diosas de la creación son también deidades de destrucción. Cifra viviente de la extrañeza del universo y de su radical heterogeneidad, la mujer ¿esconde la muerte o la vida?, ¿en qué piensa?, ¿piensa acaso?, ¿siente de veras?, ¿es igual a nosotros? El sadismo se inicia como venganza ante el hermetismo femenino o como tentativa desesperada para obtener una respuesta de un cuerpo que tememos insensible. Porque, como dice Luis Cernuda, "el deseo es una pregunta cuya respuesta no existe". A pesar de su desnudez —redonda, plena— en las formas de la mujer siempre hay algo que desvelar:

Eva y Cipris concentran el misterio del corazón del mundo.

Para Rubén Darío, como para todos los grandes poetas, la mujer no es solamente un instrumento de conocimiento, sino el conocimiento mismo. El conocimiento que no poseeremos nunca, la suma de nuestra definitiva ignorancia: el misterio supremo.

Es notable que nuestras representaciones de la clase obrera no estén teñidas de sentimientos parecidos, a pesar de que también vive alejada del centro de la sociedad —incluso físicamente, reclusa en barrios y ciudades especiales—. Cuando un novelista contemporáneo introduce un personaje que simboliza la salud o la destrucción, la fertilidad o la muerte, no escoge, como podría esperarse, a un obrero —que encierra en su figura la muerte de la vieja sociedad y el nacimiento de otra—. D. H. Lawrence, que es uno de los críticos más violentos y profundos del mundo moderno, describe en casi todas sus obras las virtudes que hacen del hombre

fragmentario de nuestros días un hombre de verdad, dueño de una visión total del mundo. Para encarnar esas virtudes crea personajes de razas antiguas y no-europeas. O inventa la figura de Mellors, un guardabosque, un hijo de la sierra. Es posible que la infancia de Lawrence, transcurrida entre las minas de carbón inglesas, explique esta deliberada ausencia. Es sabido que detestaba a los obreros tanto como a los burgueses. Pero ¿cómo explicar que en todas las grandes novelas revolucionarias tampoco aparezcan los proletarios como héroes, sino como fondo? En todas ellas el héroe es siempre el aventurero, el intelectual o el revolucionario profesional. El hombre aparte, que ha renunciado a su clase, a su origen o a su patria. Herencia del romanticismo sin duda, que hace del héroe un ser antisocial. Además, el obrero es demasiado reciente. Y se parece a sus señores: todos son hijos de la máquina.

El obrero moderno carece de individualidad. La clase es más fuerte que el individuo y la persona se disuelve en lo genérico. Porque esa es la primera y más grave mutilación que sufre el hombre al convertirse en asalariado industrial. El capitalismo lo despoja de su naturaleza humana —lo que no ocurrió con el siervo— puesto que reduce todo su ser a fuerza de trabajo, transformándolo por este solo hecho en objeto. Y como a todos los objetos, en mercancía, en cosa susceptible de compra y venta. El obrero pierde, bruscamente y por razón misma de su estado social, toda relación humana y concreta con el mundo: ni son suyos los útiles que emplea, ni es suyo el fruto de su esfuerzo. Ni siquiera lo ve. En realidad no es un obrero, puesto que no hace obras o no tiene conciencia de las que hace, perdido en un aspecto de la producción. Es un trabajador, nombre abstracto, que no designa una tarea determinada, sino una función. Así, no lo distingue de los otros hombres su obra, como acontece con el médico, el ingeniero o el carpintero. La abstracción que lo califica —el trabajo medido en tiempo— no lo separa, sino lo liga a otras abstracciones. De ahí su ausencia de misterio, de problematidad, su transparencia, que no es diversa a la de cualquier instrumento.

La complejidad de la sociedad contemporánea y la especialización que requiere el trabajo extienden la condición abstracta del obrero a otros grupos sociales. Vivimos en un mundo de técnicos, se dice. A pesar de las diferencias de salarios y de nivel de vida, la situación de estos técnicos no difiere esencialmente de la de los obreros: también son asalariados y tampoco tienen conciencia de la obra que realizan. El gobierno de los técnicos, ideal de la sociedad contemporánea, sería así el gobierno de los instrumentos. La función substituiría al fin; el medio, al creador. La sociedad marcharía con eficacia, pero sin rumbo. Y la repetición del mismo gesto, distintiva de la máquina, llevaría a una forma desconocida de la inmovilidad: la del mecanismo que avanza de ninguna parte hacia ningún lado.

Los regímenes totalitarios no han hecho sino extender y generalizar, por medio de la fuerza o de la propaganda, esta condición. Todos los hombres sometidos a su imperio la padecen. En cierto sentido se trata de una transposición a la esfera social y política de los sistemas económicos del capitalismo. La producción en masa se logra a través de la confección de piezas sueltas que luego se unen en talleres especiales. La propaganda y la acción política totalitaria— así como el terror y la represión— obedecen al mismo sistema. La propaganda difunde verdades incompletas, en serie y por piezas sueltas. Más tarde esos fragmentos se organizan y se convierten en teorías políticas, verdades absolutas para las masas. El terror obedece al mismo principio. La persecución comienza contra grupos aislados —razas, clases, disidentes, sospechosos—, hasta que gradualmente alcanza a todos. Al iniciarse, una parte del pueblo contempla con indiferencia el exterminio de otros grupos sociales o contribuye a su persecución, pues se exasperan los odios internos. Todos se vuelven cómplices y el sentimiento de culpa se extiende a toda la sociedad. El terror se generaliza: ya no hay sino persecutores y perseguidos. El persecutor, por otra parte, se transforma muy fácilmente en perseguido. Basta una vuelta de la máquina política. Y nadie escapa a esta dialéctica feroz, ni los dirigentes.

El mundo del terror como el de la producción en serie, es un mundo de cosas, de útiles. (De ahí la vanidad de la disputa sobre la validez histórica del terror moderno). Y los útiles nunca son misteriosos o enigmáticos, pues el misterio proviene de la

indeterminación del ser o del objeto que lo contiene. Un anillo misterioso se desprende inmediatamente del género anillo; adquiere vida propia, deja de ser un objeto. En su forma yace, escondida, presta a saltar, la sorpresa. El misterio es una fuerza o una virtud oculta, que no nos obedece y que no sabemos a qué hora y cómo va a manifestarse. Pero los útiles no esconden nada, no nos preguntan nada y nada nos responden. Son inequívocos y transparentes. Meras prolongaciones de nuestras manos, no poseen más vida que la que nuestra voluntad les otorga. Nos sirven; luego, gastados, viejos, los arrojamos sin pesar al cesto de la basura, al cementerio de automóviles, al campo de concentración. O los cambiamos a nuestros aliados o enemigos por otros objetos.

Todas nuestras facultades, y también todos nuestros defectos, se oponen a esta concepción del trabajo como esfuerzo impersonal, repetido en iguales y vacías porciones de tiempo: la lentitud y cuidado en la tarea, el amor por la obra y por cada uno de los detalles que la componen, el buen gusto, innato ya, a fuerza de ser herencia milenaria. Si no fabricamos productos en serie, sobresalimos en el arte difícil, exquisito e inútil de vestir pulgas. Lo que no quiere decir que el mexicano sea incapaz de convertirse en lo que se llama un buen obrero. Todo es cuestión de tiempo. Y nada, excepto un cambio histórico cada vez más remoto e impensable, impedirá que el mexicano deje

de ser un problema, un ser enigmático, y se convierta en una abstracción más.

Mientras llega ese momento, que resolverá —aniquilándolas— todas nuestras contradicciones, debo señalar que lo extraordinario de nuestra situación reside en que no solamente somos enigmáticos ante los extraños, sino ante nosotros mismos. Un mexicano es un problema siempre, para otro mexicano y para sí mismo. Ahora bien, nada más simple que reducir todo el complejo grupo de actitudes que nos caracteriza —y en especial la que consiste en ser un problema para nosotros mismos— a lo que se podría llamar "moral de siervo", por oposición no solamente a la "moral de señor" sino a la moral moderna, proletaria o burguesa.

La desconfianza, el disimulo, la reserva cortés que cierra el paso al extraño, la ironía, todas, en fin, las oscilaciones psíquicas con que al eludir la mirada ajena nos eludimos a nosotros mismos, son rasgos de gente dominada, que teme y finge frente al señor. Es revelador que nuestra intimidad jamás aflore de manera natural, sin el acicate de la fiesta, el alcohol o la muerte. Esclavos, siervos y razas sometidas se presenta —siempre recubiertos por una máscara, sonriente o adusta. Y únicamente a

solas, en los grandes momentos, se atreven a manifestarse tal como son. Todas sus relaciones están envenenadas por el miedo y el recelo. Miedo al señor, recelo ante sus iguales. Cada uno observa al otro, porque cada compañero puede ser también un traidor. Para salir de sí mismo el siervo necesita saltar barreras, embriagarse, olvidar su condición. Vivir a solas, sin testigos. Solamente en la soledad se atreve a ser.

La indudable analogía que se observa entre ciertas de nuestras actitudes y las de los grupos sometidos al poder de un amo, una casta o un Estado extraño, podría resolverse en esta afirmación: el carácter de los mexicanos es un producto de las circunstancias sociales imperantes en nuestro país. Por lo tanto la historia de México, que es la historia de esas circunstancias, contiene la respuesta a todas las preguntas. La situación del pueblo durante el período colonial sería así la raíz de nuestra actitud

cerrada e inestable . Nuestra historia como nación independiente contribuiría también a perpetuar y hacer más neta esta psicología servil, puesto que no hemos logrado suprimir la miseria popular ni las exasperantes diferencias sociales, a pesar de siglo y medio de luchas y experiencias constitucionales. El empleo de la violencia como recurso dialéctico, los abusos de autoridad de los poderosos — vicio que no ha desaparecido todavía— y finalmente el escepticismo y la resignación del pueblo, hoy más visibles que nunca debido a las sucesivas desilusiones post-revolucionarias, completarían esta explicación histórica.

El defecto de interpretaciones como la que acabo de bosquejar reside, precisamente, en su simplicidad. Nuestra actitud ante la vida no está condicionada por los hechos históricos, al menos de la manera rigurosa con que en el mundo de la mecánica la velocidad o la trayectoria de un proyectil se encuentra determinada por un conjunto de factores conocidos. Nuestra actitud vital —que es un factor que nunca acabaremos de conocer totalmente, pues cambio e indeterminación son las únicas constantes de su ser— también es historia. Quiero decir, los hechos históricos no son nada más hechos, sino que están teñidos de humanidad, esto es, de problematicidad. Tampoco son el mero resultado de otros hechos, que los causan, sino de una voluntad singular, capaz de regir dentro de ciertos límites su fatalidad. La historia no es un mecanismo y las influencias entre los diversos componentes de un hecho histórico son recíprocas, como tantas veces se ha dicho. Lo que distingue a un hecho histórico de los otros hechos es su carácter histórico. O sea, que es por sí mismo y en sí mismo una unidad irreductible a otras. Irreductible e inseparable. Un hecho histórico no es la suma de los llamados factores de la historia, sino una realidad indisoluble. Las circunstancias históricas explican nuestro carácter en la medida que nuestro carácter también las explica a ellas. Ambas son lo mismo. Por eso toda explicación puramente histórica es insuficiente —lo que no equivale a decir que sea falsa.

Basta una observación para reducir a sus verdaderas proporciones la analogía entre la moral de los siervos y la nuestra: las reacciones habituales del mexicano no son privativas de una clase, raza o grupo aislado, en situación de inferioridad. Las clases ricas también se cierran al mundo exterior y también se desgarran cada vez que intentan abrirse. Se trata de una actitud que rebasa las circunstancias históricas, aunque se sirve de ellas para manifestarse y se modifica a su contacto. El mexicano, como todos los hombres, al servirse de las circunstancias las convierte en materia plástica y se funde a ellas. Al esculpir las, se esculpe.

Si no es posible identificar nuestro carácter con el de los grupos sometidos, tampoco lo es negar su parentesco. En ambas situaciones el individuo y el grupo luchan, simultánea y contradictoriamente, por ocultarse y revelarse. Mas una diferencia radical nos separa. Siervos, criados o razas víctimas de un poder extraño cualquiera (los negros norteamericanos, por ejemplo), entablan un combate con una realidad concreta. Nosotros, en cambio, luchamos con entidades imaginarias, vestigios del pasado o fantasmas engendrados por nosotros mismos. Esos fantasmas y vestigios son reales, al menos para nosotros. Su realidad es de un orden sutil y atroz, porque es una realidad fantasmagórica. Son intocables e invencibles, ya que no están fuera de nosotros, sino en nosotros mismos. En la lucha que sostiene contra ellos nuestra voluntad de ser, cuentan con un aliado secreto y poderoso: nuestro miedo a

ser. Porque todo lo que es el mexicano actual, como se ha visto, puede reducirse a esto: el mexicano no quiere o no se atreve a ser él mismo.

En muchos casos estos fantasmas son vestigios de realidades pasadas. Se originaron en la Conquista, en la Colonia, en la Independencia o en las guerras sostenidas contra yanquis y franceses. Otros reflejan nuestros problemas actuales, pero de una manera indirecta, escondiendo o disfrazando su verdadera naturaleza. ¿Y no es extraordinario que, desaparecidas las causas, persisten los efectos? ¿Y que los efectos oculten a las causas? En esta esfera es imposible escindir causas y efectos. En realidad, no hay causas y efectos, sino un complejo de reacciones y tendencias que se penetran mutuamente. La persistencia de ciertas actitudes y la libertad e independencia que asumen frente a las causas que las originaron, conduce a estudiarlas en la carne viva del presente y no en los textos históricos.

En suma, la historia podrá esclarecer el origen de muchos de nuestros fantasmas, pero no los disipará. Sólo nosotros podemos enfrentarnos a ellos. O dicho de otro modo: la historia nos ayuda a comprender ciertos rasgos de nuestro carácter, a condición de que seamos capaces de aislarlos y denunciarlos previamente. Nosotros somos los únicos que podemos contestar a las preguntas que nos hacen la realidad y nuestro propio ser.

En nuestro lenguaje diario hay un grupo de palabras prohibidas, secretas, sin contenido claro, y a cuya mágica ambigüedad confiamos la expresión de las más brutales o sutiles de nuestras emociones y reacciones. Palabras malditas, que sólo pronunciamos en voz alta cuando no somos dueños de nosotros mismos. Confusamente reflejan nuestra intimidad: las explosiones de nuestra vitalidad las iluminan y las depresiones de nuestro ánimo las oscurecen. Lenguaje sagrado, como el de los niños, la poesía y las sectas. Cada letra y cada sílaba están animadas de una vida doble, al mismo tiempo luminosa y oscura, que nos revela y oculta. Palabras que no dicen nada y dicen todo. Los adolescentes, cuando quieren presumir de hombres, las pronuncian con voz ronca. Las repiten las señoras, ya para significar su libertad de espíritu, ya para mostrar la verdad de sus sentimientos. Pues estas palabras son definitivas, categóricas, a pesar de su ambigüedad y de la facilidad con que varía su significado. Son las malas palabras, único lenguaje vivo en un mundo de vocablos anémicos. La poesía al alcance de todos.

Cada país tiene la suya. En la nuestra, en sus breves y desgarradas, agresivas, chispeantes sílabas, parecidas a la momentánea luz que arroja el cuchillo cuando se le descarga contra un cuerpo opaco y duro, se condensan todos nuestros apetitos, nuestras iras, nuestros entusiasmos y los anhelos que pelean en nuestro fondo, inexpresados. Esa palabra es nuestro santo y seña. Por ella y en ella nos reconocemos entre extraños y a ella acudimos cada vez que aflora a nuestros labios la condición de nuestro ser. Conocerla, usarla, arrojándola al aire como un juguete vistoso o haciéndola vibrar como un arma afilada, es una manera de afirmar nuestra mexicanidad.

Toda la angustiosa tensión que nos habita se expresa en una frase que nos viene a la boca cuando la cólera, la alegría o el entusiasmo nos llevan a exaltar nuestra condición de mexicanos: ¡Viva México, hijos de la Chingada!” Verdadero grito de guerra, cargado de una electricidad particular, esta frase es un reto y una afirmación, un disparo, dirigido contra un enemigo imaginario, y una explosión en el

aire. Nuevamente, con cierta patética y plástica fatalidad, se presenta la imagen del cohete que sube al cielo, se dispersa en chispas y cae oscuramente. O la del aullido en que terminan nuestras canciones, y que posee la misma ambigua resonancia: alegría rencorosa, desgarrada afirmación que se abre el pecho y se consume a sí misma.

Con ese grito, que es de rigor gritar cada 15 de septiembre, aniversario de la Independencia, nos afirmamos y afirmamos a nuestra patria, frente, contra y a pesar de los demás. ¿Y quiénes son los demás? Los demás son los "hijos de la chingada": los extranjeros, los malos mexicanos, nuestros enemigos, nuestros rivales. En todo caso, los "otros". Esto es, todos aquellos que no son lo que nosotros somos. Y esos otros no se definen sino en cuanto hijos de una madre tan indeterminada y vaga como ellos mismos.

¿Quién es la Chingada? Ante todo, es la Madre. No una Madre de carne y hueso, sino una figura mítica. La Chingada es una de las representaciones mexicanas de la Maternidad, como la Llorona o la "sufrida madre mexicana" que festejamos el diez de mayo. La Chingada es la madre que ha sufrido, metafórica o realmente, la acción corrosiva e infamante implícita en el verbo que le da nombre. Vale la pena detenerse en el significado de esta voz.

En la "Anarquía del Lenguaje en la América Española", Darío Rubio examina el origen de esta palabra y enumera las significaciones que le prestan casi todos los pueblos hispanoamericanos. Es probable su procedencia azteca: chingaste es xinachtli (semilla de hortaliza) o xinaxtli (aguamiel fermentado). La voz y sus derivados se usan, en casi toda América y en algunas regiones de España, asociados a las bebidas, alcohólicas o no: chingaste son los residuos o heces que quedan en el vaso, en Guatemala y El Salvador; en Oaxaca llaman chingaditos a los restos del café; en todo México se llama chinguere —o significativamente, piquete— al alcohol; en Chile, Perú y Ecuador la chingana es la taberna; en España chingar equivale a beber mucho, a embriagarse; y en Cuba, un chinguirito es un trago de alcohol.

Chingar también implica la idea de fracaso. En Chile y Argentina se chinga un petardo cuando no hace explosión, "cuando no revienta, se frustra o sale fallido". Y las empresas que fracasan, las fiestas que se aguan, las acciones que no llegan a su término, se chingan. En Colombia, chingarse es llevarse un chasco. En el Plata un vestido desgarrado es un vestido chingado. En casi todas partes chingarse es salir burlado, fracasar. Chingar, asimismo, se emplea en algunas partes de Sudamérica como sinónimo de molestar, zaherir, burlar. Es un verbo agresivo, como puede verse por todas estas significaciones: descolar a los animales, incitar o hurgar a los gallos, chunguear, chasquear, perjudicar, echar a perder, frustrar.

En México los significados de la palabra son innumerables. Es una voz mágica. Basta un cambio de tono, una inflexión apenas, para que el sentido varíe.

Hay tantos

matices como entonaciones: tantos significados, como sentimientos. Se puede ser un chingón, un Gran Chingón (en los negocios, en la política, en el crimen, con las mujeres), un chingaquito (silencioso, disimulado, urdiendo tramas en la sombra, avanzando cauto para dar el mazazo), un chingoncito. Pero la pluralidad de significaciones no impide que la idea de agresión —en todos sus grados, desde el simple de incomodar, picar, zaherir, hasta el de violar, desgarrar y matar— se presente siempre como significado último. El verbo denota violencia, salir de sí mismo y penetrar por la fuerza en otro. Y también, herir, rasgar, violar—cuerpos,

almas, objetos—, destruir. Cuando algo se rompe; decimos: "se chingó". Cuando alguien ejecuta un acto desmesurado y contra las reglas, comentamos: "hizo una chingadera".

La idea de romper y de abrir reaparece en casi todas las expresiones. La voz está teñida de sexualidad, pero no es sinónima del acto sexual; se puede chingar una mujer sin poseerla. Y cuando se alude al acto sexual, la violación o el engaño le prestan un matiz particular. El que chinga jamás lo hace con el consentimiento de chingada. En suma, chingar es hacer violencia sobre otro. Es un verbo masculino, activo, cruel: pica, hiere, desgarr, mancha. Y provoca una amarga, resentida satisfacción en el que lo ejecuta.

Lo chingado es lo pasivo, lo inerte y abierto, por oposición a lo que chinga, que es activo, agresivo y cerrado. El chingón es el macho, el que abre. La chingada, la hembra, la pasividad pura, inerme ante el exterior. La relación entre ambos es violenta, determinada por poder cínico del primero y la impotencia de la otra. La idea de violación rige oscuramente todos los significados. La dialéctica de "lo cerrado" y "lo abierto" se cumple así con precisión casi feroz.

El poder mágico de la palabra se intensifica por su carácter prohibido. Nadie la dice en público. Solamente un exceso de cólera, una emoción o el entusiasmo delirante, justifican su expresión franca. Es una voz que sólo se oye entre hombres, o en las grandes fiestas. Al gritarla, rompemos un velo de pudor, de silencio o de hipocresía. Nos manifestamos tales como somos de verdad. Las malas palabras hierven en nuestro interior, como hierven nuestros sentimientos. Cuando salen, lo hacen brusca, brutalmente, en forma de alarido, de reto, de ofensa. Son proyectiles o cuchillos. Desgarran.

Los españoles también abusan de las expresiones fuertes. Frente a ellos el mexicano es singularmente pulcro. Pero mientras los españoles se complacen en la blasfemia y la escatología, nosotros nos especializamos en la crueldad y el sadismo. El español es simple: insulta a Dios porque cree en él. La blasfemia, dice Machado, es una oración al revés. El placer que experimentan muchos españoles, incluso algunos de sus más altos poetas, al aludir a los detritus y mezclar la mierda con lo sagrado se parece un poco al de los niños que juegan con lodo. Hay, además del resentimiento, el gusto por los contrastes, que ha engendrado el estilo barroco y el dramatismo de la gran pintura española. Sólo un español puede hablar con autoridad de Onán y Don Juan. En las expresiones mexicanas, por el contrario, no se advierte la dualidad española simbolizada por la oposición de lo real y lo ideal, los místicos y los pícaros, el Quevedo fúnebre y el escatológico, sino la dicotomía entre lo cerrado y lo abierto. El verbo chingar indica el triunfo de lo cerrado, del macho, del fuerte sobre lo abierto.

La palabra chingar, con todas estas múltiples significaciones, define gran parte de nuestra vida y califica nuestras relaciones con el resto de nuestros amigos y compatriotas. Para el mexicano la vida es una posibilidad de chingar o de ser chingado. Es decir, de humillar, castigar y ofender. O a la inversa. Esta concepción de la vida social como combate engendra fatalmente la división de la sociedad en fuertes y débiles. Los fuertes —los chingones sin escrúpulos, duros e inexorables— se rodean de fidelidades ardientes e interesadas. El servilismo ante los poderosos —especialmente entre la casta de los "políticos", esto es, de los profesionales de los negocios públicos— es una de las deplorables consecuencias de esta situación. Otra, no menos degradante, es la adhesión a las personas y no a los principios. Con frecuencia nuestros políticos confunden los negocios públicos con los privados. No importa. Su riqueza o su influencia en la administración les permite sostener una mesnada que el pueblo llama, muy atinadamente "lambiscones" (de lamer).

El verbo chingar—maligno, ágil y jugueteón como un animal de presa— engendra muchas expresiones que hacen de nuestro mundo una selva: hay tigres en los negocios, águilas en las escuelas o en los presidios, leones con los amigos. El

soborno se llama "morder". Los burócratas roen sus huesos (los empleos públicos). Y en un mundo de chingones, de relaciones duras, presididas por la violencia y el recelo, en el que nadie se abre ni se raja y todos quieren chingar, las ideas y el trabajo cuentan poco. Lo único que vale es la hombría, el valor personal, capaz de imponerse.

La voz tiene además otro significado, más restringido. Cuando decimos "vete a la Chingada", enviamos a nuestro interlocutor a un espacio lejano, vago e indeterminado. Al país de las cosas rotas, gastadas. País gris, que no está en ninguna parte, inmenso y vacío. Y no sólo por simple asociación fonética lo comparamos a la China, que es también inmensa y remota. La Chingada, a fuerza de uso, de significaciones contrarias y del roce de labios coléricos o entusiasmados, acaba por gastarse, agotar sus contenidos y desaparecer. Es una palabra hueca. No quiere decir nada. Es la Nada.

Después de esta digresión sí se puede contestar a la pregunta ¿qué es la Chingada? La Chingada es la Madre abierta violada o burlada por la fuerza. El "hijo de la Chingada" es el engendro de la violación, del rapto o de la burla. Si se compara esta expresión con la española, "hijo de puta", se advierte inmediatamente la diferencia. Para el español la deshonra consiste en ser hijo de una mujer que voluntariamente se entrega, una prostituta; para el mexicano, en ser fruto de una violación.

Manuel Cabrera me hace observar que la actitud española refleja una concepción histórica y moral del pecado original, en tanto que la del mexicano, más honda y genuina, trasciende anécdota y ética. En efecto, toda mujer, aun la que se da voluntariamente, es desgarrada, chingada por el hombre. En cierto sentido todos somos, por el solo hecho de nacer de mujer, hijos de la Chingada, hijos de la Chingada, hijos de Eva. Mas lo característico del mexicano reside, a mi juicio, en la violenta, sarcástica negación de la Madre, a la que se condena por el solo delito de serlo, y en la no menos violenta afirmación del Padre. Una amiga me hacía ver que la admiración por el Padre—símbolo de lo cerrado y agresivo, capaz de chingar y abrir— se transparenta en una expresión que empleamos siempre que queremos imponer a otro nuestra superioridad: "Yo soy tu padre". En suma, la cuestión del origen es el centro secreto de todas nuestras preocupaciones y angustias. Este oscuro sentimiento de culpa, fruto de nuestra soledad, de nuestro sabernos desprendidos del ámbito materno, es común a todos los hombres. El mexicano transfiere esa noción a la Madre y la condena. Al condenerla, se afirma a sí mismo y afirma la excelencia de su cerrada, arisca soledad.

Sería curioso establecer un paralelo entre dos concepciones mexicanas de la Madre: la Chingada y la Llorona. La primera es la Madre repudiada; la segunda, en cambio, reniega de sus hijos, los ahoga, y está condenada a llorarlos por la eternidad. No sería difícil que la Llorona sea una versión, bautizada y adulterada, de la Ciuateotl azteca, que ciertas noches descendía a la tierra y en los parajes solitarios espantaba a los caminantes. Ambas representaciones nos dan una idea más clara de los verdaderos sentimientos populares y de los conflictos que nos desgarran que la que nos ofrece el moderno e hipócrita "culto a la Madre", que no es sino una devoción hueca. El hombre siempre ha visto en la Madre una fuente de vida, pero también una potencia temible y odiosa. La Madre es la Mujer, representación de una pluralidad de encontradas significaciones y tendencias: poder y piedad, tumba y matriz, dulzura y rigor, castigo y perdón.

Es significativo que el "Viva México, hijos de la Chingada" sea un grito patriótico, que afirma a México negando a la Chingada y a sus hijos. Si la Chingada es una representación de la Madre violada, no me parece forzado asociarla a la Conquista que fue también una violación, no solamente en el sentido histórico, sino en la carne misma de las indias. El símbolo de la entrega es doña Malinche, la amante de Cortés. Es verdad que ella se da voluntariamente al Conquistador, pero

éste, apenas deja deserle útil, la olvida. Doña Marina se ha convertido en una figura que representa a las indias, fascinadas, violadas o seducidas por los españoles. Y del mismo modo que el niño no perdona a su madre que lo abandone para ir en busca de su padre, el pueblo mexicano no perdona su traición a la Malinche. Ella encarna lo abierto, lo chingado, frente a nuestros indios, estoicos, impasibles y cerrados. Cuauhtémoc y doña Marina son así dos símbolos antagónicos y complementarios. Y no es sorprendente el culto que todos profesamos al joven emperador—"único héroe a la altura del arte", imagen del hijo sacrificado—, tampoco es extraña la maldición que pesa contra la Malinche. De ahí el éxito del adjetivo despectivo "malinchista", recientemente puesto en circulación por los periódicos para denunciar a todos los contagiados por tendencias extranjerizantes. Los malinchistas son los partidarios de que México se abra al exterior: los verdaderos hijos de la Malinche, que es la Chingada en persona. De nuevo aparece lo cerrado por oposición a lo abierto.

Nuestro grito es una expresión de la voluntad mexicana de vivir cerrados al exterior, sí, pero sobre todo, cerrados frente al pasado. En ese grito condenamos nuestro origen y renegamos de nuestro hibridismo. La extraña permanencia de Cortés y de la Malinche en la imaginación y en la sensibilidad de los mexicanos actuales revela que son algo más que figuras históricas: son los símbolos de un conflicto secreto, que aún no hemos resuelto. Al repudiar a la Malinche—Eva mexicana, según la representa José Clemente Orozco en su mural de la Escuela Nacional Preparatoria— el mexicano rompe sus ligas con el pasado, reniega de su origen y se adentra solo en la vida histórica.

El mexicano condena en bloque toda su tradición, que es un conjunto de gestos, actitudes y tendencias en el que ya es difícil distinguir lo español de lo indio. Por eso la tesis hispanista, que nos hace descender de Cortés con exclusión de la Malinche, es el patrimonio de unos cuantos extravagantes—que ni siquiera son blancos puros—. Y otro tanto se puede decir de la propaganda indigenista, que también está sostenida por criollos y mestizos maniáticos, sin que jamás los indios le hayan prestado atención. El mexicano no quiere ser ni indio, ni español. Tampoco quiere descender de ellos. Los niega. Y no se afirma en tanto que mestizo, sino como abstracción: es un hombre. Se vuelve hijo de la Nada. El empieza en sí mismo.

Esta actitud no se manifiesta nada más en nuestra vida diaria, sino en el curso de nuestra historia, que en ciertos momentos ha sido encarnizada voluntad de desarraigo. Es pasmoso que un país con un pasado tan vivo, profundamente tradicional, atado a sus raíces, rico en antigüedad legendaria si pobre en historia moderna, sólo se conciba como negación de su origen.

Nuestro grito popular nos desnuda y revela cuál es esa llaga que alternativamente mostramos o escondemos, pero no nos indica cuáles fueron las causas de esa separación y negación de la Madre, ni cuando se realizó la ruptura. La Reforma parece ser el momento en que el mexicano se decide a romper con su tradición, que es una manera de romper con uno mismo. Si la Independencia corta los lazos políticos que nos unían a España, la Reforma niega que la nación mexicana en tanto que proyecto histórico, continúe la tradición colonial. Juárez y su generación fundan un Estado cuyos ideales son distintos a los que animaban a Nueva España o a las sociedades precortesianas. El Estado mexicano proclama una concepción universal y abstracta del hombre: la República no está compuesta por criollos, indios y mestizos, como con gran amor por los matices y respeto por la naturaleza heteróclita del mundo colonial especificaban las Leyes de Indias, sino por hombres, a secas. Y a solas.

La Reforma es la gran Ruptura con la Madre. Esta separación era un acto fatal y necesario, porque toda vida verdaderamente autónoma se inicia como ruptura con la

familia y el pasado. Pero nos duele todavía esa separación. Aún respiramos por la herida. De ahí que el sentimiento de orfandad sea el fondo constante de nuestras tentativas políticas y de nuestros conflictos íntimos. México está tan solo como cada uno de sus hijos.

El mexicano y la mexicanidad se definen como ruptura y negación. Y, asimismo, como búsqueda, como voluntad por trascender ese estado de exilio. En suma, como viva conciencia de la soledad, histórica y personal. La historia, que no nos podía decir nada sobre la naturaleza de nuestros sentimientos y de nuestros conflictos, si nos puede mostrar ahora cómo se realizó la ruptura y cuáles han sido nuestras tentativas para trascender la soledad.

9. Poem, Como Duele

One of the earliest meditations on Malinche and her meaning published by a Chicana in the United States. This narrative explores Malinche's fate and her abilities to negotiate difficult and competing cultural demands. It also grapples with the violence of colonization—in history, in Mexico and in the United States. The history it evokes is the intertwined history of indigenous and Chicana people, with Malinche as the figure who binds the Aztec past to the 20th-century present.

Source: Sosa-Riddell, Adaljiza. "Como Duele." 1973. In *Infinite Divisions: An Anthology of Chicana Literature*. Edited by Tey Diana Rebolledo and Eliana Rivero. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1993. First published in *El Grito*, Berkeley, CA.

Como Duele

Adaljiza Sosa-Riddell

Ese, vato, I saw you today
en Los y Sacra
en Santa Barbara, Sanfra
and everywhere else.
You walked, Chicano chulo,
eagle on your jacket,
y "carnales y carnalas,"
y "Que Viva la Raza."

But where were you when
I was looking for myself?
As if I didn't know.
Where the MAN and
all his pendejadas
sent you,

To Dartmouth, Los Angeles City College,
Barber's School, La Pinta,
Korea, and Vietnam; too many of you

returned wrapped como enchiladas
in red, white, and blue.

A Chicano at Dartmouth?
I was at Berkeley, where,
there were too few of us
and even less of you.
I'm not even sure
that I really looked for you.

I heard from many rucos
that you
would never make it.
You would hold me back;
From What?
From what we are today?
"Y QUE VIVA"
Pinche, como duele ser Malinche.

My name was changed, por la ley.
Probrecitos, they believed in me,
That I was white enough
to stay forever,
that I would never find you again.

I found you, Chicano,
but only for a moment,
Never para siempre.
Temilotzin died the morning after,
Malinche.
It's too late.
The world does not wait
for indecision,
neither do Chicanos.

And mis pobres padres
taught me
not to hurt
others too much.
Malinche, pinche,
forever with me;

I was born out of you,
I walk beside you,
bear my children with you,
for sure, I'll die

alone with you.

Perhaps I died before,
when I said good-bye
al barrio y al Cruiser.
He went to road camp,
por grifo y peleonero.
While I was saved—
for what?

Pinche, como duele ser Malinche.
Pero sabes, ese,
what keeps me from shattering
into a million fragments?
It's that sometimes,
you are el hijo de la Malinche, too.

10. Poem, La Malinche

A well-known Chicana poem about Malinche. Tafolla took inspiration from the famous 1967 poem of the Chicano movement, “*Yo Soy Joaquín*,” but re-writes from an explicitly feminist perspective. The poem addresses the scene of European colonization, charting Malinche’s fate—as conquered woman, traitor, invincible survivor. Tafolla heightens the tension between traitor and survivor, raped slave and mother of *la raza* by writing as if Malinche herself was recounting her own history. Since none of Malinche’s 16th-century words have survived, the poem lends Malinche both an indomitable personality and powerful voice; she becomes a living figure, to be reckoned with in the present, and not merely a haunting ghost from the past.

Source: Tafolla, Carmen. "La Malinche." 1978. In *Infinite Divisions: An Anthology of Chicana Literature*. Edited by Tey Diana Rebolledo and Eliana Rivero. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1993. First published 1978 in *Canto al Pueblo: An Anthology of Experiences* by Texas: Penca Books.

La Malinche **Carmen Tafolla**

Yo soy la Malinche.

My people called me Malintzín Tenepal
the Spaniards called me Doña Marina

I came to be known as Malinche
and Malinche came to mean traitor.

they called me—*chingada*
Chingada.
(Ha—¡Chingada! ¡Screwed!)

Of noble ancestry, for whatever that means,
I was sold into slavery by MY ROYAL FAMILY—so
that my brother could get my inheritance.

...And then the omens began_a god, a new civilization, the downfall of our empire.
And *you* came.
My dear Hernán Cortés, to share your "civilization"—to play a god, ... and I began to
dream . . .
I *saw*
and I *acted*.

I saw our world
And I saw yours
And I saw_
another.

And *yes*—I helped you—against Emperor Moctezuma
Xocoyotzín himself.
I became Interpreter, Advisor, and lover.
They could not imagine me dealing on a level
with you—so they said I was raped, used,
chingada
¡Chingada!

But I saw our world
and your world
and another.

No one else could *see*
Beyond one world, none existed.
And you yourself cried the night
the city burned
and burned at your orders.
The most beautiful city on earth
in flames.
You cried broken tears the night you saw
your destruction.

My homeland ached within me
(but I saw *another*).

Mother world

a world yet to be born.
And our child was born ...
and I was immortalized *Chingada!*

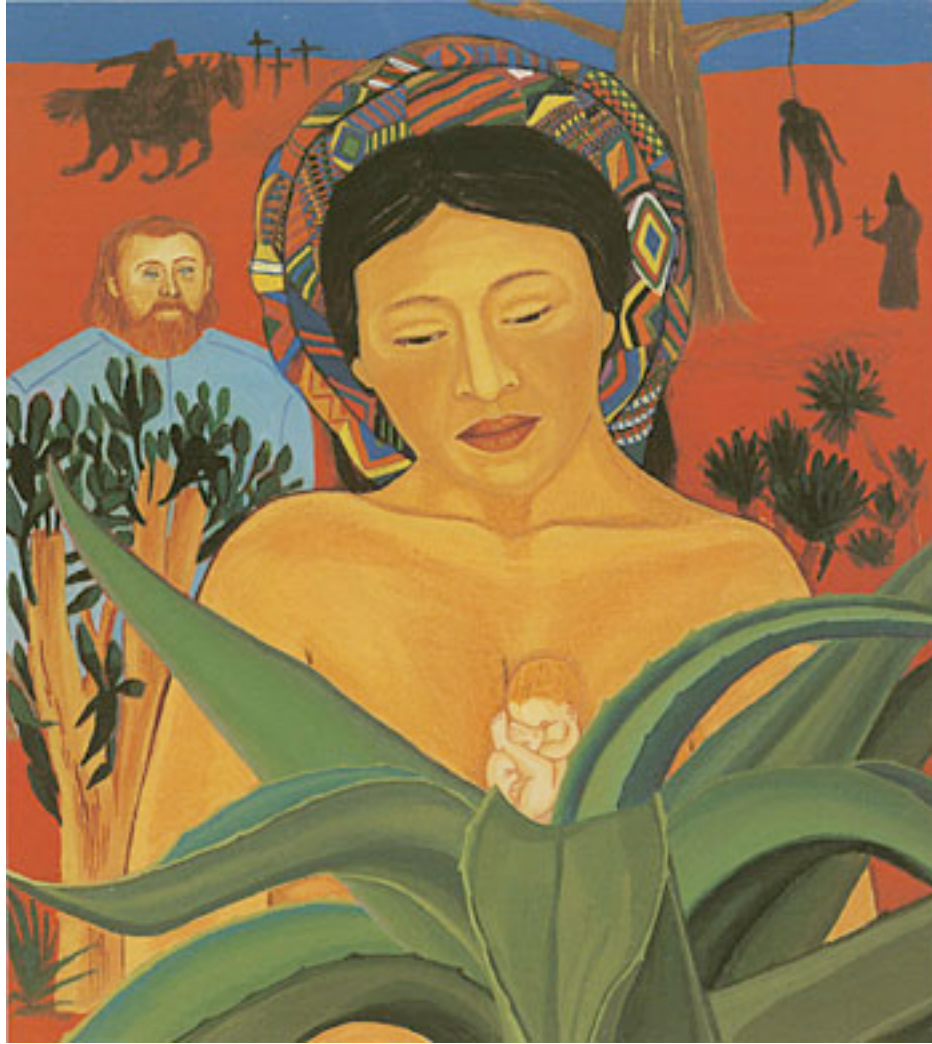
Years later, you took away my child (my sweet
mestizo new world child)
to raise him in your world
You *still* didn't see.
You *still* didn't see.
And history would call *me*
Chingada.

But Chingada I was not.
Not tricked, not screwed, not traitor.
For I was not traitor to myself_
I saw a dream
and I *reached* it.
Another world.....
la raza.
La raaaaa-zaaaaa ...

11. Painting, Santa Barraza

A representation of Malinche painted by a renowned Chicana visual artist and teacher from Texas. It depicts the beautiful, life-giving Malintzin, is a tiny image, crafted on metal, and meant to evoke *ex-voto* and other devotional images from Mexico. Malinche appears as a beautiful young woman with her gaze turned down so that she does not meet our eyes. Behind her appear references to the Spanish conquest, the introduction of Christianity, and violence of both. While it does not deny the horrors of Christian conquest, it paints a world where beauty and violence co-exist.

Source: Barraza, Santa. "La Malinche." Oil paint on metal, 8 x 9". Private Collection (USA), 1991.



12. Sculpture, Jimmie Durham

A sculpted figure by an internationally-recognized Native American activist, writer and visual artist. The materials chosen by Jimmie Durham create an image of Malinche that seems emptied of life and perhaps not fully human. He stresses the darker, underside of Malinche's history. Her face is half human, half snakeskin. Scrawny legs, made of polyester batting, cannot support the figure. Malinche's torso has no heart, no lungs, yet the bra complicates our understanding—why does Malinche wear this modern undergarment? There is nothing redemptive in Durham's vision—Malinche may wear jewelry and feathers in her hair, but no beauty surfaces, no hope appears.

Source: Durham, Jimmie. "Malinche," Wood, cotton, snakeskin, watercolor, polyester, metal. approx. 66 x 22 x 35". Museum van Hedenaagse Kunst, Ghent, 1988-1991.

