

More Bizarre Rewriting of History (and a Real, yet Much Maligned, Heroine— La Malinche)

by [Guido Mina di Sospiro](#) (January 2024)



El sueño de la Malinche (Malinche's dream)— Antonio Ruíz, 1939

Last year, in the June issue of NER, I wrote a piece about Hollywood's yearning for the [rewriting of history](#), focusing, inter alia, on the outlandish idea of doing a TV series about an *invented* female chess player, self-taught and with substance abuse problems, who manages to defeat, back in the

1950s, a Soviet chess grandmaster. While it didn't happen, the producers seem to imply, let's make believe it did happen.

Hollywood's asininity reached new heights yet when, in the film *The Aeronauts*, based on an amalgam of two real stories, one of the two leading characters is turned into a woman. The true hero of that hot-air balloon record-shattering adventure was Henry Tracey Coxwell, replaced in the film by an invented female character, one Amelia.

The implications of such a replacement are clearly insulting to women, though the asinine filmmakers must have thought they were doing women a favor. Their names are worth mentioning: Tom Harper, as director; Jack Thorne, as screenwriter; Todd Lieberman and David Hoberman as producers. This remarkable quartet—Tom, Jack, Todd and David—must have a combined IQ of –25, on a good day, that is. Why are wokesters so intellectually modest? I suppose it must have much to do with the inherent nature of Marxism: misapplied dialects aiming at persuading the layperson that history really boils down to a simple yet continuing class conflict and that in the future there will be a triumphant classless society. Anyone who thinks differently is against science, of course, and must therefore be eliminated for the good of society. Reductionism of such a drastic sort finds very fertile soil in simple minds: they become convinced of having grasped the secret, of being possessed of the ultimate explanation and, of course, of having become first-rate intellectuals whose role it is to facilitate in every possible way the establishment of the Socialist International, the old name for what today is known as the New World Order. In the US class consciousness has been substituted by identity politics, but it is the same mechanism. Indeed, the black person who votes republican in the US is akin to the *Lumpenproletariat*, which Marx himself defined as the proletarian who lack class awareness, and therefore must be eliminated, as he would be of no help to the cause.

The four above-mentioned mentally challenged filmmakers, that remarkable quartet, should have known that there are plenty of female scientists to make films about. And I am still waiting for a series, about, say, Lavinia Fontana, the first female career painter in history who, well over four centuries ago, rose above the prejudices of her time, and was very well regarded and successful. But above all, La Malinche, of all historical female characters, should be rescued from the slanderous limbo in which she dwells to this day.

Who is La Malinche? She was, at the time of the Conquest of Mexico, a teenager of Nahua descent yet a slave (a *tlacotli*, not a human being but an object) to the Mayas who became Hernán Cortés's chief interpreter, as well as negotiator. She also became his woman, and in time gave him a child, Martín, whom Cortes recognized—one of the first *mestizos*. Incidentally but not so much, both Cortés and Malinche understood early on that the *mestizaje*, the mixing of races, was a way for different people to coexist.

Yet La Malinche has a very bad reputation—that of a traitor to her own people, first of all. An facile accusation to level, especially by those who do not know her historical context.

Of noble origin, La Malinche was born in a Nahua family, hence her mother tongue was Nahuatl, the same spoken by Moctezuma II. Yet at age four she was sold by her mother, who had been widowed and had remarried, to slave traders. She eventually ended up among a tribe of Chontal Mayas in the town of Potonchán, in Tabasco. There, along with other slave girls, she was at the disposal of the local cacique, Ocho León, who would pet her constantly, touching her yet-to-develop breast in a sensual manner. The Mayas did not penetrate pre-pubescent girls because they valued their virginity and reserved it for later, when such children would have become women. It was a matter of time.

La Malinche became fluent in the local language. When Cortés

confronted the Mayas and won a battle in which the latter suffered a great number of casualties, the Maya leader presented the Spaniards with various gifts: food, gold, and twenty enslaved young women, among which Malinche. While nineteen of them had had their cranium deliberately deformed during their infancy, and they had been also made to become cross-eyed (both a deformed skull and being cross-eyed were deemed signs of beauty by the Mayas), Malinche, not having been born a Maya, had not received such a treatment, and had come to consider herself ugly. The Spaniards, on the other hand, saw her as the only beautiful girl of the lot, and Cortés initially gave her to one of his captains, Alonso Hernández Puertocarrero, a cousin of his. To be clear, in the midst of that eventful expedition, she immediately became Puertocarrero's concubine.

Her life, thus far, had been a series of personal disasters, although her noble origin had promised an entirely different destiny. Malinche's circumstances changed completely when, at San Juan de Ulúa, the Spaniards encountered Moctezuma's emissaries, who spoke Nahuatl. The expedition's official interpreter had become Jerónimo de Aguilar, a Franciscan friar who had been a prisoner of the Mayas and had learned their language before being freed by Cortés. But he could not understand Nahuatl. So the emissaries of Moctezuma would speak Nahuatl to Malinche, who would translate into Maya for Aguilar, and the latter would translate into Castilian for Cortés and his captains. Suddenly Malinche's importance had become paramount. So much so that Cortés took her away from Puertocarrero and made her stay with him. A year later, Malinche had become fluent in Castilian too, and Aguilar's talents were no longer required. She could have betrayed the Spaniards before they marched on Tenochtitlan, as the Mexica secretly tried to persuade to do. But she was loyal to the end to Cortés, and an invaluable factor in the negotiations that she conducted on his behalf with all the peoples that at first were foes of the Spaniards, but then, once defeated, became

their allies against the universally hated Mexica.

I have read all I could find about Malinche, and I must say there isn't much. One particularly painful little book is *La Malinche. La esclava indigena que alcanzó su libertad* (La Malinche. The indigenous slave who achieved her freedom), by José René Cruz Revueltas. It is painful because the historian tries to emancipate La Malinche, but the bias he grew up with in his native Mexico eventually has the better of him. Indeed, there is a word in Mexican Castilian, *Malinchismo*, that has come to mean a social complex that indicates preference for what is foreign and rejection of what is native to the country, which affects from the individual to the whole nation. It has also been described as a symptom of national self-hatred or ethnic inferiority complex—by whom, I wonder? An army of chauvinist historians whose combined IQ must be similar to that of the remarkable filmmaking quartet? Why, the accusation of *Malinchismo* is plainly absurd.

First of all, Mexico did not exist, so there was no country for La Malinche to betray. It sounds like that joke about the general who, after losing a battle, asked his captain: "Why did you not fire the canons as I had ordered?" "Because, sir, there were no cannons to fire."

Second of all, she had been treated appallingly by her own people: her mother, first and foremost, then the slave merchants and the Mayas. She was barely a child and then a teenager.

Then there is another factor, which you will not find in ordinary textbooks about the conquest of Mexico (or rather, of what would become Mexico centuries later): after the Spaniards defeated the Tlaxcalans in a series of battles, the latter became their allies against the Mexica and presented the Spanish captains with many young women from the aristocracy as brides. None of them ever wanted to go back to their native people, a recurring theme with all the peoples Cortés first

conquered then forged an alliance with: the predicament of women was so appalling among the natives, even if they were of noble origin, that they much preferred becoming the wives of Spanish captains. Evidently Malinche found Cortés much preferable to a Maya cacique who spent his time petting her as a slave who thought she was ugly because her cranium had not been deformed and because she was not cross-eyed.

When Cortés's army and his allies finally entered Tenochtitlan, the former were overwhelmed by its beauty and grandeur; in their eyes it was better than Seville and even Naples, at the time two of Europe's most populous and vibrant cities. But there was a ghastly undercurrent: all the pyramids they saw were, as they discovered, slaughterhouses. The eminently cannibalistic peoples of what is now Mexico killed and ate tens of thousands of human beings every year. Among the Mexica there were, in fact, fattening pens in which children were kept and fattened as they waited to be sacrificed to the psychotic gods of their pantheon. The central theme of one of the Brothers Grimm's most wicked story, *Hansel and Gretel*, was routine among the Mexica, indeed adopted on an industrial scale. The Spaniards, fierce warriors though they were, had none of that savagery, and La Malinche, as well as all the brides donated to Spanish captains, must have realized that.

At the time of the arrival of the Spaniards, La Malinche was an enslaved teenager who, as a child, had been sold by her own mother to slave traders. As it transpired, in the eyes of the Spaniards she was pretty, and clearly intelligent. She did not betray anyone; if anything, it was her native people who betrayed her, and then the Mayas, who paid no heed to her noble birth and kept her as a slave. Her talent for languages and her negotiating skills were hugely welcomed by Cortés, and she made the most of the situation. As a couple, they gave rise to the modern world.

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