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Malinche and Inca Garcilaso de la Vega: the dynamics of cultural contact and the role of the intermediary in early colonial Spanish America

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Introduction

The first important action Hernán Cortés undertook upon landing in the New World was to search not for gold, but for an interpreter. Malintzin¹ was a local Nahuatl (Aztec) slave girl who, given as a gift to Cortés, was to become his main translator. It has been argued that without Malintzin, or Malinche as she is known now, Cortés would almost certainly have been killed or forced to turn back.² Bernal Díaz del Castillo, a Spanish chronicler who took part in the conquest of Mexico alongside Cortés, wrote that ‘Doña Marina was a person of great importance’, and that without her, ‘we could not have understood the language of New Spain and Mexico’.³

Malinche was more than just an interpreter, however - she was also Cortés’ mistress. She was to bear him a son, Martín, one of the first *mestizos* (of mixed Spanish and Indian parentage) in Spanish America. In 1982, the Mexican government erected amid great controversy a statue in Mexico City of the country’s ‘first’ family, consisting of a sixteenth century conquistador, an Indian woman, and their *mestizo* child.⁴ Even though *mestizaje* (the process of miscegenation) serves as the foundational myth of the supposedly *mestizo* nation of Mexico, there has always been great discomfort with the notion.⁵ Reflecting on the condition of Mexican identity in his collection of essays entitled *El Laberinto de la Soledad (The Labyrinth of Solitude)*, the Mexican writer Octavio Paz saw the ‘paradigm’ couple of Malinche and Cortés as the ‘emblematic’ encounter of the conquest.⁶ Paz expressed the widely held belief that Malinche was *la chingada* (the ‘duped one’, or the ‘violated one’),

¹ Doña Marina was the name given to her by the Spanish; she is nowadays referred to as Malinche or La Malinche. Malinche is a corruption of the Nahuatl word ‘Malintzin’ which is itself a corruption of the Spanish name Marina. Malintzin was the name given to her by the Nahuatl, after she had been christened Marina by the Spanish. There was no letter "r" in the Nahuatl alphabet, so the letter "l" was used instead for it, and "tzin" was added as a sign of respect. Thus Malintzin was equivalent to Doña Marina, Malinche’s Christian name after she was baptized. For further examination of the derivation of the name, see J. D. Chaison, ‘Mysterious Malinche: A Case of Mistaken Identity’, *Americas*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (Apr., 1976), p. 514

² C. Townsend, *Malintzin’s Choices: An Indian Woman in the Conquest of Mexico* (Albuquerque, 2006), p. 6

³ B. Díaz del Castillo, *The Conquest of New Spain*, J. M. Cohen (trans.) (Harmondsworth, 1963), pp. 86-7

⁴ C. C. Chorba, *Mexico, from Mestizo to Multicultural* (Nashville, 2007), p. 1

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2

⁶ O. Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude: Life and Thought in Mexico*, L. Kemp (trans.) (London, 1967), p. 77

and that the Mexican ‘battle cry’ of ‘*Viva México, hijos de la chingada!*’ (Viva Mexico, offspring of the violated one!) signified the ‘sarcastic humiliation of the mother’⁷ – the mother who ‘opened up’ Mexico to the Spanish and betrayed her country.

The intermediary is an extremely useful category in the colonial world,⁸ as it allows us to see past the traditional dichotomy of the conqueror and the indigenous – the binary of the ‘Janus-faced discourse of the nation’⁹ – and is the essential first step in exploring the contours of cultural *mestizaje*. This methodological approach necessarily focuses on the ‘marginal figures’ of cultures. As Serge Gruzinski argues in his work on ‘man-gods’ in the Mexican highlands,

Even if their [marginal figures] representativeness is most limited, it remains true that only these individual experiences enable the historian to reconstruct the hazards of the trial and error experienced in an acculturation...to analyse a dynamic that is generally obliterated by the static description of a symbolic system or of a mentality.¹⁰

In short, Gruzinski posits that ‘case studies’ of people on the ‘edges’ of cultures, especially those that ‘navigate’ between them, are the only way to explore the issues associated with cultural contact. This is because they allow the historian to gain a perspective outside of the ‘static symbolic systems’.¹¹ In fact, Gruzinski argues that these ‘solid blocks’ of cultural systems that historians have traditionally been happy to identify ‘eliminate all kinds of elements that play crucial roles: not only the exchanges and intersection...but [also] the go-betweens’.¹²

This dissertation will enter into the theoretical debate on cultural contact. Two main schools dominate this debate. The idea of ‘transculturation’ dictates that when

⁷ Paz, *Labyrinth*, pp. 69-71

⁸ S. B. Suárez, ‘Perspectives on *Mestizaje* in the Early Baroque: Inca Garcilaso and Cervantes’, in N. Spadaccini and L. M. Estudillo (eds.), *Hispanic Baroques: Reading Cultures in Context* (Nashville, 2005), p. 189

⁹ H. K. Bhabha, ‘Introduction: Narrating the Nation’, in H. K. Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration* (London, 1990), p. 3

¹⁰ S. Gruzinski, *Man-gods in the Mexican Highlands: Indian Power and Colonial Society, 1520-1800*, E. Corrigan (trans.) (Stanford, 1989), p. 5

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-6

¹² S. Gruzinski, *The Mestizo Mind: The Intellectual Dynamics of Colonisation and Globalisation*, D. Dusinger (trans.) (New York, 2002), pp. 22-3.

cultures come into contact for a prolonged period a ‘new’ culture is born;¹³ the theory of ‘discursive heterogeneity’ argues that many ‘discursive systems’ can coexist independently, not presupposing a harmonious ‘synthesis’ as transculturation does.¹⁴ This dissertation will combine the two, by arguing that the manifestation of this ‘transcultured’ new culture is the *mestizo*, but that the *mestizo* is also a construction of many ‘discursive systems’. The *mestizo* or intermediary is not *just* part of a ‘new culture’, nor *just* a collection of different discourses within the ‘old’ culture – they are able to move between cultures freely. In this sense, this dissertation will support Angel Rama’s departure from Ortiz’s ‘transculturation’ theory by attributing agency to the intermediary themselves.¹⁵ The intermediary will therefore be seen as a potentially dynamic force within cultural contact. The presence of an ‘intermediate persona’ is crucial to this interpretation; that is to say, the adoption of values and culture dependent on social interaction and situation. Through the sources, an exploration of ‘intermediate personas’ and the colonial go-between will be able to shed light on the ways in which the intermediary was a fluid, dynamic figure rather than a passive recipient of cultural hegemony.

Debates on the form and pattern of cultural contact are long-running. Historians and anthropologists have tried in various ways to best describe how different cultures ‘blended’ in Spanish America. One of the major problems has been the vocabulary of contact: words such as ‘hybrid’, ‘syncretic’, ‘mestizaje’, ‘crossbreeding’, ‘mixing’, ‘miscegenation’, ‘fusion’, ‘acculturation’, and ‘transculturation’ are all vague descriptions, each preferred by a different author or different historiographical trend.¹⁶ Indeed, terms such as ‘biological’ and ‘cultural’ *mestizaje* presuppose the existence of distinct and ‘pure’ races and cultures, which oversimplifies the process of cultural contact. The Spanish that came to the New World were not a unified nation, as each conquistador owed allegiance to his region, town, local saint, and lord.¹⁷ Similarly, and perhaps more obviously, there was no

¹³ Developed by Fernando Ortiz, the Cuban anthropologist and historian. See F. Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, H. de Onís (trans.) (New York, 1947)

¹⁴ See J. A. Mazzotti, ‘Mestizo Dreams: Transculturation and Heterogeneity in Inca Garcilaso de la Vega’, in R. B. St. George (ed.), *Possible Pasts: Becoming Colonial in Early America* (Ithaca, 2000), pp. 132-40

¹⁵ Mazzotti, ‘Mestizo Dreams’, p. 134

¹⁶ Gruzinski, *Mestizo Mind*, p. 19

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 25

universal ‘Indian’ in America; a point especially pertinent to this dissertation, which will be looking primarily at Mexico and the Andes/Peru. These two American regions were inhabited by different races, cultures and civilisations, speaking a multitude of different languages and worshipping different gods. Thus, as Gruzinski argues, dichotomous explanations are not useful in describing the process of *mestizaje*.¹⁸ This is why the idea of an ‘intermediate persona’ is a more sophisticated tool for looking at ‘cultural contact’.

This dissertation will argue that Malinche was the ‘supreme instance of the go-between’,¹⁹ and as such use her to explore the dynamics of *mestizaje*. Until the last three or four decades, writers such as Octavio Paz have equated the unequal Cortés/Malinche relationship with the origins of *mestizaje*.²⁰ In the 1990s, the Mexican government attempted to incorporate its multiethnic population into an official national identity, by promoting the notion of a multicultural nation rather than the old, dualistic image of the Mexican *mestizo*, which portrays the indigenous and the Spanish as opposing, even conflicting, halves of a homogenous whole.²¹ These issues exist because of the ‘foundational trauma of the conquest’²² – precisely because the Cortés/Malinche ‘paradigm’ has been seen as the founding dominant/submissive relationship, the idea of a harmonious and inclusive *mestizaje* as the foundation of Mexico is undermined. In seeing Malinche as a go-between, rather than as the embodiment of a dualistic Spanish/Indian *mestizaje*, this dissertation will evaluate the process of cultural contact.

Feminist *chicana* writers from the 1980s onwards have argued that perhaps Malinche was not entirely victimised, and that she was resourceful, intelligent survivor.²³ Whilst *chicana* feminist theory approaches the rehabilitation of Malinche

¹⁸ Gruzinski, *Man-gods*, p. 17

¹⁹ S. Greenblatt, *Marvellous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Oxford, 1991), p. 145

²⁰ Chorba, *From Mestizo*, pp. 161-2

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 53-4

²² F. Ortega, ‘Trauma and Narrative in Early Modernity: Garcilaso’s “Comentarios Reales” (1609-1616)’, *MLN*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Mar., 2003), p. 398

²³ The definition and translation of *chicana/o* is a subject of great debate, but the general sentiment refers to people born in Mexico who live in the U.S.A., but still have strong cultural ties to Mexico. The term *chicana/o* is often used in reference to politically active writers/intellectuals, starting with the Chicana/o student movements of the 1960s and 1970s. The term *chicana* is especially linked in this essay to the *chicana* feminist movement of the 1970s and 1980s. See V. L. Ruiz, ‘Morena/o, blanca/o y café con leche: Racial Constructions in Chicana/o Historiography’,

from an obvious ideological position, the reaction against the ‘traitor/whore’ school of historiography is nevertheless valid. There was no ‘Mexico’ to betray, and as the sources show, her success and ability as Cortés’ translator portray her as a very able negotiator and intermediary. Malinche is, however, a silent historical figure. She left not one trace of her own thoughts or deeds, and the only picture we get of her is through the writings of others, primarily the conquistadors themselves. The Spanish chroniclers who wrote about Malinche all had their own agendas, and usually wrote about events years after they happened, whilst back in Spain.²⁴ Most of them tell us that Malinche was a willing and co-operative ally who, according to Bernal Díaz, ‘would rather serve her husband [Juan Jaramillo] and Cortés than anything else in the world’.²⁵ The diaries and chronicles of the Spanish, argues the historical theorist Michel de Certeau, were examples of ‘a writing that conquers...[that] use the New World as if it were a blank, “savage” page’ on which Western desire will be written.²⁶ As sources for analysing the way Malinche actually acted and conceived of her position within different cultures, there are issues. This dissertation will use two different but closely linked methodologies to explore the way Malinche negotiated these cultures.

The cultural contingencies and mindsets of the authors of these sources affect the way Malinche is presented. Is it not therefore possible to ‘reach that distant and perhaps lost heritage’?²⁷ The first way in which this dissertation will look at Malinche’s situation is by analysing the perspectives and epistemologies of the Spanish chroniclers, in order to get a better picture of her. Although this hermeneutical ‘stripping away’ of cultural factors contingent on the authors is not a strictly empirical process, the way Malinche is described, the roles that she fulfils, and the way these descriptions change over time can be analysed. In this way, it is possible to ‘read between the lines’, and get closer to the reality of what Malinche actually said and did. Nevertheless, because this analysis alone would tell the

Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos, Vol. 20, No. 2 (Summer, 2004), pp. 344-7. For an overview of *chicana* feminist writings on the subject of Malinche, see R. Romero and A. N. Harris (eds.), *Feminism, Nation and Myth: La Malinche* (Houston, 2005)

²⁴ The Spanish chronicles in which she is found are: Díaz, *Conquest*; H. Cortés, *Letters from Mexico*, J. H. Elliott (ed. and trans.) (New Haven, 1986); F. López de Gómara, *Cortés: The Life of the Conqueror by His Secretary*, L. B. Simpson (ed. and trans.) (Los Angeles, 1965)

²⁵ Díaz, *Conquest*, p. 86

²⁶ M. de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, T. Conley (trans.) (New York, 1992) xxv

²⁷ Gruzinski, *Man-gods*, pp. 3-4

historian little about Malinche as an intermediary, another method will be used to both complement and inform this analysis of the Spanish chroniclers' writings.

The *Royal Commentaries and General History of Peru* by Inca Garcilaso de la Vega (1539-1616), the famous Peruvian *mestizo* author, will be used to provide a comparative framework for looking at Malinche as a cultural intermediary.²⁸ This method will be employed because Garcilaso himself was another such intermediary and 'translator of cultures', and was the first indigenous writer to write about the Indian past.²⁹ The *Royal Commentaries* is seen by many as one of the first 'American classics',³⁰ a history of the Incas 'inspired with a social purpose',³¹ that is to say, its underlying aim is to vindicate the indigenous traditions of the Andes and the Inca past.³² This subjectivity has traditionally brought the *Royal Commentaries* to the centre of the 'history versus fiction' debate,³³ but the factual accuracy of the work does not concern this dissertation. Despite the fact that Garcilaso was not explicitly talking about the Indian experience of colonialism throughout both volumes, there is a 'visible mental template' throughout the *Royal Commentaries*.³⁴ These rhetorical devices, style, and argument of the books allow analysis of Garcilaso's cultural position as a *mestizo* in the colonial period. Much like Malinche, he has been called the 'incarnation of the tragic rift in colonial society',³⁵ a *mestizo* able to move between cultures. In the *Royal Commentaries*, Garcilaso designs a narrative that simultaneously expresses sympathy for his Spanish heritage, and admiration for his

²⁸ Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, *Royal Commentaries of the Incas and General History of Peru*, H. V. Livermore (trans.), 2 vols. (Austin, 1966). The *Royal Commentaries* was published in two parts, in 1609 and 1616-1617. The first part contains nine books, the second part contains eight, and each of those 'books' is divided further into chapters. Henceforth in footnotes RC, part, book number:chapter number, page number eg. RC, II, VII:VI, p. 1331

²⁹ Gómez Suárez de Figueroa, as he was known before he adopted his father's name, was the son of the conquistador Garcilaso de la Vega, and of the Inca princess Isabel Chimpu Occllo, a granddaughter of the emperor Tupac Inca Yupanqui. D. A. Brading, *The First America: The Spanish Monarchy, Creole Patriots, and the Liberal State 1492-1867* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 255. For an overview of Garcilaso's life, see D. A. Brading, 'The Incas and the Renaissance: The Royal Commentaries of Inca Garcilaso de la Vega', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (May, 1986)

³⁰ H.V. Livermore, 'Introduction', in RC, I, xv-xvi

³¹ Ibid., xxvi

³² M. Zamora, *Language, Authority, and Indigenous History in the Comentarios Reales de los Incas* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 3

³³ For a brief overview of the debate, see D. de Armas Wilson, *Cervantes, the Novel, and the New World* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 193-6

³⁴ Mazzotti, 'Mestizo Dreams', p. 138

³⁵ N. Wachtel, *Vision of the Vanquished: The Spanish Conquest of Peru through Indian Eyes, 1530-1570*, B. Reynolds and S. Reynolds (trans.) (Hassocks, 1977), p. 160

ancestors.³⁶ Because he wrote about Indian society, from a *mestizo* perspective, whilst living in Spain (where he spent most of his life), this dissertation will show that a close textual analysis of the work allows it to be seen as a documentation of a *mestizo* mindset by a mestizo himself.

The *Royal Commentaries* is a ‘product of a colonised subject and cultural go-between: it is a construction as richly mixed as the Inca [Garcilaso] himself’.³⁷ Malinche has been viewed, as we have seen, as arguably the most important cultural go-between of the early colonial period. There are several useful links between Garcilaso and Malinche that justify this comparative approach, despite the differences in their lives in space and time. The most important link between Malinche and Garcilaso de la Vega is that Malinche exemplifies the initial ‘trauma’ of the Spanish conquest of America; taken from her people to become a tool of the conquerors, and the concubine of their chief; to become *la chingada*, the raped one, and thus the manifestation of the violence of the conquest. Garcilaso’s *Royal Commentaries* was a reflection on this trauma, a ‘mediated and accumulative reflection of the experience of catastrophe’.³⁸ Francisco Ortega argues that ‘the traumatic loss is at the origin of the text’,³⁹ and in Garcilaso’s attempt to validate his Indian origins within a European Renaissance literary style, it is possible to see his reasons for doing so. The defeat and cruel treatment of his royal lineage, the collapse of the Inca Empire and destruction of Andean society, and the ‘de-authorising’ practices that ‘inferiorised’ *mestizos* and Indians led to Garcilaso needing to ‘dramatise’ and chronicle these powerful events.⁴⁰ In this way, the *Royal Commentaries* is the best tool for analysing the processes at work in the cultural mediation of Malinche; Malinche embodies the violence of the conquest, which is then described from an Indian/*mestizo* perspective by Garcilaso. Although Garcilaso should not be seen as a mouthpiece or substitute for Malinche’s silence, the issues of cultural contact raised by him can then be used to re-evaluate Malinche’s experience through the Spanish sources.

³⁶ Suárez, ‘Perspectives’, p. 188

³⁷ de Armas Wilson, *Cervantes*, p. 200

³⁸ Ortega, ‘Trauma’, p. 397

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 401

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 396-8

Whilst Malinche was on the most basic of levels a translator of languages, Garcilaso de la Vega was also a translator: ‘as an American humanist... Garcilaso sets out to describe, to “translate” for his readers, the lost Inca Empire of Tahuantinsuyu [its pre-conquest name]’.⁴¹ Writing in the most eloquent Renaissance Spanish, Garcilaso incorporated indigenous elements into European discourse, and in so doing engaged in a process of cultural negotiation and translation. As the Peruvian historian Raul Porras Barrenechea has argued, ‘In [Garcilaso] the two conflicting races are founded, united in the fruitful embrace of *mestizaje*’.⁴² This ‘foundational power’ can be seen in both the *Royal Commentaries*, and in Malinche’s interpretative skills: ‘Malintzin does not represent submission... but rather the foundational power of the word – there where languages confronted each other on the battlefield’.⁴³ Through an analysis of how Garcilaso ‘translated’ the Inca past in the *Royal Commentaries*, the role and power of translation for the intermediary can be assessed.

It is possible to illuminate what the sources tell us about Malinche’s translation skills by entering into the historiography of the links between language and colonisation. Gloria Anzaldúa sees ‘taming a language’ as being a strategy of resistance, whereas Antonio de Nebrija sees it as one of control, governance, and colonisation – where does Malinche sit in this?⁴⁴ It has been argued that an intermediary can create cultural space for a different discourse: space for the ‘proliferation of thought that would be able to transgress the boundaries of cultural hegemony’.⁴⁵ In this way, Malinche can also be seen as transcending cultural boundaries. As ‘*la lengua*’ (the tongue) to many of the conquistadors, her role as communicator and the importance that was accorded to her have been argued to transcend both indigenous and Hispanic structures of power.⁴⁶ Whilst *chicana* writers have sought to invigorate Malinche with agency and a penchant for subversion, this dissertation will analyse this issue through the *Royal Commentaries*.

⁴¹ de Armas Wilson, *Cervantes*, p. 196

⁴² En [Garcilaso] se fundan las dos razas antagónicas de la conquista, unidas ya en el abrazo fecundo del mestizaje’. R. Porras Barrenechea, *Antología de Raul Porras*, J. Pucinelli (ed.) (Lima, 1999), p. 88, quoted in Ortega, ‘Trauma’, p. 393. Translation is my own.

⁴³ S. M. Cypess, “‘Mother Malinche’ and Allegories of Gender, Ethnicity and National Identity in Mexico’, in Romero and Harris (eds.), *Feminism*, p. 22

⁴⁴ W. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonisation* (Ann Arbor, 2003), xii

⁴⁵ Suárez, ‘Perspectives’, p. 191

⁴⁶ Cypess, “‘Mother Malinche’”, pp. 17-18

Garcilaso's work has since been used by Latin American revolutionaries such as Tupac Amaru II in 1780 and the liberator José de San Martín, for its understanding and dignifying view of the Indian past.⁴⁷ The ways in which Garcilaso constructed his defence of his Indian roots can be applied to the way in which Malinche conducted herself – in translating, did Malinche also subtly or even unconsciously subvert the dominant imperial culture? Garcilaso's text may be able to present ways in which this form of resistance was possible, which allows a re-evaluation of the Spanish sources in light of this. Resistance and subversion of the dominant culture by Malinche will be analysed through the same process at work in the *Royal Commentaries*.

To take a broader perspective once more, it is necessary to discuss how valuable the insights offered by these two methodological approaches might be. As Malinche left no diaries or letters, it is dangerously easy to project motivations and actions onto her. This is a problem faced by all analyses of non-literate and disempowered peoples.⁴⁸ If Malinche is also used as a symbol or metaphor for cultural intermediaries more generally, however, then alongside her wider themes of cultural contact can be explored. Going beyond the boundaries of victim/victimiser, and assessing how dynamic the role of the intermediary was, the theories of transculturation, heterogeneity and the 'intermediate persona' can be illuminated. Whether Malinche and Garcilaso were able to freely 'shift' their identities, or whether their voices and deeds were drowned out by imperial hegemony, the theories of the role of the intermediary in cultural contact can be tested.

The first chapter will look at the link between Malinche and Garcilaso regarding the 'trauma' of the conquest. An analysis of the conquistadors' writings on Malinche can allow us to see what her role was in the conquest itself, and through Garcilaso's reflections on the violence and disruption of the invasion and occupation, it will be possible to examine how the cultural intermediary, and specifically Malinche, negotiated this upheaval. The second chapter will focus on the 'translation' that both Malinche and Garcilaso undertook. Even in 1492, Antonio de Nebrija wrote that language had always been the partner of empire; in translating cultures, the

⁴⁷ Mazzotti, 'Mestizo Dreams', p. 146

⁴⁸ Townsend, *Malintzin's Choices*, p. 5

intermediaries could transcend borders and boundaries, create their own discourses within defined parameters. Finally, in chapter three, the 'resistance' to the dominant power that was possible in the cultural 'space' will be investigated. With regards Malinche, *chicana* historiography has traditionally attempted to see her as an 'active' participator in subversion. Garcilaso too is seen as trying to vindicate the Indian past by exaggeration and glorification of the Inca Empire. This dissertation will seek to discover whether these links can be made, and whether Garcilaso and Malinche were indeed conscious or unconscious 'subversives'.

Chapter I

The Trauma of Conquest

The ‘physical and psychic distancing’ of the conquest had profound effects on all involved.⁴⁹ Both natives and Spaniards had to ‘adopt a certain distance’ from their own original milieu; this response to the ‘psychological shock’ of the meeting of cultures was crucial to survival.⁵⁰ These tactics of survival were arguably more important for the intermediary than for anyone else, as the *mestizo* or translator had to be part of different and new cultures all at once. The natives that collaborated with or had been taken by the Spaniards, such as Malinche, very quickly ‘became aware of the precariousness of their situation and the uncertainty hanging over them’.⁵¹ The creation of an ‘intermediate persona’ as a result of the ‘distancing’ becomes especially vital during the upheaval of the initial conquest. As Anya Peterson Royce notes, to ‘survive at all, to get ahead, requires knowledge of the subtleties of institutional structure as well as knowledge of the thoughts and values of the dominant group’.⁵² Malinche certainly ‘got ahead’, as she became arguably the most important woman in Mexico.⁵³

This chapter shall focus on how Malinche negotiated the ‘trauma’ of conquest; that is to say, the ‘tactics’ that she used to find her place in this new colonial order. It will be argued that the need to become a legitimate part of the new society was the most pressing, a need articulated most vehemently by the *Royal Commentaries* of Garcilaso de la Vega. To do this, Malinche used her most important asset – her multilingualism – in order to justify a place in the new order.⁵⁴ Many modern interpretations of Malinche’s role in the conquest cast her as a whore, a

⁴⁹ Gruzinski, *Mestizo Mind*, p. 45

⁵⁰ N. Wachtel, *Vision of the Vanquished*, p. 85; Gruzinski, *Mestizo Mind*, p. 45

⁵¹ Gruzinski, *Mestizo Mind*, p. 40

⁵² A. Peterson Royce, *Ethnic Identity: Strategies of Diversity* (Bloomington, 1982), p. 4

⁵³ Greenblatt, *Marvellous Possessions*, p. 143

⁵⁴ F. Karttunen, ‘Rethinking Malinche’, in S. Schroeder, S. Wood, and R. Haskett (eds.), *Indian Women of Early Mexico* (Norman, 1997), p. 311

traitorous Eve;⁵⁵ even if they are less damning, they still use Malinche and Cortés as the paradigm couple to portray the conquest as a violent rape resulting in the conception of a bastard Mexico'.⁵⁶ It will be argued, with comparative use of the *Royal Commentaries*, that the 'trauma' of the conquest was negotiated by Malinche in such a way that she not only managed to survive, but also to gain the respect of both the natives and the Spanish. She was neither a conniving traitor nor a passive victim, but a pragmatic intermediary who quickly learnt how to alternate between cultures during the upheaval of conquest to her advantage.

Garcilaso de la Vega firmly believed that the answer to the problems caused by the 'shock' of contact and the resulting trauma lay in co-operation between the Spanish and the native population. As a *mestizo*, son of a Spanish conqueror and an Inca princess, it is no wonder that Garcilaso was an advocate of this, as he himself was the offspring of 'co-operation'. What is now known as Garcilaso's *Royal Commentaries and General History of Peru* was originally published in two parts: one devoted to the Incas, the other to the Spanish. The first part is a history of the Inca Empire (hence *Royal Commentaries*) and how it came to rule over much of the Andes; the second 'treats of its discovery and of how the Spaniards conquered it'.⁵⁷ In the very structure of the *Royal Commentaries*, therefore, we can see how Garcilaso tried to explain and reconcile the two 'sides' of the conquest. Most scholars agree that this was Garcilaso's main aim - to legitimate his existence in this new colonial order, through vindication of the Spanish and (especially) the indigenous traditions.⁵⁸ There are countless examples throughout the *Royal Commentaries* where the author waxes lyrical over the achievements of the Inca Empire; for instance, Chapter XXXV in Part I concerns the 'great deeds' accomplished by the king Pachacútec Inca Yupanqui, who:

⁵⁵ For a thorough study of characterisations of Malinche in post-independence Mexican literature, see S. M. Cypess, *La Malinche in Mexican Literature: From History to Myth* (Austin, 1991), chaps. 4-8

⁵⁶ For instance Paz, *Labyrinth*, pp. 66-7

⁵⁷ Title page, *RC*, II, p. 629

⁵⁸ See Aurelio Miró-Quesada Sosa's introduction to a volume of collected essays from the colloquium on Garcilaso in Spring 1996, 'In Remembrance of José Durand, in J. Anadón (ed.), *Garcilaso Inca de la Vega: An American Humanist: A Tribute to José Durand* (Notre Dame, 1998), xiii-xv

governed his empire with such industry, prudence, and fortitude in both peace and war that he not only extended the boundaries of all four parts of the kingdom they call Tahuantinsuyu, but also issued many laws and statutes, which have been willingly confirmed by our Catholic kings, apart from such as refer to the worship of idols and to illicit marriages.⁵⁹

In the Preface to Part I, Garcilaso states that ‘the city of Cuzco... was another Rome in that [the Inca] empire’.⁶⁰ Although he claims that he will ‘make no comparison with other histories divine or human...for all comparisons are odious’,⁶¹ favourable analogies with Rome and the classical tradition abound in the first part of the *Royal Commentaries*.⁶² Both consciously and unconsciously, Garcilaso tried in this way to rehabilitate his mother’s ancestors. Garcilaso was not only born into ‘*el mundo al revés*’ (‘the world turned upside down’, as Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala described early colonial Peru),⁶³ but as a *mestizo* was a marginal figure anyway. He thus had to forge his own difficult path as a *mestizo* in both Peru and Spain; to do this, the vindication of his heritage would vindicate the *mestizo*’s place in colonial society.

Given as a gift to Cortés by the Tabascans (inhabitants of the region of Tabasco), along with nineteen other women and ‘a present of gold...some ornaments in the form of lizards...two masks of Indian faces...and some other things of small value’,⁶⁴ Malinche found herself in a precarious situation. She had to avoid becoming just ‘loot’, as Bernal Díaz describes local women in Tepoztlán (near Mexico city):

...we attacked before the spies they had posted to watch us could reach them [the inhabitants of Tepoztlan]. Here we found some very pretty Indian women and much spoil, but no Mexicans and none of the male inhabitants of the place⁶⁵

Díaz also describes a conversion he had with a Spanish page who could speak Nahuatl (the Nahua language): ‘I talked to Orteguilla [the page] and asked him to beg Montezuma kindly to give me a very pretty Indian girl...The girl whom he gave to

⁵⁹ RC, I, VI:XXXV, p. 393

⁶⁰ ‘Preface to the Reader’, RC, I, p. 6

⁶¹ RC, I, I:XIX, p. 51

⁶² S. MacCormack, *On the Wings of Time: Rome, The Incas, Spain, and Peru* (Princeton, 2007), pp. 58-9

⁶³ F. Guaman Poma de Ayala, *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno* [1628], J. Murra and R. Adorno (eds), J. L. Urioste (trans.) (Bogota, 1980), III, p. 1025.

⁶⁴ Díaz, *Conquest*, p. 80

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 338

me was one of these [Montezuma's mistresses]'.⁶⁶ Indigenous women were both taken forcefully and received as 'gifts' by the Spanish in the early days of the conquest; there are more brutal examples, such as from Michele de Cuneo, a nobleman of Savona, who wrote in his account of Columbus' second voyage that:

[w]hile I was in the boat, I captured a very beautiful Carib woman, whom the aforesaid Lord Admiral gave to me...I conceived the desire to take my pleasure, but she was unwilling for me to do so, and treated me with her nails in such wise that I would have preferred never to have begun...I took a rope-end and thrashed her well...Finally we reached an agreement such that, I can tell you, she seemed to have been raised in a veritable school of harlots.⁶⁷

Tveztan Todorov points out that de Cuneo's description is merely 'one story out of a thousand',⁶⁸ and Frances Karttunen, in characteristically direct style, asserts that 'doña Marina's inevitable fate was rape, not the making of tortillas. She had absolutely no choice about whether she would be sexually used, and very little control over by whom'.⁶⁹ Malinche was initially nothing more than an 'object of exchange'.⁷⁰

Contrary to some of the twentieth century depictions of Malinche as mere victim, as *la chingada*, 'the duped one', she quickly overcame adversity. Most sixteenth century representations show Malinche as an extremely important figure, and even powerful, from very early on in the conquest. Francisco López de Gómara, Cortés' 'secretary', mentions Jerónimo de Aguilar's (a Spaniard who had learnt some Mayan after being shipwrecked in the Yucatán⁷¹) linguistic inadequacies once the conquistadors had arrived in the land of Nahua speakers (de Aguilar spoke a Yucatec Maya language), which

vexed Cortés exceedingly...but he soon recovered from his vexation when he heard one of the twenty women [Malinche] given to them in Potonchán speaking to the governor's men [Teugilli, governor of Chalchiucuecan, known to the Spanish as San Juan de Ulúa] and understanding them very well, as if they were of her own

⁶⁶ Díaz, *Conquest*, p. 254

⁶⁷ Quotation from a letter from Michele de Cuneo to Hieronymo Annari, 15th Oct. 1495, reproduced in C. Columbus, *Journals and Other Documents on the Life and Voyages*, S. M. Morison (ed. and trans.) (New York, 1963), p. 212

⁶⁸ T. Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*, R. Howard (trans.) (New York, 1984), p. 48

⁶⁹ Karttunen, 'Rethinking Malinche', pp. 310-11

⁷⁰ Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions*, p. 143

⁷¹ López de Gómara, *Cortés*, pp. 31-2

language. So Cortés took her aside with Aguilar...and he told her that he would like to have her for his interpreter and his secretary...⁷²

It did not take long, therefore, for Malinche to be ‘transformed on the spot from [Alonso Hernández de] Puertocarrero’s drudge to Cortés’ pearl without price’.⁷³ Within a month Cortés had taken her back from Puertocarrero, and from then on ‘never let Malinche out of his sight’.⁷⁴ Drawings in the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala* and Bernardino de Sahagún’s *Florentine Codex*, which will be analysed in greater depth in Chapters II and III, show that Malinche very rarely left Cortés’ presence during any encounter with natives; she stands by his side, either just the two of them, or with the massed ranks of Spanish soldiers behind them (See Figs 1-7).⁷⁵ Bernal Díaz comments that ‘Cortés always took her with him’,⁷⁶ and Cortés himself writes that she ‘travelled always in my company after she had been given to me as a present.’⁷⁷ In all of the main chronicles written by conquistadors themselves, no other native collaborator assumes as much importance as Malinche does.

As an act of pragmatic survival, Malinche’s collaboration with the Spanish was her link between the source of power (Cortés and the Spanish) and herself. This collaboration was extremely active, and she frequently went above and beyond what she was asked to do, as shown in one example by Bernal Díaz:

Now a certain old Indian woman, a *Cacique*’s [local leader] wife who knew all about the plot and trap that had been prepared [by the Cholulans], came secretly to Doña Marina...[w]hen Doña Marina heard her story, she said to the old woman, with her usual quickwittedness: Oh, mother, I am grateful to you for telling me this! I would come with you at once, but I have no-one here whom I can trust to carry my clothes and golden jewels...⁷⁸

⁷² López de Gómara, *Cortés*, pp. 56-7

⁷³ Puertocarrero was one of Cortés’ lieutenants. Quote from Karttunen, ‘Rethinking Malinche’, p. 302

⁷⁴ M. Restall, *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest* (New York, 2003), p. 83

⁷⁵ See B. de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex, Book 12: The Conquest of Mexico*, A. J. O. Anderson and C. E. Dibble (eds. and trans.) (Santa Fe, 1955); the two relevant images from the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala* are reproduced from Karttunen, ‘Rethinking Malinche’, p. 293; T. B. Kranz’s dissertation, ‘The Tlaxcalan Conquest Pictorials: The Role of Images in Influencing Colonial Policy in Sixteenth-Century Mexico’ (UCLA, 2001), <http://whp.uoregon.edu/Lockhart/Kranz.pdf>

⁷⁶ Díaz, *Conquest*, pp. 85-6

⁷⁷ Cortés, *Letters*, p. 376

⁷⁸ Díaz, *Conquest*, pp. 196-7

Thanks to her ‘usual quickwittedness’, Malinche was able to uncover the plot, and after extracting more information from the old Indian woman, ‘burst into the room where Cortés was and told him all about her conversation with the Indian woman.’⁷⁹ Malinche’s actions, and apparent devotion to Cortés, are not those of a national traitor. As Frances Karttunen quite correctly points out, ‘her consistency could be viewed as an exercise in total loyalty. The problem for Mexican national identity after Independence was that the object of her loyalty had been a conquistador’.⁸⁰ It can also be argued that Mesoamerican Indians as a whole had no sense of themselves as ‘Indians’ united against the Spanish; they identified themselves as Tlaxcalteca, Cholula, Mexica, and so on. Malinche no longer belonged to any of these, so she pinned her loyalty and hopes of survival to the Spanish, for which, as we have seen, she was ‘rewarded’ by her important position and Cortés’ attention.

As mentioned earlier, Garcilaso’s response to ‘*el mundo al revés*’ was to try to reconcile the cultures of his parents in an act of self-legitimation as a *mestizo*. Like Malinche’s justification through the act of translation, Garcilaso’s act of cultural intermediation and reconciliation through his writing is an example of what Roberto González Echevarría calls the ‘mediation between the source of power and the individual’.⁸¹ Included in Part II of the *Royal Commentaries* is a chapter entitled ‘The author quotes authorities for what he has said; and in case he is not believed, takes pride in what the historians say about his father’.⁸² In this section he tries to clear his father’s name and thereby ingratiate himself with the Spanish crown. Garcilaso’s father was supposed to have aided the rebel Gonzalo Pizarro in the battle of Huarina in 1547 by giving him his horse when Pizarro’s died.⁸³ The Royal Council of the Indies, however,

studied the evidence I presented about all this, and they were convinced of the solidity of my case, [but when] a member of the court, Licentiate Lope García de Castro...said to me: ‘What reward do you expect His Majesty to grant you when your father did as he did at the Battle of Huarina and gave Gonzalo Pizarro that great victory?’ And although I replied that this was false witness...[w]ith this they

⁷⁹ Díaz, *Conquest*, p. 197

⁸⁰ Karttunen, ‘Rethinking Malinche’, p. 304

⁸¹ R. González Echevarría, *Myth and Archive: A Theory of Latin American Narrative* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 71

⁸² *RC*, II, V:XXIII, pp. 1152-5

⁸³ For Garcilaso’s explanation of these circumstances, see *RC*, II, ch. XXII, pp. 1149-50

dismissed my claims and closed the door against others I might have made since for my own services.⁸⁴

Garcilaso was driven by a desire to fit into colonial society; the above quote shows the bitterness of rejection from Spanish society as a *mestizo* with a disgraced family name. ‘I took refuge in these nooks of poverty and solitude...I spend a quiet and peaceful life, like a man disillusioned who has taken leave of this world and its changes’.⁸⁵ Marginalised and disillusioned, Garcilaso ‘thus tried in his writings to recapture two utterly lost worlds: his mother’s and his father’s’.⁸⁶ This act of writing, and the discourse in the *Royal Commentaries* that he created, was the mediation between his precarious position and the source of power – the Spanish crown. Although the trauma that Garcilaso faced was in many ways different to Malinche’s experiences, the physical and mental dislocation and ‘distanciation’ meant that they both implemented ‘tactics of survival’; they used their abilities – translation and mediation – to fit into their new situation. Garcilaso’s *Royal Commentaries* articulates Malinche’s navigation through the trauma and shock of conquest. His attempt to incorporate the indigenous into the new Spanish colonial order, and the actual act of creating this discourse, reflects Malinche’s initial position and her subsequent actions – she tried to deal with a traumatic situation by using her abilities, and acting as a mediator and intermediary for the ‘source of power’.

So far, we have seen what problems the intermediary faced during the ‘trauma’ of sixteenth century Spanish America and the conquest; we have also seen what Malinche’s responses were, and used Garcilaso to shed light on what motivations shaped the intermediary’s actions. It is now necessary to examine how Malinche, and intermediaries more generally, could implement their ‘strategies of survival’ effectively.

The ‘act of naming’ is integral to the formulation of an ‘intermediate persona’, and the *Royal Commentaries* articulates this *mestizo* process. Garcilaso was ‘conscious that naming within the colonial context was a highly charged political

⁸⁴ *RC*, II, V:XXIII, pp. 1153-4

⁸⁵ *RC*, II, V:XXIII, p. 1154

⁸⁶ J. Anadón, ‘Preface’, in Anadón (ed.), *Garcilaso*, viii

act',⁸⁷ and as we shall see, his various methods of 'self-identification' through naming allow the critical reader to see the 'intermediation' of this 'persona'. Throughout the *Royal Commentaries*, the textual Garcilaso 'becomes' different people in order to move between cultures and argue different issues. On the very first page of Part I, Chapter I, he writes that the New World 'was lately discovered by us'.⁸⁸ In using 'us', Garcilaso starts the *Royal Commentaries* by allowing Iberian and European readers, his main audience, to identify with him 'as one of them'. Later on, however, Garcilaso persona widens to include a large range of different identities; for instance, Garcilaso claims he is an indigenous Peruvian when he is criticising the Quechua (the main Inca language) translation skills of Pedro Cieza de León (an early Spanish chronicler of Peru): 'As a Spaniard, he did not know the language as well as I, who am an Indian and an Inca.'⁸⁹ In a further example, Garcilaso seems to be neither Spanish nor Indian, but just a Christian: 'I was born eight years after the Spaniards conquered my country, and as I have said, was brought up there till I was twenty: thus I saw many of the things the Indians did in the time of their paganism and shall relate them and say that I saw them'.⁹⁰ Important here is Garcilaso's use of '*the* Spaniards' and '*the* Indians', thereby removing himself from either tradition, but still calling Peru 'my country'. In the three examples above, Garcilaso's 'intermediate persona' shifts freely between cultures, in order to legitimate what he is saying. Claiming to be a Spaniard at the beginning of Part I helps to validate the whole work to the European majority of his readership; 'becoming' an Inca gives him authority to comment on Quechua translation; being neither of these, as in the third example, gives Garcilaso the historical detachment but patriotic interest which (in his own words) allows him 'merely [to] act as a commentator.'⁹¹ So it seems that Garcilaso uses his *mestizo* persona to 'become' different people, and move between cultures, in order to justify what he is writing, and justify being 'part' of the culture that he is addressing at that

⁸⁷ Ortega, 'Trauma', p. 408; also see R. Adorno, 'Bautizar al Inca: el acto de poner nombre en el Perú', in *Asedios a la heterogeneidad cultural*, J. Antonio Mazzotti and J. Zevallos Aguilar (eds.) (Philadelphia, 1996), pp. 102-4

⁸⁸ *RC*, I, I:I, p. 9

⁸⁹ *RC*, I, II:II, p. 70

⁹⁰ *RC*, I, I:XIX, p. 50

⁹¹ *RC*, I, I:XIX, p. 51

moment. As Bridget Kevane puts it, Garcilaso's 'situational identity is inextricably bound to the persistent need to authorise the self in multiple contexts.'⁹²

Alternation between cultures dependant on Kevane's idea of 'situational identity' (Silvia Suárez uses the term 'social interaction') is precisely how an 'intermediate persona' functions, as the intermediary is *aware* of their capacity to shift identities.⁹³ The way in which Garcilaso uses his 'persona' in the text can help to understand how these processes affected Malinche. As Bernal Díaz writes, 'when she [Malinche] became a Christian [she] took the name of Doña Marina'.⁹⁴ As with Garcilaso, this 'renaming' is crucial to understanding the 'intermediate persona'; in the Spanish accounts, she is always referred to as Doña Marina or Marina; however, for the Nahuatl writers and artists of the *Florentine Codex* and the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, she is always Malintzin, the honorific of her Nahuatl name.⁹⁵ She, like Garcilaso, used her 'intermediate persona' to move between cultures, which are represented by the names she uses. There are many instances in the Spanish chronicles in which she is mentioned when this alternation becomes visible. For example, before Malinche was approached by a native woman who told her of the aforementioned Cholulan plot,

Wanting further information about this whole plot and what was going on, Cortés told Doña Marina to take more *chalchihuites* to the two *papas* who had been the first to speak, since they were not afraid, and to ask them in the friendliest way to come back with her, for Malinche [in this instance, Malinche means Cortés⁹⁶] wanted to speak to them again. Doña Marina returned to the *papas* and talked to them as she well knew how; and, persuaded by the presents, they came back with her at once.⁹⁷

Doña Marina, as translator, 'becomes' an Indian in front of the two *papas* (elders, the senior men of the *cacique*); now 'Malintzin', in her most charming and persuasive Nahuatl, persuades these men to do what she wants, 'as she well knows how'. The meeting between Cortés and Montezuma at Tenochtitlán is the most high profile

⁹² B. Kevane, 'A Revisionist View of El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega as a Transcultured Renaissance Writer 1', *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (2003), p. 36

⁹³ Suárez, 'Perspectives', pp. 188, 202n

⁹⁴ Díaz, *Conquest*, p. 80

⁹⁵ For instance de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, xii, p. 45. For an examination of the importance of the honorific -tzin in the *Florentine Codex*, and an overview of where the name Malintzin is used in native sources, see Karttunen, 'Rethinking Malinche', pp. 295-6

⁹⁶ This is an issue that shall be returned to later.

⁹⁷ Díaz, *Conquest*, p. 194

example of this behaviour. The drawing from the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala* of this event puts Malinche in between Montezuma and Cortés (see Fig. 1); even if her physical presence is exaggerated by the *Lienzo*, she was Cortés' main translator and the intermediary between the two at the meeting. The most symbolic conversation of the conquest, depended to an extent on Malinche's ability to 'move' between cultures. As Nicolás Wey-Gómez argues:

La Malinche, ausente de sí misma, habla a través de Doña Marina, se ve a sí misma a través de Doña Marina la cristiana, sierva y esposa del español, antes adoradora de 'idolos' (La Malinche, absent from her own self, speaks through Doña Marina, and sees herself through Doña Marina the Christian, servant and wife of the Spanish and former worshipper of 'idols')⁹⁸

She was depended on to translate not just words, but alternately 'become' Doña Marina and Malintzin for Cortés and Montezuma.

⁹⁸ N. Wey-Gómez, '¿Donde esta Garcilaso?: La oscilacion del sujeto colonial en la formacion de un discurso transcultural', *Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana*, Año 17, No. 34 (1991), p. 12. Translation is my own.

Chapter II

Cultural Transcendence and Translation

Translation is not a matter of words only: it is a matter of making intelligible a whole culture.⁹⁹

Sixteenth century chronicles and codices that mention Malinche focus on her role as a translator, as the irreplaceable *lengua* of the conquest. In Chapter I of this dissertation, we have seen that Malinche used her multilingualism as a tool for personal survival during the trauma of conquest, much in the same way that Garcilaso de la Vega's *Royal Commentaries* justified his place in the unstable colonial order. This chapter will examine the dynamics of these 'tools', and show how the 'cultural space' inhabited by intermediaries was negotiated through the medium of translation. As Patricia Seed has argued, '[I]n addition to being a military and political invasion, the Spanish conquest of the New World also entailed a conquest of language and a conquest by language.'¹⁰⁰ The importance of language and translation in the conquest must not be underestimated, and this chapter shall argue that in the process of translation between cultures 'interactions lose their neatness'.¹⁰¹ In this way, the role of the interpreter was very much a fluid, dynamic one. It will be shown that the translation of intermediaries such as Malinche and Garcilaso de la Vega took place outside of what Gruzinski calls 'static symbolic systems',¹⁰² i.e. cultures, and adhered to Walter Mignolo's concept of translation, 'which places the accent in the spaces in-between rather than in the two poles implicit in the notion of bilingualism'.¹⁰³

It is easy to see how Malinche could be regarded as an 'acculturated' instrument of the Spanish conquistadors, a one-dimensional figure. It has been argued that contemporary chroniclers saw Malinche as a symbol of their dominance, 'of male

⁹⁹ A. Burgess, 'Is Translation Possible?', *Translation: The Journal of Literary Translation*, Vol. 12 (1984), p. 4

¹⁰⁰ P. Seed, "'Failing to Marvel": Atahualpa's Encounter with the Word', *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (1991), p. 12. Emphasis is from original.

¹⁰¹ G. Lamana, *Domination Without Dominance: Inca-Spanish Encounters in Early Colonial Peru* (Durham, 2008), p. 30

¹⁰² Gruzinski, *Man-gods*, pp. 3-6

¹⁰³ Mignolo, *Darker Side*, xvi-xvii; See also Bhabha, 'Introduction', p. 3

dominance of the female, of desire for the land newly conquered'.¹⁰⁴ Some modern interpretations, such as Octavio Paz's Cortés-Malinche 'root paradigm' for Mexican male-female relations,¹⁰⁵ imply a sense of 'passivity' (another translation of *la chingada* is 'the acted-upon'), and also a lack of creativity and agency. Hernán Cortés' letters, for instance, frequently give the impression that he barely needed or used an interpreter. Even at his meeting with Montezuma, Cortés does not mention a translator:

Mutezuma came to greet us and with him some two hundred lords...When at last I came to speak to Mutezuma himself I took off a necklace of pearls and cut glass that I was wearing and placed in around his neck...he sat on another throne...and addressed me in the following way...I replied to all he said as I thought most fitting, especially making him believe that Your Majesty was he whom they were expecting.¹⁰⁶

There are dozens of examples throughout the chronicles where conversations between Spaniards and Indians are recorded without mentioning that Malinche was interpreting, and the impression is often given that the two sides understand each other perfectly. One historian has likened this to old Hollywood movies, 'in which different languages are reduced to English spoken in different accents.'¹⁰⁷ Although Bernal Díaz is the commentator who mentions Malinche by far the most, there are still occasions where he too 'forgets' about the language barrier: he recalls the (supposed) conversation between Malinche and her estranged parents, despite having no way of knowing what they were saying:

When Doña Marina saw her mother and half-brother in tears, she comforted them, saying that they need have no fear. She told her mother that when they had handed her over to the men from Xicalango, they had not known what they were doing...Then she sent them back...saying that God had been very Gracious to her in freeing her from the worship of idols and making her a Christian, and giving her a son by her lord and master Cortés...Even if they were to make her mistress of all the provinces of New Spain, she said, she would refuse the honour, for she would rather serve her husband and Cortés than anything else in the world. What I have related here I know for certain and swear to.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Cypess, *Malinche*, p. 9

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 98

¹⁰⁶ Cortés, *Letters*, pp. 86-7

¹⁰⁷ Restall, *Seven Myths*, p. 82

¹⁰⁸ Díaz, *Conquest*, p. 86

This extended quotation is particularly illuminating in terms of the way the conquistadors saw Malinche as both a woman, and translator. Díaz had no way of knowing whether she said any of this; he could have completely made it up, or Malinche could have explained what happened, but lied about what she said, or indeed she could have recounted verbatim to Díaz what she said to her family – as Karttunen points out, we cannot know.¹⁰⁹ What this passage does show, however, is how Díaz and the conquistadors saw Malinche as the ‘ideal’ translator. Before Malinche was given to the Spanish, Cortés had used two other local translators, who were christened Melchior and Julian.¹¹⁰ The conquistadors, however, were ‘afraid that if we let Melchior and Julian go off they would go back to their own country, which was not far away’.¹¹¹ Indeed, shortly after the arrival of Jerónimo de Aguilar ,

[a] messenger told us that the Indian Melchior whom we had brought from Cape Catoche... had fled to them the night before. He had advised them that if they attacked us by day and night we should be beaten, for we were few in number. So it turned out that we had brought an enemy with us instead of a friend.¹¹²

López de Gómara called Melchior ‘uncouth’¹¹³, whereas Malinche (and Aguilar) were ‘faithful interpreters’.¹¹⁴ Melchior was not ‘acculturated’ enough, and thus ultimately untrustworthy; Matthew Restall argues that ‘the quest for interpreters and their relative acceptance into colonial society was a fundamental and ubiquitous Conquest pattern’.¹¹⁵ The extract from Díaz detailing Malinche’s speech to her family, whether true or not, shows us that she was *seen* as entirely ‘acculturated’ and accepted into colonial society; that is to say, the Spanish believed that she was removed from her own culture, religion, and family, and would rather serve the Spanish captain than anything else in life. From the Spanish sources, therefore, it would seem that Malinche’s role as a translator was one-dimensional, and subject to Spanish hegemony.

¹⁰⁹ Karttunen, ‘Rethinking Malinche’, p. 299

¹¹⁰ López de Gómara, *Cortés*, p. 28; Díaz, *Conquest*, p. 28

¹¹¹ Díaz, *Conquest*, p. 28

¹¹² Díaz, *Conquest*, p. 73. By this time, Julian had already died. Díaz, *Conquest*, p. 58

¹¹³ López de Gómara, *Cortés*, p. 28

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 57

¹¹⁵ Restall, *Seven Myths*, p. 24

An interpretation of the *Royal Commentaries* that sees the work as a re-evaluation of Spanish acculturation, however, can give the historian a different view of Malinche's position as translator and intermediary. As we saw in Chapter I, one of Garcilaso's motives for writing the *Royal Commentaries* was to justify his own place in a chaotic society. Another important motive, however, was his desire to 'translate' the history of the Incas as he saw it. One of Garcilaso's major narratives, for instance, was the exploration of the 'three ages in the history of Peru'.¹¹⁶ Garcilaso argued that the Incas were essentially monotheistic and thus, having civilised the Andes 'in what we call the second period',¹¹⁷ prepared it for the arrival of an equally monotheistic Christianity. Nathan Wachtel points out that this is at the root of Garcilaso's aforementioned comparisons between the Incas and the Romans; just as the Roman Empire derived its justification for uniting the ancient world and preparing the barbarian races for Christianity, the Incas had unified the Andean world,¹¹⁸ and 'taught them [pre-Inca Andeans] their idolatry and bade them hold and worship the Sun as their chief deity...he [the first Inca monarch, Manco Cápac] undeceived them about the lowness and vileness of their many gods'.¹¹⁹ In this way, many have argued that 'the *Royal Commentaries* possess[es] the dream-like quality of a Renaissance fable, reminiscent of *Utopia* or *City of the Sun*', and that the 'three stage' interpretation of Andean history shows that Garcilaso's 'fondest dream was of a Holy Inca Empire' of *mestizos*.¹²⁰ It is here where we see that Garcilaso's heterogeneous identity both allows and prompts him, from within the Renaissance rhetoric of 'providential harmony', to create something entirely new.

Garcilaso's act of translation allows him to design his own narrative¹²¹ – an interpretation of Inca history to suit his *mestizo* status – because of his flexible cultural identity. He justifies his interpretation of Inca history because of his upbringing, by reminding the reader that 'I was brought up among these Indians... Thus I learned the deeds and conquests of each Inca'¹²², but still situates his narrative

¹¹⁶ Wachtel, *Vision*, p. 161

¹¹⁷ *RC*, I, II:I, p. 67

¹¹⁸ Wachtel, *Vision*, pp. 160-1

¹¹⁹ *RC*, I, II:I, p. 67

¹²⁰ Brading, 'Incas', pp. 9, 23; Mazzotti, 'Mestizo Dreams', pp. 143-5; Zamora, *Language*, p. 3

¹²¹ Suárez, 'Perspectives', p. 188

¹²² *RC*, I, I:XIX, pp. 49-50

within a European Renaissance style.¹²³ Garcilaso's near unique position gives him the authority and space to create new narratives. An interesting example of this is in his description of the infamous meeting between the Spanish and Incas at Cajamarca on the 16th of November 1532. Garcilaso rues the miscommunication between the two sides; the incendiary incident where a book, given to the Inca King Atahualpa by the Spanish, ended up on the ground and supposedly sparked off the massacre, is said by Garcilaso to have been an accident, and neither side's fault. 'They [Spanish historians] bear false witness against the king [Atahualpa] as well as the priest [Fray Vincente Valverde], for he neither threw the book down, nor even took it in his hands'.¹²⁴ As Patricia Seed points out, the arrogance ascribed to Atahualpa by other accounts of this meeting is absent from the *Royal Commentaries*;¹²⁵ rather, he presents the Inca as unfailingly courteous, and even submissive.¹²⁶ Garcilaso laments what he sees as the misunderstanding, instead of blaming anyone:

Thus all Spaniards and Fray Vincente de Valverde and the Indian Felipillo [the interpreter] are absolved from blame that might be imputed to them for the badness of the interpretation, since today when there are so many priests and religious studying and toiling to learn their language...there is still so much difficulty in understanding one another... What would have happened then when none of this existed?¹²⁷

The impression that is given by Garcilaso is that of lost opportunity, a missed chance to incorporate the indigenous with the European, for a harmonious *mestizaje* for which he longs. Whether Garcilaso's account is accurate or not is immaterial here; the reader is instead able to glimpse his mindset. In the chapters surrounding the incident, he bemoans the lack of intercultural communication, 'we repeat that the inadequacy of the interpreter was literally as we have said',¹²⁸ and that there was 'negligence on both sides' when it came to speaking each others' languages.¹²⁹ Garcilaso even writes that Atahualpa himself said 'you should have at least granted me one request, that of

¹²³ Zamora, *Language*, p. 38

¹²⁴ *RC*, II, I:XXV, p. 688

¹²⁵ Seed, "Failing to Marvel", p. 22. The other accounts she compares the *Royal Commentaries* to, with regard Atahualpa's character, are those of Francisco de Jerez, Hernando Pizarro, and Miguel Estete.

¹²⁶ *RC*, II, I:XX, pp. 675-6

¹²⁷ *RC*, II, I:XXIII, p. 684

¹²⁸ *RC*, II, I:XXIII, p. 682

¹²⁹ *RC*, II, I:XXIII, p. 683

addressing me through a more skilled and faithful translator'.¹³⁰ It can be argued that Garcilaso saw the encounter this way because he was an intermediary who *could* reconcile the different cultures, and this act of miscommunication frustrated him. Garcilaso was an intermediary, a *mestizo* and translator; he blames neither side, for then he would have to hold one side of his family responsible; his regret is instead directed at the cultural mediation, arguably because his own perspective is that of a translator 'in-between' the two cultures, and therefore could move between them and mediate far more effectively. It is clear that Garcilaso sees the existence of three distinct parties at Cajamarca: the Spanish, the Incas, and those who failed to intermediate and interpret. For Garcilaso, the interpreter is at once separate from the two cultures, but should also be able to move between the two.

The *Royal Commentaries* can illuminate Malinche's role as translator. Garcilaso's writings, his 'translation', allowed him to promote the idea of harmony between Spanish and Indians, to create 'new' *mestizo* narratives, and also, as in the example from Cajamarca, express his own feelings and situation between cultures. Sources that portray Malinche's translation can be re-analysed, bearing in mind the creative and expressive possibilities that Garcilaso has shown. The *Florentine Codex*, a native account of the conquest prepared by Bernardino de Sahagún in Tlatelolco in 1555,¹³¹ and the sixteenth-century Tlaxcalan pictorial account of the conquest known as the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, combine indigenous elements and European artistic influences,¹³² and contain the only existing near-contemporary depictions of Malinche. In the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, which admittedly chose to focus less on the early battles and more on later co-operation and alliance, Malinche plays a central role and is shown as a major figure in many of the illustrations.¹³³ The biggest and most detailed image of her, from the *Lienzo*, shows her interpreting for Cortés at his first encounter with Montezuma (See Fig. 1). Just like Garcilaso's narrative of the Cajamarca encounter, this image gives the impression that there are three separate entities at the meeting, with Montezuma on the left, Cortés, seated on the right, both

¹³⁰ *RC*, II, I:XXIV, p. 685

¹³¹ See an introductory chapter to the *Florentine Codex* by C. E. Dibble, 'Sahagún's Historia', in Bernardino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex, Part 1: Introduction and Indices*, A. J. O. Anderson and C. E. Dibble (eds.) (Salt Lake City, 1982)

¹³² S. B. Schwartz (ed.), *Victors and Vanquished: Spanish and Nahuatl Views of the Conquest of Mexico* (Boston, 2000), pp. 123-6

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 123

with their massed armies behind them; and Malinche, in the middle, accorded as much importance in the drawing as the Aztec and Spanish leaders. In another from the *Lienzo*, there are only three figures in the image, with Malinche on the left, Cortés in the middle, and Montezuma on the right (Fig. 2). The *Florentine Codex* too places Malinche between the Spaniards and Indians when interpreting, in all five drawings she appears in (Figs. 3-7). In one, Malinche is portrayed as the centre of attention, with speech ‘glyphs’ emanating from Cortés and Montezuma and reaching Malinche from either side (Fig. 5) – a representation of a separate entity and mediator. In all depictions of her, she is wearing traditional Nahua dress, with her hair coiled ‘in the distinctive horns of the proper Nahua matron’.¹³⁴ The confusing image of a woman in Nahua dress but with the name Doña Marina again contradicts the impression of a wholly hispanicised ‘mouthpiece’ of the conquistadors. These illustrations show that Malinche was not seen by the artists (nor their Spanish masters) as a purely acculturated instrument of the Spanish. Just like the *Royal Commentaries* gives a different perspective on the role of translator and intermediary, the illustrations in the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala* and *Florentine Codex*, although definitely influenced by Europeans and European art, allow us to gain a different view to that of the major Spanish chroniclers. Malinche as a translator plays an integral part in the pictorial representations of Spanish-Indian contact, and is metaphorically (and literally) portrayed as ‘outside’ the boundaries of ‘Spanish’ and ‘Indian’.

The Spanish chronicles represent Malinche as ‘the principal agent of the circulation of cultural representations elsewhere blocked in the Spanish perception of their experience’,¹³⁵ and upon closer inspection can show that Malinche did transcend both Spanish and Indian structures of power through her translation. Bernal Díaz’s *The Conquest of New Spain*, the source that mentions Malinche by far the most, shows this most clearly. One important facet of Malinche’s ‘decentred’ position outside Spanish and Indian cultures is her gender, as Díaz writes:

Just let me say that Dona Marina, although a native woman, possessed such manly valour...she betrayed no weakness but a courage greater than that of a woman¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Karttunen, ‘Rethinking Malinche’, p. 295

¹³⁵ Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions*, p. 142

¹³⁶ Díaz, *Conquest*, p. 153

Not infrequently does he refer to her as ‘intelligent, and self-assured’,¹³⁷ ‘quite capable’,¹³⁸ ‘brave’¹³⁹, and having ‘quickwittedness’,¹⁴⁰ traits not accorded to any other women, or indeed very often to native men, in any of the major conquest narratives. Díaz also recounts how Malinche ‘was obeyed without question by all the Indians of New Spain’,¹⁴¹ which is corroborated by text from the *Florentine Codex*, in which she is referred to by the honorific ‘Malintzin’: ‘itoca Malintzin tectipac ichan’ (Her name [was] Marina; Tectipac [was] her home).¹⁴² Nahua women were not encouraged to do much more than weave, spin, and cook, and noblewomen in particular led especially sheltered lives.¹⁴³ Thanks to her translation, she transcended both Nahua and Spanish gender values; Díaz could not imagine a woman acting as Malinche did, and therefore had to call her ‘manly’ and displaying greater courage than a woman; she also commanded Indians (on behalf of the Spanish), acted as a translator for Montezuma and Cortés, and found herself in situations that no other woman, Spanish or Nahua, could have.

Garcilaso’s *Royal Commentaries* portray a writing subject ‘much more complex than the traditionally accepted commonplace of the “acculturated” and “harmonious” mestizo’.¹⁴⁴ As we have seen, neither was Malinche merely acculturated or a passive ‘*lengua*’ of the Spanish, but was a figure at once outside the cultures of Spanish and Indian, and also part of each. Unlike Felipillo, the translator at Cajamarca much maligned by Garcilaso for not being able to ‘move’ between cultures, Malinche’s ‘intermediate persona’ was able to switch.

At this point Cortés asked our interpreters why the arrival of these Indians had so agitated the *Caciques*, and who they were; and Doña Marina, who understood perfectly, explained what was happening.¹⁴⁵

Malinche could understand and translate this cultural situation ‘perfectly’, because she was able to use her heterogeneous identity to move between the two. Crucially,

¹³⁷ Díaz, *Conquest*, p. 82

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 123

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 153

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 197

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 86

¹⁴² Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, xii, p. 25

¹⁴³ Cypess, *La Malinche*, pp. 24-5; Karttunen, ‘Rethinking Malinche’, p. 300

¹⁴⁴ Mazzotti, ‘Mestizo Dreams’, p. 142

¹⁴⁵ Díaz, *Conquest*, p. 111

however, she also maintained a distinctive separateness, as a 'third entity' and a cultural *mestizo*, which is so symbolically portrayed in the sixteenth-century drawings.

Chapter III

The Intermediary as Subversive

The move to resurrect Malinche as a model of inspiration rather than condemnation has been a main aim of *chicana* literature since the 1980s.¹⁴⁶ The motivation for this has come from a direct *chicana* identification with Malinche herself, a tie that equates an attack on Malinche with an attack on *chicana* culture.

Any denigrations made against her indirectly defame the character of the Mexicana/Chicana female. If there is shame for her, there is shame for us; we suffer the effects of these implications.¹⁴⁷

It is not surprising, therefore, that *chicana* writers are keen to see Malinche as a prototypical *chicana* feminist, and attribute her with positive qualities that they see themselves as having:

La Malinche embodies those personal characteristics - such as intelligence, initiative, adaptability, and leadership - which are most often associated with Mexican-American women unfettered by traditional restraints against activist public achievement.¹⁴⁸

This rehabilitation of Malinche is clearly, and often intentionally and explicitly, affected by ideological and political contingencies, just as the post-Independence construction of national identity used Malinche as a scapegoat for three centuries of colonial rule.¹⁴⁹ This chapter will look at the historical Malinche, and argue that these literary rehabilitations of Malinche, which form by far the largest body of work about her, do not fully stand up to historical inquiry. Malinche was neither a ‘rebel’, as Brianda Domecq argues, nor a visionary founder of a new race, as Carmen Tafolla would have it.¹⁵⁰ These interpretations do, however, point in the right direction. As an

¹⁴⁶ Cypess, *La Malinche*, p. 145

¹⁴⁷ A. del Castillo, ‘Malintzin Tenepal: A Preliminary Look into a New Perspective’, in *Essays on la Mujer*, R. Sanchez and R. Martinez Cruz (eds.) (Los Angeles, 1977), p. 141

¹⁴⁸ C. Candelaria, ‘La Malinche, Feminist Prototype’, *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Summer, 1980), p. 6

¹⁴⁹ Karttunen, ‘Rethinking Malinche’, p. 297

¹⁵⁰ For a précis of Domecq’s work *Mujer que publica – mujer publica* (México, 1994), see Cypess, “‘Mother Malinche’”, p. 23. Tafolla’s short poem reads: 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. Quoted in R. J. Romero, ‘Foundational Motherhood:

analysis of the *Royal Commentaries* will show, the ‘intermediate identity’ of the go-between allows for a conscious and unconscious strategy of resistance, and even subversion, from ‘within’ the dominant culture. This resistance, contrary to the claims of writers such as Domecq and Tafolla, was not rebellion, nor often explicit in any sense, but more subtle and hidden. As James Clifford has argued, there are many strategies by which the ‘dominated’ can actively negotiate their relationship with the colonising culture, including ‘appropriation, compromise, subversion, masking, invention, and revival.’¹⁵¹ Thus, it depends on what is recognised as resistance,¹⁵² which for Malinche and Garcilaso, could have taken the form of ‘resisting’ acculturation, promoting the survival of certain indigenous cultural elements, and counteracting the force of colonial hegemony. It will also be argued that the intermediary, because of their heterogeneous identity, is especially well placed for subtle resistance ‘from within’, an act which can be highlighted using the *Royal Commentaries*.

Gonzalo Lamana argues that ‘nativelike’ narratives, such as the writings of Garcilaso de la Vega, ‘strategically introduce alterity’, and in so doing move outside of and ‘destabilise the master narrative’.¹⁵³ The ‘cultural space’ that the intermediary occupies, as shown in Chapter II, can thus be used to resist domination and even subtly subvert. Two distinct themes in the *Royal Commentaries* can be argued to be counter-hegemonic: the demonstration of the ‘fundamental complementarity’ of Inca and Spanish-Christian histories,¹⁵⁴ and Garcilaso’s derivation of authority from his Quechua linguistic heritage. The latter theme shall be analysed first.

Garcilaso’s *Royal Commentaries* was not just an interpretation of Inca history, but also a *re*interpretation of existing Spanish histories of the Inca Empire. In his preface to Part I, Garcilaso states that:

Malinche/Guadalupe in Contemporary Mexican and Chicana/Chicano Culture’, in Romero and Harris (eds.), *Feminism*, p. 40

¹⁵¹ J. Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge Mass., 1988), p. 338

¹⁵² L. M. Burkhart, ‘The Native Translator as Critic: A Nahuatl Playwright’s Interpretive Practice’, in Blair St. George, *Possible Pasts*, p. 76

¹⁵³ Lamana, *Domination*, pp. 10-12

¹⁵⁴ Zamora, *Language*, p. 3

It is true that these [Spanish histories of Peru] have dealt with many of the very remarkable achievements of that empire, but they have set them down so briefly that, owing to the manner in which they are told, I am scarcely able to understand even such matters as are well known to me.¹⁵⁵

There are other direct challenges to some of the existing histories: one chapter is entitled ‘Of many gods wrongly attributed to the Indians by the Spanish historians’.¹⁵⁶ Garcilaso emphasised the monotheistic nature of Inca religion, and it formed the basis of his ‘three ages’ theory (as outlined Chapter II of this dissertation). He thus directly confronts the Spanish historiographical establishment, an explicit act of textual ‘resistance’.

Because of these various meanings, the Spaniards, who only understood the first and main sense of ‘idol’, think that the Indians regarded as gods everything they called *huaca* and that the Incas worshipped all these things just as the Indians of the first age had done.¹⁵⁷

Garcilaso refutes the Spaniards’ claims, saying that in the second age ‘the Indians...convinced by the Inca’s arguments...accepted the Sun as their sole god’.¹⁵⁸ Other idols, such as ‘lightning, thunder, and thunderbolts they considered to be servants of the Sun...but they were not considered to be deities, as some of the Spanish historians say.’¹⁵⁹ Garcilaso’s authority for this reinterpretation is based on his ‘interpretative prerogative’;¹⁶⁰ that is to say, his knowledge of the Quechua language. The *Royal Commentaries* is full of phrases that assert Garcilaso’s authority over the Spanish because of his bilingualism. One example, a discussion of the Quechua noun *pacha*, stands out in particular:

The friar said: “But it also means ‘clothes’, ‘utensils’, and ‘house furniture’.” I said: “Yes, but tell me, Father, what difference is there in pronunciation in that case?” He answered: “I don’t know.” I explained: “You are a master of the language and you don’t know that! Well, let me tell you”...This clearly shows how ignorant Spaniards are of the secrets of the language...Consequently many errors and misinterpretations are written.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁵ ‘Preface’, *RC*, I, p. 4

¹⁵⁶ *RC*, I, II:II, p. 75

¹⁵⁷ *RC*, I, II:IV, p. 77

¹⁵⁸ *RC*, I, II:I, p. 68

¹⁵⁹ *RC*, I, II:I, pp. 68-9

¹⁶⁰ Zamora, *Language*, p. 52

¹⁶¹ *RC*, I, II:V, pp. 79-80

Garcilaso's authority thus comes from his Indian side, the indigenous part of his *mestizo* ancestry, something that seems entirely at odds with the structure of power in the colonial order. He inverts the hegemonic colonial relationship by strategically introducing Indian his primacy, and highlights the inconsistencies in Spanish colonial power, and thus counteracts the Spaniards' 'writing that conquers'.

Garcilaso's emphasis on correct translation and use of original sources is the very essence of humanist endeavour.¹⁶² Garcilaso's exegesis of Inca oral history, therefore, has also been affected by his Spanish humanist intellectual side, and the *Royal Commentaries* can be defined as a re-interpretation 'of Inca history in the light of sixteenth-century European humanist ideas'.¹⁶³ Garcilaso's cultural and biological *mestizo* status allowed him to 'subvert' from within accepted European literary and intellectual traditions – if these conventions had not been observed, the *Royal Commentaries* would not have passed the censorship of the Cronista Mayor de Indias. Garcilaso's intermediate identity allowed him to incorporate both Andean and Spanish discourses, and create his own narrative of 'fundamental complementarity',¹⁶⁴ as shown in Chapter II; this vision of harmony, however, can be seen as subversive.

The [Spanish] choirmaster of the cathedral in Cuzco, taking a liking to the Indian songs and music, composed a part-song in the year '51 or '52 for the feast of Corpus Christi...the Indians were delighted to see the Spaniards solemnise the festivity of our God, whom they call Pachacámac (or "him who gives life to the universe"), with their own songs and dances.¹⁶⁵

Garcilaso here portrays the Spanish as 'solemnising' the Inca god, something that might be unthinkable if Garcilaso had not already argued that the Inca monotheism was compatible with, and the platform for, Christianity. It is a wonder that such phrases passed the censors. Arguing for the similarities between the two cultures led Garcilaso to emphasise moments such as these, which insert native practices into the colonial environment, and work towards his vision of harmony.

¹⁶² Zamora, *Language*, p. 57

¹⁶³ Wachtel, *Vision*, pp. 160-1. For further analysis of Garcilaso's humanism, see S. MacCormack, 'The Incas and Rome', in Anadón (ed.), *Garcilaso*, pp. 8-31

¹⁶⁴ Zamora, *Language*, p. 47

¹⁶⁵ *RC*, I, V:II, p. 245

One of the most important examples of Garcilaso's subtle counter-hegemonic project is in his 'reproduction' of a letter from Francisco de Carvajal to his lord, the rebel Gonzalo Pizarro. Carvajal advises Pizarro to:

declare yourself king [of Peru]; and take the government yourself without waiting for another to give it to you...attract the Indians and make them so devoted that they will die for Your Lordship as they would for their Inca kings, take one of their princesses, whichever is closest to the royal line, to wife, and send ambassadors to the forests where the heir to the Incas is and bid him to come forth and recover his lost majesty and state....Now, by restoring it [the land] to the Inca, you are simply doing what you should by natural law.¹⁶⁶

Garcilaso fabricated the text of this letter.¹⁶⁷ Its existence is alluded to, but (tellingly) not reproduced, in two other chronicles,¹⁶⁸ and as such can be seen an example of Garcilaso's usual literary device, which was to put his own ideas into the mouth of his historical characters.¹⁶⁹ In this way, the 'letter' shows how keen Garcilaso was to promote a 'Holy Inca Empire', and subvert the oppressive colonial structure under Francisco de Toledo, Viceroy of Peru, by condoning the creation of an independent and harmonious *mestizo* Peru. The desire for unity is arguably an important motivation for the intermediary, a desire for the reconciliation of their various identities, and the removal of inequality, domination and hegemony. To this end, the dominant culture needed to be subverted, to have elements of the indigenous inserted, for this reconciliation to take place. This form of resistance was the main 'weapon' against 'acculturation' and 'deculturation'.

Malinche can be seen as the manifestation of Garcilaso's project to insert indigenous elements into colonial society. In the same way that Garcilaso's Indian heritage justified his reinterpretation of Spanish histories of the Incas, and lent him his authority and capacity for subversion, the very fact that Malinche was a native gave her power, cultural space, and thus the ability to resist. Her languages, like Garcilaso's mastery of Quechua, were her 'weapons' of resistance, but in a less explicit way. The power Malinche had was the result of her multilingualism, and thus as a result of her Indian heritage. Malinche was Cortés' eyes and ears, and for a

¹⁶⁶ RC, II, IV:XL, pp. 1071-3

¹⁶⁷ Brading, 'Incas', p. 19

¹⁶⁸ Garcilaso cites these as López de Gomara, and Diego Fernández. RC, II, IV:XL, p. 1074

¹⁶⁹ Brading, 'Incas', p. 19-20

significant period of time his only access to the languages of Mexico and the Yucatán. Her limits of knowledge were his limits,¹⁷⁰ an ironic situation indeed; the success of a man who embodied religious, racial, and masculine superiority depended to a large extent on the abilities of a female Indian slave. Díaz points out that Indians actually called Cortés himself ‘Malinche’. ‘[i]n every town we passed through and in others that had only heard of us, they called Cortés Malinche.’¹⁷¹ Díaz explains this, by claiming that:

the reason why he received this name was that Doña Marina was always with him, especially when he was visited by ambassadors or *Caciques*, and she always spoke to them in the Mexican language. So they gave Cortés the name of Marina’s Captain, which was shortened to Malinche.¹⁷²

How Díaz can know this for certain is unclear. Apart from through Malinche herself, it is unlikely he would have been able to discern the derivation of the name. If Díaz was accurate, then Malinche would also have been called ‘Marina’s Captain’ by the natives. Nevertheless, whatever its meaning, the fact that some Indians called Malinche and Cortés by the same name suggests that they saw Malinche as being so powerful, that she was in some way identified with Cortés himself. As Tzvetan Todorov comments, ‘for once, it is not the woman who takes the man’s name’.¹⁷³

The extraordinary situation that Malinche was in, as shown in Chapter II, meant that she transcended both indigenous and Spanish structures of power. It can be argued that this transcendence was in itself a ‘subversion’ of the colonial order. As R. Douglas Cope states, ‘the distinction between Spaniard and Indian, conqueror and conquered, formed the basis of the colonial regime.’¹⁷⁴ Although the early days of the conquest clearly did not constitute an official colonial ‘regime’, Malinche’s very role subverted existing notions of racial ‘*castas*’ and gender boundaries, and in becoming indispensable, she upset the order of things. Malinche becomes almost one of Cortés’ lieutenants:

¹⁷⁰ Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions*, p. 143

¹⁷¹ Díaz, *Conquest*, p. 172

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 172

¹⁷³ Todorov, *Conquest*, p. 101

¹⁷⁴ R. Douglas Cope, *The Limits of Racial Domination: Plebeian Society in Colonial Mexico City, 1660-1720* (Madison, 1994), p. 3

Having decided on the previous day that we would seize Montezuma... Cortés took with him five captains, Pedro de Alvarado, Gonzalo de Sandoval, Juan Velazquez de Leon, Francisco de Lugo, Alonso de Avila, and myself, together with Doña Marina and Aguilar.¹⁷⁵

Nine of the most important Spaniards of the conquest, and an Indian woman, on a dangerous mission to capture the Aztec king; certainly, Malinche had ‘resisted’ and avoided the same fate as other native women taken by the Spanish. Garcilaso’s themes of harmony and reconciliation in the *Royal Commentaries*, and his efforts as a heterogeneous *mestizo* to insert and vindicate indigenous cultural elements within a colonial context, are reflected in Malinche. By being an intermediary for the Spanish, she played a positive role for native culture in terms of agency – her *valued* co-operation, and her son with Cortés, was the sort of *mestizo* interaction advocated by Garcilaso. This agency can be glimpsed in some of the chronicles. For instance, Bernal Díaz’s description of Malinche’s speech to her family can be interpreted in another way:

Thus was it that mother, son, and daughter [Malinche] came together, and it was easy enough to see from the strong resemblance between them that Doña Marina and the old lady were related. Both she and her son were very much afraid of Doña Marina; they feared that she had sent for them to put them to death, and they wept.¹⁷⁶

To reiterate, Díaz had no way of knowing what was going on during this interaction. It can be argued this passage shows that he assumed Malinche was motivated by a desire for revenge on those who sold her into slavery. At the very least, the above excerpt shows that Díaz *considered* that Malinche had the potential for this kind of deed; that Díaz believed Malinche had, or could have had, a hidden agenda, a plan of her own.

In comparison to Garcilaso, however, Malinche did not have the same desire or motivation to ‘subvert’, and so her ‘resistance’ was not primarily against Spanish hegemony. As argued in Chapter I, Malinche’s abilities and role as intermediary were centred on a ‘strategy of survival’, and as such, there was less motivation to act against the colonial forces than is seen in the *Royal Commentaries*. Her resistance

¹⁷⁵ Díaz, *Conquest*, p. 245

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 86

was on a personal rather than ideological level, which is perhaps why she has been seen as a traitor and seductress. Malinche's 'tactics' of resistance were more in the register of some of Clifford's suggestions, such as 'appropriation', 'compromise', 'masking', and 'invention', and were self-advancing rather than explicitly pro-Indian. Garcilaso's *Royal Commentaries* has been seen by 'indigenists' and 'mestizists' as the writings of a 'creole patriot',¹⁷⁷ but Malinche did not see herself as acting against any nation or power. This is at the crux of the negative interpretations of Malinche, because she resisted for herself, rather than on behalf of her 'country'. From the name Malinche has come the neologism *malinchista*, in wide use in the Mexican vocabulary, which denotes someone who is overly affected by or open to foreign (i.e. non-Mexican) influence, and is thus a traitor to Mexico. The historical (rather than symbolic) Malinche, however, had no nation to be a traitor to. Often cited is the aforementioned incident of Malinche's conversation with an old Indian woman: the woman told Malinche about the Cholulans' plan to entrap the Spanish, and Malinche played along, telling her to 'wait here, mother, and I will begin to bring my possessions', so that Malinche could escape with the old woman. Instead, however, Malinche 'burst into the room where Cortés was and told him all'.¹⁷⁸ Malinche was not a Cholulan, nor should she have felt any affinity for any other Mesoamerican people (especially having been sold as a slave by her own kin). Malinche resisted domination insofar as she 'negotiated' a best case scenario for herself – she tried to become the 'best' intermediary, diplomat, and even mistress she could be, so that she would be accorded the most freedom and privileges possible.

¹⁷⁷ See J. Antonio Mazzotti, 'Garcilaso and the Origins of Garcilacism: The Role of the *Royal Commentaries* in the Development of a Peruvian National *Imaginaire*', in Anadón (ed.), *Garcilaso*, pp. 90-3; also David Brading's chapter on Garcilaso, 'Inca Humanist' is under the subheading 'Creole Patriots'. See Brading, *First America*, pp. 55-72

¹⁷⁸ Díaz, *Conquest*, pp. 196-7

Conclusion

French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss has argued that ‘between two cultures, between two living species as close as imaginable, there is always a differential gap and...this differential gap cannot be bridged’.¹⁷⁹ The three chapters of this dissertation have, however, been based on the premise that this ‘gap’ between cultures *was* bridged, by intermediaries such as Malinche and Garcilaso de la Vega. They were able to do this because they were at once part of neither prominent culture, and therefore an effective ‘go-between’, and because their ‘intermediate persona’ could move between the cultures depending on the situation. The first chapter has argued that Malinche, thanks to her intelligence and linguistic ability, avoided the fate that befell many other native women, thanks to her ‘strategy of survival’. This ‘strategy’, as argued in Chapter III, did not entail the passive collaboration so reviled by many post-Independence Mexican commentators, but instead gave her a cultural space and independence unrivalled by any other native woman in the conquest.

The Spanish sources alone cannot paint a full or fair picture of Malinche. Nevertheless, Garcilaso’s *Royal Commentaries* has helped to shed light on Malinche’s motives, actions, and role in the conquest, and two main links can be seen throughout this dissertation. Firstly, the desire for co-operation and harmony was arguably the most important factor for the intermediary. Throughout the *Royal Commentaries*, Garcilaso forwards this agenda:

There should be peace between Indians and Spanish, and neither side should molest the other...that Indians and Spaniards should behave as friends in all their dealings, and aid and succor one another as allies; that the Spaniards should free the Indians they had in chains, and not in future shackle them, but treat them freely¹⁸⁰

The other theme is that of flexibility. The ‘intermediate identity’ of the ‘go-between’ allowed them to be part of different cultures at different times. Nowhere is this better reflected than in the ‘naming’ of the intermediary. Garcilaso’s name in Peru was

¹⁷⁹ Quote from Claude Lévi-Strauss’ seminar on identity, published as *L’Identité* (Paris, 1977), p. 322, quoted in Gruzinski, *Mestizo Mind*, p. 4

¹⁸⁰ *RC*, II, II:VI, pp. 744-5. This is another instance of Garcilaso using ‘reported’ speech to put his words into others’ mouths.

Gómez Suárez de Figueroa. Under that name he travelled to Spain, settled there, and fought for Philip II against the Moors at Alpujarras. Soon after, he changed his name to Garcilaso de la Vega, and many years later, he added 'Inca' to his name.¹⁸¹ This new name became the label of the 'new' man, a forced self-identification, to incorporate both his father's and mother's names and heritages into his own distinct and new 'intermediate identity', which is seen in the *Royal Commentaries*. Malinche's many names, both honorific and derogatory, indigenous and hispanicised, also indicate the success she had and her flexibility in moving between different cultures, 'becoming' different women according to the situation. This was the most important skill for the colonial intermediary.

It has been possible in Garcilaso's work to see the mindset of an intermediary, who feels part of both Spanish and Indian cultures, which leads to glorification of both traditions. He is, however, essentially rootless and unattached, which leads to the desire for reconciliation of the two. With this in mind, Malinche, despite not being a biological *mestizo*, seemingly acted upon similar impulses. As historians cannot know for sure what Malinche thought or said, the comparative approach to 'writing' those such as Malinche into history is one way to proceed. With themes such as subversion and resistance, however, the historian must be careful not to project ideologies and agendas onto historical characters such as Malinche; in her case, it has often led to her becoming a 'polysemous sign', a literary construct that is part the 'myth system', interpreted in different ways by all.¹⁸² Her pre-conquest life is shrouded in even more mystery, perhaps a metaphor for the 'dominated' in all cultural contacts; her life is only seen in the context of conquest and Spanish hegemony. These issues have been highlighted by postcolonial scholars, who have asked whether the 'subaltern' can ever 'speak'. 'If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow.'¹⁸³ This dissertation has hopefully shown that even the voices of those who appear silent in colonial situations, or who seem only to be available through the words of others, can still be heard many years on.

¹⁸¹ J. Bautista Avalle-Arce, 'The Self Baptism of Garcilaso Inca', in Anadón (ed.), *Garcilaso*, p. 42

¹⁸² Cypess, *Malinche*, p. 2

¹⁸³ G. C. Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (London, 1988), p. 28

Appendix

Fig. 1



Malinche interprets for Cortés and Montezuma at Tenochtitlán. From the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, reproduced in T. B. Kranz's 2007 dissertation 'The Tlaxcalan Conquest Pictorials: The Role of Images in Influencing Colonial Policy in Sixteenth-Century Mexico' (UCLA, 2001), <http://whp.uoregon.edu/Lockhart/Kranz.pdf>

Fig. 2



Doña Marina interprets for Hernán Cortés in the palace of the Tlaxcalan lord Xicotencatl. From the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*. Reproduced in F. Karttunen, 'Rethinking Malinche', in S. Schroeder, S. Wood, and R. Haskett (eds.), *Indian Women of Early Mexico* (Norman, 1997)

Fig. 3



Malinche interprets for Cortés. From B. de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex, Book 12: The Conquest of Mexico*, A. J. O. Anderson and C. E. Dibble (eds. and trans.) (Santa Fe, 1955), Chapter 9, Plate 22. Following illustrations are all from the *Florentine Codex*, and the descriptions/captions for each image are taken from the work.

Fig. 4



Malinche addresses Mexican nobleman. From Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, Book 12, Chapter 18, Plate 51

Fig. 5



Malinche interprets for the Spaniards when Moctezuma meets Cortés. Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, Book 12, Chapter 16, Plate 44

Fig. 6



People of Teocalhueyacan comfort the Spaniards. Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, Book 12, Chapter 25, Plate 94

Fig. 7



People of Teocalhueyacan welcome the Spaniards. Sahagún, *Florentine Codex*, Book 12, Chapter 26, Plate 101

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