

Controlling Images: La Malinche and La Virgen de Guadalupe

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sqWzYiCl0EQ>

My project explores the racialized and gendered dichotomy of Malinchismo and Marianismo within the Latinx community, based upon the cultural symbols of La Malinche and La Virgen de Guadalupe. This paradigm is authored by Aida Hurtado in their fundamental work, *Sitios y Lenguas*, provides a critical framework for understanding how these figures have shaped the restrictive narratives about traditional femininity within the Latinx community.

The Malinchismo/Marianismo paradigm is deeply connected to Black feminist understandings of controlling images, which is a concept authored by Patricia Hill-Collins in *Black Feminist Thought*. Hill-Collins describes controlling images as racialized stereotypes which are continuously reinforced in order to normalize oppressive racial hierarchies (Hill-Collins 2022, 90). In order to avoid the overt subjectification of controlling images, Latinx women are able to forage self-definition, explored in works such as *Aesthetics of Excess* by Jillian Hernandez. The redefining of racialized stereotypes can be a powerful site of resistance to the imposition of meaning by oppressive systems such as white supremacy and colonialism. By adorning visual representations of difference through aesthetic excess, Latinx women are able to reclaim their agency by revising and expanding once limiting social scripts.

My project is also informed by my studies of Chicana feminism. Adelaida R. Del Castillo's work allowed me to dive deep into the violent historical realities that La Malinche, or Malintzin Tenepal, experienced. Fundamental Chicana feminist scholars including Gloria Anzaldúa, Antonia Castañeda, Aída Hurtado, and Emma Pérez have allowed me to reframe my understanding of the historical and cultural symbols of La Malinche and La Virgen de Guadalupe

from the lived realities of embodying those traits. They write in depth about the social construction of these symbolic figures and their implications on modern Latinx women's lived experiences. They have helped me to not only expand my view of the cultural importance of La Malinche and La Virgen through the lens of race, culture, gender, and sexuality. Their scholarship helps to unpack, for example how it is possible that a teenage girl such as Malintzin has been rewritten into a culturally significant misogynistic representation of femininity. Additionally, Alma M. Garcia's scholarship allowed me to continue my investigation of the ideal construction of Chicana femininity in comparison to embodiments regarded as deviant femininities.

I utilized the medium of a visual podcast in order to illustrate the storytelling that is fundamental to understanding the symbols of La Malinche and La Virgen de Guadalupe. By situating oneself in the historical narrative and cultural context of these two figures, we are able to interrogate their power through a much more holistic lens. I was taught about these concepts in classes through a lecture style which narrated the life story of La Malinche in a powerful format which illustrates the unfairness of her controlling image. I hoped to portray this incongruity through the use of her images alongside the storytelling.

I was able to apply the course themes of controlling images and aesthetics of excess to my own personal interest of study regarding Chicana feminism. These topics are very relevant to my life, our course, and society at large. Overall, this was an enjoyable and important project to produce.

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