

Marina, a figure of Otherness and of identity confrontation in Carlos Fuentes' *Ceremonias del alba*

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1) Preliminary remarks

In his note introducing *Ceremonias del alba*, Carlos Fuentes underlines the Mexican duality, the coexistence of two tendencies he calls "voz alta" and "voz baja":

cuando hablamos en voz alta, seguimos hablando en voz baja: dulce dejo indígena, dicen algunos; voz del conquistado, digo yo; voz del hombre sometido que debió aprender la lengua de los amos y dirigirse a ellos con elaborado respeto, rezo y confesión, circunloquios, diminutivos abundantes y, cuando los señores dan la espalda, con el cuchillo del albur y el alarido de la mentada.¹

Glocalization is therefore to be understood here as a language issue: the coexistence of two voices resulting from the history of the Conquest. On the one hand, the language of the conquered, on the other hand, the language of the conqueror: from this cultural encounter rises not only a deep interrogation on identity and perception of 'Otherness', but also emerges the question of incommunicability. Cortés and Moctezuma face each other in their quest for absolute power and between these two masculine figures, surrounded by masculine forces, a feminine character appears, Marina, who holds the essence of the play.

As underlined by Osvaldo Obregón, while many playwrights have focused their play on the two men, Cortés and Moctezuma, Carlos Fuentes introduces a third protagonist, Marina, and gives her profundity:

Comparativement à d'autres œuvres, où la Malinche apparaît également, Fuentes donne à ce personnage un relief exceptionnel, à travers sa triple condition d'interprète, de concubine du chef espagnol et de mère du premier métis mexicain [...] la pièce est une réhabilitation ou une revalorisation du personnage de la Malinche, confirmée par la suite par d'autres auteurs. (Obregón 2006: 250-251)

In the passage from history to myth, La Malinche effectively had to renounce her Indian characteristics to become a literary heroine in romantic literature (Aracil Varón 2011; Núñez Becerra 1996: 112). As a woman and as an Indian, she epitomizes minorities and passivity according to Octavio Paz' analysis. In his *Laberinto de la soledad*, Paz analyses the semantics of the word "chingada", linked with "lo abierto": as a figure of passivity and submission, La

¹ Carlos Fuentes (1998 [1991]): *Ceremonias del alba*. Mexico, Madrid: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, p. 8. All pages between brackets come from this edition.

Malinche incarnates treason² but also the absence of identity since she loses her name to become "la Chingada" that is to say "la Nada" (Paz [1950] 2009: 223). But like other playwrights in the 20th century Mexican theatre (Aracil Varón 2011), Carlos Fuentes chooses to rehabilitate La Malinche giving her a "leading role" whereas she was only "alluded to" in the *Códice* which inspired Fuentes (Iarregui 2001: 110).³ Far from being a completely passive character, "va a ejercer un papel activo contra ese poder opresor [de Moctezuma]" (Aracil Varón 2011: 104). In a theatrical context where women's perspectives "finally gained visibility" thanks to an increasing presence of women in the Mexican theatre (Farnsworth 2007), what is the meaning of Marina's voice in *Ceremonias del alba*? This essay asks to what extent does Carlos Fuentes follow an established path in the interpretation of La Malinche and how different is his own perspective? How much does the play define contemporary Mexican identity and remain relevant outside Mexico or Latin America?

Because she belongs to both camps, Marina crystallizes the questions of identity negotiation: she represents the other for both sides and, at the same time, her presence questions each camp's identity; as a translator, she permits communication and cultural encounter, even if there is an upcoming war. As the only important feminine presence in the play, she also represents the most obvious incarnation of Otherness for both sides and allows, as stated by Marie-José Hanaï (2006: 222) "la découverte primordiale et éternelle de l'autre, celui-ci étant représenté par l'homme, mais aussi par l'étranger".⁴ Carlos Fuentes works on La Malinche's representation, simultaneously a goddess, a mother and a whore: Malintzin, Malinche and Marina:

Dans son Labyrinthe de la solitude Octavio Paz avait dès 1950 englobé le rôle de cette interprète de Cortés dans son analyse de l'identité mexicaine: Malintzin, la femme indigène offerte au Conquérant, devient Malinche, la traîtresse qui se soumet au plus fort et sacrifie son peuple à une alliance meurtrière avec l'étranger. (Hanaï 2006: 219)

After analyzing the contemporary representation of La Malinche as an ambivalent figure (Aracil Varón 2011), this article will examine Carlos Fuentes' specific choice of making

² As in many myths, the woman is a figure of treason: such as Eve deceiving Adam, the woman always has dealings with the snake, even if the reptile is not always a negative symbol as in Christian imagery (see Farnsworth 2007). In *Ceremonias del alba*, Marina precisely recalls her rape by Quetzalcoatl, the Plumed Serpent, and her possession by Cortés, being the Plumed Serpent for the natives.

³ On the passage from history to myth and the controversial image of La Malinche, see Aracil Varón 2011. In Carlos Fuentes' short-story 'The Two Shores', written in 1991 and also dealing with the Conquest, many critics question the possibility of *counterfactualism* and alternative history in the text, analyzing the part of invention and rewriting of the Conquest: see Jay 1997; Ribas 2009, 2011. Without pretending to deal with historiographical questions, our article will consider *Ceremonias del alba* as a literary matter.

⁴ On the complexity of identity and Otherness regarding the Conquest and the writing of history, see Guido Rings (2010: 22-45).

Marina endures the tragic burden of the play and of history, and the ways in which the woman comes to represent the universal incarnation of fate.

2) Language, communication and identity confrontation

In the "nota del autor", Carlos Fuentes puts language at the heart of Mexican identity: the verb is a response to the act of power, language is an act that can oppose the act of crime. Both Moctezuma and Cortés, despite their differences, embody power; in front of them, Marina is language:

Moctezuma o el poder de la fatalidad; Cortés o el poder de la voluntad. Entre las dos orillas del poder, un puente: la lengua, Marina, que con las palabras convierte la historia de ambos poderes en destino: el conocimiento del que es imposible sustraerse (9).

The woman is seen as a link between two particular cultures, two identities which are enemies but also 'alter egos' through their craving for power.

The connection between them is precisely language. As Marina tells Cortés many times, she is his "lengua", his capacity to translate words and communicate in this new world. Marina embodies the possibility to speak, literally, for both sides: the conquerors, but also "la corte azteca". In this perspective, Marina is truly the bridge between two cultures and two identities, between two chiefs and two men. Marina is certainly the figure of identity confrontation and her presence highlights the difference between two peoples, two visions of the world: as "mujer indígena", she is the Other for the conquerors and, as Cortés' mistress, she represents the Other for her own people.⁵ Hence her figure's duality in the play and in Mexican traditional representations: the mother and the whore, "la madre de la tierra y la chingada".

Florence Olivier (2006: 228) underlines the fact that "les amants étrangers" are quite present in Carlos Fuentes' works. Following the original couple formed by Cortés and La Malinche, Florence Olivier examines the link between language and sexuality, in both abstract and concrete meanings:

La question du désir, qui permet aux personnages la traversée de leur propre identité, soit la reconnaissance de leur altérité dans et par la rencontre de l'autre, est souvent liée à la question de la langue, dans laquelle se résume et s'exprime la culture des amants. La langue, dans un sens tout à la fois abstrait et concret, sera culture et chair, objet symbolique dans l'un et l'autre cas, en un métissage et un dialogue entre corps et âme,

⁵ Florence Olivier (2009: 291) stresses this fundamental link between language, translation and encounter: "Les traducteurs et traîtres à leurs nations ne sont autres que les figures symboliques les plus inspirées de cette rencontre [que fut la Conquête]: tiers entre les langues, les cultures, les nations en guerre mais aussi entre l'Ancien et le Nouveau Monde pour chacune des deux rives; entre la guerre des empires et le langage; entre le langage de la violence prédatrice et la violence libératrice du langage".

entre nature et culture de chacun des amants, entre leurs cultures et leurs imaginaires respectifs. (Olivier 2006: 228)

In this way, Marina represents both identity and Otherness, a paradox which is contained in the mother figure who gives birth to another being from her own womb. Delivering Cortés' son means unifying two cultures and giving birth to a new world, the newborn being symbolically the first Mexican: Marina completely fulfils here her role as the Mother (Hanaï 2006). Furthermore, the play ends on love, Cortés and Marina being reunited; Marina's last words are meaningful since she links their love and the emergence of a new world: "Voz del amor... Voz del Nuevo mundo..." (197).⁶ In this perspective, Marina makes communication possible: thanks to her ability to translate, Moctezuma and Cortés confront their identities and, beyond them, the Spanish conquest confronts the Aztec Empire. As a connection, Marina represents the possibility of dialogue and "rearticulates these two worlds" (Ilarregui 2011: 114).

Nevertheless, does her ability to translate imply actual communication? Because Marina can translate does not mean the translation works, and as a matter of fact it does not: in her delivering monologue, she exhorts her son to hate his father and to have his revenge. Identity particularities are not erased, but increased by this reunion, and here love does not seem to eradicate hate. Eventually, the embodied reunion of two cultures, the birth of a new human being, is spoiled by a will of retaliation. Marina's violent monologue explicitly underlines the relentless opposition:

Sal, hijo de la traición... sal, hijo de puta... sal, hijo de la chingada... adorado hijo mío, sal ya... [...] sal, hijo de las dos sangres enemigas... [...] sal lleno de rencor y miedo, sal lleno de burla y engaño y falsa sumisión... sal, mi hijo, sal a odiar a tu padre y a insultar a tu madre... Habla quedo, hijo mío, como conviene a un esclavo; inclínate, sirve, padece y ármate de un secreto odio para el día de tu venganza [...]; quema las casas de tu padre como él quemó las de tus abuelos, clava a tu padre contra los muros de México como él clavó a su dios contra la cruz, mata a tu padre con sus propias armas [...] (176-177).

In spite of her love for Cortés and their final reunion, the exhortation for hatred and revenge is deeply present: the conqueror murdered her people and the voice of the mother is not the voice of the lover. The lovers' fruit is not a peaceful conclusion and the act of painful delivery

⁶ Whether they undergo its tyranny or they choose it for love's sake, women in love with violent chiefs always come out as fascinating characters. *Femmes de dictateur* (2011) written by the French historian and philosopher Diane Ducret reveals this fascination in collective imagination: how could a woman love an executioner, a mass criminal? Novels such as Roa Bastos' *Madama Sui*, where the heroine is Stroessner's mistress, and Tomás Eloy Martínez' *Santa Evita*, a novel focusing on Evita Perón, the famous figure of Perón's dictatorship, question these women's relations based on submissiveness: submission to the absolute power, until death. Beyond these generic relations exemplifying men's physical and social superiority over women, the novelists are interested in the emergence of these fascinating feminine figures: through their iconic statuses, through the collective fantasies they built up, the novels contemplate the way these feminine myths deeply linked with power were created (see Brochard 2012).

– *Marina grita*, as the stage direction makes clear – symbolises the lingering confrontation, the necessity to rebel against oppression and her struggle against "that fragmentation that condemns her in the Mexican culture" (Harregui 2001: 116). Carlos Fuentes points to the fact that even if a son is born as a symbol of the encounter of two worlds, Otherness remains. In fact, Carlos Fuentes almost quotes his character in his "nota del autor": "Lo más fácil, entre nosotros, será morir; un poco menos fácil, soñar; difícil, rebelarse; difícilísimo, amar" (10), which becomes, in Marina's tirade: "Te será muy fácil morir; un poco menos fácil, soñar; difícil, rebelarte; difícilísimo, amar" (177). *Amar* is therefore the most difficult act, and even if Marina and Cortés are reunited at the end, the spectrum of her violent monologue continues to haunt the audience and the reader, preventing them from relying on the possibility of a peaceful resolution. As Beatriz Aracil Varón (2011: 106) writes, "más que las posibles resoluciones al problema del origen, lo que interesa a Fuentes son las preguntas".

3) Marina or the enduring Otherness

In this war for power, Marina embodies the Other for both sides. Fray Bartolomé de Olmedo even goes further in this Othering process, claiming to Cortés that she is a "mujer diabólica" (129), a "pitonisa pagana" (131): the accusation of paganism represents the highest degree of difference, a difference which can cause death. Here lies a traditional link between women and devilish sorcery, men accusing them of being witches because they represent the Other, Freud's famous black continent. And Marina is actually the only female figure in the play, the only woman surrounded by men and their quest for power. Until Cortés begins to desire her and decides to baptize her, he calls her "mujer": she doesn't have a name for the conqueror and her identity remains unknown. Men impose an identity on her and her first words are her three names, each one repeated three times:

Malintzin, Malintzin, Malintzin... Marina, Marina, Marina... Malinche, Malinche, Malinche...[...]

Tres fueron tus nombres. Mujer: el que te dieron tus padres, el que te dio tu amante y el que te dio tu pueblo... Malintzin, dijeron tus padres: el nombre de la diosa que una vez dominó estas tierras y las creó en la violencia del amanecer [...]. Marina, dijo tu hombre, recordando el océano por donde vino hasta nuestras tierras... Malinche, dijo tu pueblo: traidora, lengua y guía del hombre blanco... Diosa, amante o madre, yo viví esta historia y puedo contarla. No es sino la historia de dos hombres (19-20).

These three names correspond to the three roles attributed by men, perfectly matching the archetypal representation of woman: for her fathers, Malintzin the goddess, for her man, Marina the whore, for her people, Malinche the mother. Marina tells us clearly that her story is made up by men. Therefore, her female condition is her only identity to men's eyes and her

Otherness as a woman defines her in Carlos Fuentes' play: far from being lowered by this androcentric hegemony, Marina represents rebellion facing tyranny, motherhood facing war, words facing silence.⁷

In spite of Marina's first hope, Cortés resembles Moctezuma in his loneliness and his tyranny: absolute power ostracizes men and drives them to madness. From this perspective, Marina is the only hope for change: in front of a central political power embodied by Moctezuma then Cortés, the will to change and rebel against oppression comes from Marina, that is to say from the periphery. Effectively, Marina doesn't belong to the centre: many times she is reminded of her condition, slavery, rejected and pushed down by Cortés – gesture is here explicit, Marina being on the ground several times.⁸ Moreover, her womanhood keeps her from any slight desire for commanding. Change and rebellion come from the fringe: giving his female character the desire for a peaceful and fairer world for her people, Carlos Fuentes incarnates a political message explicitly written in his introduction:

1968 le permitió al país darse cuenta de que la sociedad civil había rebasado al partido y al gobierno, y que era cuestión de tiempo, pero también de voluntad y de palabra, que la propia sociedad obligase al gobierno a responder a las iniciativas ciudadanas, surgidas desde abajo y desde la periferia y no, como ha sucedido tradicionalmente, impuestas desde arriba y desde el centro (9)⁹.

"Voluntad", "palabra", "abajo": these words totally apply to Marina, the slave whose ability to speak both languages led to a new world in Carlos Fuentes' play.

Defining Marina as "la lengua" (9), Carlos Fuentes stages the conflict between the official discourse, tempted by omnipotence and omnipresence, and a particular voice coming from the marginal figure of a slave woman representing the people oppressed and about to rebel. As "el Gran Tlatoani", Moctezuma is "El Señor de la Gran Voz", "El dueño de la palabra, la única voz con derecho a hablar" (47-48): how could a mere female slave fight him? The conflict also concerns language and, several times, she is violently requested to stop talking whereas she was speaking the truth, for instance reacting against Cortés' crimes:

MARINA

Has impuesto tu tiranía en vez de la de Moctezuma... ¿Tu Dios permite que en su nombre se cometan estos...?

⁷ In this perspective, Carlos Fuentes' vision of Marina is neither determined by passivity nor by treason: she isn't anymore *la Chingada* Octavio Paz describes. Fuentes is deeply influenced by the feminist vision in which the role of woman is sublimated and where positive feminine power is reactivated, such as in Mondragón's theatre: see Farnsworth 2007.

⁸ On the masculine violence towards Marina, exemplifying the meanings of *la Chingada*, see Paz 2009; Lagos de Kassai 1995: 167-169.

⁹ For Aracil Varón, "la propuesta de Fuentes es válida sobre todo como intento de profundización en una dimensión histórica y política del personaje de la Malinche, pero también de inscripción de este en una reflexión más amplia sobre la memoria y sobre ese 'encuentro de dos mundos'" (2011: 106-107). It seems to us that the strength of Fuentes' proposition also lies in the tragic dimension he gives to Marina, as we will analyse it below.

[...]

CORTÉS (arroja violentamente a MARINA al piso)

Cuida tus palabras, bruja; no sea que te devuelva a la esclavitud de la que te saqué; no sea que te entregue al más bajo de mis soldados.

MARINA, humillada, permanece tirada en el suelo; se repone; necesita hablar. (158)

Words against silence: this necessity to speak in spite of humiliation defines Marina, the woman who can't be kept silent because "[su] lengua es la de la tierra, y nadie puede acallarla" (71). *La Malinche* by Carlos Fuentes is a complex and positive character since she still is a mother and Cortés' lover, but she also fights for the liberation of her people (Aracil Varón 2011: 105).

This strong link between Marina and "la tierra" contributes to maternal symbolism and recalls the myths of the origins (Farnsworth 2011). Marina is a matrix, the image of the mother, even with her lover: tired, Cortés rests "en el regazo de MARINA" (105). She defines herself as "la Malinche", the mother of Mexican people, and literally delivers on stage. Obviously, this maternal symbolism is linked with the question of Mexican origins as Marina's identity represents more than itself (Iarregui 2001: 111). Precisely telling Quetzalcoatl's myth, the god blinded by his own reflection in the mirror, Marina tells the story of the origins and reminds the audience that one's perception of identity and Otherness – to perceive oneself as a self distinct from the others, but also as another same via the theme of duplicity – can be an ordeal. From this perspective, her labour on stage is highly symbolic insofar as Marina's role in the play has something to do with maieutics, a philosophical process consisting of helping people to deliver truths intellectually, thus raising the question of history and tragedy.

4) From history to tragedy: Marina, the figure of fate

Commenting upon the way Carlos Fuentes fictionalizes history in his novels, María José Bruña Bragado (2006: 225) writes that

Fuentes ne reste pas rivé à la 'mexicanité', comme on pourrait le penser; il est convaincu qu'en creusant dans l'âme individuelle, en essayant de dévoiler le mystère de son monde, il éclaircira en fin de compte celui de l'âme universelle.

This ability to deal at the same time with something universal and with Mexican identity seems to be one of the most singular ways of apprehending Marina: how could this Mexican figure be significant outside Mexico?

From the very start of the play, the stage directions yield themselves to a symbolic interpretation:

El escenario es único, dominado por un gran espejo al fondo, y comunicado por una rampa con el auditorio.

Oscuridad total. El rumor de una escoba que barre lentamente. Del fondo del auditorio, avanzando hacia el escenario, aparece una mujer indígena; levanta una tea en alto; es MARINA. Va vestida con la túnica o huipil, blanco, de franjas bordadas. Pelo largo, negro, enmarañado. (17-19).

The link between past and present is clearly made thanks to the mirror and the ramp, as if the events which are going to take place in the scene were the reflection of the present. Past and present are bonded and the ramp physically incarnates the bridge in history, implying that some answers to present issues are to be searched in the Mexican past. The beginning of the play blends temporalities as Marina tells the mythical story of Quetzalcoatl and links it to her own, "Yo viví esa historia y puedo contarla" coming and going as a chorus: Marina's monologue hence paradoxically contains all the voices of history.¹⁰

Incidentally, the term "chorus" may guide us to the tragic perception of the play as it also applies to Marina's theatrical part. To open the play with a narration that combines past, present and future, indeed gives her the role of the antique tragic chorus, omniscient and bearer of a moral interpretation as it comments on the heroes' actions. By this narrative opening, Marina is not only a character in the play but she carries the superior role of an essential tragic entity. Besides, when "el mercador y el pastor" enter the scene, she tells Quetzalcoatl's myth off stage. The audience can't see her, only her voice can be heard: Marina becomes disembodied, either an abstraction or an aede, the narrator of sacred stories. With this theatrical choice, Carlos Fuentes emphasizes abstraction. This double role, character and chorus, is particularly explicit in Moctezuma's murder scene: four men and a woman, whose identity remains unknown until Moctezuma's death ("la MUJER permanece obstinadamente cubierta" (167)), form a chorus, until the audience discovers that the woman and Marina were in fact one. Because she is the language, Marina has to assume this tragic narrative role, until action places her again in her character role.

As a tragic chorus herself, Marina knows the past, the present and it seems she can also tell the future: this ability to see further is seen as a danger by Fray Bartolomé de Olmedo when he calls her "pitonisa pagana" (loc. cit). Many times in the play, Marina's words are full of opacity, as if her knowledge or her dreams have allowed her to reach a place men can't: when she tells Cortés about her dream, "la mujer se le escapa a un mundo mágico incomprensible para él" (91). The play forcefully links womanhood with omniscience and divine perception.

¹⁰ For an analysis of the myth of creation in the contemporary Mexican theatre and its concrete staging, see Versényi 1992. Some critics have emphasized the difficulty of representation in Carlos Fuentes' play mostly because of this narrative proliferation (see Obregón 2006: 250-251), but the presence of the myth in *Ceremonias del alba* seems to lead to the antique tragedy.

Effectively, Marina is also a "pitonisa", an augur speaking sacred words, and the religious Aztec figure Cihuacóatl reminds Moctezuma of the female origins of his function. If "su atavío es el de una lujosa sacerdotisa" (28), that is a remainder of the past: "Ahora un hombre – yo – soy el gran sacerdote, pero antes lo era una mujer, llamada la Malintzin" (32), that is to say Marina herself, in one of her avatars. Originally, sacred words are women's prerogative, which is assumed as the reason why men are unable to understand events in the play.

The woman's ability to see the future and her relative omniscience are also conveyed by the allegoric interpretation of darkness and light. In this symbolic space, Marina comes from the audience, as part of the people, a role she will be bound to throughout the play, and her arrival is particularly meaningful. Effectively, Marina opens the play: her first words are her own name, declined in his three variations and her own words will also end the play. This circular construction emphasizes the character's importance and, in this perspective, carrying a torch is very significant: in the darkness, she is the only light that remains. The allegoric dimension is quite obvious: in these times of obscurantism, when men are blinded by their desperate quest for power and war, she is a figure of knowledge. Blindness is a recurrent element in the play, from the merchant and the shepherd dazzled by the striking light – "[l]a brillantez de la luz les obliga a taparse los ojos con los brazos" (21) –, to Quetzalcoatl enucleated, "cegado [...] semejante a un Edipo indio" (26) or Moctezuma blind to Cortés' mortality. As Diogenes wandering in daylight with a torch, searching for a man, Marina brings light to mankind and searches for humanity. As a matter of fact, she is the voice of wisdom in the play, first trying to rebel against Moctezuma's tyranny thanks to Cortés, then accusing Cortés of the same tyranny. In front of men blinded by gold and power, she utters words of unification:

Trata de entendernos. Danos una oportunidad. No mates el bien de mi pueblo tratando de matar sus males. No destruyas nuestra frágil identidad. Toma lo que está construido aquí y construye al lado de nosotros. No asesines a mi patria. No nos quites nuestra historia, pues también gracias a ella eres quienes eres. Alguien, alguien, nunca más nadie. (159)

We believe that Carlos Fuentes' singularity lies in this antique perception of La Malinche as a tragic entity; Marina's incarnation of the tragedy precisely allows the myth to go beyond the Mexican culture: the play was staged in Russia by Vladimir Petrov in 1998 (Villegas 1999)¹¹ and still questions today the way individual identities are able to confront imperialism. Enduring a tragic fate, crystallizing at the same time love, motherhood, treason and the sacrifice of innocence, Marina becomes a tragic figure 'par essence', such as Antigone, Jocasta

¹¹ Mexican contemporary theatre and socio-political commitment share strong bonds (Oseland 2013); as a matter of fact, the antique tragedy had also deep roots in the civil interrogation about *polis*, such as Sophocle's *Oedipus* which questions tyranny.

or Phaedra, an archetype of the human condition torn between plight and fate. Carlos Fuentes doesn't impose a unique vision of his character and this ambivalence might be his most interesting postulate in the play. As an image of sacrifice, this tragic dimension lets La Malinche achieve significance even outside Latin America since universality is a typical feature of all the great tragedies.

5) Concluding remarks

Marina is a complex figure in *Ceremonias del alba* as, in the very same character, her singular story and the Mexican destiny coexist. Both as a character and an entity in the play – on the one hand the native woman who tries to protect her people from tyranny and falls in love with the conqueror, on the other hand the Mother of a new people –, Marina confirms that history can't be understood without the perception of individual tragedies:

la Malinche reúne por un instante ambas esferas, nos recuerda que no hay historia comprensible si no se toman en cuenta las excepciones personales de la tragedia, ni tragedia personalizable, si no toma en cuenta las exigencias de la historia. (10)

Collective and individual destinies clash, just like history and tragedy, and eventually Carlos Fuentes' singularity is to transfigure a Mexican myth to a human archetype.

Because it stages identity confrontation, the translation between cultures and oppression versus power since the origins of Mexico, *Ceremonias del alba* questions the way Mexican society had, and still has, to deal with its identity torn between native particularities and the oppression of a government whose greed for power denies individual expressions. In Carlos Fuentes' play, glocalization is fundamentally a fight, "[I]a lucha por la palabra [...] [y por] el poder ciudadano de cada mexicano vivo y vivo ahora" (9). Adapting Mexican history for the theatre, Carlos Fuentes had to stage this struggle: hence, he had to choose the form of tragedy, insofar as its core is precisely 'agôn', the conflict.

To conclude, Carlos Fuentes follows an established path in the interpretation of La Malinche when he chooses her to be the face of translation: according to her historic role, Marina is the medium between languages from the start. Marina also embodies three faces in the play, the goddess, the whore, the mother, according to her traditional Mexican symbolism. But Carlos Fuentes' own perspective is quite different since he rehabilitates Marina and gives her depth as a tragic character: the tragedy does no longer lie in the conflict between two men, Cortés and Moctezuma, but in the presence of this female character torn between love and identity. Marina is no longer a passive character – *la Chingada* – but she reaches an active role in the Conquest. This is precisely the strength given to this female character which allows

Ceremonias del alba to define contemporary Mexican identity and still remain relevant outside Mexico or Latin America: the tragedy she suffers is born in a specific cultural and historical context and helps contemporary Mexican society to understand its complex identity, but at the same time, the tragic form enables the play to reach a global dimension through the universal questions of individuality and community, power and submission, love and desire.

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