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The Afterlives of «La Malinche»: Conflicting Representations of a Native Slave Woman in Literature and Art

As we all know, La Malinche cooperated with the Spaniards in the conquest of the Aztec Empire by acting as advisor, interpreter, and lover – personally to Cortés. Traditionally, her name is identified with treachery and betrayal. Yet, Feminist artists since the 1970s prefer to represent her differently, as a female figure with a voice and agency who tried to mediate between two opposing powers. This presentation traces literary representations of the La Malinche in Chicana literature (Anzaldúa, Cisneros) and compare these to contemporary visual representations of hers as showcased by the Exhibition La Malinche (2022) at the Denver Museum of Art. The presentation explores ways in which the figures and the roles of La Malinche differ across borders and media.

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