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CULTURAL MEMORY AND CULTURAL COMPLEX: REWORKING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE PAST IN THE MEXICAN HISTORICAL TELEVISION SERIES "MALINCHE"

Abstract:

In this paper, I discuss how a 'cultural memory' text (a narrative that bonds the concepts of history and identity, and that is realized and disseminated through symbolic systems such as visual images and dramatic representation) has the potential to challenge detrimental tenets of a 'cultural complex' (collective emotion-laden memories of past generations with specific historical/regional points of view). The concept 'cultural complex' (Singer and Kimbles), founded on Analytical Psychology (C. G. Jung), proposes to understand expressions of the collective mind in specific groups attitudes and behaviors. "Malinche" (Mexico, 2018) is a historical television series produced and directed by Patricia Arriaga that tells the story of Malinche, an extraordinary indigenous woman during the Spanish Conquest (1511-1550). She has been an important figure represented in history, art, literature and now, historical fiction on television. Malinche played a key role in the fall of the Aztec empire (1519-1521) by acting mainly as translator, negotiator and cultural mediator for the Spanish conqueror Hernán Cortéz. As a result of this collaboration, Malinche in Mexico has been traditionally considered a traitor; she is present in the collective imagination of Mexicans today as a symbol of dishonor and shame. The contemporary term 'malinchismo', o 'malinchista', considered a cultural complex as studied by Jacqueline Gerson, denotes a wound/trauma in the Mexican psyche, and serves to describe a person or an attitude of betrayal to one's own; in this case, a self-destructive mindset and behavior that leads to a preference for the foreign and despise for what is Mexican. The TV series "Malinche" proposes an interesting and novel venue to re think the highly complicated context of the Conquest, and advocates for Malinche to be seen in a more integrative light, as a wise and brave young woman entangled in deeply personal and external dynamics, and immersed in the most severe conditions of a war and its brutal consequences. It is my contention that by challenging our limited, pre conceived ideas, "Malinche" constitutes an opportunity to examine our deeply rooted, detrimentally condemnatory views and to amend them for an open, realistic, understanding attitude towards Malinche and her historical circumstance.

Keywords:

cultural memory, cultural complex, historical fiction, television, Mexico, Malinche.

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