



The La Malinche-“Hub”: A Woman between History and Myth in László Passuth’s *Tlálóc Weeps for Mexico* and Carlos Morton’s *La Malinche*

Edit-Mária DÁNÉL

PhD student, Ovidius University of Constanța (Constanța, Romania)

Doctoral School of Philology

daneleditmaria@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7163-7944>

Abstract. This study aims to identify the historical and mythical role of a significant and controversial female protagonist and her responsibility as a medium between two cultures in László Passuth’s *Tlálóc Weeps for Mexico* and Carlos Morton’s *La Malinche*. This research is based on Albert-László Barabási’s theory, which posits that events, objects, and individuals coexist in a network of connected nodes, or “hubs,” that form further systematic links. Furthermore, this paper seeks to identify the connection between László Passuth’s 1939 novel entitled *Tlálóc Weeps for Mexico* and Carlos Morton’s 1983 play *La Malinche* through blending history and myth, and presenting the encounter between the ancient Aztec civilization, their sacrifices and mythological thinking, represented by Malintzin or La Malinche, a princess in her own right, and the historically accurate story of conquering and pride illustrated by the deeds of the fifteenth-century legendary visionary, Hernán Cortés. Malintzin’s contribution as a mediator and translator between the two nations makes her a self-contained, empathic, tolerant, and philanthropic node, who, according to Passuth, becomes a near-mythical individual, arriving in the present and revindicating what the socio-political circumstances deprived her of.

Keywords: identity, the other, transfer, hubs.

1. Introduction

This paper focuses on the importance of rebuilding and salvaging the balance between personal history and culture as the aim of the (post)modern individual in László Passuth’s *Tlálóc Weeps for Mexico* (1939) and Carlos Morton’s *La Malinche*

(1983). Both literary works present the individual in an existential crisis, which affects their worldview from a socio-political and personal perspective, where the surrounding circumstances expose the protagonists to voluntary or involuntary encounters and witness their strength in regaining their true identity.

Passuth's historically well-documented novel concerning a culture clash that defined centuries of Mexican history places Malintzin, the translator, the mediator who connects distant civilizations with the help of her grace and linguistic knowledge, into a controversial position, endangering her future reputation. She is admired and respected for her courage and open-mindedness, but also blamed and considered a traitor by her people. Hungarian author of historical novels László Passuth's work and contemporary Chicano playwright Carlos Morton's play share the idea of cultural and class oppression due to a hybrid identity based on personal experiences. During his life, Passuth lived through the horrors of two world wars and the Stalinist takeover of Hungary; he also had first-hand experience of the Mexican culture and history through having spent a short period of time there to gather material for his works. Morton is a second-generation Mexican-American living in the United States. Both their destinies are linked to La Malinche's fate as well as to the general socio-political atmosphere of alienation, homelessness, "shame, dread, and fear that minorities experience in a dominant racist society, causing them to be dispossessed and disinherited" (Wright 1940, vii). These wounded individuals develop a mythical thinking based on the past and its remarkable characters who revolted against societal regulations, ultimately choosing non-commitment and personal freedom instead. Taking into account the disputed figure of La Malinche, whom both Passuth and Morton have chosen to discuss in their works, I hypothesised that multiple interpretations of the same event are possible, and various opinions concerning the same individual, historical personality may circulate, creating a web of direct and indirect connections that the characters in question establish in order to gain true self-identity.

In his book entitled *Linked. How Everything Is Connected to Everything Else and What It Means for Business, Science, and Everyday Life* (2014), Albert-László Barabási claims that certain events, people, and objects coexist in a network of connected nodes, or "hubs," gather further systematic webs, constantly envelop other web structures, and allow the possibility of multiple interpretations of the same text or individual.

Implementing Barabási's chain theory into discussing the axis character, the centre of László Passuth's 1939 novel *Tlálóc Weeps for Mexico* [*Esőisten siratja Mexikót*] and Carlos Morton's play entitled *La Malinche* (1983), I focused on the collision between the world of the fifteenth-century Spanish legendary visionary Hernán Cortés and the noble ancient culture of Malintzin, more popularly known as La Malinche, who became known for contributing to the Spanish conquest of

the Aztec Empire acting as an advisor, interpreter, and partner to the conquistador Hernán Cortés, as his “most reliable asset” (Morton 2004, 8). Their union gave birth to a new nation. Malinalli-La Malinche’s self-discovery from innocent princess to mother and mythical figure is a great and defining individual journey where significant events and encounters are indispensable for forming, breaking, and re-forming bonds.

These major clashes between the magical and attractive world of ancient civilizations and the conquering, invading foreigners are the subject of countless works. Jean Philippe Rameau’s 1736 opera-ballet entitled *Les Indes Galantes* is a multicultural dance of mythology and love, tenderness, peace, and acceptance, inspiring further artistic areas such as cartoons and commercials. Disney’s overly romanticized Pocahontas is based on a historical figure called Matoaka, living in the early 1600s, who shared a similar fate to that of Malintzin-La Malinche. Her role as a mediator between the Powhatan people and the English made her realize that she was used as a political tool between those in power. She ultimately returned home to her family and converted to Christianity. It was during her travels to England that she met Captain John Smith, and she “expressed outrage due to the mistreatment of his position as leader of the colonists and the betrayal to the Powhatan people” (Schilling 2017, n. p.)

2. Hubs and Connectors

Besides the domain of literature and arts, mediating ideas and facilitating understanding are present in networks and connecting systems alike. Information technology and neurobiology consider the brain as composed of certain nodes, nerve systems linked to the centre, responsible for transmitting ideas by an intelligible coding system, activating reception.

Albert-László Barabási’s research focuses on certain historical, social, and scientific entities serving as hubs or connectors in a given group dynamic, distinguishing themselves by linking different systems on various levels. Frigyes Karinthy’s 1929 work entitled *Chain-Links* [*Láncszemek*] describes an ever-shrinking “fairylend” where the population of the world is more connected than ever through expansion. In this fascinating game of hubs and nodes, “nobody from the group needed more than five links in the chain to reach, just by using the method of acquaintance, any inhabitant of our planet” (Karinthy 1929, 3). Thus, Nobel Prize winner Selma Lagerlöf shares a direct connection with King Gustav of Sweden, who handed her the award, and an indirect connection with his friend, the professional table tennis player Béla von Kehrling. From a cultural viewpoint, Karinthy also discusses the opposite phenomenon, called the “process of contraction” (Karinthy 1929, 3) or the non-tangency of ancient cultures and

civilizations. For Julius Caesar, to have any knowledge about the Mayan or Aztec culture would have been excluded. University professor Malcolm Gladwell, in his experiment called *The Tipping Point*, tested students and academics by handing them 248 surnames randomly selected from phone books, asking them to detect a connection to their acquaintance circles, documenting their names multiple times if needed. The results obtained served as curious discoveries: immigrant students ranked impressively high compared to a random group of mostly white, educated academics. Following this experiment, Gladwell defined the notion of these hubs as such: “Sprinkled among every walk of life [...] are a handful of people with a truly extraordinary knack of making friends and acquaintances. They are connectors” (Barabási 2014, 55). As far as their personality is concerned, “[t]hey are a thread of society, smoothly bringing together different races, levels of education, pedigrees” (Barabási 2014, 56), largely influencing groups and their dynamics by their credibility, binding them into “nodes with an anomalously large number of links [...], ranging from the economy to the cell” (Barabási 2014, 56). Hubs unite concrete study areas such as biology and computer science with the estimative aspects of ecology and the subjective, interpretative, artistic-dramatic modalities of literature by connecting certain distinctive, non-negotiable, immutable features that make them unique such as visibility and popularity due to their provenience as well as the external circumstances contributing to the phenomenon of mutability and/or displacement.

László Passuth’s novel and Carlos Morton’s play centre on the character development of Malinalli, the Aztec princess who becomes La Malinche, the translator, the link between cultures, and Marina, the woman, the mother of a new nation, taking on another name and identity.

3. Visibility and Popularity of Connectors

Albert-László Barabási claims that “[i]n order to be read you have to be visible” (Barabási 2014, 57). What makes connectors special and distinguished from other characters in both László Passuth’s novel and Carlos Morton’s play is their visibility, clear intentions, and pure disclosure regarding their interaction with other characters. With the help of these “immutable” personality traits, hubs usually hold the gateway to all the solutions, having the proper “vibe” with the protagonists they interact with.

The crucial encounter between Malintzin and Hernán Cortés, in accordance with both Passuth and Morton, serves the purpose of forming a new nation and gaining territory through a manipulative alliance. Following the Dark Ages, Spain started extending its horizons towards Europe. Influenced by Aristotle’s doctrine discussed in *Politics*, which Cortés shared, natural slavery is justified: “It is clear, then, that

some men are by nature free, and others slaves, and that for these latter slavery is both expedient and right” (Aristotle 1999, 9). Other nations were considered inferior, “barbarians” compared to “wild beasts” (Aristotle 1999, 10). In 1519, Spanish conqueror Hernán Cortés and his armed forces occupied the Great Aztec Empire and began the colonization of New Spain. Rodolfo Acuña in his book *Occupied America. A History of Chicanos* describes the two opposing forces as follows: “[t]hroughout the advance to the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán, gunpowder, horses, snarling dogs, and glistening armour helped the Spaniards. Unlike the invaders, the indigenous warriors did not intend to kill their enemies, hoping to wound and capture and use them as sacrifices to the gods” (Acuña 2015, 21).

Hungarian writer, translator, and lawyer, László Passuth, in *Tlálóc Weeps for Mexico*, presents the pre-Columbian society without any “racial prejudice, they did not disrespect skin colour as such. Their judge of character was the spirit of the age” (Passuth 1974, 343).¹ While the Aztecs fought with arrows, obsidian spears, hooks, and slingshots, capturing their victims alive, Cortés and his men used cannons, horses, and boats. Having gained the upper hand over the local population, Machiavellian Cortés negotiates the terms of the mutual understanding between the two camps: “We Spaniards came to you with our sanctified right given by the Pope, and provided you surrender, we bring you the Lord’s mercy” (Passuth 1974, 51). There is, however, a reference according to which this battle has not yet been decided, and the revenge of the oppressed shall follow. Upon sacrificing the messenger from the Spanish camp, silence fell upon the troops. The Aztec Priest “[m]uttered something about the gods being patient” and that “the messenger shall not escape his fate” (Passuth 1974, 55), which symbolically is a reference to Malinalli, another name used for La Malinche, who later was going to be the greatest controversial female historical character in Mayan-Aztec-Spanish history.

Malinalli’s socio-political visibility is linked to her provenience. She is the daughter of the most influential chief, and her chosen status is immediately reflected in her physical appearance, resembling a princess with garments and emerald jewellery, a royal heiress among the slave girls. Her conscious decision not to buy her freedom with the help of her treasures is a testimony to her affection towards Cortés. Malinalli’s controversial status as a mediator and translator between the Spanish and the Aztec tribes makes her a hero and brave diplomat, but also a traitor:

Have you considered, Malinalli, that by serving your master you are betraying your people? Have you pondered upon the fact that a servant’s body belongs to its master only, but thoughts, unlike hands, cannot

1 Though the novel has an English translation (see Passuth 1987), it was not available for me. Therefore, all the translations from Hungarian literature are my own throughout the article.

forcefully be united by a string? What would happen if, instead of an innocent serpent's tongue, you would have a poisonous one in your mouth? (Passuth 1974, 227)

Her reply is straightforward and truthful:

I am a Chief's daughter; unlike many of his soldiers, I do not serve my master for gold or the town of Tezcoco [...] I do not desire palaces or precious stones, I do not want to be mistress above towns and provinces. I serve my master because he has been good to me, and his seed has been conceived inside of me; he became the father of my child, Martin, named after his father. (Passuth 1974, 227)

Malinalli's mythical visibility is connected to her ancient roots. She remembers the blessings and warnings she received at crucial moments of her life:

My darling daughter, you are more precious to me than the most fragile golden pearl; you are worth more than the Quetzal bird's feathers: you carry my blood in your veins and my face in your heart. The gods have opened the gates of your understanding, you know our ancestors' words: joy and sorrow go hand in hand... you already see that no thirst is horrible enough to taste some of its glory [...] henceforth, you are both: a mother and a father, and you alone have to look after yourself not to stain your ancestor's memory. You must protect yourself, Malinalli, for your future man, who will hopefully be your equal [...] and with whom you shall have a son and who, after me, shall be none other than the true master and lord of your life. (Passuth 1974, 32)

Her demeanour also resembles that of a queen: "Your walk should not be a proud one, because people shall talk about your bad upbringing. The storms in your soul shall always be tamed and not visible on your face, always walk with silent joy, but do not laugh without a reason, and do not despair" (Passuth 1974, 32).

Hernán Cortés's prominence and socio-political status are conditioned by Malinalli's presence. The name Marina was given to her by Cortés as a symbol of her new identity. As a tactical individual, Cortés has the utmost respect and caution towards her popularity: "Marina spoke. Everyone knew her. Hasn't there been anybody questioning her female presence there, breaking the laws of nature by starting to talk as her masters [...]?" (Passuth 1974, 248)

Malinalli's spiritual connection to her ancestors gives her a graceful and intimidating presence. She communicates with the Ancient goddess Papan, who is the messenger of Tláloc, revered as the god of rain. This steady belonging to

a higher power represents Malinalli's awakening towards reclaiming her power as a goddess and free individual. Thus, Papan is also the bearer of the general ideology in Passuth's novel:

The thirteenth month is Tláloc's month, and by the time he arrived, I had already known by his cry that he was weeping for Mexico [...] He was standing at the gates of Tenochtitlán as he was watching your every move. Nobody could see him, since gods are supposed to hide in dew, but the soldiers and the dying knew his voice as he was coughing hoarsely once or twice, you would say it resembles a bark... The raindrops brought the message to me about all these, and when every living creature left the town, it was then that Tláloc became visible, telling me he had wept for Mexico. (Passuth 1974, 278)

Marina-Malinalli, along with her son, Martin, revisits the ancient ruins of the city she grew up in, and the once renegade children of Tláloc finally revendicate their past by symbolically throwing the emerald dolls of their pain and suffering into the deep grave dug by history. It is a significant moment for Marina, who is finally able to cleanse herself from other people's sins. She never killed, never tortured, yet became loved and hated by her people: "We all have offered sacrifices to the Emerald Doll, who has brought conflict and hatred and was stronger than Tláloc himself, who as the father of our united tribes and who, unable to straighten our paths, kept weeping above our torn down walls and temples" (Passuth 1974, 333). Marina rescues her identity, restoring her legacy from under the constraints represented by the heritage of her so-called fake "benefactors."

Hernán Cortés's letters to Emperor Charles V regarding his victories contribute to his induction into the ranks of famous professors and peers and his desired recognition gained through strategic manipulation:

He was standing now amongst the honourable scientists in his fur coat, his waist being decorated with a pencil case instead of a sword, expecting the magistrates to call on him and to start his new journey with these happy young fellows towards the Sala Aurea to receive the hat of Doctor in front of the Salamanca University Council being honoured by each member of the Committee. (Passuth 1974, 312)

Aware of his modest provenience, Hernán Cortés in Carlos Morton's 1983 play *La Malinche* plans to strengthen his position by marriage to a noble lady who is "related to the Crown by blood" (Morton 2004, 21), a sensible position since he now has to distance himself from Marina: "You are like a serpent choking

me” (Morton 2004, 29). When addressing his insult, Marina emphasizes Cortés’s brutality and heartlessness: “And you are a dagger at my heart” (Morton 2004, 29).

The interlude leading to her spiritual purification is related to her reconnecting with two advisers, her alter egos of revenge and intuition: the dark and pure sides of human nature. La Llorona is the red-eyed skeleton who recognizes Malinalli’s worth as an Aztec princess and who offers her an insight into the black mirror, where she can see herself as a warrior, a strong fighter eager for revenge: “Prepare me the most powerful poison conceivable – enough to kill a thousand Spaniards [...] bitter I will make their marriage bed, bitter the wedding and the casting me out of the city, bitter the taking of my child. So, bishop, wife, and husband, you must die” (Morton 2004, 34).

Carlos Morton’s drama pays homage to this remarkable and controversial female individual who, feeling jilted and rejected by the man she helped and loved, is plotting revenge. La Llorona’s appearance in Carlos Morton’s play opens the drama as “The Weeping Woman” (Morton 2004, 4), the Aztec goddess, who is punished to carry an empty cradle and lament for her lost children. She was supposed to have been “an Indigenous mestizo woman who fell in love with a Spaniard and had children by him” (Morton 2004, xiii), but she chose to marry someone else. As a revenge, she murdered her children and now roams rivers, lakes, and waterways, screaming “Ayyy mis hijos!” [Oh my children!]. Symbolically, the massacre of these children means the death of the Native American People caused by the mother as an act of revenge against the “imperial conquering sword of the invading country, Spain” (Morton 2004, xiii). She is the emblem of Aztec conscience, where any form of treason leads to vengeance. La Llorona is the Earth Mother, the mother of all living whose existence is eternal and her fluid, androgynous look becomes one with nature: “I am she of the starry skirt, but whose radiance envelops; she who is clothed in black, she who is clothed in red; lady of our flesh, lord of our flesh” (Morton 2004, 50).

La Llorona and Marina form a united front of revenge against oppression and manipulation: “But like a volcano that lies dormant / One day we shall erupt” (Morton 2004, 24). In Morton’s play, La Llorona represents Marina’s conscience: “He’s using you. Your knowledge of tribes, customs, and languages. Without you, he is lost, or dead” (Morton 2004, 23). She furthermore exposes the issue La Malinche is about to face because she collaborates with Cortés: “He will betray you! Your own people will grow to despise you, Malintzin. What is happening to you?” (Morton 2004). Assisted by La Llorona, she rediscovers her true Aztec priestess qualities and ancient roots of a fighter led by revenge: “A raging river must run its course” (Morton 2004, 6).

At the same time, her confidante, Ciuacoatl, tries to reverse the upcoming tragedy with a gentle, reasonable approach to matters: “Malintzin, my little flower, my precious quetzal. I watched you grow from a doe, unsteady on thin legs, into

a swift and graceful deer. Together we learned about herbs and roots, our puberty rite. I watched you dance, sleek and dark, a panther in the moonlight. Forget Hernán Cortés; forget this self-destructive desire for revenge” (Morton 2004, 38). Cuacoatl offers Marina a modality to escape along with her son, which she refuses.

Marina realizes her role in Cortés’s manipulative plan: “I was the medium by which he communicated. I put myself in the middle of the conflict and intervened in the plot. I was his adviser, secretary and messenger” (Morton 2004, 16). Marina’s popularity among both the Aztec and the Spanish camps makes her a difficult target, endangering Cortés’s name and political status: “Many people could not conceive of Cortés without me. They called him ‘Hue-Hue Malintzin,’ the old captain who brings Doña Marina” (Morton 2004, 16). Being a Machiavellian character, he explains his evil deeds as such: “But you shall see how the end justifies the means” (Morton 2004, 37). He chooses their son, Martin, as a scapegoat to complete his plan. Cortés refers to his son and the mother of his child in terms used in the animal kingdom: “This is a cub who will grow into a lion. The way he rides a horse, as though born in a saddle. Martin will be the bulwark of my old age, the second in a long line of conquistadores” (Morton 2004, 14). The Mother is claimed to “fight like a lion to keep her cub” (Morton 2004, 15).

Marina’s decision to have a child with Cortés later turns into a conscious act to eliminate the link between them: “In vain did I rear you and suffer the pain of childbirth. Never will I see you grow into a strong warrior. Never will I see you wed or wait on your bride and make your marriage bed. Once, I had hopes that you might look after me in my old age and see my spirit carried into the great beyond. Oh, heavens, pity me, but give me strength to do what must be done” (Morton 2004, 52), which her dream also reflects: “I had a nightmare. I dreamed my son was in chain mail mounted on a beast with a sword in one hand and a cross in the other. He looked like a Spaniard! (*Beat.*) Hide him from his father” (Morton 2004, 11). Killing her son with Cortés’s sword forged in Spain means the breaking of traditions and the refusal to assimilate, under humiliation and disrespect, a historical perspective shared by Sanchés, one of Cortés’s most faithful men: “After all, we Spaniards are but a pool in the sea of Aztecs” (Morton 2004, 36). He also raises the problem of acculturation versus assimilation in a discussion with Cortés himself: “By your pardon, my grace, but sometimes I wonder whether we really conquered them, or they just swallowed us up” (Morton 2004, 36).

The play closes with the reappearance of La Llorona, the ultimate power, the suffering mother figure and voice of reason, carrying the general message of the play in her mortuary song: “Truly do we live on earth / Not forever on earth; only a little while here / Although it be jade, it will be broken / Although it be gold, it is crushed / Although it be quetzal feather, it is torn asunder / Not forever on earth; only a little while here” (Morton 2004, 51). She appears with the same empty cradle being presented as the one who never seems to cry, emotionless

like the Dead, yet active like the Living Dead: “It seems to me that the flowers, Llorona, / on graves are steadily creeping, / and when the wind blows, Llorona, / it looks as if they’re weeping” (Morton 2004, 51).

Passuth and Morton focus on restoring personal strength concerning the individuals who, once displacing themselves from an unwanted situation, reclaim their freedom. They pay homage to La Malinche, the champion who, through many obstacles, managed to “arrive” at her destination, her true self, portraying her fateful encounter with Hernán Cortés as the main condition for her self-discovery.

4. Displacement and Reintegration of Connectors

Removing oneself from an imposing, toxic form of existence means reintegration into another way of living. László Passuth and Carlos Morton present a female entity who manages to decipher the operational system of a foreign language, thus linking herself directly and indirectly to other protagonists she needs to interact with to reach self-knowledge.

Albert-László Barabási mentions *displacement* as a *mutable* characteristic that connecting elements undergo the phenomenon of getting linked to any other network, political or social celebrity or mathematical equation through at least three nodes, on average.

Influenced by Frigyes Karinthy’s 1929 article *Chain-Links [Láncszemek]* as well as by Professor Malcolm Gladwell’s *The Tipping Point* study, Craig Fass, Mike Ginelli, and Brian Turtle from Albright College in Reading, Pennsylvania, initiated a peculiar experiment involving actor Kevin Bacon wanting to prove that “Bacon is God” (Barabási 2014, 59). They tried to ensure their fifteen-minute fame in the popular *John Steward Show* in January 1994 by claiming that they could associate Bacon with every actor, performer, or celebrity in history with at least three direct or indirect links: “Bacon is no closer to the centre of Hollywood than to the centre of the universe” (Barabási 2014, 59). Thus, Kevin Bacon is indirectly connected to actors like Tom Cruise, due to their 1992 thriller-crime collaboration in *A Few Good Men*, and Mike Myers and Robert Wagner, his co-stars in the 2002 comedy-adventure movie *Austin Powers in Goldmember*. The third chain to Bacon represents Robert Wagner’s cooperation with Charlie Chaplin and Edward Norton due to the 1947 comedy-crime production entitled *Monsieur Verdoux*.

The main character in both Passuth’s and Morton’s works is the Aztec female entity considered to be the axis who forms various links to several protagonists due to her immutable life circumstances such as visibility and popularity, as well as provenience. Certain external circumstances force her to make the best of the

phenomenon of mutability and/or displacement as the social protagonist on the stage of her existence.

László Passuth focuses on Malinalli's first interaction with fate. Presented from the oppressed party's point of view, she is faced with a dilemma: accommodating to the new regime or losing her life. Her first encounter with Hernán Cortés immediately compromises her entire existence. Whenever a chain is forming regarding the development of the characters, another parallel one is naturally broken, yet symbolically fortified. The last ritual she takes part in as an Aztec princess is the Red Flower ceremony. The parental blessings define Malinalli's whole perspective on being a woman, and her fateful encounter with Hernán Cortés crowns her existence as a queen. Motherhood is a self-defining moment for women, so much more for this Aztec royalty who not only gives birth to their son but also becomes the creator of a new nation. Cortés, on the other hand, considers Martin a pawn regarding his plans, similar to his mother, who helped him in the present. Being an exotic princess, Malinalli is revered and feared by Cortés and his army alike:

She is the mother of my son, Martin, who carries my father's name and whom I shall never deny, even if birthed by an Indian mother. You see, my lord... we would perhaps never have reached Mexico if it wasn't for this girl... maybe we would not be on our path to return today... The soldiers are superstitious... they say, they would only march forward if accompanied by Marina; death has nothing on her. (Passuth 1974, 235; omission in the original)

Cortés has respect for her contribution to the future of the newly created nation and land. He values the deed, not considering the person behind his success: “I do not believe in these stories, but I have asked Don Carlos to consider her services; her sins and shortcomings must be considered, but a sign of her plainness and I myself shall take all of these upon me. She must be rewarded and praised among the noble women of Castille” (Passuth 1974, 235).

The animal allegory both Passuth and Morton use in their works demonstrates a perspective of postcolonialism when the issue of an indigenous minority and the majority that subjugates them, writing history from their perspective, can be seen. Similar to the fate of many nations, including Hungarians in Transylvania after World War I, considered secondary citizens after the new political regime, the decline of a great ancient civilization bears the scars of past decisions. Cortés, the foreign conqueror, describes Malinalli's person and her actions during various altercations in a contemptuous manner as the deeds of a “serpent” (Morton 2004, 29), a “serpent-tongued slattern” (Morton 2004, 2) or a “loathsome viper” (Morton 2004, 53). Her protective nature towards her son is mocked as well, her

being compared to a lioness grabbing hold of her cub and “fight[ing] like a lion” (Morton 2004, 15).

The themes of shame, dread, fear, and homelessness that marginalized groups experienced are described by the late Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes in his acclaimed novels *La región más transparente* [*Where the Air is Clear*] and *The Crystal Frontier*, respectively in American writer and novelist Richard Wright’s literary legacy of activism against discrimination in association with the cold feeling of “living in a ‘No Man’s Land’” (Wright 1940, vii–xxxiv). Both Aztec princesses are deeply connected to their ancient roots, refusing to completely assimilate into the New World. While generations of women shall praise their mastery, their people are going to regard them as traitors. Another common hub these female protagonists share is the presence of the Priestess / Higher Power. Passuth’s Malinalli echoes Goddess Papan, a messenger of Tláloc, the god of rain himself, who, as a natural phenomenon, has the power to cleanse and revive. Malinalli can read the signs of her surroundings:

Tláloc is eternal. When the humidity descends and fog covers the world, the dew produces blue spots, then everything turns into emerald blue like the sea, the leaves tremble softly, and the vapour becomes so dense, one would think it’s dew, but then, it gets ever denser, something running down the leaf that has a sound similar to a painful yet pleasant moan... I know his voice, and we, who come from his tribe, all do. (Passuth 1974, 278)

Malinalli understands that, to reach spiritual purification, she has to accept nature’s pharmakón. By revisiting the site of her ancestors, Malinalli buries the past, throwing its memories into the millennial grave dug by history. This time, her royal, proud silence is louder than ever, reversing her fate. On a personal note, her “rectified” statement would read as follows: “Marina spoke. Everyone knew her. There hasn’t been anybody questioning her female presence there, breaking the laws of nature by starting to talk as her masters” (Passuth 1974, 248).

Carlos Morton presents a similar itinerary when it comes to Marina. The play opens and ends with the dramatic entrance and exit of La Llorona, the “Weeping Woman” (Morton 2004, 4), who warns Marina about the consequences of collaboration with Hernán Cortes, one of which is the status of an outsider: her tribe shall turn against her, and the New World that she plans to create shall reject her as well. Indeed, Marina’s strongest direct connection is Cortés, who is only a “common soldier” (Morton 2004, 9) when transactions regarding the tribes are concerned. As an adviser, secretary, messenger, and later the mother of his son, Martin, they share a strong bond.

Through Hernán Cortés, Marina is also connected indirectly to his new fiancée, Doña Catalina, whose sheer existence would endanger Marina’s life and

needs to be eliminated before “whelping [...] a white litter” (Morton 2004, 28). Marina’s confident, Ciacoatl, with her maternal reasoning, tries to reverse the fate of her beloved. In her description of Marina, she compares her to a soft and meek deer, which is a beautiful, positive, caring, and majestic symbol, truly containing Marina’s essence. Marina’s tragic deed of killing her son bears the symbolism of regaining freedom as the ultimate sacrifice and brutal revenge against the White Man who invaded and “raped” (Morton 2004, 54) her land.

5. Conclusions

This paper examines the significance of reconstructing and preserving the equilibrium between personal history and culture as a central objective for the (post)modern individual. To explore the causes and consequences of pivotal existential experiences, individuals must refocus, be present in the moment, and piece together their fragmented socio-cultural identities. By becoming the focal point of their surrounding circumstances, protagonists encounter a range of voluntary and involuntary interactions that disrupt their established worldview, compelling them to witness and adapt to a new way of life. As these protagonists leave their familiar environments, they inevitably engage with various individuals throughout their experiential journey. Under these conditions, the possibility of multiple interpretations of the same event occurs. The spectator/reader encounters divergent perceptions regarding the same individual. The result of establishing a complex web of both direct and indirect connections among the characters involved and the fundamental themes of their exploration is the birth of a healed, self-conscious individual.

I hypothesised that, based on Albert-László Barabási’s network theory, certain historical, social, and political entities like Malinalli / Marina / La Malinche function as hubs and connectors in a given group dynamic, establishing at least three direct or indirect links with their fellow protagonists. They serve as mediators, translators, and partners, highly influencing large groups with their magnetic personality; their vibe and charm make them memorable. To gain a deeper understanding of these individuals’ fictional identity cards, I analysed certain distinctive, non-negotiable “immutable” features that make La Malinche, the axis of the discussion, unique, such as her visibility, socio-cultural diversity, as well as her popularity due to her controversial reputation provoked by external circumstances of mutability-displacement. In the light of her bravery and genuine love for her ancestors and their traditions, Malinalli undertakes the painful but necessary road of remediating her broken existence, (re)discovering the joy of spiritual purification.

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