

“Seeing” the Malinche Myth as Nomad Subject in Laura Esquivel’s *Como agua para chocolate*

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Abstract

How and where can we locate the Malinche myth in a collage-like perception of cinema as articulated by Gilles Deleuze? Cinema weaves and re-weaves myths in/through movement image and time image so that both the subject and the viewer perceive and cohabit terrains of our personal and public experiences in a relationality of “becoming” nomad. Rosi Braidotti adds that the nomad subject is a splintered non-unitary subject, in a rhizomatic linkage with the post-human condition of the Anthropocene that may be non-linear and non-gendered in ways of embodied ontologies of the “normal.” This paper argues that Maria Lugones’ post-colonial proposal of reclaiming colored bodies as gendered and rational becomes another way towards becoming nomad. The film *Como agua para chocolate* is explored as an attempt to map the Malinche as a becoming myth located amidst an epistemological and an ontological struggle of post-human “seeing.” Forbidden colors and bodies perform unique stories that denounce the hybrid, to consider instead a mosaic-like collage of differences moving towards affect and solidarities as a new ethics of nomadism. The collage is borderless like cinema itself where subjects and objects are in rhizomatic de/re-territorializations of movement image and time image.

Keywords: Nomad, colored bodies, collage, time image, movement image

1. Introduction

The present paper attempts to look at the Malinche myth as nomad subject in Laura Esquivel’s novel *Como agua para chocolate, novela en doce entregas con recetas, amores y remedios caseros* (1989) turned into a film entitled *Como agua para chocolate* (1992). Although Laura Esquivel herself was the script writer of the film, Alfonso Arau, the director of the film, borrows from traditions of Mexican cinema and the Hollywood style to play with stereotypes of the Mexican “otherness” to dwell on cliché themes of the revolution, border and identity. These clichés and stereotypes are reworked through visual images that highlight the Deleuzian movement image and time image as integral to embodied matter in movement. They don’t signify like words, rather they become meanings themselves rendering any other-i-zation irrelevant. However, this paper is not about how the film is different nor about how it adds to “the original” text or deflates it. On the contrary, it will dwell on its filmic narrative, visual language and its rhizomatic linkages with our perceptions and our memories of the playing out of the bodies off/on screen. It will attempt to map the Malinche as a becoming myth¹ located amidst an epistemological

and an ontological struggle of post-human seeing.² She is a polyglot and forever travelling across different linguistic domains. She is in this sense a nomadic subject who “sees/speaks” or “is seen/spoken to” through her own body and her mind with those of others.³ Slices of time surrounding each other move, touch and overlap each other randomly and intermittently. Deleuze understands cinema in this way so that one may be both viscous subject and object at the same time/space through shifting time and space. So, the viewer and the viewed (not only in cinema) share each other’s time and space, subject and object positionality to a relationality of becoming (Barad 2007 and Braidotti 2013), requiring ethical responsibility and accountability that present themselves with every possibility. This is rhizomatic and random in its scope and extension.⁴ We as viewers also become nomadic as we see the visual narrative of the novel because we become polyglots, rhizomatic and non-unitary subjects as we continuously translate and engage with the moving images. This puts the audiovisual subject in a shared plane with the viewer; there is no othering, hence no hybridity rather a collage, where every real and potential subject sticks out through her difference, with no scope for any kind of synthesis. Cinema becomes this site of myth making in its attempt at re-viewing Esquivel’s narrative over a time and space that continuously negotiates a presence/t with its ghost of history and of its potential myth making towards a collage of decolonial encounters.⁵

It therefore proposes to dwell on issues of re-telling of Esquivel’s suggested film script in visual modes or re-viewing in general and of disengaging with her imagined mode of representation in the said movie so that she becomes not an “other,” rather our own conjugations through her and also the other way round, that is of her through us as real or imagined. Both Esquivel and the viewers become an assemblage in rhizomatic linkages with everything else surrounding us such as our own histories, geopolitics and epistemologies, which may be visually challenged with colonial blindness or loaded with different kinds of etiquettes, ethics and responsibilities.

Postmodernism’s reckoning with rejection of mimetic representation rests on the splintering of knowledge systems caused by the indeterminacy of meaning due to problematic social entanglements with power and knowledge. In Latin American contexts, this coincided with the “boom” novels as well as with the “testimonial” genre; in visual culture, Third Cinema reached its plenitude in the Cuban filmography of Humberto Solás, especially *Cecilia* (1982) in the present context because it was a film based on Cirilo Villaverde’s classic 19th century novel *Cecilia*. This novel also became a film, just as the present text and context of Laura Esquivel. *Cecilia* locates in the realm of national identity and the oedipal anchors of race. Malinche, on the other hand, is one that breaks any filiations, especially familial, patriarchal and the national. This is nomadism, decolonizing and empowering. *Cecilia* on the contrary explores how black was colonized, altered and acculturated into a colonial gaze. It is precisely this difference of perspective that brings to the fore the historical-libidinal materiality of subjugated knowledges,⁶ which destabilizes the verticality of the structuralist “metaphor” to a Deleuzian “becoming.”

Maria Lugones problematized Anibal Quijano’s submission that the characteristic of global, Eurocentered capitalist power organized around two axes: “the coloniality of power” and “modernity.” This is problematic as it is blind to heterosexual and patriarchal normativity in terms of race and gender. Hence, she fine-tunes this submission further.

Quijano’s lenses also assume patriarchal and heterosexual understandings of the disputes over control of sex, its resources, and products. Quijano accepts the global, Eurocentered, capitalist understanding of what gender is about. These features of the

framework serve to veil the ways in which non-“white” colonized women were subjected and disempowered. The heterosexual and patriarchal character of the arrangements can themselves be appreciated as oppressive by unveiling the presuppositions of the framework. Gender does not need to organize social arrangements, including social sexual arrangements. But gender arrangements need not be either heterosexual or patriarchal. They need not be, that is, as a matter of history. Understanding these features of the organization of gender in the modern/colonial gender system—the biological dimorphism, the patriarchal and heterosexual organizations of relations—is crucial to an understanding of the differential gender arrangements along “racial” lines. Biological dimorphism, heterosexual patriarchy are all characteristic of what I call the “light” side of the colonial/modern organization of gender. Hegemonically these are written large over the meaning of gender. Quijano seems not to be aware of his accepting this hegemonic meaning of gender. In making these claims I aim to expand and complicate Quijano’s approach, preserving his understanding of the coloniality of power, which is at the center of what I am calling the “modern/colonial gender system.” (Lugones 2008, 2)

Lugones thereafter argues how spaces and bodies of the new world became inscribed/embedded within parameters of an invented “white rationality” that consequently racialized the non-white as savage and barbaric dimorphic male/female; they couldn’t be assigned any gender as they were outside of the rational. Hence these bodies and spaces were “seen” as dangerous and ungovernable without coloniality of power. Seeing became a problematic materiality of coloniality as it highlighted the multiplicity of unfamiliar colors and contours. Coloniality of power is an understanding of colonization as a design, a plot to encroach upon everything including spaces, bodies and minds. That is how it becomes phallogocentric involving writing with the Spanish phallus of religion and language. Differently shaped bodies of different colors of the colonized were attempted to be recast through rape and Christianity and Spanish language, into hybrid ones. Colored bodies were processed to “becoming bodies” so that the process of “becoming” is not one of imitation or analogy, rather generative and creative, in order to give shape to a new way of being that is a function of influences rather than of resemblances. The process is one of removing the element from its original functions and bringing about new ones⁷ (bodies that were delinked from family, race, gender, nationhood, etc. in the present context of coloniality of power). These posthuman bodies were thus contending with forces that were violently coercive, masculine and driven not only by political or economic interests but also by sociocultural agendas premised on white rationalism. The latter represented so strong a fervor that the colonized subjects were either killed or processed as objects of the colonial gaze. Since these subjects were outside of the realm of the rational, they were simply marked as male or female, not man or woman. They were herded, moved and possessed in different ways. Latin America became a space that colonization had to “cleanse” and “sanitize” and “redeem” of its savagery, its alleged lack of history and culture and its soul with embodied Christianity, and Spanish language and “civilization.” Politically and economically it had to be geared up for Spain’s own profits as justification for enslaving of colored bodies.⁸

Thus, the *encomienda* system, the *repartimientos* and the reductions became the uniquely designed colonial panopticons in order to maximize exploitation from within a controlled space. While colored men were managed as beasts to serve as laborers in mines and farms, the women were managed to service sexual and other interests of their owners. Men’s bodies and minds and spaces would service the colonial economic agenda, but

women's bodies and minds and spaces were to comply with the political and social. The Indian women (and later their African sisters transported from the overseas) were seen as extremely lascivious and oversized sexual objects (or bodies) that had to be controlled. Their bodies were re-located outside of their indigenous set-up of social hierarchies, as such arrangements were destroyed. This way their sexuality was controlled and utilized to maintain a relationship of subordination between the colonizer and the colonized, setting in place the question of race and heterosexuality as a new "normal."

Mexican history becomes so contaminated with this design that it continues to be in place and to be deployed in the interests of the colonial or neo-colonial powers. Post-independent/revolution Mexico map these very issues of race to draw new borders involving racial profiles. Seeing became very crucial in terms of new colors, cartographies and contours. The Indian and black bodies were the savage others, though in the early twentieth century after the Mexican revolution, some important intellectuals, such as José Vasconcelos and Diego Rivera, attempted to bring these colored bodies into the mainstream, at least symbolically. Rivera's depiction of marginal identities in his murals was meant to give them some visibility in the history of Mexico. They were also meant to educate the common Mexican regarding her rich heritage of multiculturalism and democratic values earned during the Mexican revolution. However, there were others, such as Octavio Paz, who continued to fix the Indian element of Mexican identity with some reproach and shame. Representation has always been problematic.

2. Malinche between Myth and History

Decoloniality argues against the logic of European rationalism that justified colonization. Reckoning with the Malinche myth as nomadism is a move towards such an attempt. From among the most symbolic of the Mexican myths of the undesirable "other" is the Malinche, an alleged traitor and a whore responsible for Mexico's conquest by Cortés. Thus, she is associated with illegitimacy and treachery though she herself was at the receiving end of rape and humiliation at the hand of the conquistadores. Different narratives by conquistadores and colonizers have articulated the Malinche in different ways. She was the violated Mexican-Indian who was the conquistador's "tongue" (translator) and concubine occupying open public spaces. Generally, language and body were to service colonial agendas of conquest and miscegenation as decreed by royal slogan of "poblar es gobernar" or "to populate is to govern." Malinche's body was different as it birthed the first mestizo or mixed race that became another word for another language articulating another way of being. She was a woman chaperoned by the conquistadores, namely Hernán Cortés. Her body was "recast" to make her his strategic partner, his interpreter and his concubine. She could not be seen as a mere irrational savage with a lascivious sexuality. Bernal Díaz, a known chronicler of the conquest of Mexico, has portrayed her with some dignity. Malinche herself, either way, was not a passive subject as her multilingualism and her body were performing, defying, manipulating and taking control. She has been shown to be oscillating between a victim or a manipulator, both of which need salvation and male agency of liberation. Any agency, if at all, of this indigenous woman came with the tags of a prostitute, a public woman and the violated one who bore the first illegitimate subject. Octavio Paz had gathered this all up to finally write her off as "la chingada" or the "the screwed one" and has theorized Mexican identity around her with a sense of a "lack" that had to be hidden behind a smiling mask. She was the bad mother who had birthed the Mexican into a shameful and fatherless illegitimacy.⁹

Feminists denounced such representations and condemned the allegations that Malinche was responsible for Mexican failed identity. Their writings, paintings, performances or other ways of storytelling, would involve a re-interpretation that focused on the colored bodies as sites of re-conquest and decolonization and the “tongue” or her language potential as the source of power towards ultimate autonomy for the Malinche. This aspect of the Malinche and the contrast of Paz’s understanding of a toxic masculinist discourse of the woman as the “chingada,” passive and without agency, is significant. Malinche is thrust into a public space, hence visible, framed within a very important colonial design. For post-colonial Mexican women fighting caudillismo, machismo and racism, embodied language, hence visible colored bodies become another way of ontological struggle. This ontology constitutes a paradigm shift that defies the givenness of a norm, to enable an encounter with feminist rhizomic reterritorialization. Significantly, Frida Kahlo assumes and identifies with the Malinche and “writes back” with her body, defying the concept of body matter as passive receptor of male designs.¹⁰ Gloria Anzaldúa says *SOY MI LENGUA* (Anzaldúa 40). That is, I am my language, and thus locates her language and her body as a border of Spanish and American striations, not smooth space, breaking the grammars of both into what goes as Spanglish, which is borderless, grammarless and fluid. There are very many young people of the present generation who continue to reweave, reprocess and delink this myth from coloniality of power in order to enter into nomadic ontologies and epistemologies of alternate ethnic and gendered identities around the becoming Malinche. This is the exact opposite of Paz’s post-colonial concept of hardened and masked masculinity that conceived femininity as vulnerability and weakness, reminiscent of colonialism. Such hardness serviced the State, the Church and Positivist philosophy while Feminist language and bodies went contrary to it. Liberal Nationalists also contributed to this re-invention through painting as they helped a vast majority of illiterate people to relate to dominant ideologies of nationalism in order to facilitate a pan-continental sense of belonging and unity that could reckon with and counter the colonizing forces of oppression and slavery. It also served to fill in the sense of orphanhood and illegitimacy of the mixed identity and flaunt it as the legitimate national Mexican identity as against the “purity of blood syndrome” of the colonizers. The otherization of the Malinche and the invention of the Virgin of Guadalupe, both as visible colored image and concept, was a way of compromise and compliance towards this end.¹¹

3. The Film *Como agua para chocolate*

Laura Esquivel’s narrative, especially the novel, is a parody of the nineteenth century publication of women’s fiction in the form of a monthly serial. Such publications contained home remedies, recipes, dressmaking tips, lace designs, moral advice and some such things common in women’s magazines today. The novel is a parody in the same way that *Don Quixote* was of the chivalrous novels, sited in popular culture.¹² This is almost completely invisible in the film that complicates the novelistic narrative by fiddling with different layers of embodied histories and fiction.

The film retells the story of Mexican revolution (1910-1920) from the perspective of Tita’s great grandniece who discovers and inherits her diary. The myth woven around the historical figure of the Malinche, this paper argues, is recycled as the fictional character of Tita as she manipulates her life and those of others through her body and her culinary skills. The narrative vividly explores the world of women of the then

Mexican society, through its intimate gaze into the lives of members of the Garza family, where the mother, Elena Garza, performs the rigid and patriarchal norms of Mexican society. The narrative moves through flashbacks of real happenings with Tita, interspersed with whisperings with the dead and also with her great grandniece's commentaries in the present. Embodied voices in the narrative become performing images in the film as in the Deleuzian concept of a movement image and a time image.¹³ The inside and the outside become ambiguous though they prevail.

The narrative traces the life journey of the youngest of the four daughters of Elena, Tita, who is at the receiving end of her mother's patriarchal dictates. She is marginalized and is forced to submit to the instructions of her mother who is authoritarian and plays the role of a dominant matriarch in the family, unlike the space and freedom allowed to her other sisters. She is born in the kitchen, where her mother messed up the floor with so much birth fluid that the entire kitchen becomes flooded, and when the liquid dries up, it leaves salt behind that Nacha collects and will later use in her magical cookery. (One may remember the tumultuous birth of the Malinche in Esquivel's eponymous novel (2007) and how soon after, she was abandoned by her mother.) Tita is not thrown out of the house but abandoned nonetheless, although symbolically. She is thus thrust into the kitchen in the company of the Indian cook Nacha and maid Chíncha who nurture her as she grows up. She is deprived of any affection and kindness by her mother, though she lives on the ranch. Elena, her mother, feels this way because her husband dies soon after Tita's birth. Moreover, the family tradition forbade the youngest daughter to marry so that she could look after her parents in old age. However, she finds the intimate corner of the kitchen as her most intensely private space where she can discover and express her own self and her agency through different culinary skills that she inherits from Nacha. The kitchen becomes that space of confluence and conflict where time and movement as well as places become nomadic. White cross path with the indigenous brown (the staff in the house) but they can diffuse these differences of color by remaining confined to the most invisible margins of the house. White is visibly the dominant color in the interiors of the Garza household throughout the film. Anything colored, such as the bunch of roses for example, which Tita receives from Pedro, seems to be scandalous and hence has to be hidden away. Tita however chooses the dark red rose petals to prepare a dish with tender quails that contagiously spread intense sexual arousal in everybody. The brightness of the red petals stands out prominently on the screen as it reminiscences an indigenous recipe whispered into her ears by the ghost of Nacha.

The dusty outside embedded in the revolution stretches into the messy inside embodied in the rebellions of Tita and her friends (the house staff) to not submit to her mother, Elena. This is no fairy-tale narrative as has been made out to be sometimes.¹⁴ Instead it tells a tale of hatred, passion, desire and revenge. The scandal surrounding Elena's affair with a mulatto, resulting in the birth of white blonde Gertrudis was revealed in gossip during the birth ceremony of Tita. Unable to cope with this shame, Elena's husband dies. She has to hide the picture of her black lover in a locket on her bosom. Her own life story seems to be a mythic reworking of the Llorona¹⁵ as she abandons the baby to the care of Nacha because she feels that Tita had brought her bad luck. Thus, black also invades the whiteness of the Garza house. Black, red and brown visually contaminate the entire whiteness of narrative of the film thereafter. The white in the household transforms into a becoming white¹⁶ as it gets tainted by odd colors of black, brown and red among many others.

4. Nomadism

Rosi Braidotti's concept of nomadism as an existential and intellectual feature of her subjectivity is helpful to theorize on the becoming Malinche of Tita that this study involves itself with. Tita, like the Malinche, *becomes nomad*, both in body and spirit (through the culinary) who defies the conditions and constraints imposed on her through her skillful use of inter-spaces of opportunities and abilities of cookery, which she creates for herself amidst these very adverse conditions. Such opportunities appear as event-potentials that break any conception of binaries and dwell instead on undoing the hierarchical privileges of the former over the latter of any binaries. Instead, it is Tita's reach spanning the non-human (as in her friendship with Nacha, Chincha and all subalterns, her acceptance of her blonde but mulatto sister), the non-life and the non-ontological (as in the end of the film where she chooses death in a golden blaze of her burning chambers) that empower her to defy power where power alludes not only to patriarchal designs of domination but also to understanding of it as a force that works on this design to make it seem normal.¹⁷ Many critics have seen this as simply a magical realist style as events occur beyond any realm of the rational. However, the camera moves that draw the spaces surrounding Tita articulate this unique "reach" with light, sound and movements that are fast and randomly moving in the Deleuzian way of the motion picture as also /nomadism.¹⁸ Nomadism is about a practice or a performance against one's own stabilized sense of identity based on contingency of history, arbitrariness of language, affective desires, and unstable epistemologies. In the sense of coloniality of power, it may be seen as a kind of anti-writing, which is significant, given that in Latin America, writing was equivalent to colonizing and the imposition of modernity.¹⁹

Tita reminisces rhizomatic moves that seem to grope through inter-spaces of her kitchen and the unknown and inhospitable zones of the world outside (the revolution) that defy modernist normativity for linear, coherent and unified narrative. Instead they invoke gestating thinking that will birth new grounds of a disturbing and distinct epistemological order through defiance of and deviance from any condescending and compromising situation of recolonization and surrender. In order to further explore this, Tita can be read through and in conjunction with the phenomenon of thinking around Malinche. She contradicts the national narrative that has traditionally demeaned her, as has been seen in the works of Paz. Laura Esquivel has brought this to light in her novel on the Malinche and has emphasized the ways in which she exercises her own agency through difficult situations that she was forced to bear. Tita's unique culinary skills in the domesticated space of the kitchen can be interpreted as nomadism in the same way as Malinche's translation skills through the Mexican landscape. One's knowledge and control of the kitchen and the other's familiarity with the Mexican terrain were acquired as they were condemned to inhabit them because their respective mothers dispossessed them from familial affection and security for selfish motives. However, Malinche and Tita reclaim their agency through their respective embodied experiences of the Mexican histories. The interrelations, which both Tita and Malinche establish with non-prescriptive ways of being, are reflective of their situations of nomadism and their assertion of their own agency. Nomadism is a way of being that is empowering and liberating as it involves a breaking away from prescribed ways of subjectivity in order to practice and live by their own agency.

5. Interstices

Since the human is white, male and rational, and at the helm of all life and earth matters, the posthuman is all others such as colored, gendered, flora and fauna, earth, rivers and oceans or cyborgs, monsters, vampires, real or imagined, virtual or real, etc. in relationships of mutuality, randomness and casual (rhizomatic) linkages. Posthumanism denies any beginnings or ends, chronologies or clock time.

Posthumanist hybridity today is all-encompassing and beyond the human paradigm, crossing threshold with the animal world as well as with the material one. Entanglements and complex root-weavings connect all creatures, thoughts and the materials as knowledge gets de-privileged in multiple ways, patterns and traces. Knowledge flows through everywhere, not necessarily as an adjunct of power, consuming up all spatiality of status quo and predictability to conceive, gestate and birth hitherto unknown worlds embedded in the realm of the known. Feminism, in this context, entails negotiating with all interstices as nomadic, as it contests and contends conflicting unstable borders moving along, so that they continue to remain borders. There is no scope of any blending.

Very interesting example in this context is that of the three Garza sisters as rhizomic becomings of different kinds of female stereotypes; thus, what strikes is that Rosaura performs the role of a domesticated submissive woman while Gertrudis, that of a prostitute. Rosaura is the Virgin who birthed a baby, but her breasts were dry and without milk. Gertrudis, on the other hand, is the result of her mother's affair with a mulatto, though she is blonde and white, as we saw. She is no good at any domestic work, sexually open and dares to run away naked with a revolutionary adventurer until she becomes a commander of her own troop of men with arms. Each one remains within her personal bodily dispositions.

Tita is the most problematic of them all as she slips between domesticity and sexuality, jumping from her Anthropocene instability to a "becoming" nomad.²⁰ She can breastfeed Rosaura's baby and at the same time induce sexual arousing through her culinary prowess in the kitchen. She can be rational and also magical, thus reclaiming her gender through the rational or the magical. This space that she occupies through her breasts and her hands is an enabling embodied space as it allows her to stretch the space into the prohibited outside. Malinche's love and language corresponds to Tita's indulgence in desire and pleasure intertwined with her skill to feed, to sustain, to nurture and to care. She becomes the clandestine lover and the magical nanny, subverting the givenness of any understanding of a breast giver. Maria Lugones' concept of the re-gendering of racialized (and therefore visible) bodies underscores Rosi Braidotti's nomadic subjects that break free from logocentric, linear narratives of an "Oedipal plot,"²¹ liberating nomadism from any passive unbelonging into a powerful non-space, a plateau that is striated, non-white, nomadic and unstable. Braidotti argues:

One of the strengths of feminist theory is the desire to leave behind a linear mode of intellectual thinking, the teleologically ordained style of argumentation most of us have been trained to respect and emulate. In my experience this results in encouraging repetition and dutifulness to a canonical tradition that enforces the sanctimonious sacredness of certain texts: the texts of the great philosophical humanistic tradition. I would like to oppose to them a passionate form of posthumanism based on feminist nomadic ethics.²² More especially, I see it as essential that women break free from

what Teresa de Lauretis, the Italian American feminist theorist describes as “the Oedipal plot” of theoretical work. (Braidotti 1994, 29)

Add to this Braidotti’s argument about the limitations of phallogocentric approach (1994, 28-29) and shifting to other modes of representation. Generally speaking, both the novel as a genre and the movie as another, break and subvert the grammar of the phallogocentrism both literally and metaphorically. Movies emerging from novels become burdened with issues of fidelity in terms of a competitive politics of representation. Today however, matters of cinematic languages of close-up, panning, flashbacks and montage have argued in favor of a relationship of complementarity rather than competitiveness in the way that they work against official history or the Oedipal plot. As a result of the Deleuzean understanding of cinematic movement image and time image, there is scope for an encounter towards a becoming mythic where Tita as Malinche loops back to a body enmeshed in moving space and time as cinema itself becomes a myth maker of alternative subject-object positions.

This implies that the posthuman knowing subject has to be understood as a relational embodied and embedded, affective and accountable entity and not only as a transcendental consciousness. Two related notions emerge from this claim: firstly, the mind-body continuum–i.e. the embrainment of the body and embodiment of the mind– and secondly, the nature-culture continuum–i.e. “naturecultural” and “humanimal” transversal bonding. (Braidotti 2018, 31)

Malinche is a myth but located in history, fiction and folklore. She is an archetype, which is feminist, nomadic and on the border. She is a bad wife, a bad mother and a public woman. She is the “chingada” and the “other” of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Cinema works against such nationalist, misogynist and colonial myths. As it does so, it also re-churns them to bring to the fore other myths that are alternate ones. The enmeshed human body thereby induces perceptions that cause affections that in turn result in actions. The relationship between each of these categories is not that of causality rather of difference, so that they can be connected by an “and” rather than any other way. They become associated with long shots, close-ups and medium shots.²³ There are no unifying concepts, rather fragments of a schizophrenic subject, which stares back at itself in the mirror-screen of our minds as screens. Braidotti’s nomad becomes another woman moving between the ontological and the existential. David Punter posits this in a very interesting way as he borrows from *Malinche*, the novel by Esquivel:

For her, the spiritual world had an intimate relationship with Nature and the cosmos, with their rhythm, with the movement of the stars through the skies. When the Sun and the Moon had been born in Teotihuacan, they had freed mankind from the darkness. She knew from her ancestors that the light emitted by the stars was not only physical, but spiritual as well, and that their passage through the heavens to unify the thoughts of men, the cycles of time and space. (Punter, 99)

Punter has been the only one to research Esquivel’s narrative using the posthuman theorizing of a mythic-historic subject-object relationality of becoming. Braidotti’s understanding of nomad subject seen through the Deleuzean philosophy of time image and movement image highlights the problems of narration as a linear, gendered and “normal”:

[...] perhaps narration is impossible, perhaps the attempt recedes behind veils of presumed history [...]. Can the relics of Malinche be exhumed? What is the purpose of

that? A narration “among other possible narrations”; and so Malinche, alongside the family of *Like Water for Chocolate*, take their place in an uncertain, undecidable world of the past. [...] How to speak of the past without some concepts of the serious, some tinge of veneration, how to remain loose, unconvinced, floating when one speaks-or writes-of the tragedies that have accompanied the birth of most nation states. (Punter, 142)

Punter, like Deleuze and Guattari, alludes to “A speaking or a writing of impurity that is not yet fully cooked, not smooth, as Deleuze and Guattari would have it, but striated” (142). The camera, arguably, becomes another squinting eye, a stone cutter, of unfinished stones of the ruins of a pyramid or a castle. It doesn’t actually write, rather it performs images so that the images in motion perform imperfect designs. It becomes impossible to speak and think or vice versa as speaking/thinking has become overused and overburdened with language so that it becomes very banal and trivial. Therefore, images themselves become the thinking, negotiating interstices and irrational breaks so that any interior monologue breaks. “The cut, or interstice, between two series of images no longer forms part of either of the two series: it is the equivalent of an irrational cut, which determines the non-commensurable relations between images” (Deleuze 1997b, 213). Deleuze proposes a thinking cinema that keeps viewership and moving images in a relationship of rhizomatic becoming. The nomad moves in broken pieces constitutive of a collage where the other cuttings are not contrasts, rather equivalences that refuse to synthesize. Tita, therefore, reminiscences ghosts of the Malinche in her other manifestations as well. The fact that she can breastfeed her nephew retraces another time image, for example of Frida Kahlo being breastfed by her black nanny. This is not a metaphor, rather a space between her real and her virtual self, a “fraternity of metaphors.” Deleuze elaborates on this concept, of “difference acting upon difference” (most notably outlined in *Difference and Repetition*). But this equivalence is also key because it is the refusal to synthesize images that allows the void to present itself between them as an interstice. The scenes where Gertrudis runs away nude with a revolutionary conman and Tita goes away with John (the American doctor who proposes to marry her) are very interesting in this sense. The landscapes are both comparable and so are the ways they are embedded and embodied; Gertrudis is fully naked, co-riding a horse kicking off dust, and Tita is over-clad with her shawl that covers not only her, but also the land she is leaving behind, settling any dust. Braidotti criticizes hybridity as a false construct of harmony due to global capitalism. So, while the film compares scenes, it doesn’t hybridize, rather it plays with a visible collage of different event potentialities.

6. Conclusion

By way of conclusion, seeing has become a political act that tracks the non-unitary subject of the Malinche myth as hidden and replayed, destabilized and rewoven by cinema as a process of becoming nomad. Further, it also relocates viewers as nomadic in the way we consume these moving images, given our own deterritorializations through surveillance systems of diverse power relations in advanced and global capitalism. Maria Lugones’ de-gendering of the colonized female subject of the non-western world locates gendering in relation to white rational subject. Malinche appropriates tokens of the rational through her translation skills, and likewise Tita, who has been kept out of the rational world by her falsely puritan mother, since she is adulterous, is condemned to submit to a degendered space as a new “norm.” The kitchen rids her of any entitlement

to gendering because she was not rational and didn't conform to European normativity of soft, mute and docile women. Tita, abandoned by her mother and growing up in company of the colored staff of the house, was therefore outside of the rational etiquettes of prescribed white women's behavior.

Tita thus becomes nomad and has good company in her indulgence with breaking up grammatically correct idiom in terms of her cookery, her skill as care giver and breast giver. Gertrudis dons this nomadism of her own free will, as she runs away with an adventurer. However, both of them reclaim their worlds through solidarity with impure embodiments of illicit relationships and illogical experiences. The Malinche myth unpacks a friendly rhizomatic link with the Garza sisters, flaunting and challenging our own situations of becoming women.

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Notes

¹ Becoming myth is borrowed from Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of the term, becoming animal/woman/etcetera, as opposed to any filiation in *Thousand Plateaus*. Hence myth and totem or structure and system are problematic as they entail a closure of subject in terms of its given-ness of categories, classifications or distinctions. The Malinche as myth, in this sense, works against such closures as it is casual, accidental and random in the way that it plays with and destabilizes histories, fictions and oedipal deterritorialization. For more on this see "Becoming-Intense, Becoming Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible" in *Thousand Plateaus* (232-309).

² The post-human is a concept drawn from Deleuzian feminists such as Braidotti, Donna Haraway and Karen Barad among many others. Rosi Braidotti argues that "it does not assume a human, individualized self as the deciding factor of main subject. It rather envisages what I would call a transversal inter-connection or an 'assemblage' of human and non-human actors [...]. Secondly, I want to emphasize the normatively neutral structure of contemporary technologies: they are not endowed with intrinsic humanistic agency. Thirdly, I note that the advocates of advanced capitalism seem to be faster in grasping the creative potential of the posthuman than some of the well-meaning and progressive neo-humanist opponents of this system" (*The Posthuman*, 45).

³ Actually, I borrow this from Derrida's submission on time image. Time image is about creating time layers with the camera so that the present and the past play on the same screen. This means that the real gets swallowed up by the virtual to the extent that the real and the virtual become ambiguous.

⁴ For more on this see *Movement Image* where he talks about different slices of space that the camera plays with. He analyses Oscar Welles' *Citizen Kane* to illustrate this.

⁵ By this I not only refer to Anibal Quijano's understanding of decoloniality as a way to affront advanced capitalist trends to encroach upon any other civilizations, but also to disengage it from an understanding that normalizes coloniality as linked only to the non-western.

⁶ Subjugated knowledges refer to knowledges that have been delegitimized, rendered irrelevant or simply disqualified due to hegemonic narratives such as monism, colonization or moral universalism.

⁷ See Deleuze and Guattari, 1987 (275-276).

⁸ For nineteenth century Latin American history, see Walter Mignolo.

- ⁹ For more on this see Paz's *Labyrinth of Solitude*.
- ¹⁰ Kahlo regularly dressed herself in precolonial Indigenous costume that resisted the strictures of a colonial gender normativity. As she embraced the identity of the indigenous people, it allowed her to deconstruct and re-codify the signs of the Malinche as la chingada in order to subvert through language and body, a decolonial act. In a self-portrait entitled *The Mask* (1945), Kahlo covers her face behind a papier-mâché caricature of the Malinche. In this conflicted character Kahlo found a mirror for her own anxieties, sometimes signing her letters "Frida, La Malinche" (See "Frida Kahlo: Room Guide: Room 9 Self-Portraits in <https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/frida-kahlo/frida-kahlo-room-guide/frida-kahlo-room-guide-room-9>. Accessed on Jan. 5., 2020).
- ¹² The Virgin of Guadalupe is a painting of an indigenous looking Madonna in Mexico.
- ¹² For more on this, see Maria Elena de Valdes' article.
- ¹³ Deleuze contests the idea that cinema is a succession of still images to argue that cinema is comprised of movement images, which are camera dependent and hence objective, mobile and non-linear. The camera can see from where no human can; it can also move on its own and can turn to flashbacks and fast forwards or zoom in on a provisional present.
- ¹⁴ See Cherie Miecham's article.
- ¹⁵ Llorona is a myth of a proud and beautiful woman abandoned by a Spanish colonizer after she birthed two babies, whom she drowned to avenge him. She is known to be roaming along water bodies lamenting the death of her babies while also devouring any child whom she saw.
- ¹⁶ Becoming white is a concept that Rosi Braidotti borrows from Deleuze and Guattari's theorization of becoming, to refer to it as problematic as it is white male, logocentric, Christian, heterosexual and rational.
- ¹⁷ Foucault's *Power and Knowledge* as well as *History of Sexuality* are useful readings to understand this concept of power.
- ¹⁸ For understanding this, see Deleuze's movement images and time images. He argues that the camera moves can make objective reality by long, middle or close shots. It can use mirrors to produce virtual images of a real one so that virtuality swallows up the real. It can also deep focus an image to distinguish between past and present in space. He borrows from Bergson's criticism of clock time to think lived time. Past and future penetrate in present as memory and desire.
- ¹⁹ For more on this, see Walter Mignolo who says that alphabetic writing is linked with the exercise of power and in the Latin American context, to colonization.
- ²⁰ Becoming nomad alludes to a non-unitary yet politically engaged and ethically accountable vision of the nomadic subject. It is about a matter or relationship to a space and a situation they encounter and embrace. Braidotti critiques the humanist ideal of "Man" as the allegedly universal measure of all things, hence the post-human. Further she also critiques the species hierarchy and the human exceptionalism as post-anthropocentrism. The implications are that one may consider the Anthropocene as a multi-layered posthuman predicament that includes the environmental, socio-economic, and affective and psychic dimensions of our ecologies of belonging (Braidotti 2018).
- ²¹ In her article, "Oedipus Interruptus," Teresa de Lauretis explains the ways in which viewers identity with the film. She looks at female spectatorship in particular to show how they are "seduced" into femininity or submissive roles through the manipulations of the cinematic apparatus. This is Braidotti's Oedipal plot.
- ²² Nomadic ethics is about a sustained taking of stand against relativism and nihilism, against a multiplicity of different political waves, joining issue with emancipatory politics begging ethical accountability. For more on this, see Braidotti, *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics*.
- ²³ To understand the meaning of these cinematic procedures, see Donato Totaro's highlighting that the "cinematographical apparatus" was an analogy for how the intellect approaches reality.

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