

## From La Malinche to El Jamaicaón: Neoliberal Governmentality Regimes in Contemporary Mexico

### De La Malinche a El Jamaicaón: regímenes de gubernamentalidad neoliberal en el México contemporáneo

Melissa Ley-Cervantes

El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, Monterrey, México  
Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, México

#### SUMMARY

This paper analyses the tension present in narratives around 'belonging' in a group of middling Mexican migrants in Madrid, through the analysis of two mythical figures whose stories are determined by their attitudes towards the other: La Malinche and El Jamaicaón. The paper argues that both figures are part of the neoliberal governmentality regimes at work in contemporary Mexico, which seek to foster loyalty to the nation state and, at the same time, competitiveness at the global level. While La Malinche has permeated public discourse since the colonial era and represents the shifting attitudes towards hybridization and mix; El Jamaicaón is a lesser known contemporary hero who fell from grace when overcome by homesickness, in a world where travel and movement are decisive in the definition of middle class identity. Constantly (re-) produced in public discourse as cautionary tales regarding Mexican attitudes towards the outside world, these figures have come to illustrate the roots and routes of 'Mexican identity'.

**Key words:** Neoliberal Governmentality; Myths; Mexicans; Middling Migrants.

#### RESUMEN

El artículo analiza la tensión presente en las narrativas en torno a la 'pertenencia' de un grupo de migrantes de clase media en Madrid, a través del análisis de dos figuras míticas cuyas historias están determinadas por sus actitudes hacia el 'otro': La Malinche y El Jamaicaón. El argumento del artículo es que ambas figuras son parte de los regímenes de gubernamentalidad neoliberal en el México contemporáneo, que buscan incentivar lealtad hacia el estado-nación y al mismo tiempo, competitividad a un nivel global. Mientras que La Malinche ha permeado el discurso público desde la época colonial y representa los cambios en las actitudes hacia el mestizaje, el Jamaicaón es la figura contemporánea menos conocida de un héroe que cayó en desgracia debido a una profunda nostalgia por el terruño, en un mundo en el que la movilidad determina de manera importante la habilidad de reproducir una identidad de clase media. Estas figuras son ilustrativas de las raíces y los derroteros de la 'identidad mexicana' pues son (re) producidas en el discurso público como moralejas de las actitudes de los mexicanos hacia el exterior.

**Palabras clave:** Gubernamentalidad neoliberal; Mitos; Mexicanos; Migrantes de clase media.

**Malinchismo**

(From Malinche, nickname of Marina, lover of Hernán Cortés)  
 1.m. Mex. Attitude of whom shows attachment to foreign things while  
 showing a disdain for the own.

RAE

**Jamaicón**

Slang word for homesickness used by Mexicans. Mexican soccer defender (sic.)  
 José el Jamaicón Villegas felt sick regularly when abroad. He even claimed once that  
 his wife was ill in order to escape a training camp. Hence, homesickness was referred (sic.)  
 as 'el Jamaicón' amongst mexicans (sic).

Urban Dictionary

Within the logics of late capitalist accumulation and globalization there are three interrelated processes that have set up the stakes for the game in the transnational social field: the transnationalization of production, the spread of multinational enterprises and technological change. These interrelated processes are dependent upon the movement of capital, goods, information and people across nation-state's borders. In this sense, neoliberalism can be understood as a process of market-driven projects that aim to facilitate capitalist accumulation by redrawing the state's role in a myriad of issues.

The neoliberal project is oriented towards minimizing the role of the state in order to facilitate an accumulation that is based on a global exchange and production of goods. This happens in varying degrees and depending on the specific context. It can involve the reduction of its role in providing certain services, the re-orientation towards private service-oriented industries, or losing its grip on issues such as tariffs or workers' rights (Glick-Schiller and Caglar 2011:4).

In the words of Gupta *et al.* (2006) the mode of neoliberal governmentality «is characterized by competitive market logic and a focus in a smaller government that operates from the distance» (Gupta *et al.* 2006: 278). This idea of the government operating from the distance reshapes the notion of belonging to the nation-state. Nowadays, national governments encourage a certain degree of flexibility that is characterized by the idea that subjects should remain loyal to the nation-state while reaping from the benefits of a globalized economy (Ong 1999).

In this context, governmentality is broadly understood as the deployment of forms of non-repressive state's power aimed to discipline the population, through the bureaucratic corpus but also through other kinds of institutions that produce rules based on the knowledge and power (Ong 1999: 265). Such knowledge schemes, understood as *regimes*, seek to normalize power relations and regulate subjects through the reproduction of particular ideas about science, culture and social life (Ong 1999: 113).

The arrival of the neoliberal era made evident that the boundaries of belonging in countries all around the world had to be re-defined. The boundaries of belonging to the nation, set in Mexico during the post-revolutionary era, excluded Mexican diasporic identities, which were created at the margins of what was conceived as the nation-state.

This paper follows the tension between a narrowly defined belonging to the nation-state *vis a vis* the necessity of flexible dispositions towards the outside and the

way in which it shapes the relationship of Mexicans with their own country and the 'outside'. To do so I will explore these tensions through the changing role of two mythical figures whose stories are determined by their relationship towards the other: La Malinche and El Jamaicaón. The paper argues that both figures are part of the neoliberal regimes at work in contemporary Mexico, which seek to foster loyalty to the nation-state and at the same time, competitiveness at a global level. While La Malinche has permeated public discourse since the colonial era and represents the shifting positions towards hybridization and mix, El Jamaicaón is a less known contemporary figure of the fallen hero in a world where travel and movement greatly determine an individual's success. These figures become illustrative of the roots and routes of 'Mexican identity' as they are continuously (re) produced in the public discourse as cautionary tales of Mexican attitudes towards the other.

I will use the myth in an anthropological sense, by focusing on its social function, and its use within the context of governmentality. In Ferguson's words a myth «is not just a mistaken account but a cosmological blueprint that lays down fundamental categories and meanings for the organization and interpretation of experience, a meaning making device» (1999:13-14).

Although the paper deals with widespread ideas about 'Mexican identity', it focuses on a group of relatively privileged Mexican migrants in Madrid —postgraduate students, professionals, trailing partners— in which the use of both mythical figures was documented through semi-structured interviews and participant observation between 2008 and 2011. This paper aims to describe two processes. First, the way in which neoliberal governmentality infiltrates the everyday dynamics within a relatively privileged Mexican community in Madrid, Spain. This highlights the continuous challenge to the idea of a rooted belonging and a negotiation with the routes found in Madrid. Second, it explores the way in which structural constraints and privileges shape these dispositions. This indicates that their shifting positions within different social fields suggest a loss of privilege outside of Mexico, which has a direct impact in the ways in which Mexican women and men, experience and negotiate their belongings to both places.

## MEXICO'S RELATIONSHIP WITH ITS EMIGRANTS

It can be said that historically, Mexico has treated its indigenous populations and transborder migrants as denizens and in a sense they remain excluded from the imagined national community (Fitzgerald 2006; Fox 2006; González-Gutiérrez 1999). On the one hand, for indigenous population the access to 'full Mexicaness' is only granted as long as they renounce to their languages and ethnic autonomy. On the other hand, Mexicans abroad and their descendants are labeled as traitors and 'half-breads' (cholos, pochos and malinches) implying that somehow they are 'washed down Mexicans' by living abroad and therefore acquiring a hyphenated identity.

Emigrants in Mexico transitioned from being 'traitors to heroes' in the last decade of the 20th century (Fox 2006: 41). In the last years of the 20th century the Mexican government began the efforts to reincorporate its diaspora into the national arena and nowadays Mexicans abroad are being promoted as a «benefit to the nation and as extraterritorial citizens» (Smith 2003: 9).

Thus, although the Mexican government has intermittently promoted mass migration to the U.S and migrant remittances have constituted a great portion of the national income, local political authorities considered that Mexicans who left had «exited the imagined national community» (Goldring 2002: 65). For example, throughout the 20th century, Mexico gained good reputation as a destination for refugees from various Spanish-speaking countries. The country offered asylum and preferential naturalization rights to citizens fleeing from authoritarian regimes: in the 1940's from Spain, between 1960's and 1970's from diverse South American countries and in the early 1980's from Guatemala. In contrast, second and third generation Mexicans, who were regarded as foreigners threatening the rights of natives, did not receive the same preferential naturalization rights given to other Spanish-speaking citizens until 1974 (Fitzgerald 2006:94).

It was in the mid 1980's that the Mexican government began to establish a relationship with its diaspora and Mexican emigrants began to gain some positive attention in their home country. This shift responded to three interrelated processes that redefined Mexican domestic and foreign policy. The regularization of nearly three million Mexicans in the U.S. by the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 rendered a population that considered themselves Mexicans while having a secure migratory status in the U.S. In this sense, there was an entire population that could be used as leverage in negotiations at a domestic and foreign level.

At a domestic level, in the 1988 presidential elections, the hegemonic power of Mexico's ruling party for over 80 years (PRI) had been threatened by the support given to the opposition candidate Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas during his campaign tours in the U.S., prompting the ruling party to re-orient its political strategy by including Mexicans abroad. At a foreign level, Mexican professionals and entrepreneurs in the U.S. were seen as leverage in the negotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement in the late 1980's (Goldring 2002: 65).

As Smith (1997) has argued, transnationalism led by the Mexican state has been a key in establishing what may be relatively long-lasting transnational fields. In this sense Suárez-Navaz (1998) points out the transnational social field is related to the logics of globalization and late capitalism. The author outlines three key actors in such fields: the moving actors (migrants), the state and the middling organizations such as NGO's, associations and small entrepreneurs. What the migrants have at stake is the transference of capitals: moving from one field to another implies that some privileges related to the possession of certain capitals are lost and some are won. Sending states need to secure a certain loyalty to the nation-state while encouraging a certain degree of flexibility to reap from the benefits of a globalized economy and might facilitate this fragmented sense of belonging by allowing the possession of dual citizenship or establishing channels for the influx of remittances. Receiving states might police movement and subject immigrants to different degrees of exploitation. Middling organizations might have a myriad of interests at stake: from economic, to political gain (cf. 30-31).

This new relationship between Mexico and its diaspora involved a series of programs and policies that started with out-reach programs in immigrant communities in the U.S. during the 1980's, passed through the reinstatement of Mexican nationality to Mexicans living abroad and their offspring in 1998 and were culminated by the

right to vote from abroad in 2005. It has to be noted that although there are a series of constitutional reforms to accommodate Mexicans abroad into the national landscape, mainly in the form of the non-loss of nationality, the Mexican constitution forbids dual nationals from holding public offices. In reality, these reforms only give Mexicans abroad property rights and more recently the right to vote in certain elections from abroad. Effectively, the regime behind these reforms entails a flexible notion of citizenship that promotes a cultural and political affiliation to Mexico through the maintenance of 'Mexicaness' while the acquisition of a second nationality is encouraged (Goldring 2002; Fitzgerald 2006).

## MEXICANS IN MADRID

This paper is part of a larger ethnographic study that took place between 2008 and 2011 and was focused on the home-making strategies and feelings of belonging of a group of relatively privileged Mexican migrants in Madrid. The research is based on an inductive approach where the informants could talk about their 'homes' and other places of belonging and the way they experienced them while moving. It departed from transnational perspective, which problematizes the traditional associations of 'home' with fixity and stability, and also allows the exploration of the experience of belonging at different geographical scales: from the global, to the national, to the local.

Data on the human face of the Mexican presence in Spain has been relatively absent from scholarly studies. This lack of data is attributable to the fact that most of the human and economic exchanges coming from Mexico have been focused on the U.S. However, in the last decade, there has been some interest on the Mexican community in Spain, notably, the work by Pérez Herrero (1999) and Rodríguez Lozano (2010) on Mexican entrepreneurs in Spain. There are several reasons behind these studies. First they point out that there is an increasing economic interest between both countries. Second, their high levels of education, makes them an interesting group to study. Third, although the Mexican community in Madrid is very small, it is highly visible due to their socioeconomic characteristics and entrepreneurial tendencies.

The majority of the Mexicans living in Madrid could be described as «neither elite nor extremely poor or in dire straits but very much in the middle» (Wiles 2008). The label 'middling migrants', a term recently coined in the field of migration studies, are usually skilled workers, holidaymakers, students, retirees and adventurers and their main characteristics are that they occupy a middle status position in their countries of origin and that they are usually educated (Conradson and Latham 2005; Favell 2008; Wiles 2008). For these middle-class migrants, international mobility can be used as exit strategy from alienating conditions in their own countries or as a strategy of class reproduction in a world where traditional means of distinction, such as secondary and tertiary education, are blurring (Bourdieu 1986; Scott 2006).

Choosing to focus on Mexican «middling-migrants» was convenient for the study since they were they were highly visible, accessible and represented the majority of the Mexican population in the city, but also because the migration of Mexican middle classes is (understandably) understudied. More importantly, in the burgeoning but

relatively new field of studies on 'home', focusing on a population that was in control over its own mobility —legal recognition and access to various means of communication and transportation— and had its immediate needs covered —shelter, basic income, access to health services, etc.— provided greater analytical leverage and theoretical insight.

The point of entry into the field was a large network of ex-alumni from a private university in Mexico that gathered professionals, postgraduate students and exchange students in different parts of the world and had a large membership in Madrid. From there I was introduced to another network that gathered Mexican women who moved to the city for a variety of reasons: to study, to work or were following their partners. Also I started attending events organized by a local think-tank that invited Mexican scholars, politicians and entrepreneurs, and attracted Mexican residents and students in Madrid. In addition to that, a snowball technique was used to gather more informants.

34 Mexicans were interviewed in various points of their stay in the country and their time of stay varied between 5 months and 16 years. 17 were women and 17 men, all of them had at least a bachelor degree and most of them were pursuing or had already obtained postgraduate education. They were born between 1966 and 1984 and at the time of the interviews the youngest was 24 and the oldest was 45 years old. This was a generation of Mexican middle-class women and men, that experienced the democratization of higher education and had greater access to schemes of international mobility for higher education, scholarships and loans for postgraduate education abroad and access to international networks that facilitated their mobility as working professionals inside and more notably, outside a corporate structure.

Within the time frame of the research —from 2008 to 2011— there were three events that marked the experience of these Mexican migrants in Madrid. First, in 2006 Mexican President Felipe Calderón declared the «war on drugs» which increased the violence and instability in the country. Second, in 2008 Spain started to experience the effects of the global economic crisis and this led to, among other things, high rates of unemployment particularly among the younger generations. Third, in the summer of 2010 South Africa hosted the World Cup, in which Mexico played the inaugural match and Spain would ultimately win the Cup.

It is in this setting that Mexicans in Madrid made reference to the mythologies of La Malinche and El Jamaicaón to explain the way in which they related to both countries. On a first level of analysis —which was in the context of the experiences of the informants— La Malinche was used to describe detachment, betrayal and preference for the 'foreign', and El Jamaicaón would reference the contrary: attachment, nostalgia and certain chauvinistic attitudes. On a second level of analysis, I traced the different historical contexts in which these mythologies emerged and transformed. While scholarly analysis on La Malinche is abundant and I had access to historiographical accounts, and analysis from Feminist, Chicano, Cultural and Literary studies; narratives around El Jamaicaón were only present in one essay published on 2006 and written by Saeltiel Alatríste, a wealth Mexican newspaper editorials and a few blog entries written by football fans and/or Mexicans abroad. Ultimately, what informed the section on El Jamaicaón were the stories that my informants would vaguely recount about the man behind the myth —José Villegas Tabarés—, the scattered data provided by

the aforementioned editorials and essay, and two ethnographies on Mexican football fandom that provided some background on the politics behind Mexican football teams (Fábregas-Puig 2001; Magazine 2007). This lack of scholarly analysis on El Jamaicaón only indicates how new and emergent is the topic, particularly when analyzed from the perspective of neoliberal governmentality, which in this specific case, I argue, seeks to foster loyalty to the nation and at the same time competitiveness at a global level.

#### FROM LA MALINCHE...

La Malinche is the popular name given to Malintzin, an Indian woman from south-east Mexico who later became known to Spanish conquerors as Doña Marina. La Malinche is a symbolic figure originated during the colonial 'encounter' and it has been present in Mexican imaginary ever since. The meanings ascribed to the figure of this woman, reflect to a great extent the history of the (trans) formation of Mexican identity. She has transited from being the 'tongue', the translator and the helper during the invasion, to the 'womb', the figure of the mother of the new and hybrid identities produced by the colonization. In the post-revolutionary (and hegemonic) discourse she is presented as the traitor while in counter-hegemonic movements such as the Chicano movement, she is the symbol of multiculturalism and hybridization (Cypess 2005: 12).

In her youth, Malintzin was sold as a slave to some Maya traders. While living as a slave under Aztec domination, she became bilingual as she learnt Mayan in addition to Náhuatl, her mother tongue. By 1519, at the age of fourteen, Malintzin was offered as a 'gift' to Hernán Cortés, along with several other women. Soon enough, the conqueror took advantage of his 'new lover's' bilingualism and knowledge of the local costumes. Malintzin, the slave, became Doña Marina, the translator of Spanish conquerors (Enriquez and Mirandé 1981: 23-24).

It has also been pointed out that Doña Marina bore the offspring of two Spanish conquerors, Hernán Cortés and later on, Juan Jaramillo. Martín Cortés, the son of Hernán Cortés, is though to be the first mestizo. He was uprooted from his mother and thus stripped from his indigenous roots while enjoying the rights of a *peninsular*. He joined the colonial endeavors of the Spanish crown as a Knight from the Order of Santiago, fought in Algiers and Germany and died in Spain during the Granada wars (Diggs 1953: 414). Additional data on the life of this woman is subject to debate and therefore, passages of her life are the arena of (re) interpretation by those with a voice, the ones who tell her story.

For example, according to Bernal Diaz's, conqueror and later on chronicler of the Spanish invasion, Doña Marina was born into nobility and then sold as a slave by her own mother. He describes Doña Marina's role in the Spanish conquest of Mexico as pivotal, as she had a role as a mediator and a 'key strategist' in forging alliances with indigenous groups against Aztec domination. According to this version of events, she was motivated by a deep faith in Christianity, religion to which she converted soon after she joined Cortés and his colonial endeavor (Pratt 1993: 867).

After Mexico achieved its independence, Doña Marina was stripped from many of the positive characteristics that were inscribed to her figure during the colony and

was re-framed under a negative light. Doña Marina becomes La Malinche, the reincarnation of a Desirable Whore/Terrible Mother, who had sold her children to the conqueror. As a way to reject any association with Spain, Doña Marina was transformed into La Malinche, who is perhaps the most hated woman in America (Cypess 1992: 9).

## CONTEMPORARY ERA: THE TRAITOR AND THE HEROINE

In 1950, Octavio Paz announced to the world that we, Mexicans, are the offspring of 'La chingada': *Somos los hijos de la chingada*. In his seminal and often controversial essay on Mexican identity «El laberinto de la soledad,» Paz depicted a profoundly misogynistic and self-hating Mexican that was unable to deal with his own origins, which were located in the figures of who are seen as the mythical 'parents' of Mexicans: Hernán Cortés and La Malinche.

In Mexico being *un(a) hijo(a) de la chingada* implies that the recipient of the insult is the product of a rape and/or an illicit sexual relationship. *La chingada*, is an open woman who has been raped and conversely a *chingón* is a man who has been successful in his attempts. According to Paz, even when La Malinche represented rape of autochthonous women during the Spanish invasion and colonial era, she «gave herself willingly to the conqueror, who in turn abandoned her» (Paz 1998: 91) and that is why she cannot find forgiveness.

One has to keep in mind that the book was published towards the end of the presidency of Miguel Alemán (1945-1951) and while Paz was part of the Mexican Diplomatic Service in France. This was the first civilian presidency in Mexico since the beginning of the revolution and the era of the 'Mexican Miracle', which was marked by an unprecedented economic growth. Such economic growth was achieved because of a widespread State's intervention in the economy, which had protected the growth of local industries by establishing tariff barriers in a time when the foundations for a global and neoliberal economy were being established through the Bretton Woods Agreement (1945) and the General Agreement on Trade Tariffs (1947). In his essay, Paz was placing the blame and resentment towards La Malinche in the context of the birth of neoliberalism and a globalized economy. In post-revolutionary Mexico the distrust towards the outside was as big as the hatred towards La Malinche, in the words of Paz:

...that is why the success of the derogatory adjective *malinchista*, recently put in motion by newspapers to denounce all of those infected by foreignizing tendencies. The *malinchistas* are partisans of Mexico opening to the outside: the true sons of La Malinche, who is the personification of *la chingada* (own translation, Paz 1998: 97).

In this context, if La Malinche is a mytho-historical product of coloniality; the malinchistas, 'infected by foreignizing tendencies' and 'giving (themselves) willingly to the conqueror', were born in the context of an increasingly globalized economy.

North of the Mexican border, in Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, and California, the myth of Malinche came into play with respect to a different but interrelated project of construction of identity (Alarcón 1989; Cypess 2005: 22). According



to Enriquez and Mirandé (1978), the label was also applied to Chicanas who left the community to seek higher education. In this sense the label was used to police the assimilation into mainstream 'white' culture and the alliance to feminism (cited on Pratt 1993: 862).

The hegemonic view of La Malinche was counteracted within the Chicana feminist movement, which placed her actions as a translator for Cortés as an act of will and an 'open' view of the world. La Malinche then, became one of the articulating symbols of the Chicana Movement, who found in her figure a familiar one. While Malintzin in an act of agency and survival Hispanized herself, these Chicanas are perceived to be 'Americanizing themselves' and are suffering from a double process of exclusion: from the dominant culture but also from the dominated culture (Alarcón 1989).

## THE COSMOPOLITAN

Mexicans in Spain used the term *malinchista* as a tool for policing their own behavior and the behavior of other Mexicans. Of course, in Madrid, the term acquired a very literal sense that could hurt the most detached sensibilities: a Mexican favoring anything Spanish. Thus, while in Mexico the term is thrown carelessly to accuse anyone who seems to be favoring the 'foreign' in *lieu* of the 'national', in Madrid it seemed that there was a certain degree of controversy over what constituted an affront to Mexicaness. The only thing that was an uncontroverted act of malinchism was speaking with a Spanish accent. By the virtue of a differentiated pronunciation of two letters, the 's' and the 'z', a Mexican in Madrid would be the target of criticism and mockery from the rest of its connationals. Almost everything else could be interpreted as the product of a necessary adaptation into the new place.

In many cases, what Mexican middling migrants interpreted as an act of adaptation into Spanish society and as a necessary step into making their lives easier in a new place, was interpreted by the Mexicans at home as an act of *malinchismo*. For example, by adopting a more direct approach to social interactions they learnt in Madrid, they were distancing themselves from what their families and friends perceived to be 'good manners': they were stepping out of the national game of avoiding a blunt 'no' by replacing it with a polite *a lo mejor* (perhaps) or *aborita* (in a little while). There were many stories about the way in which Mexicans middling migrants were accused of having 'Hispanized' their manners in their first visits to Mexico. In the eyes of the shocked parents, siblings and friends who stayed put they were not only starting to loose their accents and their words, but they were also loosing their 'good manners'.

The only people I met who satisfied the requirements to be labeled a Malinche in both sides of the Atlantic, were women. As their Chicana counterparts they were suffering of a double process —if not exclusion— of chastisement from Mexicans at home and abroad. One of them was a woman who was divorced at a young age and people around her though she lived a 'scandalous life'. Eventually she met and married a Spanish man and 'fortunately!' moved to Spain.

...there are some Mexicans that ask me if I'm Spanish, and then they tell me 'That's so wrong!' like implying that I'm being malinchista. And the thing is, when I came to Spain, they treated you better if you blended in, instead of coming and saying: yes, I'm different. I was fed up, because every time I showed up saying 'Good Morning' they would ask me: 'Where are you from?'... And you end up doing things the way they do them.

And you did it on purpose?

The accent thing, no, it is a factory defect, integrating yes... it was clear to me that I am a guest here, that this is not my home and that 'when in Rome... well do what the Romans do'.<sup>1</sup>

(Cristina, interior designer/entrepreneur, 6 years)

Even in this case, the adoption of the accent was framed in a negative light as 'a factory defect' implying that under 'non-defected' circumstances she would have kept her accent while modifying other behaviors as an adaptation strategy. In any case, in a transnational setting, Mexicans were better off acting as Malinches, as this open and flexible attitude was related to a cosmopolitan orientation that is described by Ulf Hannerz (1996) as a «willingness to engage with the other... an intellectual and aesthetic openness towards divergent cultural experiences» (Hannerz 1996: 103).

### ...TO EL JAMAICÓN

For better or for worse, the term malinchista was only one of the ways in which the public displays of 'Mexicaness' were subjected to policing in Madrid. While acting 'too Spanish' by adopting the accent was certainly criticized, being overly attached to 'Mexicaness' was also criticized and seen as an incapacity of some Mexicans to make themselves at home while abroad: they were suffering from El Jamaicaón syndrome. The figure of El Jamaicaón, whose story I was unaware of until I moved to Madrid, is used by some Mexicans to describe the rootedness to Mexico that some displayed while living abroad.

José Villegas Tabarés, El Jamaicaón Villegas, was an outstanding football player for *Chivas del Guadalajara* who was unable to perform outside of Mexico as part of Mexico's national team. Although this is not the place to discuss at length the politics behind Mexican football it is important to note that out of the four major national football clubs in Mexico —*América*, *Pumas*, *Cruz Azul* and *Chivas*— this last club is famous for its policy of having only Mexican players in its lineups and therefore embodying 'Mexican brotherhood' and 'true nationalism'. According to Fábregas-Puig for the *Chivas* fans, followers of other national teams, especially those who hire a high percentage of foreign players, symbolize an admiration for the foreign —a clearly malinchista attitude— and more over an admiration that «reaches the extreme of delivering the *Country* without conditions to the will of outsiders» (Fábregas-Puig 2001: 73 emphasis added). In this sense, *Chivas* has been described by Magazine (2007) as a holdout from the 'Mexican Miracle' era when laws limiting imports and encouraging their substitution with Mexican products were created and widely applied.

<sup>1</sup> I am roughly translating what she said, in the original text she said *a donde fueres haz lo que vieres* and its literal translation is 'wherever you go do what you see it is done'.

In 1958, when the Mexican government was petitioning to be the host of the next Olympic Games<sup>2</sup>, the Mexican Soccer Federation arranged a series of matches in Europe to test the National team's performance abroad. From that moment on, what happened to El Jamaicaón Villegas takes mythical proportions and becomes a cautionary tale for Mexicans travelling abroad. Depending on who tells the story, El Jamaicaón Villegas was unable to protect the national team from the offences of the opposite team, either in England, Portugal or Sweden. Although there are different versions of the story, the message is clear: El Jamaicaón had a rather chauvinistic explanation of why he was failing to perform outside of Mexico.

El Jamaicaón became infamous because of a single phrase that is reproduced time and again in Mexican media even when it has been more than half a century since the incident. Apparently, when he was asked why he was hanging on the gardens instead of being at the dinner that the Federation organized for the team, he showed a distraught demeanor and answered:

How am I supposed to have dinner if what they cooked is *comida de rotos*<sup>3</sup>? What I want is some *chalupas*, or some *sopes* or a nice *pozole*, not that garbage that is not even Mexican.

(Alatríste 2006: 91)

From this story derives the idea of the 'Jamaicón syndrome', which is defined as a feeling nostalgia and homesickness plaguing an otherwise successful Mexican who ceased to be a *chingón(a)* outside his/her homeland and instead became a shadow of his/her former self.

## THE MEXICAN BRAVADO: EL CHINGÓN IS CHINGADO

The topic of soccer aficionados was frequently raised as an example of 'Mexicaness' and more specifically an aggressive portrayal male 'Mexicaness', this contrasted with the idea of an open and often submissive portrayal of feminized attitudes that the figure of La Malinche embodied.

It's a very distrustful culture but it is also very *gandalla*<sup>4</sup>... I came to the World Cup in Germany and there were a lot of Mexicans, and of course! They were always thinking about ways to twist the rules: how to sneak alcohol into the stadium and then feeling proud because they tricked the Germans. I was in a bus that they hijacked in Germany, they made a German-speaking kid threaten the driver to deviate from the established route and take us directly to the stadium...

(Bruno, postgraduate student, 7 months)

<sup>2</sup> The petition was granted five years later and Mexico City became the host of the 1968 Olympic Games, which sparked a massive student protest that would end up in the mass murder of hundreds of students just ten days prior to the opening ceremony.

<sup>3</sup> *Roto* is related to upper class attitudes, which brings some light into the belief that cosmopolitan orientations are exclusive of the 'elites'.

<sup>4</sup> As a Mexicanism, *gandalla* relates to a person who twists things to get advantage of it without deserving it. It is an abusive attitude that not necessarily involves physical violence.

According to Magazine *et al.* (2013), in Mexico football does not carry the symbolic weight that it carries for identity formation and nationalism in Argentina or Brazil. This because football became popular in Mexico until the 1950's, when the process of national identity building was already set and was inspired by the peasant revolution of 1910. Instead, international sporting events such as the World Cup work to define the nation in a competitive sense, particularly in the neoliberal period. In this sense the national football team embodies the international competitiveness of the country (ibid.: 3).

Every four years, during the World Cup, soccer players emerge as the national heroes in a country that paralyzes and submerges itself in a form of light nationalism and intense machismo that lasts just a few weeks until the national team is kicked out of the competition. Mexican masses cheer up the national team and highlight their manliness by yelling (Insert the name of the country) *va a probar el chile nacional!* which is roughly translated as the adversary having a 'taste' of Mexican penis. Eventually, *el chile nacional* proves to be ineffective and the Mexican public submerges in a process of auto-reflexivity to understand what went wrong. Was it lack of funding? Was it poor training? Was it the product of complex of inferiority steaming from the colonial period?<sup>5</sup> Eventually, the Mexican media will recycle the story of El Jamaicaón and the explanation will become self-evident: some Mexicans are unable to cope with being away from their home.

The use of the figure of El Jamaicaón Villegas is not only limited to explain the failure of soccer players in international matches, but in a contemporary globalized world it becomes a cautionary tale for those privileged Mexicans who fail to make themselves at home while abroad. In a world where mobility for some implies the reproduction of a contemporary middle class identity, failing to make oneself at home in the world, goes against the values of cosmopolitanism and 'openness' that middling migrants are supposed to hold in high regard.

Just go one Wednesday to *La Malquerida* (a Mexican bar in Madrid) and it is filled with Mexicans who perhaps are going to be here just for a couple of months and the only thing they do is hang out with other Mexicans. They come here to hang out in Mexican bars instead of getting to know the city... and the thing is they are always complaining about discrimination but Mexicans are close-minded... they are always missing their tortillitas, their taquitos and their little cousins... they are overly attached to their things. They all suffer from the Jamaicaón syndrome.

(Marco, journalist, 4 years)

El Jamaicaón syndrome for Mexican middling migrants thus, represents a direct affront to the idea that in the context of the international mobility of the highly-skilled, human capital is enough to achieve success regardless of the social structure or reproduction (Favell *et al.* 2007: 21). In this sense while the term malinchista is used to control and police 'openness', the Jamaicaón syndrome is used diagnose 'closeness'.

In Madrid, although Mexican men and women could experience an acute sense of loss that could be labeled as suffering from El Jamaicaón syndrome, these attitudes

---

<sup>5</sup> For an in-depth analysis of the variety of explanations regarding the national team's lack of international competitiveness see Magazine *et al.* (2013).

tended to be more prevalent in men and more often than not, those who experienced this sense of loss of male privilege would eventually return to Mexico.

## DISCUSSION: THE NEGOTIATION OF PRIVILEGE

Mexicans tend to move to Spain to study or to explore new professional and cultural landscapes. Although many of them go back to Mexico or move elsewhere after one or two years, others opt for a longer experience in the country and even resettle indefinitely in Spain. When they choose to stay, they rarely do so because of economic reasons and in general they tend to stay because they fell in love or simply because they liked their everyday lives in Madrid.

The mobility of middling-migrants is not frictionless and the sorts of capitals they possess (and value) do not necessarily translate from one place to the next. So, life in Madrid posed a new challenge. They left a relatively comfortable life as middle classers and had to make a new life in a place where they were foreigners. Their new life in the city made them (more) aware of the privileges and constraints that their middle class life in Mexico entailed. In some cases the loss of such privileges and constraints would make them re-evaluate their stay and go back to Mexico or move elsewhere. In some others, these privileges were viewed as a 'golden cage' and in these cases the positive aspects of everyday life in Madrid, would out-weight the loss of privilege.

Because of the freedom that everyday life in Madrid conveyed and because, to a certain extent, they were removed from the dynamics of Mexican machista attitudes, Mexican women started adopting certain habits that in Mexico would be frowned upon.

There are many things [I would like to adopt from my new friends], like moving in with my boyfriend. I know that back in Mexico I wouldn't do it because of the culture and the society. Or this willingness to know about new places and peoples... or even silly things like being more direct without feeling like you are being rude.

(Cecilia, postgraduate student, 2 years)

Since they were aware that some of the habits they adopted in Madrid would be judged in Mexico, women would soon enough learn how to adapt their habits depending on the situation at stake to fulfill the societal expectations around their gender. It was generally women who were more open to trade some of the privileges they enjoyed back in Mexico, in order to be able to live in a place where they could 'be themselves'.

Moreover, for this particular set of migrants, relying on marriage to secure a stable migratory status in Spain was seen as a last resource and sometimes as a defeat. Among the younger and more liberal Mexicans there was a running joke about binational couples getting married, that played with the words *visa* and *vida* (life) and described the marriage as 'finding the love of her/his visa'<sup>6</sup>. This is not only because marrying 'for papers' was associated to women in a more vulnerable position and in this context was stigmatized as a malinchista behavior, but also because of its impli-

<sup>6</sup> *'Encontró al amor de su visa'*.

cations: sometimes, formal education and other sorts of typically middle class capitals are not enough to obtain legal recognition in another country (Kofman and Raghuram 2006; Sorensen 2005).

In contrast, men often would state that they would be better off living in Mexico because of the opportunities to develop their careers. «What's better? To be at the mouse's head or at the lion's tail?» one of my informants asked me. I had talked to him at various stages, first as a law student, then as a part-time worker at the Mexican Embassy in Madrid and finally when he was re-evaluating his stay. Using the ancient proverb he described the relationship between both countries as Mexico being at the 'head' of Latin American development and Spain being at the 'tail' of the European Union's. In that sense, although there was recognition of Spain's impressive economic upturn in the last thirty years, he also felt that because of Mexico's constant developing stage and because of the social capital he had, there were more professional opportunities. This in addition to the increasing unemployment rates, specially, among the younger population.

As much as there is the pervasive idea of a limitless mobility for those who possess certain kinds of capitals, as middling migrants do, the fact is there are several constraints to mobility. It is not only a matter of will, openness and cosmopolitan attitudes, but first and foremost it is a question of opportunities.

In a sense, Mexican women in Madrid experienced a betterment in at least one aspect of their every day lives because they were removed from the dynamics of a society that limited their freedom in several ways, while for a man movement could derive in the loss of all privilege, and the interpretations of *La Malinche* and *El Jamaicaón* are symptomatic of it. In Mexico, a woman that manages to keep herself alive under conditions of enslavement and colonial exploitation is deemed a traitor and a whore; while a man who is unable to perform his job under the best of circumstances is at most a pitiful figure worth of understanding, because after all, he was away from the soil where he belonged. In this logic, it is not the restorative power of Mexican soil and its food that makes some of its (wo)men stronger, but their strength is rooted in the hierarchical relations of power that prevail in the country. For some people, movement does not imply betterment but the loss of certain kind of privilege specially when coming from the higher end of a deeply stratified society along the lines of class, race and gender.

It is precisely because of their 'middling' characteristics —high levels of formal education, middle class status in the country of origin, and experience abroad— that this tension between remaining loyal to the nation while displaying competitiveness when abroad was particularly evident. In this sense, although the figure of *La Malinche* has been present in Mexico since the colonial era and its shifting meanings can be traced back and related to broader events at a national and transnational level, the figure of *El Jamaicaón* is relatively new. Although in the case of this relatively privileged group of Mexicans, *El Jamaicaón* is a cautionary tale that warns them against failure abroad, in other settings it might have different meanings.

## WORKS CITED

- Alatríste, S. 2006. «El jamaicón y sus precursores». *Revista de la Universidad de México* 28: 91-92.
- Alarcón, N. 1989. «Traddutora, traditora: una figura paradigmática del feminismo de las chicanas». *Cultural Critique* 13: 57-87.
- Bourdieu, P. 1986. «The forms of capital», in J.E Richardson (ed.), *Handbook of theory of research for the sociology of education*: 241-258. New York: Greenwood Press.
- Conradson, D. And A. Latham. 2005. «Transnational urbanism: Attending to everyday practices and mobilities». *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 31(2): 227-233.
- Cypess, S.M. 1992. «La Malinche in Mexican Literature From History to Myth»: 1-13. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Cypess, S.M. 2005. «Mother» Malinche and allegories of gender, ethnicity, and national identity in Mexico, in R. Romero and A. Nolacea-Harris (eds.), *Feminism, Nation And Myth: La Malinche*: 14-27. Houston: Arte Público Press.
- Diggs, I. 1953. «Color in Colonial Spanish America». *The Journal of Negro History* 38(4): 403-427.
- Enríquez, E. and A. Mirandé. 1978. «Liberation, Chicana Style: Colonial Roots of Deministas Chicanas.» *De Colores* 4(3): 7-21.
- Enríquez, E. and A. Mirandé. 1981. *La Chicana: The Mexican-American Women*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Fábregas-Puig, A. 2001. «Lo sagrado del rebaño: el fútbol como integrador de identidades». Guadalajara: El Colegio de Jalisco.
- Favell, A. 2008. *Eurostars and Eurocities: Free Movement and Mobility in an Integrating Europe*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Favell, A., M. Feldblum and M. Smith. 2007. «The human face of global mobility: A research agenda». *Society* 44(2): 15-25.
- Ferguson, J. 1999. *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Fitzgerald, D. 2006. «Inside the Sending State: The Politics of Mexican Emigration Control». *International Migration Review* 40(2): 259-293.
- Fox, J. 2006. «Reframing Mexican Migration as a Multi-Ethnic Process». *Latino Studies* 4(1): 39-61.
- Glick-Schiller, N. and A. Caglar. 2011. *Locating Migration. Rescaling Cities and Migrants*. Ithaca: Cornell.
- Goldring, L. 2002. «The Mexican state and transmigrant organizations: Negotiating the boundaries of membership and participation». *Latin American Research Review* 37(3): 55-99.
- Gupta, A., A. Sharma, A. Agrawal, V. Benei, J. Clarke, J. Echeverri-Gent et al. 2006. «Globalization and postcolonial states». *Current Anthropology* 47(2): 277-307.
- González-Gutiérrez, C. 1999. «Fostering identities: Mexico's relations with its diaspora». *The Journal of American History* 86(2): 545-567.
- Hannerz. 1996. *Global Connections: Culture, People, Places*. London: Routledge.
- Kofman, E. and P. Raghuram. 2006. «Gender and Global Labour Migrations: Incorporating Skilled Workers». *Antipode* 38(2): 282-303.
- Magazine, R., 2007. *Golden and blue like my heart: masculinity, youth, and power among soccer fans in Mexico City*. Arizona: The University of Arizona Press.
- Magazine, R., M. González and S. Varela. 2013. «The Mexican Men's National Football Team and Representations of the Nation During the 2010 World Cup: a postcolonial dilemma». *Soccer & Society* 15(4): 535-547.
- Ong, A. 1999. *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Paz, O. 1998. *El laberinto de la soledad*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Pratt, M. 1993. «Yo Soy La Malinche' : Chicana Writers and the Poetics of Ethnonationalism». *Callalaloo* 16(4): 858-873.
- Pérez-Herrero, P. 1999. «Los empresarios mexicanos en España y las nuevas relaciones México-Unión Europea (1982-1997)», in M. Cargmani, A. Hernández y R. Romano (eds.), *Para una historia de América III. Los nudos (2)*: 412-452. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica.

- Scott, S. 2006. «The Social Morphology of Skilled Migration: The Case of the British Middle class in Paris». *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 32(7): 1105-1129.
- Smith, M. P. 1997. «The Two Faces of Transnational Citizenship». *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30(6): 1096-1116.
- Smith, M. P. 2003. «Transnationalism, the State, and the Extraterritorial Citizen». *Politics & Society* 31(4): 467-502.
- Suárez-Navaz, L. 2008. «Colonialismo, gobernabilidad y feminismos poscoloniales», in L. Suárez-Navaz and R. Hernández (eds.), *Feminismos Postcoloniales: teoría y práctica desde los márgenes*: 24-67. Madrid: Cátedra.
- Rodríguez-Lozano, I. 2010. *Redes de empresarios mexicanos en España*. México: Miguel Ángel Porrúa.
- Wiles, J. 2008. «Sense of Home in a Transnational Social Space: New Zealanders in London». *Global Networks* 8(1): 116-137.

Fecha de recepción: 17 de febrero de 2015

Fecha de aceptación: 9 de marzo de 2015