"La Malinche: A Critical Analysis of Gender, Sexuality, and Mestizaje in Early 16th Century Mexico"

Abstract: In “La Malinche: A Critical Analysis of Gender, Sexuality, and Mestizaje in Early 16th Century Mexico,” Lizeth Gutierrez uses sources from early sixteenth century Mexico to further push Gloria Anzaldúa’s theory of mestizaje. Gutierrez’s work aims to redefine Anzaldúa’s mestizaje by exposing the complexities of language and culture through the figure of La Malinche. The first part of the paper explores the gender ideologies of the Aztecs as told by Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagún in the Florentine Codex (mid-1540’s through the 1570’s). Through the interrogation of gender paradigms, the second part of her paper analyzes Hernán Cortés (1520’s), Bernal Diaz del Castillo (1520’s) and Sahagún’s (mid-1540’s through the 1570’s) writings to argue mestizaje as a cultural category, rather than a racial one by exposing La Malinche’s straddling of languages and crossing of cultural boundaries as a way to take power. La Malinche’s behavior reveals that mestizaje is not based on a biological construct. She is the mestiza figure and does not have to have European ancestry to be that.