This would seem to be the end of Marina's story, but Mexico has never been willing to let her go. People in the Coatzacoalcos region talk about her as if she were still alive. The island between the branches of the river they still call "Marina's Island." She continues to live in memories which are handed down from generation to generation, and also in popular legends. According to one of these, an original conquistador reported his terror on encountering the soul of Malinche wandering one night in the square where the old temple of Huitzilopochtli had once been. Another asserted that he had seen her at a crossroads in Texcoco. After this, people would glimpse her on dark nights, draped in long white robes, and fallen to her knees, her face covered, wailing long and piteously before hurrying away again to disappear into the great salt lake. Even her daughter Maria Jaramillo may have seen this ghost because there is a record of her having paid for daily masses at the Church of the Holy Trinity for the repose of her mother's soul. This the poor woman did throughout her entire adult life.

Thus the legend of La Llorona, the Weeping One, continues to permeate Mexican culture. She is said to be the soul of a woman seeking her lost children at every crossroad. Many of those who are familiar with the history of Marina believe that she is still looking for Martín, who was taken from her as an infant, and Maria, who was barely two at her death. Perhaps, they say, she is still even searching for her monkey, the Aztec god of happiness, and the other animals which were lost so long ago.

Those who are more sophisticated believe that La Llorona is far older than Marina. She goes back to the very beginning of Nahuatl legend when she was thought to be Ciuacoatl, the serpent goddess or "Snake Woman." It is said by Father Bernadino de Sahagún, one of the original missionaries sent out by the king, that ten years before the conquest this ghost-goddess, draped in her own long white hair that reached to her toes, was the first to announce the fall of the Aztec empire. She appeared at night in the streets of Tenochtitlan crying out, "My children, we must leave here now!" And other times she wept, "But where shall I take you?"

Today Ciuacoatl has returned again to the realm of myth or legend. But Malinche remains as a curious creature, half legend, half reality. History records only the seven years she spent as the companion of Cortez. But this does not diminish her enormous importance for Mexico. Cortez once declared under oath that the greatest aid he had in the conquest, after God, was Marina. Without her remarkable talent in languages, her skills in diplomacy, her love and fidelity, he never could have conquered the lands and the people of the Aztec empire.