MUSIC AND INTERRACIAL ROMANCE IN GOLDEN AGE MEXICAN CINEMA: A CASE OF TWO FILMS

by

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ABSTRACT

ALEXANDRA JEAN FITZGERALD. Music and Interracial Romance in Golden Age Mexican Cinema: A Case of Two Films

(Under the direction of DR. DAVID DALTON)

The purpose of this thesis is to address how film composers and film directors in the Golden Age of Mexican cinema used music and filmographic storytelling techniques to promote the post-revolutionary Mexican state's ideals regarding nationalism and cultural integration. The decision to analyze these two films specifically allows me to explore and critique their depictions of music and interracial romance in post-revolutionary Mexico. The comparison of these two films also allows me to draw similarities between both of these movements, in that the aim to integrate indigenous people into Mexican society and elevate their culture in these films was essentially devoid of any meaningful participation from actual indigenous people. In chapter 1, which is dedicated to *Allá en el Rancho Grande* (starring Jorge Negrete), I argue that the film's musical and cultural narrative idealizes a colonial past, in which indigenous people are not treated as equals, as well as sexually and racially exploited. In chapter 2, which analyzes *Tizoc* (starring Pedro Infante), I argue that certain indigenous and criollo pairings are not to mix, as well as address the fabricated assumptions about the Indian. The film's narrative culminates in punishing Tizoc for his rejection of an indigenous woman's love and his lust for a criolla woman. This thesis directly incorporates film music and describes its interplay with narrative, allegory, and romance in film.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Six years after the armed phase of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920), an unprecedented event in the history of Mexican music took place. This event occurred amidst a period of relentless ideological, social, and political changes in the building of a modernized state and nation, which followed the Mexican Revolution. The First National Congress of Music brought together Mexican composers, educators, performers, musicologists, musical theorists, and many other musical specialists to discuss the state of musical proceedings in post-revolutionary society (Madrid 112). Mexican musicians were experiencing political, social, and cultural instability at that time. Those who belonged to the intellectual elite had experienced the effects of the collapse of pre-revolutionary musical institutions after these had been paramount to the development of their active musical life (113). Composer Manuel M. Ponce stressed the need for a redefinition of musical roles and revitalization of musical institutions, as well as for a discussion of "the causes of our [Mexican] music's backwardness and the best ways to fight that decadence," a fact that made him one of the earliest advocates of musical nationalism in post-revolutionary Mexico (113; Morris 366).

The historical context surrounding my thesis is post-revolutionary Mexico—which encompassed the decades immediately following the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920)—and the Golden Age of Mexican Cinema. The Golden Age of Mexican cinema spanned roughly from the mid-1930s to the late 1950s. Different scholars select different start and end dates, but in general, they agree that it spanned roughly two decades. The following are some examples: "the 1930s to the 1950s" (Hegarty 89, Antebi 2); "20 year era" (Mulholland 361); and "1940s and early 1950s" (Mraz 107). While individual scholars may identify different dates, they tend to agree about the cinematic projects that existed in Golden Age cinema. During these years, the Mexican film

industry accepted funding from the United States for the production and distribution of many of their films (Mulholland 361). At the same time, however, these films tended to be very nationalistic, often trying to bring together a nation ravaged by civil war.

The Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) began as a result of widespread dissatisfaction with the elitist and patriarchal policies of President Porfirio Díaz, which favored wealthy landowners and industrialists (García Blizzard 17). The economic policies of Díaz, unequal distribution of land among the social classes, deeply ingrained economic inequality, and undemocratic leadership were the major causes of the Mexican Revolution (17). In the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution, the Mexican state made an effort to integrate different populations into the Mexican nation. The government was creating and organizing the ideal nation through the emergence of their "imagined community". In an imagined community, written, visual, and aural media help to construct large populations built on the recognitions of shared ideals, encouraging the populace to "imagine" themselves within this framework (Gellner 8; Hobsbawm 4; Ávila *Sonidos del Cine* 5-6). Claudio Lomintz-Adler describes the notion of a community of shared thought as a "concept of coherence," which is a way of gauging the mutual compatibility of one or more major beliefs or institutions in an intimate culture, which estimates how likely society is to bond with these beliefs and institutions (37). Social relations in post-revolutionary Mexican society were changing via the power of a dominant political ideology that drew people to interact with them.

As I embarked on this project, my research on music itself proved at times to be challenging, as most film scores of my studied genres have been lost. Indeed, according to Jacqueline Ávila, "Mexico's film heritage from the early silent period is difficult to access and information regarding the musical accompaniment from that period is even more of a challenge"

(*Sonidos del Cine* 8). I found it necessary to dictate certain musical passages myself in order to be able to refer to them later as opposed to finding them once again within the lengthy films. I am fairly unique in that I can do this; other scholars of Latin American music cannot, because they do not have this sort of musical training. Therefore, what *would* they do in my shoes, faced with the lack of such resources? Therefore, the major project for me in the following thesis is to use my ear and musical training to more deeply interpret the colors, textures, lyrics, and sentiments which derive from the film music.

Music and Golden Age Cinema

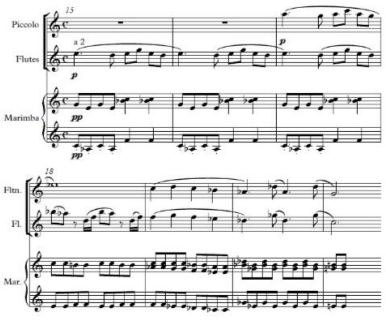
In studying a few of the most well-known films, I will more deeply investigate the musical depictions of interracial romance and a national conscious. My ultimate goal is to expand on previous studies on the interracial romances in Golden Age film by focusing on music. I will focus so much more on musical elements than my academic colleagues, putting to light the effect that aural stimuli can have on film viewers. The Golden Age of Mexican cinema was a unique and fundamental development in Mexican film. During these years, Mexican filmmakers developed a style that was quite distinct from that of Hollywood (Ramírez-Berg 53). Scholars like Charles Ramírez-Berg have written extensively on how Mexican directors created a visually distinctive national cinema, but very little has been said about the cinema's aural components. In fact, Mexican film and film music were considered to be too distinct from and not favorably comparable to Hollywood, according to Jacqueline Ávila:

> With the exception of modernist composer Silvestre Revueltas (1899-1940), film composers writing the orchestral music for the film's musical track are typically disregarded and admonished for not bringing to Mexican cinema what Max

> Steiner (1888-1971) and Erich Korngold (1897-1957) brought to Hollywood: lush, hyper-romantic orchestral scores with dramatic and memorable leitmotifs. (*Sonidos del Cine* 9)

However, as this thesis will address, the post-revolutionary state had definite political motives behind distinguishing their films' musical and visual components. This thesis allows me to build on previous scholarship to analyze and critique the means of sound in which I am most trained: Music.

The development of modernist music followed a number of different pathways, as did the search for and establishment of a national identity. In the 1920s, Mexican composers Chávez, Carrillo, and Ponce displayed at least three distinct musical development trajectories above (Casco-Centeno 59). José Vasconcelos, who was serving as secretary of public education, hired Chávez in 1921 to write a ballet with an Aztec theme (Casco-Centeno 59). Chávez started experimenting with new fashions in music, but he made sure to keep them within the pre-Hispanic musical tradition. He composed Toxiuhmolpia: El Fuego Nuevo, a piece of music, as a result of his exposure to pre-Colombian music. Chávez used a harmonic austerity that was inspired by the concept of pentatonic music (Casco-Centeno 60). The rhythm gives, as shown in the section below, the sense of time precision.[1]



[1] According to Emilio Casco-Centeno (60), Spanish chroniclers of the sixteenth century found the aforementioned sense of time precision to be astounding.

Here, the usage of percussion and wind instruments alludes to pre-Hispanic musical history (Casco-Centeno 60). This genre of music frequently uses repetition as a creative strategy, as is shown in the fragment (Casco-Centeno 60). Clearly, both post-revolutionary music and post-revolutionary film began to share certain similarities as they both celebrated indigenous, primarily pre-Columbian, aesthetics as an important part of their work.

Mexico produced several melodramatic movies after the Revolution. The term "melodrama" comes from the Greek word melos, which translates to "music," and was first used to describe stage shows from the early nineteenth century in which the drama was alternated with musical numbers and supported by an orchestral accompaniment that heightened emotional climaxes. In Mexico, the term "melodrama" is used to describe historical epics that place the family in the context of bigger national themes, in addition to personal dramas (Sadlier 2). Additionally, the plots of post-revolutionary Mexican movies often include musical pieces performed by well-known recording artists or nightclub performers (Sadlier 3). Music became a very important component of films during the budding sound era.

As Jacqueline Ávila discusses, it is crucial to acknowledge the contributions that sound and music have made to film, particularly during Mexico's Golden Age. A new reconstruction of the Revolutionary event(s) was in some ways built through the collection and juxtaposition of various sound samples and musical examples to recreate the Revolutionary soundscape (*Sonidos del Cine* 3). The music's impacts played a key role in creating and/or consolidating the myths and symbols that were incorporated into Mexican nationalist discourse (4). Indeed, acoustic representations were essential to the credibility of national narratives. Through particular musical associations, each of which emphasize a different aspect of national identity, Mexican cinema

perpetuates symbols, myths, memories, and traditions, cementing them in the popular imagination (4).

Silent cinema captured widespread attention from audiences during the silent era, but it was sound cinema that encouraged the ritual of going to the movies in Mexico. The addition of sound made the experience of watching a movie feel like "a more real reality" (Ávila, *Sonidos del Cine* 6). Below, Ávila describes the cultural effects of sound and music:

> Music rather takes on a role as a cultural suture: providing the necessary sonic associations to the representations and narrative on screen. In order to discuss the associations built by music and the cinematic image, I utilize the concept of cultural synchresis, which builds upon sound theorist Michel Chion's concept of synchresis, the juxtaposition of two important sound elements, synchronism and synthesis, creating "the spontaneous and irresistible weld produced between a particular auditory phenomenon and visual phenomenon when they occur at the same time. (*Sonidos del Cine* 14)

The connection between sounds and events in Mexican cinema provide "mutual reinforcements" to the viewers (Ávila, *Sonidos del Cine* 15), meaning that the eyes and ears of the viewer take note of a reality and "agree" with it, allowing for the identification of and compliance with ideas to become easier.

There were two main reasons why Mexican producers realized that they could succeed in the film industry during the era of sound. First, by producing their own flavor of sound in their films, the end results in their films were different and more focused on their own national context than were the ones that Hollywood filmmakers were including in theirs (Ramírez-Berg 57).

Secondly, prolific Mexican filmmakers had the ability to creatively capture *mexicanidad*, by emphasizing what officials deemed as authentic Mexican culture and celebrating the incorporation of indigenous cultures into the nation (Ramírez-Berg 55). Mexican filmmakers and audiences also tended to prefer cathartic film endings (Ramírez-Berg 56). Indeed, both of the films that I discuss in this thesis have cathartic endings despite one being "happy" and the other "sad." *Allá en el Rancho Grande* ends with the triumphant marriage of Cruz and Francisco, while *Tizoc* culminates in the deaths of the interracial lovers as they face the consequences of their forbidden love. In order to demonstrate the hope that the Mexican state wanted to portray to the once-desolate (in terms of a sense of belonging) indigenous people, Mexican filmmakers probably believed that this was an especially relevant reason to put cathartic endings into their films. In this way, they could either play into a sense of belonging and joy, as in *Allá en el Rancho Grande*, or they could raise certain critiques, as in *Tizoc*.

Mexican musical nationalism was already well underway before the Mexican Revolution started (Velázquez and Vaughan 95). An array of foreign wars during the 19th century introduced new genres, instruments, and musical formations into the country. Such musical formations included the French-introduced brass band, military bands (introduced by conservative leader Antonio López de Santa Anna and Catalan bandmaster Jaime Nunó, the latter of whom composed the music of Mexico's national anthem), and *cuerpos filarmónicos* by liberal leader Benito Juárez in response to flocks attending concerts of large bands accompanying French and Austrian invaders (Velázquez and Vaughan 95). In this way, music became a highly political entity that allowed Mexicans of different ancestries and ethnicities to ensure their place in national culture. Juárez's use of music to differentiate his Mexico culturally from the nation's

French and Austrian occupiers represents a clear example of the role that music could play in creating a national consciousness.

In the field of Mexican music, the period from the time of the Mexican Revolution of 1910 to approximately the Golden Age of the Mexican Cinema is especially important, since it represents the time when Mexican popular music and art music came to nonpareil national attention throughout the country (Koegel 6). Mexican musicians developed and spread unique musical forms and repertories that enriched musical expression (6). They successfully intermingled various manifestations of both musical culture and mass media in the aforementioned portion of the twentieth century: film, radio, television, recordings, musical theater, opera, concerts, and print media (6). The contributions of Mexican musicians during the Golden Age of Mexican cinema are numerous; however, I will focus my thesis on a narrower number of musicians, actors, films, and genres which will be discussed later.

My thesis will address two main styles of music present in Golden Age films: *Mariachi* and *ranchera*. Ranchera ("ranch") music saw a more Europe-centered development in Mexico from the Spanish lyric song or "canción" (Romero 1). The music has a simple accompaniment, simple chord progressions, duple or triple meter, and instrumental sections opening and alternating with verse and refrain (Romero 1). An especially important detail that will manifest itself in corresponding sections of my thesis include the following: "The vocal style associated with early rancheras is the open bel canto style from 17th- and 18th-century Italian opera, exploited by such famous singers as Jorge Negrete" (Romero 1). The emotional and prideful delivery of these songs is typically emphasized with stylized *gritos*, or yells (Romero 1). The *ranchera* appears in many scenes of *Allá en el Rancho Grande*. *Ranchera* music frequently refers to a nostalgia for the comforts of home (Romero 1). "Home," in this case, refers to the big

ranches where the greatest conflicts between Indigenous peasants and landed, mestizo/criollo hacendados took place (Nájera-Ramírez 3). In my chosen films, the scenes tied to haciendas tend to lack indigenous people, a fact that relegates them to "invisible labor" on the hacienda. Indigenous characters are almost exclusively played by mestizo—and even criollo—actors who performatively invoke Indigeneity through false accents, dress, and exaggerated simplicity.

Mariachi music originated in the western state of Jalisco (Mulholland 362). The state of Jalisco is known as the birthplace of such westernized traditions and important national symbols including charrería (horsemanship) and *mariachi* (359). The word *mariachi*—which is an ensemble of guitars, guitarrón (bass guitar), diatonic harp, violins and trumpet—does not originate (as some have suggested) from the French "marriage" (Clark 228); instead, it actually comes from native languages of western Mexico (specifically Náhuatl and Coca language groups) referring to a social event involving dancers performing on a wooden platform (Chamorro 1). Modern mariachi orchestrations, however, employ the instruments of the European theater orchestra, e.g. violins, brass, and guitars (Chamorro 2). The trumpet, for example, gave the mariachi ensemble a more European image, and it was then used frequently for stage performances and films (2). The presence of trumpets in mariachi ensembles branches from the 1930s, a time when mariachi music began to be used and promoted widely in cinema and on popular radio (2). Of course, *mariachi* has undergone certain modernizations. *Mariachi* music was launched into the commercial scene in the 1930s and 1940s, which established it as a common accompaniment for film stars such as Jorge Negrete (Oboler and González 3). It was in part due to such a propulsion into modern media that specific changes to the *mariachi* ensemble took place. For example, like the *charro cantor* in the Golden Age of cinema, musicians in *mariachi* ensembles increasingly wore the traditional *charro* outfit (Oboler and González 3).

Mariachi music is a salient genre within the types of music discussed because of its appropriate place in the modernization of post-revolutionary Mexico, as well as its abundance in Golden Age Mexican cinema.

Both of the films that I discuss in this thesis use these genres of music to advocate for heterosexual romance between Indigenous and mestizo characters. That said, they do so in different ways; while *Allá en el Rancho Grande* celebrates the successful marital union of a mestizo man and an indigenous woman, *Tizoc* documents the tragic failure of society—both indigenous and mestizo—to allow the protagonists to love one another that punishes an indigenous man for falling in love with a criolla woman. I will now turn my attention to Jorge Negrete and Pedro Infante, the singer/actors whom I will be discussing throughout the balance of my thesis.

Pedro Infante and Jorge Negrete: Stars of the Mexican Golden Age

The two actors that I have chosen as representatives of my thesis are Jorge Negrete and Pedro Infante. I discuss their performance of interracial, heterosexual romance in *Allá en el Rancho Grande* and *Tizoc* respectively. My reasoning behind choosing these two actors specifically revolves around their on-screen persona, star studies, and the varying complexities they both add to the character of the singing charro.

Jorge Negrete was known as the foremost singing charro of the comedia ranchera film genre (Henriques, "Negrete, Jorge" 1). As this thesis will demonstrate, based on existing star studies, Negrete reached iconic status in Mexican pop culture. Negrete was a reputable musician as well, and numerous songs from films he starred in became staples within the mariachi repertory (Henriques, "Negrete, Jorge" 1). As a result, Negrete was greatly admired by audiences

in Mexico. On screen, he had a strongly arrogant and haughty persona (Mraz, "Cinema and Celebrities" 135). In Mraz's *Looking for Mexico*, an unidentified scholar of mass media comments on the meaning of Negrete's and Infante's status as idols. The following quote particularly pertains to Jorge Negrete; and with respect to the "conqueror of women" classification, Negrete's acting is a much more appropriate example than Infante's.

> The Mexican idol differs from Argentine or U.S. stars. He is not only someone who sings and acts in movies, he is a being that has it all; he has reached fame thanks to his voice, his presence, his acting gifts, and his reputation as a conqueror of women. The idol is above all the idealized image that Mexicans would like to have of themselves. (135)

Pedro Infante was considered the successor to Jorge Negrete, and regarded as the second-best musical portrayal after Negrete of the *charro cantor* (Henriques, "Infante Pedro" 1). That said, Infante was arguably the more popular of the two stars (Paredes 24). In a competition between Infante and Negrete to determine who would reign as the king of the *charros cantores* based on singing ability, the latter emerged victorious (Mraz, "Cinema and Celebrities" 137). However, Infante's screen persona was more complicated than Negrete's. He portrayed a macho, yet good-natured man (Henriques, "Infante Pedro" 1), thereby adding a new perspective to manliness; a man could exude tenderness while maintaining his masculinity (Mraz, "Cinema and Celebrities" 141). Like Negrete's film songs, Infante's numerous recordings (especially of rancheras) have also become classics of the mariachi repertory (1).

Negrete and Infante are two of the most important figures of Golden Age Mexican Cinema. Far from ordinary *charros cantores*, they were considered "idols" in their day (Mraz, "Cinema and Celebrities" 135). Negrete was considered a "symbol of Mexico" (135); and

Infante, “the most authentic Mexican hero” (139). Individual artists were an important factor in “rescuing” the concept of *lo mexicano* (Mraz, “Cinema and Celebrities” 119). Movie stars like Negrete and Infante appeared in all the magazines, periodicals, and advertisements; they were both the products and epitomes of Mexican mass media. Therefore, the public became intoxicated by these men, and they were able to effectively “articulate the dominant ideology” (120). Jorge Negrete and Pedro Infante were studied as expressions of “national archetypes”; they specifically embodied the *charro* (120).

The *charro* is a type of Mexican cowboy, which served as a symbol of what constituted “lo mexicano” (Nájera-Ramírez 3). Not only did charrería manifest itself in the male wardrobe, but so too in the behavior, music, and even in wooing women (3). Charros in Mexican Golden Age films especially idealized the term “macho.” They did so by showing pride in their so-called masculine tendencies, which included drinking (but not too heavily), basking in their elite status, and riding horses and donkeys (3). To have a horse and be able to ride it with such pride and authority was considered a privilege to these well-to-do gentlemen; a group of people who were, not incidentally, the men who rode the horses (called *caballeros*) (Nájera-Ramírez 4). Cattle ranching was another skill that charros were known for (Nájera-Ramírez 2). Politicians narrated the legendary status of the *charro* by exploiting their image (Nájera-Ramírez 4). Musicians and filmmakers then portrayed that same narrative artistically by romanticizing the charro lifestyle. In this way, the image made its way into Mexican cinema during the Golden Age. Male characters wore sombreros (4). They dressed in dark colors, because the charro code did not allow them to wear brighter colors like yellow or orange (4). They even sported guns as part of their outfits (4). Such was the essence of the personification ventures undertaken by Negrete and Infante.

Both films depict love triangles. In *Allá en el Rancho Grande,* Negrete's *criollo* character falls in love with an indigenous woman, directly threatening the pursuit of an *hacienda* landowner. In *Tizoc,* the genders encompassing each role are reversed. Infante's character is indigenous, and after believing he loved another native woman, he eventually falls in love with a *criolla* woman. The romantic relationships in these films reverberate with those discussed in Doris Sommer's *Foundational Fictions*, which asserts that stories of interethnic and cross-class heterosexual romances communicate an ideal of nation building and posterity (7). By capturing the audience's attention with a romantic narrative, authors "connected romance and republic", campaigning to establish an emerging national identity that reconciled different sectors of society through love and reproduction, both literal and figurative (7). In the case of my thesis, the love stories promoted official national reconciliation across racial and class-based lines.

Some Latin American writers, according to Sommer, considered narrative to *be* history (9), calling for issues to be acted on in a resolving manner (as part of the nation building campaign). These films work in the same way that Sommer says romantic novels work, in that they *are* a portrayal of history, and they *do* insinuate a need for action. In these films, the main indigenous characters feel a sense of longing for their culture and isolation from their beloved homeland. The solution that my chosen films present, the so-called "action", is reintegrating into a new society through romantic means. By marrying descendants of colonialism, indigenous characters were "liberated" from this detachment from civilization (although not necessarily from their pure culture). Both characters' portrayals as victims of colonialism are improved through marrying the man or woman they love. In doing so, they minimize the effects of colonialism in their lives, and liberate themselves from the class inequality that came from

colonialism. In that way, they positively contribute to building the nation through their interracial romances.

In the era of Golden Age Mexican film, reputable filmmakers and film composers chose compositional techniques, charismatic actors and singers, and lyrics that connected emotionally and culturally with a wide array of audiences (Koegel 6). These songs also affected how the nation understood and projected itself, both internally and internationally. As I embarked on my research, I noticed that there was not much in-depth research or analysis of film music lyrics or the performance-based nuances of such lyrics. As a musician, I feel that I can breathe a new life into the perspective of such lyrics, film composers, and singer/actors/actresses. I can contribute, from a performing artist's perspective, why such nuances are very important in assisting governmental ideals of society and nationhood in post-revolutionary Mexico.

Chapter 1: Interracial Romance through Music in Negrete's *Allá en el Rancho Grande*

A key scene in Jorge Negrete's *Allá en el Rancho Grande* (1949) occurs when the protagonist, José Francisco (Jorge Negrete) squares off against his nemesis, Martín, a local bum who is jealous of José Francisco's success. Both men take out their guitars and sing insults back and forth while bystanders react with oos and awes. After José Francisco wins the battle based on quality and style, Martín decides to stoop to a new low, singing to him that his fiancée, Cruz, recently slept with Felipe, José Francisco's dearest friend, and the hacendado in Rancho Grande. José Francisco's demeanor changes from one of light-hearted banter to one of silenced rage. He asks the other men if this is true, and when they confirm that several men witnessed Felipe visiting her alone in her home, he saunters away and gets his gun so that he can challenge Felipe to a duel. This scene highlights the key role that music plays throughout the film in promoting heterosexual romances between mestizo men and Indigenous women. From a narrative standpoint, this scene catalyzes the confrontation that ultimately leads to Cruz's vindication and José Francisco's blissful marriage. The music allows people to tell truths that they may not be able to say through the spoken word, and this in turn informs characters of events they may not otherwise know about. Indeed, the film uses music—and particularly the star power of Jorge Negrete, its larger-than-life leading man—to demonstrate José Francisco's right to marry, and presumably procreate with his indigenous love interest.

A brief plot summary will help to facilitate our discussion. *Allá en el Rancho Grande* has a cast of characters that—despite being idealized versions of stereotypes—mesh beautifully together in the romanticized version of the *Comedia ranchera*. José Francisco and Felipe have been friends at the Hacienda of Rancho Grande since they were little, when José Francisco and his sister Eulalia moved there with their godmother Ángela, after becoming orphans. Cruz (Lilia

del Valle), another orphan who had been staying with them and was José Francisco's late mother's godchild, joined them. Felipe, who now owns Rancho Grande, has appointed José Francisco as the farm's manager because the man is by far his most dependable worker. Cruz has always been treated as little more than a servant by Ángela, despite the fact that Ángela's perpetually inebriated husband, Florentino, takes care of her and treats her like a queen. The viewer realizes that José Francisco is secretly in love with Cruz, and things start to get complicated for Felipe and José Francisco shortly after. José'sfriendship with Felipe is put to the test after Ángela realizes that Felipe likes Cruz as well. Following the aforementioned misunderstanding, Felipe gives José and Cruz his blessing to marry.

The film highlights Negrete's popular singing voice to bring about an interracial romance between José Francisco and Cruz. In focusing specifically on how Jorge Negrete uses his star power to advocate for his character's interracial romance through song, this chapter distinguishes itself from much of the scholarship that went before. Previous articles written on this film describe it as one that "served to familiarize Latin Americans with Mexican folklore" (Paranagua par. 2), or that the film was "the country's first great commercial success at the cinema, paving the way for both rapid industrialisation within the industry and the enduring popularity of the comedia ranchera" (Roddick par. 8).[2] Others have argued that the film presents "a bucolic interpretation of the feudal hacienda system that predated the Mexican Revolution" and that "De Fuentes was highly critical of the Revolution's outcome and its limited reform efforts" (Garcia 73). My interventions into this film will culminate in an emphasis on the musical elements and how those influence an emotional and trusting response from the audience. First however, I will need to explain how the presence of Jorge Negrete on the screen facilitates these ends.

[2] Certainly, Roddick refers to the original version of the film more than the Jorge Negrete remake.

Jorge Negrete was one of Mexico's most adored film actors and singers. During the height of his popularity in the so-called Golden Age of Mexican cinema, the *ranchera* film became a popular genre. Rancheras took place on ranches, and they employed popular, *ranchera* music. The genre was especially popular because this was a time that the state was constructing a culture which promoted populist, agrarian ideals (Hegarty 90). The state was also using film and particularly movie scores to establish and normalize social class relations, social class dynamics, and gender roles (90). *Allá en el Rancho Grande* is a perfect example of this sort of cinema; as it places different characters in contact one with another—and especially as it negotiates their romantic stories through music—it comes to advocate for specific types of social relations. As he embodies the *charro*, for example, Negrete comes to represent the film's portrayal of the idealized Mexican nation. His *charro* performance further upholds conventional gender roles, both for men like himself and women like Cruz, while imagining a "proper" way for them to come together to sire a new generation.

Negrete started his career with a role in *La madrina del diablo* (1937), and he went on to appear in a total of thirty-eight pictures (Fernandez and Tamaro par. 4). The actor popularized the ranchera comedy through his popular performances of the "charro cantor." The charro cantor was a brave macho, a good guy, a wealthy man, a womanizer, and a vital, even somewhat arrogant, member of society (Fernandez and Tamaro par. 4). In many of his performances and in various movies, Negrete used his charisma and acting abilities to win his audiences over. Because his real-life personality apparently matched that of the "charro cantor" in numerous ways, film critics commonly argue that Jorge Negrete generally played himself in his movies (Fernandez and Tamaro par. 4). By starring in such films, and through establishing his personality as an embodiment of the "charro cantor," Negrete reached a legendary status within Mexican popular

and throughout the Golden Age (Henriques par. 2). Not only did Negrete champion *ranchera* films, but he was a very popular *ranchera* singer as well. As a result of his fame, songs from Negrete's films such as *Allá en el Rancho Grande*, *Ay, Jalisco, no te rajes, Cocula*, and *Yo soy mexicano* became staples of the mariachi repertoire (Henriques par. 2). Negrete was well respected by audiences in Mexico, Spain, and throughout the Americas.

As we can see in *Allá en el Rancho Grande*, Negrete's dress plays a key role in his performance of a traditional charro. He wears an embroidered jacket, tight pants, a white shirt with a bow tie, and a wide-brimmed hat with a high, cone-shaped crown (Fernandez and Tamaro par. 8). In every scene of these films in which he takes part, Negrete saunters with the confidence that characterizes the toughness and worthiness of the macho male, and with a tender and sweet smile that is always ready to entice a woman into a love affair, which highlights the more romantic side of his performance. In the movies, Negrete's innocent charm appears to win over the faithful female public found in these film settings (Fernandez and Tamaro par. 8). Filmographers were particularly intentional about the appearance and wardrobe of male characters. In *Dude Lit*, Emily Hind proposes that the Mexican intellectual figure is homogeneous and has to do with corporeal practices: "The most heterosexual of twentieth-century masculinist intellectual performances sought disembodiment by assigning embodiment either to the audience or to the object of critique" (44). Hind further explores the correlations between height, smiling, dress, and other bodily practices with a writer's (or, in this case, actor's) popularity. Hind cautions that if this correlation seems naive or silly to the reader or viewer, it is important to remember that sexism has never been very sophisticated (46). Hind demonstrates here how the canon of Mexican literature and film is built from misogynist and sexist attitudes, which were pervasive during the Golden Age.

The post-revolutionary period in Mexico was a time of both changing and strengthening ideologies, which John Mraz describes as a historical moment that set the criteria for who, like Negrete, could be classified as a "true star." As Mraza explains, "true stars are highly individualized archetypes that articulate the dominant ideology, at times embodying values that are in crisis. Mexico was undergoing the profound transition from a rural and agricultural society to one that is urban and industrial, and stars served to redefine a changing national identity" (120). Individual actors like Jorge Negrete became personified definitions of the ongoing national identities set in post-revolutionary Mexico, in that they clarified how to behave in the changing society. While the population at large became more urban, Negrete and others like him continued to affirm the value of rural communities. What is more, their films suggested that it would be in the *rancho*—and not in the city—where the nation would be regenerated. Stars like Jorge Negrete served to both challenge and redefine the national identity in Mexico, connecting with something very deeply and emotionally important in the national imagination and enabling the audience to identify with only them, *not* less important actors who did not have the predominantly romantic, social, and/or musical roles.

Nostalgic Bygone Days of Rural Life: *Allá en el Rancho Grande*

Prior to his starring in this 1949 film, part of Negrete's career involved touring Latin America and singing rancheras with the Trío Calaveras (Clark 234). The ranchera was a traditional genre of music in Mexico, which originated in the mid-19th century (Clark 228). Following the Mexican Revolution, rancheras became popular among the Hispanic-influenced mariachi bands that developed in Jalisco (Clark 234). The ranchera became an artistic symbol of a new national identity in Mexico, in which indigenous peoples were incorporated under a

blanket of national identity, in order to suit the more trans-cultured intentions of that period. Therefore, since Negrete made his mark as a reputable ranchera singer, he would be able to use his musicianship to represent the previously-mentioned guiding beliefs that characterized the Mexican community. It was widely through such artistic influences that these short, simple, and upbeat mariachi songs became so interlaced with discourses of Mexican modernity. Indeed, singers and actors like Negrete could embody Mexican manliness by singing this music and exporting it to audiences throughout the nation.

In addition, rancheras were used to nostalgize the traditional Mexican ranch life, meaning the hierarchical hacienda system that had begun with the Spanish conquest of 1519 and survived into the 20th century (Nash 950). In the 20th century, the hacienda's purpose had become that of securing private property for aristocrats. Indeed, criollos and mestizos benefitted massively from the hacienda system because they tended to be the ones who owned the land. Mestizos (who made up the majority of the Mexican population at that time), would only possess such land if recognized by their criollo father as having the same genetic rights as he did (Nash 952). To nostalgize that lifestyle through such a prominent cultural medium so deep into the 20th century makes clear just how difficult it was for the nation to navigate the social and cultural changes that arose in the wake of the Revolution.

Another important detail to note, which pertains to the history of post-revolutionary Mexico as well as the Golden Age period of Mexican cinema, is the Mexican *charro,* or cowboy. The Mexican cowboy served as a symbol of what "lo mexicano" should be: hard-working, good with horses and with his hands, etc. (Pagés par. 2). Not only did *charro* manifest itself in the male wardrobe, but so too in the behavior, music, and even (or perhaps especially) in their relationships with women. *Charros* in Golden Age films especially idealized the term "macho."

They did this by showing pride in their so-called masculine tendencies, which included drinking, basking in their elite status, functioning as womanizers in social contexts, and of course, riding horses and donkeys (Nájera-Ramírez 3). To have a horse and be able to ride it with such pride and authority was considered a privilege to *caballeros* (a term that, not coincidentally, means both gentlemen and men who ride horses) (Nájera-Ramírez 4). Many *charro* activities entailed activities that had come to Mexico from the Iberian Peninsula (Nájera-Ramírez 2). The goal of the Mexican state in merging these traditions with other, more explicitly indigenous, practices was to generate a culturally hybrid appearance (and sound in the case of music) that would advocate for *mestizaje* by mixing European art and sensibilities with the supposedly more folkloric tendencies of the contemporary indigenous populations.

Politicians narrated the legendary status of the *charro* by exploiting their image. Musicians and filmmakers then portrayed that same narrative artistically by romanticizing the *charro* lifestyle. In this way, the image made its way into Mexican cinema during the Golden Age. Male characters wore *sombreros,* or Mexican cowboy hats. They dressed in dark colors, because the *charro* code did not allow them to wear brighter colors like yellow or orange. They even sported guns as part of their outfits. Ultimately, these *charro* films communicated ideas about interracial romance and national identity more generally. Finding such ideas within the film music is very important, because musical stars such as Jorge Negrete were invaluable to Golden Age Mexican cinema. Reputable touring musicians such as Negrete helped popularize the ranchera, which would make it logical to include them in these Golden Age films. By that era, Mexican cinema had essentially become mutually dependent on these trending, mixed-culture rancheras, which had been established as a musical icon of popular culture (Doremus 378).

In *Allá en el Rancho Grande,* the viewer sees the emphasis on Mexicanness, a concept promulgated by the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution. Mexico's "imagined community" following the revolution was built on a fantastical utopia of an invented agrarian past that is home to a peasant hero.[3] Aesthetic and intellectual elites used post-revolutionary discourse to create this fictitious past in an effort to build a mixed-race nation and show what they had identified as the core elements of Mexican culture. Mexican filmmakers looked for ways to change a field dominated by Hollywood and European models into a cinema that was distinctly Mexican. They did this in part by casting away Western and European aesthetics in favor of a more mixed aesthetic that employed certain indigenous elements, or, more often, through cinematographic techniques that emphasized the Mexican landscape (Hershfield 38-39). From the opening of *Allá en el Rancho Grande,* representations of race are apparent, as will be discussed by the film and music examples provided.

To start, in the very first scene following the introduction and opening credits, the musical motif plays in the background while a man on a horse rides into the town of Rancho Grande. Following this man's entrance, a second man who is clearly indigenous (based on his clothing and his straw hat) casually rides a donkey into the Rancho Grande. However, as the viewer is taken inside of Rancho Grande and introduced to the *mariachi* band and singers who are singing the *Allá en el Rancho Grande* motif, the presence of indigenous men on horseback disappears. There are no indigenous men to be found inside, so therefore, they are most likely being sent to work somewhere around the *hacienda*. There may be indigenous women present in Rancho Grande, but all of the women who are present are sitting off to the side. Their role in this

[3] The concept of the "imagined community" is best described in Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, where he designates communities as "imagined" because members of a nation will "never know most of their fellow members". Yet, in each person's mind, there is an image of fellow community members, leading to the falsifications and fabrications that nationalism "masquerades" under.

opening scene appears to be moderating the behavior of the men who are drinking and taking care of them. They are definitely not singing and dancing in the center with the *mariachi* band or the singers.

The scene takes place in a massive rectangular building, within which there is a group of *charros* formed into a mariachi band. They turn out to be the musicians singing and playing the *Allá en el Rancho Grande* tune. They are playing violins, guitars, and brass instruments. Following their energetic and passionate performance of *Allá en el Rancho Grande,* the gaggle of people listening to the musicians inside the "Rancho Grande" erupt into a rapturous applause. This particular version of the popular tune at the beginning of the film is more in the *corrido* style, which is a more energetic and faster-paced version of the *ranchera.* The upbeat, pulsating energy also highlights the more prideful emotions that *charros* historically felt regarding their lifestyle and their heroic status in society (Nájera-Ramírez 4). Therefore, from the very beginning, *Allá en el Rancho Grande* emphasizes that the norm within the film's hypothetical society is to incorporate those "Mexicannized" cultural elements into a general lifestyle.

In one scene, José Francisco plays and sings the tune "Allá en el Rancho Grande" on a guitar. Firstly, the guitar was one of the instruments introduced from Europe to replace native instruments. Secondly, one notable element of the ranchera is the "grito mexicano," a spontaneous yell during musical interludes of the ranchera, in order to express an emotional response. In keeping with this traditional style, the "grito mexicano" occurs throughout this specific ranchera in that scene, generating primarily from the audience that listens to Negrete's character, Francisco, as he plays and sings. In so doing, Francisco comes to embody many of the nationalist ideals that the post-revolutionary state aimed to instill among its population. In many ways, Francisco comes to embody the type of macho bravado that the post-revolutionary state

most adored. Not only does his character live on a ranch, but he can sing traditional music, he has a respectable occupation, etc.

Consider the lyrics of the tune *Allá en el Rancho Grande.* These are the words to a couple stanzas of the song:

Soy un charro de rancho grande
y hasta el amor bebo de un cántaro;
y no hay potrillo astuto
que puede tirarme si aguanto.
Oh, Dios mío, qué bien apareció
cuando está en su traje de charro.
Nací en Rancho Grande
y no lo ando presumiendo;
hay quien no es de aqui
y lo único que hacen es alardear,
como alguien que conocí
y todavía estoy conociendo.
Yo no nací en Rancho Grande
pero me encanta este lugar;
hay muchos que por costumbre
hablar sin razón alguna,
hay muchos que inician incendios
que no saben apagarlos.

The image portrayed within these lyrics demonstrates nostalgia for a bygone rural Mexico, as well as a dissatisfaction with the people who are "not from the Rancho Grande", which fits the *ranchera* and *charro* models very adequately. Even without the passion and energy that comes from the performers and elevates the lyrics to another level (which is a key addition to the romantic and musical drama within the film), these lyrics by themselves generate the appropriate image of "the big ranch" and the people who live and work on it. "The big ranch" was indicative of a larger part within the hierarchical *hacienda* system. The *hacienda* system was a Mexican feudal system which was based on the presence and structure of *haciendas* and *ranchos. Haciendas* were large land estates that were tended to by *vaqueros* (cow hands) due to their size, and *ranchos* were smaller cattle ranches (Nájera-Ramírez 2). *Rancho* houses were owned or rented by a single family, and the development of cattle ranching from the 16th century provided an opportunity for lower-class Indians and mestizos to use their equestrian skills to work on these properties (Nájera-Ramírez 2).

Imagery is extremely powerful in itself, even without music. However, the musical tempo, energetic spirit, and prideful yet reflective mood add the emotional and musical layers necessary to cultivate a meaning within the imagery. In that first scene of *Allá en el Rancho Grande,* the audience responds enthusiastically to the musical performance, as if they are enticed by both the character of this *ranchera,* the simplicity of the image, and the story within the *ranchera*. The audience in this particular scene clearly appreciates the musical content, because it brings a moment of joy into their lives. In turn, they want to extend the joy past just that particular moment and share as much as they can with the other people in their lives. These factors of influence make for a great marketing campaign, which happened to be the goal of the

government and their use of well-known musicians to inculcate national traditions in their audiences.

Mujer Pura and Role of the Female in the Rancho Grande

The role of the *mujer pura* in the *ranchera* story is demonstrated by the main female character, Cruz (also known affectionately by other male characters as Crucita). The allegorical techniques used via the main male and female characters in this film are documented by Doris Sommer in *Foundational Fictions* as a portrayal of Venezuelan poet Andrés Bello's endorsement of narrative in history. Some nations, including post-revolutionary Mexico, went beyond such an endorsement in their own literature and films, and they considered their narratives to not only portray history, but to *be* history and to take on the challenges of developing into a real national narrative (115). As will be demonstrated by the film examples below, a character's visual portrayal and musicianship go hand in hand with the political narrative that shaped society in post-revolutionary Mexico.

In a musical scene that is closer to the beginning of the film, Cruz\ sings a melancholic song in which she acknowledges both her beauty and her suffering. After all, she must constantly be on the lookout for men who would take advantage of her for her beauty:

Estoy lejos de la tierra en la que nací
Mis pensamientos son invadidos por la nostalgia
Como estoy solo y triste a merced del viento
Quisiera llorar, quisiera morir de pena
¡Tierra del Sol!
Ansío verte
Porque estoy lejos sin luz y sin amor

Como estoy solo y triste a merced del viento

Quisiera llorar, quisiera morir de pena

This specific song is known as the "Canción mixteca" (Hegarty 97) which, written two years after the Revolution began, portrays the longing of the Mixtec people for their ancestral home of Oaxaca. Cruz identifies with Mexico's indigenous peoples and further establishes herself as a metaphor for the country's colonized peoples through her aching for the *tierra natal*, which signifies a prevalent motif in indigenous music and poetry (Hegarty 97). Her name is also a representation of the "cross" that all Mexicans wear as a result of the hardships they have encountered throughout their history.

Cruz is nostalgic about her homeland in Oaxaca, which is a common theme in indigenous poetry and song (Hegarty 97). Her song establishes her as a representation of the indigenous, previously colonized population. The isolation she feels from her homeland represents the "historical solitude" that can be interpreted from the Paz quote, the physical solitude of being away from home; which will be followed by a cultural "modern solitude" as she pulls away from her authentic culture and marries into a hybrid, yet not truly authentic, version.[4] Her people's presence in the midst of *mestizo* culture in this film, therefore, is initially a double-edged sword for Cruz. While it was politically expected to progress and encompass a more mixed culture, Cruz herself feels lonely, unloved, and detached from her home in the state of Oaxaca. The fact that people such as Cruz still feel a painful separation from a culture she holds dear is a negative side effect to the cultural homogenization that mestizaje necessarily entailed. Nevertheless, the movie does not advocate for Cruz to resolve her sadness by returning to Oaxaca. Rather, it demands that she accept the changes taking place before her and embark on a romance with José

[4] See Paz quote on page 10 of this thesis.

Francisco. In doing so, she will find her proper place within the Mexican nation, and her nostalgia for Oaxaca will slowly dissipate.

As a character, Cruz is considered very important to the interracial romance. Indeed, she functions as a reminder of the problems associated with past colonialism. Cruz has asthma, which represents the physical toll inflicted on the indigenous populations when they were worked to death. Her portrayal as a weak and defenseless victim of colonialism is reversed through marrying the man she loves, José Francisco, a man who, ironically, can trace his lineage directly back to the conquering forces of Spain. In marrying him, Cruz numbs the effects of colonialism in her life and liberates herself from the class, racial, and ethnic inequalities that resulted from colonialism. In this way, her union with her lover becomes the cure for the loneliness she has felt throughout her life. Rather than simply return to Oaxaca and turn away from the predominant, mestizo culture, she ends up integrating into it. In so doing, she makes mestizo society more like herself even as she changes herself to more adequately reflect and embody the demands of mestizo state. If we follow the theorizations of Doris Sommer, then we realize that she and José Francisco will sire a new, mixed-race generation, a conclusion that occurs across an array of Golden Age films. Presumably, their children will inherit their father's bravado and mental and physical toughness while inheriting their mother's abnegation and spiritual goodness. Of course, given the film's musical nature, they will also inherit both parents' musical abilities.

Cruz's primary role in *Allá en el Rancho Grande* is to represent and seek to elevate Mexico's disadvantaged peoples. Cruz is the victim in the story; her passivity can be interpreted as both a representation of the plight of the oppressed, as victims of a colonial social order, and as moral superiority in which her suffering elevates her and separates her from the dishonest

social relations she is made to endure. According to Roger Bartra, passivity is arguably and traditionally common among Mexicans who are dealing with stress, because they cultivate a "clear perspective" that is "free of obstacles"; in contrast to North Americans, who are "active and efficient", Mexicans are "characterized by passive methods of dealing with stress" (*The Cage of Melancholy* 50). The Mexican attitude is characterized by "Asiatic passivity" in which people are "curled up" (which refers to an indigenous way of sitting or squatting) and characterized by "calmness, passivity, and self-absorption" (50). Therefore, Cruz is a very good demonstration of the concept of inner strength throughout distressing times. Cruz is the ideal national symbol because, as an orphan who is taken advantage of by her godmother Ángela, she embodies the exploitation of the Mexican people as a whole and "orphans" according to the colonial myth of the chingada, by supposedly "benign" forces (see Paz 75-80). Her role as a metaphor for the Mexican race under colonization is furthered by Ángela's perception of her as property to be married off and sold for financial gain. She longs to be with José Francisco, and her abnegation comes to associate her with the Virgin. Certainly, she is unfairly charged with sleeping with Felipe, a fact that momentarily equates her with la Malinche. Nevertheless, her eventual vindication serves to make her association with the Virgin even stronger by completely discounting any attempt to associate her with la Malinche.

Although Cruz the character is indigenous, the actress who plays her is not. Lilia del Valle (1928-2013) was a Mexican actress who starred in several Golden Age Mexican films, such as *Las tres alegres comadres* (1952) and *Las cariñosas* (1953). Monica García Blizzard describes the notion of white actresses representing indigenous women in film as "whiteness-as-indigeneity" (210). According to García Blizzard: "Whiteness-as-indigeneity is the visual device that functions to present women as the physically attractive, primary sufferer in

the melodrama with whom the audience is meant to commiserate, and as a female model of good character in film" (210). The character Cruz, as played by Lilia del Valle, fits that description well. She is a white woman who is physically attractive, she is the primary emotional sufferer in the film because of the nostalgia she feels about her homeland, and she models the established superior character of someone who has successfully evolved from indigenous culture and integrated herself into mestizo culture. Nevertheless, given the relative slippage in the terms Indigenous, mestiza, and criolla, the Mexican cinema allowed this white woman to interpret the role of an Indigenous woman by simply dressing the part. Of course, this casting decision also has an oppressive underbelly that seeks to whiten those aspects of indigeneity that the state viewed as desirable even as it wrote other articulations of indigeneity out of the picture altogether. Sommer gets at this point when she asserts that "the project to whiten the color and consciousness of Latin American masses had, to be sure, a continuous extra-literary life in the positivist mainstream of Latin American philosophy and education" (125). Given the deep ties between Mexico's Secretaría de Educación Pública and its film industry, this assertion applies particularly well to this movie. Indeed, Sommer's argument lines right up with García Blizzard's, in that she discusses whitening as a project to be stamped into national consciousness, in order to establish that ideal as the mainstream narrative. These ideas will be demonstrated visually below.

In the photograph below, from *Allá en el Rancho Grande*, one can see that Valle's skin is light-to-white in tone. Indeed, the only thing that aligns her with indigeneity is her decision to dress in traditionally indigenous clothing. See the image provided below:

Lilia del Valle (center) and Jorge Negrete (far right)

Her skin tone is essentially identical to Negrete's, as can be seen in the same photograph. Identifying the whiteness of both characters' skin is an important detail. "Instrumentalization of whiteness-as-indigeneity means that while film's diegesis presents the perseverance of an interracial romantic union, visually it avoids the projection of a coupling that can visually be understood as interracial in the context of the local racial formation" (García Blizzard 211). Therefore, while the eventual marriage between Cruz and Francisco is interracial, the visual representation muddles that on purpose. Romantically, the viewer sees the desirability of what García Blizzard calls the "White Indians of Mexican Cinema". Not only does *Allá en el Rancho Grande* diminish indigenous people from taking on a dominant presence, but it also ensures that those who do make a presence are white or light in skin tone. In this way, the film emphasizes a type of Eurocentric aesthetics on their relationship. Even as it purportedly calls for interracial marriages, it also upholds whiteness as an aesthetic and beauty standard that would seem to exclude most indigenous women from the national narrative.

By playing Cruz, Lilia del Valle projects a version of Mexican Whiteness that is common in Golden Age Films, in which she undermines the triumphs of indigenous women in real life. In Golden Age Mexican Cinema, indigenous womanhood is ultimately celebrated as "an abstract essence that is not culturally or visually perceptible and is only verbalized sentimentally from time to time" (García Blizzard 238). In other words, in these films, the indigenous woman is present and idealized as both a character and a marital partner, but racially she does not look like a phenotypically indigenous woman. If she does, then she will not be put into a starring or triumphant role. This complex typicality will be discussed more in Chapter 2.

The person who treats Cruz like a piece of property, seeks to sell her for profit, and makes light of the whole situation is Ángela, whose name is ironic (unlike Cruz's). The patrón is

shown to have made sexual approaches, but it is made apparent that this was only because of a lie that Ángela told that he had no malicious intentions. In the end, Ángela is the lone antagonist in the movie, which is how it shifts the negative aspects of colonialism to a different archetype. Joanne Hershfield discusses this type of feminine figure that recurs in Mexican, social and cultural, myths and narratives: The "Terrible Mother", who "operates as a force that threatens, causes harm to, or interferes with the goal of the hero. Though represented as negative, aggressive, and destructive, at the same time the terrible mother emerges as a dynamic and powerful figure." (Hershfield 16). The lower class woman is transformed into the traditional antagonists in Mexico's cultural narrative in a way that does not elevate the lower classes, as the Revolution sought to do, but instead scapegoats a new articulation of female in order to maintain the status quo of Mexico's colonialist narrative.

The need to sanitize colonial history is a reflection of Mexico's sociopolitical concerns in the 1930s. For starters, the Mexican state started working on building its national identity during the 1930s in an effort to forge a strong feeling of "Mexicanness" (Hegarty 100). As a result, this national identitarian initiative created a cultural narrative that highlighted the agrarian class as the foundation of the newly formed Mexican state, in keeping with Cárdenas' reforms. Mexicans did not just go to the movies to see themselves as they used to be, but they also went to the movies to learn how they should "become" (Hershfield 44). Demonstrating what to "become" was a very important aspect of Golden Age Cinema in post-revolutionary Mexico.

This brutal history of colonization, which is ingrained in Mexican national mythology, is recast in a less tragic light in the ranchera, where the indigenous culture—which was feminized and defenseless in the silent film—gains support and is given authority. The *ranchera* movies aim to recast colonial power systems in favor of colonized classes by shifting this historical

tragedy onto the connection between *novia* and *patrón* through this modification of the female archetype within the films. The significance of the *ranchera* is also greatly influenced by the bond between the *mujer pura* and the *charro*. By superimposing patriotic history onto an idealized, heterosexual love connection, as Doris Sommer has noted in her research of the domestic romance novels of nineteenth-century Latin America, romance novels contributed to the legitimacy of the new states. And in nations where even the most fundamental historical records were lacking (as a result of centuries of colonial power), fiction (within film especially) not only became an essential form of historical storytelling but also came to be associated with the most genuine and independent forms of cultural expression. The story of *Allá en el Rancho Grande* performs a definite function of fictionalizing and idealizing history, but instead of imagining the future of national fusion, they recreate the colonial past in a way that becomes a component of the current endeavor of nation building. Even though the blatant lack of historical realism within has led me to dismiss it as escapist and detached, it is precisely this escapism that defines the film as "authentic" cultural expressions because, through its idealized narratives, it highlights the tensions and inequalities inherent in Mexico's experience of modernity.

Chapter 2: Tizoc, A Mexican Tragedy

The title of this chapter loosely alludes to a book that I read in high school: *An American Tragedy* by Theodore Dreiser. I say loosely because: 1) the book was written in the environment of the turn of a century (from the 1800s to the 1900s) in the United States, and the film was published in the environment of 1950s Mexico; and 2) while the novel is centered on the innate weakness of a character, I would argue that the film highlights the unfortunately innate weaknesses of the social, cultural, racial, and sexual structures in post-revolutionary Mexico. Once more, the following is an outline of the plot, in order to generate the discussion.

A brave and selfless indigenous trapper named Tizoc is getting ready to wed Machinza, a fellow indigenous woman, in a little village close to the Oaxacan sierra. He is more talented than anyone else at hunting, and he can kill more animals without the use of weapons—which destroys their hide—that anyone else. He also has an ongoing dispute with Machinza's family that stretches back to before their births. María, a Criolla woman, and her father, a wealthy cattle driver who wants to check on his businesses, arrive in town. The local priest is astonished by María's strong similarity to the church's statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary after Tizoc observes it. After a hunting trip goes awry and Tizoc saves her father, María starts to be drawn to the indigenous man's demeanor and way of doing things. She finds Tizoc at his cottage near the mountains. After initially being horrified by his apparent lack of decency, and despite the fact that she is already engaged, she eventually falls in love with him. Tizoc feels a deeper love for María when she hands him her handkerchief than he did when he first saw her. Tizoc confides to Machinza's brother, Nicuil, that he no longer loves his fiancée. Nicuil then kills his sister because he thinks she betrayed the family and that she was determined to harm Tizoc's image. Nicuil then pursues Tizoc, who, as a result of his bad deed, kills him. María decides to

accompany Tizoc to his home after realizing that her lifestyle doesn't align with her aspirations and that she loves him. However, when they draw near the entrance of the cave that would serve as their temporary hiding place, Cosijope, Machinza's father, fires an arrow intended for Tizoc that instead kills María. Tizoc, who is grieving, snatches the arrow and shoots himself in the heart. Tizoc's voice repeats a previous notion that the souls of lovers become nightingales after death as the movie comes to a close.

Tizoc is a tragic example of racial configuration. The film builds up the differences between the perceptions of the criollo and the perceptions of the indigenous in Mexico throughout the film, and then strikes down the chance of the two ever connecting. The film makes a point of highlighting the cultural and social differences between criollos and indigenous, while at the same time guaranteeing that one will never completely understand the other. An example of this is when María innocently offers Tizoc her handkerchief, which in the indigenous culture means that the receiver of the handkerchief is the true love of the giver. María does not know this, and finds herself "engaged" to Tizoc by accident. When this confuses her, Tizoc grows frustrated and emotionally scarred. In the end of the film, when both Tizoc and María finally attempt to break free from the ethnic and cultural barriers that keep them apart, the arrows of their enemies snap them back into a reality where such a love is impossible. The film asserts that, in order for Tizoc and María to ever have a chance of being together, they both have to be dead. This ending absolves contemporary (1957) Mexican society from the conflict associated with that union. Not only does the film depict the romance between an indigenous man and a criolla woman as outlandish and unacceptable, but at the end of the film, it seals the final nail in the coffin of such a notion. In other words, the film dismisses the very idea that such a romantic connection can or should even exist between such differing ethnic classes. Unlike narratives that

celebrated white, masculine heroes that romanced Indigenous women, this movie inverts the racial and gender dynamic. This chapter will now discuss the racial and gendered structure of this national narrative in *Tizoc*, in which the indigenous woman is lighter-skinned and desired as a Spanish male's romantic partner. First, however, we must discuss the persona that Pedro Infante brought to the screen because this informs his representation of indigeneity.

Pedro Infante: Charro Amado (Beloved Charro)

When Pedro Infante died in a plane crash on April 15, 1957, the news had spread by that evening, and the public was distraught. Approximately one hundred thousand people attended his funeral, which marched through historic avenues and culminated with his burial at the Panteón Jardín (Beezley and Curcio-Nagy 229-230).

According to the newspaper coverage, Infante was considered a shining example of *mexicanidad*, and the working-class people in Mexico loved him dearly (Beezley and Curcio-Nagy 230). Infante could relate to such people due, in part, to his own upbringing. He was a man of modest origin and humble character who rose from working as a carpenter to establishing himself as a fan favorite in the Mexican cinema (230). Unique from several other Mexicans who shared working class upbringings, however, Pedro Infante's personality and relatability allowed him to develop into *el charro amado* (beloved charro), a true film star who moved beyond his humble origins and former working-class living. In addition, his lighter skin tone allowed him to embody a multitude of characters in film (Mraz 139). Thus, Infante was willing to embrace filmographic versatility.

Infante left behind a powerful legacy after he died, which happened shortly before *Tizoc* was released. There is even a book dedicated to him, titled *Loving Pedro Infante*, in which Denise Chávez pays tribute to his memory:

> Inside el Colón you can watch el mero mero, el merito, nuestro querido, Pedro Infante, the world's most handsome man love the world's most beautiful women.… He is the man whose child we want to bear. He is the man we wish we could be. Ay, Pedro, most fortunate and unfortunate of men. Dead at age forty. Papi, we miss you still. (52)

The presence of great numbers of lower-class people at his funeral demonstrates just how much the population at large loved him as a film star and could relate to him insofar as his work was concerned (Beezley and Curcio-Nagy 230). According to Mraz, Infante had a more complex and relatable personality than the typical macho man, and because of this, he was driven to represent the struggle of the common people (140). Mraz goes on to say that in film, Infante surpasses the brute maleness previously represented by machismo, in liberating the man to express emotions (139). However, this does not mean that the macho male characters like this are anywhere near faint of heart, according to Mraz.

> I would argue that his characters are not wimps but complex personas, trying to do the best they can in complicated gender relations and oppressive socioeconomic situations. As Infante himself said, "The personages in which I have been cast are very peculiar people with multiple personalities: they are both unreflective and responsible, superficial but solemn; they are half 'crazy' and half serious; they get sad easily and, just as easily, they are happy; they cry and they laugh, they hurt and they sing, all in lightning succession." (141)

Based on this excerpt, I can deduce that perhaps it was the enigmatic persona embraced by Infante that drew interested fans to him, enticing them to learn about the intricacies of being a part of post-revolutionary culture. He was also an excellent musician, and was able to entertain audiences with his skills and singing voice. After all, as stated previously, Mraz tells us that film icons in the star system embodied specific personalities or characters who represented certain ideals of the imagined post-revolutionary Mexican nation.

Not So Hidden Anymore: Indigenous Peoples in *Tizoc*

The film *Tizoc* centers on a frustrated interracial romance that is doomed to fail precisely because of unjust societal pressures that keep Tizoc from declaring and showcasing his love for María. That said, the film also does this aesthetically through its musical score, which contains an array of both indigenous and European influences. The introduction, interludes and conclusion, for example, employ an array of instruments associated with indigeneity like rattles and sticks. That said, these musical elements are often mixed with instruments of European origin, such as violins and trumpets. The music in the film resembles an album published in the same year, which is titled *Indian Music of Mexico* (Boulton 1957). The compiler of the album, Laura C. Boulton, establishes the distinction between instruments that are truly indigenous to Mexico and instruments that are European in origin. The indigenous instruments that are present in the nondiegetic music of *Tizoc* are more percussive, while the melodic line is generally dominated by the instruments of European origin. Thus, from the musical introduction of *Tizoc*, one will notice instances of both "indigenous" and "European" music. Throughout the film, European instruments contain the melodies. One can argue that this specific musical balance indicates that the narrative will more than likely favor criollo characters over Indigenous. Far

from favoring one group over another, this decision underscores the tragic nature of a society that grants greater privilege to one sector of society than to another.

Certainly, even as it laments the tragic effects of ethnic stratification in the failed romance, the film also plays into essentialistic understandings of race and ethnicity. For example, in some of the intermittent musical instances, the instruments are strictly indigenous with no presence of European musical traditions. The sounds of the rattle are heard especially in the forest scenes, which take place in the more heavily indigenous areas. Rather than buildings, for example, we see various animals such as snakes. The director clearly felt that such music made more sense in a natural setting than would brass and strings instruments from Europe. Nevertheless, this decision underscores their own association of indigeneity with nature and the environment, an attitude that permeated much Mexican literary and cultural production from the time period (Doremus 377). The idea that rattles and woodwind instruments are more "natural" than European instruments points more at the constructedness of what constitutes natural. The indigenous music in these scenes is just as human-made as any type of human music; it is no more natural to have a rattle in the woods than it is to have brass. Viewed in this light, the decision to use indigenous music in these natural scenes underscores the fact that official discourses in Mexico associated indigeneity with nature. These musical decisions thus reflect the racial and ethnic attitudes of the day more so than any true association of these types of music with nature. The visual presence of indigenous characters—often interpreted by mestizo and criollo actors—dominates the film. However, due to the deep misunderstandings that exist among these communities, the film shows both musically and narratively that the communion among Indigenous and criollo people will not prevail. The film frames this as a tragedy even as it contributes to the very sorts of misunderstandings that ultimately doom Tizoc and María's love.

The film begins with an already tragic situation for Tizoc. He is clearly an outsider in both the criollo and the indigenous communities. Not only is he looked upon by the criollo and mestizo people as inferior, but he is also envied by the indigenous community because of his hunting and trapping skills, which curry him a degree of favor and economic privilege. Rodríguez incorporates many non-verbal hints into the film that Tizoc is disliked by the indigenous community of the Mixtec village below his mountain home at large, especially when he visits that village. As he rides on a donkey through the streets, other indigenous men throw rocks at him, while an indigenous woman spits at him. Other indigenous men by the entrance gaze upon him threateningly as he approaches. Before the viewer knows anything about Tizoc as a person, they realize from the non-verbal cues that Tizoc is not liked in the Mixtec village's indigenous community. This is a trope that plays out in different ways in an array of Mexican films where indigenous characters who embody modernity in one way or another face the wrath of other people within their own communities.[5]

In one scene, when Tizoc is in "La Mixteca" trading his furs, he comes across María for the first time, and the same musical theme plays as he looks at her. The musical motif indicates that Tizoc must be having a vision or thought about the Virgin Mary, whose statue he had visited earlier. Based on the replaying of that motif, Tizoc clearly notices María's resemblance to the Virgin Mary statue. When Tizoc makes the sign of the cross over his chest and runs away, his actions confirm that he had in fact mistaken María for the Virgin Mary. Associating a more sacred musical theme with María, as well as naming her María and giving the Virgin Mary a striking resemblance to her, perhaps insinuates a reverence for whiteness. This is, of course, ironic given that the Virgin of Guadalupe—Mexico's most popular saint—has always been a

[5] For a deeper discussion of this subject, look at Chapter 6 of Rebecca Earle's *The Indian Problem*.

pro-mestizo symbol due to her explicitly indigenous presentation. Joanne Hershfield tells her story in the excerpt below:

> The story of the Virgin of Guadalupe, a dark skinned apparition of the Virgin Mary, can be seen as part of an attempt to Indianize Catholicism, in order to make it more palatable to Indians, who were still resistant to Spain's religious proselytizing. The colonization of Mexico was forged by a very powerful state–church alliance, achieved, in part, because the Indigenous populations were persuaded to incorporate into their culture. Certain meanings presented to them by the Catholic Church. The development of the particular form of Mexican Catholicism was emerging of indigenous religious practices with the new Christian religion personified in the figure of the virgin of Guadalupe. (22-23)

The comment about making religion more "palatable" for indigenous people is very apparent in *Tizoc*, due to the almost hypnotic way that Tizoc devotes himself to the practices of Catholicism; I will discuss how that devotion mixes with the potential for simplicity of musical expression later in the chapter.

Quite unlike the biblical Virgin Mary, María is accidentally killed with an arrow at the end of *Tizoc*. Realizing that he will never be with María ever again while alive, Tizoc makes the decision to remove the arrow from María and pierce his own heart, killing himself. Even though María was white, Tizoc's ability to be with her in an interracial romance, perhaps even marriage, was simply not to be. Mónica García Blizzard explains this issue in *The White Indians of Mexican Cinema*.

> The notion of the Indigenous male's marginality in the project of mestizaje can be identified in the conventions of casta painting from the colonial period in New

> Spain. These visual representations of interracial heterosexual pairings usually began with the depiction of the Spanish man and Indigenous woman (while the opposite racial and gender configuration was rarer and not as prominently featured). This convention points to how elite colonial culture—of which casta painting was an emanation—promoted the coupling of the Spanish man and Indigenous woman while deemphasizing the inverted arrangement. In this sense, the pictorial genre reflected the colonial social landscape in which White men maintained 'privileged access to non-white women's sexuality' while at the same time obstructing non-Whites' access to White women's sexuality. (240)

Tizoc displays the lifestyle and culture of indigenous peoples as a significant amount of its visual features. However, the visual representation is very superficial, because none of the actors or actresses playing these characters are actually indigenous. Throughout the film, there are no major indigenous characters interpreted by Amerindian actors; instead, they are played by mestizo and criollo/a actors. Although makeup art can do its wonders in visually portraying an indigenous character, culturally, the actors do not represent what is authentically indigenous, engaging in an appropriation of indigenous culture that was common in post-revolutionary Mexican composers and actors (Béhague 30). In addition, despite indigenous characters being present at the forefront of *Tizoc*, the film goes nowhere near representing them as valued members of Mexican society, nor does it favorably portray indigenous peoples as purely indigenous. We can see the film's problematic posture *vis-a-vis* indigenous Mexico through its cast, where the leading indigenous character is played by Pedro Infante.

The film engages in a problematic, paternalistic representation of indigenous cultures and romance throughout Mexico. As will be discussed in the next section, it was considered

unfavorable for an indigenous man to marry a white woman (Palou 149-150). While the myth of mestizaje was a strong ideal in Mexico, racial hybridity was almost always understood as a male conquest of the Indigenous woman, and vice versa was frowned upon (Paz 43). Indeed, the idea that white men should marry indigenous women but that indigenous men should *not* marry white women appears in most examples of Mexican literary and cultural production from the time period. Viewed in this light, while the union of a criolla woman with an Indigenous man could produce biologically mestizo offspring, it tended to exist beyond the parameters of official mestizaje. The existing sexual-racial marital structures presented in *Tizoc* will go to show how officialist notions of mestizaje favored the European—as opposed to blackness and Indianness—were foremost in Golden Age Mexican Film.

There is another layer to this issue in *Tizoc*: Despite the direct presence of indigenous peoples, they are not given any specific reason to be there, other than to serve as examples of being "uncivilized" (in the case of the darker skinned ones) or being doomed to death in pursuit of their socially unacceptable desires (in the case of Tizoc). I do not see a positive representation of indigenous people or their culture, and Pineda validates my sentiment in her article: "Whichever of these [stereotypical] representations we've encountered, you'll never actually see an indigenous Mexican representing themselves" (22). Rather, "they're [the actors are] always mestizos, or of mixed race" (23). Viewed in this light, the film does not concern itself much with the representation of Indigenous characters. Given that the film itself tends toward the essentialistic, it should come as no surprise that it would present the failed romance as the inevitable, if tragic, result of interracial romance.

John Mraz further validates this point through his discussion of an array of Mexican films from the time period. As he states,"There was little room for them [Amerindians] in the modern

nation being constructed" (139). Viewed in this light, Tizoc's downfall comes precisely from his continued primitivity; not only does he make a living by hunting animals and selling skins—an anachronistic occupation in a rapidly modernizing society—but he also fails to understand the society and culture of his beloved. Rather than recognize that María's supposed acceptance of his advances was a mistake on her part due to cultural misunderstanding, he insists that the couple will inevitably wed. Not even the priest—whom Tizoc follows with a blind devotion—can convince him of his mistake. Clearly, the film casts Tizoc as a tragically backward child who cannot function in a modern society; his death at the end of the film tragically suggests that his assimilation was always impossible.

In *Tizoc*, another contributing factor to the preeminence of Hispanista mestizaje and the acceptance of that amongst society (including the indigenous), was the fact that, despite the "nobility" of the Indian, they were often either encouraged or self-motivated to remedy their inferior situations by seeking out white mates. Pineda describes this here:

> Tizoc is not meant as a kind of insulting thing. It's the portrayal of the Indian as a noble character with sort of authentic and good, positive feelings until he gets crossed and then all this violence erupts . . . and also in the movie he's lusting for a 'white-looking Mexican' who belongs to the upper classes. (20)

I take issue with this quote, because I see the film as showing that society *does* consider it insulting for Tizoc to lust for a white-looking Mexican *and* to reject an indigenous woman's love. In addition, Jacqueline Ávila tells us that "Mexican cinema did not portray indigenous populations as antagonistic or violent but, rather, exalted them, featuring him or her (typically him) as noble and heroic, but also at times oppressed and struggling (*Cinesonidos* 133). Although I see an oppressed and struggling portrayal of Tizoc, I also see a violent portrayal of

Machinza's loved ones, as well as any member of the indigenous community who is jealous of Tizoc. Both Machinza's brother Nicuil and her father Cosijope tried to kill Tizoc after he rejected Machinza's love. Also, the jealous members of Tizoc's village engage in violent acts towards him and violent fantasies about him. Therefore, I do not agree with the part of Ávila's statement that says "Mexican cinema did not portray indigenous populations as antagonistic or violent". I see the film as a direct and violent insult to Tizoc for his change of heart, in that he started by being engaged to an indigenous woman, but then fell out of love with her as he began to love a criolla woman. In doing so, he has crossed a racial and social class barrier that cannot be crossed, as has been pre-determined from the beginning of the film.

Doris Sommer's discussion of foundation fictions in Latin American letters underscores the film's treatment of this frustrated romantic relationship. As she explains, in such works, "The narrative [or film in this case] begins conceptually from a resolution of conflict, whether that resolution is realized or not, and serves as a vehicle for love and country that seem, after the fact, to have pre-existed the writing (49). Indeed, *Tizoc* begins by drawing a distinct cultural separation between indigenous people and criollos, which foreshadows the conflict that Tizoc will inevitably face when he tries to become involved with someone who is not his own kind racially or culturally. At the same time, the movie posits the potential for their love as a way to bridge the cultural gaps that continue to exist between indigenous and mestizo/criollo society. In this way, Tizoc and María are simply ahead of their time as they blaze a trail that future lovers may be able to follow without facing mortal consequences. That said, the tragedy within this particular film is that it posits that the era where interracial romances between white women and indigenous men can occur is still decades away.

The Union of Gender and Race in The Mexican Tragedy

Tizoc highlights questions of race and gender directly. In doing so, the film not only becomes a romantic tragedy, which is so common in literature and film, but it also becomes a Mexican tragedy. The tragedy in Mexico does not stem from love, but from societal constructs of racism and sexualization that punish the protagonists for their forbidden affection. In this way, the movie becomes a love story turned tragedy as a result of the already tragic racial and sexual hierarchies that were present in Mexican society during the midcentury when it was filmed.

The Indigenismo narrative was characterized by a push for the well-being of modern indigenous peoples in Mexico, usually depicted as a call to elevate indigenous peoples from their "lowly position" so that they could enjoy the same benefits as modernized citizens (Earle 185). This, however, is very problematic, because the type of call to elevate anyone from a "lowly position" means that these people are pre-assumed to be lowly and therefore need to be "helped" by superior people. In addition, the state not only assumes that they need help, but they also exclude indigenous people from participating in their supposed "elevation" process, and they exhibit much confusion themselves about how to make improvements in the lives of indigenous (Mignolo 102). What is more, indigenista thinkers tended to reify the indigenous—and particularly pre-Columbian—past while at the same casting contemporary indigenous actors as a hindrance to progress that would have to be overcome.[6] That said, not all indigenous traits needed to be overcome. Indigenista thinkers tended to exalt the spirituality of indigenous people and societies as a trait that would benefit the nation at large.[7] We see this clearly in *Tizoc*, where the indigenous man's faith marks him as generally good, if at times childish. Viewed in this light,

[6] For a discussion of the problematic nature of the Mexican state's invalidation of contemporary indigenous societies alongside its reification of pre-Columbian civilizations, see Guillermo Bonfil Batalla (3).

[7] For a discussion of the role of indigenous spirituality in post-revolutionary thought, see Sergio Pitol (188-89).

he represents a type of person that the country should strive to support. Tizoc, then, represents that indigenous actor who is steeped in the future; while he uses traditional hunting practices to kill his animals, he also interacts with numerous people from high society. This ultimately puts him in contact with María and moves him toward his ultimate demise. As the film makes clear, Tizoc is ahead of his time, and his death is a tragedy in part because it means that Mexico will have to start over in its attempts to regenerate its population.

Not surprisingly, an array of writers and cultural producers from art to cinema employed indigenista discourses in their works. Given the nature of the debate, the writers, directors, and artists tended to imagine the relationship between indigenous people and the state in different ways. Rebecca Earle discusses this struggle in her book:

> Individuals [scholars and artists] involved in indigenista-style activities did not always see eye to eye with their fellow indigenistas, and the movement's success in making meaningful improvements in the lives of indigenous people was disputed from its inception. (185)

If elevation of life was the intent of the Indigenista movement, then, in making a tragedy, *Tizoc* is urging for a new national order where indigenous voices are valued and respected. People like Tizoc should be allowed to marry into mestizo families and assimilate to the state without the interference of others. Interestingly, the film posits both mestizo and indigenous actors as threats to the imposition of such an order. Mestizo characters treat Tizoc with contempt, while the family of Machinza ultimately kills him for falling in love with María and eschewing their family.

Throughout the film, the intersections of Tizoc's identity as both a man and an Amerindian come together to construct his agency and set him on the tragic path toward his

death. Mónica García Blizzard describes the dynamics that often surround the indigenous male characters in Golden Age cinema:

> Whereas the centrality and desirability of the white-as-indigenous female is so common in Indigenous-themed Mexican films as to be a cliché of the genre, the protagonism and appeal of the Indigenous man in Mexican cinema is much rarer. This comparative dearth is rooted in the racial and gendered structure of the nation's foundational narrative in which the Indigenous woman is sexualized as the Spanish male's partner and the Indigenous man has no discernable function other than that of an ancient and deceased heroic figure. (239)

Here, García Blizzard brings an entirely new facet to the gender gap that exists in Golden Age Mexican Film. Film can lay bare the deep interconnections between race and gender in developing human subjectivity. Golden Age films from Mexico do this by showcasing the juxtaposition of criollo heritage and indigenous heritage. As a criollo male, it would be acceptable—and desirable—to marry a criolla female. However, it was important for criollo and mestizo men to have children with—and perhaps even marry—an indigenous woman to regenerate the nation. That said, the role of the indigenous man in Golden Age film, according to García Blizzard, was not to match the protagonist nature of the Spanish male (239). Rather, his role was often to disappear in order to facilitate the union of indigenous women with criollo men (Dalton 71).

The racialized nature of desired gender roles shows up throughout Latin American foundational fiction. For example, Sommer speaks to the "idealized" racial and social roles of the different characters of the region's literature. Her observations hold equally true when applied to Golden Age Mexican cinema:

> In national romance, one level represents the other, and also fuels it, which is to say that both are unstable. The unrequited passion of the love story produces a surplus of energy, just as Rousseau suggested it would, a surplus that can help to overcome the political interference between the lovers. At the same time, the enormity of the social abuse, the unethical power of the obstacle, invests the love story with an almost sublime sense of transcendent purpose. As the story progresses, the pitch of sentiment rises along with the cry of commitment, so that the din makes it ever more difficult to distinguish between our erotic and political fantasies for an ideal ending (47-48)

Therefore, while it would be acceptable for an indigenous man and an indigenous woman to marry, it would not be socially acceptable for an indigenous man to marry a criolla woman. In fact, the criolla woman would be considered to have moved down in racial and class ranking, and the indigenous male would be considered the barbaric brute that put her there. Far from promoting a project of mestizo modernity, it would instead mark her entrance into a type of indigenous primitivity. The film certainly contests this belief, but these attitudes form the backdrop of the production. Such a racial profiling amongst genders already spells potential disaster for Tizoc before the film even begins, and it foreshadows the tragedy that is to inevitably befall him, in order to establish an idealized ending to this film in the eyes of the state and as propagandized to the public.

García Blizzard argues that whiteness is favored in Golden Age Mexican Film. We see this clearly in *Tizoc*, which portrays dark, indigenous characters in a negative light. Throughout the film, these dark Amerindians are seen as primitive, culturally and linguistically backward, and uncivilized. At the same time, the film's principal "white" Indian—Infante's Tizoc—is

viewed as a good character who can teach both indigenous and criollo people how to be better Mexicans. We see this when the lead character expresses his distaste for the behaviors of two mestizo/criollo men (María's father and Don Pancho García) when he oversees them shooting an animal in the forest for sport. When Tizoc demands to know why these men killed this animal, María's father argues that the indigenous people kill these animals too. Tizoc then says his people do not shoot animals for no reason. He says that María's father is not killing the animal because he is hungry, but simply to kill it, and chastises him for being a murderer. This leads to a brief physical altercation between the two men, as well as Tizoc's future unfriendly attitude towards María's father after he rescues him from a hunting accident and visits him as he's recovering. On the one hand, this scene works to equate Tizoc and other Amerindians with nature; on the other hand, however, it speaks to the excesses of European and Western consumption, which leads to immoral practices like that of killing animals for sport.

The above scene brings into view another modernity/primitivity divide between criollos and indigenous, in that throughout this film, the criollo men hunt and fight with guns, while the indigenous men do so with bows and arrows. Sophie Esch introduces us to the gun as a symbol of modernity:

> The firearm is a prime artifact of modernity. Modernity understood in Weberian and Virilian terms is a process of rationalization in the context of the development of the nation-state and a market economy—oftentimes through the organization of war and concurrent technological innovation. Robert Kurz goes so far as to call the discovery of gunpowder in Europe in the fourteenth century the "big bang of modernity" and the firearm the "fundamental innovation of modernity." (4)

The criollo men in *Tizoc* demonstrate satisfaction with and pride in their ability to quickly lock, load, and precisely kill animals in the forest. My conviction upon viewing this scene was that the gun was not only a symbol of sophistication and modernity, but also yet another symbol that criollos are more culturally and socially powerful than their indigenous counterparts. Esch confirms this point by arguing that "the firearm's functional value is often superseded by its symbolic value" (5). At one level, this symbolic value is one of modernity, since the Americas were conquered by people with firearms. That said, at a deeper level, we see a critique of the violence associated with modernity. In accusing the men of using their weapons to impose dominion on animals—and, crucially, not to satisfy their needs—he underscores the great abuses that so often accompany modernity. Viewed in this light, his more passive, spiritual temperament would benefit Mexican society at large. His romance with María would have the potential to do precisely that, but this potential is destroyed before they can ever marry and raise children of their own.

There is absolutely no love lost between Tizoc and the white men—though crucially not women—of the film. When Tizoc expresses his desire to marry María, her father expresses his disapproval by plainly stating, "Eres indio, por lo tanto eres pobre." The inferiority situation is even worse for the darker-skinned Indians in the film, as they do not speak the same language as the criollos and the indigenous who are perceived as more culturally assimilated. Their languages are strictly native to their region. As one will see in the scene at "La Mixteca", a darker-skinned Indian tries to exchange some fabric with Don Pancho for money, and Don Pancho renders it almost hopeless to even attempt to communicate with him. María's father furthers the sentiment by essentially regarding the dark Indian as "backward." Of course, the antagonism often goes both ways, with the film suggesting that indigenous distrust of criollos also represents a serious

problem for national unity. What is more, these communities often are suspicious of those among their number who fraternize with mestizo and criollo actors. We see this with Tizoc. Not only is he noticeably lighter-skinned than most of the indigenous people in this film, but he falls in love with a white woman and ends his relationship with an indigenous woman. All of these factors make him especially unpopular with the Mixtec village's indigenous community.

Although his skin color is lighter, Tizoc's accent throughout the film is a linguistic marking which codes him as an indigenous person. The accent is, of course, a problematic performance that the criollo actor employs to mark himself as indigenous despite not belonging to that community in real life. Such practices were common in Golden Age cinema, where actors frequently used accent, dress, and other markings to play characters of ethnicities different from their own. Throughout the film, Tizoc uses indigenous mannerisms (e.g. whistles) and a distinctive dress and accent. If one did not know what culture Tizoc was a part of simply by looking at him, they would know as soon as he spoke, because both his linguistic idiosyncrasies and accent tag him. Of course, Infante still plays an explicitly whitened indigenous character. Perhaps because the actor did not speak it, for example, Tizoc does not use Mixtec on camera at any point in the film. This sets him apart from other indigenous characters who cannot speak Spanish at all.

Musically, the film composer establishes a motif for the Virgin Mary, which Tizoc sings towards the beginning of the film when he visits her statue inside a church. The simplicity of the melody, as well as his unquestioning awe of the light-skinned Virgin Mary, are both purposeful, in that they associate Tizoc with a childlike, indigenous faith. Religious connection and influence in encouraging indigenous people to embrace social change is a common trope across Mexican thought, literature, and film (Smith 64).

As this chapter has shown, following the Mexican Revolution, the state waged intense endeavors to create a single, cohesive national identity. This effort both denigrates and romanticizes indigenous actors. Despite being frequently sidelined, they continue to be of constant public interest in post-revolutionary Mexico. The indigenous community of Mexico has been alternatively included and excluded from the state's self-conscious attempts to define its identity due to conflicting policies that emphasize segregation, assimilation, modernization, and traditional preservation. This precarious relationship is examined in Indigeneity in the Mexican Cultural Imagination, which provides a much-needed investigation through literature, ethnography, film, and art. Mexico is not the only nation that treats the Indian in a paradoxical manner in its cultural imagination. Instead, the situation there serves as an example of a global phenomenon. Despite the fact that this book exclusively discusses indigeneity in Mexico, it has broad ramifications for research on indigeneity in Latin America and beyond. The impacts of literary and intellectual discourse on indigenous people who live on the periphery of post-revolutionary society are quite significant, as this chapter has shown.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have discussed and examined several narrative and musical ideas from two important post-revolutionary films that were created during the 1940s and 1950s. Both films have numerous depictions of national icons that were continuously sculpted cinematically to fit particular narrative frameworks and accomplish different objectives. By giving the characters, locales, stories, and moving images a vital auditory stamp of connection, the music in these movies became an essential and fascinating layer of discourse. These experiences were relatable because the associations they evoked were familiar to the observer.

Allá en el Rancho Grande and *Tizoc* were reactions to post-revolutionary Mexico's search for a coherent national identity amid a time of sociocultural and political unrest. Through a detailed investigation of the roles of cinema music, it becomes clear that these national symbols and representations were visually and aurally accessible for ongoing re-interpretation, re-imaging, and reconstruction. The conventions of nationalism were made clear in these films, as well as the consistent changing of Mexican identity. Characters, backgrounds, narratives, and music were juxtaposed and rearranged throughout the early sound period in the 1930s, creating genres in the 1940s and 1950s that are well-known to Mexican audiences and communicating particular views and behaviors that were then pervasive in the contemporary social environment. The use of music in post-revolutionary Mexican film superimposed meanings onto these experiences. Film music functions in a similar way to actors. Cinematically, both of these come together to communicate messages and improve the viewing experience.

In this thesis, I have looked at the many representations of national identity in Mexican film and music. Selections from the canción ranchera tradition are employed in the comedia ranchera to not only connect the urban audience with the rural countryside, but also to enhance

the masculine mindset of the singing charro, the most obvious embodiment of Mexican nationalism. In order to provide an appropriate and believable aural environment for the indigenous population on screen, the indigenista genre diverged from currents in popular music and followed national art music trends toward artistically representing the indigenous (Hill 4). These films depicted specific representations of indigenous cultures, operating within a narrative developed during the post-revolutionary era by anthropologists and government officials. Music was used to strengthen that narrative and to promote interracial, heterosexual romances.

Although this thesis analyzes several of the key genres and their featured music, it does not discuss all the genres that developed during this period. More study is necessary in order to understand a larger breadth and depth of film composers and musicians in post-revolutionary Mexico.

This thesis has demonstrated a more deep analysis of music than past studies, which focus more on visual art and literature. This thesis has also engaged in a different method to understand film music, one that doesn't center on the conventions of the "Classical" era in Hollywood. Studies on the development and study of film music tend to ignore Mexican film industry procedures in favor of concentrating on Hollywood music departments, composers, and movies. Mexican cinema composers did not copy Hollywood's methods for film scoring; instead, they added something unique to their work. For inspiration and, at times, appropriation for their film scores, both domestic and foreign composers in the Mexican industry looked to regional and urban cultural and musical practices. In Mexico's early sound film era, a number of genres depended significantly on music to advance the story and offer specific information to the audience. In these films, music served as the main attraction, carefully placed and serving a purpose. Mexican films express musical conventions unique to the nation and to the business as

an example of film music practice. By using Mexican film music as a springboard for examining more significant concerns of Mexican nationalism, this thesis complements existing readings and adds to those studies. Mexican film music provides a site for the criticism of ideology and identity in the applied synchresis and its accompanying cultural connections.

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