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Ethnographic Seeping in Mid-Twentieth-Century Mexican Cinema

Este artículo argumenta que, si bien la "antropología nacional" de México definió los proyectos oficiales del indigenismo y el mestizaje como ilustra Lomnitz, el impacto de la "antropología nacional" ha reverberado en la representación de lo indígena en el cine mexicano de mediados del siglo veinte. Proponiendo el concepto de "ethnographic seeping" este estudio ilustra cómo el modo etnográfico aparece de manera parentética en películas sobre indígenas que fueron creadas para el consumo comercial y/o de prestigio. Aunque ethnographic seeping *ha realizado una relacionalidad caracterizada por la distancia y la apropiación, también ha operado de manera crítica para disputar perspectivas y objetivos oficiales.*

Palabras clave: *indigenismo, mestizaje, cine etnográfico, cine mexicano*

This article argues that the impact of what Lomnitz has termed Mexico's "national anthropology," which structured indigenismo and mestizaje as official institutional projects, also reverberated in the representation of Indigeneity in Mexican mid-twentieth-century cinema. Proposing the concept of "ethnographic seeping," this study illustrates how the ethnographic mode recurs parenthetically in commercial and independent Indigenous-themed narrative films intended for popular audiences and/or prestige venues. While ethnographic seeping enacted a distanced and appropriative relationality between spectators and Indigenous Mexicans, it also functioned critically to contest official aims and perspectives.

Keywords: *indigenismo, mestizaje, ethnographic film, Mexican cinema*

It is widely known that from the early 1920s through the late 1960s anthropology played a central role in the Mexican postrevolutionary government's project of reimagining a more homogenous nation through *indigenismo* and *mestizaje* (Urías Horcasitas 60; Lewis 4). Given Mexican anthropology's role in local nation-building, Claudio Lomnitz identifies the

discipline in Mexico as an example of "national anthropologies." In contradistinction to metropolitan practices, the term "national anthropologies" refers to "anthropological traditions that have been fostered by educational and cultural institutions for the development of studies of their own nation" (Lomnitz 167). According to Rodolfo Stavenhagen, the institution that most clearly exemplifies the Mexican government's investment in anthropology is the Instituto Nacional Indigenista (INI), founded in 1948 (187). Other institutions that "house Mexico's large professional establishment" have included the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH) (1939), the Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia (1939), the National University's Sección de Antropología (1963), and the Museo Nacional de Antropología (1964) (Lomnitz 187). For some scholars, Mexican anthropology's weddedness to the postrevolutionary government's institutions and cultural ideology during the first half of the twentieth century prevented the discipline from developing a critical stance with respect to the tenets of evolutionist anthropology (Lomnitz 187-89; Urías Horcasitas 59-84). This means that Mexican anthropology preserved the idea that mestizo and White Mexicans needed to orient Indigenous Mexicans toward modernity, and that Indigenous people's contributions to the modern nation consisted of their "archeological and historical vestiges which functioned as symbols of a national specificity" (Urías Horcasitas 81). In short, Mexican anthropology as institutionalized with government support from the 1920s through the late 1960s had a central function in the production of information and discourses about Indigenous peoples that afforded asymmetrical positionalities to White and mestizo Mexicans on the one hand, and to Indigenous Mexicans on the other.

Here I focus on a phenomenon that suggests the extent to which an institutional anthropological perspective permeated the cultural discourse about Indigeneity in Mexico in the mid-twentieth century. This phenomenon is the presence of what I term "ethnographic seeping" – parenthetical sequences that shift to the ethnographic mode – even in commercial and independent Indigenous-themed narrative films intended for commercial exhibition and/or prestige venues. Such films, which were not produced by the government's anthropological institutions themselves, nonetheless reference the position of legitimacy that anthropological discourse occupied with regards to the presentation of Indigeneity within the Mexican cultural landscape. It is in this sense that aspects of the government-supported anthropological discourse about Indigeneity "seeps," not only into institutional films created for pragmatic purposes, but also into the fiction cinema of mid-twentieth-century Mexico. While the

representation of Indigeneity in Mexican cinema has indeed been influenced to some degree by US film (Carreño 46), what is of interest here is how the local factor of Mexico's pervasive "national anthropology" notably shaped how the country's cinema presented Indigeneity.

To be sure, the filmic repertoire generated within government-backed anthropological entities themselves is remarkable. Given the chronological arc of Mexican anthropology's institutional rise and the enthusiasm surrounding cinema's apparent indexicality, it is not surprising that film became a tool for the recording, study, and dissemination of information about Indigenous peoples. The use of film within institutions associated with anthropology begins with Manuel Gamio's large-scale study of the Valley of Teotihuacán (Reyes, *Manuel Gamio* 48-101). Later, offices tasked with attending to the needs of Indigenous populations such as the Departamento de Asuntos Indígenas, the INI, and the INAH also produced films for their objectives (Dorotinsky et al. 17). Recent scholarship has begun examining this institutional output in ways that demonstrate both their adherence to and negotiation of *indigenismo* and *mestizaje*. For instance, Deborah Dorotinsky and David Wood have studied the 1958 INI production, *Todos somos mexicanos*, as a docudrama that foregrounds Indigeneity's symbolic capital to present that institution's Centro Coordinador de Chiapas as a successful project (209-17). Similarly, Antonio Zirión Pérez reads the 1938 Departamento Autónomo de Prensa y Publicidad (DAPP) production, *Flor de las peñas*, as well as *Todos somos mexicanos*, as state propaganda for its *indigenista* policies (379-80). Examining a broader filmic corpus of the INI's first phase (from 1956 to 1970), Claudia Arroyo Quiroz has argued that the institution's early productions promoted their integrationist policies while also registering Indigeneity in a "proto-multicultural" vein (225).

In the existing scholarship on institutional and commercial films about Indigenous people, there is not always consensus about what the terms "ethnographic" and "anthropological" mean precisely. Arroyo Quiroz marks a clear distinction between the INI films whose nature is promotional and other productions that play a role in ethnographic study (227). However, Ana Piñó Sandoval's "El documental etnográfico mexicano," which surveys a range of institutional and non-institutional productions, does not provide explicit criteria for the inclusion of films within the ethnographic category. The volume *Cine antropológico* by Javier González Rubio I. and Hugo Lara Chávez similarly comprises a variety of films from diverse production contexts while using the terms "anthropological" and "ethnographic" loosely. Zirión Pérez's discussion of "el cine etnográfico en México" privileges documentary conventions, which he identifies in a range of productions including the silent *vistas* and the promotional filmmaking of

the INI and DAPP. Furthermore, in the introduction to the volume *Variaciones sobre cine etnográfico*, to which Zirión Pérez contributed, ethnographic film is defined as either audiovisual sroducts that register information about other cultures or products that use the conventions of such documentaries in order to propose a reflection about visual systems that manifest cultural difference (Dorotinsky et al. 13).

In agreement with the authors of that introduction that ethnographic cinema cannot be understood as a specific genre, style or methodology (Dorotinsky et al. 14), here I use the term "ethnographic" as a specific "mode" or approach to interpellating the spectator and making truth claims. While there are scores of folklorizing Indigenous-themed Mexican films made in the mid-twentieth century, here I deal specifically with those that incorporate the documentary techniques and truth claims of the ethnographic mode. The first set of films analyzed in this article, *Maclovia* (1948) by Emilio Fernández, *Sombra Verde* (1954) by Roberto Gavaldón, and *Ánimas Trujano* (1961) by Ismael Rodríguez, exemplify how, through ethnographic seeping, filmmakers inserted within narrative films displays of Indigeneity that claimed indexical veracity that also worked to avoid an alignment of the spectator with an Indigenous positionality. In this way, narrative Indigenous-themed films that employed the ethnographic mode produced a positioning of the spectator that mirrored the aims of official *indigenismo* and *mestizaje* with regards to the molding of non-Indigenous national subjectivities constructed *vis-à-vis* Indigenous Mexicans (Gómez Izquierdo 117-81). In so doing, these films capture the contradiction at the heart of *indigenismo* and *mestizaje*: while the integration of Indigenous peoples into national society and culture was a goal of these projects, they also required the continued projection of a "pure" unassimilated Indigeneity to define mestizo subjectivity. By including tidbits of "real" Indigenous culture for audiences to consume as national patrimony couched within the legitimized, yet distancing discourse of ethnography, these narrative films allowed viewers to inhabit their Mexicanness and non-Indigenous subject position *at the same time*.

However, ethnographic seeping in Mexican cinema could also serve as a vehicle to criticize the anthropologically endorsed presentation of Indigeneity as domestic alterity. Used parodically in the "Nuestra Señora" segment of Benito Alazraki's 1954 film, *Raíces*, ethnographic seeping criticizes the Othering of Indigeneity that classical anthropological discourses perpetuated and reinvented. "Nuestra Señora" uses ethnographic seeping for the purpose of alienating spectators from – not aligning them with – an anthropological view of Indigeneity. The film's instrumentalization of the ethnographic mode is just one of the multiple

ways in which, more generally, the segment problematizes anthropology as a discipline linked to power that does not necessarily promote – and can in fact impede – an understanding of Indigenous marginality in mid-twentieth century Mexican society. Turning to Luis Alcoriza's 1965 film, *Tarahumara (cada vez más lejos)*, I show how the film takes up this critique with even greater directness while eschewing parenthetical ethnographic sequences.

THE ETHNOGRAPHIC MODE AND THE FILMIC ROOTS OF ETHNOGRAPHIC SEEPING

To discuss how sequences in narrative mid-twentieth-century Mexican films constitute parenthetical shifts to the ethnographic mode, one must address how the mode operates and the role of its formal characteristics in establishing spectatorial positionality. For film theorist Bill Nichols, ethnographic film exemplifies what he terms "discourses of sobriety," which are characterized by an "unproblematic relationship to the real," and operate as sites at which "knowledge/power exerts itself" ("The Ethnographer's Tale" 33). Following Mary Louise Pratt, Nichols observes that in ethnographic film, "the separation of 'here' and 'there' is sharply demarcated," which in turn, affords the act of travel and arrival scenes a notable significance. Voice-over commentary is a common tool, which not only serves as an accessory to sights and sounds that are presumed to be unfamiliar to the spectator, but also performs authoritative knowledge about what is visualized (33). Furthermore, ethnographic film, according to Nichols, functions under the pretense of the effacement of the observer. By "transform[ing] first-hand, personal experience into third-person, disembodied knowledge," these films convey information through a point of view that takes on the qualities of "omniscience and omnipotence" (33).

Various theorists have pointed out the ways in which the supposedly objective perspective of the ethnographic mode was forged within the racially determined circumstances of coloniality. For Cultural and Media Studies scholar Stuart Hall, this type of media has its roots in the cultural production that accompanied various imperial projects, and which bear the presence of "the 'absent' but imperializing 'white eye'; the unmarked position from which … 'observations' are made and from which, alone, they make sense" (275). Ella Shohat and Robert Stam also highlight the relationship between ethnographic cinema's beginnings and imperialism. Cinema, like photography before it, "demonstrated the power of science to display and even decipher otherized cultures; dissection and montage together constructed a presumably holistic portrait of the colonized" (Shohat and Stam 106). For Shohat and Stam, the use of cinema to present scientifically legitimized information about non-European peoples bolstered the imperial European subject position.

Going beyond Nichols' general discussion and emphasizing the pervasiveness of racial asymmetry that Hall, Stam, and Shohat highlight in the deployment of the mode, Fatimah Tobing Rony identifies three different iterations of ethnographic cinema: 1) the positivist mode of the scientific research film; 2) the taxidermic mode of the romantic ethnographic film; and 3) the commercially-oriented entertainment film (12-15). Through these multiple variants, Rony has shown how the authoritative subject position and implied (neo)colonial perspective of ethnographic film is present in mainstream film production, questioning a discrete understanding of cinematic genres and modes. Rony's fluid understanding of the ethnographic spectacle is particularly useful for approaching the phenomenon in the Mexican context, where in the mid-twentieth century the mode repeatedly surfaces within narrative cinema. Specifically, Rony's concept of "romantic ethnography," which she also refers to as the "lyrical ethnographic film," makes it possible to discuss the ways in which films that do not have explicit pretentions of serving as research data nonetheless present themselves as authoritative pronouncements regarding the lifeways of racialized societies by establishing an asymmetrical positionality vis-à-vis ethnographically represented people. Key aspects of romantic, lyrical ethnography are the use of "artifice and reconstruction" through which "the 'ethnographic' is reconstructed to appear real to an anticipated audience, and the fiction sustained is that the film does not alter anything" (Rony 15).

In Mexico, a significant and early example of the lyrical ethnographic mode occurs in Sergei Eisenstein's *¡Que viva México!*, which he shot during his travels in the country in 1931.[1] Influenced by anthropologists such as Sir James Frazer and Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, "Eisenstein saw Mexico as a bridge linking the age of biological submission (the primitive) to the triumph of the social collective (the revolution), and in *¡Que viva México!*, he sought to present what he perceived as the coexistence of distinct evolutionary stages in Mexican society" (Podalsky 26-31; Salazkina 21-23). The film's presentation of "the primitive" occurs in the segment titled "Sandunga" which transmits a romantic and idealized representation of the Indigenous people of Tehuantepec as living in a tropical paradise, encapsulated in the images of a youthful Indigenous woman, Concepción, among flowers (Podalsky 31-32; Salazkina 64-65, 72-73). "Sandunga" can be understood as an example of Rony's concept of lyrical ethnographic cinema because it uses artifice to craft a cinematic idealization of Indigenous people while appealing to indexicality in order to sustain the fiction that the film "does not alter anything" (Rony 15). As Masha Salazkina has observed, in "Sandunga," "Everything is calculated to give the impression of natural life taking place

before the camera", yet the footage is in fact, "extremely staged" (60, 66). "Sandunga" is a cinematic precursor to the ethnographic seeping of mid-twentieth-century narrative cinema through which local filmmakers re-presented Indigeneity with similar claims to authenticity via indexicality, but in a manner that implicitly privileges the mestizo as the national modern subject.

"Sandunga" is widely known for playing with expository documentary conventions, however, Eisenstein's film is by no means responsible for introducing the blending of narrative and non-narrative filmmaking practices in Mexico. The juxtaposition of the two was a characteristic of national exhibition and production since the silent period. From the 1910s through the early 1930s, the practice of projecting of local newsreels prior to the showing of feature-length narrative films supported the steady production of film in Latin American when first French and Italian, and later, US narrative films predominated in the region's movie theatres (Shroeder Rodriguez 24). In fact, as Paul Shroeder Rodríguez has argued following Paulo Antonio Paranaguá, the continued integration of "Latin American documentary practices" makes them one of the three reference points that constitutes Latin American cinema throughout its entire history – the other two reference points being Hollywood and European cinemas (Shroeder Rodriguez 21; Paranaguá 15-31). Furthermore, from the earliest narrative feature film productions in Mexico, local filmmakers were aware of the national audience's desire to see itself onscreen and catered to this eagerness as a way of differentiating and leveraging an advantage over foreign films in the Mexican market (Ramírez Berg, *Classical* 48). During and after the silent period, the inclusion of parenthetical non-narrative shots or sequences within narrative Mexican feature films was one mechanism through which filmmakers could attempt to satisfy the local audience's desire to see the country onscreen from a perspective other than that of Hollywood. Ethnographic seeping, therefore, should be understood within the broader context of the rich and complex relationship between narrative and non-narrative filmmaking practices in Latin American cinema, and in Mexican film specifically.

MACLOVIA AS LYRICAL ETHNOGRAPHIC SPECTACLE

Emilio Fernández's *Maclovia* is set among the Purépecha community on the island of Janitzio. In the film, the title character (María Félix) cannot marry her beloved, José María (Pedro Armendáriz), because her father disapproves. A sergeant (Carlos López Moctezuma) incarcerates José María in order to seduce Maclovia. Though she refuses to give in to his sexual demands, her rival, Sara (Columba Domínguez), tells the community that

Maclovia has slept with the soldier. The Mexican army intervenes while the Purépecha are carrying out Maclovia's punishment, after which she and José María flee the island.

Maclovia has not been the subject of much scholarly attention, most likely because it is considered to be derivative of both Carlos Navarro's 1935 film, *Janitzio*, in which Fernández played the Indigenous protagonist Zirahuén, and Fernández's own celebrated 1944 film, *María Candelaria* (García Riera 202-04; Ayala Blanco 148). Despite their pronounced similarities, Tierney has pointed out the ways in which *Maclovia* differs from the previous two films, suggesting that it puts forth a more poignant critique of racial inequality and that the couple's escape from the punishing Indigenous mob privileges a message of Indigenous assimilation into Mexican society (96). Tierney also suggests that *Maclovia* transmits "a much greater sense of the nobility and moral exemplarity of the entire community" through the film's fishing sequences which aestheticize and exalt the Indigenous people of Janitzio as a whole (97). While I agree with Tierney's assessment of these sequences, I suggest that they achieve their effect by instrumentalizing the lyrical ethnographic mode alongside two other key sequences in the film, the opening and *noche de muertos* sequences. Taken together, the three sequences shift the film's otherwise highly melodramatic representation of Indigeneity by introducing parenthetically an ethnographic mode of address. This shift echoes the postrevolutionary government's emphasis on anthropology as the key framework for the production and dissemination of knowledge about Indigenous people, and it positions the spectator as an outsider and recipient of a mediated Indigeneity that is both vaguely instructive and highly embellished.

Associating Fernández with state-sponsored cultural nationalism and with didacticism is certainly not new. In Carlos Monsiváis's and Jesús Martín Barbero's examinations of Mexican Golden Age cinema, of which Fernández was arguably the most prominent auteur, both authors point to the role of film in the state's attempts to shape national subjectivities (see also Schroeder Rodríguez 102-110). Furthermore, Charles Ramírez Berg and Julia Tuñón Pablos have drawn more specific connections, suggesting that Fernández's indigenista films were a kind of cinematic extension of the government-funded muralist movement (Ramírez Berg, "Cinematic" 106; Tuñón Pablos 442). And yet, scholars have also pointed to the ideological complexities of Fernández's films in that they "embody the disunity and contradiction that fractures the national unifying project" (Tierney 39). For instance, while Fernández certainly does channel official discourses, they are not necessarily those contemporary to his filmmaking. Tuñón Pablos

has effectively demonstrated how the lessons of *historia patria* in Fernández's Golden Age films *Río Escondido* and *Maclovia* reproduce José Vasconcelos's views on rural education from twenty years earlier (455-56; 463-66).

Ethnographic seeping in *Maclovia* can be understood as a variant of Fernández's didacticism that bears a relation to another influential state-affiliated architect of indigenismo and mestizaje: the anthropologist Manuel Gamio who served as the director of the Instituto Indigenista Interamericano from 1942 through 1960 (Urías Horcasitas 99). In his treatise, *Forjando patria* (1916), Gamio identifies anthropology as the most important tool for fostering both effective governance and national sentiment in Mexico (15). According to him, through the Mexican government's creation of anthropological institutions, Indigenous families would be incorporated into national life after which he believed, "comenzará a fortalecerse el verdadero sentimiento de nacionalidad, que hoy apenas existe disgregado entre grupos sociales que difieren en tipo étnico y en idioma y divergen en cuanto a concepto y tendencias culturales" (Gamio 18). At the same time, Gamio believed Indigenous people to be in a state of underdevelopment with respect to mestizo and White Mexicans and deemed it the task of anthropologists and ethnologists to "laborar por el adelanto de la clase indígena" (25). In this way, Gamio positions these social scientists on the other side of progress and modernity with respect to their objects of study. *Maclovia*'s ethnographic sequences echo Gamio's ambitions with respect to anthropology's potential to realize the project of nation building by disseminating information about Indigenous peoples to a wide audience. The sequences convey an alignment with this project by using the ethnographic mode to do two things: 1) educate the Mexican spectator about an idealized version of Indigeneity; and 2) position the spectator as a subject on the other side of modernity and progress with respect to the Indigenous community.

Maclovia's fishing and *noche de muertos* sequences constitute examples of cinematic lyrical ethnography for several reasons. First, their relationship to the central plot of the film is marginal, giving them a parenthetical quality. Although the setting is the same as that in which the plot takes place, these sequences contain no dialogue and do not privilege the narrative's characters. Second, the cinematic language in these sequences is markedly different from that used in the narrative scenes where close-ups are essential to conveying intense emotional states – a hallmark of melodrama in cinema. Instead, in the fishing and *noche de muertos* sequences, the camera presents Indigenous people in groups, providing information about the community as a whole. Third, in line with what Rony and Nichols have

identified as the underlying condition for how ethnographic film functions, both sequences operate under the pretense that the spectator is receiving accurate information about the Indigenous community. Moreover, these sequences in *Maclovia* reproduce the thematic organization of classic ethnography. Susan Slyomovics has noted that classic ethnography (in the tradition of Bronisław Malinowski and Claude Lévi-Strauss) attempted to encapsulate the life of an entire community in one single volume and would do so by dividing it into several themes such as "the life cycle," "social and political organization," "the economy," etc. (Rony 7). *Maclovia*'s ethnographic sequences participate in this convention of classical ethnography and are clearly organized around the specific themes of fishing and spirituality.

In its totality, the fishing sequence presents a brief and straightforward narrative: the Indigenous men row out into the lake, cast out their nets, play the flute to attract the fish, pull in their nets, and return to land. Through the visual and verbal devices of the ethnographic mode, the film highlights that these actions are a communal endeavor, while exalting them as a practice that possesses both cultural and aesthetic value. Visually, the film emphasizes the group through the use of long shots from a high angles, which maximize the spectator's field of vision, capturing several men on canoes rowing out to the lake and carrying out all of the actions described above. Other shots present Indigenous fishermen arranged in curved lines, a famous feature of the *indigenista* films in which Emilio Fernández and cinematographer Gabriel Figueroa collaborated (Ramírez Berg, "Cinematic" 13-24; Ramírez Berg, *Classical* 119-22). Such arrangements are compatible with the ethnographic film's tendency to display Indigenous people together to create the impression of providing information about a representative sample of the community, but the diagonal arrangement constitutes enhanced aestheticization. The sequence further emphasizes that fishing is a communal practice through the repetitive medium close-ups edited in quick succession by Gloria Schoemann. Finally, the voice-over commentary reinforces the unity of the group displayed through the various visual devices: "En las claras noches la comunidad se lanza al lago ordenada y unida como una gran familia para arrancar a las aguas el diario sustento" (13:15). Here, the correspondence between the images shown and the authoritative aural mediation generates truth effects, adhering to the documentary tradition (Nichols, "Ethnographer's Tale" 34-38). But in addition to corroborating the visual information, the verbalized metaphor of the family goes a step further, idealizing the Indigenous people's cooperation. In this way, the fishing sequence purports not only to present accurate information about the lifeways on Janitzio, but it also crafts

Indigeneity as an idyllic spectacle for the viewer, whom the film positions as an outsider.

Furthermore, during multiple other instances the voice-over commentary clearly takes on a function other than that of factual mediation by distancing, fossilizing, and idealizing the Indigenous people through phrases such as, "El pueblo de Janitzio vive de la pesca, trabajo al cual se dedica con *unción* como a un *rito*…" (13:10; emphasis added), and "El silencio sólo es herido por el sonido de la flauta indígena, que como en una ceremonia de *encantamiento*, convoca a los peces y los atrae hacia las redes" (14:00; emphasis added). Here words such as "unción" (devotion), "rito" (rite), and "encantamiento" (enchantment) attribute a degree of mystery, poetry, and sacredness to the acts depicted, markedly adding embellishment to an indexical presentation of Indigeneity.

Other forms of sound, both diegetic and non-diegetic, are central to how *Maclovia*'s fishing sequence romanticizes and exalts Indigeneity. For instance, as the sequence opens (13:02) with an extreme long shot of the lake, solemn music adds a sense of gravitas supporting the commentary's presentation of the act of fishing as a ritual. The sound of the fisherman's flute amid the stillness of the entire group generates a serene atmosphere (14:09). When the fishermen pull the fish from the lake, the celebratory sound of harps and wind instruments is heard, contributing to the idealized atmosphere (14:29). Later as the men conclude their task, non-diegetic music carries with it a triumphant tone, glorifying the men's labor as success (14:58). Through instrumental sounds, the film's fishing sequence further embellishes and exalts what it presents as accurate information about Indigenous people.

In contrast to the scenes discussed above, *Maclovia*'s *noche de muertos* sequence differs in that it forgoes explanatory voice-over commentary. Instead, it mobilizes aestheticization even more markedly through lighting and angles while retaining the truth claim of representing Indigeneity indexically. For instance, in the sequence's initial low-angle shot of a man ringing a church bell, the man appears only as a black silhouette because the shot is backlit, instead featuring the "Figueroa sky" with great clarity (1:29:01) (Ramírez Berg, "Cinematic" 14-15; Ramírez Berg, *Classical* 112-14). Moments later, a striking low-angle long shot captures a multitude of Indigenous people processing on a path while holding large wooden frames ornamented with flowers (1:29:46). Because of the ascending nature of the path and the low angle of the shot, they appear to form visually appealing zigzag lines as they ascend. A cut to a threshold under which community members pass to reach their destination is the only explicit indication of the occasion the spectator is observing (it reads "noche de muertos") (1:29:58).

Through the threshold, a multitude of people and decorated frames are visible far into the distance, suggesting that the ritual is widely observed by Indigenous peoples in the local area. After a cut, a low-angle shot against the remaining sunlight reveals the dark silhouettes of few Indigenous women passing the bell ringer (1:30:10). Instead of opting for the documentary value of clearly showing Indigenous people walking toward the assembly with explanatory voice-over, here the more artistic appearance of black silhouettes alongside the diegetic sound of the bell and somber non-diegetic music transmits the solemnity of the ritual. The combination of striking shots and an absence of explicit contextual information leaves the spectator to deduce from the stylization that a significant Indigenous practice is unfolding before her gaze. Therefore, while ethnographic film at its core visualizes racialized populations in an effort to make them knowable, here the Fernández-Figueroa team forgoes an expository approach in favor of a highly stylized variant of indexical presentation.

After these initial shots, the truth claims in the *noche de muertos* sequence hinge on visualizing the multitude's participation in the ritual and foregrounding diegetic sounds. The shot of the dark silhouettes discussed above dissolves into an extreme high-angle long shot, showing a large crowd of people holding candles (1:30:21), which then pans into an extreme-long shot that reveals a vast multitude far into the distance (1:30:33). Here the cinematography operates, as in the fishing sequence, to maximize the spectator's visibility of the event as a whole, but the sheer number of people suggests that film directly presents the observation of the ritual and not its staging in a studio. At this point, only the diegetic sounds of the bell and of the multitude's devotional singing is heard. The singing also contributes to the sequence's apparently indexical presentation of the ritual because, unlike other moments of musical display in the Fernández unit's films (such as the highly staged, choreographed, and artfully edited song and dance number in *La perla* [26:16]), *Maclovia* does not showcase musical skill. Instead, it foregrounds the simple a capella singing of the Indigenous multitude as a primary means through which the people participate in the *noche de muertos* ritual. Here an absence of musical artifice supports the truth claim that the film re-presents the ritual realistically. By pairing the image of innumerable people holding candles in the darkness with a robust, but artistically modest chorus of devotional voices, *Maclovia* projects a version of the local ritual that is both ostensibly indexical and also a solemn aesthetic experience.

From this focus on multitudes, the *noche de muertos* segment proceeds to produce its own authenticity by showcasing individual Indigenous people visibly engaged in the ritual through their pious demeanor. A series of close-

ups and medium close-ups of Indigenous women and children at eye level and from a high angle mark the sequence's shift toward clearly displaying individual faces and body postures (1:31:17). These shots feature a young girl, a young boy, an elderly woman, a young woman, a small group of mourners holding candles as they sing, and a mother holding her baby. In these closer shots, the Indigenous people are still and their gazes are cast down or to the side. Their lack of movement and the directions of their gazes present them as fully participating in the ceremony and not engaging with the camera. These shots underscore that the sequence is an ethnographic parenthesis in the film due to the fact that here, the women and children's unemotional facial expressions contrast sharply with the exaggerated facial displays of emotion throughout the melodramatic narrative scenes in *Maclovia*. Furthermore, this group of closer shots uses another logic to maximize the spectator's panoramic view of the community. While the initial shots in the sequence use distance in order to visualize multitudes, the latter group of intimate shots show individuals in various stages of their lives: childhood, adulthood, and old age. These faces function metonymically to present the lifecycle of the Indigenous community visually, again creating the impression of providing access to a breadth of knowledge about the community within a synthetic space of representation, a convention of the ethnographic mode.

As we have seen, *Maclovia*'s fishing and *noche de los muertos* sequences provide additional information about the Indigenous community in which the main plot supposedly takes place. However, in contrast to the rest of the film's adhesion to melodramatic conventions, these sequences operate within the ethnographic mode in a manner that foregrounds aesthetic stylization while also maintaining the illusion of indexical representation. The result of this approach on behalf of the Fernández-Figueroa team is a cultural product that visually aestheticizes Indigeneity and ostensibly educates about Indigenous people, while simultaneously placing the spectator in a separate subject position with respect to the represented group. These stylistic conventions of the ethnographic spectacle in the Mexican context suture the spectator into a subjective space that is in tune with appropriative dimensions of *indigenismo* and *mestizaje* in that they promote a measured approximation to Indigenous culture while assuming and reinforcing the non-Indigenous subject position of the spectator. In this way, the viewing experience of *Maclovia* and other Mexican films that employ the ethnographic mode in a straight manner set up conditions within which the spectator can inhabit a spectatorial mestizaje and take Indigeneity up as "lo extraño y separado a la vez que lo propio" (Villoro 234-35).

ETHNOGRAPHIC SEEPING BEYOND THE GOLDEN AGE HEYDAY

Though after the mid-1940s Mexican films tended to privilege the urban context, and in particular the moral conflicts posed by life in a modern metropolis, *indigenista* themes did continue to surface in the realm of prestige production (films that aspired to international recognition) (Mora 73-104). Mexico's submissions for the Oscars after the decline of the studio system bear this out with Robert Gavaldón's *Macario* (1960), Ismael Rodríguez's *Ánimas Trujano* (1961), and Luis Alcoriza's *Tarahumara* (1965). Made after the heyday of the Mexican Golden Age, the films I explore here, *Sombra verde* and *Ánimas Trujano,* also take up the parenthetical ethnographic spectacle in their approach to rendering Indigeneity. Though in their films directors Gavaldón and Rodríguez craft the ethnographic mode in a distinct manner to that of the Fernández-Figueroa unit's meticulous stylization, the later directors nonetheless propose the same underlying dynamics of spectatorial relationality vis-à-vis Indigeneity.

Gavaldón's *Sombra verde*, which Gloria Schoemann also edited, employs the ethnographic mode to place the spectator in the position of the urban traveler, Federico, who is on an excursion from Mexico City to the tropical jungles of Veracruz to collect barbasco root, which has become a key ingredient for a medical treatment. The film begins with Federico in the capital, and it emphasizes his displacement to the domestic (yet exotic) environment through shots showing his plane taking off and his arrival by car to Papantla in which the festivities for Corpus Christi are underway (4:01).[2] His urban and modern expectations are immediately frustrated in this new space. First, he is forced to exit the car before it arrives at his destination because the townspeople have filled the streets for the celebrations (4:44). Next, the forest ranger whom he expected to meet is away for several days and cannot help him. The woman who tells Federico this information suggests that her husband, Anselmo, may be able to help, but he is temporarily occupied. The husband is the "capitán de los voladores," the head of the group of dancers who are performing the "danza de los voladores" (dance of the flyers) precisely as she and Federico are speaking. Through all of Federico's experiences upon his arrival, the film prefaces the subsequent ethnographic shots as a display that takes place in a reality separate and alien to that of modern, urban Mexican subjects.

What follows are several shots that both display and document the dance of the flyers couched within a tenuous narrative justification. First, the men are shown climbing the pole and the camera tilts upwards to convey the height they ascend (4:54). Long shots show the captain on the top of the pole and the four dancers swinging upside down around the pole

by means of ropes that are bound to their feet (7:02). These shots alternate with others showing individual dancers swinging (7:18; 7:32). The repetition of images of similar actions within a short space of time indicates that the purpose of the sequence is not merely to cite the dance ritual in passing, but also to visualize the practice in detail. Throughout these shots, only the diegetic sounds of a whistle and beating percussion instrument are heard, contributing to the film's illusion of representing the ritual indexically. Furthermore, although it is loosely embedded within the plot, the duration of the flying sequence is gratuitous with respect to its narrative function, as the captain of the flyers turns out to be unable to assist the protagonist at all. As in *Maclovia* this excessive, extra-narrative quality as well as its implicit truth claims about Indigenous ritual practices are the factors that locate the shots of the dance of the flyers within the realm of the ethnographic spectacle.

Although in this case there is no explicit mediation in the form of text or voice-over, interspersed between the shots of the flyers are eyeline matches that cut back and forth to show Federico observing the flyers (7:12; 7:24). In this way, the performance is presented as a spectacle that reproduces the Indigenous customs of Veracruz both for the traveler and for the spectator of the film. Furthermore, the editing sutures the spectator's experience of the spectacle to the non-Indigenous, urban Mexican subject. Because Federico is the protagonist, and the spectator has journeyed with him from the city to this new setting, *Sombra verde* establishes him as the urban, non-Indigenous male mediator with whom the spectator is meant to identify as the central point of reference and identification. By presenting the ethnographic spectacle through the eyes of an outsider, *Sombra verde* displays Indigenous culture as curio, while structuring spectatorial alignment with the non-Indigenous Mexican subject.

In Ismael Rodríguez's 1961 film *Ánimas Trujano*, the relationship between ethnographic seeping and the central narrative is less contrived. This film opens with an explicitly documentary-style prelude whose purpose is to explain the custom of festival stewardship (*mayordomía*) and its value for Indigenous Oaxacans. Being selected as the *mayordomo,* or sponsor of the festival, confers the status of "hombre importante" (the film's subtitle) to whomever is chosen to fulfill the role. Because the film's narrative follows the title character (played by Japanese actor, Toshiro Mifune) as he endeavors to become the *mayordomo* of the community's largest festival, the introductory ethnographic sequence bears a clear connection to the plot. However, its pedagogical voice-over and visual language clearly establish its distinct mode of address, marking it as parenthetical with respect to the narrative portion.[3]

As in *Maclovia*, the voice-over in *Ánimas Trujano* adopts a didactic tone, assuming the viewer's lack of familiarity with the region of Oaxaca and its Indigenous people. The film establishes this position through its first images consisting of a globe that spins and stops to show where Oaxaca is located (0:14). The voice-over presents the Indigenous peoples as distant when it explains the custom of *mayordomía*, which in keeping with classical ethnographic conventions, functions as the theme for the informative micro documentary. The voice-over suggests the separateness of the Indigenous Oaxacans through its explanation of the great social value that being a festival patron has within their social group: "Por cuenta del mayordomo corren todos los gastos de la fiesta que son muchos, pues todo el pueblo queda invitado. Para los elegidos, este honor significa un sacrificio, pero el hombre importante disfruta el poder agasajar a sus hermanos de raza y consolidar sus afectos" (0:49) First, this commentary's reference to the mayordomos's "hermanos de raza" in the third person presumes that neither the commentator nor the spectator belongs to this group. Second, this explanation presents *mayordomía* as possessing a unique value within the Indigenous group, a value that is not transparent and needs to be explained to the spectator who is presumed to operate according to different social codes. Furthermore, by indicating later on that "estas costumbres perjudican notablemente la economía de la masa indígena" (1:13), the voice-over further essentializes and distances Indigenous Oaxacans, because it insinuates that investing large sums of money in communal events in exchange for the esteem of the community is inconsistent with a normative (capitalist) relationship to wealth.

Mirroring the voice-over's essentialization, the opening ethnographic sequence's cinematography emphasizes groups using high-angle long shots and pans to maximize visibility. Here, the poetry and aestheticization of *Maclovia* are notably absent in favor of a more prosaic relationship between verbal information and image. Instead of offering up stylized arrangements of Indigenous bodies for the spectator's admiration, *Ánimas Trujano*'s expository visualization of the verbal commentary presents *mayordomía* as a distinct cultural curiosity existing hermetically within the domestic national space. Moreover, this ethnographic sequence presents *mayordomía* and Indigenous Oaxacans as exotic yet national content in a manner that both essentializes Indigeneity and affirms a mestizo relationality to Indigenous culture that is appropriative. The perfect articulation of this relationality occurs when the voice-over states, "… la mayordomía es uno de los escasos motivos por los cuales *nuestros indios* abandonan su legendaria tristeza y se sienten felices durante los tres días que dura cada fiesta" (1:21; emphasis added). Presenting Indigenous people

in terms of "legendary sadness" fossilizes, homogenizes, and romanticizes them, while the use of the third person reaffirms the presupposition that neither the commentator nor the spectators are Indigenous Mexicans. This rhetoric positions the national spectator at a remove from Indigenous "reality" displayed on screen and foments a national subjectivity that defines itself in relation to Indigeneity, but not as emanating from an Indigenous perspective. Furthermore, the telling phrase "our Indians" suggests an asymmetrical relationality between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Mexicans in which the former "belong" to the latter. In contrast to the integrationist emphasis that Arroyo Quiroz identifies in the INI production *Todos somos mexicanos*, the ethnographic mode in *Ánimas Trujano* (and in the other examples explored above) attributes to viewers a shared Mexican mestizo positionality precisely by enacting a spectatorial *distance* with respect to Indigeneity, which the mode produces as the nation's legitimately consumable curio (219).

PARODIC ETHNOGRAPHIC SEEPING IN *RAÍCES*

While ethnographic seeping in *Maclovia*, *Sombra verde*, and *Ánimas Trujano* reproduces the dynamic established by an official cultural project in which Mexican anthropology played a central role, the "Nuestra Señora" segment in Benito Alazraki's 1954 film, *Raíces*, suggests the fallibility of the social sciences, and in part, utilizes the familiar conventions of ethnographic cinema to do so. *Raíces* is the filmic adaptation of four short stories in Francisco Rojas González's short-story collection *El diosero*, published in 1952. Produced by Teleproducciones, *Raíces* was made outside of the Mexican studio system and has been credited as a foundational work for modern independent Mexican cinema (García Riera 40). The result was a film whose aesthetic was viewed as experimental at the time and that put forth a critical perspective of criollo and mestizo society.

In "Nuestra Señora," the protagonist is a US anthropologist, Jane, who travels to Mexico to study the Tzotzil people in Chiapas in order to complete her thesis. From the beginning, *Raíces* complicates the spectator's relationship with Jane's point of view when it represents the studies she carries out and the heavy-handed conclusions she derives from them. For instance, after Jane measures the craniums of a few Indigenous people and consults her graph, she concludes with confidence in her accented Spanish, "Según la medida de los cráneos, estos indios forman parte de una de las razas más primitivas del mundo" (24:05) Later, she displays copies of famous paintings and prompts the locals to express their opinions about the works. When they seem indifferent to the images, she pronounces another overstated judgment about Tzotzil people, "Está claro que los indios no

están capacitados para entender las mejores obras de nuestra gran cultura" (3:18). In light of the introductory sequence to *Raíces* which showcases the accomplishments of Indigenous cultures in Mexico, the film implies that Jane's anthropological conclusions in "Nuestra Señora" are premature and extreme, thus clearly establishing her as unreliable mediator.

The Chamula carnival sequence marks both the culmination of Jane's certainty about Tzotzil inferiority and the film's attempt to alienate the spectator from her perspective. Crucially, unlike the rest of the segment in which close-ups and medium close-ups are used to present the interactions between characters in the narrative, the carnival sequence uses the cinematographic language of the ethnographic documentary mode. Here one sees high-angle shots, long shots, and panning shots showing groups of Indigenous people as they dance, celebrate, and run across burning sticks (35:16). The diegetic sounds of the celebration (percussion, a whistle, and festive music) produce Jane's (and the spectator's) experience of "being there." The carnival sequence includes a key eyeline match, which presents the carnival through Jane's point of view (35:51). However, while in *Sombra verde* such eyeline matches suture the spectator to the urban traveler's perspective, in *Raíces* the device alienates the spectator from Jane's perspective by juxtaposing the visual cinematic language of objectivity (high-angle long shots, eye-level long shots with pans and diegetic sounds) with Jane's hyperbolic and biased commentary: "Esta experiencia fue para mí la experiencia decisiva. Carnaval Chamula, comprobación final: salvajismo máximo. Danza del fuego: demostración completa de barbarie. Raza sin salvación. Título definitivo para mi tesis: la vida salvaje de los indios mexicanos" (35:30) What is noteworthy about the sequence is that it employs the basic premises of the ethnographic mode: the idea that what is captured on camera conveys truthful information that makes Indigenous people knowable to the spectator. However, "Nuestra Señora" mobilizes the truth-value and indexicality of the mode to complicate the spectator's relationship to a biased mediator, Jane, who personifies what the film suggests is a fallible regime of truth: anthropology – when exercised tendentiously and from an ethnocentric perspective.

In this sense, the Chamula carnival sequence's parodic pairing of documentary conventions and overstated verbal mediation falls within the tradition of Luis Buñuel's well-known mock documentary, *Las Hurdes* (1932). According to Nichols, *Las Hurdes* is based on an ethnography of an impoverished area in Spain, but the film "condemns the very procedures of fieldwork, detailed description, and humanistic empathy that were to form the backbone of the ethnographic encounter in the decades to come" ("Documentary Film" 588-89). Like Buñuel's film made 22 years earlier, the Chamula carnival sequence in *Raíces* mocks both the rhetoric and aesthetic

of "expert" scientific claims regarding underprivileged populations. Furthermore, the background of the figures involved in the making of *Raíces* substantiates the likelihood that Buñuel's work served as a reference. The film's producer, Manuel Barbachano Ponce, was steeped in the world of documentary filmmaking before and after producing *Raíces*. Moreover, the production supervisor on *Raíces* was none other than the prolific Spanish documentary filmmaker, Carlos Velo, who, having begun his career in 1930s Spain, would undoubtedly have known Buñuel's work well.[4]

Still, the clearest and strongest critique of anthropology in "Nuestra Señora" comes in its final scenes, and it occurs as much through the dialogue as it does through cinematography. During a conversation with the village priest, he refutes every one of Jane's arguments for why the Indigenous peoples are savages. The movement of the camera and its angles alienate the spectator from Jane's ideological perspective during the conversation. For instance, when Jane insistently tells the priest, "¡Pero si son unos salvajes!" (43:10), the camera tracks toward her from a low angle, producing an intimidating image of her that conveys the arrogance with which she pronounces her prejudice. After the priest reveals the ethnocentrism of Jane's "evidence," she has no choice but to accept the priest's conclusion: all are equal, and if Indigenous people are marginalized, it is the collective fault of society. The film conveys Jane's conversion visually when she takes the copy of her thesis that she had gifted to the local INI doctor and rips it in half. The close-up of the ripped thesis thrown on the floor is the film's strongest visual statement critiquing the limited ability of classical anthropology to alleviate the material hardships of Indigenous people in Mexico (45:19).

However, given that in "Nuestra Señora" the anthropologist is from the U.S., how are we to understand the film's critique regarding the relationship between anthropology and Indigenous people in Mexico? Can the film be understood only as a commentary on metropolitan anthropology, or does it also denounce the uses of Mexico's "national anthropology"?

In Rojas González's original short story "Nuestra Señora de Nequetejé," it is a Mexico City-based psychoanalyst who leads the studies on Indigenous people. According to this character, psychoanalysis explains Indigenous people's supposed mental deficiency (75), however, the narrator does briefly mention anthropology, and establishes a parallel in the way the two disciplines place Indigenous peoples in a relative position of inferiority (73). In this way, the text establishes its principal themes: 1) the disconnect between Mexican intellectuals and the Indigenous population; and 2) how western regimes of knowledge applied locally have justified and perpetuated inequality.

In addition to replacing the psychoanalyst with an anthropologist and making her the segment's narrator, *Raíces* also relocates the setting of the

Indigenous town, changing the short story's Nequetejé in the state of Hidalgo for Chamula in the state of Chiapas – not far from San Cristobal de las Casas, where the INI established its first Centro Coordinador Indigenista in 1951 (Lewis 1). In light of the growth of state-sponsored anthropological entities in Mexico from the 1940s to the 1960s, I suggest that these revisions on behalf of the filmmakers were far from arbitrary. The changes made to the original short story signal a desire to comment on Mexican anthropology's prominent role in producing information about Indigenous people and in shaping official policies toward them.

At first glance, the fact that the researcher in "Nuestra Señora" is from the U.S. could limit the film's capacity to serve as a commentary on Mexico's tradition of national anthropology. However, Jane's underlying premise – that Indigenous Mexicans exist in a state of inherent backwardness – was *also* the premise of Mexican interventionist anthropology from the 1940s to the 1960s. Furthermore, Jane's teleological discourse is more characteristic of mid-twentieth-century Mexican anthropologists' developmentalist stance and internal colonialism, than it is of studies done in Mexico during the same period by US anthropologists (Lomnitz 187-89). By exaggerating the discourse of developmentalist anthropology and attributing it to a US researcher, "Nuestra Señora" displaces its critique of Mexican anthropology's teleological subtext onto a conveniently familiar figure: the arrogant, uninformed, and out of place White American – a personification of post-World War II US hegemony. Ostensibly then, "Nuestra Señora" presents the academic misapprehension of Mexican Indigeneity as a dynamic characterized by neo-imperialism instead of internal colonialism.[5] And yet, Jane is not an entirely convincing avatar because, while she is completely foreign, her discourse is not; she is, therefore, a circumspect device through which the film puts forth a veiled critique of the treatment of Indigenous people within the Mexican social sciences and domestic power structures.[6]

In some ways, the critique of anthropology in *Raíces* prefigures that in Luis Alcoriza's 1965 film, *Tarahumara (cada vez más lejos)*, with the latter film more directly taking on the disconnect between Mexican anthropological institutions and Indigenous peoples. In the film, Raúl is an INI worker who has been sent to collect data about the Tarahumara people in Northern Mexico. He befriends an Indigenous man, Corachi, and becomes the godfather of his child. While spending time in the community, Raúl realizes that local politicians and business owners have been conspiring to annex more of the Indigenous group's lands. Eventually, Raúl is shot because of this conflict, and hastily flown away.

There are several moments in which the film points to the limitations of formal anthropological methods for addressing the concrete difficulties

of Indigenous peoples. One the most explicit instances of this is when Raúl converses with his non-native host, Tomás, after Raúl has begun to involve himself in the dispute between the Tarahumara and the powerful members of the local community. When Tomás suggests that Raúl simply stick to the tasks he has been asked to do, Raúl suggests the ridiculousness of the questionnaires he must distribute:

> … la institución que me paga quiere un estudio sesudo y objetivo. Debo someter a los Tarahumaras a un cuestionario para juzgarlos por el promedio de sus respuestas … ¿Pues qué quiere? Vivimos en la época de los test [*sic*]. Pero a mí me atrae demasiado el mundo de ellos para verlo con la frialdad de un simple observador (33:00).

This dialogue furthers the critique articulated with regards to anthropology in *Raíces* and makes it even more specific to Mexico. Just as *Raíces* illustrates how research methods that appear objective to their practitioners in fact impede them from understanding Indigenous peoples, here Raúl suggests that the Indigenous are not entirely knowable through Mexican anthropology, its institutions, or its pursuit of objectivity. This point is further reinforced later in the film when Raúl is conversing with a like-minded anthropologist, who explains that he finds himself doing very different work from what he originally set out to do: "Fíjese, yo soy antropólogo. Vine a hacer una labor cultural y aquí me tiene encargado del cerradero, cuidando chivas y peleando por sus tierras. ¿Y sabe usted por qué? Porque ve uno que eso es lo que verdaderamente importa" (1:20:19). The anthropologist, like Raúl, questions the relevance of anthropological research, and having encountered the day-to-day struggle of the Tarahumara, finds that he can be more effective through other means. Ultimately, the film suggests that instead of focusing on producing knowledge about the Tarahumara, it is more important to help them assert their agency in concrete ways. This critique in Alcoriza's film foreshadows that of Mexican anthropologists Arturo Warman, Margarita Nolasco Armas, Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, Mercedes Olivera de Vazquez, and Enrique Valencia, who, in *De eso que llaman antropología mexicana* (1970), argued that their discipline had abandoned its scientific and critical potential and that it should shift away from assimilating Indigenous people into the nation-state and its exploitative capitalist model (27-38; see also Lomnitz 170, 192).

With respect to the cinematographic language of *Tarahumara*, I argue that it cites the ethnographic mode as a referent but does not engage it in the same vein as the previous examples examined in this study. For example, after the baptism of Corachi's son, there is scene that takes place during a group ceremony. The scene opens with a high-angle long shot of

the ceremony, but lasts just a few seconds (36:18). The subsequent shots capture interactions between the Indigenous characters in the narrative. Here any long or extreme long shots that are reminiscent of the ethnographic mode – whose presence lead Jorge Ayala Blanco to associate the film with a documentary tendency and objectivity (151-53) – are brief and are always closely tied to the narrative, unlike the scenes from *Maclovia*, *Sombra verde*, and *Ánimas Trujano* in which they are parenthetical. The function of these shots within *Tarahumara* is not to provide consumable knowledge of a particular ritual, but to open a scene and provide contextual information that informs the narrative clearly. In avoiding full ethnographic sequences, *Tarahumara* eschews a spectatorial subject/object dichotomy vis-à-vis Indigenous Mexicans – an aversion that is consistent with the film's call for solidarity alongside native people's struggle for agency.

CONCLUSION

Ethnographic seeping in mid-twentieth-century narrative Mexican cinema is in tune with aspects of the official discourses of *indigenismo* and *mestizaje*, which were heavily shaped by a local tradition of "national anthropology." Through the parenthetical insertion of ethnographic sequences in these films (as exemplified in *Maclovia*, *Sombra verde,* and *Ánimas Trujano*), Mexican filmmakers reproduced the premises of these discourses: the idea that Indigenous culture is worthy of consumable dissemination and that the presumptive national Mexican subject is *mestizo*. In these cases, the ethnographic spectacle on film positions the spectator to behold Indigeneity as cultural content over which the nation has a legitimate claim ("nuestros indios"), but also enforces a dissociation with respect to an Indigenous subject position.

In contrast, ethnographic seeping in "Nuestra Señora" mobilizes the truth-claims of the documentary mode to criticize anthropology itself, and in so doing puts forth a veiled criticism of anthropological discourses, though through a US avatar. Where *Raíces* hesitated to discuss Mexican anthropology explicitly, *Tarahumara* proceeds more directly, and its cinematography rejects the parenthetical ethnographic sequences that produce Indigeneity as objectified cultural patrimony. Whether reinforcing the premises of official *indigenismo* and *mestizaje* or contesting them, the presence of the ethnographic mode in Indigenous-themed narrative films suggests both the reach of Mexico's "national anthropology" and its profound impact with respect to the presentation of Indigeneity within national cultural production of the mid-twentieth century.

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NOTES

1 While Masha Salazkina does not engage with Rony's work in her *In Excess: Sergei Eisenstein's Mexico*, she does anticipate my understanding of "Sandunga" as lyrical ethnography by noting the segment's "intertextual referent of the ethnodocumentary look, which connects it to Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* and similar projects" (56). See also Aurelio de los Reyes's *El nacimiento de ¡Que Viva México!* (2006) and Joanne Hershfield's "Paradise Regained" (2014).

2 García Riera verifies that Papantla was a filming location for *Sombra verde* (vol. 7, 208).

3 For García Riera, the use of the ethnographic mode in the beginning of the film is part of director Ismael Rodríguez's unsuccessful strategy to infuse the film with prestige, which also included recruiting the internationally admired Japanese star, Toshiro Mifune (vol. 11, 64).

4 As Arroyo Quiroz observes, Carlos Velo went on to supervise production on the INI documentary about Mazatecan people, *Todos somos mexicanos* (213).

5 Also in *Raíces*, "La potranca" based on Rojas González's short story, "La cabra en dos patas," changes the predatory White Mexican "ingeniero" into a central European archaeologist. Another filmic adaptation that conveniently converts Hispanic antagonists into non-Hispanic ones is Fernández's film *La perla* (1947), which changes the origin of the men who oppress Indigenous fishermen from Spanish to German in an effort to mirror anti-axis sentiment (see Tierney 100; Pineda Franco 104-07).

6 Potentially, this displacement was a way of avoiding a slight to Rojas González, who was ensconced within the Mexican anthropological establishment at the UNAM. "Nuestra Señora" also softens its critique through the addition of the INI doctor, who is gentle, effective, and skeptical of Jane's blunt affirmations all along.

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