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The Amsterdam University College (AUC) Undergraduate Journal of Liberal Arts and Sciences is a biannual, interdisciplinary publication showcasing outstanding undergraduate academic papers. The Journal aims to demonstrate the strength of undergraduate scholarship at AUC, to reflect the intellectual diversity of its academic programme, to encourage best research and writing practices, to facilitate collaboration between students and faculty across the curriculum, and to provide students with opportunities to gain experience in academic reviewing, editing and publishing. The Editorial of the Journal is constituted of members of the InPrint board, a registered AUCSA committee.

Foreword

Welcome to the 14^{th} Capstone Issue!

Before graduation, all AUC students are required to write a Capstone thesis - an independent research paper in the disciplines of Science, Social Science or Humanities. The four-month writing process during the semester encourages students to engage with and contribute to the academic dialogue in their chosen field. In this Capstone Issue we publish six student Capstones, two from each major, written by AUC's graduating students of 2020.

The Capstones published in this issue have undergone rigorous selection and editing processes carried out by our Editorial Board. The aim of the editors is to improve the clarity and accessibility of the selected works, making them interesting to a general reader but maintaining a high standard in their academic field.

I would like to extend a word of thanks to the editors who worked tirelessly on the papers, meticulously caring for every minor detail – without them this publication would not have been possible. Thanks also goes out to the authors for their continued engagement in the process and for their patience with the long conversations regarding word choice and punctuation.

The papers in this edition cover topics ranging from Mexican cinema and the gender roles to earthworm behavioural differences, showcasing the variety of interests encouraged by a liberal arts and sciences education. I hope that this Capstone Issue can share a small slice of AUC students' academic work and interests – with our peers, our families, and more. Enjoy reading the issue!

Sarah Martinson, on behalf of InPrint

A note from the photographers

Every semester, InPrint publishes a capstone issue containing a collection of selected capstones from the previous semester. This year, they wanted to include a picture with every capstone to make the issue more visually appealing, so they approached RAW! InPrint sent the abstracts of the six selected Capstones to RAW, who distributed them over the Photographers Team. The participating photographers each interpreted the abstract in their own way, and took a picture relating to it, which can be found on the title page of each paper. If you're curious about their thought process, read the captions that accompany each photograph below!

Rosa Wijnen for Joyce den Hertog's *Artistic representation of the daily news* The photo represents the title 'Headlines as Art' quite literally, using paint instead of graphic design to create a headline. Would this catch the attention of people better than the usual bold red letters screaming 'Breaking News'?

Jasmin Ronach for Rayne Leroux's *The early bird catches the bold worm* This picture was taken during an afternoon in Flevopark, and subsequently the orange skies were created through photo editing. The focus was put on the bird and its position high up in the trees, from where it may observe the behavior of the 'bold' worm coming to the surface.

Margherita Guida for Aisha Erenstein's *In Reconciliation We Trust* The concepts of reconciliation and trust brought a lot of inspiration in me as they can be very powerful and symbolic. I juxtaposed them with a lily plant, that still has to bloom, which goes to represent Ethiopian politics.

Sanch Sen for Catherine Schulter's *Meaningful Youth Participation in Global Climate Talks* This photograph represents two ideas. One is the essential "running out of time" concept that exists for the world to solve the climate crisis. The second is the complicated framework of ideas and network that come together for the global governance of these ideas.

Mirthe van Veen for Patrīcija Keiša's *Why Are We Not Doing The Right Thing?* Most of us are akratic when it comes to diet. Whether this is about eating meat or a delicious brownie; even though eating it wouldn't be the best choice, the majority still does it.

Che Spraos Romein for Martha Echevarría González's *A Move Towards Visibility* The photo attempts to incorporate elements of a working-class aesthetic, seen through the outfit of the woman, especially in the shoes and less visible apron. It is captured in a monochromatic scheme to match visual elements of some of the films addressed in the essay, and features a woman moving behind bars as a play on the title (move towards visibility).

Contents

Humanities

A Move Towards Visibility

Representations of Working-Class Indigenous Women in Classic and Contemporary Mexican Cinema

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Photographer: Che Spraos Romain

Abstract

This paper argues that Mexican national cinema, along with other national arts, has contributed greatly to the construction of a homogenous national imaginary in which marginalized groups, such as working-class indigenous women, are essentialized and stereotyped. Borrowing from Mexican writers such as Octavio Paz and Carlos Monsiváis, I provide an overview of the history of Mexican indigenous women in the national arts to understand their placement in the national imaginary. In terms of film, I first examine the Golden Age of Mexican cinema to explore its construction of indigenous female archetypes in the context of the *indigenismo* movement and its impact on spectators through an analysis of *Maria Candelaria* (1944). With this historical discourse in mind, and from an intersectional feminist perspective, I then examine two contemporary Mexican films, *Roma* (2018) and *La Camarista* (2018), to explore how some recent movies are calling attention to the most marginalized groups of society. Drawing on the work of Latin American film scholars as well as on feminist film theory, I present original close scene analyses to examine the ways in which contemporary films are offering working-class indigenous women the opportunity to reclaim their space in the national imaginary. These close analyses show that there has been a move in contemporary films towards making visible the struggles and realities of working-class indigenous women – as gendered, racialized, and classed citizens – on screen and in today's society. As such, this thesis shows the compelling need to reconstruct Mexico's national imaginary in a more inclusive and heterogeneous form, and the trend that is emerging in this direction.

Keywords and phrases: *Mexican cinema, intersectionality, female archetypes, indigenous women, national imaginary*

Contents

1 Introduction

1.1 Visibility in Contemporary Mexican Cinema

In the last decade, several Mexican filmmakers have worked on projects that document or dramatize real life stories about indigenous people in and outside of their communities. Feature films such as *Roma* (dir. Alfonso Cuarón) and *La Camarista [The Chambermaid]* (dir. Lila Avilés), which both premiered in 2018, were made as an attempt to give visibility to one of the most marginalized and ignored groups in Mexico: working-class indigenous women. Like many other contemporary Mexican films[1] which attempt to bring the marginalized to the center, *Roma* and *La Camarista* aim to create a verisimilar representation of female Mexican laborers and thus call attention to a sector of society that is often overlooked in both the arts and in the public sphere. To do so, both films feature indigenous working-class women as protagonists whose struggles seek to expose the realities of the social, economic, racial, and gender inequalities in Mexico City. In an attempt to create realistic and fair representations of these women, both filmmakers have chosen to tell the women's stories as the main plot of the films and to work with actors from a working-class background as protagonists of their own stories.

Roma and *La Camarista* are films that are interested in building a space for new cinematic representations of those women that were hardly visible before: indigenous and mestizo[2] women that have moved into larger cities to work as cleaners, cooks, domestic workers, and artisans. Most importantly, these films explicitly attempt to debunk female and indigenous archetypes that have been constructed and reproduced throughout Mexican film history, particularly since the Golden Age of Mexican cinema (roughly from 1935 to 1960). In order to analyze which conventional paradigms these films are challenging, I will focus on their innovative and disruptive way of representing working-class indigenous women. The close scene analyses of *Roma* and *La Camarista* will look at the relation between these films' cinematic narrative strategies and what feminist authors describe as the 'gaze', the myth of women, and the power relations on screen. Using these terms within the film analysis, I will explore how contemporary films can contribute to constructing heterogeneous and non-essential images of indigenous women in the contemporary national imaginary, and the impact this may have on flesh and blood women off-screen.

Before doing so, this study will present its theoretical framework based mainly on a series of Latin American and feminist film scholars, as well as on the concept of intersectionality. Then, with these theories in mind, it will review the legacy of the Golden Age of Mexican Cinema – also known as Classical Mexican cinema – as a project of nation building by incorporating the ideas of feminist scholars and Mexican intellectuals who discuss the role that women, and particularly indigenous women, have played in Mexican discourse, films, and arts of the 19^{th} and 20^{th} century. Finally, this section will explore the essentialist and simplistic representations of indigenous women in cinema and the national arts, and how these have affected their conditions of visibility in the national imaginary.

After examining the ideological constructions that were made during the Golden Age of Mexican Cinema through a close analysis of *Maria Candelaria*, I will move on to analyze how *Roma* and *La Camarista* magnify marginalized women's visibility today. In this text, the concept of visibility will refer to the extent to which marginalized groups are included in the production of national arts, and thus the extent to which they are incorporated in the national imaginary. Finally, for this study, I assume that the more verisimilar representations of marginalized groups there are in the national arts, the more possibilities these groups have to be included in the national imaginary and consequently, the less difficult it is for them to participate socially, economically, and politically. The more visibility and attention they receive, the more likely it is for

[1] Some examples of recent Mexican films that tell the life and stories of working-class, indigenous, and other marginalized groups are *La Tirisia* (dir. Jorge Pérez Solano, 2014), *Sueño en otro idioma* [I Dream in Another Language] (dir. Ernesto Contreras, 2017), *Lorena, la de pies ligeros* [Lorena, Light-Footed Woman] (dir. Juan Carlos Rulfo. 2019), and *El sueño de Mara'akame* [Mara'akame's dream] (dir. Federico Cecchetti, 2016).

[2] In the Latin American context, mestizo/a refers to a person of mixed European and 'Indian' blood (Encyclopædia Britannica). In the colonial caste system, mestizos held a middle social position, placed under Europeans and above indigenous. Since the physical characteristics that distinguished mestizos from other groups were not always obvious, "mestizaje became as much a cultural identity. . . as a racial identity" (Ching et al. 92-93).

them to receive equal and just treatment from society and the nation.

1.2 Feminism & Intersectionality in Mexican Film Studies

Understanding the different socio-cinematic representations – from the Golden Age compared to those from contemporary times – through an intersectional feminist perspective is essential when examining the role cinema plays in shaping the conditions of visibility for indigenous women of contemporary Mexico. The concept of intersectionality in feminist theory is an attempt to bring diversity into feminism by taking into account the fact that not all women experience inequality in the same way. Intersectionality expresses the idea that each woman lives at the junction of different systems of privilege and oppression; therefore women experience different levels of discrimination in terms of class, race, ethnicity, religion, and so on, which differentiate their experiences of what it is to be a woman. In order to analyze the role that cinema plays in shaping indigenous working-class women's visibility, it is thus essential to look at their representation and their experiences from an intersectional perspective. This study draws on diverse feminist theories of film and visual culture – Claire Johnston and bell hooks, as well as Ana López and Dolores Tierney – to explore the roles that "old" and "new" Mexican cinema play in the construction of marginalized women in the Mexican national imaginary.

In her essay "Women's Cinema as Counter-cinema" feminist scholar Claire Johnston looks at the unequal evolution of male and female myths in cinema and addresses the way myths of women, the vamp and the straight girl, have operated in Classical Hollywood cinema. Similarly, Ana López and Dolores Tierney explore the myths of women in Classical Mexican cinema through the perspective of gender studies. In 1975, Laura Mulvey published her now seminal essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," where she develops the concept of the male gaze, or the masculine-coded camera, through which Classical Hollywood films reflect and reinforce the unconscious patriarchal binary of male/active and female/passive. Through the male gaze, the ideal (male) spectator derives pleasure via narcissism (identifying with the ego-ideal male protagonist) and voyeurism (identifying with the masculine-coded camera) (Mulvey 837-839). This study is informed by Mulvey's reading of the male gaze, however it focused mainly on the socio-historical background of the spectators rather than on a psychoanalytic interpretative framework.

Drawing on Mulvey's theory of the male gaze, bell hooks introduces the juxtaposed concept of the 'oppositional gaze' which refers to the gaze of those who are not being represented; in her argument, this was the black female gaze (116-117). Since people of color have historically been denied the right to look, hooks argues that an oppositional gaze can become a site of resistance from the dominant white patriarchal power (116). As there is a historical similarity between the power relations of black and white Americans, and the power relations of indigenous Mexicans and creole Mexicans[3], this paper adopts hooks' theory of the oppositional gaze of African Americans and applies it to that of Mexicans of indigenous heritage. For the purpose of this study, the idea of the oppositional gaze will help us to understand indigenous women's place as underrepresented and, therefore, oppositional 'gazers' in both Classic and contemporary Mexican cinema. With the help of these scholars, this thesis will transition from an overview of Golden Age Mexican Cinema to a study of the ways in which contemporary Mexican films are reframing and challenging archetypal representations of marginalized women today.

Following this conceptual framework, this comparative study will incorporate the work of intersectional feminist scholars – again bell hooks and also Claire Johnston – to analyze gendered, classed, and racialized power relations involved in filmic treatments of white and indigenous female and male characters. The work of Latin American film scholars who have already incorporated seminal feminist film theories into their studies of classical Mexican cinema will serve as a foundation upon which this study will build when analyzing contemporary Mexican films and the roles they play in shaping the Mexican national imaginary.

[3] In the Mexican colonial caste system, gachupines (Peninsulares or Spanish-born whites) and creole (Spanish-whites born in Mexico) were at the top of the social hierarchy, while mestizos (indigenous and Spanish mixed) and indigenous followed lower in the social and legal hierarchies.

1.3 Women in The Golden Age of Mexican Cinema: The Construction of a Nation

The Golden Age of Mexican cinema – along with Muralism[4] – is one of the most representative national arts of the 20^{th} century to contribute to the construction of female archetypes and the development of a system of values and beliefs that established the role that men, women, and indigenous people were expected to play in Mexican society. The Golden Age is particularly relevant for two reasons: its magnitude and its influence on its contemporaneous audiences. First, the Golden Age was one of the most prolific periods in the history of Mexican cinema. Between 1932 and 1939, the Mexican film industry produced 236 movies, and in the next ten years, between 1940 and 1949 it increased its productions to a total of 665 feature films (de la Vega Alfaro, 24-25). This cinema grew thanks to the introduction of sound and to the interest of the government in investing in the national arts in order to establish a sense of unifying national identity (de la Vega Alfaro 23).

As the industry flourished, its films' themes and archetypes became a reflection of 20^{th} century Mexico while at the same time contributing to the shape and contour of the national identity (Mraz 92). Part of this project of nation building was the *indigenismo* movement, which offered Mexico a myth of origin free from its colonial past. The purpose of *indigenismo* was to reconstruct the national identity through a romanticized and essentialist picture of indigenous people to "assimilate [them] within the nation state" (Tierney 75). The national cinema, alongside muralist painters, portrayed indigenous people in a way that reflected the notion of a pure and essential Mexican identity, and that prioritized a 'native style' over a 'European style' (Tierney 76-77). However, as Tierney notes, this project was far from reality – most of the underclass indigenous communities were physically, economically, and racially separated from the rest of the nation (74).

For Carlos Monsiváis[5], an important element of the process of nation building is the consumption of popular culture by the masses ("Cultura Popular" 98-99). This echoes Benedict Anderson's idea that imagined communities[6] were first formed thanks to the printed press, and consequently, contemporary ones are formed thanks to the news and media that are consumed en masse. In Mexico, Golden Age cinema was also a means to develop the imagined community and the unified national identity. Therefore, with the hopes of analyzing the past, present, and future constructs of Mexican identities, historians and academics have extensively studied this emblematic era of national filmmaking. Latin American film scholar Dolores Tierney challenges the canonization of the Golden Age cinema and debunks many of the original readings of these films to highlight the ideological and representational contradictions present in this period of filmmaking. Similarly, Latin American film scholar Ana López explores the role of women in popular genres, such as the melodrama and the cabaret film, to map and then interrogate the archetypes of women constructed in Classical Mexican cinema. Other scholars such as Juan Pablo Silva Escobar use these mapped archetypes to understand how the Golden Age cinema has contributed to building a Mexican social imaginary. He argues that films of this period were responsible for elaborating images and ideas of what is conceived as 'typically Mexican', and for inscribing these ideas in the collective consciousness (10). *Maria Candelaria* (dir. Emilio Fernández, 1944), which this study will later explore in greater detail, is a canonized film which constructs a damaging and othering image of indigenous people, and particularly indigenous women.

Movies of the Mexican Golden Age were not so concerned with creating realistic representations of women, but rather with creating archetypes and moralistic characters from whom viewers could learn and with whom they could identify (Monsiváis, "Cultura Popular" 105). Therefore, popular

[4]Mexican Muralism was an art movement and a project of nation building that began in 1920 and lasted until around 1970 with the purpose of reunifying the country after the Mexican Revolution. Its paintings were usually charged with social, political, and historical motifs that aimed at uniting all Mexicans into one common history (Greeley 263-267).

[5]Carlos Monsiváis, belonging to a very active generation of Mexican journalists and writers, became a fundamental figure in the documentation of Mexican values, traditions, and social changes from the late 20^{th} century.

[6]For Anderson, a nation is an imagined community in the sense that it is socially constructed and imagined by individuals, the media, politics, etc. Ian Buchanan states, "it is imagined because the actuality of even the smallest nation exceeds what it is possible for a single person to know – one cannot know every person in a nation, just as one cannot know every aspect of its economy, geography, history, and so forth." (244). Thus, the 'imagined community' is a way for people to abstract their own and other communities.

genres of this period, such as the melodrama and the cabaret film, focused on creating contrasting white female archetypes such as the sacred, well-behaved mother and the sensual mistress, in order to reinforce patriarchal values (López 147-154). However, and even with the presence of the *indigenismo* movement, real indigenous women received little attention in the national cinema, and as scholar Dolores Tierney explains, that scant treatment of the indigenous "often reflects the fantasy of otherness, painting the *indígena[s]* as an exceptional other while suppressing the reasons for [their] social marginalization, backwardness and exploitation." (Tierney 74).

These archetypal representations from Classical Mexican cinema established trends, behaviors and a model for working class and aristocratic families to follow (Monsiváis, "Cultura Popular" 113). These models and archetypes became so embedded in the national imaginary of Mexican audiences and filmmakers that films today still struggle to diverge from them (Silva Escobar 11-12). Contemporary film production has become more independent from the state and therefore offers both films with archetypal representations of female figures (commonly found in mainstream cinema) and films that challenge these figures. Since the academic discussion surrounding contemporary Mexican cinema needs to be updated, this research will analyze two movies produced within the last decade to observe the most recent changes in both cinema and the society that these films reflect.

2 Women in the National Imaginary

2.1 Archetypes and Stereotypes

In 1950, writer and intellectual Octavio Paz wrote *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, a book-length essay in which he attempts to decipher the characteristics, traits, and historical elements that define and shape Mexican identity. It is important to note that an identity in this sense is not an ontological fact, but is rather socially determined and "its meaning is constructed by the people who try to define it." (Ching et al. 7). In this search, Paz draws on colloquialisms and local expressions, and finds that one of the most important elements defining Mexicanness is an identity born from a history of rape and female treason[7] (57-79). Carlos Monsiváis takes Paz's influential essay as a widely accurate historical-cultural interpretation of Mexican society, and notes that "by nature and definition, Mexican culture is a sexist culture" ("Soñadora, coqueta y ardiente" 23). He explains that Mexico is a culture divided by 'feminine' and 'masculine' roles with certain characteristics assigned to each that allow for the perpetuation of a patriarchal ideology ("Soñadora, coqueta y ardiente" 22-23). Similarly, Paz argues that Mexican people always understand the role of women as an instrument or a means – to fulfill men's desires or whatever tasks the law or society assign – but never as an end in itself (57-60). Under these social conditions, diverse realms of artistic expression such as literature, painting, and film have interpreted the position of women in Mexican society.

Monsiváis explores the literature of the 19^{th} century, which was preoccupied with depicting different archetypes of Mexican women, in order to define what he calls *la sensibilidad femenina* [the feminine sensibility] and its opposition, the free woman. The feminine sensibility is morality, inspiration and tenderness, while the free woman is usually incarnated by the prostitute who 'negates' the real femininity (Monsiváis, "De la construcción de la 'sensibilidad femenina' 82-83"). However, while 19^{th} century arts and literature only played around with these archetypes and moral values, mid 20^{th} century Mexican cinema became moralizing and didactic by creating more culture-specific stereotypes of bourgeoise, working-class, and indigenous women. Although the Mexican Revolution (1910) opened many doors for women to participate more actively in society, the national arts of that period did not reflect these changes. Instead, they continued repeating female stereotypes and moralistic ideas (Monsiváis, "Soñadora, coqueta y ardiente" 38).

One of the most effective ways of transmitting a homogenous ideology – in this case the idea of the Mexican – is through archetypes and stereotypes. However, it is worth noting the difference between the former and the latter. Archetypes, as established by psychoanalyst Carl Jung, are "ways

[7] Paz tells the story of Marina or La Malinche who in times of the Spanish conquest was given to Hernán Cortes, the Spanish conquistador, as a wife and slave. Because she gave birth to one of the first mestizos she is seen as a traitor to the Aztec people and as the raped mother of all Mexicans (57-79).

of thinking and acting that derive from the most primitive aspects of our psyche" (Buchanan 25) and that reside in our collective unconscious. Stereotypes, on the other hand, are generalized assumptions about groups and communities which, according to Stuart Hall, "reduce people to a few, simple, essential characteristics," (257) and thus are inherently essentializing and reductionist. The usage of archetypes in stories and narratives is important because it helps readers and audiences identify and relate to the different characters (the hero, the villain, the ruler, etc.). However, as Mary Anna Kidd argues in her study of archetypes and stereotypes in media representation, when archetypes are married to stereotypes it leads to problematic stigmatization of groups, particularly in multicultural societies (26).

Along these lines, then, the question as to what role the moralistic stereotypes from 19^{th} and 20^{th} century Mexican arts played in the construction of indigenous women in the Mexican national imaginary arises. First, it should be noted that the Mexican cinema of the 30s and 40s was strongly unified and controlled by the State, which turned the national cinema into a nation building cultural project (Pick 217). The Mexican government of that time encouraged the cinematographic industry to "participate in the economic and political transformation of the State" (Chávez 120), and, consequently, this industry started dealing with the education of the masses (Monsiváis "Cultura Popular", 118).

Juan Pablo Silva Escobar argues that this cinematic project, especially through location-specific genres – such as *comedia ranchera* – and its applications of excessive stereotypes – for both men and women – contributed greatly to the transformation of the national imaginary (23-24). Additionally, as Monsiváis notes, cinemagoers at the time experienced films as if they were happening in the real world: they would scream in anger, chant or applaud, and, on occasion, even attack the actors who played antagonist roles ("Cultura Popular" 105-106). Therefore, it is fair to assume that audiences would relate the characters' positive and negative traits to the real world and create associations that categorized certain groups under certain traits and characteristics. For example, if a movie stereotyped an indigenous community as lacking education, or an indigenous woman as a typical domestic employer, then audiences were more likely to associate the real life indigenous to a lack of education and poverty. Anecdotes of the time, in addition to analyses such as Silva Escobar's or Monsiváis', show that the stories and characters that these films created had a strong influence on how the spectators learned about and developed a relationship with their environment. Since the stories of the films of the Golden Age of Mexican cinema are mostly about Mexican people living 'Mexican lives', audiences took in an essential way of experiencing and understanding their own *Mexicanness*.

Within this essential understanding of nationality there also exist relatively fixed images of gender. Similarly to the production of *Mexicanness*, imagined archetypes of manliness or femininity were constructed through popular culture. In her study of Classical Mexican cinema, Ana López explores the different female archetypes that the genre of melodrama developed. First, she explains the trope of the 'good' mother, usually portrayed by Sara García. Second, she examines the vamp; a 'bad', haughty, and independent woman, usually portrayed by María Félix (155). For the former, López concludes that these family melodramas and their construction of an asexual, saint mother are still reinforcing the values of a patriarchal society (154). For the latter, López argues that even though this often provides the film with a strong, female character, independent and sexually emancipated, the character type is still built under a patriarchal structure that reflects the dangers of desire for men (156). As López analyzes the construction of archetypes in Mexican cinema, Claire Johnston studies 'the myths of women' in Classical Hollywood films to understand the role that the vamp and the straight girl character play within the narrative. She states that "within a sexist ideology and a male-dominated cinema, woman is presented as what she represents for man [through] myths that transmit and transform the ideology of sexism and render it invisible – when it is made visible it evaporates – and therefore natural." (32-33). Drawing on López's and Johnston's work, then, the creation of female archetypes reflects and practices gendered power relations and naturalizes discourses which construct relations of power between men – that which creates the meaning of woman – and women.

2.2 *Maria Candelaria*: The White Indigenous Woman

This study will now look at one of the representative films of Classical Mexican cinema, *Maria Candelaria*, to explore more specifically the archetypes of indigenous women and the stereotypes that are built around them. This iconic film was part of the project of *indigenismo*, and thus it idealizes the indigenous protagonists as the noble and original inhabitants of Mexico. The film provides a clear example of the relationship between gendered power structures and the construction of archetypes. It also presents a framework with which to explore how racial and class discourses in this context intersect with those of gender.

The story, told from the point of view of a famous painter, is about the life and death of Maria Candelaria (Dolores del Rio), an indigenous woman rejected by her entire community for being the child of a prostitute. In an attempt to protect Maria Candelaria, her fiancé, Lorenzo Rafael (Pedro Armendáriz), steals medicines for her but is caught and jailed. While attempting to earn money as bail for her fiancé, Maria Candelaria decides to model for the famous painter. However, when he asks her to pose naked, she refuses and leaves, after which he finishes the portrait with another woman's naked body. When Maria's community sees her nude portrait, they mob her and tragically stone her to death.

Maria Candelaria was a huge national and international success and has become one of the iconic films of the era. A newspaper article from 1944 praising it for its success at Cannes Film Festival reads it as "a moving love story, in the most beautiful Mexican landscape, with the best actress in national cinema" (qtd. in Avendaño). However, this newspaper also inadvertently displays the racial and class discourse of the 40s by stating that "in this film the soul of our poor Indians beats with all its sadness, stoicism and rare joys." (qtd. in Avendaño). By calling the characters 'our poor Indians', the article shows a sense of ownership of white over indigenous people, as well as an oppressive class and racial discourse, which the film itself reinforces through archetypes and binaries. More recent academic arguments around the film tend to be polarized: some scholars, such as Charles R. Berg, argue that it manages to represent indigenous communities through a positive lens, while others, including Jorge Ayala Blanco and Julia Tuñón, argue that all it does is erase differences and reinforce stereotypes about indigenous people (qtd. in Tierney 74). However, according to Tierney, the issue is not necessarily whether it reinforces or challenges these stereotypes, but rather that the "film's representation of the [indigenous] embodies a hybrid incoherent identity" (Tierney 75). In other words, the way the film constructs indigenous characters is full of contradictions which, as we will explore, end up supporting the racial binary of white as modernity and order, and non-white as backwardness and chaos (Tierney 95).

According to Tierney, the way the protagonists of this film are constructed, lit, and contrasted in comparison to the other characters creates a racial binary. First, it is important to note that both Del Rio and Armendáriz are white bourgeois Mexican actors playing the role of working-class indigenous people in this film. As Tierney notes, throughout the history of cinema, white actors have played universal roles, i.e., "a white actor can be 'raced' by the mise-en-scène to represent a non-white character. . . , but a non-white actor can never play a role that is not racially marked" (86). Part of the process of racializing these white actors is to give them traits and characteristics usually assigned to the 'race' portrayed. In the case of del Rio's Maria Candelaria, the actress was given very little makeup, dressed in simple peasant clothes (which, ironically, were designer made), and made to speak a colloquial Spanish with an exaggeratedly rural accent, which characterizes her as uneducated (Tierney 84, Silva Escobar 24). Del Rio's racialized image as well as her submissive and humble performance around white characters (such as the priest) further reinforces a sense of the indigenous as subordinate (Tierney 85).

On the other hand, even though both del Rio and Armendáriz are 'raced' to serve as indigenous characters, the way they are lit and their role in the film as more progressive than the rest of the community associates them with whiteness and progress. Both the priest and the painter, who are white characters, are portrayed as the 'ideal' future of a nation under construction, while the indigenous community is portrayed as backward and even barbaric for resisting modernity when they stone Maria Candelaria to death for her allegedly progressive attitudes (Tierney 84-90). Consequently, the glaring contradiction of

this film is that it presents the indigenous "as both modern Mexico's central couple (Maria Candelaria and Lorenzo Rafael) and as the obstacle to its progress." (Tierney 84).

As previously explored, the films of Classical Mexican cinema were part of a project of nationhood and homogenous identity construction. Therefore, the ways in which the characters in *Maria Candelaria* are constructed and how they relate to each other can help us understand more about the role of women in the national imaginary and its relationship to Mexican national cinema. In order to explore this idea and make a comparison possible between the two contemporary Mexican films in contrast to *Maria Candelaria*, this study looks into three aspects of each film. First, it examines where in the social hierarchy the working-class or indigenous woman is placed in the context of the film. Since Maria Candelaria is characterized as not only a poor woman but also an indigenous one, it is possible to read her character from a perspective of class, race, and gender, both separately and simultaneously. Through an intersectional lens, all of these perspectives (class, race, and gender), establish particular relations of power between Maria Candelaria and her community, her fiancé, or the painter. In this power structure, it is clear that she sits at the bottom of the hierarchy as a poor, indigenous, and 'immoral' woman. Above Maria is the indigenous community, then her indigenous fiancé, and finally at the top stands the white male painter along with the priest. This hierarchy is representative for the distribution of power across Mexico's society of the 20^{th} century.

The second aspect regards how the working-class or indigenous woman's sexuality is portrayed in the film, and how it is 'gazed at'. Maria Candelaria is sexually objectified by almost all the men around her: the painter, Lorenzo Rafael, and the mestizo store owner, Don Damián. Because the camera angle and perspective reproduces the stare of the male characters, for Mulvey this would be a clear example of the way in which Classical cinema aligns the spectator's active gaze with that of the male character, positioning Maria Candelaria as the passive bearer of the look. However, since Maria Candelaria is not only gendered but also raced and classed, it is important to examine the role that the oppositional gaze plays. As previously explained, the oppositional gaze is the gaze of the underrepresented subject – in this case the indigenous women – which the subject to regain agency through the power of looking. In Maria Candelaria, most viewers are aware that they are watching a movie about an indigenous woman, however, they are not actively aware that what they see is not an indigenous woman but rather a famous white actress in a costume, who is aligned with the other white characters via the lightning and the mise-en-scène. Just like black spectators in Hollywood, indigenous female spectators in Mexico had to "develop a looking relation within a cinematic context that constructs [their] presence as absence, that denies the "body" of the black female so as to perpetuate white supremacy," (hooks 118) alongside a spectatorship that established that the desired woman is white (hooks 118). But *Maria Candelaria* does not truly offer the opportunity for indigenous female spectators to adopt an oppositional gaze. Instead, as Tierney suggests, the director Emilio Fernández places himself in the position of a colonial voyeur, thereby creating a movie that, similar to Eisenstein's *¡Qué viva México!* (1979), "inscribes Mexico within European primitivism" (78, 82), and leaves the women in the film to be gazed at by the white male spectators and characters.

The third aspect is how the working-class indigenous women are constructed in terms of cinematography and portrayed in terms of traits and stereotypes. As explained, Tierney develops the idea that the way the indigenous community in *Maria Candelaria* is depicted is contradictory as some of them – Maria Candelaria and Lorenzo Rafael – are made to look white and act in line with the progressive and noble ideals attributed to whiteness, while the other indiginous characters are made to look of darker skin and given 'barbaric' characteristics including anger and violence. The lighting in the final scene is key to understanding this binary and what it conveys to the audience. As Maria Candelaria runs away from the angry mob that wants to stone her, a dramatic medium close up of her face appears on the screen, beautifully illuminated with a bright key light. This cuts to a shot of an angry indigenous mob who is given barely any light. This makes them appear much darker, both in complexion and in temperament. Tierney notes that, in this scene, "Western notions of white's moral superiority are mobilized" (90), and therefore, as spectators, we are led to understand that the whiter an indigenous woman is, the more noble and modern she will act, while the darker she is the

more likely she will act barbaric and dishonest.

While some of the stereotypes in this film, such as portraying the indigenous community as peasants, make historical sense, some others, such as the racial binary of white as modernity and non-white as backwardness, are damaging for the image of these communities in the national imaginary. Also, returning to Johnston's theory of myths, it is important to consider that this film was produced during a male-dominated period of cinema and consequently it presents women, particularly Maria Candelaria, from the perspective of what they represent for men. Stereotyping Maria Candelaria as a submissive and innocent indigenous woman not only essentializes her but also transmits and naturalizes a sexist discourse.

This emblematic film serves as an example of how the melodramas of the Golden Age, which featured female characters, were likely to represent them through myths and archetypes encouraging unequal power-relations between the male and female characters. *Maria Candelaria* therefore serves as an ideal example to compare and contrast to contemporary Mexican films in which working-class indigenous women are also protagonists, such as *Roma* and *La Camarista*. As Silva Escobar states, these stereotypes of the indigenous, and particularly the female indigenous, are part of what contributed to the construction of the national imaginary of *"mexicanidad"* (24). Therefore, it is important to question how recent movies have challenged these images and how much can they contribute to modifying the national imaginary.

3 Contemporary Mexican Cinema

3.1 Post-NAFTA Growth

As the Golden Age of Mexican cinema began its decline in the early 60s, popular filmmakers looked for ways to produce almost anything – regardless of the quality – for quick profits. Mexico's economy collapsed throughout the 70s and 80s, and consequently the government withdrew funds from the cultural and cinematic industries (Maciel 99). Simultaneously, a wave of aspiring, young filmmakers who were particularly inspired by the new European cinema of the time, such as the French New Wave, began an independent and low-budget cinema. In contrast to the Golden Age films, this new Mexican cinema did not attract large audiences until the 1990s when it slowly caught the attention of international filmgoers and investors (Maciel 100-101).

In 1994, the North American Free Trade Agreement[8] went into effect and with it came a wave of consequences, both positive and negative, for the national film industry. According to research carried out by the *Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León* (UNAL), national film production had decreased greatly by the end of the 1990s due to the economic and political changes brought about by NAFTA, going from a total of 75 Mexican films produced in 1990 to 9 films produced in 1997 and 11 in 1998 (Hinojosa Córdova, Padrón Machorro). However, NAFTA also brought positive effects, such as foreign investment in the local industry and increased access to international audiences and markets. Therefore, even though the total number of productions in the 90s was extremely low, the few films that were produced and internationally marketed became very successful, such as *Como Agua Para Chocolate* (dir. Alfonso Arau, 1992) and *Sexo, Pudor y Lágrimas* (dir. Antonio Serrano, 1999). By the turn of the millennium, the national film industry was ready to take off, thanks to the capital brought in from abroad, and to the aspiring filmmakers that began their training in the 90s, such as Arturo Ripstein, Guillermo del Toro, Alejandro González Iñárritu, and Alfonso Cuarón, among many others who, with their new filmic proposals, began an era known as the New Mexican Cinema.

Through the 2000s, these directors gained fame in both the national and international film industries, in the latter case mainly Hollywood, and became part of a global scene of influential filmmakers. In 2018, Alfonso Cuarón returned to create his most recent project in Mexico after many years of working in Hollywood where he had directed films like *Gravity* (2013) and *Children of Men* (2006). Back in Mexico, his aim was to make a movie that could recreate his childhood memories, and particularly his memories about Lido, the housemaid who had worked for his family while he was growing up. The result was *Roma*, a film set in the Colonia Roma middle-class neighborhood of Mexico City during the 1970s, a time of widespread student protests

[8] NAFTA reduced the trade and investment barriers between Mexico, the United States, and Canada. For the film industry, this resulted in the fall of national film production, monopolization of distributions and exhibitions, and the decrease in attendance and box office (Hinojosa Córdova, Padrón Machorro).

and political violence. The protagonist of the story, Cleo (Yalitza Aparicio), works as a live-in maid in Antonio (Fernando Grediaga) and Sofia's (Marina de Tavira) household, helping them take care of their four children, cooking, and cleaning the house. As the story moves forward and complications arise, Antonio leaves the family and Cleo finds out she is pregnant with the child of Fermin (Jorge Antonio Guerrero), a member of a paramilitary group known as *Los Halcones*.

Soon after the release of *Roma*, director Lila Avilés presented her most recent film *La Camarista*. This movie tells the story of Eve (Gabriela Cartol), a young chambermaid who works in a luxurious hotel in Mexico City. She is a meticulous cleaner, but to everyone else around her, she is considered a lowly maid. Regardless, she enrolls in the hotel's education program for adults and seeks to be promoted from cleaning the 21^{st} floor to the 42^{nd} floor – a meaningful rise through the ranks. This chapter will analyze *Roma* and *La Camarista* as two case studies of contemporary Mexican films that, by addressing the representation of indigenous working-class women, attempt to reshape the image of these women in the Mexican national imaginary.

Throughout cinema's history, both women and men have been portrayed through stereotypes or fixed iconographies so that audiences can easily identify their roles. However, Johnston explains that, due to sexist ideology, the stereotyping of men (what she refers to as myths) "underwent rapid differentiations while the primitive stereotyping of women remained with some modifications" (32). Thus, according to Johnston, the myths through which women are portrayed also transmit and transform the ideology of sexism (32), while the myths portraying men do not limit them, as they change to accommodate changes in reality. In the case of this study, the myths through which working-class women are portrayed expose and explore a location-specific, sexist ideology of Mexico. Using Johnston's concept of myths along with López's study of archetypes, one can compare the construction of indigenous characters (Cleo and Eve to Maria Candelaria) and historicize their origins. *Roma* and *La Camarista* expose how white and male characters in the film treat Cleo and Eve as if they were living manifestations of the archetypes created by films such as *Maria Candelaria*: that of the subordinate, indigenous or lower-class woman who lays at the very bottom of the social hierarchy, and whose sexuality (in some cases) plays an essential role in determining her path.

As previously discussed, Maria Candelaria's racial binary construction as well as her crude relationship with her community suggest that indigenous communities should continue to be segregated unless they are willing to modernize and whiten their lifestyles. As Tierney puts it, since contact between both groups, indigenous and white, brought the death of Maria Candelaria, "rather than the incorporation of the *indígena* within the modernizing state, isolation is the only means to protect indigenous people." (83). Building on this idea, this study will now turn to the development of Cleo and Eve to evaluate how these newer films allow marginalized women to claim a space of visibility within the national imaginary, and thus within the reality of Mexico. To do so, it will follow a similar structure to the analysis of *Maria Candelaria* by exploring three main aspects of the film on both a narrative and cinematic level: firstly, the position of the working-class or indigenous woman in the social hierarchy; secondly, the portrayal of their sexuality, and thirdly; the cinematographic construction and character traits that contribute to their contemporary image in the national imaginary. These three points are relevant not only because they are present in almost all Mexican movies that create an archetype of a working-class woman, but also because each of the selected case studies present a different level of engagement with this archetype.

3.2 *Roma*: A Look into the Daily Life of an Indigenous Maid

Roma is a contemporary, realistic recreation of the 1970s in Mexico City through a realistic lens. Through historical events and cultural references, the film constantly reminds the viewer that it is a recounting of the past. The historical character of *Roma* recognizes and comments on the race, class, and gender discourses of the 70s, but from a critical distance. As this analysis will argue, in order to create this distance, much of the camerawork throughout the film avoids engaging with the drama of the narrative and instead presents dramatic situations through a distant and impartial lens.

The first aspect of *Roma* to explore is the position in which the film places Cleo, as an indigenous woman, in the social hierarchy. As we meet all the characters in Cleo's life, we realize that there is a

Figure 1: *The position of the characters and the lighting reflect the class and race hierarchy within the film.*

racial as well as a gender and class binary which establishes the different power relations in the film. One of these binaries is the white, middle-class family in opposition to the indigenous, working-class maids (Cleo and Adela, played by Nancy García). The mise-en-scène is telling in this relationship, particularly the lighting of the scene where the family sits to watch a comedy show on TV while Cleo serves them dessert and sits next to them. First, Cleo gives some food to Antonio, the patriarch of the family, and picks up some dirty dishes. This is shot from the perspective of the television that illuminates the faces of the happy family who sit in the foreground of the frame, while the background, where Cleo is walking with the dirty dishes in her hands, is thrown into shadow (see Figure 1). As she walks behind the couch, the camera pans, following her movement. When she reaches the other side of the couch, she sits on the floor next to one of the children who offers her a welcoming hug in the foreground. There, the camera looks at Cleo from the shadowy background where she was standing before, giving a sense that it awaits her return. Soon afterwards, the mother asks Cleo to go and prepare some tea for the father, and as Cleo stands, the camera tracks her walk back into the shadow. The camerawork of this scene, together with the automatism with which Cleo is given orders immediately after a warm moment that invited her to feel like part of the family, exposes the contradictions Cleo experiences as a domestic worker, and the racial, class, and gender hierarchies that stem from the essentialist discourses operating in the Mexican national imaginary. While the mise-en-scène stages the social and racial divide, the camera always follows Cleo as the protagonist. Therefore, the film exposes Cleo's invisibility within its narrative, but makes her visible by constantly bringing her into the foreground of the story.

Cleo also confronts gendered power relations throughout the film, particularly with regard to Fermin, her boyfriend. To explore this relationship, it is important to examine the way in which Cleo's sexuality is portrayed in the film, and how it is gazed by the other characters. After Cleo and Fermin meet and go on a few dates, they go to a hotel room where they have sex. This unconventional sex scene begins with Fermin standing alone and naked in the bathroom, holding a curtain rod. As he walks out of the bathroom, he begins an awkward martial arts performance which Cleo observes, amused, while lying in bed and covering her underwear with the bedsheets. Most of this scene is shot from Cleo's perspective on the bed. Fermin is shot straight on, center punched, and from a medium shot that shows that Cleo is slightly far away from him. The unconventional full frontal shot of a naked male body, as well as the camera positioned from the female perspective, distances the audience from Fermín and guides them to gaze at this man through Cleo's eyes. With shot-reverse-shots of Cleo's giggly and awkward reactions, the

spectator and Cleo share a sense of ridicule at Fermin's show of masculinity, as he is trying to display his strength and manly nude body through a strange show, almost as if he was performing an animal courtship ritual. It is also important to note that the "looks" in this sex scene are reversed from a conventional sex scene in two ways: the audience is seeing a nude male body and a (partially) dressed female body, and the audience is invited to gaze at Fermin's body along with Cleo. This rare scene offers a moment for audiences to take the place of the oppositional gaze, almost as if they were sitting next to Cleo and gazing from her perspective; the audience is placed as an indigenous woman watching the hyper-masculine performance of a working-class man.

For hooks, Cleo's oppositional gaze would represent a site of resistance from Fermin's gaze and from the audience's male gaze. Since the spectator is not given an opportunity to gaze at Cleo during a sexual scene, she can use this space to reclaim her agency. In terms of a gendered power-relation, however, this scene, as well as their upcoming encounters, shows clear instances of Fermin trying to impose his dominance over Cleo, sometimes even through threats and violence. However, these scenes where Fermin wants to dominate Cleo also create a sense of disassociation in the spectators by distancing the camerawork from the dramatic action. For example, while they are kissing in the cinema, Fermin finds out that Cleo is pregnant and literally disappears after excusing himself to go to the bathroom. When Cleo goes seeking for Fermin, she finds him in the countryside practicing martial arts. There, his dominance becomes more violent as he insults her and threatens to harm her if she does not leave him alone. However, Fermin's aggression towards Cleo is innovatively shot to keep the spectator at a distance. As they walk in parallel but somewhat far apart from each other (Cleo is clearly trying to keep up with Fermin's pace and his sight), the camera tracks them from a disengaged distance. When Fermín insults and threatens Cleo, there is no reverse shot of Cleo's reaction; we see only her back. Even though there is a heightened tension in the dialogue and in Fermin's body language, the camera stays as disengaged and steady as possible, reminding us that we are distant spectators in a different historical moment. Yet, we are no less affected by what we see on screen.

Finally, during their last meeting, Fermin takes this dominant and violent power-relation even further. As Cleo shops for her baby's crib, the Corpus Christi Massacre[9] of students begins right beneath the shop. Suddenly, Fermin, along with his paramilitary group known as *Los Halcones*, enter the store looking for hidden students, and Fermin points his gun straight at Cleo who silently stares back. As he runs away back to the protests, Cleo's water breaks, causing an early miscarriage. From the moment the armed men enter the shop until Fermin is about to leave, there are no cuts. Instead, there is a slow wide shot pan that follows the students into the shop. As one of the students gets shot, a gun is introduced into the frame as an out-of-focus close up. Steadily, the camera pans to show us that it is Fermin holding a gun and most likely pointing it at Cleo. The lack of fast editing and the slow pan across this very shocking scene again keeps the spectators distanced. The three scenes between Cleo and Fermin are moments full of tension, however the camerawork does not increase the drama but rather creates a critical distance through which the spectators are able to watch from their 21^{st} century perspective. The spectators are invited to understand the lives of indigenous housemaids in 1970s Mexico City and to put Cleo and Fermin's relationship in context, through a historic lens of gendered, racial, and class relations.

The historical character and the distant camerawork throughout *Roma* play an essential role in recognizing the discourses operating in the 1970s. In a slow but climatic scene near the end of the film, Cleo becomes the hero of the story by saving the children from drowning in the ocean while not knowing how to swim herself. The scene finishes with the family and Cleo hugging and crying in relief while sharing how much they love each other. Yet, as soon as they are all back in the city, Cleo immediately goes back to doing house chores and preparing a smoothie for the children. Through these scenes, it is revealed on a narrative level,

[9]The Corpus Christi Massacre, also known as *Halconazo* occurred on June 10^{th}, 1971, the same day that the Catholic Church celebrates the Feast of Corpus Christi. That day, a large group of student demonstrators gathered to protest for better management of education funds and for the end of government repression, among other things. However, as they were marching, a paramilitary group known as *Los Halcones* broke into the protest and triggered one of the most brutal episodes of repression in Mexican history, murdering at least 120 students and injuring hundreds more (Cruz Cárdenas and Mendoza).

that nothing has really changed for Cleo in her social or economic relationship to the family. However, at the level of cinematic form, the drowning scene also shows how the film creates a critical distance for the spectator as opposed to full immersion. As Cleo sits with Pepe (Marco Graf), the youngest of the children, at the back of the beach, she notices that the other two, Paco (Carlos Peralta) and Sofía (Daniela Demesa), are getting too far into the ocean. Scared, she moves quickly towards the shore and, without thinking, runs straight into the water to rescue the two children. The entire scene is filmed in one long shot with a camera that moves sideways tracking Cleo's advancement into deeper waters. From a distance, we see Cleo struggling against the current while the camera itself is surrounded by tall waves and fighting to follow Cleo's movement. Even though the tension is not built through conventional point-of-view and reverse shots, the audience still finds itself swimming against the same heavy current as Cleo and the children are completely engulfed by the intense surround sound of the crashing waves. But while this is one of the most intense moments of the film, we never see them from a close up or from any of their perspectives. Instead, the camera keeps its distance, mirroring Cleo's and the children's struggle in the water without showing us their emotional response until they are out of the water. Then, back in the city and as Cleo goes back to her daily chores, the distance constructed throughout the previous scene allows viewers to recognize Cleo's reality from a critical but still emotional perspective.

To further recognize Cleo's reality within the discourses of the 1970s, it is important to observe how her character is constructed and how this construction contributes to her place as an indigenous and working-class woman in the national imaginary. A key moment raising this question appears in the middle of the film – during the Christmas Holidays of 1970, after Cleo and the family arrive at a countryside ranch where they intend to spend the holidays with some wealthy friends. As we learn, Cleo was already friends with Benita (Clementina Guadarrama), one of the housemaids from this ranch. During New Year's Eve, while Cleo is taking care of some children at the bourgeois party of the house owners, Benita invites her to join her to the 'other' party. Through an establishing shot of the house and the hallways, we see both maids walking from the high-class party on the top floor, to the working-class party in the underground service kitchen. The steep stairs that Cleo and Benita walk down are illuminated primarily at the top, increasing in shadow as they descend, illustrating a binary relationship in which the bright light as well as the white high-classes are on the top floor (as well as at the top of the hierarchy), while the dark and shadowed areas as well as the non-white and indigenous people are on the underground floor (as well as at the bottom of the social hierarchy). As the two friends chat, Benita uses every opportunity she has to point out that Cleo is becoming a city person – too posh for a countryside farmer.

The binary opposition between the scenes in which Cleo is embraced and simultaneously rejected by the family in the city, and the scenes in which she is embraced and rejected by her countryside community convey the sense that Cleo does not really belong in either place. The construction of Cleo's character through these binaries seems to mirror the loss of identity that indigenous people go through when migrating from the countryside to the cities. However, it might also suggest that this loss of identity is transformative. For this, it is important to also examine the production of *Roma* and the choice of hiring non-actress Yalitza Aparicio, an indigenous woman who moved from a small rural community in Oaxaca, Mexico, straight into Mexico City to participate in a huge filmic project. The binary opposition that Cleo experiences in the film is also experienced by the actress herself who was largely rejected and discriminated against by commercial high-class actors in Mexico City. After the success of the film, Aparicio adopted a look that combined Hollywood glamour with traditional indigenous wear, transmitting the idea that she had to go through the same transition as Cleo, from countryside to urban, but successfully constructing a new blend of traits, traditions, and looks. Therefore, when questioning how Cleo's character is constructed and how this contributes to her place in the national imaginary, it is also essential to consider Aparicio's role as an indigenous non-professional actress who went through a similar experience as Cleo in her adaptation from the countryside to the urban setting.

In contrast with the example of Classical cinema, *Roma* breaks with *Maria Candelaria's* proposition that the only way to 'protect' the idealized *indígena* is by isolating them from the moderniz-

Figure 2: *Wide shot shows several rooftops with many housemaids doing laundry. It speaks to the idea that there are hundreds of other women living the same life as Cleo.*

ing state. Instead, *Roma* makes the working-class indigenous woman visible in the image of the nation, and successfully gives her space for expression as an autonomous person. *Roma* attends to the complexity of Cleo's living situation as an indigenous housemaid economically dependent upon and subjugated to her white employers, and as a young woman dominated by a working-class man. At the same time, *Roma* subtly remarks that Cleo and her story is just one of the innumerable untold and unseen individuals and stories. In an early scene where Cleo is washing clothes on the rooftop with Pepe and Paco playing around her, the camera follows Pepe with a slow pan revealing in the background many more rooftops full of maids who, just as Cleo, are washing clothes by hand and hanging them (see Figure 2). As the scene comes to an end after Cleo lays down to comfort Pepe, the camera slowly pans again to show the activity on the surrounding rooftops. The scene closes by implying that there are hundreds of housemaids like Cleo in Mexico City that are also made invisible by daily classist discourses, and whose struggles and realities need to be seen and heard.

3.3 *La Camarista*: The Life of a Chambermaid in Mexico City

As previously explored, class, race, and gender are so interlinked that belonging to a certain class might directly cause someone to be racialized by others, and vice-versa. In the US and the UK, cultural theorist Stuart Hall explores how black female bodies have often been stereotyped to fall under the category of "mammies", the "prototypical house servants, usually fat, bossy and cantankerous." (251). In other words, by virtue of their black skin, black women are stereotyped and classed within the national imaginary. Something similar happens in the Mexican context because, when working-class women of color are domestic workers, they are racialized and thought of as indigenous. In the case of *La Camarista*, there are no obvious signs that can lead us to assume that Eve is an indigenous woman. However, due to her class, job, and gender, she is associated with the indigenous working-class. Therefore, even though she is technically a mestizo woman, she can be considered as indigenous in the racialized national imaginary. For this reason, the following analysis will examine Eve through this racialized lens when approaching the topic of movement towards visibility for working-class indigenous women.

When released, *La Camarista* resonated with many viewers and film reviewers as a film worth comparing to *Roma*, given that both have similar settings and subject matters (García). *La Camarista* tells the story of Eve, a working-class woman who works as a chambermaid at one of the most luxurious hotels in Mexico City. We follow Eve

– through a motif of unusually close tracking shots – constantly moving from top to bottom of the building: going from the most luxurious bedrooms all the way to the service and laundry rooms in the basement. Eve's main aspirations are to get a red dress that sits abandoned in the lost and found, and to be assigned as the main cleaner of the 42^{nd} floor (the most exclusive of the hotel). The entire movie takes place inside the hotel and its space therefore functions as a microworld. Here, Eve works and cleans, makes friends, showers, sleeps, engages with her sexuality, and lives out her motherhood within these walls, through the absent-presence of Ruben, her four-year-old son, with whom she occasionally gets to speak over telephone calls. This microworld portrays the social, racial, gendered, and economic relations between higher and lower classes (the guests and the workers), and thus it works as a reflection of the same relationships seen in Mexico City as a whole.

To explore where Eve stands in terms of class, race, and gender in relation to the other characters in the film, one must first examine how the social hierarchy is constructed and where Eve is placed within this hierarchy. The verticality of the hotel serves as an analogy for the social hierarchies present in Mexico. The top section of the hotel, where the bedrooms are, corresponds to the wealthy guests; then the middle section, where the lobby and restaurant area is, corresponds to the hotel managers and cooks; and finally, the bottom section, where the service, laundry, and tiny bunk rooms are, corresponds to the cleaners and chambermaids of the hotel. The top area of the hotel is where Eve works, and is responsible for cleaning the 21^{st} floor. This area also holds Eve's dream job: being the main cleaner of the palatial 42^{nd} floor where dignitaries are lodged. Here, Eve interacts with the privileged white guests of the hotel while being ignored by them: from an Orthodox Jew who motions for Eve to push the elevator buttons for him, to a VIP guest who constantly requests ridiculous amounts of toiletry, to an Argentinian woman who gives Eve some money to watch her baby while she takes a shower every morning. All these characters represent the wealthy and mostly white part of (Mexican) society.

Many of these encounters are filmed by constructing a clear vertical line in the middle of the screen that visually separates Eve from the guests. For example, when Eve approaches the Jewish man, she stands on the right side of the screen separated from him by a vertical line created by the elevator. Since we only see the man's back and shoulder, our focus is fully on Eve. Similarly, when Eve goes to the VIP guest's room to bring toiletries, the camera is in the bathroom with Eve in the foreground and the guest sitting on his bed in the background. While they are in separate rooms, the wall emphasizes their distance by creating a clear vertical line down the middle of the screen which separates them even further.

Figure 3: *Eve looking at the Jewish man. A vertical line in the middle of the screen visually separates them*

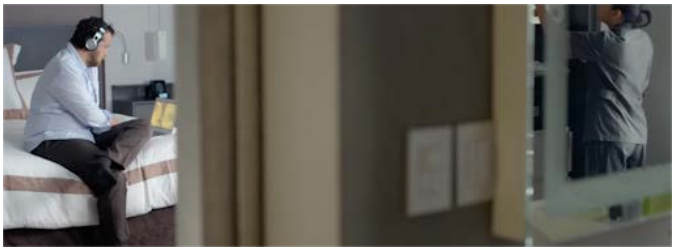

Figure 4: *Eve bringing toiletry of the VIP's guest room. Again, they are visually separated by this vertical line in the middle of the screen created by the wall*

The middle section of the hotel, where the hotel managers, secretaries, and restaurateurs work, represents the middle class of society. The employees of the hotel also maintain a clear hierarchy amongst themselves. Early on in the movie, we see a male chef getting into the service elevator while enjoying some snacks. In this shot, the chef occupies almost all the screen space, barely letting us see that there is an elevator operator next to him (see Figure 5). This brief scene seems insignificant, since we never see this character again. However, a few minutes later in the film, Eve gets into the same elevator discretely eating popcorn, and immediately gets scolded by the female elevator operator who reminds her it is not allowed to eat

there. Unlike the previous scene, the elevator operator is the main element, occupying most of the screen space and leaving Eve cropped and out of focus. Clearly, the operator makes a gendered and class distinction between who is allowed to break the rules and who is not. A male chef who has a higher-paid job than a female cleaner can be entitled to more transgressions without punishments within the hierarchy of the hotel workers. The camera position and focus during both scenes visually emphasizes this hierarchy.

Figure 5: *The composition of the shot – centering the chef and cutting out the elevator operator – reflects hierarchical constructs within the hotel.*

Finally, we find Eve and her coworker chambermaids in the basement of the hotel and in a small classroom where Eve and three other cleaners take elementary school lessons in the early mornings. Eve belongs to this section of the hotel, as well as to the bottom section of society in terms of class, race, and gender. However, as this analysis will later explore, Eve challenges this hierarchy not only by freely exploring all levels of the hotel (even areas restricted only to guests), but also by leaving the confines of the hotel to go onto the rooftop as a brief attempt to escape the hierarchical social and economic system.

Although Eve's gender doesn't necessarily stand out as a factor of oppression, it definitely influences how others around the hotel treat her, the problems she encounters, and how she decides to explore her sexuality within this space. One example of Eve's exploration of her sexuality is in her relationship with the window cleaner with whom Eve often exchanges glances, and who draws hearts on the outer windows of the rooms she is cleaning. One day, after Eve's friend Minitoy challenges her to be more courageous, Eve gives the window cleaner a note with an invitation to meet in a window of the 21^{st} floor where she'll be cleaning. This small step, which in a patriarchal society could be read as a step into female emancipation, leads to an unconventional sex scene. Throughout the scene – a long take with no cuts lasting about three minutes and filmed with a wide angle lens – the camera does not move from its original spot. In the foreground, we see Eve occupying the middle and right side of the screen, and in the background left corner, we see the window cleaner who is at the same time staring at Eve from behind the glass. As Eve notices him, she starts playing around with him, raising and lowering the curtains in a teasing manner. Then, as he keeps on staring, she goes to the edge of bed where she begins to undress. As she sits, she puts lotion on her legs, looks up and slowly and timidly takes off her bra. She lays on her back and as soon as she brings her hand inside her underwear the scene ends.

By being in a fixed and slightly lowered position, the camera suggests that it is a hidden or surveillance-like camera of which the characters are completely unaware. The camera somewhat reflects the setup of the audience in the theater, and thus puts the spectators in a strange and discomforting position in which they are made to question whether they should be watching this private moment through their voyeuristic position. This distanced camera, as well as the discomfort it provokes, also pushes the spectators to distance themselves from the scene and to choose how to gaze at this private moment: either by identifying with the male window cleaner or with Eve's gaze towards the cleaner. However, there is also a distance that does not fully allow for identification with the window cleaner. The man is placed at the very back of the screen in the left corner and slightly out of focus, swinging in and out of the frame and separated from the action by a thick window. The positioning of the window cleaner disassociates the spectators from him and his gaze.

The unconventional camerawork, the distance between the viewers and the male character, the placement of Eve in the middle of the screen, and her fixed stare on the man guide the viewers to identify with Eve's gaze. Since Eve is the oppressed female subject in terms of class, race, and gender, her gaze is another example of hook's 'oppositional gaze'. If viewers choose to follow and identify with her gaze then the scene experience switches from that of a spying camera to a moment of female empowerment and exploration of sexuality. Simi-

larly to *Roma*, and in opposition to *Maria Candelaria*, the protagonist takes control of her sexuality. Eve never actually speaks to the window cleaner, yet she uses this encounter as an opportunity to explore her sexuality without wondering how others may judge her. In terms of sexuality and gender, it seems that Eve is going through a process of emancipation.

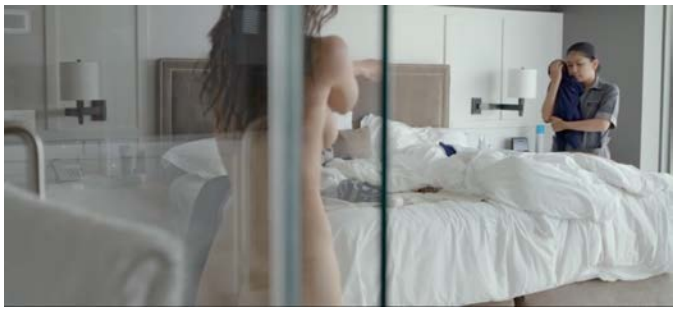

Figure 6: *The composition of the shot - splitter in half by the glass - reflects the social division between the hotel workers and the guests.*

The film also uses the subject of gender to expose the different levels of inequality that women can experience depending on their class and race. To explore this issue, the film builds a relationship between Eve and one of the guests: the Argentinian woman, Romina, who is always in the hotel taking care of her baby while her husband goes to work. The first time they meet, she asks Eve to watch her baby every morning while she takes a quick shower. Eve tries to explain that she is very busy and does not have time to help, but Romina ignores her while thanking her and getting into the shower. Even though Romina does not dismiss Eve as the rest of the guests do – probably because she does not act according to Mexican class structure due to her foreignness – she still makes Eve invisible by often interrupting her. Throughout Romina's shower we see Eve in a tight close-up from which she cannot escape. At the same time however, Eve seems to relax as soon as she holds the baby, who reminds her of her son. When Romina gets out of the shower, the shower door clearly splits the screen in two: on the left side of the screen she stands naked and complaining about not being able to work because of the baby, while on the right side of the screen stands Eve holding the baby as if nostalgic from being separated from her own baby due to her work. Even though both women bond through their motherhood, the visual construction of the scene shows a clear separation between their worlds. Their relationship and the scene construction illustrate the clear binary between rich, white woman and poor, indigenous woman. At the same time, it shows the necessity for intersectionality when trying to understand their struggles as women who are marked distinctly via race and class.

To further explore where Eve is being placed within the national imaginary, it is also important to examine how she is portrayed (characteristics and stereotypes) and constructed (cinematically). Throughout the film, we see Eve as a timid and sometimes fearful character who is overlooked and dominated by almost everyone around her. However, Eve is also a character that challenges many typical assumptions about someone in her position. She studies and educates herself, she is a single mother, she explores her sexuality, and she even goes through the guests' things with a curious spirit (of course knowing that she could get in trouble). Even though Eve often acts submissive in front of her managers and the guests for fear of losing her job, as soon as she is alone, she begins challenging all those classed, racialized, and gendered impositions that oppress her.

Overall, the style of the movie could be described as very claustrophobic. The use of medium close-ups and the lack of establishing shots makes the spectator feel lost and trapped in the space, mirroring how Eve feels inside this microworld. Her initial dreams collapse when she discovers that her friend Minitoy was promoted instead of her to the 42^{nd} floor and that, consequently, she was given the red dress out of pity. As her frustrations and disappointments build up, the scenes get more and more stifling, increasingly making use of tighter close-ups and shaky shots. This sense of entrapment is relieved when Eve heads to the rooftop to take a breath, and the entire space suddenly opens up for her and for the viewers. Through a panoramic wide shot that tilts from Eve up to the open sky, and back down again to Eve, the claustrophobia is broken. However, this is not a fully satisfying sense of relief since we know that this break is only temporary and that she has to go back inside to the microworld that entraps her.

The last two scenes, right after she's back inside from the rooftop, are again entirely shot with tight close-ups and shaky camera, provoking a rough hit back into this claustrophobic world. The viewers

are bound to identify entirely with Eve since the camera blurs and cuts off the bodies and faces of everyone else around her. As she makes her way out of the hotel in extreme close up shots, Eve takes another challenging step and leaves the building through the main elevator, rather than the utility elevator, and the main entrance rather than through the back door. This is the first time in the film that Eve walks through the main lobby, since usually only the guests and managers are expected there. Through this action, she challenges the social hierarchy by reminding everyone around her that she exists and that she is no longer willing to accept the position of inferiority that has been imposed upon her. Similarly, by closely following Eve's walk through the main lobby, keeping her at the center of the image and blurring the guests around her, the film is reminding the viewers to recognize all the other cleaners and workers that are often overlooked. The film's final gesture Eve leaving the hotel is symbolic of her joining a society that has ignored her for too long.

On first impression, it could seem that Eve is not so different from Maria Candelaria. She acts submissive in front of others and she is a hardworking and humble maid. However, the way Eve's character is cinematically framed and narratively constructed shows that she is aware of how invisible she is for her surroundings, and that she is willing and able to speak up and to look for recognition. Even though it might seem insignificant for her to explore the 42^{nd} floor, to be in 'only guests' sections, or to walk through the main lobby, these are all signs of Eve's struggle to be seen by those around her.

4 Conclusion

The inherent contradiction at the core of the Mexican national imaginary is that indigenous people are seen as the origin of the Mexican nation while at the same time being society's most marginalized groups. While the *indigenismo* movement tried to assimilate indigenous people into the national imaginary, it failed by erasing them as autonomous people into a politics of whitening, essentializing their identities and creating damaging stereotypes that are still pervasive in mainstream media today. This is shown through an analysis of the film *Maria Candelaria*, that illustrates the portrayal of indigenous women in Mexican film driven by a romanticizing and essentializing national agenda. The broken relationship between white, mestizo Mexicans, and indigenous Mexicans becomes evident in the urban setting, where the latter becomes economically dependent on the former, exacerbating the power imbalance. This dependence creates raced, classed, and gendered power-relations that are often reflected in the national arts and media. Some recent films, such as *Roma* and *La Camarista* have exposed these relations and opened a space for indigenous people to reclaim a space in the national imaginary.

Through a close scene analysis of these two contemporary films, this thesis has shown that there is a growing interest in the stories of working-class indigenous women, one of the most invisible and underrepresented groups in society. Moreover, it argues that the introduction of intersectionality in contemporary discourses allows films to explore new ways of telling the stories of these women and of exposing their struggles without adhering to stereotypes, essentializing their identities, or undermining the possibility for solidarity. By exploring where in the social hierarchy of the narrative these women are placed, the analysis shows that both contemporary films acknowledge the structures of inequalities underlying Mexican society. Then, by inspecting how their sexuality is portrayed and gazed, it demonstrates that both films build characters in the process of recovering their gaze and thereby attempting to emancipate themselves from the patriarchal discourse of female sexuality.

Seeing working-class indigenous women on the screen can be empowering for these marginalized groups, but it can also be a reminder for those in power that these people exist in the same space. On a more tangible level, the recognition of these groups and their fair presence in the national imaginary can be a first step into seeing real life improvements in the living conditions of working-class indigenous women. These attempts to portray varied and complex representations of marginalized women are a tangible movement towards visibility.

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5.2 Filmography

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