

RTVF 180: Mexican Cinema Midterm Review

| | |
|-----------|--|
| DATE: | Tuesday, 03/22, second half of class |
| DURATION: | One hour, following discussion of <i>Santo</i> |
| FORMAT: | Multiple choice and/or short answer (<i>cumulative essay questions will only appear on the final exam</i>) |
| COVERS: | Everything up until and through Week 8 |

As I mentioned in class, I will not actively try to trick or befuddle you by testing you on minor details hidden in the dark recesses of the writings or films. Let me give you a sense instead of what I do expect you to know (*note that this is not an exhaustive listing*):

- 1) Main points of the authors and articles and how to apply them to the films we have screened and the history/culture that frames them.
- 2) History and backdrop of the films, which we've read about, discussed, and seen in the productions; this includes key figures and general timeline of pre-revolutionary, revolutionary, and post-revolutionary Mexico: Díaz (*porfiriano*), Villa, Zapata, Cardenas, and Aleman come to mind among the presidents and leaders. The context of the revolution (land reform and the rise of the hacienda and big business) is also key.
- 3) Names of filmmakers and dates of production for all films screened in class, along with the general plot lines of movies (evidence that you have seen them). I might ask a question that is very easy for those who saw the film and simply a guess for those who did not. Other film-specific points, including: the rise of more expensive movie theater complexes in the 1940s, which helps us to understand the Golden Age's targeting of the middle class; the Cinema Laws of the 1940s, which stipulate that movies must not disparage nation or its values (among other things); Mexican studio system, and especially Churubusco (*Susana's* studio), emulated Hollywood; and Buñuel as a transnational surrealist, skeptical of nation-building, nationalism (remember, where/when he came from, nationalism = fascism), and "God, nation, family."
- 4) The progression of the class and syllabus: We mainly focused on the Golden Age of Mexican cinema, but we start at its earliest point with de Fuentes's uncharacteristic Revolutionary Trilogy, a testament to the revolutionary period's complexity and divisiveness; then we move into the supposed apex with Fernandez/Figueroa and its reinforcement of *la mexicanidad* and a colonizing moralizing eye, enforced somewhat by the government's Cinema Laws of the 1940s; we followed this up with the "decline" of the golden age and its "crisis," whether in the form of Buñuel's scathing critique of Mexican society and national cinema or of the transition to exploitation cinema by the end of the 1950s/60s. We then move into melodrama and its subversive tendencies vis-à-vis both Mexican and Spanish national cinema and identity, followed by exploitation, which signals the death knell of the Golden Age.
- 5) Several key themes, terms, and figures (other than the filmmakers and those connected to the Mexican revolution) have recurred thus far: *la mexicanidad*, *hispanismo*, *indigenismo*, *porfiriano*, "God, Nation, Family," Surrealism, repression, melodrama (and Mexican

melodrama, in particular, including its subgenres: revolutionary melodrama, for instance), patriarchy/masculinity (machismo, *charro/vaquero*), and matriarchy/femininity (*La Malinche*, virgin/Virgin v. unchaste woman).

- 6) Other themes and terms have emerged more specifically out of single films we have looked at. Let me use *SANTO* as one example: “counter-macho,” *la chica moderna*, *rudo v. técnico*, and pre-Columbian past v. capitalistic, scientific modernity; here’s another: *LOS OLVIDADOS*: *porfiriano*, Alemán and his promises of urban development; Paz’s critique of post-revolutionary Mexico; and “ethnographic surrealism.”
- 7) Paz is someone to focus on somewhat, as well, since we’re reading him throughout the course. He helps us understand the critique of a post-revolutionary Mexico that kept reinvoking the Revolution in an effort to smooth over (and deny) inequity, poverty, instability, oppression, divisiveness, and plurality. He also clarifies the source of *La Malinche*. Finally, he emphasizes the solitude of Mexicans, the lack of identity, in a way, due to its colonial history, which is related to its sense of being orphaned (and thus in search of mother/father figures).