

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE  
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## **ENAMORADA / In Love (1946)**

Emilio "El Indio" Fernández

Link to video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EjSm6Kgg7NQ>

### **OVERVIEW**

Considered one of the most important Mexican films of all time, and emblematic of the Golden Age of Mexican film, *Enamorada*, directed by Emilio "El Indio" Fernández, brings together a tumultuous time in Mexican history and an intensely passionate love story. The film takes place during the Mexican Revolution (1910 – 1920), in which the 30-year dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz was brought to an end and replaced by a constitutional republic. More than the end of a dictatorship, however, the Mexican Revolution was a class struggle against the land-owning elites who had come to dominate all aspects of economic, social, and political life. Class was tied to race, and both were connected to the Catholic Church, which played a great part in maintaining social hierarchy, with the "castas" or "whites" firmly in the top rungs. So, considering the rigid social and class hierarchy, the fact that the privileged only daughter of the wealthiest man in a Mexican town, would fall in love with a mestizo leader of a rebel faction of the revolutionary forces, was something that would strike contemporary audiences as taboo. With the stunning cinematography of Gabriel Figueroa, which used light, dark, and brilliantly executed shots to illustrate emotional and existential states of mind and being, the film becomes a story of romantic potential – how love, vision, and passion can come together to create a beautiful and more equitable world. The film has moments of passion and hilarity, as the proud and ethereally beautiful Beatriz Peñafiel has her spitfire moments, and the mestizo rebel leader, José Juan Reyes, exudes danger as he has men summarily executed, and leads forces to what will unavoidably be a ghastly slaughter. The proud, privileged, and intensely religious Beatriz ultimately joins José Juan as a "soldadera" waking along his horse with the other camp-followers. This can be viewed as an inspiring testimony to the power of love and the legitimacy of the Revolution, or a pitiable spectacle of how a woman, once hit by the man she loves, masochistically attaches herself to him, to an assured bad end.

### **SYNOPSIS**

The Mexican Revolution is in full force, and rebel armies (largely mestizo or Indio) are intent on toppling the dictatorship and stripping the elites (mainly white descendants of the Spaniard viceroyalty) of their wealth and (eventually) land. They arrive in Cholula, and immediately demand tribute in the form of cash and resources from the wealthy. Beatriz, the daughter of the wealthiest man in town, Carlos Peñafiel, is at first an onlooker, but then, after being catcalled by the leader of the rebels, José Juan Reyes, is a combatant, as she slaps him for his impudence. Intrigued by her beauty and passion, José Juan pursues Beatriz, all the while conducting his executions, plundering of the elite, and discussing the parallels between the function of the Catholic Church and the objectives of the Revolution, with his old classmate from the seminary, Padre Rafael Sierra. José Juan becomes an impassioned suitor, but Beatriz is already engaged to be married to an American, Eduardo Roberts. Beatriz continues to spurn him, but even Eduardo can see there is a true chemistry between them, and he offers to drop the marriage if José Juan is serious in his intentions (He probably sees that José Juan could easily have him shot to get him out of the way). José Juan decides that Beatriz is an impossible quest, and moves on to fight the Federales, which are coming toward the town. The marriage proceeds and as Beatriz is literally leaning to sign the marriage license, the sound of the ragtag Zapatista rebels led by José Juan Reyes, spurs Beatriz to bolt from the office where the civil ceremony was taking place, and to run to the group of soldados and soldaderas, where she positioned herself at the side of José Juan's horse, walking alongside him as a soldadera marching into battle.

## THE STORY

**REVOLUTIONARIES** Led by General José Juan Reyes, an organized band of revolutionaries come to the town of Cholula for supplies, rest, and funds which they require the wealthy in the town to pay. The revolutionaries, who are dressed in typical campesino fashion, with white pants, shirts, and broad straw sombreros. They left the ranches where they worked and were often accompanied by women who supported them.



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**LEADER** José Juan is revolted by the groveling of one of the richest men of the town who has been sentenced to death for not giving over his money and resources to the revolutionaries. Even as he begs, he lies. He claims he has no money, which José Juan knows is not true.



**PRIEST** José Juan greets Padre Rafael Sierra, a man he considered to be a brother. They studied together at the seminary until José Juan decided to become a revolutionary rather than a priest, although he maintained that his occupation (including mission and vision) were essentially the same. Padre Sierra is stunned and dismayed by the brutality of José Juan and he asks him to reconsider his behavior. José Juan goes into great detail to explain that his harsh methods are more than justified because of the enormity of the need to correct social and income inequality in the Mexican society of Porfirio Diaz.



**BEATRIZ**

Beatriz reacts with outrage. She stops in her tracks, turns, and strides toward the men. Although passionately committed to Mexico and a deeply religious woman, she is proud and will go to any length to defend her honor. Beatriz takes a look at the leader, pulls back her arm, and then lets it fly. She smacks him in the face as his astonished corporals stop and stare, jaws agape.



**THE AMERICAN FIANCE** Eduardo Roberts speaks to Beatriz about their upcoming marriage, and their plans to move to the United States and leave Mexico behind. José Juan speaks to Eduardo Roberts, the American fiancé of Beatriz Peñafiel. José Juan finds Eduardo to be a decent human being.



**PRIEST COUNSELS** Meeting in the church where Padre Sierra is a priest, José Juan announces that he will marry Beatriz. Padre Sierra speaks about circumstances and the fact that the love José Juan wants is inadvisable. For one, José Juan has virtually no money or resources to his name. Padre Sierra goes on to tell José Juan in great detail why a marriage would be doomed. Padre Sierra defends the honor and essential goodness of Beatriz, and tells José Juan that it would be cruel to subject her to a life with a rebel officer. Not only are they from different classes and backgrounds, his violent life means that he may likely die soon.



**FALLING IN LOVE** Beatriz slaps him again. José Juan loses control and smacks Beatriz to the ground. She should have, at that moment, turned and never looked back. However, she did not, and this marks a turning point in her heart and she is open to love. Later that night, José Juan brings singers of El Trio Calaveras who serenade Beatriz with the soft, harmonious, and soothing tones of the song, Malagueña. During the serenade, Beatriz undergoes a transformation, much of which is evident through her stunning eyes. She starts to be affected by José Juan's love for her, and his willingness to leave his high perch of pride and to beg for her love in a gestures of profound humility.



**WEDDING DAY** Wearing her very elaborate and costly wedding present, a string of pearls, Beatriz stands next to Eduardo Roberts as the justice of the peace performs the civil ceremony. Beatriz does not respond. José Juan and a rebel commander discuss the plans to leave Cholula and go to fight in a battle with the "federales," the Mexican Army, who are approaching and will arrive by nightfall.



**JOINING REVOLUTIONARIES** Beatriz is startled by the sound of the rebel soldiers headed to battle. Making a sudden, jerky movement, she inadvertently breaks the string of pearls, her wedding gift. She startles and moves back from the table, and then, listening to the sounds again, she bolts away to run out the door. As she goes, she takes a rebozo to put over her head and shoulders. Running toward the sound of the soldiers, who are accompanied by the camp followers, the “soldaderas,” who accompany and support the men, Beatriz turns her back on her privileged life and plunges into a battle to change Mexican society. It is a class war, and Beatriz, from the highest class, repudiates and spurns it for love, and also for the vision of a Mexico that allows the lower classes to own land, gain an education, have jobs, and above all, human dignity. Standing tall and proud, Beatriz walks alongside José Juan’s horse, joining him, the rebels, and the other camp followers, in acts of self-sacrifice to try to create a better world and give the previously disenfranchised races and classes and discarded a chance at economic opportunity. Silhouetted against the stunning Mexican sky and a distant volcano, Beatriz Peñafiel walks alongside and supports General José Juan Reyes. From a member of the elite, to a self-sacrificing soldadera, Beatriz’s transformation demonstrates a love for José Juan, but above all, for a vision of what Mexico could become.



## **THEMES**

**PRIDE:** Both Beatriz and José Juan are extremely proud, and they are quick to defend themselves when they perceive a slight. The products of an honor culture that requires one to defend oneself, both Beatriz and José Juan put themselves in harm’s way, which makes them be perceived as romantic, heroic, passionate and flawed.

**IDEALISM:** The quest for a better world suffuses the principle argument of the film, which is enhanced by the stunning cinematography of Gabriel Figueroa, which simultaneously illustrates the vast, new world of dreams and transcendent utopias, and the seething, contradictory inner world a person who experiences the emotional chaos of a world in flux. The feelings of idealism are illustrated when Padre Sierra sings an ethereal version of Ave Maria.

**MACHISMO:** The men in the film exhibit Mexican machismo in all its forms: first there is the powerful drive for change in the General of the revolutionaries, followed by the displays of virility in the rather scabrous catcalling a beautiful woman. On the other side, there is the dignified walk into the inevitable as the wealthy face death in front of the rebels’ firing squads. Finally, the obsequious and dissembling



pleading of the cowardly businessman is shown to be the absolute opposite of machismo, and hence worthy of elimination by whatever means necessary.

**LOVE:** Love conquers all. In *Enamorada*, the “taming of the shrew” energies are triggered by beauty and passion, which is immediately taken to be love. José Juan is intrigued and more than a little titillated by Beatriz’s indignant response to his impudence – the fact she slaps him and embarrasses him in front of his companions is at least a sign of profound emotional engagement on the part of a mesmerizingly beautiful woman. The true love in this film is exhibited by Beatriz for her father, and also in Padre Sierra for the Church.

### **CHARACTERS:**

General José Juan Reyes	Leader of rebel forces during the Mexican Revolution
Beatriz Peñafiel	Daughter of the wealthiest man in Cholula
Padre Rafael Sierra	Priest of the parish in Cholula
Eduardo Roberts	American fiancé of Beatriz
Carlos Peñafiel	Beatriz’s father

### **CHARACTER ANALYSIS**

**JOSÉ JUAN REYES:** The leader of a disciplined and organized group of revolutionaries consisting primarily of peasant farmers and peones, José Juan is an educated man who studied to be a priest in the seminary before leaving to pursue social justice and change. He appears as a man in his 30s with clear leadership and organizational abilities, who is determined to play an important part in deposing the dictatorship and giving the disenfranchised more rights.

*Proud:* José Juan defends his honor at any cost. He is proud in the sense that he believes deeply in values and he has a personal code that he upholds, even when confronted by doubters and physical confrontation. He maintains an appearance that demonstrates his desire to telegraph power, attention to detail, and leadership. His General’s uniform shows the world he considers himself at the highest rank, although as the leader of a rebel group that he himself formed, it is all “soi-disant.”

*Idealist:* José Juan Reyes is fighting to give the downtrodden a place in the world, with economic access, dignity, education, and a future for individuals and families. He speaks out against the wealthy landowners and their stranglehold on power and the economy when he explains to cowardly hacendado, Fidel Bernal, that he will execute him. In addition, he explains his views to the man he considers a brother, Padre Rafael Sierra.

*Macho:* José Juan Reyes exhibits all the macho qualities that the Mexican culture revered at the time. As opposed to the works of Juan Bustillo Oro, Emilio Fernández does not question the values, although he does use them for comedic relief, as in the encounter with Beatriz as she leaves the church, and her lovely face and figure enchant him. He shouts out admiring yet quite impudent phrases to Beatriz, as well as whistling and encouraging his companions to also indulge in harassment. When she slaps him, he does not hit her back (at least not this time), showing his superiority, at least in the eyes of his companions.

*Self-sacrificing:* José Juan Reyes has sacrificed his bright future as a priest in order to become a revolutionary and fight for the cause he believes in. Not only did he sacrifice his career, he also sacrificed the hope of a stable home life with a family and community members. It is quite possible that he could have to make the ultimate sacrifice as well as he leads numerous violent skirmishes on the battlefield, and potentially in town in ambushes and attacks as well.

## GUIDING QUESTIONS:

1. The film opens with cannon fire on the battlefield in the Mexican chaparral, near the city of Cholula, in Puebla, near where another famous battle was fought (the Cinco de Mayo). The cannon fire can be considered a metaphor for the explosive emotions that will take place in the film. Please describe at least three examples of explosive emotions and passions that occur in the film.
2. Eduardo Roberts, an American, has settled in Cholula to educate the children of the town by establishing a school. In doing so, he has met and fallen love with Beatriz, and they plan to marry. Why does José Juan not execute Eduardo? After all, he is blocking José Juan from total access to Beatriz. How does the fact that he educates the young play into José Juan's values and ideas of a more equitable Mexico?
3. Describe how Padre Rafael Sierra embodies the values of the Catholic Church during the time of the Mexican Revolution. Include at least three scenes in which his values align with those of the goals of the Revolution. They could include the discussion in the basement with José Juan, the singing of Ave Maria, and the discussion with Beatriz about marriage. Are there any conflicts? Describe them as well.
4. Discuss female masochism in *Enamorada*. The obvious example of female masochism is that of the once-haughty Beatriz who leaves a decent man of high moral character as she is about to sign her marriage license so that she can follow a hot-headed revolutionary who has harassed her, mocked her, and then hit her to the ground after she slapped him. Her masochism seems to be aligned with excitement-seeking. However, there are other examples of masochism. For example, one might look at Fidel Bernal's widow, Rosa, or the camp followers. How does the social situation reflect the values of the times and the society?
5. Describe the elements of machismo in *Enamorada*. When is machismo exhibited? What are different varieties and aspects of machismo, and how do they relate to concepts of honor, pride, relationships with women, self-defense, violence, self-restraint, and other potentially contradictory values? Please include at least three scenes.