

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE  
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# THE POSSESSION / La Posesión (1950)

Julio Bracho

Mexico (Spanish)

Archived video on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/oelzex6dEL4?si=c5r5g3qJM42o-JV9>  
La parcela <http://www.elem.mx/obra/datos/8668>

## Contents (Overview-Synopsis-Characters-Character Analysis-Themes-Scenes)

### OVERVIEW

*Auteur:* Under the guidance of director Julio Bracho, the novel *La Parcela* is transformed into affirmation of Mexican culture, with an emphasis on hacienda culture as well as the small town plaza and marketplace. Román sings rancheros and romantic songs, and even has an improvisation battle as Román sings, which is responded to by Laura's mariachis. The women wear traditional dresses and stay warm with a large scarf (rebozo). The men wear their traditional Mexican vaquero gear, and the men of the hacienda dress up in the tight, adorned pants and jacket in the "charro" tradition. It is clearly an honor society and the ranch workers who work at one hacienda or the other are very clearly loyal to their own Patrón and will go to blows (and machete attacks) to defend what they perceive is right. This is clear when Pánfilo is cut by Roque as they argue about their ownership of the mountain, and various accusations. Macho culture is in force not only in the sense of honor, but also in the differences in gender expectations. When Román tells Lupe that men can love women in different ways, it is heartbreaking to Lupe, as he is essentially telling her that he loves having a physical relationship, but she's not the blonde hacendado's daughter. Social hierarchies are a reality in rural Mexico.

*Film:* The story takes place in Jalisco where two large haciendas come together joined by the Monte de los Pericos (Parakeet Mountain). The plot revolves around a prolonged dispute over Monte de los Pericos where two hacienda owners, Don Pedro Ruíz (the legal owner) and Don Miguel Díaz (the person who claims he purchased it in good faith), both insist that they have title to the land. Intertwined in this dispute is the relationship between the son and daughter of the opposing sides. Laura, daughter of Don Miguel, and Román, son of Don Pedro. In the novel, the two marry at the end, the disputes having been resolved when it becomes clear that there was fraud and corruption, and a deceitful attorney cooked up fake deeds so he could sell Don Miguel the land for a pretty penny. Don Miguel's corrupt attorney, Licenciado Jaramillo, knew how much Don Miguel wanted the land, so he presented fake deeds and moved boundary markers in order to collect funds for the transaction, a portion of which he split with the corrupt judge, who signed off on the dirty deed. In the film, Don Pablo, Román's father, comes back dead on the back of his horse and Román accuses Don Miguel of murder. Don Miguel is subsequently murdered by a mob, enraged after the only person who knew of the corruption was falsely imprisoned and then killed as he supposedly attempted to break out of jail. The movie ends as Laura and Román visit the graves of their fathers, side by side on the mountain they both claimed, El Monte de los Pericos. The title of the film, "La Posesión" takes on an ironic meaning as the desire for legal possession of it, possessed two formerly pacific neighbors to a state of violence and harmony-rending strife.

*Background:* *La Posesión* was directed by Mexican director Julio Bracho and released in 1950. It was based on the novel, *La Parcela*, written by Jesús López Portillo and published in 1898. López was born in Guadalajara and eventually would become the governor while Porfirio Díaz was President of Mexico. The novel is known for being a "costumbrista" novel, which is to say that it captures and preserves the traditions and customs of traditional rural Mexico. However, there is actually a lot more

going on in the movie, and it is powerful critique of Porfirio Díaz and class structure, which put the land in the hands of a few landowners, who were owners of haciendas, hence were referred to as “hacendados.”

Traditions are upheld; they drink hot corn pozole, and dinners include handmade tortillas, sauces and nopalitos. Town life revolves around a plaza around which there is a marketplace / store owned by Lupe. The ongoing conflict of who owns the mountain does not seem to have much chance of resolving, primarily because Don Miguel is depicted as greedy, cruel, and willing to use “shortcuts” and because Don Pedro will not accede his ownership, and insists that he is the rightful owner, despite flawed documents and surveying markers that can no longer be found. Don Miguel Díaz, who, coincidentally, has the same last name of the despotic ruler, Porfirio Díaz, is likewise despotic, ambitious, inhuman, prideful and envious. His character flaws set in motion the destabilization of what was previously a harmonious paradise (at least for the owners of the haciendas).

The abject dependency of the “peones” (ranch workers) on the Patrón (the hacienda owner) is not downplayed, nor is the calumnious behavior on the part of a scheming attorney and a corrupt judge. The film (and the novel) are a critique of a social system that creates enormous social inequality, and even if the Patrón is generous, the fact remains that it is a paternalistic system and women, tenant farmers, ranch hands, and other employees have little or no self-determination.

### **SYNOPSIS:**

The landowners, Don Pedro Ruiz and Don Miguel Díaz, who are neighbors and godfathers to each others' children, are in a dispute over the ownership of Monte de los Pericos. Mr. Jaramillo, a corrupt attorney who is handling the case, representing Don Miguel, bribes Judge Camposorio, who is interested in courting Rosaura. Don Pedro's attorney is Lic. Muñoz. Don Pedro and Román receive a summons to publicly show the boundary markers (ones which have been falsified by Lic. Jaramillo) for their property. Leading up to that day, there is a clash in the Monte de los Pericos, and Roque, the foreman of El Pinar, property of Don Pedro, defeats Pánfilo, Miguel's employee, in a machete duel, cutting his rival's hand. Pánfilo tells Don Miguel, making him promise that he will not say anything, about the machete duel with Roque. However, Don Miguel orders the judge to arrest Roque. They go to look for Roque to arrest him but Román advises him to flee and promises to help his family. Roque flees, without his wife and children, but is stopped by some soldiers while leaving the farm and arrested. In the meantime, Don Miguel, Don Pedro, Jaramillo and the judge go to Monte de los Pericos so that the judge can make a ruling. The judge rules in favor of Miguel, who throws a grand celebratory banquet while Pedro suffers an attack. Román gets drunk and goes to Miguel's party having a couplet duel with the mariachi. Román accuses Miguel of being a coward and murderer and buries Don Pedro at the top of the mountain, where he stands armed with his men. Mr. Muñoz goes to court to appeal the ruling of Judge Camposorio regarding the possession of the mountain. Don Miguel, aware that Román has buried his father in the mountains and that he has placed armed men there, orders the place to be surrounded. There is only one exit through which Román and his men descend from the mountain to replenish supplies. Rosaura hears that her father will order his men to go there for an armed confrontation. With the help of Lupe, who knows of this because she is the one who supplies Román with provisions, she disguises herself and goes to where Román is to warn him. She thinks that with her being there, her father will avoid attacking him. Rosaura accepts a marriage proposal from Román and he presents her as his wife at the grave of her father. Don Miguel, aware of everything, ignores his daughter. Miguel, Jaramillo and Don Santiago, president of the City Council, try to make Pánfilo confess against Roque in order to sentence him to death. Pánfilo refuses despite Don Miguel's anger. Don Santiago then suggests applying the fuga law to Roque and Don Miguel agrees. Pánfilo's wife listens and notifies Roque's wife. The woman, desperate, goes to the mountains to beg Román to help Roque. Román leaves immediately but is unable to save Roque, who has already been treacherously murdered, accused of escaping from jail. Román brings Roque's corpse to Miguel, who is killed by the angry mob. Don Miguel is buried next to his compadre Don Pedro. The film ends with the scene of Rosaura and Román turning to walk back down the Monte de los Pericos, the wooden grave markers in the foreground.

## MAJOR CHARACTERS:

Román Ruiz	Son of Don Pedro, the legitimate owner of El Monte de los Pericos
Rosaura Díaz	Son of Don Miguel, despotic and cruel owner of the adjacent hacienda
Lupe	Dry goods store owner in town who is in love with Román
Don Pedro Ruiz	Owner of a hacienda and historical owner of El Monte de los Pericos
Don Miguel Díaz	Owner of the adjacent hacienda, corruptly acquires El Monte de los Pericos
Lic. Jaramillo	Corrupt attorney who works for Don Miguel, who falsifies documents, etc.

## CHARACTER ANALYSIS:

### **DON MIGUEL DIAZ:**

The owner of a hacienda that borders that of Don Pedro Ruiz, who claims to own El Monte de los Pericos.

*Ambitious:* To expand his property holdings and to maintain control of the judicial system in the courts, Don Miguel openly declares that he owns El Monte de los Pericos. Despite the fact that he is part of the same tight-knit group of landed elites, he breaks ranks to try to illegally procure their property. His ambition causes him to launch what is tantamount to internecine warfare, and ultimately very destructive to the fabric of society.

*Ruthless:* The depth of Don Miguel's ruthlessness is exhibited when he orders the jailers to create a simulacrum of a jail break which would then enable the sheriff to shoot Roque as an escapee. Before this, he openly challenged Don Pedro, and threatened violence to all who sided with Don Pedro. With no regard for the suffering that he caused when Roque's wife was left a widow with young dependents, Don Miguel simply wished to control the narrative of ownership.

*Elitist:* At the heart of the ambition and ruthless scheming is a sense of entitlement which was succored by the generations of men and women reassured by their government and the Church that they deserved to own the lion's share of land and to control resources by dint of their European bloodlines. Their beliefs were codified in the Mexican "casta" system, of which there were at least eight, and they were recorded by the Priest in the local parish upon their birth and again upon baptism. At the top of the pecking order were the "Peninsulares" – those born in the Iberian peninsula. Toward the bottom were the Indigenous "Indios" and at the very bottom were the "Negros" or Blacks, who tended to be slaves. This created a rigid hierarchy and made upward social and economic mobility impossible, just as it hard-wired people into racism and exclusionary social interactions.

### **ROMAN RUIZ:**

In the novel, Román (called Gonzalo) is a decent chap who has fallen in love with forbidden fruit – the daughter of the neighbor who is feuding with his father. In the end, the feud ends when everyone sees the light or reason, and he and Rosaura marry, thus uniting the estates and eliminating any internecine squabbling amongst the elites.

*Idealistic:* In the film, Román is an idealistic chap, who also has a talent for singing seductive serenades for inventing snappy responses when challenged to a singing couplet duel by the woman who feels skeptical (rightly so) of his ability to be a faithful love. That said, he is idealistic in that he truly believes in Mexican culture and heritage, and in defending his father, he is defending the status quo and the social structure that he understands.

*Macho:* Sombrero slips notwithstanding, Román cavorts about the countryside in full charro regalia, tight pants, tight jacket, and a heavily decorated wide sombrero (hat) that has the pesky habit of sliding down his forehead, just when he wants to make a serious point or to look jauntily cavalier (or caballero, which also means "gentleman" in Spanish as well as horseman gentleman). Román is the quintessential scion of the wealthy owner of a hacienda; his main job is to stay alive so he can inherit his father's wealth

and position. He does not actually have to involve himself in the day-to-day operations, but instead makes sure he knows what is happening around him. Perhaps his most obvious show of machismo is in his treatment of Lupe; he fully expects her to be available to him whenever it suits him.

## THEMES

**SOCIOLOGICAL:** There are a number of complex and often contradictory sociological themes and messages in the film, despite the fact that it is packaged as a Mexican identity-affirming film, with long performances of the incredibly popular singer of “ranchers” songs.

**Social Class:** Social class and a rigid hierarchy with its attendant built-in privilege is responsible for the conflict in the film. The clash between the two rival owners, who are, in fact, tied together by being godfathers, is one that ultimately consolidates power and privilege, particularly if Rosaura and Román marry. The film points out the corruption in the judicial system that allows this to continue, and it also recognizes that the people who work for the hacienda owners are those who are pulled into the conflict to the point of losing their lives, all for naught.

**Social Inequality:** One literary critic pointed to the novel, *La Parcela*, upon which the film was based, as being a spectacle of threats, but in the end, they were more or less empty, since the status quo never changed, despite Roque’s murder, and then the subsequent vigilante killing of Don Miguel Díaz. In a world where the resources were controlled by wealthy landowners of the elite descendants of the Spanish colonizers, there was no possibility of social advancement, and the class boundaries were very rigid. For example, although Lupe was very entrepreneurial, hard-working, and intelligent, she could not enter into the social circle of the scion of the owner of a hacienda. Instead, he kept her in the shadows.

**Injustice:** Roque, in the employ of Don Ruiz, was arrested for having engaged in a machete duel with one of Don Miguel’s employees, Pánfilo. He was arrested, and because he knew the truth about the falsification of documents regarding the Monte de los Pericos, he was killed while “escaping” from the prison because it was legal to use lethal force on an escaping prisoner (although he was not “escaping;” he had been forced out of the jail so that it looked like an escape.). The tremendous injustice was made clear, and an angry mob demanded justice of Don Miguel. While there was a sort of vigilante justice, it did not change the fact that what happened in the first place was deeply unjust.

**Traditional Mexican Culture:** The film celebrates the traditional rural Mexican culture, first and foremost with the beautiful songs sung by Román (Jorge Negrete). The music is played on traditional instruments in the context of fiestas, which also feature traditional food. Also featured are the traditional Mexican outfits; the elites tend to be adorned in European style dress, or in fancy charro gear. The ranch workers and inhabitants of the pueblo wear traditional ponchos, serapes, rebozos, sombreros, and embroidered huipiles, and the women wear their hair in elaborate braids.

**Corruption:** The attorney, Lic. Jaramillo, perpetrates a fraud and he suborns the judge who allows himself to be bribed. The fact that this is a common practice is made clear in the film, and while the story involves the “good vs evil” clash between Don Miguel Díaz and Don Pedro Ruiz, the message is clear that the corruption serves to cement the control of land in the hands of the elite.

**Women’s Role in Society:** While Rosaura is the daughter of Don Miguel and one of the elite, her status does not imbue her nor impart any particular self-actualization or self-determination. She can fall in love, but only with people approved by her father. Her “job” in life is to be feminine and attract the right husband. Lupe, who is mestizo and a small business owner in the pueblo, has little chance of being able to marry the man who professes love, but is, in reality, simply using her for his own pleasure. In the end, her love for Román leads her to protect Rosaura, the woman who supplanted and usurped her.

**PSYCHOLOGY:** The film explores the darker emotions of people living in what appears, at first blush, to be a paradise. All of the emotions are made visible to the audience through the skillful direction and cinematography.

**Ambition:** Don Miguel is ruthless with ambition that knows no end, and takes no quarter in its pursuit of property. He wants El Monte de los Pericos with a passion, and is willing to be unethical to obtain it. When he causes Roque to be killed in the trumped-up jail break, he demonstrates his utter disregard of rule of law. His actions result in the death of his neighbor, Don Pedro Ruiz, which is, in his mind, expedient, despite the fact that his neighbor's son accuses him of murder. There is a conscious parallel between Don Miguel and President Porfirio Díaz, particularly since it takes place in the same time frame.

**Jealousy:** Lupe is extremely jealous of Rosaura, mainly due to her privileged position as the daughter of a wealthy land-owner, and the clear choice for marriage for a wealthy, privileged and entitled scion of a wealthy landowner. The jealousy is exacerbated by the fact that Román is in a relationship with her, breaks it off to woo Rosaura, and then, when Rosaura refuses to have anything to do with him after he accuses her father of murder, returns to Lupe. She is convenient as well as attractive, and her situation was illustrated in many of Julio Bracho's films. The woman could count on little more than scraps of affection, and never anything legitimate or legitimizing.

**Loyalty:** Roque is loyal to Don Pedro and even takes part in a machete duel which occurred when men from Don Miguel's hacienda attempted to tamper with the gathering of evidence around the property boundary markers. The primary hallmark of a good ranch employee is their loyalty to their "patron" – any employee who shows even the slightest disloyalty runs the risk of severe punishment, even death.

**Envy:** Don Miguel is deeply envious of Don Pedro's properties and holdings. Envy drives many of his decisions and his behaviors; he will do anything to obtain the property, even if it is unethical. His envy leads him to hire Lic. Jaramillo and to participate in the bribery of the judge. The implication is that his envy reflects the darker impulses of the government of Porfirio Díaz, which, for all its zeal for industrialization and development, widened the gulf between the haves and the have-nots, and mortgaged the country's future by selling rights to its resources to foreign enterprises.

**Romantic:** Román is deeply romantic, and he uses his songs to woo Rosaura, and even participates in an improvisation duel with musicians from her father's hacienda. He is romantic also, in terms of his connections with nature and also the deeper concepts of Mexican identity. The songs, which are performed at length, illustrate not only his love of traditional Mexican music, but also their ability to transmit emotions and an idealized concept of seduction, which involves the active outreach and display of talent and self-expression on the part of the man, and the requisite passivity on the part of the

**COSTUMBRISMO:** I've been reflecting on the way that Julio Bracho has taken a "costumbrista" novel from 1898 (Jesús López Portillo) and has adapted it to a "costumbrista" film released in 1950. On the face of it, it would be a straightforward thing to do. He changes the plot a bit, which I've mentioned, but there is really more to it than that.

First, let's take a look at the "costumbrismo" in the original novel, "La Parcela." The context was that during the Porfiriato, a time of extremely rapid industrialization and change. So, the novels written then often have an idealizing view of the customs of the ranch and the pueblos, and they have built in nostalgia for a lifestyle that is, in some cases, quickly disappearing with rural to urban migration, railroads, automation, and an influx of foreign capital (British, French, American, and German for the most part), which resulted in industrial-scale harvesting of natural resources (mahogany comes to mind as one of the most disruptive examples). Author López Portillo ended up being the governor of the important state of Jalisco (Guadalajara being the capital, and his home), and was firmly within the ruling elite. He was even the grandfather of one of the future presidents. So, it was not likely that he would take the position of a rabble-rousing anarchist. He did, however, take issue with the cruel, despotic dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz, to the point that the despotic hacendado (hacienda-owner) shared the last name, Díaz. Costumbrista authors were usually anchored along political lines, and although he was clearly against corruption amongst the elites, he was not interested in too much disruption. After all, in his novel, the land dispute is resolved when the corrupt attorney and the judge are exposed as being complicit in the production of fraudulent documents used to line their own pockets and sow discord amongst the landowners. The ownership of the land stays firmly within the same privileged individuals of European descent (direct from the original "Peninsulares" born in Spain and immigrated to "New Spain" aka Mexico. The son and

daughter marry, and the social order is maintained. The only change is that the corrupt actors are extirpated.

Bracho's change of plot as well as his making the movie itself a highly popular "singing cowboy" film shows his use of costumbrismo to be quite different. While he looks back at the traditions of the Mexican hacienda and small town (pueblo) with nostalgia and positive regard, he also affirms the core tenets of the Mexican Revolution; namely land reform and a demand for economic access and upward mobility for those not of the ruling elite. So, the film does not end in a marriage, but instead, with the womanizing singing cowboy scion of one of the hacendados, and the ornamental (and ultimately idle) daughter of the other hacienda owner, gazing upon the graves of their fathers. The grave markers are not ornately carved tombstones or statues of angels, but instead, are simply sticks fashioned into crude crosses. What is the symbolism in this? First, the old system is dead. And second, rather foppish singing cowboy will need to rely on the people he works with to succeed. Rosaura, the blonde daughter of Don Miguel, has already demonstrated that she has no marketable skills, and in fact, has no common sense when it comes to surviving in a rapidly changing world. In contrast, Lupe, the passionate, quick, and entrepreneurial shop owner, always dressed in traditional dress with rebozo and huarache sandals, is the one who will save others. She does it for the love of her people.

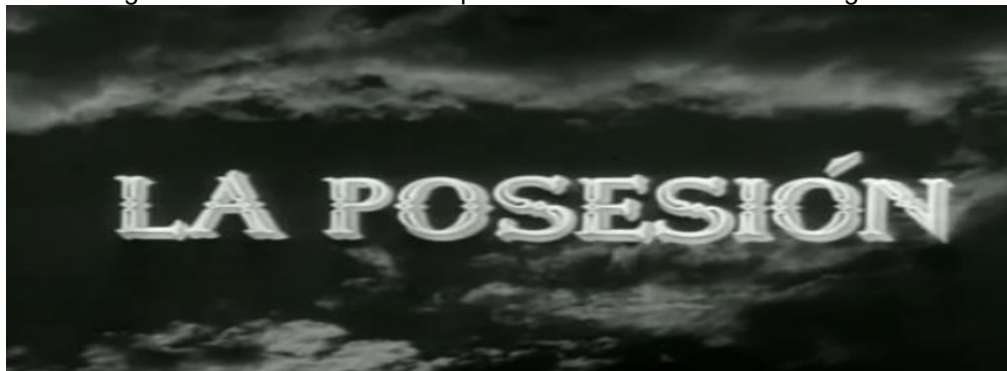
Like the "costumbrismo" of 50 years earlier, Bracho's film embraces realism as its core sensibility and guiding aesthetic. There are no surrealist, abstract, neo-gothic, or grotesque shadows or psychological exaggerations. Instead, the sweeping panoramas, the gorgeous encounters with nature on horseback, the intimate scenes at dinner table, and the shadows from which the songs of the singing cowboy and his accompanying mariachis emerge, resonate in the hearts of the Mexican audience members. The film affirms their identity, and also asserts that the sacrifices made by the Roques of the world, who were murdered to expose and eliminate corruption and to seek a more just and equitable Mexico were justified. But, yet, there are indications that not as much changed in Mexican society as was promised, and that elitism and social class persist, with those of European descent still in charge, and the mestizos and finally the indigenous, still lacking in self-determination and access to education, property, capital, and social networks.

It's hard to keep from asking the question that Bracho hints at: Do wars and revolutions do anything more than harm the poor, impoverish the middle classes, and enrich the provisioners of knives, cannons, and war horses?

In 1950, "Fin" or end of the film, "La Posesión" had enough ambiguity to please the cinema-goers who loved the music and that cute singing cowboy, and wanted to turn the reels in their imagination to see a wedding in their mind's eye. However, the film does not really end with a union. It ends with the death of the owners of the contiguous massive estates, first placed in their families by the Spanish Crown, who seized it by means of invasion and persistent occupation. They are dead. The future is indeterminate.

SC ENES

The film was released in 1950, the script based on the 1898 novel, *La Parcela*, by Jesus Lopez Portillo, but with significant modifications and updates that communicate messages.



Don Pedro Ruiz announces to Don Miguel that he will brook no questions to his ownership of Monte de los Pericos. The tiled roof and their charro vestments situate the scene in a Mexican hacienda.



Don Pedro Ruiz tells his son, Ramon Ruiz, that he must do everything possible to defend their rights to title to the property in el Monte de los Pericos.



Don Pedro urges his son, Román, to uphold their rights to the land, and to fight the highjinks. The details in the set are extremely detailed and authentic with respect to a typical hacienda, in the dining room. Notice the wooden serving utensils and the cheerfully patterned ceramic servingware.



Lupe and Román embrace outside Lupe's adobe home. Lupe owns a store specializing in women's clothing and it is located the commercial areas surrounding the town's plaza.





Román explains to Lupe that he must end their relationship, since he discovered a person to love; the fact that he is wearing an expensive and elite “charro” costume (note the embroidery and silver on the legs and his elaborate sombrero.). Lupe emerges from her home carrying cups of atole to bring to him. Not that he is wearing a charro outfit, while she is wearing a traditional women’s outfit for the times.



Román rides his horse from Lupe’s home; the cinematography emphasizes the magnitude of the Mexican sky and Mexican identity. The barren landscape suggests the barrenness of Román’s love for Lupe.



Román with ranch workers who accompany him in various tasks in their hacienda. The purpose of this shot is to demonstrate the beauty of the Mexican landscape, and a vast, expansiveness of vision and mission, equating to the heroic.



Lupe is not of the elitist, European Peninsular class; she is mestizo (mixed Spanish and indigenous), and as such wears traditional Mexican clothing and follows traditional Mexican ways of living, as opposed to Rosaura, who lives as though she were living in Europe.



Román declares his love to Rosaura, daughter of his father's rival, Don Miguel.



Don Pedro and Don Roman are informed of the nefarious plots of Don Miguel to win the conflict over land ownership.



A beautiful shot of Guanajuato's municipality; the tradition dating back to the earliest Spanish colonial times is foregrounded. It is a very traditional Mexican style of architecture, with a lovely plaza in the middle. This view is designed to evoke nostalgia and pride.



Lupe's shop is within the plaza, and her store is one of many in that marketplace. She is very successful and respected. The pillars and architecture indicate that it is in the colonnade of a colonial-era building, suggesting tradition and traditional values.



The corrupt attorney, Lic. Jaramillo, speaks to the Judge to validate the fraudulent documents to make it appear that Don Miguel is the rightful owner of El Monte de los Pericos. The office and the dress of the individuals is European, emphasizing that they are part of the elites, and suggesting institutionalized corruption on the part of those descended from the Spaniards.



Don Roman, sporting an elitist rural Mexican charro outfit (including the oversized sombrero and an ornamented jacket), encounters emissaries from Don Miguel's camp. This medium close-up places Román in front of a colonial-era building, emphasizing heritage and culture.



Roman assembles his men to move to El Monte de los Pericos in order to establish the boundaries. The shot suggests that the Monte de los Pericos is in the background.



Román looks with concern at the brewing confrontation. This close-up shows his use of the traditional Mexican sombrero. It is not a fancy, adorned one used for times when regalia is important. This is one of straw, used for everyday horseback riding. It demonstrates his connection with the traditional Mexicans, the common man.



Don Miguel Diaz wears traditional charro jacket and pants, along with a traditional Mexican sombrero, suggesting he is both a part of the land-owning elite, as well as Mexican. The men who ride with him are in European dress, as is his daughter, demonstrating their connection to the elite classes who control commerce and the legal system.



Rosaura rides with her father's group, the Monte de los Pericos in the background, suggesting that she is both in the conflict, and also connected with her father. She does not dismount, however, and stays as apart as she can.



The corrupt attorney, Lic. Jaramillo perpetrates a fraud with boundary markers, to the benefit of Don Miguel's claim to ownership. Don Pedro listens. This shot shows the beauty of the coveted land, and its relative fertility.



Don Miguel throws an elaborate fiesta to celebrate what he claims is his definitive ownership of El Monte de los Pericos. An employee warns Rosaura that Román has come to crash the party, and that there could be trouble. Don Miguel's wealth is on full display in this elaborate party. There is a contrast between her European gown and that of the employee, dressed in a traditional Mexican dress worn by women in the pueblo.





Román arrives with his musicians to challenge Don Miguel's household, and in particular, Rosaura, to a musical duel in which each side sends a message by means of improvised rhyming couplets. It is humorous and reveals the truth.



The canciones are in the traditional Mexican ranchera style, and the demonstrate both his passion for Rosaura and his wounded pride. It is a Mexican tradition and one in which the audience would take great delight.



The morning after the triumphant banquet, Don Pedro dies, and Roman and others are quick to assume he was murdered. He is buried in a plain pine casket in the Monte de los Pericos, which Román is convinced is his.



This shot shows the gloominess of the gravesite with the silhouette of a Mexican charro (not a vaquero because he is not wearing a serape). It is assumed to be Don Román.



Don Miguel responds to the news that Don Román has threatened vengeance and that there is a high likelihood of violence. This dramatic point of view shot gives a sense of privileged access to knowledge, as though one were overhearing a conversation.



Despite being hopelessly in love with Román, Lupe warns Rosaura of the impending violence and that there is a chance that Rosaura could be injured or killed. She urges Rosaura to flee, and to disguise herself in traditional Mexican clothing. Seeing Rosaura has nothing like that, Lupe even gives her an outfit from her store.



Lupe in her dry-goods store, illuminated by a kerosene lamp, instructing her helper to find a dress, rebozo, huaraches, and ribbons for Rosaura.



Rosaura and Román stand in front of the make-shift stick cross which is the grave marker for Don Pedro, buried in the contested Monte de los Pericos.



Roque is arrested for assaulting and cutting Panfilo, in a machete duel between Don Pedro and Don Miguel's households. Don Miguel, in his charro outfit, listens to Jaramillo stating that Roque has dangerous knowledge.



Roque, in the city jail, insists that he will never tell anything about what he might or might not know. He fears for his life. This closeup includes the bars of the jail, which emphasize his situation.



In disguise, Rosaura meets with Román who will protect her, which seems unlikely since he would be in the middle of any sort of conflict. They are dressed in traditional Mexican clothing, suggesting a break with the corrupt and exploitive colonialism, but at the same time, reinforcing the fact that they will not ever completely change, as Rosaura does not cover her bright blonde braids, and her braids are not quite fashioned in the beribboned, and conjoined rural Mexican fashion.



Dramatic cumulus clouds surge over the contested Monte de los Pericos, suggesting impending conflict and violence.



Play (k)

The military has been called in to intervene and avoid a potentially bloody internecine armed conflict. They traverse the countryside, passing alongside the famed aqueducts of Guanajuato, which provide a connection to the early colonial constructions. The pipes carrying water were on top of the arched bridge.



Roque is killed in cold blood as he is falsely accused of breaking out of jail. This shot shows the brutality and indignity of his death, as he lies prostrate in the muddy road.



Roque's body, strapped to the back of a horse, is brought to Don Román by members of the military. They were there to quell any potential violent outbreak, but just the opposite will happen.



Roque's widow accuses Don Miguel of being complicit in Roque's death, and she despairs of being able to raise her children. Don Miguel is flanked by his corrupt attorney, Lic. Jaramillo.





Understanding for the first time, the depths of Don Miguel's avarice and duplicity, he is taken by the mob and killed in cold blood, in a parallel fashion to what he had caused to happen to those who stood in the way of his ambition (including Don Pedro).



Dressed in black of mourning, Rosaura weeps after her father is buried. Don Román looks stoically upon the grave. They are in the Monte de los Pericos, and the fact that both Don Miguel and Don Pedro, both part of the wealthy elite and hacienda owners, has two potential interpretations: first, that the fight over land resulted in the death of both landowners, but the new generation will bring about positive change by being in love and marrying; or second, a darker interpretation that despite the peon uprising and vigilante justice (killing the corrupt Don Miguel), ownership of the land did not change, and if anything was even more consolidated in the hands of the elite.



The film ends with the close-up of the two crosses fashioned from the trees from the Monte de los Pericos. Were the deaths redemptive in any way? Did they serve a higher purpose? The film offers potential interpretations, but no single deterministic or absolute message.



#### **GUIDING QUESTIONS:**

1. The character of Don Miguel Díaz has been shown to be a parallel of that of the President at the time of the action of the film, President Porfirio Díaz. What are the personality traits and character attributes of Don Miguel? Please identify three and include a scene that illustrates each one. What might an audience then think of President Porfirio Diaz, by extension?
2. Lupe is not a part of the elite land-owning class, but she does own property as she is the owner of a small dry-goods establishment in the Plaza in the town. Please describe how her position in town gives her insight into some of the secrets of those who do business in town, but also how her knowledge does not really empower her, due to the fact that she is a mestiza and not part of the “white” or “Peninsular” class structure. Please describe the class structure and the role of women within the mestizo class as illustrated in the film.
3. Please compare and contrast the character of Don Miguel and Don Pedro. After you have listed the differences, pay close attention to how the film shows that they have attributes in common, and how this might contribute to a subversive message in the film that points to the ultimate failure of the Mexican Revolution to empower the people.
4. What is the role of the landscape in generating meaning in the film? Please select three scenes that depict the landscape (including the Monte de los Pericos), the weather conditions, and/or scenes of traditional Mexican structures, and explain how they contribute to some of the themes in the film.
5. In what way could both Rosaura and Román be seen to have contradictory attributes? For example, how is Román depicted as simultaneously heroic and callow? How is Rosaura depicted as sophisticated and elegant, but then at the same time a decorative object on a pedestal who has no actual agency on her own? Please select scenes that support them.