



Enamorada

Director: Emilio Fernández

Production Company:

Filmadora Panamericana S.A.

Producer: Benito Alazraki

Screenplay: Iñigo de Martino, Benito Alazraki, Emilio Fernández

Photography: Gabriel Figueroa

Editor: Gloria Schoemann

Production Designer: Manuel Fontanals

Set Decorator: Manuel Parra

Costumes: Xavier Peña, Armando Valdés Peza

Make-up: Sara Mateos

Hair Stylist: Esperanza Gómez

Music: Eduardo Hernández Moncada

Sound: José B. Carles

Cast:

María Félix (*Beatriz Peñafiel*)

Pedro Armendáriz (*General José Juan Reyes*)

Fernando Fernández (*Padre Rafael Sierra*)

José Morcillo (*Carlos Peñafiel*)

Eduardo Arozamena (*Alcalde Joaquín Gómez*)

Miguel Inclán (*Captain Bocanegra*)

Manuel Dondé (*Fidel Bernal*)

Eugenio Rossi (*Eduardo Roberts*)

Norma Hill (*Rosa de Bernal*)

Juan García (*Captain Quiñones*)

José Torvay (*Maestro Apolonio Sánchez*)

Pascual García Peña (*Merolico*)

Mexico 1946

99 mins

35mm

A BFI National Archive print

Restored by UCLA Film & Television Archive and The Film Foundation's World Cinema Project in collaboration with Fundacion Televisa AC and Filmoteca de la UNAM. Restoration funded by the Material World Charitable Foundation.

Too Much: Melodrama on Film

Enamorada

We're delighted to confirm this screening will be of the BFI Archive's brand new 35mm print made with funding from the National Lottery and the additional support of donors to our Keep Film on Film campaign. With thanks to the UCLA Film & Television Archive and The Film Foundation.

SPOILER WARNING The following notes give away some of the plot.

'I am Mexican cinema!' Emilio Fernández liked to tell people when they asked him about the state of filmmaking in his country. When one critic dared to dispute this grandiose claim, the director reputedly pulled a gun on him.

That story may be apocryphal but then Fernández tended to take a 'print the legend' approach to his own life, even if his life was already interesting enough to need no further embellishment. Having killed a man as a youth and fought in the quashed rebellion against President Obregón, Fernández ended up in jail in 1924, facing a 20-year prison sentence. He quickly escaped and fled to America, where he landed in Los Angeles and discovered the movies.

Enamorada opens in a manner befitting Fernández's image as a rebellious figure of macho virility (he would later play the vengeance-seeking patriarch in *Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia*): the credits are preceded by the firing of a cannon, which is immediately followed by the thunder of hooves as a revolutionary army takes control of the town of Cholula. What unfolds after the credits, however, is in fact a spry romantic comedy that displays the director's lighter touch. The meet-cute between its two leads, half an hour into the film, could have come from any Hollywood comedy of the era, as the revolutionary General Reyes (Pedro Armendáriz) gets slapped by Beatriz (María Félix) for commenting on her legs as she passes in the street. He tells her that he'd risk another slap for another glimpse of her legs, and she gives him exactly what he's asked for, lifting her skirt and then knocking him to the floor in front of his men.

The template for *Enamorada* is Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, with the wealthy and anti-revolutionary Beatriz being particularly resistant to any taming. She is introduced wielding a gun and ready to defend herself against any man who dares to approach her, and throughout the film Félix brings a riveting emotional intensity to her performance; but ultimately both characters need to be tamed here, or at least find a common ground, and it is the Church that brings them together.

The third key character is Padre Sierra (Fernando Fernández – Emilio's brother), a priest who is both Reyes's childhood friend and Beatriz's most trusted confidant, and he encourages these two headstrong individuals to be more humble and spiritual in their outlook. The scenes shot inside his church have a transcendent quality, with the great cinematographer Gabriel Figueroa – who studied his craft under Gregg Toland – beautifully exploiting the architecture and light to emphasise the epiphanies the characters experience within its walls.

Figueroa's mentoring by Toland and Fernández's immersion in the home of American filmmaking during his formative years both seem to contribute to the aesthetic sheen of classical Hollywood cinema that is evident throughout *Enamorada*. The bickering relationship between the two leads has the ebb and

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flow of a screwball comedy (although Rosalind Russell never actually tried to blow up Cary Grant...), while the more tender scenes are filmed with the intimacy and rapturous beauty of a Frank Borzage romance. The emotional high point of the film involves Reyes serenading Beatriz beneath her bedroom window, an act that – finally – starts to break down her defences. The camera largely focuses on Félix's expressive face throughout this sequence, and one close-up on her eyes in particular is breathtaking.

Through their very successful series of collaborations in the 1940s, Fernández and Figueroa are credited with playing a key role in putting Mexican cinema on the map, and *Enamorada* was seen as an important film by the authorities in helping to establish the country's post-revolution identity. The narrative works to bring gradually together two fiercely independent and politically opposed people through the mediation of the Church, and the film's climax proves to be genuinely stirring. Just as Beatriz is about to marry her wealthy American fiancé, she is distracted by the sound of Reyes's army leaving Cholula to take the revolution to another town. Inadvertently but symbolically ripping off the pearl necklace the American has given her, Beatriz follows both her heart and her sense of national pride to join Reyes, and the pair then march side by side into a changing Mexico.

There is a curious footnote to this picture. Shortly after *Enamorada*'s release, Paulette Goddard optioned the remake rights, believing that the film could emulate its Mexican success in the US and reinvigorate her career. She ended up enlisting most of the same production team to make *The Torch* (1950), with Fernández again in the director's chair, Figueroa once more behind the camera and Pedro Armendáriz reprising his role as General Reyes. The result is a bizarrely sluggish and tone-deaf film that follows the original almost shot for shot but fails to match it in every conceivable way. Of course, the project was doomed to failure the moment Goddard decided to take the lead role for herself; there was no way that she was ever going to emulate the passionate defiance in María Félix's eyes. Who could?

Philip Concannon, *Sight and Sound*, November 2015