

***Encanto*'s 'Colombian' soundtrack:  
A diffuse charm unveiled through analysis**

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## Abstract

In the imagination of non-Latin, or even Latin foreigners, Colombia is mostly stereotyped as a country of drug trafficking, dealers, and violence. Although it is a social and politically transversal problem that has violently affected the country for decades, national and international TV shows such as *Pablo Escobar: El Patrón del Mal* (Colombia, 2012) or *Narcos* (United States, 2015–2017) have posed *narco-cultura* as an ideal; they have glorified the power and enrichment of drug production, turning it into a desired lifestyle. However, in 2020, Disney announced that its next animated movie, *Encanto*, would be set in Colombia, thus presenting a chance to reformulate the long-time established stereotypes and to show the diversity of Colombia's different cultures. The story follows the journey of a multigenerational family, and by intertwining real-life situations with magic, the writers honor magical realism, a literature genre of which the Colombian Nobel Prize winner, Gabriel García Márquez (1927–2014), was one of the most prolific exponents. The film has been praised for its detailed representation of traditional elements, and the soundtrack broke records throughout social media and Billboard charts. The score, by American-born composer Germaine Franco, featuring songs by American-born songwriter Lin-Manuel Miranda, uses folkloric instruments such as *acordeón*, *arpa llanera*, *tiple*, and *marimba de chonta*, musical genres such as *bambuco*, *salsa*, *cumbia*, and *tropipop*, and mixes them with Hollywood cinematic musical resources. Through this paper, I aim to question whether Disney's movie *Encanto* depicts an appropriate representation of Colombian music. I will try to achieve this by analyzing the rhythms and instrumentation of two tracks and comparing them to traditional folk songs from Colombia.

**Keywords:** *Encanto*, Colombia, Disney, bambuco, salsa, soundtrack, Germaine Franco, Lin-Manuel Miranda.

## **Preface**

Artists have an essential role to fulfill when addressing the lack of representativity—or misrepresentation— within global industries such as Hollywood or the North American music industry. As a Colombian artist, I constantly question the outcome of the global political powers turning their attention towards Latin America and how it impacts us positively and negatively. Therefore, my interest in better understanding the concept of *Encanto* arose from living abroad in the United States and thinking about my colleagues, professors, and friends' perception of my country, Colombia, and my identity as a Latina. I must state that the movie has excellent value—significantly in changing the international perception of Colombia—; watching so many aspects of my culture represented through art on the big screen and sharing them with my non-Colombia community is undeniably a reason to celebrate the film. Nonetheless, in the spirit of constructive criticism, I dig into some aspects that, in my view, do not represent tradition and contribute to the homogenization and the creation of a generic Latin American identity.

## Introduction

Over the last decade, animated films have gravitated towards more inclusive and socially aware content. Whether it is through incorporating hot topics such as mental health, by including underrepresented minorities such as LGBTQ+ or Indigenous people, or by trying to change the narratives of misrepresented cultures, the most recent movies, and even the remakes of big hits, show how the industry is trying to target a more diverse audience. This is the case of none other than Disney and Pixar, which in recent years have released films like *Moana* (2016), *Coco* (2017), *Aladdin* (2019, live-action), *Mulan* (2020, live-action), or the one this paper will focus on, *Encanto* (2021). These stories engage with underrepresented and misrepresented countries such as the Pacific Islands, México, and Colombia, and the remakes of *Aladdin* and *Mulan* try to depict a more culturally authentic version of the original movies. Despite this awareness, some consequential phenomena such as extraction, homogenization, and assimilation, raise concerns about the commercialization of native cultures through the entertainment media.

Disney has its share of criticism regarding claims of cultural misrepresentation and extraction. From early movies such as *Peter Pan* (1953)<sup>1</sup> to the aforementioned *Moana* and *Coco*, Western studios expropriate Native stories and extract cultural information to “hybridize them into Western or ‘modern’ colonial genre forms” and “homogenize them further for optimal monetization.”<sup>2</sup> Thus transforming the social and cultural values into utilitarian symbols. An example is the 2013 attempt to trademark the expression “Día de los

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<sup>1</sup> The song “What Makes the Red Man Red?” from Disney’s animated musical movie *Peter Pan* (1953) has been criticized for its exaggerated representation of Native Americans’ physical traits and ritual practices. See notes at the end.

<sup>2</sup> Ida Yoshinaga, “Disney’s *Moana*, The Colonial Screenplay, and Indigenous Labor Extraction in Hollywood Fantasy Films,” *Narrative Culture*, Vol. 6 No. 2, (Fall 2019): 188.

Muertos,” a Mexican spiritual celebration of the dead, to secure the production of merchandise for its upcoming movie.<sup>3</sup> In the case of *Encanto*’s representation of Colombia, there is a set of contextual and historical considerations to be made about the stereotyping of its culture and how new representations are being portrayed.

From the 1960s decade until —partially— the signing of the Peace Agreements in 2016, Colombia was subjugated under a violent armed conflict rooted in social and economic inequity, the Government’s lack of presence in rural territories, and a war against drugs.<sup>4</sup> After more than 60 years, many stereotypes are still present not only because of the international relevance of the conflict but also because of the representations of the country in mainstream media. A quick internet search for “Colombia” and international news stories of the 1990s will show multiple articles from major American news outlets such as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *Los Angeles Times*, to name a few, reporting on the drug war, abductions, and political corruption. But even into the 2010s and 2020s, Colombia’s drug war past would be a primary topic for many Hollywood action movies and shows.<sup>5</sup> In light of this, the announcement in 2020 that Disney would make a movie set in Colombia was a pleasant surprise to Colombians, who hoped for revindication and fresh representativity. Disney’s vibrant and cheerful productions kept expectations high regarding the elements of the tradition and ethnicity that would be portrayed.

Thus, in 2021, the highly anticipated movie came to theaters. Its critical reception was mixed, but it was a significant success with Colombian-born communities living abroad that

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<sup>3</sup> Ben Child, “Disney drops bid to trademark Day of the Dead,” *The Guardian*, May 8, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> For more context about Colombia’s conflict, refer to the notes at the final section.

<sup>5</sup> *Behind Enemy Lines 3: Colombia* (2009, USA); *Colombiana* (2011, France-USA); *Narcos* (2015-2017, USA); *Escobar: Paradise Lost* (2014, USA); *Medellin* (2023, USA).

had not been in the country for years. *New York Times* reporter of Colombian roots, Laura Zornosa, described watching *Encanto* with her father: “Maybe 20 minutes in, his glasses came off and the tissues came out,” when talking about the emotive reaction of her father while watching *Encanto* for the first time and seeing many common elements to his youth in Colombia.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the film boasts a wealth of detail, especially visual, as it is possible to appreciate the biodiversity of landscapes and animals, traditional food and costumes, and references to national symbols such as the yellow butterflies from Gabriel García Márquez’s novel *A Hundred Years of Solitude*. In this same line, the score is another crucial aspect to consider when analyzing the movie's accuracy.

### **The soundtrack**

The orchestral score was composed by Germaine Franco<sup>7</sup> (b.1987), a California-born composer of Mexican descent who has also participated in films such as *Coco* (2017). The film's eight songs were written by Lin-Manuel Miranda (b. 1980), a New Yorker of Puerto Rican descent best known for his Broadway triumph, *Hamilton* (2020), and the recent film adaptation of his musical *In the Heights* (2021). As Miranda has said in press interviews, the songs and the score were inspired by a two-week trip he and the creative team took to Colombia to research the music of different regions of the country. They intended to incorporate traditional elements into the tracks, such as instruments and genres, fusing them with symphonic orchestration to add the cinematic sound. For example, “Waiting on a

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<sup>6</sup> Laura Zornosa, “I Watched ‘Encanto’ With My Dad. It Brought Him Back Home,” *The New York Times*, December 15, 2021.

<sup>7</sup> Franco is the first woman ever to be brought into a Disney production to compose the score for an animated movie.

Miracle” —the “I Want”<sup>8</sup> Song of the movie— is a *bambuco*, and “We Don’t Talk About Bruno” is a *guajira*. They were inspired by Colombian folkloric genres that, additionally and maybe not ideally, incorporate resources outside the Colombian tradition. Despite the folk sonority of the tracks, analyzing them in the context of the genre’s evolution illustrates how those outside elements extract their social value in the development of a post-colonial society.

*Bambuco* is a dance of mestizo and African origins, primarily found in the Andean region of Colombia,<sup>9</sup> that, along with the colonization process, evolved into both instrumental and song forms. As defined by ethnomusicologist Ana María Ochoa, *bambuco* has a “polymetric character in which binary and ternary durations overlap rhythmically, binary and ternary melodic articulations alternate, and syncopations frequently occur due to melodic delays when the harmony or meter changes.”<sup>10</sup> Because of the lack of primary sources—such as scores—and the oral tradition origins of the genre, there is a longtime academic controversy about whether it should be notated in 3/4 or 6/8 meter, arguing that 3/4 reflects better the hemiolas, but 6/8 is more straightforward to read. Instrumentation-wise, the core instruments of *bambuco* are *tiple*, *bandola*,<sup>11</sup> and guitar, also known as the “Andean-Colombian trio;” percussion and strings have been incorporated later in its evolution.

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<sup>8</sup> Marc J. Franklin, “‘I Want’ Songs To Keep You Motivated,” *Playbill*, July 20, 2020. The “I Want Song” is a musical number in which the main character expresses their most intimate desires, dreams, and dissatisfactions. In the case of “Waiting on a Miracle,” Maribel sings about how people treat her differently because, unlike the rest of her family, she has no magical power.

<sup>9</sup> *Currulao* is also a form of *bambuco* from Colombia’s Pacific coast, but we will focus on the Andean form.

<sup>10</sup> Ana María Ochoa Gautier, “Tradición, género y nación en el bambuco,” *A Contratiempo: revista musical en la cultura* 9 (1997): 37.

<sup>11</sup> *Tiple* and *bandola* are plucked string instruments.

According to Miranda, the “I Want” Song of the film, “Waiting on a Miracle,” is a *bambuco*, which he describes as a “Colombian waltz,”<sup>12</sup> which is not accurate. Despite its dance origins, *bambuco* cannot be considered a waltz, like the *pasillo* genre, which is, in fact, descended from the Austrian waltz.<sup>13</sup> The song is written in a 6/8 meter, and the orchestration features *arpa llanera* (a Colombian harp used in the eastern plains and in the *loropo* genre), guitar, and modern instruments like drum set. Including *arpa llanera* raises the question: Why include this instrument but not the *triple*, which is a chief instrument of the *bambuco*? Moreover, this choice affects not only the genre's characterization but also the aural result, making the song sound like a mixture of generic “folk” elements but not an actual *bambuco*. To illustrate this point, I will compare the famous Colombian *bambuco* “Cuatro Preguntas” to the song “Waiting on a Miracle.”

First, it is important to remember that one of the main characteristics of *bambuco* is that it is polymetric and polyrhythmic. Hence, the *tambora*<sup>14</sup> rhythmic pattern in Example 1 demonstrates the juxtaposition of the 6/8 and 3/4 metrics. In “Cuatro Preguntas,” it is possible to see this pattern between the melody and the accompaniment (Example 2),<sup>15</sup> and the prosodics of the lyrics show a strong syncopation. Additionally, when revising the polymetric and polyrhythmic in the “Andean-Colombian trio,” the guitar serves the bass role, and the

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<sup>12</sup> Lin-Manuel Miranda, “Encanto talk with Lin-Manuel Miranda & director Jared Bush,” *The Movie Reporter* (December 22, 2021).

<sup>13</sup> William Gradante, “Pasillo,” in *Grove Music Online*, 2001.

<sup>14</sup> *Tambora* is a membranophone percussion instrument. The *aro* is the wood part, and the *parche* is the drumhead.

<sup>15</sup> I will present the 6/8 version of this *bambuco*, solely to provide a clearer understanding of this, not to express any preferences towards either way of notation.

tiple has the agogic accent characteristic of the rhythm while the bandola plays the melody (Example 3).

EXAMPLE 1. *tambora* rhythmic pattern.

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff, labeled 'Aro', is in 6/8 time and features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents. The bottom staff, labeled 'Parche', is in 3/4 time and features a rhythmic pattern of quarter notes with accents.

EXAMPLE 1. *Cuatro Preguntas*, score for piano.

The image shows a piano score for 'Cuatro Preguntas' in 6/8 time. The score consists of two systems of music. The first system has the lyrics: 'Nie gas con él lo quehi cis te'. The second system has the lyrics: 'y mis sos pe-chas-tea-som bran etc.'. The melody is in the right hand, and the bass line is in the left hand.

EXAMPLE 2. *Tiple* and guitar in *bambuco*.

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff, labeled 'Tiple', is in 6/8 time and features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents. The bottom staff, labeled 'Guitarra', is in 3/4 time and features a rhythmic pattern of quarter notes with accents.

In contrast, “Waiting on a Miracle” does not present a strong syncopation, nor does the guitar serve its original purpose. As stated before, the inclusion of *arpa llanera*—from

the *joropo* genre and the Llanos region<sup>16</sup> — is even more questionable, as it adds a dance-like feeling not particular to the *bambuco* dance. Another resource taken from *joropo* is the bass line. This particular element seems to be one to set aside the original idea of the song from being a *bambuco*: a comparison of the bass line in the piano score of “Waiting on a Miracle”—which in the orchestration is played by the electric bass— (Example 4) with *Cuatro Preguntas* shows the visual and thus, the contrasting aural outcome. The left-hand part in this section of “Waiting on a Miracle” gives the song a sonority of *joropo por derecho* (Example 5).

EXAMPLE 4. “Waiting on a Miracle”, piano and voice score.

The musical score for "Waiting on a Miracle" consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is G major (one sharp) and the time signature is 4/4. The vocal line includes the following lyrics: "fine... I can't move the mountains. I can't make the flow - ers bloom. I can't take an - oth - er night up in my room, wait - ing on a". The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line. A red bracket highlights a section of the bass line in the piano part, which is characterized by a steady eighth-note pattern. Chord diagrams for E, Dmaj9, F#m, and E are provided below the piano part.

<sup>16</sup> According to the entry of Colombia in the *Grove Music Online*: “The Llanos is the large region of grassy plains that stretch from the foothills of eastern Colombia into south-west Venezuela. The music of the Llanos is dominated by the recreational dance style known as *joropo*.”

EXAMPLE 5. In *Sistema B*, observe how the bassline of a *joropo por derecho* works as in “Waiting on a Miracle.”

The image shows a musical score for four instruments: Arpa, Cuatro, Bajo, and Maracas. The score is divided into two systems: Sistema A (Por correo) and Sistema B (Por derecho). The Arpa staff is in treble clef, and the Cuatro, Bajo, and Maracas staves are in bass clef. A red oval highlights the bassline in Sistema B, and a red arrow points to the Bajo staff.

The next proposed song is the record-breaking “We don’t talk about Bruno.” In 2022, five weeks after its theater release, it ascended to No. 1 on the “Billboard Hot 100” chart, becoming Disney’s second song to hit that position since “A Whole New World” from *Aladdin* (1993).<sup>17</sup> As for Miranda, this position gained him the credential of “single-writer song” in four years. And *not to talk about* numbers and social media overwhelming reception. “Bruno” is an ensemble song, characteristically from musical theater, in which six members of family Madrigal narrate each one’s perception of *Bruno*, a character seemingly prohibited to mention until that point. The base of the song is identified as *guajira*, a rhythm particular to *son Cubano*; it has a middle section that includes rap and hip hop—a distinctive element from Miranda’s composition style—, a contrasting vocal ballade, and an ending where the entire ensemble gathers to create an intense polyphony singing each one’s verse at the same time, to make a climatic return to the final chorus. Instrumentation-wise, this song does not use symphonic orchestra but only a typical *son*

<sup>17</sup> Gary Trust, “‘We Don’t Talk About Bruno,’ From ‘Encanto,’ Hits No. 1 on Billboard Hot 100,” January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022.

group with piano, electric bass, and different percussion instruments such as *bongos* and *maracas*.

Now, if there is a common and defining trait of *salsa* throughout its evolution in Latin countries, it is syncretism. Originating in New York around the 1960s from Afro-Cuban and Puerto Rican music, *salsa* has many variants, including performance and composition styles that change from country to country. Its origins in Colombia are traced to the first half of the Twentieth century with the introduction of Cuban music records through *Buenaventura* Pacific seaport. It was in the 60s and 70s that became established in Cali and Barranquilla cities, with artists and bands such as Joe Arroyo, Grupo Niche and. The development of Colombian *salsa* involved, once again referring to syncretism, the fusion of Colombo-Caribbean folklore as *currulao*, *porro*, and *cumbia*, mainly adopting instrumentation and rhythmic patterns from them.

In the same interview for “The Movie Reporter” mentioned previously, Lin-Manuel Miranda stated that one of his main influences when composing for *Encanto* was Joe Arroyo and his *salsa*. Nonetheless, it should be highlighted that the instrumentation in Arroyo’s songs—and the vast majority of Colombian *salsa*—is mainly for a larger ensemble, with the primordial presence of brasses (trumpets, saxophones, trombones). Below is a comparison of the instrumentation for “We Don’t Talk About Bruno,” and Joe Arroyo’s popular “En Barranquilla Me Quedo.” The first example, as noted before, shows a small group of instruments for the particular *guajira* sonority, while the second one shows a full “salsa orchestra,” even including a *marimba* as evidence of the Colombian influences.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> For the scores, refer to the notes at the final section.

As the film was developed during COVID-19, orchestral score composer Germaine Franco could not go on the research trip; however, she had traditional instruments built and brought to her in order to find the ethnic sounds she was aiming for. It must be highlighted the use of in the track “Family Allies,” where its distinctive color and timber are easily heard, and the syncopation of the violin’s melody with the percussion, creates a balanced fusion of traditional and cinematic elements. Unfortunately, as part of the orchestral score but not of the main songs of the movie, it is likely to go unnoticed by the general audience. Even more, hit songs as “We don’t talk about Bruno” or tracks as “Dysfunctional Tango,” contribute to the assimilation of Latin cultures, which will be discussed further, as they do not point any specific Colombian genre, but from Cuba and Argentina respectively. These two types of music are broadly known and studied, overshadowing the existence of non-Caribbean Colombian traditions like *bambuco*.<sup>19</sup>

Overall, several valuable elements were incorporated into the film score, making the aural outcome appealing to both natives and non-natives. Listening to instruments as *tiple*, *arpa llanera*, *marimba de chonta*, *acordeón*, traditional rhythms and genres, and the feature of Colombian artists like Carlos Vives, Sebastián Yatra, Carolina Gaitán, Cristian Camilo Peña, among others, invited to perform and record some of the songs is a highlight of the film. This section constitutes a proposal to listen to *Encanto*’s soundtrack, and hopefully to other soundtracks, from a critical perspective, considering the crucial role of music in the construction of national and personal identities. It is far from a critique of the musical quality of the score and songs, of which popularity speaks for itself.

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<sup>19</sup> John Varney, “An Introduction to Colombian ‘Bambuco’,” *Latin American Music Review* 22, no. 2 (Autumn–Winter, 2001): 125. As stressed in the article, by 2001 there were only three English sources on Andean music from non-Colombia authors.

### Assimilation and Extraction in the making of *Encanto*

The brief previous musical analysis brings out a couple of reflections worth noting. From a semiotic perspective, the first issue that arises is a lack of correlation between the visual and the musical context.<sup>20</sup> Colombia is a multicultural and diverse country, and the conception of *Encanto* itself is based on a mixed depiction of many of these multicultural aspects. On-screen, it is possible to recognize the contrast in tangible cultural artifacts such as clothing, everyday objects, flora and fauna.<sup>21</sup> While Miranda’s proposal of a *bambuco* relates to the geographical locations in which the story of *Encanto* develops, the fusion of elements results in contradictory representations—thus, in the commercialization of Colombia’s culture—. During the live concert of *Encanto* at the Hollywood Bowl (2022), the song “Waiting on a Miracle” is performed with an off-stage live symphonic orchestra, a small on-stage ensemble of traditional instruments, the original actors and singers, and some dancers. Regarding the dancers, they appear in costumes that do not correspond to the *bambuco* dance tradition, nor are they dancing to it (IMAGES 1 and 2).

IMAGE 1. Traditional *bambuco* costumes.



<sup>20</sup> Laura Gualdrón, “La banda sonora de ‘Encanto’: una mirada a las representaciones sociales de Colombia en el cine Disney del siglo XXI,” (2024): 69.

<sup>21</sup> Costumes and clothing from the Andean region as well as from the Atlantic Coast; “Carmen de Viboral” hand-made pottery from the central region of the country; fauna and flora from the mountains and the Amazon rainforest, among others.

IMAGE 2. *Joropo* traditional costumes (left), *Encanto* representation of *bambuco* in the Hollywood Bowl (right).



Although this may not seem relevant, it is important to understand it from a post-colonial mindset. The black and Indigenous roots of *bambuco*, in addition to the oral tradition characteristic of it, challenged its establishment as national music and the consideration of its worth among society elites. Already well positioned in 1867 in conservatories and salon parties, it experienced a setback when literature author Jorge Isaacs (1837–1895) highlighted the slave’s practice, and the consequent reaction of many supporters was to contradict him and defend its Spanish roots. This is a sign of how endemic aesthetics had to undergo a process of *blanqueamiento* or purification of ethnic traits to be considered in the construction of the national canon. As stated by Ochoa, this is shown by the efforts to fit *bambuco* under a European metric system—which denotes an epistemological problem—the attempt to deprive it of polymetric and the rejection of its African roots.<sup>22</sup> Consequently, without trying to imply it was Miranda’s or Franco’s

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<sup>22</sup> Ana María Ochoa Gautier, “Tradición, género y nación en el bambuco,” *A Contratiempo: revista musical en la cultura* 9 (1997): 42.

intention, this characterization of *bambuco* in “Waiting for a Miracle” poses an assimilation problem.

Citing the work of investigator Noelia Gregorio-Fernández, “‘Appropriation’, also described in critical race theory as a cultural exchange, entails some differences from the concept of ‘assimilation’. While ‘assimilation’ describes what happens when minority cultures adopt features from a dominant culture in order to fit in, ‘appropriation’ exploits other cultural idiosyncrasies either for commercial benefits or in a cultural exchange. Cultural appropriation has been largely considered as a negative notion of ethnic studies, and thus something to be avoided. However, [...] appropriation and assimilation may encompass beneficial strategies when making Latinx representation in Hollywood visible.”<sup>23</sup> Alongside Gregorio-Fernández’s, to James Young appropriation is the use of cultural elements by a group of members from a different culture that acquires a negative connotation within the context of theft.<sup>24</sup> In this text the terms assimilation and extraction are used instead of appropriation, as the later displays, most of the time, an accusatory implication.

In such sense, *Encanto*, and the way its soundtrack was conceived, exemplifies assimilation by blending distinguishable ethnocultural groups into one and further, implying the absorption of them into the mainstream.<sup>25</sup> As seen in the case of the track “Dysfunctional Tango” and the song “We don’t talk about Bruno,” Franco and Miranda merge Colombian culture within a transnational, pan-Latin, conception. Even when it can

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<sup>23</sup> Noelia Gregorio-Fernández, “Lin-Manuel Miranda: New Articulations of Latinidad in the Hollywood Imagination,” *Camino Real* 4, no. 17 (2022): 85.

<sup>24</sup> James O. Young, *Cultural Appropriation and The Arts* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 21.

<sup>25</sup> Rubén G. Rumbaut, “Assimilation of Immigrants,” *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* 2, no. 2 (2015): 81.

be acknowledged as “Disney’s endeavor to add diversity into its films,”<sup>26</sup> it must be considered the advocacy of post-colonial studies to claim ethnic authenticity for its own, not for what European or North American canons considered worthy. In other words, it becomes a setback by wanting to fit Latin identity into one big culture rather than each country’s, to integrate it into the US and Hollywood market.

Extraction, on the other hand, contributes to the perpetuation of the hegemonic narratives. As mentioned before, Hollywood has controlled in large scale the stereotypes of Latinx people in its productions, and more specifically, the narratives of Colombia’s conflictive history. Coming to this point, I am willing to comment on a personal concern: as members of Colombian and Latinx community, it is our own responsibility to change the stereotypes of the society we have built, supporting diverse representations and not adding up to the negative narratives.<sup>27</sup> Nonetheless, an undeniable reality is that the global entertainment capitalized by companies as Disney—“company” instead of “studio”, in this case is more suitable due to its different ways of making profit—that reach global audiences, hold a responsibility when appropriating on the stories and history of different places to build their owns.<sup>28</sup>

In the case of *Encanto*, extraction is manifested in the temporary decontextualization of the story. As the film progresses, a year or historical period is never established. However, based on the visual representation of the locations, the garments worn by the characters, and the understanding of the social context, it is probably set

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<sup>26</sup> Gregorio-Fernández, “New Articulations of Latinidad,” 76.

<sup>27</sup> Many Latin American productions themselves perpetuate and profit from the stereotypes of Latin countries and Latinx communities.

<sup>28</sup> In this case, I am not referring to “appropriation” in the context of theft and oppression but to the process in which every artist is involved by borrowing and creating on the base of others’ ideas.

around the mid-1900s.<sup>29</sup> Thus, the very rural and colonial looks depicted suggest a narrow image to the audience not familiar with the country's actuality. Hence, building on the image of Latin American countries as underdeveloped. Although *Encanto* treasures a wide array of diversity, landscapes, and traditions cherished by nationals, it is concerning to look at other examples of movies such as "Mr. and Mrs. Smith" (2005), which reinforce this conception.

## Conclusions

*Encanto* brought to light a commonly forgotten version of Colombia and its people, distancing it from widespread negative stereotypes. The production of the movie holds up to major Colombian costumes and idiosyncrasies, but it is still necessary to evaluate specific approaches, as mentioned in this research, especially while dealing with a long-time socially and historically complicated context. Although some of these reflections may come from a personal place, part of the theoretical framework proposed was driven by research that shares similar concerns about the role of mainstream media in the dissemination of native cultures. In other words, extraction and assimilation<sup>30</sup> work as a translation tool for predominant groups—in this case, Western—to create a closer engagement with the stories presented on the screen, at the cost of sacrificing true identities and establishing standardized and generic models. Todd Gitlin's concept of the "second culture" leads to reflecting on this last point, as the products from the Northern Hemisphere do not have to be "translated" to generate engagement with audiences beyond their borders.

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<sup>29</sup> Although forced displacement was a recurring problem during most of the Twentieth, and a part of the Twenty-one century.

<sup>30</sup> Two terms that do not mean negative connotations per se.

Finally, it is important to make clear that there are no harmful depictions of Colombian culture on *Encanto*. The downside of accuracy comes from, however, the lack of active participation of Colombians in making crucial decisions, such as the curation of the music. Lin-Manuel Miranda and Germaine Franco designed a record-breaking soundtrack and involved some Colombian artists in it, but it could have actually been a platform for more socially involved artists—as one of the elements of the screenplay is taken from a crucial social problematic. Thinking about the long term, *Encanto* is probably a good start to conveying Colombia's different realities, while in the short term, audiences from all ages are mumbling to “Waiting on a Miracle” in a waltz-like form.

### Notes

1. The 1953 *Peter Pan* movie adaptation included not only harmful racial stereotypes as referencing Native Americans as “redskins” or “savages,” but also sexist behaviors like the complete lack of participation of the Indigenous princess “Tiger Lily” in the song “What Made a Red Man Red?” The producers of the movie have tried to frame these portrayals under the argument that they only were the impressions of Indigenous people through the eyes of Peter Pan, the never-aging child. However, the original story by J.M. Barrie and its movie adaptations were written in social and cultural contexts that did view minorities as such. Moreover, many arguments that search to defend inaccurate representations state that these are “children's movies,” which seems irrelevant as it does not take away the responsibility for respectful representation.
2. Rooted in the political and economic oppression of large landowners' groups, Colombia's most violent history dates from the second half of the 20th century, in

which major *guerrilla* insurgent groups appeared as a response to the lack of Government protection in the marginalized rural territories. In 2016, after almost 60 decades, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (the most prominent leftist *guerrilla*) signed a historical peace agreement to put an end to the violence perpetuated by them toward the civilian population. Nonetheless, narcotraffic also saw its rise in the 70s, permeating multiple spheres of society—including *guerrillas*, politics, and Government—contributing to the violence and the establishment of Colombian stereotypes.

3. Aside from being the first woman ever to compose a score for a Disney animated movie, Franco's music for *Encanto* positioned her as the first Latina to win a Grammy Award for Best Score Soundtrack for Visual Media and the first Latina nominated for an Academy Award for Best Original Score.
4. (EXAMPLES). A transcription of the song "We Don't Talk About Bruno", composed by Lin-Manuel Miranda, compared to the salsa song "En Barranquilla Me Quedo," by Joe Arroyo. See the instrumentation.

“We Don’t Talk About Bruno”

Musical score for the song "We Don't Talk About Bruno". The score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). It features five parts: Piano, Bajo, Congas, Maracas, and Bongoes. The Piano part is circled in red. The Congas part includes 'x' marks above notes to indicate specific rhythmic patterns. The Maracas and Bongoes parts also show rhythmic notation.

“En Barranquilla Me Quedo”

Musical score for the song "En Barranquilla Me Quedo". The score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). It features ten parts: Trompeta en Sib I, Trompeta en Sib II, Saxofón Alto, Claves, Cajón, Bateria, Marimba, Piano, and Guitarra Bajo. The tempo is marked as  $J = 100$ . The Piano part is circled in red and includes a dynamic marking of  $f$  (forte). The other parts are mostly rests.

5. (IMAGE). Bogotá, as seen in the movie “Mr. and Ms. Smith”. Despite being a modern and developed city, the capital of Colombia, it is shown as a forest under flames.



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