An emotional journey through Mexican films
from the 40’s and 50’s
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ABSTRACT

One of the characteristics of film viewing since the beginning is the reaction film causes in the audience. This emotional reaction puzzles me. The aim of this study is to discover how film conveys emotions to the viewer and how these emotions are triggered. Film viewing has an emotional response often expressed by the viewer whether the film was good or not. What is it that makes it so appealing to our emotions?

In order to find an answer I have looked through the theories of Greg M. Smith, Annette Kuhn, Allan Casebier and Colin McGinn, among others, to unveil how this emotions emerge. These theories approach the emotions in different ways giving a wider view of how emotions emerge during the film viewing. Personally, I am emotionally attracted to black and white Mexican films from the 40’s and 50’s and based the analysis on some of this films.

After analysing Mexican films from the 40’s and 50’s I have come to the conclusion that the emotional reaction can be analysed by filmic tools such as the mood-cue system or the reading of thresholds and boarders, among others. The sum of visual, aural, narrative, movement among other elements together trigger emotions expressed depending of one’s own beliefs. Films have developed a wide range of ways to cue the viewer to a certain response and enhance determined emotions. The emotional response is however strongly linked to the individual background of the viewer and its beliefs. This makes a general reading not always easy to predict.
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1. INTRODUCTION

“It is one thing to say what an aesthetic object is; it is another thing to say what it does to us”.

Monroe Beardsley, *Aesthetics*

It is undeniable that film viewing affects audiences as Allan Casebier explains. There is always a reaction to it, it is never neutral. Hollywood, one of the biggest film producers of our time, has even been called a dream factory.

To see film is to be able to experience someone else’s reality for a short while, like stepping into someone else’s world, and at the same time unavoidably, to recreate a new experience of our own, according to our background and cultural context. This stepping in and experiencing something positive or negative in such a short time interests me. When people usually talk about films they talk about if they liked it or not and this brings me to think of the emotions that film often develop in the audience. This essay is about trying to understand how we get these emotions that are often pleasant or unpleasant and how film as a medium is able to achieve this.

Is it our background that taints our way of interpreting a film and responding in an emotional way? Is it the illusion that film brings that is so appealing to us or simply that film is our dream catcher and that is why the satisfaction after seeing a film can be so strong? Or is it simply a way of day-dreaming through film as the viewer fantasises? As Torben Grodal writes: “The represented objects and film scenes are transformed into types and paradigms, and lose their sense of concrete reality.”

Since the beginning of film history film has raised emotions. Maxim Gorkij described Lumière’s Cinematograph as a grey, depressing experience: “It seems as though it carries a warning, fraught with a vague but sinister meaning that makes your heart grow faint.”

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which has developed within time. The spectator’s approach to cinema has been developing as we become used to viewing films. The same way understanding film is not a simple task, it took a long time and film scholars have been developing new skills.

Some philosophers have tried to answer the question of why the spectator has strong emotional feelings to film as a natural response to the representation of something that the spectator cares for. Imagining how we would react to a certain situation triggers a natural emotional response. Thomas Wartenberg writes: “Because how we imagine things working out does affect our emotions, fiction films have an emotional impact upon us”.

The production of films has from the beginning been working on how to achieve and convey response in the spectator. As film industry developed the methods became more refined and accurate. Undoubtedly film is a medium that uses both visual and aural senses to convey a story. Film enhances our senses and in a compressed way submerges the spectator in another world. Literature does something similar, but in a longer period of time and imagination substitutes the visual. Therefore the result of the experience is different. One could say that film is more immediate in its way of transporting or submerging the spectator in another world or space.

As Jean Mitry explains: “The essential nature of the cinema is to be an image. A sequence of moving images…film is movement and change…” Movement and change such as life and film represent such in a very vivid way. Mitry says that: ”in literature, movement is a goal, in cinema it is merely a beginning”. It is like Pandora's box, an opening for the spectator’s emotional response.

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5 Jean Mitry, The aesthetics and psychology of the cinema, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), p.16.
6 Ibid., p. 18.
2. PURPOSE AND RAISING OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this essay is to try to understand what specially film triggers in order to give an emotional response in the spectator. Whether the response is positive or negative there is always one. Is it the mere medium of the moving image, or the way the story is narrated that produces the response? Or is it that the audience is taken by the hand during the narrative to create a certain response? And in that case, how is it achieved?

Colin McGinn writes: “there is something about movies specifically which succeeds in connecting to the human psyche in a deep way”.\(^7\) He analyses the power that film has to touch the spectator. Film through its visual power makes contact with the viewer’s emotions. How this contact occurs is what this essay is about.

Cynthia Freeland talks about the sublime in film and the emotion that this promotes in the viewer. She also discusses the illusion that film triggers in the spectator through the perceptual processes involved in film viewing.\(^8\) But she restricts this sublime emotion to just certain types of film.

As mentioned before Gorkij had a strong reaction to a film when viewing one of the first films of Lumière. What is undeniable is that there was an emotional reaction. This was partly because of the novelty of the moving image and partly thanks to the vividness that this new medium conveyed to the viewer. The vividness is still there, while the novelty has vanished. The spectator has learned to see films in a different way as technology has advanced and the films have become a natural way of entertainment and art appreciation. I shall depart from the way we see film today, as film now a days is a natural narrative medium. We do not see film today as a novelty or an unusual medium of expression.

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3. METHOD AND SOURCES

Mexican films from the period of the 40’s and 50’s lie near to my heart. They show a Mexico that has disappeared and which arouses strong emotional response in me. I would like to discover what triggers this sentiment so strongly. With the help of some theories which explain the emotional response to films, I will try to unveil how it is triggered resulting in a positive or negative experience.

For this I will go through Greg M. Smith’s Emotion Theory\(^9\) based on the cue-mood approach as well as some of the articles edited in *Passionate Views*.\(^{10}\) Cognitive theory shed some light on how we are able to interpret and respond to film in an emotional way, although it gives a physiological answer through the brain and nerve response. Greg M Smith bases his theory on cognitive psychology and neuropsychology. Annette Kuhn explains how an aesthetic experience in cinema emerges through the link between inner and outer world and its thresholds. The aesthetic experience is closely linked to the emotion that comes with it. Her article “Thresholds: film as film and the aesthetic experience”\(^{11}\) might bring some light on the subject. She explains how cinema is “able to evoke the very structure of feeling”.\(^{12}\) Allan Casebier’s book\(^{13}\) on film appreciation provides the means to see the different elements that shape film. Through the understanding of its different elements it is possible to see how emotions are triggered. Colin McGinn\(^{14}\) makes an analogy between the immersion in dreams and the immersion the viewer experiences in film. This immersion entails feelings and emotions, which are the subject of this paper.

The narrative and different elements of a film such as the photography, the music, the mise en scène and the dialogue play an important function in the way a film is viewed and experienced. One’s personal background also plays a roll. All this together will give an emotional response which is very interesting to try to break down and understand. Much has been written about Russian montage and the way they used films and montage in order to provoke a specific response. The making of marketing trailers are also made trying to achieve

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\(^{11}\) Annette Kuhn, "Thresholds: film as film and the aesthetic experience", *Screen*, Vol. 46, No. 4, pp. 401-414.
\(^{12}\) Ibid., p. 414.
\(^{14}\) McGinn, ibid.
a specific response. This essay aims to understand how a story told visually provokes strong emotions and creates a special magic.

In order to understand how emotion is a normal response to film viewing, I will set some examples referring to Mexican cinema, as my background lies there. The Mexican films involved are from the 40’s and 50’s:


They are all Mexican dramas, melodramas and comedies. I will be concentrating in certain scenes that highlight the emotional response. *Salón México* was directed by a well-known director Emilio “Indio” Fernández and photographed by Gabriel Figueroa. It takes place in the dark surroundings of a very well-known dance saloon in Mexico City. Buñuel’s films are beautifully photographed by Alex Phillips, Gabriel Figueroa and Raúl Martinez Solares. With his unique way of expressing himself, Buñuel manages to capture and show Mexico’s soul in a very special way. Both Phillips and Figueroa are well-known for being first class in their profession. These films arouse different emotions in the spectator which would be interesting to analyse.
4. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 Greg M. Smith’s mood-cue approach.

Greg M. Smith departs from his own mood-cue approach to try to understand the emotional reaction to film viewing. At the same time Smith compares his approach to other theorists such as Noël Carrol, Ed Tan and Torben Grodal. Carrol makes a genre oriented analysis based on horror films, in particular the characteristics of the monster. Tan bases his analysis in the importance of interest, as it is interest that induces the viewer to discover the world the film presents. Tan and Freija believe that emotions are action tendencies (interest vs. mood) and that is why interest encourages us to perform certain actions. Grodal develops a model of the interrelationship between fiction, reality and emotion where film style can evoke emotion.\(^{15}\) According to the above scholars film emotions are character-orientated. They neglect the importance of other features that help provide emotional appeals such as style, which gets a secondary role. Smith summarises: “In each cognitivist theory the dominant mechanism engaging filmic emotion depends on characters and their actions”.\(^ {16}\)

David Bordwell explaining Cognitivism writes that it: “holds that people’s perceptions, feelings, and actions result in significant part from processes which go beyond the input to the senses. These processes include prior mental representations which to an important degree are projected onto the world out there, as a way of ordering it”.\(^ {17}\) Cognitivists in general share the idea that the knowledge of mental processes help to a better understanding of film. The first researches were based merely in physiological response: the central nervous system (the peripheral theories), emotions reside in the thalamic region of the brain (central neurophysiological theories), feelings are motion cues provided by the environment (cognitive appraisal theories: how one characterise objects and how one assess their relationships with those objects) and emotions have to be understood within culture (social constructivist theories).\(^ {18}\) Greg M. Smith points out that Cognitivism is based in philosophy and psychology. It explores the nature of emotion from two different points of view according to their own disciplines methodology.

\(^{15}\) Smith, *Film Structure*, ibid., pp. 65-81.


Smith proposes that emotions are groups of responses to several possible eliciting systems. Emotions are, so to say, linked to thoughts and memories as well as patterns of physiological reactions. According to Richard S. Lazarus “emotions are what may be called multidimensional response syndromes”.  

Smith explains that it is not possible to specify which response a specific person will have. It is anyway only feasible to point out a number of possible responses. Through his theory Smith explains how a film can evoke similar responses in audiences and widely different in individuals. According to one’s emotional state we tend to interpret stimuli, these so-called moods tends to keep us oriented to express and experience an emotion. This predisposition helps us experience emotion. For him it is important to pay attention to how long term mood and brief emotions interact across the film. This way it is possible to maintain a mood predisposition or create an emotional reaction. Through the reading of the mood-cues in a film it is possible to anticipate an emotional reaction or presume what might come.

In Smith’s Emotion System he argues that it is important to understand the interaction across the film of the long term mood and the brief emotion. He explains how the mood prepares the viewer for what is coming, which maintains a constant expectation throughout the film. Brief emotion prepares the viewer for the changes in the narration. The different stimuli used in a film to create a mood prepare the spectator for a certain predisposed reaction. That is the interaction between the mood and the brief emotion. In order to achieve brief emotions the classical Hollywood cinema uses what Smith calls emotion markers. These are: “configurations of highly visible textual cues for the primary purpose of eliciting brief moments of emotion”. Often this brief burst of emotion is used for either to maintain a wished mood in the audience or to mark a turn in the story. In order to achieve this, simple devices like music or sounds are often used and they tend to be uncomplicated and direct.

Music, sound, mise-en-scène, lighting, photography, acting, narrative provides the viewer with information which are series of emotion cues headed to create a certain reaction. They can be prototypical (when asking to interpret for example characters actions) and not prototypical (by recurring to redundancy in order to gain access to the emotion system). “Cues

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18 Smith, Film Structure, ibid., pp. 15-18.
19 Cited in Greg M Smith, ”Local emotions, global moods”, ibid., p. 107.
20 Ibid., p. 107.
21 Smith, Film Structure, ibid., pp. 23-40.
22 Ibid., p. 44.
are the smallest unit for analysing a text emotional appeals. Mood is sustained by a succession of cues”.  

Smith’s theory helps analyse the mood in a film and how the small bursts of emotion either help maintain or alter the mood orientation. But he explains also that through so called genre microscripts, “intertextual expectation sets for sequences and scenes”, it is possible to assume what is to occur. The audience has already a collection of microscripts acquired through time and this helps the viewer in the reading of the films genre microscripts. In this way films encourage the viewer to a certain emotion. Smith points out that recognising and labelling an emotion does not mean that you experience it, it is a mere a cognition. But it is the first step to shape an emotional experience. That is why, in a film, the combination of the genre microscripts with patterns of emotional cueing will encourage the viewer to feel the emotion. As Smiths writes: “a text provides only an invitation to feel, not an irresistible prescription. If mishandled, genre microscripts can derail the emotional appeal established by the mood”. Filmmakers take advantage often of a mixture of genres in order to provoke a certain mood or emotion.

Films can be redundant when it comes to the amount of emotional information they provide. This in order to elicit emotions frequently and maintain the mood. For this the filmmakers use film features such as music, shots, facial features, texts, etc. Some filmmakers on the contrary use less information in order to create a special response. The finish director Kaurismäki is one of them. Sometimes the emotional response is strongly linked to the main character (goal orientation), as Buñuel’s film Nazarin, where the viewer is taken through the film awaiting Nazarin to succeed or fail through life.

Smith concludes that there is a broad range of emotional associations provided by music, mise en scène, shot, sound, etc. and not only by representations of human actors. And that is why it is so important to understand the complex range of emotional appeals that films make.

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23 Smith, Film Structure, ibid., p. 47.
24 Ibid., p. 48.
25 Ibid., p. 49.
26 Ibid., pp. 51-57.
27 Smith, "Local emotions, global moods", ibid., p. 126.
4.2 Allan Casebier

As Allan Casebier mentions many of the beliefs and expectations developed through culture are brought by the viewer to the film screening and depending of that will influence the viewing. He writes: “The presence of aesthetic qualities in a film depends in part on whether or not it makes contact with our beliefs”. Part of the emotions arising from film viewing has to do with the viewer’s own cultural and personal experience. Depending for example on the viewer’s concept of women or marriage, will the reaction to film scenes regarding this subject follow his preconception. Carl Plantinga agrees on this as he writes: “Our responses to films depend on our culture’s moral order and can function to prescribe and proscribe thought, feeling, behaviour and values”.

The way the filmmakers use the on-screen space and time, affects the viewer, eliciting a response, explains Allan Casebier. But this response is depending on the perceptual ability of the audience. It is said to be an aesthetic response to the visual or aural. When talking about time and timing in a film Susan L Feagin explains that the portion of a film to which one is responding is an elicitor, but the response can also depend on the properties of the viewer, so to say beliefs, ideas, abilities and other psychological conditions of the viewer. Both Casebier and Feagin agree that although films elicit a response it varies from viewer to viewer.

The use of what Casebier calls uncertainty affects in film (dreams, transformations, juxtapositions, identity changes among others) are meant as an awakening call to the viewer, as one is never sure of the reality or unreality of the events. This disruption has an emotional effect in the viewer. It is often used by surrealists such as Buñuel.

4.3 Annette Kuhn

Annette Kuhn in her essay, “Thresholds: film as film and the aesthetic experience”, explains how the relation of the individual inner and outer reality is related to the aesthetic experience, when viewing a film. She bases her approach to film viewing in the English psychoanalyst

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28 Casebier, ibid., p. 76.
30 Casebier, ibid., p. 60.
D.W. Winnicott’s theory of transitional objects. In order to understand how an aesthetic experience is gained it is necessary to see how the mind returns back to old experiences in order to relate and understand the new ones. Winnicott based his theory on his observations of children. The way children link their imaginary inner world to the outer real world, through so called transitional objects. These transitional objects belong to the inner and outer world at the same time. It is the link between both worlds, as they have an affective imaginary value for the child, but they are physical and belonging to the real world. The Teddy-bear is according to Winnicott a transitional object and part of the transitional phenomena, where children learn to link the inner and outer world and later on the adults use it to acquire an aesthetic experience. Annette Kuhn talking about transitional objects says: “they have a physical existence, but at the same time they are pressed into the service of inner reality. They are at once part of the subject and not the subject”. She extends this idea to the film frame, which according to Milner: “marks off the boundary between two worlds, or two realities as she puts it”. Important to take in account is that the frame sets boundaries that include and exclude (inner-outer world) and that they are crossing points as well as cutoff points. Kuhn opens an understanding of film and its emotional response regarding the viewers background and experience, which triggers when stepping into the frame. This stepping in happens automatically when the viewer gets absorbed by the film screening.

Rephrasing Bazin she underlines the importance of: “the fact that a film’s ‘perfect neutrality and transparency of style’ makes a connection with the viewer’s experience of the world”. What separates the inner and outer reality is a boundary that can be a frame, a threshold, a window, a door which gives the green light to develop strong emotions or feelings. Film as film enables the viewer to relate its own experience to what it is shown in the frame, developing an emotional reaction either positive or negative. The viewer might be seeing the same scene, but with different emotional experiences that brings different emotional results.

Kuhn suggests at the end of her essay that cinema in general resembles or “evokes the very structure of feeling, the experience of such quests through their organization of space(s) and

32 Kuhn, ibid., pp. 401-402.
33 Ibid., p.401.
34 Ibid., p. 403.
movement within the film frame”. According to her, regardless of the story content, cinema evokes fundamental experiences in the process of becoming human beings. It is important to take in account her point of view as it may help us to understand the process that elicits emotions during film viewing.

4.4 Colin McGinn.

McGinn says that: “movies are primarily a medium of sensation and feeling, not for abstract thought”. He explains how film lives in the senses. Film viewing “enters the brain through its sensory centres and radiates outwards to the emotional sub-regions”. When talking about the power that films have on the viewer McGinn points out that films penetrate our inner spaces, just as dreams does. One submerges into its inner world while viewing a film and open our consciousness, letting it enter one’s private space where sensitivities and vulnerabilities are located. He underlines the power of entering into one’s inner space where feelings emerge. It is the content of what we see that wakes up our senses into feelings. The mixture of reality and imagination that a film conveys, opens the viewer’s senses and makes contact with its emotions. McGinn stresses the similarity between dreams and films as they depart from reality into the realm of fantasy. Film engages one’s mind and offers us fiction, it is in a certain way transformative of reality. It is the power of imagination that films offer the viewer.

4.5 Summary

In this chapter different theories have been laid out regarding the way the viewer experiences emotions through a film screening. All of them agree that film opens our senses and touches the viewer. Whether it is the narrative, the music, the mise en scène or the connection with our senses there is always an emotional response. Kuhn talks about the aesthetic experience that film brings us, evoking the transitional spaces where children learned to connect their inner and outer world. McGinn comes to a similar conclusion in a different way as he says that film penetrates our inner spaces. Feagin, Casebier, Plantinga and Kuhn point out the importance of our own beliefs and cultural background in the way we respond emotionally to film viewing. Smith through his mood-cue approach offers the means to see the cinematic structures that appeals the viewers to an emotional response.

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37 Kuhn, ibid., p. 414.
39 Ibid., p. 203.
40 Ibid., p. 198.
5. BACKGROUND TO MEXICAN PRODUCTIONS IN THE 40’S AND EARLY 50’S

It is important to take in account the background of the chosen films. They are included in the so-called Mexican Golden Age of the cinema (1947-1959) which represents the richest period of film production and profit during Mexican film history. A lot of money was invested during this period in the film industry and this gave, among others, Luis Buñuel the opportunity to film in Mexico. The production of films was targeted to make films meant to be an economical success. A certain formula was developed to produce dramas, melodramas and comedies with known artists who could secure the economic success. Mexico, Brazil and Argentina were then the big film producers in Latin America. Big film studios such as Churubusco Studios were constructed and the Banco Cinematográfico (Film Bank) funded production expected to have commercial success. As a consequence of war the European market produced less films and many were exported to Latin America and Spain. During this period many patriotic scripts were filmed.\(^{41}\)

Luis Buñuel (1900-1983) moved from the United States to Mexico City after leaving Spain in the 30’s. In the United States he had been working, among others, for the Museum of Modern Art in New York and for Hollywood’s Hispanic Productions. Buñuel’s first film in Mexico was a flop, *Gran Casino* (1946). The film was starred by Jorge Negrete, a well-known actor and singer, and Libertad Lamarque, an Argentine actress and singer, who wanted to be successful in Mexico. Carl J. Mora writes: “The result according to Buñuel, -was a tourney to see who could sing more tango, Lamarque or Negrete.”\(^{42}\) As he arrived in Mexico he had to submit his ideas to existing scripts, which gave him the opportunity to work. Later on he was able to change this and make films based on his own ideas and scripts. His rich film production during the 50’s is entirely Mexican, before moving to co-produce with Spain and France in the 60’s.\(^{43}\)

Emilio “Indio” Fernández (1904-1986), known for his patriotic films, probably influenced by his past as a revolutionary soldier and the time spent afterwards in the United States. He was an actor, screen-writer and director. He worked with the well-known photographer, Gabriel


\(^{42}\) Ibid., p. 76

Figueroa, and actors such as María Felix, Pedro Armendáriz and Marga López.\textsuperscript{44} His films are known for his portraits of Indians, rural stories, Mexican landscapes. \textit{Salón México} is among his few urban films. Exquisitely photographed by Gabriel Figueroa, he takes us around the surroundings of the well-known dancing venue in Mexico City.

Most of the chosen films are photographed by Gabriel Figueroa and Alex Phillips, both well known and winners of several international photography prizes in the film industry. They both worked in the United States, where they learned to master the camera before moving back to Mexico.\textsuperscript{45}

It is also relevant to talk about Mexico’s background. The original native population consists of different Indian cultures which disappeared or almost dissolved with the arrival and stay of the Spaniards. Today Mexico’s population consists mostly of a mixture of Indian and Spanish peoples and cultures. This mixture has given the culture a special twist that makes it very sui generis. This is of course tangible in the Mexican film production. The three centuries which the Spaniards stayed in Mexico, left deep marks in the culture. The United States, the Independence movement (1810) and the Revolution (1910) have had a strong influence in the development of the country and the culture, which is manifested in Mexico’s film industry.

\textsuperscript{44} http://cinemexicano.mty.itesm.mx/directores/indio_fernandez.html, 2007-03-23, 13:05
6. FILM ANALYSIS

The following analyses are based on the above mentioned theories and are meant to enlighten our understanding of the emotional response in the spectator.

6.1 Salón Mexico (Salon Mexico, Emilio Fernández, 1948)

Synopsis

This is a drama set in a well-known dancing saloon of the 40’s. This is the story of a prostitute, Mercedes, who struggles through life and sacrifices herself to provide her sister, ignorant of this, a better life. She works at a saloon where her pimp takes advantage of her. Mercedes pays for her sister’s boarding school, letting her live a rich girl’s life. She is due to get engaged with a war hero. Mercedes has a friend-lover who is willing to stand for her, the policeman Lupe.

The film opens with strong non-diegetic music that turns suddenly diegetic showing the neon lights of the Saloon’s sign glowing in the night. The camera moves slowly down showing the entrance of the saloon and the street where couples and women are on their way to the saloon. The photography is black and white with low-key lighting, gloomy and dark giving a dubious atmosphere. Casebier points out that the lighting used for a film helps to form our perception of its world, in this case it is dark as to underline the atmosphere of the saloon. The mood for drama is established depicting a decadent world. Mercedes arrives and salutes the guard at the entrance. The looks she gets, while smiling and gyrating her hips rhythmically as she walks in the saloon, tells of her profession predisposing the viewer positively or negatively. The guard (Lupe) greets her with a big smile and helps her light her cigarette. He looks at her with admiration, the viewer gets a cue of a probable further relationship. The way she is dressed, her heavy make-up and cigarette denotes that she is a woman of dubious reputation, which provides at the beginning of the film a cue to the viewer of the central character. Feelings for or against Mercedes have been set already.

We see the band playing, a smoky, dark saloon, couples dancing and a man (Paco) telling somebody that he has to see to that he wins the contest. The mood has been settled through the loud music, the low-key lighting, the cramp and smoky interior, the exaggerated make-up and costumes conveying a feeling of trouble and confinement. The dance contest is on and Gabriel Figueroa (the photographer) focuses with a low long-angle shot on the couples’ dancing. The focus on the dancing feet and the music emphasises the sexuality prevailing in
the saloon. This emotion marker reinforces the feeling of decadence and danger, maintaining the viewer in expectation.

The viewer becomes aware of Mercedes’ need of money, her fragile position and her desperation as Paco denies her, her share of the money they just won on the dancing contest. The cue for a desperate reaction from Mercedes permits the viewer to be prepared emotionally. The tension increases as she clings to Paco by the saloon entrance. Mercedes follows Paco across the street into a hotel, where he has gone in with a hooker he picks up on his way in. This crossing of the street marks an escalation of the tense-mood. Although the saloon is not a safe place she now heads out for the unknown. Crossing borders as Kuhn says is an emotional trigger in itself.

The diegetic music of the saloon links the former and this scene. As the music escalates an almost violent and noisy Afro Latin American dance is shown, heightening the tension for the coming development of the film. The camera takes close-ups and medium long shots of the musicians, the dancers and music instruments. A close-up of a horn-like instrument gives the viewer a subconscious cue. The atmosphere is loud and noisy preparing the audience for the next scene. The loud music from the saloon shuts down and a soft music sounds as Figueroa shoots a low angle close-up of Mercedes’ high-heel shoes while she takes them off. The viewer is cued for nervousness as she seems to be unprotected. She enters tip-toeing in Paco’s room, while he and a hooker are sleeping. The neon sign lightens the room intermittently, making the viewer nervous. After she struggles silently looking around for the money, she manages to get it. She flees away through the stairs. This long-shot lets the viewer’s emotion rise as the music suddenly heightens, making the spectator take part in the runaway. As Mercedes gets to the street, the music increases dramatically while she takes nervously the money and drops the wallet. The camera reveals some footsteps coming and somebody picking up the wallet; it is Lupe, the policeman.

Mercedes runs to her house, a multifamily building, a vecindad, typical of Mexico City’s poor neighbourhoods. Gabriel Figueroa, the photographer, shoots from the entrance, an arch, letting the viewer see the staircase in the background, windows and lots of washing hanging here and there. She is home and as Kuhn says, safe in her own environment. This emotion marker is immediately interpreted by the viewer as a safe space. The music still cues tension for the viewer. Mercedes hides the money and takes out a hat and a dress and irons it. Calm
reigns in her safe space, home. Next morning, in the daylight, she is dressed-up as a proper lady. The emotional value the diverse gowns Mercedes wears in the different environments as well as the lighting, enhances the difference between both worlds. The viewer is, so to say, manipulated to recognise the honest and dishonest woman and the environment (upper-lower class) in which she lives. The emotional reading of the film becomes complicated as the audience have their own prejudices against prostitutes. Already from the beginning of the film, the dress-code is of essential importance. Social class and moral value are nearly linked from the beginning to the dress-code, which in this case is used as an emotional marker.

The film breaks its narrative flow as the director, known for his patriotic vein, forges twice the story with his patriotic inserts. First as he takes the viewer around Mexico City. And a second time as Beatriz (Mercedes’ sister) recites at school about heroism making parallels to her sister’s sacrifice as well as the country’s heroes coming back from Second World War. Casabier names the factor of belief in the audience strongly linked to the presence of aesthetic qualities in a film. Here the patriotic input breaks the flow in the narrative and makes it difficult to maintain the mood.

In the scene where Paco takes Mercedes by force across the street into the hotel, the crossing of the border signals for danger. The fear and disgust she feels cues the viewer to feel fright for her as the music reinforces the feeling. Paco demands his money back and begins hitting her. The audience has been prepared and the scene elicits a strong reaction. She is being brutally battered. While this is going on, the camera shoots from above a shadow entering the hotel, music underlines the suspense. Although there is not a distinct musical cue for the film or the characters, the director does use music to cue a certain emotional development. The shot is wonderfully composed as we see someone’s shadow grow while the music accentuates it. Lupe arrives and hears Mercedes screaming, he runs up the stairs and enters the room saving her. He treats her with the utmost delicacy, enhancing her value for the viewer. A dual sentiment flourishes in the viewer, on one hand she has been looking for trouble and on the other she is sacrificing herself to give her sister a better life. Paco, astonished and frightened, exclaims that she has stolen his wallet. Lupe lets her go and takes off his police jacket saying: “Hit a man if you are such a macho!”. Paco ends up all beaten up and threatened not to touch Mercedes ever again. The scene ends while Lupe slowly dresses up after the fight while the camera turns to focus on Paco who is lying in a corner all beaten up. The viewer gets his emotional pay-off as Paco ends up beaten as a sign of punishment.
Lupe is Mercedes’ moral support and regards her as a sort of saint, as she does everything to avoid her sister ending up as her. A cue for the viewer is his name which is the short name for Guadalupe, the virgen, patron of Mexico. A musical cue is given as Lupe meets Mercedes and confesses his love and desire to marry her. She is unable to accept as she needs to earn much money for her sister. Ironically the band is playing “Si Juárez no hubiera muerto…” (If Juárez had not died…), which cues the viewer on Mercedes’ fate. Benito Juárez, former president of Mexico, fought for the equality of human rights. The music reinforces the desperate mood. This is enhanced by the next scene where Beatriz meets her sweetheart to be. The viewer is forced to compare the clean rich atmosphere of Beatriz’ boarding school and life in the saloon.

At the saloon there is a wonderful scene where the hookers are sitting down in a row waiting to be picked up to dance while chewing gum. It reflects the waiting in the hooker’s life, depending of the men’s decision to pick them up. It shows the passive position inherent in their occupation as well as life at the saloon, this, in contrast to the band playing and dancing. Mercedes finds it more difficult to earn money and Paco tries to convince her to return to him. He tries again to coerce Mercedes to help him, but she flees. The emotional marker is to create anxiety and nervousness in the viewer. As Mercedes is scared, Lupe accompanies her home. On their way out of the saloon a lady sells him a white flower for her. He reacts anxiously as he says that it is a flower symbolising death and it might bring bad luck, but Mercedes is happy to receive it and wants to keep it. The flower is the cue for the further development.

As they arrive at the vecindad where she lives, we hear a street barrel organ in the background, typical sounds of the time. Once again the house is framed through an arch with the staircase in the background. The stairs give the audience a cue of the boarder to two different worlds or situations. It strengthens the mood of the unknown coming. At her home, a medium close-up of a portrait of the virgin Guadalupe and the flower she offers to the virgin, cues the viewer for disaster. She undresses and gets ready to go to bed, unaware of what is coming. This sequence is rich in cues as the virgin represents the protection Mercedes is longing for, the flower the danger and her home what she regards her safe place.
Meanwhile Paco has committed a robbery and the police are on his heels. The intense music with harsh rapid character is used as the emotion marker to convey the desperate feeling of the robbery and the runaway. Paco hides in Mercedes’ home and they both end-up in jail. A beautiful medium close-up of Mercedes behind bars in jail sustains the desperate mood she is in. The scenes in jail are taken with low-key lighting and using shadows to deepen the feeling of sorrow and desperation in the viewer.

This scene takes place during Christmas Eve, as a posada (a Christmas typical celebration) takes place in the saloon and fireworks are set off in the streets. Mercedes has decided to marry Lupe and to look for a new place to live. As they head to her house the music cues suspense increasing gradually as the camera zooms the front page of a newspaper, letting the viewer see the photograph of Paco, cueing for disaster and danger. Lupe and Mercedes walk along the street calmly, totally ignorant of the news printed in the newspaper.

As Mercedes and Lupe approach her home the barrel organ plays. This emotion marker repeats every time she comes home. Mercedes says goodbye to Lupe by the staircase, as he recommends her to move to another place as soon as possible. This underlines for the viewer the danger she is in. The camera slowly retreats taking a long-shot of her ascending the stairs, as Lupe starts smoking framed by the house’s arch. This reinforces their good-bye and sustains the melancholic mood as he goes off-stage, the music continues. As she enters her home a dramatic music marks for trouble. Paco is waiting for her and tries to convince her to run away with him. The music follows and reinforces the dramatic events conveying emotions to the viewer. The low-key lighting and close-ups of Paco, Mercedes and later a gun sustain the dramatic development. Mercedes, desperate because of his threats, stabs him and he shoots her with the gun. At the mortuary, Lupe laments her death and says she was the greatest woman he ever met. Back at school, Beatriz is graduating, sad because of her sister’s absence. The story ends without her knowing the truth. The film closes as it began with a scene of the saloon and the music of Juárez played by the band.

The film is full of stereotypes of the good and bad in all senses. Although not in a constant way the film manages to keep the mood using emotion markers, cues and microscripts among others, creating an emotional reaction. The use of props as the shoes, the street, the cloths, the flower, her house, the newspaper as emotion markers reinforce the mood or marks a turn in the story. The atmosphere of the saloon and the vecindad, enhanced by microscripts, is well
represented, both visually and aurally. The music is intentionally used to heighten the feelings in the viewer.

6.2 Nazarin (Nazarin, Luis Buñuel, 1958)

Synopsis

It is the story of Nazario, a Roman-Catholic indigent priest, who lives his life according to his beliefs, struggling in life against adversity in order to keep his faith alive. He lives in a poor neighbourhood among contempt and disrespect from even the prostitutes. Beatriz, a countryside girl who is disillusioned and heartbroken, is struggling to keep on living after her boyfriend leaves her. Ándara, a prostitute, who always insults Nazario ends up wounded after a row and begging for his help. As a result he ends up being accused of a fire she provokes and running away to the countryside. He even has to renounce being a priest.

In the countryside Nazario is unwillingly joined by Ándara and Beatriz. They form a bizarre trio with a mixture of faith, superstition, humbleness, which is easily misunderstood. After many tribulations Nazario ends up in jail and almost loosing his faith.

The film is divided in two parts. First the inn, a close environment, characterised by low-key lighting, where the characters are presented and the story begins. Second the countryside, an open environment, where the high-key lighting predominate, and the following events take place. Although the story is based on a novel by Benito Pérez Galdós who was Spanish (Gran Canaria), the story, based in Mexico depicts the Mexican way of thinking. The script is supervised by Emilio Carballido a well-known Mexican writer.

Our first impression is while the credits are running and drawings of Mexico City at the beginning of the century are shown. The sounds of the town are heard in the background: a “ropavejero” (a person who buys and sells old clothes) shouting after goods, horses galloping, music from a street barrel organ, street sellers, galloping horses from a carriage, barking of dogs, a tamales (typical Mexican food) seller etc. Annette Kuhn writes: “In British cinema, the front doors of terraced houses in the cities in the north of England hold a wealth of other meanings, and these are deepened by the idiosyncratic meanings of the front door in this particular film”. Making a resemblance with the British cinema one could say that this prelude opens a vast world of experiences and gives the viewer a taste of what is to come. The taste of old Mexico is vivid and creates an emotional response for those who have the

46 Kuhn, ibid., p. 409.
background. For those who have not had this experience it opens a new world and the curiosity of what is to come. An emotional response is triggered as the mood is settled.

The scenery is settled in an old shabby house ironically called “Meson de los héroes” (Heroes’ Inn). In this particular house live poor people, sarcastically called heroes by Buñuel. The camera zooms in from the house’s sign to the inside of the inn. Indians arriving with their donkeys, prostitutes with grotesque heavy make-up are zoomed in letting the spectator hear their conversation, small mischievous children, running around depicting life in a poor neighbourhood establishes the mood. The beautiful black and white photography accentuates the poor scenery.

The camera takes the viewer upstairs to the first floor where Nazario (the priest) lives. Nazario’s house has been stolen again. He seems calm and content. He wonders if the landlady (Sra. Chafa) could give him something to eat. This sequence prepares the viewer for disaster. According to Smith’s mood-cue approach there is already at the beginning of the film an emotional framework that will elicit a certain amount of possible emotions. Of course depending of the viewers own background. Casebier mentions that “the presence of aesthetic qualities in a film depends in part on whether or not it makes contact with our beliefs”.47 The film is about faith and religion and how Nazario is ready to sacrifice himself to a divine belief in a world full of superstition, injustice and disbelief. In an almost humorous way, Nazario shows how his few belongings have been stolen. Here a light comedy cue is used breaking the drama mood. This is often used developing a complex emotional mix used to surprise the viewer and encourage feelings.

There is an amusing detail in the way he goes in and out of his home, through the window as the door is on the other side, by the other staircase. In the middle of the eighteenth century windows and doors were taxed by the government in order to raise funds. As a result many windows and doors were filled in so as to pay less taxes. This use of the window as a door strengthens in a humorous way the mood of misery in which Nazario and the other inhabitants of the inn find themselves. It also allows Buñuel and Figueroa to take aesthetically beautiful shots, as when Nazario converses with Sra. Chafa and one sees his sober and almost empty home in the background. Arches, windows, doors and later landscapes frame the development of the story. Once again this brings one’s thoughts to the thresholds that Annette Kuhn talks
about. Nazario’s own world is separated by the window-door and arches surrounding him. His world is in a certain way naked, but at the same time rich for him. This develops a reaction in the viewer either positive or negative depending on its own point of view regarding religion.

Through Beatriz’ character the viewer gets emotion markers in two dramatic scenes. The first one, with a comic twist, as she is about to commit suicide by hanging herself in a ceiling beam, which breaks making her fall down. The second as she realises that Pinto, her lover, is leaving her and mocks her. She reacts laughing deliriously. Her laugh is synonymous with her desperation. This gives the viewer a cue of how she is on the edge of insanity. Here the viewer not only gets an emotion marker, but its own beliefs heighten the emotion. It is not merely that love triggers her desperation, it is her social position, the fact that she suddenly has no real value in society. In Catholic Mexico, relationships are not approved before marriage. As she feels abandoned she seeks Ándara’s company as they come from the same town. In a typical Buñuel nightmare or hallucination, Beatriz sees Pinto and herself talking about how he is going to use her and leave her. The scene is shaky to denote the dreamlike situation, she ends up biting him to bleed in dreams. She is unstable and does not know what to do with her life now that her lover has abandoned her. The viewer tends to feel sorry for her. As McGinn denotes the face of dream characters are full of emotions, in this case fearfulness. Strong affects are caused by dreaming and Buñuel takes advantage of this. The uncertainty between the real and the unreal elicit emotions.

The prostitute, Ándara, is portrayed, on the contrary to Beatriz, as a strong woman ready to make everybody hear her. In the following scenes the mood is reinforced by emotion markers as Ándara trespasses Nazario’s home. The viewer meets her as she insults Nazario (an emotion marker which strengthens the viewer’s impression of a defenceless priest) without any shame. She opens his window without knocking and blows her smoke in his face before insulting him. The second time is after having a big quarrel with another prostitute, she is injured and seeks refugee with Nazario, as nobody will look for her there. The scene begins as Ándara opens Nazario’s window without knocking and entering his home. Again she trespasses his domains without any grief. This violent trespassing thresholds are emotionally significant, as Nazario is defenceless and dragged in unexpected situations, which will have consequences in his life. As Kuhn points out the borders imply considerable emotional and imaginational weight. She explains home as a safe place, which in this case has been violated.

47 Casebier, ibid., p. 76.
With the installation of electricity in the inn, modern times are cued. This indicates to the spectator that the period is Mexico at the beginning of the century, before the revolution, when Porfirio Diaz (the president) was still in power. It is a land where the gap between rich and poor was enormous. This is well depicted in the sequence where a priest obliges an Indian, who has passed by without greeting him, to go back in the road and return again in order to greet him, as it should be done when there is somebody of higher rank. It is as well illustrated through Àndara’s and Beatriz’ superstitions which show their ignorance in comparison with Nazario. Hunger prevails and work is not easy to obtain. In the scene where Nazario wonders through the countryside and begs for some food at a railway construction, the foreman answers that there is no place for lazy people. Nazario stays, exchanging his work for food. But he is thrown out of work by other workers who think that working for just food is not a good deal for the rest of them. All this provides the viewer with an idea of how the country looked like at the beginning of the century. This scenes show how emotion markers and microscripts are used to reinforce the viewer’s feelings for Nazario as well as to maintain the mood. It is important to stress that microscripts convey their full meaning depending of the viewer’s background.

Àndara stumbles into Nazario’s house at night as the church bells toll, while he is praying before Christ’s portrait. This portrait will be a significant cue later on, when Àndara hallucinates as she hears Nazario pray in Latin. She sees Christ’s portrait in the wall smiling and mocking her. As she covers her face a cry is heard. A cut is made and the action takes place in the inn’s yard by daylight, where a boy is being spanked. The cry links both scenes and brings Àndara back to reality. Christ is depicted as protecting, frightening and mocking her. A cue is even given to the viewer as there is sunlight outside, while inside darkness and shadows prevail.

The Mexicans have a special way of adapting religion to their own needs, as a result of the mixture of the old Indian cultures with Catholicism. Religious symbolism is a part of the Mexican way of life. It occupies an important position in day-to-day life. As the Aztecs (among other Indian cultures) had a polytheist religion it left its trail in the importance the people give to its saints. Àndara prays to San Antonio to protect her and when this fails, she burns him. This microscripts, as Smith calls them, might be difficult to read for those who lack the background.
When Ándara is denounced to the police, she sets fire to Nazario’s place and flees away with Beatriz. The scene where she is discovered hiding, is full of cues. There is Ándara’s own fear and Nazario’s neutral position, where he does not mind being discovered and ending up in jail. Suspense tightens as Ándara asks Beatriz for petrol and burns up the place, including the effigy of the saint. As Smith says the burning is the emotion marker that will give a new turn to the story.

Nazario, suspected by the police for the burning, is expelled from church. He decides to go to the countryside. One day when passing a town, Nazario encounters Beatriz who begs him to meet her niece who is ill. Suddenly he is received as a saint with powers to cure. He is stupefied and accepts to see the girl and pray for her recovery. He believes in God’s will and does not accept other reasons. During the scene where Nazario and the other women pray surrounding the girl, ignorance and barbaric behaviour prevails, as the women scream and pray awkwardly. Buñuel creates a surrealist scene where chance might bring the girl’s health back, as it occurs. He takes advantage of making the viewer immerse in a dreamlike state in the surrealist scenes creating microscripts that enhance the emotions. The above sequence, full of emotion cues, results in a turn in the story as from now on Nazario will continue his pilgrimage in the company of Ándara and Beatriz.

Buñuel presents a character who often appears in his films: a dwarf, hanging upside down on a tree being molested by some men. This figure, which is not unusual in towns as a result of misery and ignorance, depicts a bizarre love to Ándara. The bizarre in this case is an emotion marker to keep the viewer tense waiting for the development of the story. To introduce almost at the end a deformed person is a way to dislocate the narrative to provoke the viewer.

The film concludes with an open ending where Nazario, accompanied by a guard, receives fruit from a vendor as he goes to meet his destiny. At first he rejects the gift, but then accepts it. This gift depicts a typical Mexican gesture, and it can be interpreted as a sign of life. He seems desperate and discouraged for the first time.

One particularity of this film is the almost prevailing absence of music. This silence reinforces the mood throughout the film. The strong drumming that increases in the final scenes reinforces Nazario’s despair as he faces jail or death. This musical or sound cue increases at
the same time the viewer’s feelings for or against Nazario’s position in life. Although a
drama, Buñuel manages through dialogue and situations to make the viewer laugh. These
emotion markers maintain the viewer’s interest throughout the film. Knowing the historical
and cultural background it is easier to understand their reactions. Buñuel provokes the viewer
by juggling with the real and unreal. The language is a cue marker as it underlines the social
position of the characters throughout the film.

6.3 Subida al Cielo (Ascent to heaven, Luis Buñuel, 1951)
Synopsis
It is a light-hearted comedy taking place in a fictitious town, San Jeronimito, on the coast of Guerrero, Mexico.
Oliverio, who is newly wed has to interrupt his honeymoon to try to get his mother’s will legal. For this he
embarks in an adventurous bus journey to look for the lawyer. It is a journey full of unexpected events and
temptations. In order to get to this town they have to cross a dangerous hill called “Subida al cielo”. He has little
time, as his brothers are coercing the authorities to get the will done according to their own wishes.

The first cue-mood for a comedy is settled as we hear the narrator compare the production of
the palm tree with a cow: “Coconut palm trees produce as much as a cow”. The town has no
church and the marriage ceremony takes place in this particular town where the couple spend
the night on an island. But before spending the night together, they have to ask for forgiveness
from the bride’s mother. The inhabitants of this dreamlike town have no religious ties and live
in a place resembling paradise. The opening is accompanied by strident music which denotes
the comedic vein of the film. Buñuel settles the mood through dreamlike situations, with his
mixture of fantasy and reality he challenges the viewer’s emotions. The language is an
important factor too keep the mood and heighten emotional situations throughout the film.

The arrival of the daily bus brings news from the world which underlines that this town lies
far away, or maybe is not real at all. The bus will have a central place in the development of
the story. It epitomises the Mexican idiosyncrasy and sense of community. At the same time it
represents the place where dreams are being fulfilled, it is a strong microscript throughout the
film. As Smith points out, its value depends on the viewer’s already acquired microscripts, so
to say its own background. Travel is in itself an emotion marker as it represents mobility, a
change, which always implies consequences and feelings. There is a time-space dichotomy
implied in the opposition between narrative and visual attraction. Film in itself implies a
double movement as we see space become time. Travel is a form of transition, a boundary
crossing, an illusion or the dreaming becoming reality. This brings us back to Kuhn and the crossing of boundaries, full of emotions. As soon as the travellers step into the bus a new world is open to them.

The film is marked emotionally by interrupted journeys which keeps the viewer laughing and in suspense throughout the story. As Casebier says much of the liveliness and humour is produced by the relation of the film and the viewer’s own beliefs. The first one is when Albina’s and Oliveiro’s honeymoon is interrupted by his brother (Felipe). They are travelling in a decorated boat where the movement of the camera and the photography makes it surrealistic, this sensation strengthens as Felipe arrives in his motorboat. This particular visual style enhances the sensation of unreal, which Buñuel will be using throughout the film as an emotion marker. This way of dislocating or interrupting the viewer’s attention creates emotions.

There is a lively gathering at the bus, loading and making everything ready for the journey: Oliverio on his way to the lawyer, a pregnant woman on her way to a doctor, a politician flirting with Raquel, Silvestre (the bus driver), a one-legged man among others. The dialogue is very picaresque and full of Mexican expressions, which cue the viewer for an enjoyable trip. When the politician tells Raquel that he is her admirer, she answers that she likes fruit, but not rotten! The surrounding mob laughs and comments that his influence has just wilted! A man arrives to talk to Silvestre asking him to lend him the return ticket, as he has no money. This scene synthesises what Mexico is: the sense of national identity that has its roots in the colonial heritage and indigenous tradition. The lightness of gatherings where everybody is cordial and helpful is typical of the country. The different characters: politician, pregnant woman, the man hoping to get back his fortune and the one-legged man, all give different emotional angles to the story.

The journey on the bus opens the door to a fantasy world for the viewer. This implies of course opening the senses for emotions. McGinn mentions how the blend of fantasy and realism accentuates the dreamlike character of the film and gives way to emotions. This is well depicted in the bus ride, as we see the bus curve rapidly along the roads and ascending with difficulty to the mountain. A camera shot from the inside of the bus frames the border to the outside which is getting foggy and dangerous. The feeling is totally surrealistic. The lack
of music focus on the visual effects of the ride: shaky camera, long shot to emphasise the hardship of moving upwards, etc.

As they begin driving uphill the twisty road becomes foggy. Silvestre is having a hard time driving and hearing all the mean comments of the passengers who are becoming nervous with the ride. The viewer becomes tense waiting for something to happen. Suddenly they meet with a car coming in the opposite direction and as it is so narrow, they have to stop to avoid a crash. Everybody gets off the bus. They try to convince the car driver to move backwards but as luck would have it, he is unable to do so as his car lacks a reverse gear. This incredible situation causes the viewer to laugh. Amazing, though not an impossible situation, if the viewer is familiar with Mexico’s ways.

The bizarre situations, as well as the dialogue, make the viewer laugh and enjoy the development of the narrative. These emotion markers reinforce the mood. In the middle of all this, the pregnant woman, who has been feeling bad during the journey, begins to give birth. One of the ladies in the bus commands Silverio to bring two women to help while everyone gets off from the bus. In the middle of this situation she gives birth to a boy. Strident modern music sounds as she is carried down from the bus to the other car, who is driving her back home. The atmosphere and the language is very colloquial. This situation strengthens the bonds among the passengers. The politician offers to be the new-born’s godfather. Silverio moves back to let the car pass and the journey continues. The music vanishes as the mother and the new-born disappear in the other car. A long-distance shot of the cars on the steep road is both funny and unreal, because of its faked scenery which accentuates the predominating fantasy feeling.

The viewer expects another mishap as we see the bus crossing the river. A farmer and his daughter are waiting for Silvestre, the girl’s godfather, by the river. The sound of the bus’ motor decreases almost completely and the sound of water increases before hearing the voices of the farmer and the girl. This accentuates their role. This marker prepares almost unconsciously the viewer for what is coming. As expected, the bus becomes stuck. The farmer tells Silvestre not to worry, that’s why he is there with his bullocks to drag him out. A funny situation develops as everybody comes down in the middle of the river. Raquel immediately flirts with Oliverio, as she pulls up her skirt to avoid getting wet and convinces him to take a

48 Casebier, ibid., p. 76.
dip with her. The politician becomes desperate with the situation and affirms that progress has arrived and points to a tractor in the field, that will pull the bus out, according to him. The farmer answers that his bullocks are slow, but effective. This points hilariously the crossroad in which Mexico finds itself between modernity and the old ways. This microscript is full of emotion cues such as Raquel’s insistence to seduce Oliverio, the tractor versus the bullocks, Oliverio’s desperation as his destination seems to be so far away. All this contributes to reinforce the mood.

Non diegetic music sounds as Raquel and Oliverio take a dip. The music strengthens the situation and tunes for laughter, which is inevitable in the viewer. Music stops as we see the struggles to pull out the bus. Meanwhile the politician and the tractor driver get stuck in the river, in their attempt to pull the bus out. All this while the passengers burst out in laughter. The situation is hilarious as progress seems to be less effective than animals. The bullocks manage to pull the bus out of the river guided by Silverio’s goddaughter. This scene is reinforced by the non-diegetic music.

A cue marker is given in the scene where Raquel gives a bite of her apple to Oliverio, when sitting in the bus. It is an allegory of Eva tempting Adam in paradise. The background sound is the roaring of the motor engine, which increases as the camera makes a slow close-up of him and dissolves his image to focus on the inside of the empty bus. Where Raquel with Oliverio’s help undresses and goes to the end of the bus, that has suddenly turned into a thick jungle and Raquel seductively invites him to join her. The roaring vanishes as a band of musicians formed by Silverio and other passengers begin playing and give a funny and ironic twist to the scene. Oliverio sees his wife Albina by the river, being cheated and suffering by his betrayal and rejection. As Oliverio kisses Raquel he gets a sort of ribbon in his mouth, that suddenly ends up being knitted by his mother, who is an observer. His mother is sitting on a pedestal, watching him as she smiles from the top. The scenes are very hallucinatory and surrealistic, taking part in the bus and outside by a river. The mix up of Raquel’s and Albina’s personalities switch into each other, through dissolves, showing Oliverio’s mixed up feelings, a herd of lambs suddenly passes by. During this scenes the music turns softer. When Oliverio wakes up Raquel asks him if he was dreaming with her, he is carrying a lamb, which makes the scene hilarious. The juxtaposition of the real and unreal is a way to shock the audience to create emotions. As it is the ribbon hanging out of Oliverio after the kiss and linking him to
his mother, just as an umbilical cord does. Or the lambs passing by as he struggles with his feelings for Raquel and his wife. A feeling of uncertainty develops during these scenes.

Almost at their destination Silverio breaks out the news that they are making a stop at his mother’s place to celebrate her birthday. Everybody is invited. The Mexican national identity is highly identified with the mother’s figure, partly thanks to the catholic religion and partly because of the ancient Indian heritage. Octavio Paz mentions in “El Laberinto de la Soledad”: “the maternal body as the site which is simultaneously an altar of veneration and the place of an original shame”. Buñuel accentuates this through Silverio’s mother’s celebration. An emotion marker is the hilarious speech that the politician holds to Silverio’s mother, summarising the importance of the occasion. The irony of the scene heightens as a bus arrives with American tourists visiting the town. They end up joining the birthday party. This bizarre situations triggers positive reactions.

As Oliverio is continuing the journey alone Raquel manages to jump into the bus. Night has fallen, it is raining heavily and the bus ascends a twisty road uphill. The camera zooms in on a road sign and the viewer can read, “Puerta de la subida al cielo” (Ascent to heaven’s door). This title is an allegory as Raquel manages to seduce Oliverio after pestering him on the way up. The bus suddenly stops on the top of the mountain in the middle of the storm and the camera moves backwards giving a wide range of the scene. The scene gives the impression of unreal. Next morning the music cues for content as we see Oliverio and Raquel who seem to be very happy and satisfied. The music here enhances their feelings.

On their way back to San Jeronimito the bus stops to pick up some passengers. They are the farmer, who helped him -with his bullocks- cross the river, and some mourners with a coffin and a band of musicians. Silverio’s goddaughter died in an accident and now he is taking her to the cemetery. They all go up the bus creating a bizarre scene, as even the coffin is among the passengers. This disruption gives way to the viewer’s feelings. The way death casts a shadow on Oliverio’s bus ride is used in contrast to the humoristic emotion markers and microscripts throughout the film. The reminder of death appears as the girl’s funeral is depicted. As they arrive at the cemetery the band begins to play underlining their sorrow. This scene cues for the next one to come.

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Oliverio arrives late after his mother has passed away. While mourning, the camera zooms in on him dissolving his image into Raquel’s. She is eating an apple and spitting it out while she says she has got what she wanted. Her image dissolves returning to Oliverio, whose guilt increases. Here the prop of the apple is used again reminding the viewer of his sin and guilty feelings.

In the final scene Oliverio is with Albina by the seaside. With the sound of the waves as a background he swears that his mother’s wishes will be granted. The music starts as they walk towards the sea giving the story an open end.

Through this fantastic bus journey full of the unexpected and treated in a farcical way, Buñuel manages to sustain the mood throughout the film, making use of cues, microscripts and emotion markers. Through sequences like when they ride upwards the hill or the dream sections Buñuel manages to shock and convey emotions. With the use of music, travel interruptions, language, props and appealing characters laughter is a natural emotional reaction. Although a comedy Buñuel manages to show the struggle the country has with ignorance and superstition. The film captures the sense of community and the way people help each other without expecting a reward. This fantastic journey unleashes emotions in the viewer.

6.4 La ilusión viaja en tranvía (Illusion travels by streetcar, Luis Buñuel, 1953)

Synopsis

The story of two workers (Caireles and Tarrajias) from a streetcar company in Mexico City, who in a drunk spell decide to take streetcar 133 for a ride. Their problems begin as they fail to bring back the streetcar before anyone notices it. Their ride is full of incredible adventures and funny situations.

Once again Buñuel sets up his film predominantly in a streetcar, a travel device, which as mentioned before possesses the virtue of change, both in time and space. The mobility that time involves and the perception of spatial consequences of this mobility are central to the development of the story. The streetcar is a prop with strong emotional meaning in itself. It is the medium that the characters make use of to fulfil their dreams. It is a dream-like journey composed of funny situations that could end catastrophically.
The film begins with an aerial view of Mexico City and a narrator describing the hazardous life in the city. He explains that the story is going to concentrate on the bulging masses: people travelling by streetcar. A streetcar station is seen where the vehicles are being repaired. The car number 133 is just repaired to the workshop chief’s surprise. The car is doomed to be replaced by a modern unit.

Since the beginning of the screening Buñuel has taken the viewer by the hand to see the funny side of the working class of a big city. The way Caireles and Tarrajas talk to each other is unmistakable. An emotion marker is when we first see Tarrajas standing under the rails, being scolded by his boss for being where he knows he shouldn’t, the spectator bursts into laughs as he ducks to avoid being crashed by the passing streetcar. The comic mood is reinforced as Caireles breaks the good news that the streetcar is repaired, chaos takes place. They all go around trying to find out what to do with a streetcar that has been repaired sooner than expected. Although a comedy, to someone who knows the country, this may not appear improbable. Buñuel and the screenwriters masterly manage to bring the highlights of bizarre situations in a humorous way. Instead of keeping on working they decide to take a beer as the day is almost finished. Caireles and Tarrajas are sad as their job is endangered. Their way of talking is through Mexican expressions and slang. This brings the public into immediate laughter. They end up drinking in a bar ironically called “Bueno…y qué?” (yes…and?). Bars are known to have the most funny and incredible names and here it cues the viewer to laughter.

Next scene is at a vecindad, where a posada is being celebrated. A Pastorela is to be played. It is a satirical representation of heaven. Tarrajas is the fallen angel turned to devil and Caireles God. The angel is thrown from heaven and tempts Eve with the apple. With enormous horns Buñuel depicts a hilarious devil tempting Eva and Adam. Although it is a typical pastorela with jokes and written in verse, it is very much Buñuel in the setting up and

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50Tito Dreinhüffer: Recordó que la pastorela es un género proveniente de Europa que en sus orígenes se utilizó como medio para reforzar la fe, pero al llegar a nuestro país se empezó a mezclar con la picardía y el ingenio del mexicano, hasta lograr el género que ahora conocemos.(14 de Diciembre 2005). (The pastorela is a genre with its origin in Europe, which was used to reinforce the faith. In Mexico it mixed up with the cheekiness and ingenious of the Mexican becoming the genre now known).
taken into account his religious background. This allegory of the angel being thrown from heaven can be related to the streetcar 133, which is of no more use for the streetcar company.

It is inevitable to feel the Mexican atmosphere at the vecindad with the lady selling tamales and punch with alcohol and the guests dancing. Braulio, the watchman of the streetcar’s company, is celebrating at the posada while he left his job unattended. He cues the viewer as he says he does not need to be at his work as there is nothing that can be stolen. He laughs at the thought of a streetcar being stolen, cueing for what is coming.

Tarrajas and Caireles go to the streetcar depot to get some beer, as there is none left at the party. They sigh nostalgically when they arrive and see their streetcar number 133. Completely drunk, Tarrajas and Caireles decide to go for a ride in the streetcar, as according to them, nobody will notice. This cues the viewer into laughter, as a streetcar is dubiously rolling through the streets unnoticed. They agree to go to the vecindad to invite the guests for a ride. As the streetcar rolls through the dark streets it creates associations for the viewer, where fantasy and reality mingle. The dark empty streets today reminds the viewer of a time bygone. There is a beautiful scene where the streetcar is rolling towards the viewer giving a nostalgic and illusory impression. A shot of Caireles and Tarrajas inside the streetcar framed by the window, dark outside and bright high-key light inside, strengthens the impression of illusion. The streetcar is the boundary that leaves the real life outside, permitting them to fulfil their dreams. This sequence elicit emotions.

When the streetcar arrives, the lights are off and they meet some guests on their way home. Lupita (Tarraja’s sister) scolds them. They calm her by saying they are testing a ‘pilot service’. As the guests begin getting in the streetcar it seems that they are entering an imaginary world, where no problems exist and time has stopped. To begin with they are travelling without paying, late at night when no transport services are usually rendered. Here we could relate to Kuhn’s threshold theory where they step into an intermediate zone between reality and their own inner world. While the streetcar is rolling, some passengers, musicians, begin to play as requested by Caireles. They are eating, drinking and dancing in the streetcar, as in a dream. Raul Martinez Solares, the photographer, takes an interesting shot from the outside of the car looking into the illuminated interior. This gives the viewer the impression of peeking into a dreamlike world. It focuses on the window and the driver, Tarrajas, letting the
spectator see the lively action inside as a background. It is hilarious to hear the music and see Tarrajas, drunk, shake as the streetcar rolls.

The following sequence is a microscript full of emotion markers that reinforce the good mood. They arrive at El rastro (slaughterhouse) making the first stop. Confusion emerges as the guests get off and new passengers want to board the streetcar. Caireles decides to let them on without charging for the ride. This is happy news and as they board they begin hanging on the ceiling straps their merchandise. Big pieces of meat, chickens and a pig’s head are hanging all over the place. Passengers give them ‘kidneys and brains’ as a token, to show their appreciation for the free night ride. It is so grotesque and hilarious! Poor people from the countryside often share their few belongings with each other. The streetcar stops and picks up a couple of women. They have a big package with them and as they sit down they open it. It is an image of Christ (El señor de la columna) which, according to their conversation, will protect them. A fat butcher recognises them and says they are always telling stories to beg for money. A big fuss breaks out and everybody has an opinion regarding the women and their saint! It is a very funny situation, completely bizarre and eccentric, impregnated of community feelings.

Buñuel’s streetcar ride takes the viewer through unthinkable and eccentric situations, which open the imagination to a dreamlike world. The car rolling in the night is an emotion marker creating tension as Caireles and Tarrajas are drunk and Lupita completely mad. This night ride elicits feelings in the viewer and maintains the attention alert waiting to see what will happen.

The film takes a new turn as they cannot take the streetcar safely to the depot. This is accentuated and cued to the viewer by a camera shot of the rails as they are about to turn. The camera suddenly moves to the street signs showing how the turn is ignored by the tracks. They might get caught and end up in jail. The night that allowed them to dream is over and the prevailing daylight makes them nervous as they realise they are in trouble. Against all odds they have to continue. The viewer is now waiting for disaster to come. Daylight cues for the end of the dream. Reality has arrived.

The scene where they are stopped by a company inspector, who orders them to change their route is cueing for trouble. They are heading towards Niño Perdido (a street in Mexico City)
and new passengers come on board. In contrast to the passengers heading El Rastro these people are of a higher economic and social class. They become annoyed by the idea of not paying their fares as Tarrajás finds it difficult to charge them. He thinks that on top of stealing the streetcar now they are robbing the company, by getting paid for the ride. This scene refuels the mood as it represents the contradiction of two social classes. Among the passengers there is a former worker from the streetcar company called Pinillos. He is known to be a troublemaker and they become nervous. Pinillos realises rapidly that something is wrong and phones the company as soon as the streetcar stops. The streetcar leaves him by the phone box. In the company they do not believe him and say that car number 133 is dismantled and out of service. Pinillos figure is an emotion marker, as he represents a jeopardy.

The camera takes a close-up of the rail tracks as they are being changed. This cues the viewer for a change in their situation. This is the second time the film cues the viewer a change in the plot, using the rails as a marker. Tarrajás and Caireles decide to take the streetcar to an abandoned street so they can wait before taking it back to the workshop. They dismiss the passengers despite their protests. The whole scene is hilarious and bizarre. The fact that things happen against all odds is an emotional trigger for the viewer. The timing and length of the scenes are in itself an emotional trigger. Comedy depends on it.

Scenes such as where Lupita, Caireles and Tarrajás are standing by the front window of the streetcar waiting for the unknown, are emotion markers. This scenes open the viewer’s senses of their uncertain future, at the same time that it is almost aesthetically poetic. This scenes appeal to the viewer’s inner dreams, as travel implies change in space and time. To travel is a transition, a boundary crossing as Kuhn explains which creates an aesthetic moment.

The scene where Pinillos climbs into the streetcar and threatens them again with gossiping causes tension in the viewer. Tired and stressed by him, they want to throw him out. The tension reinforces as he suddenly faints. A policeman arrives and he is carried out to a nearby drugstore to be attended. The emotion marker caused nervousness in the viewer, but as Pinillos wakes up and leaves suddenly, this unexpected situation cues for laughter. Here the viewer goes from tension to laughter in few moments.

Streetcar 133 is at the depot. Braulio, Caireles and Tarrajás affirm that the car has been there all day. Pinillos gets angry and impertinent, and is thrown off the premises. This cues the
viewer for uncertainty of the real and unreal, did everything really happened? Out in the street they all head home. The narrator explains that life goes on in the big city.

Buñuel and the screenwriters manage to summarise Mexico’s economic situation through the film. Although a fine comedy, the film handles deep problems within the country. The film plays with the notion of reality and illusion, desires and fulfilment of them. It uses props as the streetcar, the streets, the rails to convey the emotions to the viewer. The timing as well as the length of the shots bring the viewer to laughter. Travelling as a dream fulfilment triggers emotions in the viewer. The language is a strong prop, because of its slang and idiomatic expressions, it conveys a world in itself. Travelling around in the streetcar crossing boundaries cues the viewer to a nervous breakdown as it implies the forbidden. The streetcar implies mobility in the viewers perception and unchains emotions.

6.5 *Los Olvidados* (*The young and the damned*, Luis Buñuel, 1950)
A realistic story about the hard lives of children and youngsters in indigent slums of Mexico City. Jaibo flees from the reformatory and goes back to his gang. Pedro, one of them, witnesses when Jaibo kills a youngster, as he tries to take revenge for his gossiping. This has strong consequences in Pedro’s life.

As the credits roll the music with heavy tones forebodes a drama. The narrator confirms this mood as he explains that this story could take part anywhere and the solution depends on society. The story is about the hardships of children living in poverty and misery. The first scene takes place in an abandoned state where a group of children and youngsters play football. They are smoking, swearing and drinking, which cues the viewer for trouble. The mood is established. They are talking about Jaibo, cueing for next scene, who just escape the reformatory and is looking for Julian. The language is raw and direct, harsh slang underlining the misery mood.

In the next scene appears Jaibo walking in the streets. This sequence cues for emotional hypothesis formation on Jaibo’s character, as Smith explains. The viewer gets its first strong emotional impression of who this character is. He seems very proud as he walks upright. His body movements signal confidence. This is confirmed in the next scene as he boasts how he escaped and all he has learned at the reformatory that will bring him money. He is talking to his gang, the group presented in the first scene. The mood has been established putting Jaibo
in the centre of the story. This scene is opposite to the next one as we see a boy sitting at a fountain in a market, crying. This emotion marker, strengthened by the foregoing scene, awakens the viewer’s feelings creating sorrow and expectation. The camera zooms into a blind musician playing for the market crowd trying to earn some money. Through this scenes we see clearly a series of co-ordinated emotion cues meant to reinforce the mood and preparing the viewer for the development of the story. The blind man complains about “today’s moral” compared with before.

Jaibo arrives with his gang and tries to rob the blind man. Although blind he senses they are robbing him and manages to hit the robber with his cane. The boys runaway hiding behind some sheds. The injured boy complains and Jaibo affirms that the rusted nail from the cane can cause an infection. He orders the boys to look for a spider web, which will cure him. Ignorance and superstition are an emotion marker reinforcing the mood of misery, helplessness and loneliness the children find themselves.

As the blind man is going to cross the street he begs for help. The crying boy is standing by his side and touching his face, the blind man ask him why he is crying. The boy answers that he is waiting for his dad. Although blind he seems to be able to see more than others (this will be an important cue in the further development of the story). The boy helps him cross the street. The blind man is being followed by Jaibo and other two boys. Low strident non-diegetic music starts as the blind man walks by a deserted construction site. The music together with the mise en scène are emotion markers for disaster. The music cues for what is coming as the blind man walks through the lonely site. He senses someone is after him and leaves his things as he turns around. He says: “Pity for this poor blind”, being an emotion marker as it heightens the tension. Jaibo and his friends beat him and break his instruments. They make him fall down and leave him. A hen suddenly appears by the fallen blind man. This sequences engage the viewer’s feelings as it is full of emotion markers and cues.

Next scene is linked with the former as Pedro (one of Jaibo’s gang) is seen in his house embracing a hen. The music continues until this scene fades out. The hen is a cue to break the story and create dislocation and surprise. Casebier explains this as a juxtaposing device to create the surrealistic impression. Animals are seen as defenceless and in this case both the blind man and Pedro are in the same position in life.
Pedro is badly treated by his mother. He runs away after stealing some food from home when she denies him dinner. Soft music starts again as the camera zooms the effigy of a virgin and then downwards toward the market fountain where the crying boy is sitting, waiting for his dad. Pedro arrives. The cue to maintain the mood is given by the music, the virgin and the abandoned boy. As he is hungry he gets some money from the boy and runs away returning with bread for both of them. The emotional framework developed by the film is enhanced once again with this scene of abandonment and solitude the boys are in. Julian passes by with his drunken father, giving an emotion cue of misery. As Pedro leaves, the boy follows him and the camera takes a long-distance shot of the boys talking and then disappearing through the dark street. This shot strengthens the mood of solitude and despair. They arrive to the house of Pedro’s friend where they get to sleep in the barn. The crying boy is named “Ojitos” (eyes) by a girl who lives in the house. In the barn Ojitos sucks milk from a donkey lying under it. Both the hen and the donkey are emotion markers. They convey the viewer to compare the social status of the children and the animals.

This is a drama with no taints of comedy as in Nazario. It is crude although a distinct sense of community is shown by the children, which convey the viewer warm feelings. Buñuel describes in a naked way a reality full of misery. The harsh cold way Pedro’s mother treats him raises the question in the viewer as to why she reacts to him in that way. And the viewer is awaiting an answer, keeping his interest alive. The way she treats Pedro compared with his siblings is a strong emotion marker in the first scene they appear together.

Jaibo asks Pedro to take him to Julian. Jaibo wants revenge, as he blames Julian he was locked in the reformatory because of his gossip. Pedro takes him to Julian’s work and asks Julian to go to talk to Jaibo. In the meanwhile Jaibo hides a big stone in a scarf he puts around his arm, pretending he is injured. Jaibo takes him to a lonely place. Again the construction site is in the background. After a row Jaibo hits Julian with the hidden stone. The music starts strengthening the scene, becoming more eloquent as Jaibo picks up a branch and batters Julian. This emotion marker is a turn in the story, as the meaning of this action has deep consequences for the three of them. Pedro tries to stop him, the music lowers down, giving way to the city sounds. Jaibo robs Julian, who is lying there defenceless, and gives Pedro his share. This dramatic sequence is central to the story. The depiction of the sequence is raw and naked strengthened by the music. The camera emphasises Jaibo’s look before hitting Julian,
giving cue to the viewer of the further dramatic development. The money is as well a cue, as it emphasises the connection between life and money.

Ojitos becomes the blind man’s helper. The blind man is a complex character as he seems to have an inner vision that permits him see things, as when he was robbed. He executes a sort of ritual with a white dove to heal a woman. As in Nazario superstition is part of their way of life. Their lives seem to be full of superstitious beliefs and hopes. This are emotional markers for the viewer at the same time that the microscripts may be interpreted depending on the viewers own experience on the subject.

The next scene is typical from Buñuel. A man without legs comes rolling down the street as he is attacked and robbed by Jaibo’s gang. He is left lying down helpless without his board on wheels. The shot is aesthetically beautiful which contrasts harshly with the scene enhancing its content. This bizarre and horrible incident is an emotion marker to maintain the dramatic mood. It brings out strong feelings in the viewer as we see the board on wheels rolling down the street. The next shot is ironically of a church, cueing the viewer to ask himself where God is. As in Nazario where a dwarf appears by the end here a disabled man is tormented. Buñuel uses this to dislocate the viewer’s attention and create an emotional discharge.

Pedro goes back home as he hears that Julian is dead. As he lies in bed, he hallucinates. his body unfolds in an ethereal Pedro. A hen appears cackling. He looks under the bed finding Julian lying there bleeding as feathers fall down. As the cackling continues, soft music begins. Pedro’s mother ask him what is going on and stands up on her bed. She goes down to him and tells him he is a good boy and wonders why he did that. The conversation takes place without moving their lips. He asks why she did not want to give him food and she gives him a raw piece of meat. Jaibo emerges from under his bed and takes the meat away. Thunder and strong wind appear. This nightmare allegory typical of Buñuel emphasises his anguish enhancing the viewer’s feelings.

There is a scene where Pedro’s mum kills a rooster and Pedro relives Julian’s death. His guilt hunts him. This scene is strongly connected with his nightmare, the cackling upsets him. Once again the hen/rooster is used as a prop to trigger a reaction. When later on Pedro is taken by the police to a special boarding school against his will, he reacts as his mother, killing the
hens. The music once again cues in the same way as in the other scene. This scenes are micro-
scripts full of emotional markers for the viewer.

A mute sequence, masterly filmed, shows the viewer the dangers of a big city. As Pedro cold
and hungry looks into a pastry shop longing for food. The camera frames him from the inside
of the shop looking through the window. The window separate him from getting food.
Referring to Kuhn’s establishment of boundaries, Pedro is in the outside open and dangerous
space, while food and in a certain way protection are inside the window. The music cues for
danger and expectation as a man approaches Pedro, convincing Pedro to accompany him.
When a policeman approaches, Pedro runs away and the man disappears nervously. This
emotion marker enhances the viewers feelings reinforcing the mood. It shows the danger
surrounding Pedro and how defenceless he is.

The scene where Pedro is taken to the police by his mother is full of cues strengthening the
feelings of pity and sorrow for Pedro. The music is soft to enhance the dramatic turn as the
mother explains why she is unable to love Pedro (he is the result of a rape). Pedro sits by a
window waiting for what will happen to him. The window separates him from freedom. The
window, the light rays entering through it, the music and shadows are all used to enhance
deep emotions during this scene. A middle close-up of two dead hens, with the stick that
killed them in the middle of them, ends this scene. This unchains emotional associations in the
viewer.

Jaibo kills Pedro as revenge and as this happens a hen stands on the dead body cackling. In
the next scene a donkey awakens a girl, who together with her grandfather discover Pedro’s
body. The animals cue the viewer for dead and misery. As they discover the body they are
standing at the barns entrance. Little light is behind them underlining the boundaries of life
and death, inner and outer worlds triggering emotions.

The blind man tells the police where Jaibo is and Jaibo gets killed. A surrealistc scene takes
place as he is lying down. An in between of life and death is depicted through a shot of a
blurry, shaky path and a dog appearing as a sign of violent death. This scene is juxtaposed to
the picture of Jaibo lying down. Music enhances the scene.
The last scene is a strong emotion marker. Because of fear to be accused of Pedro’s death, the girl and her grandfather dispose of Pedro’s body, by throwing it down on a steep hill.

The film provokes strong emotional reactions. The realistic rawness, the language, the music, the juxtapositions create emotional triggers. The characters themselves bear a strong emotional drive. The animals, the man without legs are among others used as strong emotion markers, which cue the viewer for turns in the story or help maintain the mood throughout the film.

6.6 Film analyses’ summary

The analyses show how the mood is established at the beginning of the film through the mise en scène, the music, the lighting, the dialogue among other elements. Using the theories of Smith, Kuhn, Casebier and McGinn it is possible to read how this elements are used to maintain, reinforce or trigger emotions in the viewer throughout the film.

Using the mood-cue approach that Greg M. Smith developed, one is able to discover the sequences and scenes that elicit emotions in the viewer. With the use of emotion markers, microscripts and cues it is possible to enhance the mood or give a turn to the story. This with the aim to maintain the interest or trigger other emotions in the viewer, that will help the development of the story.

Mexican films from the 40’s and 50’s are characterised often by a non-diegetic voice (narrator), who will introduce and sometimes finalise the story. This gives often a romantic impression in the viewer. It is possible to draw parallel lines in the above films, even though they have different thematic and genre. They often want to express a moral, like in the character of Lupe or Nazarin. There is a sense of community in La ilusión viaja en tranvía, Subida al cielo and Los olvidados, being specially strong in this last one as it opposes the misery it depicts. The language it is used denotes the epoch when they are filmed as well as it is linked to the character’s social background, making their message richer.

The chosen films have an exceptional beautiful photography, conveying the viewer an aesthetic experience. This is especially accentuated in the dramas, where it contrasts strongly
with its misery. Some of the camera shots convey in itself an emotional response in the
viewer.
7. CONCLUSION

Viewing film demands an active participation by the spectator. Even though one is not aware of this, associations are immediately arisen from the process of viewing. Our senses are stimulated in different ways simultaneously, by the sight, the sound and the movement of the images, and create an experience. Greg M Smith explains with his theory and develops a method for us to understand how the emotions emerge in the viewer, without going deep into the internal psychological background of the viewer. His method is more neutral. While Annette Kuhn relies more on a recalling of the infant’s learning processes using the help of Winnicott’s theory. McGinn on the other hand makes an analysis of film comparing it to dreams. He emphasises its fantasy-reality blend in order to trigger emotions. As dreams are mostly emotional. Casebier helps us analyse the film’s elements and how they work to trigger emotions. Films convey aesthetical and emotional reactions.

Film uses diverse elements to trigger sensations and emotions. But it is important to emphasise that this emotions are always depending on the viewer’s beliefs and background, in order to feel and interpret the given cues. The different elements used in a film, opens doors to associations and thereby create an emotional reaction. But the intensity of this reaction is individual. As explained above in the different film analyses the stairs, the street, the bus, the streetcar, etc. have different values to the viewer depending on what they bring along to the viewing. The language is a strong trigger as it has an emotional value in itself.

One of the purposes of this essay was to discover why Mexican films from the 40’s and 50’s arouse a strong emotional response in me. Through the film analyses I discovered the importance my background has in the reading of the cues and triggers. The interaction of the language, my own microscripts and beliefs with the film microscripts, cues, etc. result in a strong emotional response. The fascination I have for this period in the Mexican film history has to do with my romantic and nostalgic approach to these years. This is strengthened by the films elements as the use of the chiaroscuro, the black and white film, the cloths, the view of a Mexico that has disappeared among other things. The language in this films is characterised by the use of expressions and slang directly connected with the time. Their use is now obsolete and brings a special charm which triggers emotions.
The theories mentioned in this essay are of great help to the reading of the cues and triggers that create emotional reactions in the viewer. But it is important to underline that the emotional reaction and intensity is personal and depending strongly of the individual’s beliefs and experiences. This of course taking in account that the filmmaker manages to convey feelings through the production of a good film.
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